Sunni-Shiite Political Relations in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century and Early Modern Ottoman Universal Caliphate

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Ottoman-Iranian relations in the period between 1722 and 1747, with a focus on the interplay between religion and politics in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire. It also investigates the Ottoman claim to universal caliphate in the early modern era. The thesis aims to contribute to scholarly understanding of the complex dynamics of Ottoman decision-making with regard to three regimes in Persia in four different periods: the Shiite Safavids (1501-1722), the Sunni Afghans (1722-29), the Shiite Safavids (1729-36), and Nadir Shah, who was a self-proclaimed Sunni with the Ja'fari legal sect (1736-47). As the Russians were actively involved in the Iranian question during that period, Russo-Ottoman relations are investigated in most of the chapters. Through a close study of primary sources, this thesis claims that the Ottomans supported the Shiite Safavids against the Sunni Afghans and Nadir Shah in their aim to reestablish the Safavid dynasty in Iran. The main argument is that the Ottoman political claim to the universal Sunni caliphate, which secured the Ottoman dynasty's legitimacy in their vast domains, led them to adopt anti-Sunni policies in Persia. A Sunni power in Iran created a major legitimacy crisis for the sultan, whose political title of Caliph could be challenged by virtue of their new neighbors' shared religious identity. Against them, therefore, the Porte supported the Safavids, who posed a wall at the border, protecting the sultan's legitimacy. My study thus challenges two established views in Ottoman historiography, which suggest that (1) the sultans used their caliphal title in a political sense only in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and (2) sectarian differences were inherent sources of conflict in the Ottoman-Iranian axis. In terms of international relations, this thesis shows that the Porte followed a rational foreign policy in the first half of the eighteenth century in a continuity with early modern era, as particularly exemplified in the Russo-Ottoman relations, as well as in relations with other political powers in the wider Eurasian region.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOA	Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
BOA, A.DVN	Divan (Beylikçi) Kalemi Belgeleri
BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d	Mühimme Defteri
BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d	Nâme-i Hümayûn Defteri
BOA, AE.SAMD.III	Ali Emiri, 3. Ahmed
BOA, C.AS	Cevdet Askeriye
BOA, C.HR	Cevdet Hariciye
BOA, MAD.d	Maliyeden Müdevver
BOA, A.MKT	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Belgeleri
BOA, İE.DH	İbnu'l Emin, Dâhiliye
BOA, TT.d	Tapu Tahrir Defteri
BOA, YB.(1)	Documents copied from the Russian Archives
BOA, YB.(21)	Documents copied from the Georgian Archives
EI	Encyclopedia Iranica
TSMA.e	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Evrak
TSMK.R	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Revan Kitaplığı
Ş.S.D.	Millî Kütüphane Başkanlığı, Şer'i Sicillat Ahkâm Defterleri
TDVİA	Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi
SIRIO	Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoričeskogo Obŝestva (Collection of the Imperial Russian Historical Society)

INTRODUCTION

On October 23rd, 2019, President Donald Trump addressed the American public, asking "How many Americans must die in the Middle East in the midst of these ancient sectarian and tribal conflicts?"[1] The president's remarks are arguably a fair representation of the popular contemporary approach to the Sunni-Shiite split in Middle East.[2] My study of Ottoman-Iranian relations challenges such reductionist assumptions, demonstrating that the plurality of confessions, rather than their unity, is what provided stability in inter-imperial relations for a long time in the early modern era. This dissertation argues that the Ottoman sultan adopted a pro-Shiite attitude on the eastern frontier of the empire against Sunni alternatives in order to protect his title of great caliph, an essential component of his political legitimacy during the early modern era. Thus, the thesis also challenges the common view that the Ottoman sultan only used his caliph title politically in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, skipping the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The main goal of this dissertation is to understand the interplay between religion and politics in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire regarding the Iran question in the period between 1722 and 1747. In 1722, the Sunni Afghans of Kandahar took over the Shiite Safavid Empire, founded in 1501. Prince Tahmasb, the last heir of the Safavid dynasty recaptured the Persian throne in 1729. Nadir Shah returned Iran to Sunnism again between 1736 and 1747, but kept the legal school of Ja'farism, creating controversies. According to assumptions about

[1] Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump on the Situation in Northern Syria," *The White House*, October 23, 2019, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-situation-northern-syria/.

[2] This view was historically rooted, as can be seen from an eighteenth-century book: Tadeusz Jan Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia: Taken from the Memoirs of Father Krusinski, Procurator of the Jesuits at Ispahan*, 2 vols. (London: J. Pemberton, 1733). Among many other examples, a recent example of that view can be seen in a magazine article written by a Pulitzer winner author, David Zucchino, "As ISIS Is Driven From Iraq, Sunnis Remain Alienated," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/26/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-sunni.html. For a scholarly articulation and defense of this popular view in a bestseller book, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future* (Norton, 2006).

confessional rivalry, the establishment of Sunnism in Iran should have created a Pax-Sunnica in the broader Eurasian region. However, seemingly paradoxically, the opposite occurred, and the period witnessed major military confrontations. The Ottomans were actively involved in these wars, and they supported the Shiite Safavid princes in their bids to regain their throne against Sunni powers. In 1724, the Sunni Ottoman government signed a treaty with the Christian Russians to replace Sunni Afghan ruler Mir Mahmud with the Shiite Prince Tahmasb. Between 1743-46, the Porte even employed a forged Safavid prince, Safi Mirza, to replace Nadir Shah, in the absence of a living Safavid prince. Why did the Porte decide to side with the Shiite Safavids against the new Sunni rulers of Iran in this period?

My answer to this question in this dissertation is as follows: The Ottoman political claim to the universal Sunni caliphate, which secured the Ottoman dynasty's legitimacy in their vast domains, paradoxically led them to adopt anti-Sunni policies in Persia. The sixteenth century witnessed the expansion of the Ottoman borders at a rapid pace. However, the Porte started to abort their expansionist policies in favor of a more settled policy in the second half of the century. The main reason for the shift was the Porte's gradual recognition of its physical limits given the available technologies of war and governance at the time. As a result, the Porte focused on reinforcing Ottoman sovereignty over a vast geography from the western Mediterranean to the Iranian borders and from the Crimea to Yemen.[3]

This reinforcement required the creation of a legitimizing discourse that constituted Ottoman soft power. The Ottoman sultans' claim to the universal caliphate occupied a central place in the exertion of this soft power. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman claim to universal caliphate had coupled with policies at a global scale. In the seventeenth and eighteenth

[3] Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 152–79; Muhammet Zahit Atçıl, "State and Government in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Ottoman Empire: The Grand Vizierates of Rüstem Pasha (1544-1561)" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2015), 129–84.

centuries, when the Ottoman caliphate continued to retain its global character in theory, it worked regionally, in practice. Critically, it was this globally symbolic significance that made it work regionally. The global claim enabled the sultans to protect their dynastic sovereignty and Ottoman domains by delegitimizing opposing Sunni rulers. The Porte declared these rulers within and beyond the Ottoman realms rebels against the universal caliph.

The geographical and religio-political walls protecting the Ottoman "well-protected domains" (*memâlik-i mahrûse*) were critical in the maintenance of the unchallenged rule of the Ottoman dynasty. The Saharan Desert in Africa and the Indian Ocean bordered the southern parts of Ottoman territories, geographically. Christian rulers in the West and in the North, and the "heretic" Safavids in the East encircled the Ottoman domains politically. In a way, Ottoman domains resembled ancient Egypt, which was well-protected against enemies through its isolation by the geographical barriers of sea and deserts. I argue that this *isolation*, in turn, provided Ottoman rule with an ultimate *monopoly* within that vast geography in the early modern era. A Sunni power in Iran would have broken the isolation of the Ottoman domains, and thus the monopoly of the Ottoman dynasty as the only ruling family having "orthodox" religio-political legitimacy. That Sunni power would have created a major legitimacy crisis for the sultan, whose political claim to the caliphate could be challenged by virtue of the new neighbors' shared religious identity. Against possible Sunni contenders like the Mughals and the Uzbeks, and the actual Sunni threats of the Afghans and Nadir Shah, the Porte continuously supported the Safavids, who posed a wall at the border, protecting the sultan's legitimacy. My discussion will show that the protectionist policy of the Porte toward the Safavids and against alternative Sunni dynasties was not limited to the period on which I focus (1722-1747), but dated back to the 1640s.

A. Certain Theoretical and Methodological Questions Regarding Religion and Politics

Contrary to popular views, modern scholarship insists that historical actors used religion instrumentally to disguise worldly motivations.[4] Even though this perspective takes us a step further in understanding the deeper causes of historical problems, it fails to construct a proper connection between religion and politics, by prioritizing the political and neglecting the religious completely. My dissertation attempts to provide a balanced picture by underlining the religious in the political and the political in the religious. Instead of cataloguing conflicts as either religious or political, I argue that religion and politics were two inseparable realms that helped define one another. Thus, in my thesis, to highlight that interconnectedness, I call these problems "religio-political" questions. Patricia Crone's comparison of the place of religion in modern and pre-modern contexts captures the interconnectedness quite succinctly:

> To a modern student, pre-industrial politics appear to be virtually soaked in religion, both in the sense that rulers devoted much attention to religious questions (including the management of religious personnel) and in the sense that everyone talked endlessly about it, justifying and vilifying all courses of action in religious terms. […A] modern Englishman will legitimate his actions with reference to democracy in connection with politics, to animal rights in connection with vegetarianism, to the growth of knowledge in the context of science and scholarship, and so on, reserving his religious values (if any) for questions to do with the transcendent. By contrast, a pre-industrial Englishman would have marshalled his religious values in all of these connections and a host of others too. Modern religion typically limits itself to a special aspect of life, but pre-industrial religion was for multiple use. […] Pre-modern religion could be about anything and everything.[5]

As opposed to modern scholarship's handling of religion as a "passive" tool in the service of politics, my study highlights the ways in which religion became an active force limiting rulers.

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[4] For important examples of this perspective in religion and politics relations in the Ottoman Empire, see Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 77; Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (SUNY Press, 2012); Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, 1983). For the representation of that perspective specifically in Ottoman-Iranian conflicts, see Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition 1972* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 69; Rudolph Matthee, "The Ottoman-Safavid War of 986-998/1578-90: Motives and Causes," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 20, no. 1 & 2 (2014): 1–20; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1978), 193.

[5] Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 78–79.

There are two aspects of the activity of religion: First, the right to speak in the name of religion, thus law, was not in the hands of a completely closed or monolithic class or group. Scholars in the Islamic sciences, specifically law, whether officially working in bureaucracy or not, had the authority to interpret religious orders and law. Second, opposing political groups could and did turn religious arguments against the government in alliance with the scholars in opposition. Thus, even if the rulers aimed to use religion instrumentally, this was not a free and arbitrary use. The common modern perspective of religion as the "legitimizer" of political goals omits the very "delegitimizing" power of religion. The perspective that aims to understand politics by purifying it from other factors like religion, fails to understand politics itself.

Modern scholars also often refer to cross-religious or cross-confessional alliances in history as evidence of the instrumental use of religion for political aims. Indeed, history is full of such examples, and one of the central themes of this thesis is related to Sunni-Shiite political agreements against Sunni powers. Rather than studying religion as completely subordinate to politics, I approach this question by highlighting the restrictive capacity of religion. The way a given regime legitimized its rule had a limiting effect on its political actions. Thus, any action contradicting the legitimizing sources had the potential to damage the credibility and the legitimacy of the ruler. That is why governments always attempted to present their actions in full conformity with the established legitimate discourse of the regime.

"Allying with the infidel" evidently contradicted the legitimizing sources of the regime, and domestic opposition or international rivals were always ready to utilize such inconsistencies against the current government. In the instances where they allied with the "infidel," they struggled to justify their seemingly out-of-line political choice through various propaganda mechanisms. For example, in the period between 1722 and 1747, ceaseless propaganda wars went hand in hand with the actual wars between, first, the Ottomans and the Afghans and, then, between the Ottomans and Nadir Shah. All three powers employed various propaganda tactics

to drive their rivals into a tight corner and to weaken each other's legitimacy, appealing to the hearts and minds of their respective populations, especially those living in the border regions. When combined with other factors, religious challenges, both in social and legal senses, were effective in shaping the course of events. I will discuss the Patrona Halil Rebellion, which ended the reign of Ahmed III and the life of his once-powerful son-in-law Damad İbrahim Pasha in 1730 as a case study.

A related theoretical issue with the aforementioned problems pertains to the question of the sincerity of political actors. This thesis defends the view that to judge the sincerity of historical actors is beyond the scope of the social sciences and humanities. Nevertheless, many modern historians confidently assume the right to judge. In his book on Ebussuud and the Islamic legal tradition, Colin Imber alleges that while "[…T]he Sultans sought to project their military campaigns as holy wars, their *real* motive was *always* dynastic aggrandisement or the defence of dynastic interests."[6] Writing specifically on the emergence and rise of the Ottomans, Heath Lowry and Paul Lindner engage in long discussions to prove that the sultan, the military-administrative cadres, and the warriors were fighting for their materialistic secular aims, and religion was only the cover and guise for their real intentions.[7] Similarly, Laurence Lockhart feels free, when judging Nadir's sincerity, to say that "[T]here can be no doubt that, if he [Nadir] ever had any religious beliefs at all, they were neither deep-seated nor sincere. Consequently, he had no scruple whatever in subordinating religion to political expediency."[8] John Eliott puts forward that Charles V's framing of the Ottoman threat as "the paladin of Christendom against Islam" was "no more than a piece of cynical exploitation designed to further his own ambitions

[6] Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*, 77. Emphasis added.
[7] Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*; Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*.
[8] Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac, 1938), 100.

and those of his family."[9] Condemnation and approval of intentions are the two sides of the same coin. Cornell Fleischer, for instance, "approves" of the sincerity of Mevlana İsa, who justified Süleyman I's claims of being the *sahib-kıran*: "Nevertheless, it is impossible to dismiss or discount this section of his history as insincere panegyric, in light of both the functional rather than artistic character of his verse, and the fact that the work seems not to have been intended for presentation at court."[10]

There are studies, though few, drawing attention to the problematic aspect of rejecting the validity of non-materialistic goals in political action. Derin Terzioğlu criticizes Rifa'at Abou-El-Hajj's socio-economic approach to understanding Ottoman *nasihatname* literature. She argues that "any approach that intends to do justice to the complexity of the Ottoman decline-and-reform literature has to take into account the factors of *loyalty*, *identity* and *legitimacy* as well as the issue of interest all at once."[11] Cemal Kafadar also highlights the possibility of mutual existence of this-worldly and other-worldly motives beyond a certain political action, in discussing the *gaza* ideal:

> We should be cautious, however, about reducing the ideological rivalry and exchange to semiotic gamesmanship in the service of power. Positivist cynicism may prevent us from seeing that exchange with and absorption of other truths may have been the main concern of many actors involved who might still believe in the superiority of their own side and wish to achieve its supremacy, though not necessarily in an exclusivistic sense.[12]

Murat Dağlı problematizes the "pragmatism" argument in studies of Ottoman history, which reduces complex historical questions to political pragmatism alone, leaving the real power dynamics unexplained. He criticizes the historiography by arguing that:

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[9] John Elliott, "Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry: The European Perspective," in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (The Isis Press, 1993), 154.
[10] Cornell H. Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman," in *Süleymân the Magnificient and His Time*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 166.
[11] Derin Terzioğlu, "Turmoil, Upheaval and Confusion among Men: Ottoman Decline-Consciousness in the Seventeenth Century" (Senior Thesis, Princeton University, 1991), 4. Emphasis added.
[12] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (University of California Press, 1995), 72.

> The usual line of argument has been that the Ottomans (the ruling elite) did not really care about any religious, moral, or legal principles and were prone to use whatever best served their interests. However, this line of argument was too unsophisticated and even derogatory, since it implied that the Ottomans were simply political opportunists.[13]

The objections of these scholars point to a need for a comprehensive theory for studying religion and politics. Above all, rejecting any role for non-materialistic motives means denying the importance of ideas and ideologies for social and political action in history, which would be an untenable position.

In this dissertation, my point is not to prove the sincere religious intentions, if any, of the political actors. I basically suggest that dealing with intentions is beyond the job of a historian. In the absence of observable proofs, the claims about the "real" intentions of people and about how sincere they are in their inner self can only be speculations, rather than falsifiable claims. Just as a person's seemingly religious actions do not guarantee their religious intentions, a person's seemingly "individualistic and materialistic" actions also do not directly prove their materialistic intentions. The inner self of a person and their real intentions cannot be accurately known and detected even by the person themselves, whether egoistic, altruistic, materialistic, or spiritual.

Lastly, I think it is important to note in this discussion that the desire to reveal the "real" intentions of historical actors is not a novelty of the modern perspective per se. Rival political actors in the early modern Muslim and Christian world accused each other of having hypocritical worldly aims under the guise of religion. Moreover, especially works on Sufism dealt with hypocrisy (*riyâ*) in deeper ways to warn people not to blend their sincere religious intentions (*ihlâs*) with worldly aims.

[13] Murat Dağlı, "The Limits of Ottoman Pragmatism," *History and Theory* 52, no. 2 (2013): 195.

All in all, the reality of the interaction between religion and politics should go beyond both popular views naively considering religion as the driving force in political struggles and scholarly perspectives cynically seeing religion as subordinate to politics. In this dissertation, I highlight both the political maneuvers used to overcome religious boundaries and the restrictive power of religion over political actors. Rather than focusing on the preeminence of one over the other, I investigate the dynamic interaction between these two realms.

B. How to Study Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History

The periodization problem in Ottoman history affects not only the method but also the content of the studies on the eighteenth century. The post-Karlowitz era is mostly studied within the framework of the Age of Decline, cutting the period from the earlier times. Westernization is another prevalent lens through which the developments in the eighteenth century are analyzed. The designation of Damad İbrahim Pasha as a "peace-lover" or "pacifist" and his term of grand vizierate as the Tulip Age is still the dominant theme for the studies of the period between 1718-30.[14] This perspective depicts the Ottoman governing apparatus as naïve and mostly irrational, not following a foreign policy that would best serve the interests of the empire. The major alleged reasons for this naivete are the Ottoman acceptance of the categorical superiority of European powers, the Ottoman statesmen's somewhat romantic admiration of European culture and values, the seeking of personal leisure in the age of decline, and so on.

Not accepting these frameworks as proper categories for understanding Ottoman history, this thesis studies the first half of the eighteenth century in continuity with early modern Ottoman history, arguing that the Porte followed a rational foreign policy. In the so-called Age

[14] Recent studies have started to challenge the "Tulip Age" designation. Among others, specifically the works of Can Erimtan and Selim Karahasanoğlu are of importance. See Can Erimtan, *Ottomans Looking West?: The Origins of the Tulip Age and Its Development in Modern Turkey* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2008); Selim Karahasanoğlu, "A Tulip Age Legend: Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in the Ottoman Empire (1718–1730)" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2009). Indeed, eight out of the twelve years of Damad İbrahim Pasha's reign included wars, between 1722 and 1730. So, the "peace-loving" Damad İbrahim Pasha needs to be studied separately and in a critical way.

of Decline, the Ottomans recovered Azov from the Russians after a humiliating victory over Peter I, established a stronger central authority over the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, took back Morea from the Venetians, reached the extensive borders of the sixteenth century in the east, and defeated the Austro-Russian alliance in the war of 1736-39 and recaptured Belgrade. My discussion of Ottoman foreign policy between 1722 and 1747 demonstrates that the Porte pursued a rational foreign policy through establishing a major strategy and making tactical changes within it, ranking several goals according to their priority, considering risks and advantages of alternative decisions, preparing flexible policies based on alternative scenarios, gathering constant information from the frontiers in order to reevaluate decisions based on new information, holding frequent consultative assembly meetings, and following the rules of diplomacy properly toward both eastern and western powers.

Besides these methodological issues, the question of who holds authority is an important issue in examining Ottoman foreign policy. In the early modern period, while the realm of the state entity with all its bureaucratic structure and legal institutions expanded, the space of the sultan shrank. Even in the so-called classical Ottoman period, when the power and personal charisma of the sultans was at its height, the state apparatus was expanding at the expense of the sultans through "rigid principles and rules."[15] Hüseyin Yılmaz marked the Süleymanic age as the period in which contemporary authors envisioned the state "as the primary object of analysis and an entity separate from the household of the sultan or the dynasty."[16] In the post-Süleymanic period, the trend of the decrease in the actual power of sultan and increase in his role as a symbolic personification of state continued.[17] As Tezcan argues, the early modern

[15] Halil İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (The Isis Press, 1993), 74.
[16] Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 13.
[17] That transformation is showcased in the scholarship especially in the dethronement and succession of sultans. For specific references, see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (SUNY Press, 1991), 5, 24, 44; Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women*

period witnessed two simultaneous political developments: "the expansion of the political nation and the limitation of royal authority."[18]

Examples from the first half of the eighteenth century confirm the transformation in state structure. All three *padishah*s of that period, namely Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703), Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730), and Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754), did not hold the actual political power during their reigns. Respectively, Grand Mufti Feyzullah Efendi, Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha, and Chief Black Eunuch Beşir Ağa were the prominent figures who predominantly controlled state affairs. Moreover, the first two of these sultans lost their thrones and were deposed by the opposition, which was mainly composed of the members of the janissaries and the *ulema*. Osman III, who replaced Mahmud I in 1757, stated that he ascended the throne through the consensus of great viziers and higher *ulema* (*ittifâk-ârây-ı vüzerây-ı 'izâm ve icmâ'-i 'ulemây-ı kirâm*).[19] In characterizing Ottoman rule, the Marquis de Bonnac, the French ambassador in Constantinople between 1716 and 1724, wrote that even though the type of Ottoman rule seemed "despotic in appearance," it resembled a "republican government" very much in terms of its structure and functioning.[20] Thus, in my discussion of Ottoman religio-political discourse, rather than singling out the sultan, I take the sultan, the government, and other partakers in authority, like influential members of the *ulema* and army, as a central Ottoman governing body. It is significant to add that this thesis deals mainly with the decision-making process in

and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 24–27 and 262–63; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 72–77, 197, 218. Beyond these specific references, these writers discuss the dynamics of that process in detail throughout their books.

[18] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 232.

[19] Hâkim Mehmed Efendi, *Hâkim Efendi Tarihi (Osmanlı Tarihi 1166-1180/1752-1766)*, ed. Tahir Güngör and Ziya Yılmazer, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2019), 217–18. I thank Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak for bringing Osman III's statements to my attention.

[20] Marquis de Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894), 230–31. The date of the letter to France was January 22nd, 1724. He described the highly effective power of the consultative assembly and its prominent members on the last decision even in matters of war and peace.

Constantinople, though it does not exclude the impact of the periphery on this process. To include the influence of peripheral actors would require another study on its own.

C. Archive and Sources

I use a wide range of archival materials and manuscripts from the early modern era, especially from the eighteenth century, in the dissertation. Official Ottoman and Persian chronicles, royal epistles, imperial orders, accounts of ambassadorial missions, scholarly treatises, collections of legal opinions, and travel accounts are among the historical sources I utilized. I did not do archival research in European and Russian archives, although I used several primary and secondary European sources, like the memoirs of the Marquis de Bonnac, to research the relations of the European states and Russia with the Ottoman Empire.

My research on Ottoman primary sources was centered around the Turkish State Archives (*Devlet Arşivleri*) and Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, and to an extent Topkapı Palace Museum Archives (*Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivleri*). I did extensive research in Turkish State Archives on the twenty-five-year period between 1722 and 1747. The period between 1720 and 1730 was one of the most complicated eras in Ottoman diplomatic history, so I dedicated extra time and space to the study of that decade. However, as my discussion on the Ottoman caliphate goes back to the beginning of the sixteenth century, my research extended to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well. My competence in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and German allowed me to conduct a relatively comprehensive historical research on a conflict in which several Eurasian states were involved. For sources in French and Russian, I am indebted to the kind help of my colleagues.

D. Overview of the Chapters

The thesis is composed of eight chapters, which mostly follow a chronological order. Chapter One explores the Ottoman claim to the universal caliphate from Selim I until the first half of the eighteenth century. It argues that the Ottoman sultan continued to use his great caliph title

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well, though there was a change in the functions of the title from a global to a regional scale. The chapter traces the competition between the Ottoman-Moroccan and Ottoman-Mughal rulers for leadership among Muslim monarchs throughout the early modern period. It also demonstrates the Ottoman policy of siding with the Safavids against other Sunni rulers in international rivalry. At the end of the chapter, I engage in a theoretical discussion on the dynamics of cross- and intra-confessional alliances in foreign policy.

Chapter Two focuses on Ottoman-Iranian and Ottoman-Russian relations in the two decades preceding the fall of Isfahan in 1722. I argue that the Porte continued to pursue its long-established goal of having a weak but stable central Safavid authority in Persia during that period, as well. The chapter demonstrates the way the Ottoman government followed this policy toward Iran in that era. In that chapter, I also compare the Ottoman and Russian policies with regard to Iran before 1722. I argue that invading Persian lands was not the aim of the Porte during that period, but of the Russians.

Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six deal with the Iranian question in the period between 1722 and 1729. While the first two chapters investigate the first period of wars in Iran between 1722 and 1725, the latter two examine the second period between 1725 and 1729. Chapter Three studies Ottoman policies toward the Safavids and the Afghans in the first period. The chapter argues that the Porte supported the Safavid Prince Tahmasb against the Afghan Mahmud, the new ruler of Iran. I demonstrate that due to religio-political concerns, the Ottoman government hid its preference for the Shiite candidate over the new Sunni shah of Persia from the Ottoman public.

Chapter Four explores Ottoman policies toward Russia in the first period of wars in Iran. It claims that two conflicting determinants shaped their relations: (1) both powers considered one another's advancement in Persia a threat to their own security; (2) they both wanted to

expand toward Iran while refraining from military conflict among each other as much as possible. The chapter examines the Treaty of the Partition of Iran in 1724 between the Ottomans and the Russians, a temporary diplomatic success that did not remove the main concerns of each party about the other.

Chapter Five studies the Ottoman-Russian and Ottoman-Afghan relations in the two-year period between 1725 and 1727. The first part of the chapter argues that the Treaty of Partition was no longer valid in practice as of Spring 1725, though it continued to be in effect on paper at least until 1727. One of the main arguments of the thesis is that the cleavage between the policies of the Russian and the Ottoman states in 1725 changed the course of events in Persia substantially. In the post-1725 period, the major strategy of the Russians was driving the Ottomans out of Iran, at the expense of losing all occupied Russian territories. The second part of the chapter investigates the religio-political and military confrontation between the Ottomans and the Afghans, as two Sunni neighbors. It shows that the reason for the Ottoman sultan's fervent defense of his title of great caliph against the Afghan Ashraf, who claimed equal caliphate with Ahmed III, was the danger posed to the Porte by an equally legitimate alternative dynasty at the eastern border. The chapter argues that the aim of the Ottomans in the Battle of Anjudan against the Afghans in 1726 was to overthrow the Afghans and reestablish the Shiite Safavid state by enthroning Prince Tahmasb in Isfahan. Chapter Six explores the last phase of struggle among all four actors in Persia: the Ottomans, the Afghans, the Safavids, and the Russians. It traces the deepening of the cleavage between the Iranian policies of the Ottomans and the Russians. The chapter examines the Safavid-Afghan competition and the way the Ottoman government reacted to this rivalry through changing policies as the Safavids gradually became stronger.

Chapter Seven deals with two main topics; first, the religio-political discourse of the rebels in the Patrona Halil Rebellion, and second, the withdrawal of the Ottomans to their

traditional eastern borders between 1730 and 1735. The chapter first demonstrates how the opposition could use religious discourse to effectively delegitimize those who were in the government. Second, the chapter traces the steps of the gradual Russian help for Nadir to expel the Ottomans from the Caucasus. It argues that besides Nadir's own strength, the Porte's returning of the Caucasus to the Persians happened mainly due to the Russian strategy, which Catherine I initiated in 1725. Chapter Eight discusses the Ja'farism proposal of Nadir Shah to the Porte between 1736 and 1747. I argue that Nadir Shah threatened the sultan's authority and challenged his title of great caliph through this Ja'farism offer in a delicate religio-political way. I examine the challenge Nadir Shah posed to the Ottoman sultan in parallel to that posed by the Afghans. I conclude that due to this similarity, the Porte employed the same strategy against both of the new Sunni dynasties of Iran: replacing the Sunni rulers with the Shiite Safavids. I discuss the Porte's support of Safi Mirza, the impostor Safavid prince, against Nadir Shah in the war of 1743-45 within that framework.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY MODERN OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

This chapter investigates the way in which the Ottomans conceptualized and portrayed their caliphate claim between 1517, when Selim I incorporated the Hejaz into the Ottoman domain, and the first half of the eighteenth century. First, I will discuss the gradual establishment of the House of Osman's sources of legitimacy and the development of Ottoman religio-political discourse from the formative period to the early modern era. Second, I will provide a short review of the literature on the Ottoman caliphate, covering the main perspectives. Then, I will offer a revision to the commonly accepted idea of the disuse of "caliphate" in politics between the latter half of the sixteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century.[21]

The sixteenth century witnessed the expansion of Ottoman borders at a rapid pace. However, the Porte abandoned their expansionist policies in favor of a more settled policy in the second half of the century. The main reason for the shift was the Porte's gradual recognition of its physical limits given the available technologies of war and governance at the time. As a result of this transformation, the Porte focused on reinforcing Ottoman sovereignty in a vast geography from the western Mediterranean to the Iranian border and from the Crimea to Yemen. This reinforcement required the creation of a legitimizing discourse that would constitute Ottoman soft power, a central place in which had been occupied by the claim of the universal caliphate of the Ottoman sultans. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman claim to a universal caliphate was also coupled with policies at a global scale. I will argue that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the Ottoman caliphate continued to retain its global

[21] Referring to the Treaty of Hamadan (1727), in which the Ottoman sultan's caliphate was explicitly confirmed, Hakan Karateke indicates the need for a revision in the modern periodization regarding the political usage of the Ottoman caliphate, which has focused either on the sixteenth century or on the post-1774 period. However, as I will show in the literature review below, no serious attempt has been made since then. Hakan Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Brill, 2005), 30–31.

character in theory, in practice it worked regionally. Critically, it was this global symbolic significance that made the Ottoman title of "caliph" work regionally: the global claim enabled the sultans to protect their dynastic sovereignty and Ottoman domains by delegitimizing opposing Sunni rulers. The Porte declared these rulers within and beyond the Ottoman realms rebels against the universal caliph.

After discussing the transformation of the political functions of the caliphate for the Ottomans, I will investigate the new functions through case studies from the second half of the sixteenth century through the eighteenth century. In this examination, I will discuss the competition between Ottoman rulers and their Moroccan and Mughal counterparts for the title of universal caliph in the early modern era. Then, I will explore the Ottoman mobilization of Dagestani khanates, who were Sunni powers outside the Ottoman domain, to perform *jihad* against the Austrians, the Russians, and the Safavids, under the great caliph.

Lastly, I will link the Sunni-Shiite division to the competition over the caliphate within the Sunni world. I will demonstrate that the struggle for the title of "caliph" between Sunni rulers made the neighborliness of Sunni states more conflictual in the Constantinople-Isfahan axis and rendered the Sunni-Shiite neighborliness more peaceful. I will also offer a new perspective on the religio-political dynamics of building cross-religious alliances. I will argue that rulers were not free in "allying with the infidel," as such an alliance would have gone against the sources of their regimes' legitimacy. The delegitimizing power of religion, as much as its legitimizing power, put a constraint, though not necessarily an insurmountable one, on the formation of cross-religious alliances.

A. The Ottoman Dynasty's Sources of Legitimacy

As political discourse depends primarily on the commonly-shared sources of legitimacy of a given regime, any discussion of political discourse should entail a thorough understanding of

those sources.[22] The evolution and development of the Ottoman dynasty's sources of legitimacy had been in the active process of production and reproduction from the beginning of the Ottoman principality in the thirteenth century until the demise of the empire in the twentieth century. Modern scholarship analyzes the types of Ottoman rule in three chronological categories: a frontier principality in Bithynia, a patrimonial state ruling over the Balkans and western Anatolia, and a world empire after the conquest of Constantinople.[23] According to these structural changes, certain changes occurred in the sources of legitimacy for Ottoman rule, as well. In this section, I will touch upon that evolution leading up to the first half of the eighteenth century, following Karateke's division of political legitimacy between "normative" and "factual."[24] He defines "normative legitimacy" as the legal right to rule, which had two sources: divine and hereditary.[25] "Factual legitimacy," on the other hand, denotes the actual provisions of the state to its subjects in terms of economic well-being, justice, order, security, and the like.[26]

In the first two phases in the evolution of the Ottoman polity, Ottoman authors gradually constructed a solid genealogy for the Ottoman dynasty, whose roots extended back to the Oguz Turks of Central Asia.[27] As for the religious or divine legitimation, the dominant reference was made to the "holiness" of Ottoman "*gaza*" over infidels.[28] Starting with Mehmed II, the

[22] Gottfried Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Brill, 2005), 55–56.
[23] Among others, see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 15.
[24] Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate."
[25] Benedict Anderson also pointed to religious and dynastic claims as the two key elements of and "frames of reference" for political legitimacy in the pre-modern world. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), 12–22.
[26] Karateke has a broad definition of normative legitimacy, in which he included the depiction of the sultan in certain ways, like religious and traditionalist, victorious, prosperous, magnanimous, and modest. He also considers ceremonies, and the construction of charitable buildings and insignia within normative legitimacy. Although my aim here is not to engage in a discussion on the types of sources of legitimacy, I think that to consider these not as sources of legitimacy, but as mediums of advertising legitimacy would analytically be more proper.
[27] Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," *Turcica* 19 (1987): 16–19.
[28] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*; Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," 7–12; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 103–4 and 226.

Ottoman state had gradually become a world empire in terms of geographical size, change in the position of the sultan, universal claims of political superiority, and construction of a central bureaucracy.

In this new phase, there occurred significant changes in the sources of legitimacy for the Ottoman dynasty's ruling claims. In heredity claims bolstering normative legitimacy, the lineage of the dynasty was "Islamized" by associating "Oguz genealogy to an Islamic cosmogony and chronology" starting from the second half of the fifteenth century.[29] However, the following century witnessed a gradual fading away of heredity claims based on Oguz lineage, due to its weakening of importance as a justifier in the new era.[30] Moreover, instead of Central Asian roots, the Ottomans started to embrace the heritage of the Roman Empire as a new identity, and from Mehmed II on, sultans also styled themselves "*kayser-i Rûm*" (Caesar of Rome).[3132] However, efforts to Islamize Ottoman roots had continued, too.[33] In addition, as the dynasty proved itself with successful successors from the same lineage for a long period, more than ancient roots, that continuity itself became a source of legitimacy in its own right.[34]

[29] Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," 20; Barbara Flemming, "Political Genealogies in the Sixteenth Century," in *Essays on Turkish Literature and History* (Brill, 2018), 226–38.
[30] Colin Imber, "Frozen Legitimacy," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Brill, 2005), 105–6.
[31] Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 284–85.
[32] The centrality of Rumi identity for the Ottoman state came again to the fore in the Ottoman response to Nadir's challenge in 1736 after his coronation. I discuss that conflict in Chapter Eight.
[33] For these efforts from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, see Feridun Emecen, "Hilafetin Devri Meselesi: Şaban-ı Şifai ve Şehrizade Mehmed Said'in Görüşleri Üzerine Yorumlar," in *Osmanlı'nın İzinde: Prof. Dr. Mehmet İpşirli Armağanı*, ed. Feridun Emecen, İshak Keskin, and Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2013). It seems that claiming Arabic roots for the Ottoman lineage did not become successful, as we do not see that reference within the established Ottoman political discourse in the official documents and chronicles. As will be discussed in the following chapters, Ottoman legal-discursive defenses against Afghan Ashraf's claims to the caliphate and his so-called Qurayshi roots did not include any counter claim for the same lineage of the Ottoman sultan. Nevertheless, these continuous attempts to bind Ottoman lineage to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad and the Hejaz by contemporary historians show that to be a descendant of the Prophet was an aspirational source of legitimacy in that age.
[34] Marinos Sariyannis, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Brill, 2018), 60–61.

"Sultan, son of the sultan" (*sultan ibnü's-sultan*) became an essential epithet of sultans until the end of the Ottoman Empire.[35]

The overthrow of the Mamluk Empire by Selim II and subsequent acquisition of the privilege of possessing Mecca and Medina added a new title: being the supreme political authority in the Muslim world. As Kafadar states, after donning this title, "within the Muslim world, the Ottoman dynasty enjoyed overarching prestige, and within its own domains, an almost unshakable legitimacy."[36] After incorporating the caliphate into his epithets, the Ottoman sultan claimed the exclusive right to *gaza* and *jihad* as the defender of Islam and protector of all Muslims against "infidels" in Europe and "heretic" Kizilbash in Iran.

Regarding the state's factual legitimacy, the legal system began to be defined according to Islamic jurisprudence much more so than in earlier times. There were certain specific internal and external reasons for that transformation after becoming an empire. Internally, the state needed a more solid legal structure for a sustainable social, political, and economic order in a vast geography with a diverse population.[37] Externally, both the incorporation of major old Islamic centers into the empire[38] and the fight against the "heterodox" Safavids led the Ottomans to assume a more "orthodox" identity.[39] In the *kanun* (customary law)-*sharia* duality, *kanun* was taken gradually under *sharia* by the adjustment of customary practices to align with *sharia* by means of various juristic methods and instruments.[40] In 1696, Mustafa II sent an edict

[35] Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 31.
[36] Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle East and Islamic Review* 4, no. 1–2 (1997 1998): 40.
[37] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 14–45.
[38] Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 118, 121.
[39] Cornell Fleischer, Messiah, p. 160; Colin Imber, Myth, p. 22. Leslie Peirce, Morality Tales, pp. 10, 35, 36.Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman," 160; Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," 22; Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 10, 35, 36.
[40] Snjezana Buzov, "The Lawgiver and His Lawmakers: The Role of Legal Discourse in the Change of Ottoman Legal Culture" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2005).

to the deputy grand vizier ordering that "fermans and decrees should, from then on, only refer to the 'noble Sharia' and strictly advised against the coupling of the terms Sharia and *kanun*."[41] Moreover, the Hanafi sect became the "official" sect of the empire especially with works of *Şeyhülislam* Ebussuud and his successors in the office.[42] As a significant indicator of that transformation, "heresy" cases started to become a critical matter and certain prominent religious figures of the period were executed upon convictions as heretics.[43]

The Shariatization of the Ottoman legal system became manifest in the institutional strengthening of the *ulema*, the backbone of the system, steadily from the fifteenth century on. Their numbers increased and new posts were introduced within the enlarging bureaucracy; the appointment of *ulema* was taken under the authority of *ulema* bureaucracy from the civil bureaucracy; they gained more legal protection and privileges in the centuries to come; the members of the *ulema* hierarchy secured high positions for their offspring; they increased their income sources through various mechanisms and networks; and so on.[44] As a result of the continuous growth of their power, Zilfi characterizes the *ulema* of the eighteenth century as aristocracy that was a privileged elite group composed of established families in the learning hierarchy for long periods, even centuries.[45]

Thus, as of the early eighteenth century, all political sources of the Ottoman sultan's legitimacy were directly or indirectly defined through religion.[46] Under normative legitimacy,

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[41] Ekin Tuşalp Atiyas, "The 'Sunna-Minded' Trend," in *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century*, by Marinos Sariyannis (Brill, 2018), 276. See also Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 27.
[42] Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*.
[43] Richard Cooper Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), 182, 183, 234–38.
[44] Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanli Devletinin İlmiye Teşkilâti* (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965); Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*; Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Mevali as 'Lords of the Law,'" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 3 (January 9, 2009): 383–407; Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[45] Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988).
[46] As a matter of fact, it was not so different from other political traditions in other geographies in the Middle Ages.

the sultan portrayed himself as divinely chosen due to his *gaza* on "infidels" and "heretics," and due to his leadership over the Muslim world. The genealogy of the Ottoman dynasty was Islamized, with attempts to bind the Ottoman lineage with that of the Prophet Muhammad. The justice system, the backbone of factual legitimacy, was shariatized in a gradual and constant effort, with the fading of *kanun* into the background.

B. Literature Review

In modern scholarship there is a consensus that Ottoman sultans used their title of caliph politically in only two short periods: from the 1520s to the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and in the Abdulhamidian era in the nineteenth century.[47] The scholarship discusses the recourse to caliphate in the first period within the world emperorship ideals of Selim I and Süleyman I, especially in reference to Ottoman activities in the Indian Ocean. Historians examine the case of the nineteenth century by referring to the Ottoman policies of standing against the increasing military and political dominance of European powers in Muslim lands. According to this dominant narrative, Ottoman sultans did not make use of caliph as a political title for around three centuries between these distinct periods.[48]

There are few studies within caliphate literature discussing the use of the title by the Ottoman sultan in the 1720s and 1730s against Ashraf and Nadir.[49] These studies locate

[47] Modern scholarship underlines the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) as the first official document in which an Ottoman sultan claimed a supreme status in the Muslim world. However, it also maintains that that claim was only as a mark on paper and had no practical use in Ottoman foreign policy until the reign of Abdulhamid II.

[48] Halil İnalcık, "Appendix: The Ottomans and the Caliphate," in *The Cambridge History of Islam: The Central Islamic Lands from Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, vol. I A (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 320–23; Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," 40; Tufan Buzpınar, "Osmanlı Hilafeti Meselesi: Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi," *TALİD* 2, no. 1 (2004): 113–32; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 25, 28; Azmi Özcan, "Hilâfet: Osmanlı Dönemi," in *TDVİA*, 1998; Giancarlo Casale, "Tordesillas and the Ottoman Caliphate: Early Modern Frontiers and the Renaissance of an Ancient Islamic Institution," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 6 (2015): 509.

[49] İnalcık, "Appendix: The Ottomans and the Caliphate"; Tufan Buzpınar, "Osmanlı Hilafeti Hakkında Bazı Yeni Tespitler ve Mülahazalar (1725-1909)," *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 10 (2004): 1–38; Haim Gerber, "An Early Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Ottoman Caliphate," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013): 119–25; Emecen, "Hilafetin Devri Meselesi: Şaban-ı Şifai ve Şehrizade Mehmed Said'in Görüşleri Üzerine Yorumlar," 561–74; Feridun Emecen, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Hilafetine Yeni Bir Bakış," in *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Hilafet ve Saltanat* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2020), 13–88.

Ottoman insistence on the caliph title within the specific political context of the Ottoman-Iran wars in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, modern historians who write about Ottoman-Iranian conflicts in the period between the 1720s and the 1740s also include the caliphate question in their discussions.[50] These debates and contributions remained mostly unnoticed by the Ottoman scholarship on the caliphate for long decades. However, those who write on the Perso-Ottoman conflicts in the second quarter of the eighteenth century also remain within the immediate context without situating the competition over the caliph title at that period in the wider context of the development of the idea of the Ottoman caliphate.

There are three doctoral theses that studied the importance of the Ottoman caliphate in the commonly-neglected era of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the contexts of Ottoman-Mughal and Ottoman-Moroccan relations. [51] The first two were written by Naimur Rahman Farooqi and Abderrahmane el Moudden in 1986 and 1991, respectively.[52] Recently, Maya Petrovich also wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the political and cultural interactions between Ottomans and Mughals, covering a large time span from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.[53]

[50] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*; Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge University Press, 1958); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*; Abdurrahman Ateş, *Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1720-1747)* (İstanbul: Altın Post, 2012); Saim Arı, "Osmanlı Arşiv Kaynakları Işığında Nadir Şah-I. Mahmut Dönemi Ehli Sünnet-Şii Diyaloğu" (PhD diss., Harran Üniversitesi, 2001); Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006); Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); İlker Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)" (PhD diss., Ege Üniversitesi, 2010); Mehmet Yılmaz Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729" (Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2015).

[51] As far as I can see, these are the only academic works examining Ottoman caliphate claim in the post-sixteenth-century era. I will refer to their theses in the following pages more specifically, and it suffices here to introduce their contributions generally.

[52] Naimur Rahman Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, 1556-1748" (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin, 1986); Abderrahmane El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs: Moroccan-Ottoman Relations from the Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1992). He also wrote an article on the same subject: Abderrahmane El Moudden, "The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolic Stakes in the 16th and 17th Century-Maghrib," *Studia Islamica*, no. 82 (1995): 103–12.

[53] Maya Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah: India in Ottoman Reality and Imagination" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012).

In his thesis, Naimur Rahman Farooqi explores political and diplomatic relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and focuses also on the Mughal reaction to Ottoman sultans' claim to be the caliph of Islam and on the problem of *hajj* traffic. Farooqi's central question was to explore the "factors conducive to amity and to conflict between the Mughals and the Ottomans?"[54] As he finds out, Sunni solidarity was not a motivating factor in this centuries-old relationship. Mughal and Ottoman monarchs only drew on that discourse in times of a mutual need to stand against Safavid Iran.[55] Regarding the caliphate claims, Farooqi shows that both empires had insisted on their supreme caliphate over the global Muslim community for centuries. Maya Petrovich's research supports the main argument of Farooqi's thesis. She shows that political competition was the main agenda between Ottomans and Mughals, unlike any supposed unity and solidarity due to shared Sunni identity. Utilizing rich historical sources, she demonstrates that the claim for a universal caliphate was among the major conflicts between Ottoman and Mughal rulers.

Abderrahmane El Moudden, on the other hand, focuses on Moroccan-Ottoman relations from the mid-sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century and discusses the evolution of the competition over the claim to be the superior caliphate between these two Muslim powers. He traces Ottoman caliphate claims in relation to Morocco, the only independent Sunni state bordering the Ottoman Empire. Through various cases, he shows that there had been a long competition between the Ottoman sultans and Moroccan rulers for the coveted title of the "exalted caliph" for almost two centuries.

Unfortunately, modern scholarship has ignored these three studies, just as it has ignored the historical works on Ottoman-Iranian conflicts on the first half of the eighteenth century, in

[54] Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 6.
[55] Farooqi, 380–90. This finding is also closely related to my argument that sectarian difference, rather than sectarian unity, created a less conflictual Middle East historically.

the wider discussion about the claim of the Ottoman caliphate. However, Ottoman-Mughal and Ottoman-Moroccan competition are arguably the two most important cases against which to compare Ottoman caliphate claims, as to investigate counter-claims is a *sine quo non* for any exploration of a given claim. The conflict over the supreme leadership of the Muslim world had continued for centuries among these three rival states. Rather than studying these real power competitions, modern scholarship on the pre-mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman caliphate is preoccupied mostly with internal discussions about the caliphate, such as the authenticity of the transfer of caliphate to the Ottomans from the Mamluks, or the supposed juristic requirement of being a Qurayshi descendant to be a caliph.[56] As a result of this negligence, modern scholarship suffers from a lack of a comprehensive and integrated perspective on the Ottoman caliphate that covering its continuous and changing elements over the centuries.

C. The Ottoman Caliphate in the Early Modern Period

A significant reason for the scholarly negligence with respect to the importance of the claim for caliphate for the Ottoman sultan in the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries is related to assumptions regarding the definition of "caliphate." Sunni legal theory and modern scholarship commonly define the caliphate as universal political leadership of Muslims. Scholars detect the mentioned two periods of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, that matched to the definition of caliphate. They underline the perceived absence of the claim to universal dominance in Islamdom in other times as proof that the Ottomans did not value the caliphate as a political tool in that three-century period.

[56] Among others, see Hamilton Gibb, "Lutfi Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," *Oriens* 15 (1962): 287–95; Ahmed Asrar, "The Myth about the Transfer of the Caliphate to the Ottomans," *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute* 5, no. 2–3 (1972): 111–20; Faruk Sümer, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Halifeliği Devraldı Mı?," *Belleten* LVI, no. 217 (1992): 675–701; Hulusi Yavuz, "Sadrıâzam Lütfi Paşa ve Osmanlı Hılâfeti," *Marmara Üniversitesi İlâhiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 5–6 (1987 1988): 27–54; İsmail Köksal, "İslam Hukuku Açısından Osmanlı Hilafetinin Meşruiyetinin Değerlendirilmesi," *İslâmî Araştırmalar* 13, no. 1 (2000): 63–74; Emecen, "Hilafetin Devri Meselesi: Şaban-ı Şifai ve Şehrizade Mehmed Said'in Görüşleri Üzerine Yorumlar"; Uğur Demir, "Hilafetin Osmanlıya Devri Meselesi ve Buna Dair Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi," *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, no. 40 (2019): 87–142.

This is a narrow perspective. The Ottomans gradually gave up on becoming the masters of the entire world and focused on being an unchallenged political power within a reachable geographical extent after reaching their "natural borders" sometime around the end of the sixteenth century. However, I argue that instead of giving up the privilege of the caliphate altogether, the Ottoman claim to the leadership of the global *ummah* had narrowed only in practice. Here, I will first briefly discuss the way in which the Ottomans themselves portrayed their caliphate status in their foreign policy in the sixteenth century. Then, I will show how that claim was maintained in discourse in the subsequent centuries of the early modern era, when the scope of its function underwent a transformation.

D. The Ottoman Caliphate in the Sixteenth Century

Selim I brought an end to the Mamluk empire after the Battle of Ridaniye in 1517. With that success, the Ottomans conquered Egypt and incorporated Mecca and Medina into their domains. Notwithstanding some recent analyses, soon after that outstanding accomplishment, Selim I proclaimed his seat the "exalted caliphate" (*hilâfet-i 'ulya*) and became the first Ottoman sultan to use that epithet.[57] Moreover, he became the first Ottoman sultan entitled as

[57] Feridun Bey, *Mecmua-i Münşeat-ı Feridun Bey*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Takvimhane-i Âmire, 1858), 443. Hakan Karateke and Hakkı Çıpa claim that Selim I never assumed the title "caliph." To support that claim they refer to letters sent by Selim I to Prince Süleyman, to Ottoman judges, and to other rulers, compiled in Münşeat-ı Feridun. See Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 26; H. Erdem Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World* (Bloomington, 2017), 236.

It is true that in Selim's letters to Süleyman and Ottoman judges there is no reference to "caliphate." However, it is not correct that "caliph" was not assumed by Selim I as a new title in the letters sent to other rulers. The examples of it are present only a few pages after the letters sent to Prince Süleyman and Ottoman judges in the same Münşeat. As shown by historians decades ago, Selim called his position "*hilâfet-i 'ulya*" (exalted caliphate) in his letter to *Sheikh* Ibrahim, khan of Shirvan. Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 1:443.

Moreover, the emir of Aden swore allegiance to Selim by sending his envoy to the new "caliph." Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 31. In addition to that, Diu governor Malik Ayas, who was among the leading nobles in the Gujarat Sultanate, called Selim "*kemâli's-saltanat ve'l hilâfete ve'd-din*" (perfection of sultanate, caliphate, and religion) in his congratulatory letter written on November 23rd, 1518 (20 Zilkade 924) for Selim's conquest of Arab lands. See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 1:449. Other than claims to hold the exalted caliphate, Selim called himself "caliph" in his letter to the ruler of Gilan informing the latter of his conquest of Egypt and all Arab lands. See Feridun Bey, 1:435. In addition, in their replies to Selim I, both the judge and the mufti of Bursa characterized the sultan as caliph. See Feridun Bey, 1:442.

Lack of reference to "caliphate" in Selim's aforementioned letters to Süleyman and Ottoman judges is also important. Selim wrote in his letter to Süleyman that Abu Numay, the son of Meccan *sharif* Barakat II, was on his way to Egypt. See Feridun Bey, 1:429. Abu Numay came to Cairo on July 6th, 1517 and presented the keys of the Ka'ba to Selim I. It was after this ceremony that Selim acquired the title of the "servitor of the two Holy

"servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" (*hâdimu'l Haremeyn*).[58] All Ottoman sultans after him carried that unique title in their epithets. At Süleyman I's enthronement in 1520, the *sharif* of Mecca praised him for sitting in the "seat of supreme sultanate and the dignified office of great caliphate" (*serir-i saltanatu'l uzma ve mesned-i hilâfeti'l kübra*).[59] Ebussuud and Celalzade

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Sanctuaries" (*hâdimu'l Haremeyn*). See Hulusi Yavuz, "Hâdimü'l Haremeyn" (TDVİA, 1997). Critically, the date of Selim's letter to *Sheikh* Ibrahim, khan of Shirvan, claiming himself to be the exalted caliph was July 15th, 1517, only nine days after assuming the title of *hâdimu'l Haremeyn*. Thus, it seems logical that Selim waited for the arrival of the Meccan *sharif*'s official approval of Selim's position to use that title.

Other than Selim's letters from Cairo, the law-book of Halab dated 1519 also asserted Selim's caliphate. First, the introductory parts of "*hamdele*" (praise to God) and "*salvele*" (salutation to Prophet) underlined God's choosing of caliphs and the Prophet's caliphate.

The *hamdele* part reads as follows: "Dear God, You subdue whomever You wish to subdue, as the preliminary (step) for his preliminary submission (and offering) of fidelity (to You); and You remove him from under Your protective wings; verily, You even remove from his majesty's (the ruler) shoulders the robe of succession (*khilafah*); Thou, who art the Victor over the pharaohs and the unrighteous; and You honor in the center of Your Esteem (*'lzzatika*) whoever upholds the prescriptions of the faith; and You raise the banners of his victory to whomever You designate to the office of successor (*khilafah*) over the universe; Thou who esteem the caliphs and the sultans…" Translation belongs to Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj. See Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles to Two Early Liva Kanunnameler," *Turcica* XXI–XXIII (1991): 374–75. See the original document, BOA, TT.d, no. 68, p. 1. This part perfectly matched the context of the fall of the Mamluk caliphate and their replacement by the Ottomans. The special reference to pharaohs indicated it even clearly. Besides, Selim's letter to the khan of Shirvan made the analogy between Mamluks and pharaohs more directly: "The divine wrath ordered the drowning of opposers who were coming from the lineage of the Pharaoh, in the sea of holy fighters' swords." (*Va lashkar-i firavni-najâd-i muhâlifân râ qahr-i ilâhi dar darya-i tigh-i mujâhidân ghark farmûd*). See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 1:442.

The *salvele* part reads as follows: "And we pray over (for) the lawgiver (*shari'*, i.e., the Prophet Muhammad) who is Your Caliph (*khalifatuka*) in the assignment (*wad'*) of *jizyah* and *kharaj* on the Arabs, Turks and Daylam, (the very same one, i.e., the Prophet) who conveyed the laws (*kawanin*) of Islam for all mankind, in the most accurate and complete fashion, none other than Muhammad, the Prophet…" Again, in this part, the caliphate of the Prophet was stressed and Ottoman tax laws were being based on prophetic practice. See BOA, TT.d, no. 68, p. 1; Abou-El-Haj, "Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles to Two Early Liva Kanunnameler," 375.

Toward the end of the preamble, Selim's caliphate is asserted again with a special emphasis on the servitude of the Haremeyn. "It is meet that he is rewarded in his *khilafah* by having earned the happiness of having won the services of the Haremeyn and earned honor by attending the two circles (*Halqatayn*)." See BOA, TT.d, no. 68, p. 3; Abou-El-Haj, 375.

Furthermore, the *defter* of Tokat from 1520 qualified Selim I as "the caliph of the Prophet" (*halîfet-i Resûlullah*). See Emecen, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Hilafetine Yeni Bir Bakış," 48.

All the evidence makes it clear that Selim I claimed universal caliphate over the entire Muslim community. Without noticing that, Hakkı Çıpa even argues that Lütfi Pasha was the first person to attribute caliphate to Selim I in his treatise written in 1554. He explains the posthumous glorification with the current needs of Süleyman in his competition for world emperorship. See Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 236. It seems that his assertion, and Karateke's, are factually wrong.

[58] Historically, that title was the major justification for universal caliphate in Sunni world. It was the main distinguishing element of Mamluk sultans signifying their supreme position in the Muslim world as "sultan al-Islam." See El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 29; Emre Cihan Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007), 53, 54, 120, 218; Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 30.

[59] Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 1:449. Selim Güngörürler discusses the titulature of rulers based on their ranks in the pre-modern Eurasian world. According to his classification, *sultanu'l 'azam* referred to emperorship and

Mustafa, two masterminds of the Süleymanic age, unconditionally portrayed Süleyman I as supreme sultan and great/exalted caliph of the age.[60] The same dual claim continued to be made by all Ottoman sultans until the end of the Ottoman empire. The third article of Kanun-i Esasi, the first Ottoman constitution declared in 1876, defined the "Sublime Ottoman Sultanate" as "inclusive of the great caliphate of Islam."[61]

However, as early as 1421, if not earlier, Ottoman sultans called themselves "caliph."[62] There is an important distinction between these two terms. Early Muslims had established the institution of the "caliphate" or "imamate"[63] after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, with the succession of Abu Bakr in 632. Following Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman, and Ali successively became the heads of Muslim community until 661. However, neither their terms, famously known as the period of "rightly-guided caliphs" (*hulefâ-i raşîdîn*) in Sunni tradition, nor the terms of subsequent caliphs were free of intense conflict.[64]

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supreme monarchy. See Selim Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016), 26–36.

[60] In the beginning of the law-books of Buda (1541) and of Skopje and Thessaloniki (1568), Ebussuud characterized Süleyman I and Selim II as "*halîfe-i Resûl-i Rabbi'l-alemin*," "*hâizü'l imâmeti'l uzmâ*," and "*vârisu'l hilâfeti'l kübrâ*." See Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *XV ve XVIinci Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Zirai Ekonominin Hukuki ve Mali Esasları, Birinci Cilt: Kanunlar* (İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1943), 296; Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*, 104. He again claimed Süleyman's caliphate of the Prophet in a letter with the same formula, "*halîfe-i Resul-i Rabbi'l-'âlemin*." See Abdülkadir Dağlar, "Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi'nin Türkçe Mektupları" (Master's thesis, Ege Üniversitesi, 2001), 29.

In his *Tabakatu'l Memalik ve Derecatü'l Mesalik*, Celalzade gives Süleyman I and his capital Constantinople the following titles: "*Daru's-saltanatu'l aliyye hilâfetü's seniyye*" p. 92, 415, and 564, "*hilâfetü'l 'âliyy*e" p. 228, "*saltanatu's-sâmiye, hilâfetü'l 'âliyye*" 395, "*saltanatu'l-'aliyye, hilâfetü's-seniyye*" p.474, "*saltanatu'l kübrâ, hilâfetu'l uzmâ*" p. 681. In his book, the title "caliph" is mentioned hundreds of times denoting the Ottoman sultan, mostly in the form of "*hilâfet-penâh*" (the refuge of caliphate). See Funda Demirtaş, "Celâl-zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik" (PhD diss., Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2009).

[61] "Saltanat-ı seniyye-i Osmaniye, hilâfet-i kübrâ-i İslâmiye'yi haiz olarak sülale-i âl-i Osman'dan usul-i kadimesi veçhile ekber evlada aittir." See "Memâlik-i Devlet-i Osmaniyye," 3 Kanûn-ı Esâsi § (1876).

[62] İnalcık, "Appendix: The Ottomans and the Caliphate," 320; Özcan, "Hilâfet: Osmanlı Dönemi"; Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*, 103–4. Feridun Emecen traces the use of caliph as title by the Ottoman sultans since Murad I. See Emecen, "Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Hilafetine Yeni Bir Bakış," 26–36.

[63] Muslim jurists used both terms interchangeably to mean the leader of Muslim community. However, the term "imamate" is used more frequently in *fiqh* literature. See Ann K. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (London: Routledge, 2006), 5; Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 17–18; Yavuz, "Sadrıâzam Lütfi Paşa ve Osmanlı Hılâfeti," 34–35.

[64] Mustafa Fayda, "Hulefâ-yi Râşidîn," in *TDVİA*, 1998.

In Islamic history, there were several breaking points regarding the authority and position of the office of caliph. First, in 657, in the second year of Ali's reign, the Siffin War occurred between Ali and Muawiya, the governor of Syria. That war was inconclusive. After the war, while Ali continued his leadership position in today's Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula as "commander of the believers" (*amir al-Mu'minin*) for four years, Muawiya ruled over Syria and Egypt independently, though not claiming that his rule constituted a caliphate.[65] From then on until today, except for the turbulent ninety-year rule of the Umayyads, Muslims have not united under a single political authority either factually or symbolically. After the assassination of Ali, the caliphate turned into a hereditary sultanate under the Umayyads. The Abbasid family took the caliphate from the Umayyads after a major rebellion and maintained its power, to a greater or lesser extent, until the mid-tenth century.[66] From that century on, due to the Abbasid caliphs' weaknesses, a dual ruling structure emerged. In that system, politically-mighty sultans took caliphs under their protection and possessed the real ruling power. In return, caliphs provided these sultans with symbolic religious legitimacy. That era experienced the emergence of multiple independent Muslim rulers. The fractured Muslim world also saw competing dynasties claiming religious leadership of Muslims: the Abbasids in Baghdad, Fatimids in Egypt, and Umayyads in Spain.[67] The Mongol invasion of Baghdad and killing of the Abbasid

[65] John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 42; Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 20.

[66] In 945 Shiite Buyids captured Baghdad, and in 1055 the Seljuks took control of the city, repulsing the Buyids. See Hakkı Dursun Yıldız, "Abbâsîler," in *TDVİA*, 1988. Patricia Crone claims an even shorter period of effective rule for the Abbasid caliphate. She divides Abbasid rule into two: effective rule 750-861, *fainéance* 861-1258. In 861, caliph al-Mutawakkil was assassinated. See Crone, *God's Rule*, 33.

[67] In 756, Abdurrahman I established the Ummayad state in Spain. He did not claim that it was a caliphate and called himself "emir." However, at the same time, he did not recognize the Abbasid caliph. Moreover, Abdurrahman I minted coins in his own name and made Friday *khutba*s be read in his name. See Hakkı Dursun Yıldız, "Abdurrahman I," in *TDVİA*, 1988. Both of these mentions were main symbols of sovereignty for Muslim rulers. In any case, already from the start of the Abbasid caliphate there had been no political unity in the Muslim world under a single caliph in global sense.

In 909, Shiite Fatimid ruler Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi declared his caliphate independent of the Abbasids. Following him, in 929, Abdurrahman III of the Umayyads in Cordoba entitled himself caliph. Thus, already in the first half of the tenth century there were three competing caliphs in the Muslim world. The Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba was abolished in 1031 due to internal strife, and the Fatimid state collapsed in 1171. See Eymen Fuad Seyyid, "Fatîmîler," in *TDVİA*, 1995; Mehmet Özdemir, "Endülüs," in *TDVİA*, 1995.

caliph and all his family members in 1258 became another turning point in the history of the caliphate. Abu al-Kasım Ahmad, the uncle of the last caliph Aba Ahmad al-Musta'sım Billah, escaped Mongol persecution and after a brief stay in Damascus, went to Cairo. Mamluk sultan Baybars I declared Abu al-Kasım Ahmad successor of the last caliph in 1261.[68] The Ilkhanids were a major rival of the Mamluks in their claims to religious leadership of Muslims. As followers of Shiite Islam until 1317, they refused the authority of the Abbasid caliph and argued for the continuity of the imamate of the twelfth imam, the "hidden" one.[69] The mutual relation between the sultan and the caliph continued in the Mamluk sultanate until the demise of the state in 1517.

In the face of the turbulent and unsettled history of the caliphate, the Sunni legal tradition had developed several legal solutions. As early as the tenth century, there was a consensus among Sunnis that with the assassination of the fourth caliph, Ali, the period of "rightly-guided" caliphs ended. Their uniqueness was recognized as the holding of both complete political authority and competence in religious legal reasoning (*ictihad*), earning them the title of "successor of Prophet" (*khilafat al-Rasul Allah* or *khilafat al-nubuwwa*).[70] Regarding the caliphs of the Umayyads and Abbasids, Sunni theologians continued to call them "caliphs," but in the exclusive sense of *mulk*, referring to worldly kingship.[71] Thus, "caliphate" became a reference to the political leadership of the Muslim community, and ceased to have any juridical authority. Moreover, starting at the latest in the eleventh century, jurists also accepted the use of the title "caliph" by independent Muslim rulers within their domains. The conditions for a

[68] İsmail Yiğit, "Müstansır-Billâh, Ahmed b. Muhammed," in *TDVİA*, 2006.
[69] Özgür Kavak, "Memlükler Dönemi Siyaset Düşüncesine Giriş: Ahkâm-ı Sultâniye Geleneğinin İhyası ve Meşruiyet Problemini Aşma Çabaları," *İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (2020): 202–6. For the belief of occultation in Imamism, see Crone, *God's Rule*, 118–24.
[70] Crone, *God's Rule*, 225.
[71] Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 17; Crone, *God's Rule*, 224. The famous incident of the *mihna* was a major breaking point in the history of Islam in terms of the limits of caliphal authority in the post-*rashidun* period. After that incident, the religious authority of the *ulema* was established firmly. For a detailed study of the *mihna* see John P. Turner, *Inquisition in Early Islam: The Competition for Political and Religious Authority in the Abbasid Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Muslim ruler to deserve that title were that he was righteous, governed with justice, and implemented the *sharia*.[72] However, jurists in Abbasid times distinguished the interchangeable concepts of *al-imama al-kubra* / *al-imama al-'uzma* / *al khilafah al-kubra* / *al khilafah al-'uzma* from other titles. These titles referred to the single head of the "entire community of believers, the entire umma."[73] Ottoman sultans, in assuming the title of *halîfetu'l kübra* (the great caliph) in the fifteenth century, proclaimed their supreme position as the new heads of the global Muslim community. This was not a territorial claim to all the domains ruled by Muslim rulers, but a superiority claim over all Muslim monarchs.

More than merely a discursive claim to the universal caliphate, Ottomans struggled hard to materialize their superiority in the Muslim world until the last decades of the sixteenth century. As mentioned above, Selim I called his seat the "exalted caliphate" in writing to *Sheikh* Ibrahim, the khan of Shirvan; the emir of Aden swore allegiance to Selim, and Malik Ayas, governor of Diu in Gujarat, accepted Selim's position as the perfection of caliphate and sultanate.[74] During that time, the Indian Ocean became the major scene in which Selim I and then Süleyman I manifested their dual claims of world emperorship and great caliphate.[75] In

[72] Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3; İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," 67. A quite similar title to "caliph" used by post-Mongol Muslim rulers was "God's shadow" (*zill Allah*). It also denoted the ruler's obedience to *sharia* and justice in his rule. See Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 281. Recently, Hüseyin Yılmaz demonstrated the emergence and increasing popularity of mystic conceptualizations of "caliphate" among the rulers in Eurasia in the post-1258 era. See Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*. In a recent Master's thesis, Arif Erbil discussed the growth of juristic discourse in Ottoman political writing, including the question of caliphate, in the sixteenth century. See Arif Erbil, "Translation and The Growth of Juristic Discourse in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Political Writing" (Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2021).

[73] Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 17; Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 215.

[74] See footnote no. 57.

[75] There is a growing literature on Ottoman relations with Indian Ocean Muslims. My discussion here depends on these studies. See Anthony Reid, "Sixteenth-Century Turkish Influence in Western Indonesia," *Journal of South East Asian History* 10, no. 3 (December 1969): 395–414; Affan Seljuq, "Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 301–10; Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, eds., "The India Trade," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 1: 1300-1600* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Giancarlo Casale, "'His Majesty's Servant Lutfi' The Career of a Previously Unknown Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Envoy to Sumatra Based on an Account of His Travels from the Topkapı Palace Archives," *Turcica* 37 (2005): 43–81; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*; Elizabeth Lambourn, "Khutba and Muslim Networks in the Indian Ocean (Part II)- Timurid and Ottoman Engagements," in

that period, the Ottomans competed with the Portuguese over Indian Ocean trade in incessant fights until the end of the century.[76] Both maritime powers confronted each other in nearly every corner of the Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea, the Swahili cost, off Aden, the Gulf of Oman, off Mumbai and Diu, and even near Sumatra.

Together with trade, another major Ottoman concern was protecting the Hejaz from Portuguese incursions and providing security to Muslim pilgrims visiting the Ka'ba through the Indian Ocean. The Mamluks were not able to fulfill their protection role as "servitors" of Muslim Holy Sanctuaries by defending them against the Portuguese in the 1500s and were forced to ask for Ottoman military help. Bayezid II sent military support to the Mamluks defending the holiest Muslim places against Christian invaders. A Mamluk-Ottoman naval force was initially successful against the Portuguese, but was then defeated in 1508 off the coast of Mumbai and Diu.[77] The defeat was alarming news for the Mamluk state, and provided great leverage for increasing Ottoman influence. Thus, Ottoman sultans were aware of the vitality of

The Growth of Non-Western Cities: Primary and Secondary Urban Networking, ed. Kenneth Hall (Lexington Books, 2011), 55–97; İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, "Ottoman-Aceh Relations as Documented in Turkish Sources," in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly, and Anthony Reid (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 65–96; A. C. S. Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop, eds., *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

For the Ottoman policies and wars in Indian Ocean, see Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); İnalcık and Quataert, "The India Trade," 315–63; Salih Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion Toward the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century* (İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009). For that specific goal, among others, see for example Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, 179–80.

[76] They first came across in 1508 as a result of a joint Mamluk-Ottoman attack against the Portuguese. Then, in the years of 1517 (in the Red Sea, protecting Jiddah and the Hejaz from Portuguese attack), 1538, 1551, and 1555, and 1589 (the Battle of Mombasa in the Swahili cost), the Ottomans and Portuguese fought naval wars. The Ottoman military help to Acehnese Muslims against the Portuguese in the late 1560s could also be added to that list.

[77] Peacock underlines the significance of Ottoman help in promoting "the international image of Bayezid as a protector of Islam and [gaining] leverage over the crumbling Mamluk state." See Andrew Peacock, "The Ottoman Empire and the Indian Ocean," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, Asian History, 2018. Emre Cihan Muslu also claims that Ottoman naval help opened the gates of eventual Ottoman control over Mediterranean and Red Sea. See Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 46, 47, 139–40. See also Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, 115.

protecting the Hejaz and *hajj* routes both for the Muslim community overall and also for the increase of their own political power over their rivals.

The increasing influence of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean starting with the early sixteenth century created political and military tensions in maritime Asia. Several Indian Ocean Muslim states and principalities, mainly those of the Gujaratis in India and Acehnese in Sumatra, had economic goals that conflicted with those of the Portuguese and suffered from Portuguese blockage of the *hajj* route. The overlap of interests between the Ottomans and Indian Ocean Muslims created a unique occasion for mutual support and alliance. In these diplomatic and political relations, the Ottomans used their caliphate title as leverage. In return, South Asian Muslim states and principalities also aimed for the Ottoman support against internal competitors and the Portuguese, strengthening their respective positions with the backing of the caliph of Muslims. For example, after exchanges of envoys in the early 1560s, in 1565 the ruler of Aceh, Ali Ala al-din Ri'ayat Syah, declared his allegiance to Süleyman I as the universal caliph and asked for military help against the Portuguese. Selim II, the successor of Süleyman I, responded with a large military force including two war ships, canons, expert gunners, and gunsmiths.[78] In a letter to the king of Portugal dated September 1564, Süleyman I had written threateningly that he possessed the "caliphate of the world" (*hilâfet-i ru-i zemin*) and that people of the East and the West were under the shadow of his state.[79] By protecting not only *hajj* traffic, but also

[78]Seljuq, "Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago," 305–6; Casale, "'His Majesty's Servant Lutfi' The Career of a Previously Unknown Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Envoy to Sumatra Based on an Account of His Travels from the Topkapı Palace Archives," 53–55; Göksoy, "Ottoman-Aceh Relations as Documented in Turkish Sources," 68–80.

[79] Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion Toward the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century*, 357, 137. The letter is located in Ottoman archives, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 5-161, p. 70. The exact statement in Turkish reads, "Şimdiki halde, hilâfet-i ru-i zemin, kabza-i tasarruf ve iktidarımızda olup, Şark ve Garbın reayası cenah-ı devletimizle mustazil olup"

Muslim states in other parts of the world, the Ottoman sultans of the sixteenth century enjoyed a full-fledged universal caliphate.[80]

Moreover, the Ottomans inherited *khutba* networks in the Indian Ocean that had existed long before the sixteenth century. In these networks, smaller states declared allegiance to larger ones by pronouncing the name of the ruler of the larger state in Friday *khutba*s. Elizabeth Lambourn argues that several Muslim polities in the Indian Ocean, like in Calicut, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka, accepted the Ottoman universal caliphate via these *khutba* networks, and in return, they received military equipment and support, and political protection from the sultan.[81] A *Mühimme* register from 1576 demonstrated that the Ottoman Sublime Porte purposefully fostered *khutba* networks in the Indian Ocean by aiding Calicut mosques with annual gifts of cash, and in return, Friday *khutba*s were preached in the name of the Ottoman sultan.[82]

Ottoman expansionist policies coupled with this developing universal caliphate manifested itself in the far north-east of Ottoman territory, too. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Muscovites expanded their territories, and in alliance with the Nogais, Cossacks, and Circassians incorporated Astrakhan into their domains in 1556, defeating the Crimean Tatars under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. With that expansion, the Russians posed a major political and economic threat to the Ottomans from the north and northeast.[83] Moreover, as Uzbek and Khiva khans complained to Ottoman sultan, the Russian tsar did not allow the passage of Central Asian pilgrims from Astrakhan, the traditional stopover for Central Asian

[80] Anthony Reid underlines the unification of the Rum identity and possession of Mecca by the Ottoman dynasty as a uniquely critical factor in the Southeast Asian acceptance of the Ottoman universal caliphate. Anthony Reid, "Rum and Jawa: The Vicissitudes of Documenting a Long-Distance Relationship," in *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia*, ed. Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.
[81] Lambourn, "Khutba and Muslim Networks in the Indian Ocean (Part II)- Timurid and Ottoman Engagements."
[82] Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 147–48.
[83] Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlı-Rus Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don-Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü (1569)," *Belleten* 7, no. 46 (April 1948): 361–62.

pilgrims on their way to Mecca.[84] This blockage was a direct challenge to the universal caliphate of the Ottoman sultan, who was obliged to protect *hajj* routes in accordance with his authority as the *hâdimu'l Haremeyn*. To extirpate that problem completely, the Porte decided to open a canal between the Don and Volga rivers, thus enabling the passage of Ottoman ships from the Black Sea to Azov.[85] If it had succeeded, the Ottomans would have established their firm control over the Volga delta, including the strategic city of Astrakhan. That expansion would have also been to the great advantage of the Ottomans in their wars against the Safavids, especially regarding the Caucasus. Besides the political aspect of the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, Central Asian pilgrims and merchants had troublesome journeys along Safavid territory, and sent their complaints to the Ottoman sultan regarding the difficulties of that route due to the hostility of Safavid authorities to Sunni pilgrims and tradesmen. The Don-Volga canal would have allowed Central Asian pilgrims a safe and direct maritime connection between Astrakhan and Suez, free from the troubles created by the Russians and the Safavids.[86] However, the Ottoman expedition in 1569 to dig the canal and capture Astrakhan failed due to physical hardship, lack of sufficient technology, environmental problems, and also the probable reluctance of the Crimean khanate.

Regardless of its failure, the Ottoman attempt to expand into the gates of Central Asia by referring to its caliphate status showed the centrality of the concept of the universal caliphate for Ottoman ideals of global hegemony. In his affirmative reply to the khan of Khiva informing the latter of the Ottoman expedition to Astrakhan, Selim II did not miss referring to his caliphal

[84] İnalcık, 367–69; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj Under the Ottomans 1517-1683* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 140–41.

[85] Together with İnalcık's article, Akdes Nimet Kurat's article is significant on that project, especially in terms of his critiques of İnalcık's article. See Akdes Nimet Kurat, "The Turkish Expedition to Astrakhan' in 1569 and the Problem of the Don-Volga Canal," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 40, no. 94 (1961): 7–23.

[86] It should be added here that at the same time as the Don-Volga canal project, Sokollu was engaged in another canal project: the Suez Canal connecting the Mediterranean and Red Sea. Both of these canals would have enabled the direct maritime connection between Astrakhan and Jiddah, as they connect both cities today after the opening of both canals in 1952 and 1869 respectively. The Suez Canal project failed before it started due to the technical incapabilities of the time. See Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 135–37.

authority.[87] Overall, Ottoman sultans of the sixteenth century, starting with Selim I, struggled to implement a universal caliphate, both symbolically and politically, over the entire global Muslim community, similar to that enjoyed by the caliphs of early Islamic history.

E. The Ottoman Caliphate from the late Sixteenth to the mid-Eighteenth Century

Ottoman presence in the Indian Ocean started to fade as of the last decades of the sixteenth century.[88] Ottoman withdrawal from the Indian Ocean was not peculiar to that area, but a consequence of a broader shift from an expansionist perspective to a more settled policy.[89] The main reason for that shift was the Porte's gradual recognition of its physical limits and the impossibility of the task of subduing all contenders for world emperorship, from the Habsburg emperors to the Safavid shahs. The technologies of war and governance in the early modern era did not allow the Ottoman Empire to expand its territories beyond a certain point.[90] Kafadar draws attention to the similar distances of Vienna, Podolia, Tabriz, Baghdad, and Cairo from Constantinople as a demonstration of the "natural borders" of the premodern Ottoman Empire.[91]

As a result of that political shift, the Porte turned its gaze inward and aimed to reinforce Ottoman sovereignty in the wider Middle East area over which it ruled. This reinforcement required the creation of a legitimizing discourse that would have constituted Ottoman soft power. The Ottoman scholarly elite of the sixteenth century quickly incorporated that new position into the official discourse. The main aim of that discourse was establishing the Ottoman

[87] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 7-2723, Ramazan 975 (February 29th – March 29th, 1568).

[88] Isaac Donoso, "The Ottoman Caliphate and Muslims of the Philippine Archipelago during the Early Modem Era," in *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia,* ed. Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 121–46; Peacock, "The Ottoman Empire and the Indian Ocean"; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 180–203.

[89] For several studies on this shift, among others, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire,* 286–87; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration,* 152–79; Atçıl, "State and Government in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Ottoman Empire," 129–84.

[90] Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition 1972,* 69–72; Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," 45. Regarding the Ottoman limits in the Indian Ocean, Salih Özbaran shows in a detailed way the structural barriers Ottomans were not able to overcome in the sixteenth century. See Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion Toward the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century*.

[91] Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," 45.

sultan as the sole political and religious authority so firmly that no room remained for contenders from inside or outside.

In his *Ahlâk-ı ʿAlâʾî*, written in 1564, Kınalızade Ali, a high-ranking Ottoman jurist, *kadıasker* of Anatolia, and a famous writer, characterized the Ottoman realm as a "virtuous city" (*medîne-i fâzıla*), as opposed to the kind of "errant city" (*medîne-i dâlle*) neighboring the Ottoman Empire.[92] Then, he divided the "errant city" into two types: "infidel errant" (*dâlle-i kâfire*) and "heretic errant" (*dâlle-i gayri kâfire*). The examples he gave for the "infidel errant city" were the Europeans (*Efrenc*) and the Russians (*Rus*). The example for the latter was Safavids (*Surh-ser tâifesi*), who had deviated from the straight path and become corrupt (*mezâhib-i fâside*). With regard to the ruler of the virtuous city, Kınalızade asserted that: "Know that the administrator of the virtuous city is the righteous imam (*imâm-ı hak*) and the absolute caliph (*halîfe-i mutlak*), and his governance (*hükûmet*) is imamate and caliphate, and its purpose is to perfect people's souls and provide means of happiness."[93]

Kınalızade's depiction provided the Ottoman sultan's authority with the utmost discursive protection. It isolated the vast Ottoman territories and their "perfectly legitimate" ruler from other Sunni competitors via insurmountable religio-political and environmental walls. According to his formulation, the "well-protected" Ottoman domains (*memâlik-i mahrûse*) were encircled by Christians in the West and in the North, and by heretics in the East. Even though he does not mention them, the physical walls of the Saharan Desert in Africa and

[92] Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 151–52. The debate on the "virtuous city" was an old discussion in medieval Islamic political philosophy, as seen in the works of Farabi, Davvani, and Tusi.

It is also suggestive that Kınalızade penned the book nine years after the Amasya Treaty (1555) that ended Ottoman-Safavid military conflicts lasted four decades. The Amasya Treaty marked the Ottoman acceptance that it cannot conquer Iran and overthrow the Safavid dynasty completely. For two recent and thorough studies on how Amasya Treaty was a turning point in the eastern foreign policy of the Porte, see, Zahit Atçıl, "Warfare as a Tool of Diplomacy: Background of the First Ottoman-Safavid Treaty in 1555," *Turkish Historical Review* 10, no. 1 (June 7, 2019): 3–24; Zahit Atçıl, "The Foundation of Peace-Oriented Foreign Policy in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in *Diplomatic Cultures at the Ottoman Court, c.1500–1630*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Christopher Markiewicz (New York: Routledge, 2021).

[93] Translation belongs to Hüseyin Yılmaz. See Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 155.

the Indian Ocean bordered the southern parts of Ottoman territories geographically. In this sense, Ottoman domains resembled ancient Egypt, which was well-protected against enemies through its isolation behind geographical barriers of sea and desert.

I argue that it was this *isolation*, in turn, that provided Ottoman rulers the ultimate *monopoly* within that large region, which was practically an "Ottoman" Muslim world. The claim to the universal caliphate made by Ottoman sultans had occupied a central place in both isolation and monopoly. Despite using it in a regional context, Ottoman sultans continued to maintain their claim to universal caliphate. Thus, while the symbolic meaning of "caliphate" retained its global character, in practice it worked regionally in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and, critically, it was this global symbolic significance that made the caliphate work regionally. The global claim enabled the sultans to protect both their dynastic sovereignty and Ottoman domains by delegitimizing opposing Sunni rulers. The way the Ottoman exercised a monopoly over some Muslim scholars, mostly Turkish-speakers, after the conquests of major Islamic lands is shown by Abdurrahman Atçıl.[94] There was a similar monopolistic mechanism at work against possible challengers to the Ottoman dynasty within their territory. Ottoman scholar-bureaucrats deemed those rulers who did not obey the sultan juridically rebels (*bâğî*) against the legitimate Supreme Imam of the age.

Starting in the late sixteenth century, the caliphate functioned as (1) a guarantee of the incontestability of Ottoman power in a vast geography from the western Mediterranean to the borders of Iran and from Crimea to Yemen; (2) a tool for convincing Muslim populations on Ottoman borders to help defend the Empire; (3) and a justification for territorial expansion into

[94] Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. He argues that after Selim I's conquests of Arab lands, the Ottoman sultan became the only Sunni provider of patronage to religious scholars. That situation made it so difficult for religious scholars to change their dynastic patronage compared to the easiness that had existed in the earlier periods due to the multiplicity of available options in nearby geography. He further contends that the Ottoman monopoly over political patronage resulted in an easier incorporation of religious scholars into the Ottoman enterprise and identification of them with the Ottoman dynasty.

other Muslim domains. Importantly, when at work, the second and third functions reinforced the first.

From the perspective of Constantinople, there were three major powers and one middle-scale regional state in the Islamic world in the early modern era: the Safavids in Persia, Mughals in India, and Uzbeks in Central Asia. Moroccan rulers controlled a limited area in the northwestern corner of the African continent and were relatively less powerful. These states were in sufficient proximity to threaten Ottoman territories and challenge the Ottoman sultan's claims to political and religious superiority, directly or indirectly. Among them, only the "heretic" Safavids did not pose a religio-political alternative to the universal caliphate of the Ottoman sultan, due to the dominance of Sunnis in the Muslim world. Moreover, the Safavid shahs recognized the Ottoman sultan as the universal caliph from 1639 on.[95] The Porte maintained its relations with the remaining Muslim states always in suspicion, considering them potential rivals in the struggle for religio-political supremacy in the Muslim world throughout the early modern period. Ottoman reactions to challenges from Sunni powers suggest that two main features of a given contender's potential to threaten the Empire determined the Porte's policy with respect to them: physical distance and actual and potential power. Based on the perceived risk, the Ottomans employed either hard policy tools, not excluding the option of war, or peaceful methods, nevertheless insisting on their exalted caliphate status.

In the following chapters, I argue that the Ottoman-Afghan and Ottoman-Nadir wars in the first half of the eighteenth century occurred within such a context. As reviewed above, modern scholarship deals with the conflict in the 1720s as an exceptional case in the broader Ottoman caliphate idea. My analysis sets itself apart from earlier studies on Ottoman-Persian

[95] Selim Güngörürler, "Islamic Discourse in Ottoman-Safavid Peacetime Diplomacy after 1049/1639," in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

conflicts. The fact that contestations about the caliphate turned into military clashes only in the post-1722 period does not mean that competition to be recognized as the supreme caliph was absent in the rest of the early modern period. Competition had existed throughout the early modern era, but not at a level sufficient to ignite war. What was exceptional about the post-1722 period was the closeness of the threat, as opposed to the earlier competition with more remote powers. In 1722, the Shiite wall protecting the empire's eastern borders fell, and the isolation of the "well-protected" domains was broken for the first time. The replacement of the Safavids with Sunni Afghans caused a serious challenge to the Ottoman claim to the universal caliphate, and had serious internal repercussions.

In the discussion below, I examine several cases showcasing the ways in which the Ottomans operationalized their universal caliphate claim in their regional politics until the 1720s.

E.1. Political Functions of the Ottoman Universal Caliphate in the Early Modern World

Here, I will first investigate Ottoman-Moroccan competition for the title of universal caliphate in the early modern era. Then, I will discuss the competition between Ottoman and Mughal rulers. Lastly, I will examine the Ottoman mobilization of the Dagestanis and Shirvanis, Sunni powers outside the Ottoman domain, for Ottoman wars using the rhetoric of performing *jihad* under the exalted caliph.

E.1.1. Ottoman-Moroccan Competition

Ottoman-Moroccan political relations began soon after the establishment of the Sa'di dynasty (1549-1659) in Morocco. The 'Alawi dynasty (1659-present) replaced the Sa'dis in the mid-seventeenth century. The Moroccans and Ottomans fought several times between the mid-sixteenth century and the late 1580s. However, neither could Ottomans take control of Morocco nor were Sa'di rulers able to extend their territories at the expense of Ottoman lands in North Africa. Thus, the late sixteenth century witnessed the halting of Ottoman imperial expansion in North Africa, as well. The geographical distance between Constantinople and Morocco was a

major factor behind the cessation of Ottoman expansion. From then on, the Porte's main strategy became to confine Morocco to the North African corner by means of the Ottoman stronghold in Algeria, so that Moroccan claims to the universal caliphate could never have been supported by any actual political power that could have endangered Ottoman sovereignty in the Arab world, including the Hejaz region.[96]

The rivalry over claims to the universal caliphate between the Ottoman and Sa'di dynasties started as early as 1548. Süleyman I asked Sa'di al-Shaykh (r. 1544-1557) to deliver the *khutba* and mint coins in the Ottoman sultan's name.[97] In response, al-Shaykh characterized Süleyman as "the sultan of the fishermen and skiffs" (*sultan al-hawwâta*, *sultan al-qawarib*). Similar contestations continued in the reigns of the following Moroccan and Ottoman sultans. Toward the close of the century, Moroccan ruler Mawlay Ahmad al-Mansur tried to unify western Africa under his "rightful" universal caliphate and made an important move in this direction by overthrowing the Songhai Empire in 1591. Al-Mansur challenged the Ottoman sultan directly by asserting that he was the only rightful caliph, since no other sultan but himself was Qurayshi by being a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.[98]

With the establishment of central authority in Morocco by the 'Alawi dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century, Moroccan-Ottoman regional fights began again. In the 1680s, Mawlay Ismail (r. 1672-1727) expelled the Spaniards and the English from Al-Ma'mura, Larache, and Tangier. With that success he became the leading figure of *jihad* against the Europeans in the North Africa.[99] At the same time, the Ottomans were engaged in one of the

[96]El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 150–55.
[97] El Moudden, 58–59.
[98] Stephen Cory, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph: A Sixteenth-Century Sultan's Bid for an African Empire," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 179–200; El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 131–39. For a late sixteenth-century comparison of the caliphate claims of the Ottoman and Sa'di dynasties by a Sa'di ambassador to Murad III in 1589, 1590, see El Moudden, 61. The Moroccan ambassador depicts the Ottomans as protectors of Muslims, but only under higher authorities, and Sa'di sultans were presented as the only legitimate universal rulers, as "imams" and "caliphs" due their Qurayshi lineage.
[99] El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 194.

most difficult wars in their history, against the Holy League. Taking advantage of Ottoman preoccupation on the western front, France attacked Algiers several times in the 1680s.[100] The Moroccans and Tunisians also assaulted Algiers to weaken Ottoman power as much as possible. However, the Algerian-France military conflicts ended with a peace treaty in 1690. That peace was followed by a major Ottoman-Moroccan war between 1692 and 1701, at a time when Constantinople needed the help of its North African provinces against the Europeans most. In that occasion, France even promised to support the Moroccan sultan Mawlay Ismail in his fight against the Ottomans and to make him the ruler of the entirety of North Africa by expelling the Ottomans from Egypt as well.[101] At the end of the nine-year war, the Ottomans had the upper hand, despite being seriously impacted.[102]

Just as had been the case for the Sa'dis, the 'Alawi dynasty's central legitimating discourse was their status as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, at the outset. The 'Alawi sultans entitled themselves caliphs and "*amir al-Mu'minin*" (commander of the faithful), reinforcing their authority in Morocco and possibly beyond.[103] Mawlay Ismail's continuous wars with Ottoman Algiers were a great concern for the Porte. This conflict seriously endangered the above-mentioned two priorities of Constantinople: maintaining the strength of the Ottoman provinces in North Africa against both the Moroccans and the Europeans. Mawlay Ismail's claim to rule the rightful caliphate, as opposed to the Ottoman sultan's caliphate, exacerbated the crisis, from the viewpoint of the Porte.

[100] During the reign of Louis XIV, France bombarded Algerian coastal cities in 1681, 1683, and 1688. See John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (London: Longman, 1999), 171–74; Geoffrey Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power, 1688-1697: From the Guerre d'escadre to the Guerre de Course* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 72, 74.
[101] El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 200.
[102] El Moudden, 197–212.
[103] El Moudden, 156–57 and 175–76; Fatima Rhorchi, "Consolidating Authority in Seventeenth-Century Morocco, Sultan Moulay Ismail's Strategies for Legitimacy," in *Dynastic Change, Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Monarchy* (Routledge, 2020), 208–10.

In 1697, Ottoman *padishah* Mustafa II sent a strongly worded letter to Mawlay Ismail that highlighted how the Ottoman universal caliphate worked.[104] First, the sultan wrote that God had sent just people to earth in every era in order to protect His religion. Quoting the several distinguishing qualities of these just men from Prophetic traditions, he argued that the Ottoman dynasty had proven that its members were the "just men" of their respective times. He underlined the following characteristics of Ottoman sultans to deserve that privileged status: upholding justice according to the *sharia*, following the *sunnah* of the Prophet vigorously, oppressing the oppressors, and protecting their subjects. Then, Mustafa II asserted that in defending the territory of Islam fervently, "the foreheads of Pharaohs were begrimed on our threshold."[105] After that, he presented his status as supreme sultan (*saltanatu'l uzmâ*) and caliph. He claimed that protecting religion was on the shoulders of the Ottomans and that God had chosen them to make religion manifest. By referring to the Ottoman successes in 1695-1697 against the Austrians, he argued that the Ottomans were still fulfilling their religious responsibility and engaging in victorious *jihad* against the allied unbelievers (*küffar*).

After that self-presentation and praising, Mustafa II directly addressed Mawlay Ismail, whom he characterized only as "noble *sharif*" (*al-sayyid al-sharif*). First, the Ottoman sultan underlined that it was Satan's way to contradict God's orders by following worldly desires, and that action required punishment. He expressed the importance of mutual support among Muslims and the harms of conflict, quoting the Qur'an and several *hadith*s. Mustafa II condemned unfriendliness toward holy warriors as a sign of ignorance that could lead to the breaking of the unity of Muslims. He qualified the sultan, meaning himself, as the heart and the all world as his body. Then, he asserted that

[104] BOA, A.DVNSNMH 7-103, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelahir 1108 (January 5th-14th, 1697), pp. 256-62.
[105] Translation belongs to El Moudden. See El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 167. His reference to Pharaohs seems quite significant. By this, Mustafa II implied that he had even subdued the rulers who were at the level of North Africa's strongest rulers ever. Thus, it was a warning and threat to Mawlay Ismail reminding him of his status and urging him not to move further.

> If a group of those who profess the unity of God (*muvahhidin*) separate from the party of the holy warriors, they become renegades... and violators of the orders of the Lord of the universe. Then, the saying of the seal of Messengers: "He who deceives us does not belong with us" perfectly applies to them. This [separating] will strengthen the enemies of religion, may God save us and you from the wrath of the lord of the universe.[106]

Then, he again accused Mawlay Ismail, indirectly, of being a hypocrite and following worldly desires and interests.

After that, Mustafa II threatened Mawlay Ismail and blamed him directly for the Moroccan conflicts with the Algerians. He wrote that the Moroccans had prevented Ottoman Algerians from performing *jihad* against the Europeans. If they did not stop, the sultan wrote, then Ottoman soldiers would have to crush the Moroccans terribly. He reminded Mawlay Ismail that the Moroccans should have helped the Algerians in this holy fight. Since they had not, he warned, they were responsible for the outbreak of dissension (*fitna*) among Muslims; he then quoted a *hadith* cursing those who woke dissension.

Mustafa II also used Mawlay Ismail's noble genealogy against him. Following the Prophetic tradition on dissension, he asked, rhetorically: "Hence, how can a reasonable [man], let alone a noble sharif whose substance was kneaded with the water of revelation and whose seed was implanted in the soil of prophethood, and who is the descendent of his highness the Prophet, indulge in stirring up discord?"[107] Mustafa II stressed that in the hereafter, no genealogy would protect one against God's punishment.[108]

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[106] Translation belongs to El Moudden. See El Moudden, 168–69. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH 7-103, pp. 259-60.
[107] Translation belongs to El Moudden. See El Moudden, 170. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH 7-103, p. 261.
[108] Comparing the uses of genealogy as a superiority sign in Ottoman dynastic rhetoric in different contexts yields interesting results. In 1485, a Mamluk envoy named Janibak came to Bayezid II's court in Constantinople. One of the members of the sultan's entourage asked the envoy challengingly: "Who are you [the Mamluks] to rule over the Holy Places, you sons of Infidels? This rule (or land) is more proper for our sultan, [since] he is the sons of the sultans and the sultans." Clearly, that question implied the slave origins of the Mamluk sultans, and thus, their inferiority before the Ottoman dynasty. Janibak replied rhetorically by asking: "Who was the father of our prophet İbrahim and Prophet Muhammad?" Translations belong to Emre Cihan Muslu. See Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 126–27. According to the Qur'an, Abraham's father was a sculptor

The Ottoman sultan also accused the Moroccan sultan of being envious. He claimed that the Ottomans and their governors in Algiers were righteous both in deed and action. Toward the end of the letter, Mustafa II warned Mawlay Ismail to "not distract those of the people of Algiers who come [to wage] jihad in order to make victorious the community of Muhammad! [*ummat-i Muhammad*]"[109] The letter ends with similar Ottoman threats should the Moroccan ruler not comply with the Porte's demands.

Mustafa II's letter is one of the clearest examples of the ways in which the Ottoman universal caliphate functioned politically in the regional context. The Ottoman religio-political discourse toward Morocco was as follows: The Ottoman dynasty was the supreme political authority in the Muslim world. Ottoman sultans earned that superiority by centuries of following *sharia* strictly, establishing justice in their domains, and fighting in the name of Islam against infidels. Though descendants of Prophet, Moroccan rulers ranked below the Ottoman sultan, who was the universal caliph. Moroccan rulers stood in the way of *jihad* against infidels by fighting against Ottoman Algiers. For a Muslim ruler to prevent the Ottomans from holy war was the worst possible crime. Instead, all Muslims should have joined the holy war under the commandership of the Ottoman sultan, who was the heart of the world.

Another critical point to be noted about this letter was that Mustafa II defined the Ottoman dynasty and state in a detailed way, presenting the main pillars of Ottoman sovereignty and alleged paramountcy. This kind of self-definition is rare in royal epistles; the Ottomans preferred to manifest their grandeur through virtual symbols and superior epithets, rather than

making idols. Thus, the envoy meant that even the apex of humanity according to Islam came from that kind of origin. Accordingly, what mattered was not genealogy, but one's own deeds and actions.

However, in Ottoman-Moroccan relations, the Ottoman sultan shifted the sides in a similar genealogy discussion. This time, it was the Ottomans who highlighted the importance of deeds and downplayed genealogy. As I will explore in the coming chapters, debates on genealogy resurfaced again in the Porte's relations with the Afghans and Nadir. Each time, not surprisingly, the Ottoman sultans took the position that would serve best their claim to higher genealogical status than that of their contenders.

[109] Translation belongs to El Moudden. See El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 170–71. I added the Arabic wording of the "community of Muhammad" from the original letter. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH 7-103, p. 262.

expressing it openly. That imperial reflex is similar to the Porte's attitude of not opening the Ottoman dynasty's right to the universal caliphate for discussion.[110] Overt expressions appeared occasionally and signaled the precariousness of the Porte's foreign affairs in the situations in which they appeared. Similar declarations of Ottoman self-definitions were seen in the 1720s and 1730s against the Afghan and Nadir challenges. The fact that the Porte felt the need to express its self-defined status openly in all these instances was an indication of the perilousness of the perceived foreign threat to Constantinople.

The Ottoman use of its caliphate status against the Moroccan challenge did not stay at the rhetorical level. About four months after the letter, the Porte sent an imperial order to the governor of Egypt.[111] That order summarized the actions of Mawlay Ismail: Christian kings were united and had been attacking Muslim lands for years; unacceptably, Moroccan ruler Mawlay Ismail had been assaulting Algerians who were going to *jihad* against the Venetians. Mawlay Ismail was a Muslim and, due to the principle of religious unity, he should have actually supported Muslims fighting against polytheists. Instead, he chose to support polytheists by attacking Muslims. Thus, he had become a rebel (*bâğî*)[112] and his punishment became an urgent issue.

The Porte ordered the governor of Egypt to take three consecutive steps. First, he should call together that year's Moroccan pilgrims, including the head of the *hajj* caravan (*emiru'l hac*), the notables (*'ayan*), and the descendants of the Prophet (*eşrâf*). Then, he should tell them that Mawlay Ismail was attacking Algiers and thereby helping polytheists. Second, the governor

[110] The exaltedness of the Ottoman dynasty and its symbolic manifestation was embedded in Ottoman imperial culture. For various implementations of it, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis*, Pre-Modern Islamic Palaces, 23 (1993): 303–6.

[111] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 110-125, Evail-i Zilkade 1108 (May 22nd-31st, 1697).

[112] The Porte accused Afghan Ashraf using the same argument in 1726. With the term of "*bâğî*," the Ottoman sultan also meant that the Fas ruler was under him and should have obeyed his decisions. Mawlay Ismail's non-obedience to the Ottoman sultan rendered him a rebel, in the Porte's view. And the Porte used that *bâğî* discourse in delegitimizing Mawlay Ismail, who was also claiming to rule the universal caliphate based on his Qurayshi lineage.

should add that if Mawlay Ismail continued to act in this way, no Moroccan pilgrims and merchants would be allowed to enter the Hejaz, and, furthermore, Ottoman authorities would confiscate their goods and even imprison them. Lastly, the governor of Egypt was ordered to start military preparations, targeting Morocco together with Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis, to free the country altogether from the hands of the rebellious Mawlay Ismail.

The Porte's political move using the *hajj* card was an exceptional one. It captured the close interrelation between the status of caliphate and that of being the servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries. Constantinople aimed to utilize the propaganda opportunity of possessing the Hejaz as a public diplomacy weapon to undermine Mawlay Ismail's operations against Algiers, and even his legitimacy in Morocco. Banning a country's pilgrims from performing the *hajj* due to the alleged treachery of their rulers to Islam in siding with Christians against the caliph of Muslims would have been a serious charge for any Muslim ruler to make.

Though not actualized, Mustafa II also declared his right to annex Moroccan lands, since their ruler had rebelled against the exalted caliph. Thus, the Porte clearly showed that, if needed, the caliphate status already provided the Ottomans the right to conquer other Muslim lands legitimately. As I discuss in Chapter Three, the Ottomans similarly justified their first incursions into Persian lands in 1722 by appeal to their caliphate position.[113]

After 1701, Mawlay Ismail did not repeat his aggressive policy against the Ottomans until his death in 1727. His death was followed by a struggle for the throne between his several sons. In 1729, Mawlay 'Abd Allah, son of Mawlay Ismail, finally sat on the Moroccan throne. He ruled between 1729 and 1757, and, during that period, he was deposed more than five times and was able to return to power each time. Moroccan chronicles named the thirty-year period

[113] Critically, as of 1722, the Ottoman empire recognized the Safavids as Muslim, rather than heretics. Only in the summer of 1723 did the Ottomans declare the Safavids heretics and declare official war on them. Thus, any possible Ottoman attack against Iran before the summer of 1723 was justified on the caliphate pretext and protecting Muslims. I discuss these questions in Chapters Three and Four.

between 1727 and 1757 the "interregnum" (*fatra*) period.[114] It was during this period of weakness that Moroccan rulers accepted the superiority of the Ottoman sultans for the first time. Mawlay 'Abd Allah sent a letter to Mahmud I both to congratulate Mahmud on his ascension to the throne and to inform the latter of his own enthronement in Meknes, the capital of Morocco.[115] Mawlay 'Abd Allah continued to call himself "caliph," but he underlined the caliphate of Mahmud I more than his own and clearly accepted the superior position of the Ottoman sultan. He accepted Mahmud I as the "*amir al-Mu'minin*," like himself, and added that "We heard from our father that the caliphate remained pure and the blessing full nowhere but in the house of 'Uthman."[116] Moreover, Mawlay 'Abd Allah resembled Ottoman sultans to crown and other sultans to head, indicating a superior place to the Ottomans. Finally, he even wrote that he made Friday *khutba*s and religious feast prayers to be read in the name of the Ottoman sultan, claiming that he was continuing his father's practice in doing so.[117] Whether it was true or not, this statement was a clear indicator of Mawlay 'Abd Allah's recognition of Mahmud I as the great caliph, when he himself still occupied the office of caliph in the sense of ruling with *sharia* in his own territory. In his response, Ahmed III started directly with his caliphate title[118] and called his seat "caliphate" twice in the short letter, qualifying it as the "throne of caliphate and world-protection" (*evreng-i hilâfet ve cihân-bânî*). Moreover, the Ottoman sultan continued the centuries-old policy of recognizing Morocco's occupation of a lower place than that of the Ottomans by calling the Moroccan ruler "*hâkim*" (lord, prince) and his territory a "*imâret-meâb*" (princedom) instead of "sultan" and "sultanate."

[114] El Moudden, "The Idea of the Caliphate between Moroccans and Ottomans: Political and Symbolic Stakes in the 16th and 17th Century-Maghrib," 223–25.
[115] BOA, A.DVNSMH 7-162, pp. 247-48. See also its summary/translation, BOA, A.DVNSNMH 7- 183, p. 277, Receb 1143 (January 10th – February 8th, 1731).
[116] Translation belongs to El Moudden. See El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 228. See BOA, A.DVNSMH 7-162, p. 247.
[117] BOA, A.DVNSMH 7-162, p. 248.
[118] BOA, A.DVNSMH 7-163, pp. 248-49, Evahir-i Muharrem 1144 (July 26th – August 4th, 1731).

Mawlay ‘Abd Allah’s letter in 1731 represented a turning point in the state of Moroccan-Ottoman relations as they had existed since the mid-sixteenth century. It is also significant that his acceptance of the Ottoman exalted caliphate coincided with the Afghan ruler Ashraf’s recognition of the same Ottoman superiority.[119] It is probable that the Porte was more demanding of Moroccan acceptance of the Ottoman sultan’s superiority at a time when the Afghans were forcefully challenging the sultan’s authority. Mawlay ‘Abd Allah’s political weakness during the competition for the Moroccan throne could be a reason for his acceptance of Mahmud I as the great caliph. Regardless of these specific reasons, it is important to see that after centuries-long contestations, in the second quarter of the eighteenth century the superiority claims of the Ottoman dynasty had finally been accepted by the Moroccan rulers.

Remoteness was a major determinant in Ottoman-Moroccan relations, as expressed by both parties. The Ottomans did not directly intervene in Morocco’s affairs after the 1580s, with the realization of the impossibility of establishing Ottoman control in the western corner of North Africa. However, the Sublime Porte always persisted in articulating its superior position over the Moroccan rulers, and Ottoman sultans never accepted the Moroccan claims to be a legitimate caliphate on the basis of their Qurayshi lineage. Over these centuries, the Moroccans did not pose a substantial challenge to Ottoman territories or to the Ottoman sultans’ claim to universal caliphate, due to their own weakness and also their physical remoteness. Ottoman non-involvement was nevertheless a watchful stance, and, as seen in the conflicts with Mawlay Ismail, the Porte effectively employed different sorts of military, diplomatic, and religious tools to block the Moroccans.

[119] Since I did not do extensive research on Ottoman-Moroccan relations, I do not have an explanation for this radical policy change on the part of the Moroccans.

E.1.2. Ottoman-Mughal Competition

The Mughal empire was founded by a Timurid prince, Babur (r. 1526-1530), in 1526 in Northern India. With the conquests of Babur and his successors, the Mughals captured the subcontinent almost entirely within a few generations. The empire became one of the largest and wealthiest entities in the early modern world over a short time span. The physical distance between the Mughal and Ottoman realms prevented consistent political and diplomatic interaction, although, diplomacy continued sporadically throughout the centuries.

Competition over political supremacy defined Ottoman-Mughal relations, more than anything else.[120] First of all, the Mughal lineage going back to Timur and Chinggis was superior to that of the Ottoman dynasty. The Mughals actively propagandized their genealogy, declaring that there was no other dynasty above theirs.[121] Timur's historic defeat of Bayezid I in 1402 was another source of Mughal boasting of supremacy over the Ottomans.[122] However, Ottoman possession of Holy Sanctuaries gave the Ottomans an important edge in the claim to hold the universal caliphate, and thus superiority over other Muslim monarchs. Both sides claimed the status of supreme caliphate for centuries and denied the other party's claim to that title. As was the case with Ottoman-Moroccan relations, sectarian commonality was not a source of political alliance and unity, but conversely of conflict and competition.

[120] Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 163–65. Maya Petrovich criticizes Naimur Rahman Farooqi for neglecting the contentious aspect of Mughal-Ottoman relations and depicting conflicts only as incidental. I think Petrovich's is not a fair representation of Farooqi's arguments. As can be clearly seen in Farooqi's conclusion, besides in the chapters of his work, Farooqi ranks competition over lineage and caliphate as two structural elements causing antagonistic relation between the Ottomans and Mughals. He also underlines that sectarian unity between them fostered competition, rather than solidarity.

[121] Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 318–19, 393. For a recent study on the centrality of the "superior" Timurid genealogy in the Mughal ruling tradition, see Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern Central Asia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012).

[122] Lisa Balabanlilar, "Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction: Turco-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (2007): 9; Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 320.

Specifically on the caliphate question, the rivalry between Ottomans and Mughals for paramountcy among Muslim rulers started with Humayun (r. 1530-1556), if not with Babur.[123] We do not have reliable primary sources on Mughal-Ottoman relations during the turbulent reign of Humayun (r. 1530-1556).[124] However, Mughal chronicles and Humayun's letter to Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat provided important information regarding his particular superiority claims. Official chronicles qualified Humayun as the "most glorious of all kings of the world" and the "exalter of the throne of the great caliphate." In his letter to the Gujarati sultan, Humayun reminded him of the fate of Bayezid I, whom the Mughal emperor accused of being stubborn and non-compliant with the demands of his ancestor Timur. Humayun recommended the sultan not repeat Bayezid's mistake.[125] Humayun's son Akbar (r. 1556-1605), who increased the size and power of the state remarkably, inscribed on gold coins his status as "the great sultan, the supreme caliph" (*al-sultân al-'âli, al-khalîfa al-muta'ali*). Akbar received an authorization from Mughal jurists documenting his competence in legal reasoning (*ictihad*). As discussed above, that competence was the main distinguishing characteristic of the first four caliphs in Sunni tradition. He called himself the "commander of faithful" (*amir al-Mu'minin*).[126] All succeeding Mughal shahs, including Jahangir (r. 1605-1627), Shah Jahan (r.

[123] On Mughal coins, Babur inscribed the names of the first four caliphs along with his own. Friday *khutba*s were read in his name and he named his capital city, Agra, "the abode of caliphate" (*daru'l khilafat*). However, these indicators were not sufficient to show whether Babur's claim pertained to a regional or universal caliphate. See Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 319–20.

[124] Humayun lost his throne and Mughal territories to Sher Shah Suri (d. 1545) in 1540, and retook both only in 1555, one year before his death. In the meantime, he took refuge in the Safavid Empire. There were two alleged letters sent from him to Süleyman I, but neither seems completely authentic. The first one was from 1548 and is not available in either Mughal or Ottoman archives. For a discussion of that letter's authenticity, see Riazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500-1750)*, vol. 2 (Iranian Culture Foundation, 1982), 293–99. The second letter was from 1555, and Ottoman admiral Seydi Ali Reis brought it to the Ottoman court. Thus, to what extent it was authentic, to what extent forgery is a big question. Naimur R. Farooqi considers the second letter as authentic. But, agreeing with Maya Petrovich, I think that the supposed letter includes many later additions regarding the superior titles of Süleyman II, if it is not completely a forgery. Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 173–74. For Ottoman-Mughal relations during Humayun's reign, see Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 25–30; Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 171–74.

[125] Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 320. Ottoman-Gujarati friendly relations could have been a reason for Humayun's indirect message to the Gujarati sultan through the Ottomans.

[126] Farooqi, 324–26.

1628-1658), and Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), continued to describe themselves with similar epithets and maintained the Mughal claim of being the supreme political authority among all Muslim monarchs until the 1720s.

Aurangzeb's death in 1707 was followed by a relatively weak central authority in India. Between 1707 and 1719 five different Mughal shahs ruled. Muhammad Shah was enthroned in 1719 and remained in power until 1748. However, during his term, the Mughals were far from their prosperous and stable earlier days. Nadir Shah defeated Muhammad Shah in 1739 at Karnal and sacked Delhi, the Mughal capital. After the fall of Isfahan in 1722, Muhammad Shah sent a letter to Ahmed III. No specific political question was raised in the letter. However, Muhammad Shah referred to the envoy Qurchi bashi Allah Verdi, who would relate the Mughal court's message verbally.[127] It is in this difficult situation for the Mughals that we see Muhammad Shah address an Ottoman sultan as "caliph," for the first time in Mughal history. Nevertheless, when he called Ahmed III "caliph," Muhammad Shah qualified his own seat as the "world-protecting caliphate" (*hilâfet-i cihânbânî*), after quoting the famous Qur'anic verse referring to the caliphate over the entire world.[128] Muhammad Shah considered himself the great caliph and Ahmed III as a caliph only in his own territory, by virtue of the Ottoman sultan's ruling according to the *sharia*. As I will discuss below, in the mid-seventeenth century, Mehmed IV had used a similar differentiation between himself and Shah Jahan, only in reverse.

[127] We do not have information about that message. However, it was highly probable that the Mughals felt threatened by the Afghan invasion of Isfahan and wanted to get in touch with the Ottomans to form an alliance against the Afghans. The Ghilzai Afghans' main base was Kandahar, and their unprecedented strengthening must have been a great concern for the Mughals. Muhammad Shah also sent an envoy, who arrived in Constantinople in 1744. İzzî reported the reason for the second embassy as a Mughal offer of alliance to the Ottomans to fight against Nadir, who had caused great troubles to both the Ottomans and Mughals. It is quite possible that Muhammad Shah had acted with the same motivations twenty years pervious. See İzzî Süleyman Efendi, *İzzî Tarihi (Osmanlı Tarihi (1157-1165 /1744 -1752)*, ed. Ziya Yılmazer (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2019), 56–71.

[128] Qur'an: 35/39. "He is the one who has made you as successors on earth."

Mughal-Ottoman competition for religio-political primacy was thus constant for centuries, even in a highly unstable time for the Mughals.

Two specific cases are significant for grasping the dynamics of the rivalry over religio-political supremacy between the Ottoman and Mughal courts. The first case is Akbar's involvement in the Hejaz, and the second is related to the balance of power between the Ottomans, Safavids, Mughals, and Uzbeks, as experienced during the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658).

To have a clearer understanding of Akbar's undertakings in the Hejaz, it is important to look at the political meaning of the holy cities in Islamic history. Muslim rulers' religious, financial, and infrastructural endowments to Mecca and Medina had a strong political meaning.[129] Above all, these endowments added extra support to rulers' domestic legitimacy. From an international relations perspective, any such aid from a ruler who did not possess the Hejaz meant a direct political challenge to the Muslim ruler in "servitude" of Mecca and Medina. The two holy cities, and most importantly the Ka'ba, were the platforms on which Muslim rulers articulated their political moves, demands, and challenges to each other and specifically to the ruler holding the Hejaz in his possession.

Timur's son Shah Rukh (r. 1405-1447) aimed to enlarge his father's empire and threatened both the Ottomans and the Mamluks by his territorial expansions in Iran and Eastern Anatolia.[130] As Shah Rukh drew his attention to the west, the diplomatic traffic between Shah Rukh and Barsbay (r. 1422-1438) increased in the late 1420s and the 1430s. In a letter dated 1428, Shah Rukh demanded two things from the Mamluk ruler: that the latter send the *kiswa* (covering) for the Ka'ba and that he constructs waterways to bring water to Mecca. He repeated

[129] It is important not to exclude their possible sincere religious intentions. Political motivations and sincere religious aims could coexist.
[130] Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 38–41.

his *kiswa* demand in a letter in 1433. These letters also included threats to Baybars, whom Shah Rukh addressed as "emir" (prince), instead of "sultan" (king). Traditionally, *kiswa*s were manufactured in Egypt and Mamluk sultans used to send them to the Ka'ba ceremoniously with the *emiru'l hac* (commander of the *hajj*) annually. Moreover, to provide for all the needs of the Hejaz, including infrastructure, was a prerogative for Mamluk sultans who at this point exclusively bore the title "servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries." Shah Rukh's was a clear political message to Mamluks that he, as the supreme Muslim monarch, deserved most to cover the Ka'ba and provide water to pilgrims in Mecca. It was also a threat to the Mamluk sultan, signaling Shah Rukh's future military actions targeting Egypt. Being well-aware of the meaning the *kiswa* and water supply entailed, Barsbay rejected Shah Rukh's demands on the basis that it was a privilege belonging only to Mamluk sultans.[131]

Another contender for the Mamluk position, the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444-46 and 1451-1480) made a similar attempt around three decades later. Mehmed II supposedly received complaints about the water shortage in Mecca from a pilgrim who returned to Constantinople from the Hejaz in 1458. Upon receipt of this complaint, he sent an envoy to the Mamluks with a considerable amount of money to be spent for the repair of wells in Mecca. Sayf al-Din Khushqadam (r. 1461-67) rejected Mehmed II's "pious" offer, underlining his exclusive responsibility in administrating all the Hejaz's affairs.[132] Mehmed II's action was again a clear political message to the Mamluk sultan, implying that he was not able to fulfill his required duties with respect to the most important needs of the Muslim community. This religio-political move happened at a time when the Ottoman political entity was transforming into an empire with significant territorial expansion, the most important of which was the overthrowing

[131] İsmail Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı, (1405-1447)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 177–78.
[132] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, ed. Walter Braddock Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 402–3; Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 43.

of Byzantium and the incorporation of Constantinople. Previously, Ottoman rulers had maintained friendly relations with the Mamluks, recognizing Mamluk superiority. Mehmed II changed that attitude and started to challenge the Mamluk caliph's authority as the paramount Muslim monarch. Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) followed his father's policy against the Mamluks more vigorously.[133] A half century later, Mehmed II's grandson overthrew the Mamluks and became the new holder of the coveted title "*hâdimu'l Haremeyn*."

A half century after the Ottoman acquisition of the Hejaz, the Mughal emperor Akbar showed an active interest in Mecca and Medina, especially between 1575 and 1582. Akbar turned the Mughal regime into a full-scale world empire over the course of his long reign.[134] He tripled the size of the empire and increased its wealth enormously with constant and successful military campaigns from Northern India in all directions. Akbar's more direct challenge to the Ottomans started with his conquest of Gujarat in 1573. With that conquest, the Mughal Empire reached the Indian Ocean for the first time. Moreover, Gujarat was a traditional ally of the Ottomans,[135] and also a hub for rebellious Mughal nobles.[136] After the conquest, Akbar started to increase his influence in the Hejaz, challenging the Ottoman sultan's authority directly.[137] In 1575, Akbar prepared a royal ship in Surat to carry Indian pilgrims to Jeddah. It was a *hajj* caravan, headed by a royal *emiru'l hac*. That first *hajj* caravan also included prominent ladies from Akbar's household, including his own wife and paternal aunt. After getting passports from the Portuguese, the ship eventually sailed in October 1576. The royal female entourage stayed in Mecca for several years and performed the *hajj* four times. In each

[133] Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 41–47.
[134] John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India, I.5: The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12–93.
[135] Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 153.
[136] Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India, I.5: The Mughal Empire*, 32–33.
[137] For Akbar's undertakings in the Hejaz, see Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 131–34; Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 33–36 and 192–203; Naimur Rahman Farooqi, "Six Ottoman Documents on Mughal-Ottoman Relations during the Reign of Akbar," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (1996): 32–48; Naimur Rahman Farooqi, "An Overview of Ottoman Archival Documents and Their Relevance for Medieval Indian History," *The Medieval History Journal* 20, no. 1 (2017): 1–38; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 153–54.

pilgrimage season, they disbursed huge sums of alms in Akbar's name. Akbar's financial support did not remain limited to the poor but also included Meccan nobility and the *sharif* of Mecca himself. Akbar also built a hospice in Mecca. Moreover, he kept sending royal *hajj* caravans each year from India to Mecca, with a special royal ship set aside for this task.[138]

As Naimur Farooqi aptly observes, all these large-scale endeavors were clear proof of Akbar's apparent claim "to universal sovereignty over the Islamic world."[139] Besides, Akbar wrote a letter to Abdullah Khan Uzbek and explained his plans to conquer the Ottoman lands and establish Mughal suzerainty over the Hejaz.[140] To counter this Timurid religio-political challenge, Constantinople sent firm orders to the governors of Egypt, Jeddah, and Yemen, the *sharif* of Mecca, and the *kadı*s of Medina and Mecca. Ottoman provincial administrators followed the capital's orders, prohibited all Mughal-sponsored actions, transferred the huts and sheds of ordinary Indian pilgrims from around the Ka'ba to the outskirts of Mecca, prohibited the prolonged stay of Indian pilgrims in Mecca and Medina after performing the *hajj*, and expelled the Mughal royal ladies back to India. Moreover, the Porte showed extra care to the holy places and to meeting the needs of pilgrims. In the face of this strong Ottoman stance, Akbar abolished the Hejaz endeavor altogether in 1582 and suspended diplomatic relations with the Meccan *sharif*s.

Regarding Akbar's activities in Hejaz, Casale wrote that,

> None of this ostensibly pious activity was threatening to the Ottomans in and of itself. Under different circumstances, such generosity could even be interpreted as a sign of friendship or, at the very least, as a normal and innocuous component of the religious obligations of a ruler of Akbar's stature. But Akbar,

[138] Regarding the importance of Indian *hajj* caravans, Naimur Farooqi underlined that it challenged the "Ottoman sultan's monopoly of arranging Hajj caravans." See Farooqi, "An Overview of Ottoman Archival Documents and Their Relevance for Medieval Indian History," 16.
[139] Farooqi, 18.
[140] Farooqi, 18; Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 323. Akbar even attempted to form an alliance with the Portuguese against the Ottomans in 1582 and 1587. Farooqi, 36–39; Farooqi, "Six Ottoman Documents on Mughal-Ottoman Relations during the Reign of Akbar," 47–48.

> unlike his father Humayun, had never shown himself to be particularly friendly toward Istanbul.[141]

I do not agree with Casale's argument. Any direct involvement in the affairs of the Hejaz was a challenge to the authority of the ruler possessing the Hejaz. However friendly the relations between two monarchs might be, these activities meant taking a share from the Ottoman sultan's exclusive privilege of "serving" the holy cities. Throughout Islamic history, Muslim monarchs ruling over the Hejaz perceived other Muslim rulers' "pious" activities from that political perspective and were unwilling to share this prerogative with others.

The second case illustrating the Ottoman-Mughal rivalry is the Ottoman reaction to Shah Jahan's expansionist policies from the late 1630s to the mid-1650s. From the late 1630s onwards, Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658) accelerated his expansionist policies, targeting the Safavids and the Uzbeks. In 1638, he reincorporated Kandahar into the Mughal domains; it had been lost to the Safavids in 1622. From then on, he drew his attention to Central Asia, the fatherland of the Mughals who had long-existing aims to return in triumph. At that time, Balkh and Bukhara were controlled by the Uzbek Nazr Muhammad Khan. However, his son Abd al-Aziz rebelled in Bukhara in the early 1540s, paving the way for Shah Jahan's invasion of Uzbek lands by passing over the Hindu Kush mountains. In 1647, the Mughal army under the command of Prince Aurangzeb captured Balkh and started its march on Samarqand and Bukhara.

In the meantime, Nazr Muhammad Khan sent letters to the Ottomans asking for help against Shah Jahan, and even took refuge in Persia. Mughal expansion threatened both the Safavids and the Ottomans, and they both sided with the Uzbeks against the Mughals. The Safavids and the Ottomans did not provide direct military help; however, they took a concerted stance against Shah Jahan. The most serious blow to the Mughals came from the Safavids, who

[141] Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 154.

retook Kandahar in 1649 with tacit Ottoman support. To reach a consensus on that matter between Isfahan and Constantinople had not been easy.[142] The Safavids were worried about a possible Ottoman attack when they were fighting against the Mughals on their eastern frontier. Likewise, the Porte was anxious about the movements of Kizilbash soldiers, especially in Georgia.

Ottoman archival documents and English East India Company agents' reports provide significant information about that contact.[143] According to Ottoman documents, a Safavid agent arrived in Constantinople on June 20th, 1648. Two pieces of information can be obtained from the Ottoman documents. First, Safavid military preparations were not aimed to threaten the Porte. Second, the Safavids requested the safe passage of Iranian pilgrims and merchants to Mecca without having to pay any tax other than the usual one. Grand Vizier Hazerpare Ahmed Pasha recommended that the sultan write an order to the *sharif* of Mecca telling him to not take extra payments from Iranian pilgrims and merchants.[144]

Reports by the agents of the East India Company at Gombroon (Bandar Abbas) verify the information given by the grand vizier. They reported to their president at Surat that an Ottoman ambassador had arrived in Isfahan on August 2nd, 1648.[145] Sultan Ibrahim had

[142] A grand-vizierial petition to the Ottoman sultan provided important details about Ottoman-Safavid contact at that time. The specific date of the petition was not recorded, but it would have been written sometime between June 20th and August 8th, 1648 for the following reasons: in the petition, Grand Vizier Hazerpare Ahmed Pasha referred to a Persian man who arrived in Constantinople on June 20th, 1648 (28 Cemaziyelevvel 1058) from Isfahan, and Sultan İbrahim was deposed on August 8th,1648. Even though the petition did not specify the name of the sultan, there were two indicators that it was not Mehmed IV, but İbrahim. First, the grand vizier wrote to the sultan that he was older than Shah Abbas II. This was the case for İbrahim but not for Mehmed IV. Second, the grand vizier referred to Safavid Qurchi Bashi's supposed statements praising the Ottoman sultan as more courageous and braver than Murad IV. That could also be only İbrahim, since at that time Mehmed IV was only six years old. See TSMA.e 640-5.

[143] See TSMA.e 640-5; TSMA.e 798-71; TSMA.e 850-9. For studies on this contact, see Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 57–58; Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 149–50..

[144] TSMA.e 640-5.

[145] William Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1646-1650: A Calendar of Documents in the India Office, Westminster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 217–18. The date given here and in the grand vizierial petition do not match. It is probable that English agents got the news of the arrival of the Ottoman envoy late. Or, if the Ottomans sent two envoys (Yusuf Ağa and Mehmed Çavuş, as stated in other Ottoman documents referred to

affirmed the Safavid expedition and guaranteed Ottoman non-aggression toward Safavid lands while the Safavid shah was far away on the eastern front with his army. The Ottomans also allowed the free passage of Iranian pilgrims through Baghdad without their having to pay extra money. Moreover, the Ottoman sultan requested two elephants from Shah Abbas II on his return from the Kandahar campaign. The English agents added that without waiting for the march on Kandahar, the Safavid shah had sent two elephants he already possessed with the ambassador. Affirming that report, Ottoman chronicler Abdi Pasha wrote that a Persian envoy named Muhammad Quli arrived in Constantinople on June 2nd, 1649 (21 Cemaziyelevvel 1059) and brought two elephants from the Iranian shah, together with many other gifts.[146] The accounts of Muhammad Tahir Vahid Qazvini and Vali Quli Shamlu, the Safavid chroniclers of the time, also affirm the arrival of an Ottoman envoy with a letter of friendship from the sultan. They maintained that the shah replied to the letter with also friendship messages and sent elephants to Constantinople.[147]

Both the Ottomans' permission to Persian pilgrims and merchants, and the Safavids' sending of the requested elephants to the Ottomans in advance of a successful campaign were significant assurances of the friendliness of both sides before a critical expedition against the Mughals. As a result of that mutual agreement and tacit Ottoman support for his campaign, Shah Abbas II was able to retake Kandahar from the Mughals in 1649 relatively easily.[148] Thus,

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above), then the English agents probably mentioned only one of them. The dearth of historical sources does not allow us to conclude with certainty.

[146] Abdi Pasha reported that the envoy left Constantinople on June 22nd, 1649 (11 Cemaziyelahir 1059). See Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'-nâmesi*, ed. Fahri Çetin Derin (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2008), 20.

In his *Geschichte*, Hammer writes that the reason for the sending of two elephants was to celebrate the enthronement of Mehmed IV. For that information, he refers to Abdi Pasha. However, Abdi Pasha did not mention any such reason. Most probably, not being aware of the Safavid-Ottoman diplomatic contact, Hammer interpreted the arrival of two elephants from Persia as celebration of Mehmed IV's enthronement due to its timing. See Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1623-1656)*, vol. 5 (C. A. Hartleben, 1829), 490.

[147] Vali Quli Shamlu, *Qisas Al-Khaqani*, ed. Sayyid Hasan Sadat Nasri (Tehran, 1992), 313; Muhammad Tahir-i Vahid Qazvini, *'Abbas-Nama*, ed. Ibrahim Dihqan (Arak, 1951), 97–98.

[148] Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 123–24. Rudi Matthee gave no information about this Ottoman-Safavid contact preceding the Kandahar campaign.

the Safavid-Ottoman agreement against the Mughal threat to the existing balance of power between the major Muslim empires in Eurasia proved to be successful. The Ottomans strengthened the Shiite wall against the expansionism of a Sunni rival in the east.

However, to fully secure the old order, the Mughal threat to the Uzbeks had to be thwarted as well. Uzbek sultan Nazr Muhammad Khan's letter reached Constantinople in early 1649 with the embassy of Khwajah Abd al-Mannan.[149] In that letter, Nazr Muhammad Khan wrote that his son Abd al-Aziz had revolted. He also must have informed the Porte that Shah Jahan had invaded Balkh.[150] Nazr Muhammad Khan asked for diplomatic help from the Ottoman sultan against both Abd al-Aziz and Shah Jahan. The Uzbek sultan referred to Mehmed IV as the greatest of the kings, *sahib-kıran*, caliph, imam, and the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the eleventh century of Hijra. He asked the Ottoman sultan to write separate letters to Abd al-Aziz, Shah Jahan, and Shah Abbas II, to exert his power as an arbiter between the Muslim monarchs. That diplomatic demand fitted quite well with the exalted international position in which the Porte had situated itself for centuries. The Ottoman sultan did not miss the opportunity and wrote all three letters to their respective recipients.[151] A reply letter to Nazr Muhammad Khan was also penned.[152]

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[149] Feridun Bey, *Mecmua-i Münşeat-ı Feridun Bey*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Takvimhane-i Âmire, 1858), 150–53. The letter was composed in August-September 1648 (Şaban 1058). Also, for an account of Mughal-Ottoman diplomatic relations following that letter, see Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 56–64; Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 237–50. N. Farooqi does not mention Nazr Muhammad Khan's letter, but discusses the events following it.

[150] We get this information indirectly from the Ottoman letter to Nazr Muhammad Khan's son Abd al-Aziz. See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:358–59. Moreover, in his reply letter to Nazr Muhammad Khan, Mehmed IV wrote that Uzbek envoy Khwajah Abd al-Mannan had also conveyed the verbal messages of the Uzbek sultan. See Feridun Bey, 2:357–58.

[151] Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'-nâmesi*, 13. For the letter to Shah Abbas II, see Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:343–44. For the letter to Shah Jahan, see Feridun Bey, 2:355–57. For the letter to Abd al-Aziz, see Feridun Bey, 2:358–59. All these letters were dated Evail-i Rebiulahir 1059 (April 14th-23rd 1649). Ottoman ambassador Seyyid Muhyiddin departed from Constantinople for India in the same month. He was accepted for an audience with Shah Jahan in September 1651.

[152] For the letter to Nazr Muhammad Khan, see Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:357–58.

Mehmed IV's letters to Shah Abbas II and Shah Jahan were almost identical and employed a heavy religio-political discourse. At the center of that discourse stood the necessity of unity among Muslim rulers. He wrote that the nation of Muhammad (*ümmet-i Muhammed*) should have been united sincerely (*sine-saf*) according to all sources of *sharia*. After implicitly calling the Mughal invasion of Balkh and Badakhshan an instance of *fitna*, Mehmed IV quoted a *hadith* stating that "*fitna* is asleep; may God curse the one who awakens it!" The Ottoman sultan demanded Shah Abbas II and Shah Jahan help the Uzbeks reestablish peace among themselves, as it was their duty to do so out of neighborliness. Addressing only Shah Jahan, the Ottoman sultan demanded the freeing from persecution of Muslim subjects in Uzbek lands, who should have been protected according to *sharia*. Moreover, Mehmed IV reminded Shah Jahan of another *hadith* of the Prophet: "Entering into paradise became obligatory for those who abstain from torment."[153] Only the letter to Shah Jahan ended with a warning; it appears that the Ottoman sultan contented himself with that much advice.

Interestingly, in none of these letters did Mehmed IV call himself "caliph," nor did he use epithets of superiority.[154] However, the tone of the letters and the umpire position of the Ottoman sultan situated Mehmed IV in a higher position relative to the letters' recipients. However smooth and conciliatory his letters were, the Ottoman sultan was still intervening in the international affairs of Central Asia as a big brother. Moreover, he warned the Mughals to step back from Central Asia, implicitly but decisively.

In the meantime, the Mughal expedition in Balkh and Badakhshan was failing and the Mughals retreated to the south of Hindu Kush. Shah Jahan wrote his reply to Mehmed IV in

[153] "Man kaff al azā, vecebet lahū al-jannah"

[154] However, Mehmed IV's reply to Nazr Muhammad Khan was not modest in terms of superiority claims. As mentioned above, Nazr Muhammad Khan recognized the Ottoman sultan's paramountcy with clear expressions in his letter. Mehmed IV also highlighted his superior position in the response letter, unlike the ones he sent to the other three recipients. See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:357–58.

this new context, in November 1651.[155] In countering Ottoman accusations, Shah Jahan justified his entrance into Uzbek lands by giving a very long account of political developments in the region.[156] He wrote that Nazr Muhammad Khan had requested Mughal help against Abd al-Aziz, and that the Mughal army had entered Balkh and Badakhshan only to resolve the Uzbek domestic conflict. He argued that the rebel Almans had created complete disorder and desecrated mosques, burned Qur'ans, and even massacred the descendants of the Prophet.[157] He added that after suppressing all of them, he had handed the regions back to Nazr Muhammad Khan and situated the Uzbek sultan back in his seat. Moreover, he wrote that he had also settled the problem between father and son, even before the arrival of the Ottoman sultan's letter. Shah Jahan referred to the remoteness between Central Asia and Ottoman lands as the possible reason for Mehmed IV's unawareness of the end of the conflict. The reference to distance could be a veiled expression of displeasure with Ottoman intervention in the affairs of a region that was within the Mughal sphere of influence and distant from the Ottoman capital. Moreover, unlike the modest Ottoman use of epithets, Shah Jahan called himself *sahib-kıran* in the epistle.

The Mughal royal letter reached Constantinople with the envoy Sayyid Ahmad Sa'id in June 1653. In the same month, the Porte dispatched Zülfikar Ağa with a response letter; he arrived in the Mughal court in April 1654.[158] The tone of the second Ottoman letter was quite different from the previous and showed that Shah Jahan's letter had offended the Ottomans. Where the first Ottoman letter had been modest about Mehmed IV's titles, the second one highlighted the Ottoman sultan's superior position with clear expressions. After giving Shah

[155] Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500-1750)*, 2:328–29; M. Athar Ali, "The Objectives behind the Mughal Expedition into Balkh and Badakhshan 1646-47," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 29 (1967): 165–66; Richard Foltz, "The Mughal Occupation of Balkh 1646-1647," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (1996): 49–61.
[156] Shah Jahan narrated these events over 80 lines. See Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500-1750)*, 2:328.
[157] I was not able to identify the group called the Almans.
[158] Feridun, II, pp. 163-165.Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:163–65.

Jahan's titles,[159] Mehmed IV stated that the Mughal ruler's epistle had arrived in the Ottoman court that was the resort and shelter of kings (*merci'-i selâtîn, melce'-i hâvâkîn*). Then, he defined the Ottoman dynasty's mission and duties in some detail: God had commissioned the Ottoman dynasty to revive (*ihya*) the established customs of religion (*merasim-i din*) and rules of the *sharia* (*ahkam-ı şeria*). He claimed his ancestors had been famous for these qualities for centuries, and also for their help to the weak and the distressed. Mehmed IV justified Ottoman diplomatic involvement in Central Asian affairs by appeal to that religious duty. Moreover, he added that he had replied to Muhammad Nazr Khan's request for help positively due to "religious affection" (*muhabbet-i diniyye*), whereas, the Ottoman sultan implied, Shah Jahan's invasion of Uzbek lands had not been motivated by religion, but by political ambitions. For that aim, Mehmed IV underlined that the turmoil in Uzbek lands was a political one and not a religious one (…*ihtilâl-i mülkî, gayr-ı millî vâki olub,..*), unlike the religious justifications the Mughal emperor had offered. Similar to the first letter, Mehmed IV referred to Mughal aggression by stressing that the conflict between father and son went beyond them and had spread throughout Uzbek lands (*tamamet-i Turaniyan*).

Then, the Ottoman sultan touched on the settlement of the conflict in less than a line, referring to Shah Jahan's letter. As mentioned above, that part had been the longest one in Mughal ruler's letter. Surprisingly, rather than thanking Shah Jahan or congratulating him, Mehmed IV satirized the Mughal emperor, referring implicitly to the Mughal failure in the

[159] Riazul Islam wrote that two of the Shah Jahan's titles written by Mehmed IV were "*sahib qıran-ı sani*" and "*padishah-ı ghazi*." However, in the copy in Feridun's Münşeat, the Ottoman sultan addressed Shah Jahan with neither of these titles. As will be seen below, this letter created a diplomatic crisis due to an alleged Ottoman unconformity with diplomatic etiquette in addressing Shah Jahan. Thus, it was unlikely that Mehmed IV qualified Shah Jahan with these two titles. See Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500-1750)*, 2:328.

Uzbek campaign.[160] Mehmed IV wrote that "man plans and fate laughs."[161] He went on to state that vanity about possessions and high posts (*mağrûriyet-i mâl u câh*) made one deaf. Moreover, he advised that

> However mighty and wealthy monarchs may be, it is also incumbent on the kings to assume and cultivate moral faculties and virtues. He, who gets a share from that storehouse of felicity embraces in himself material as well as spiritual sovereignty, and is endowed with divine beatitude and spiritual bliss.[162]

Unlike in the previous letter, Mehmed IV called himself "caliph" twice. Answering Shah Jahan's remarks on remoteness, the Ottoman sultan wrote that due to that distance there were ample unique pieces of jewelry and valuable articles in Ottoman lands and the Zülfikar Ağa was bringing gifts of that kind to Shah Jahan. Thus, Mehmed IV even used the remoteness of the Ottoman Empire from the contested Uzbek territory as another opportunity to stress the superiority of Ottoman lands over India.

This derogatory Ottoman letter was received with great anger in the Mughal court. The Mughal attempt to be the master of Muslim monarchs had failed bitterly, and Ottoman derogation about that fiasco, paired with expressed claims of superiority, was too much to tolerate for the Mughals. Thus, instead of continuing the conversation in the same line, Shah Jahan changed the direction and brought diplomatic etiquette to the fore. Zülfikar Ağa arrived in the Mughal court on April 6th, 1654, the Mughal response letter was dispatched with Qa'im Beg in October 1655. That duration was unusually long, possibly indicating Shah Jahan's resentment.

[160] Mehmed IV did not make this burlesque specifying Shah Jahan explicitly. However, the points he raised were not related to the conditions of Nazr Muhammad Khan, but those of Shah Jahan. For example, Mehmed IV blamed rulers' "vanity of possessions and high post." This could hardly have been related to Nazr Muhammad Khan, as he was in a very poor situation, having even lost his throne. N. R. Farooqi also interprets the Ottoman sultan's words as targeting Shah Jahan. See Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 61.

[161] "Al-mar'u yudabbir, wa'l qadha yadhaku"

[162] Translation belongs to Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 61.

Shah Jahan wrote that the Ottoman letter had failed to observe diplomatic customs in addressing him in a kingly manner.[163] In a humiliating tone, the Mughal emperor noted that the Ottoman improper addressing might have been due to the inexperience of the young sultan, who had been eleven when the second Ottoman letter was written. Shah Jahan reminded the sultan that he had sent a book of knowledge (*dustur al-ʻamal*) to Murad IV that informed the Ottomans about the proper titles of Mughal emperors. Shah Jahan referred Mehmed IV to that book, noting that it should still have been in the imperial library. Again sarcastically, Shah Jahan added that he was resending the book, just in case the Ottomans had lost it. He maintained that the Mughals would have responded to the Ottoman letters more promptly, if only the Ottomans had addressed them according to acceptable diplomatic protocols. Otherwise, he noted allusively, "the friendship is not at a level requiring [us] to write letters and send mediators."[164] In the letter, Shah Jahan highlighted his caliphal status twice and qualified the Ottoman sultan only with lesser titles. He did not even mention the Ottoman sultan's "servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" title, although he did qualify Mehmed IV as "*râfiʻu elviye-i dîn-i mübîn, nâsıb-i aʻlâm-ı şerʻi metîn, mücâdil-i feccâr-ı Frenk*." These epithets were proper designations for the kingly status of the Ottoman sultan.[165]

Interestingly, Shah Jahan's titles written in the Ottoman letters of 1649 and 1653 were nearly identical to each other. Why, then, did the Mughal court turn that title issue into a crisis only in the second case? A possible answer might be that in the first letter, the Ottoman sultan implied his superior position with the tone of his language and his intervention in the conflicts

[163] Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:159–61. Riazul Islam noted that official Mughal chronicler Muhammad Waris also recorded this letter. Waris's version was only half the length of Feridun's version; however, unlike Feridun's copy, it included "*sahibqıran*" and "*padshah-ghazi*" as titles of Shah Jahan. See Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500-1750)*, 2:332.

[164] "Va illâ, dustî nâ dar martaba ast ki, muhtâj-ı bangashtan-i nâmah ve firistâdan-i mayânji bâshad."

[165] They can be considered the equivalents of the Ottoman qualification of Shah Jahan in the Ottoman letter of 1640: "*câmi-i âyât-ı cihânbâni, kâmi-i esâsi'l küffâr, kâhiru'r-rafaza ve'l mülhidîn, kâtilü'l kefere ve'l mütemerridîn*." I refer to that letter below.

in Central Asia but did not express it explicitly with epithets. The second Ottoman letter, in contrast, situated the Ottoman sultan at a higher position when the titles used for both rulers were compared. Presumably, Shah Jahan considered that clear expression of inequality as unacceptable. Shah Jahan's failure in his military attempts against the Uzbeks and the loss of Kandahar most likely compounded his anger as well.

Maya Petrovich suggests that Shah Jahan's titulature in the second Ottoman letter could be seen as conventional.[166] A comparison between the titulature used in addressing Shah Jahan by the Ottomans in letters written in 1640, 1649, 1653, and 1656 suggests a different case. In the letter of 1640, the last one sent to the Mughals before the 1649 letter referring to the Uzbek situation, Sultan İbrahim qualified Shah Jahan with titles such as "*câmi-i âyât-ı cihânbâni, kâmi-i esâsi'l küffâr, kâhiru'r-rafaza ve'l mülhidîn, kâtilü'l kefere ve'l mütemerridîn.*" The low profile of Shah Jahan's titles in Mehmed IV's letters of 1649 and 1653 thus highlighted a degradation in the Mughal emperor's status from the Ottoman perspective. In 1656, the Ottoman sultan took a step back and acknowledged that Shah Jahan occupied a higher position than that indicated in 1649 and 1653.

The Ottoman response to Shah Jahan's caustic epistle was a conciliatory and seemingly humbled one.[167] Mehmed IV praised Shah Jahan with outstanding titles such as "*müessis-i bünyân-ı dîn-i mübîn, müşeyyid-i kavâid-i şer'i Seyyidi'l mürselîn, nâsır-ı cünûdu'l İslam ve'l Müslimîn, kâsir-i ru'us'ir'rafaza ve'l mulhidîn, merci'-i ekârim-i selâtîn*." Moreover, the

[166] She further states that Ottomans did not refer to Shah Jahan with the coveted titles of "*sahibqıran*" and "caliph," and she makes the general observation that the Ottomans did not employ a standard titulature for Mughal emperors in their letters. Therefore, she argues, Ottoman qualification of Mughal rulers ranged between adulatory and dismissive. Lastly, Petrovich adds that the Ottoman sultan claimed his superiority by calling himself "caliph" in the same letter. Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 240.

[167] Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:352–55. The Ottoman envoy Maan-zade Hüseyin Ağa took the letter to the Indian court. However, when he arrived in Surat sometime after November 1657, the Mughal war of succession was about to start. Instead of proceeding further, he handed over the letter to Prince Murad, the governor of Gujarat, and turned back. See Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 64. Shah Jahan was dethroned and imprisoned in July 1658.

Ottoman sultan called the person of the Mughal emperor "caliph" four times over the course of the letter,[168] quite an exceptional Ottoman attitude towards a Mughal ruler. Mehmed IV's praises for Shah Jahan in 1656 even exceeded those of Sultan İbrahim in 1640. Regarding Shah Jahan's accusations of improper addressing, Mehmed IV accepted the Mughal resentment with smooth diplomatic language. He grandiloquently wrote that "it is difficult even for an expert diver to reach the bottom of the ocean of Your Majesty's praiseworthy qualities."[169]

The Ottoman sultan called himself "caliph" only once in the letter. He wrote that with the endless bestowment of God, who is Unique (*ehad*), and with the infinite guidance of the last Messenger, "our exalted and heavenly-high caliphate became the place of the rising sun of the sultanate."[170] The Ottoman composer of that letter chose "*ehad*" as God's attribute, most probably, to further underline the exclusiveness of the Ottoman caliphate, as opposed to other caliphates that exerted authority over a limited territory. More importantly, the reference to the Prophet in qualifying the Ottoman caliphate suggests the caliphate of the Prophet, which is the great caliphate and thus the head of the entire Muslim community in the world. The emphasis on the exaltedness and heavenly-highness of the Ottoman caliphate again pertained to the Ottoman sultan's claim to hold the universal caliphate. Thus, when Mehmed IV qualified Shah Jahan as a caliph only in his own territory, he simultaneously proclaimed his own universal caliphate over all the other Muslim kings and princes in the world.

Without looking at that difference, Maya Petrovich argues that the Ottoman sultan recognized the superiority of Shah Jahan by attributing caliphate to the Mughal emperor.

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[168] In the Ottoman letter, there was no ascription of caliphate to the Mughal capital, in any form like "*dar al khilafah*." Maya Petrovich stated that Mehmed IV described India as "as the seat of the *hilâfat-nisâb*." In fact, "*hilâfat-nisâb*" was used as an attribute of Shah Jahan himself, not of India. The text reads "…cenab-ı şevket-meâb, hilâfet-nisâblarına…" See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:354.

[169] Translation belongs to Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 63–64.

[170] "İnayet-i bî-gâyet-i Cenâb-ı ehadiyyet ve hidâyet-i bilâ nihâyet-i Hazret-i hatem-i risâlet aleyhi efdali's-salavât ve ekmeli't-tahiyyât ile matla'-ı âfitâb-ı saltanat olan südde-i seniyye-i gerdûn-bestat-ı hilâfetimize…" See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 2:354.

Considering the difficulty of such an attribution, she raises her doubts about the authenticity of the letter[171] and proposes a scenario to explain why the Ottomans could have sent that "self-depreciatory" letter. She suggests that the Ottoman need for money might have caused the Porte to take that humbled stance. According to this scenario, Shah Jahan might have offered financial support to the Ottomans, in case the Ottomans accepted his offer to attack the Safavids jointly.[172] She further alleges that it was only in the late 1680s that the Porte returned to its claim of universal sovereignty over the Mughals. For this argument, she gave the example of Süleyman II's letter to Aurangzeb, which arrived at the Indian court in 1690.[173]

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[171] Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 248.

[172] Regarding the financial aid scenario, Maya Petrovich first writes, "Probably the answer to our questions about unexpected Ottoman eagerness to interact with Mughals lies in Ottoman need for Indian commodities, and Indian money" and "Perhaps Shah Jahan was indeed offering monetary incentives as he was envisioning another Ottoman attack on Safavid." (Meanwhile, there was no eagerness in Ottoman interaction with the Mughals in 1656. And Ottoman-Mughal diplomatic interaction at that time was a continuation of correspondence that had begun in 1649, not something "unexpected.") Then, fifteen pages later, she drops "perhaps" and "probably" and states, "…since the 1650s, when Ottomans first sought pecuniary aid from the Mughals." See Petrovich, 249, 264.

Moreover, she did not provide any evidence regarding the Ottoman acceptance of the Mughal offer of a joint attack against the Safavids. As she envisages, the realization of Mughal aid depended on Ottoman acceptance of that offer. All the available historical sources indicated the opposite of what she argued. As I discuss below, the Porte valued its peace with the Safavids, and opposed Mughal expansionism.

[173] Here again, M. Petrovich brought the issue of Ottoman financial aid request from the Mughals to the fore. She argues that Süleyman II asked for monetary support from Aurangzeb to be used in the Ottoman war against the Holy League. She uses two pieces of evidence: first, the writings of Nicollao Manucci, an Italian traveler in India; second, the words semantically related to money in the Ottoman letter.

Manucci's account is an important but weak support for that kind of a claim. That is why, for instance, N. R. Farooqi considers Manucci's claims about Ottoman monetary help request to be moot. Moreover, if Aurangzeb did actually send pecuniary aid as claimed by Manucci, then Mughal chroniclers should have mentioned it pompously. However, they did not.

Her second piece of evidence is highly problematic in terms of interpreting historical texts. First, she refers to words "semantically related" to money, like "treasure," "jewels," and "self-sufficient" in Süleyman II's letter, and claims that these words "clearly indicate" Ottoman request for monetary help from the Mughals. Second, she quotes a part of a long sentence from the preamble: "sezâvârdır ki cevâhir-i mâhiyyat-ı mümkineyi "kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan faahbabtu an 'urifa" hızânehânesinden ibdâ ve nev'ü'l-envâ olan nüsha-i câmi'a-i insân-ı keyfiyyet [...]." Actually, that excerpt refers to the creation of human beings. After that, Süleyman II wrote that God designates an imam (leader) for all of entire humanity in every age. Later in the letter, he clearly expressed that the House of Othman was the chosen dynasty for the leadership over Muslim monarchs and subjects. I also discuss the letter separately later in the chapter. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 5-27, pp. 54-61; Hikmet Bayur, "Osmanlı Pâdişahı II. Süleyman'ın Gurkanlı Pâdişahı I. Alemgîr (Evrengzîb)'e Mektubu," *Belleten* 16, no. 54 (1954): 269–85. Without giving that inner context of the letter, after quoting that excerpt, Petrovich puts forwards that "In short, Ottomans asked Aurangzeb for financial assistance." See Petrovich, "The Land of the Foreign Padishah," 263.

It is true that words in royal epistles carried implied meanings. However, in order to claim any implication, one needs to show the connection between the used words and their implied meanings through a proper study of

I do not agree with this speculation for a number of reasons. The Ottomans appear to have taken a step back from their "improper" usage of titles for Shah Jahan, but this is not enough to qualify the letter as "self-depreciatory." On the contrary, in the same letter, the Ottoman sultan claimed the exalted nature of his caliphate and thus superiority over the Mughal emperor. Moreover, the Ottomans were stronger in the 1650s than they were in the late 1680s. If the Ottoman sultan could have maintained his claim of superiority over the Mughal shah in the 1680s, as Petrovich herself accepts, then logically, it would have been easier still to do so in the 1650s. Regardless of the reference to the great caliphate or the relative power of the Ottomans at different times, it was impossible for any Ottoman sultan to accept the religio-political superiority of the Mughal shah for any reason, let alone financial. As I argue throughout this chapter, the superiority of the Ottoman dynasty over other Muslim monarchs was essential in the Ottoman conceptualization of their own political authority as inalienable and incontestable.

Besides these letters, there is a curious historical argument about Qa'im Beg's embassy in 1656. Hammer wrote that Shah Jahan demanded Ottoman help against the Safavids in the reconquest of Kandahar.[174] For that information, Hammer depends on Austrian resident Simon Reniger's report and Ottoman historian Abdülaziz Efendi's (d.1658) account.[175] French traveler Jean de Thévenot, who was at Constantinople between December 2nd, 1655 and August 30th,

text and context. Certain possible semantic relations are not sufficient to prove an argument without that connection. See Petrovich, 263–64.

[174] Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1623-1656)*, 5:644–46.

[175] Abdülaziz Efendi wrote that the Mughal shah sent that ambassador "probably" to request Ottoman soldiers against the Safavids. The Turkish tense he used for that information was "-miş," meaning that he got that information from somebody else. The usual language of Ottoman chronicles was a direct voice, as if the chroniclers were eye-witnesses of the events they reported. See Kara Çelebizâde Abdülaziz Efendi, *Ravzatü'l-Ebrâr Zeyli*, ed. Nevzat Kaya (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2018), 257–58. Other Ottoman chroniclers only gave information on ceremonies, and not on the diplomatic relations between the Mughals and Ottomans. Silahdar and Naima basically copied Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha's text. See Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'-Nâmesi*, 78, 82; Nazire Karaçay Türkal, "Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065-22 Ca.1106/1654-7 Şubat 1695)" (PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2012), 51, 65; Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Naîmâ Târihi*, ed. Zuhuri Danışman, vol. 6 (İstanbul: Zuhuri Danışman Yayınevi, 1969), 2670, 2698. That alleged demand was not mentioned in Shah Jahan's letter, either.

1656, repeated that he was told that the Mughals offered the Ottomans the opportunity to mutually attack the Safavids.[176] Claes Rålamb, a Swedish envoy in Constantinople, also reported the same request for aid, though he arrived in the Ottoman capital nine months after the departure of Qa'im Beg.[177] Hammer also added two other Mughal requests made in this delegation: first, a special prayer location for Indian pilgrims in Mecca;[178] second, an architect to help finish the Nur Mahal tomb in Ahmadabad. He wrote that out of the three demands, the Porte accepted only the last one.

Only C. Rålamb provides information about the reasons for the Ottoman rejection of Shah Jahan's offer.[179] The official response, as he related, was that the Ottomans would not have broken their peace with Iran at a time when they were still at war with Christians. The Porte instead offered its intermediacy between Iran and the Mughals to reconcile their relations.[180] However, Rålamb claimed that the "true reason" for the Ottoman rejection was something else. According to Rålamb, the *şeyhülislam*[181] recommended that the sultan not overthrow the Safavids, since they were a surmountable enemy, as opposed to the Mughals and the Uzbeks. The *şeyhülislam* reasoned that if the Safavids fell, the Mughals and Uzbeks could create two bigger sources of trouble for the Ottoman dynasty as its new neighbors. First, their

[176] Jean De Thévenot, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant : dans laquelle il est curieusement traité des Estats sujets au Grand Seigneur* (Paris, 1664), 164.

[177] Qa'im Beg arrived in Constantinople on May 11th, 1656 (17 Receb 1066) and left the city in the end of August 1656 (Evail-i Zilkade 1066 / August 21st-30th, 1656). Rålamb came to Constantinople on May 17th, 1657 and departed from the Ottoman capital on January 21st, 1658. See Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi'-Nâmesi*, 78, 82; Claes Rålamb, "A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 5 (London, 1732), 708. Rålamb did not give the name of the Indian envoy. However, it was certain that the Indian envoy was Qa'im Beg, since Rålamb wrote that the accompanying Ottoman envoy to that Indian envoy in his return to India was "Hussein Manoli." "Manoli" referred to Man-oğlu (the son of Man), whom Ottoman sources called Maan-zade (the son of Maan) Hüseyin Ağa. See Rålamb, 708. Rålamb reported his voyage and observations to Swedish King Charles X (r. 1654-1660).

[178] That offer, if real, is a reminder of Akbar's endeavors in Mecca in the late 1570s. We do not know the details of that demand; however, it also resembles Nadir Shah's request for a special prayer place for Iranian pilgrims in 1736. I discuss Nadir Shah's request in Chapter Eight separately.

[179] Rålamb, "A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople," 708. I was not able to consult Reniger's report. Thus, I do not know its contents.

[180] Mehmed IV's letter did not mention any of these points. If that official response was real, then it must have been made through other means, like verbal communication with the Indian envoy.

[181] He would have been Hocazade Mesud Efendi, who remained in office between March 6th and July 17th, 1656.

superior lineage (Timurid and Chinggisid respectively) would challenge the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty. Second, thanks to their co-religionism with the Ottomans, either the Mughals or the Uzbeks could successfully take Mecca into their possession. The *şeyhülislam* maintained that with Shiite Safavids as neighbors, the Ottomans would be able to sustain their control over the Mecca more easily. He even suggested that the sultan help the Safavids, as they provided a "barrier" between the Ottoman Empire and the Mughals and the Uzbeks.

We cannot verify Rålamb's reports about Ottoman concern, due to the absence of other primary sources. However, there is a striking parallel between the *şeyhülislam*'s points and Kınalızade's framework to which I referred above. The *şeyhülislam* highlighted the vitality of the "Shiite wall" for the maintenance of the isolation of Ottoman territories and of the monopoly of the Ottoman dynasty on that protected geography. The continuation of similar central concerns after more than a century shows how well-grounded that strategy was in official Ottoman foreign policy making.

Indeed, Sayyid Abu'l Fayz (r. 1711-1747), the new Bukharan ruler, had offered a similar proposal to Ahmed III in 1712. In his letter carried by Abd al-Sami Yasaval Khan, Sayyid Abu'l Fayz had praised Ahmed III as "the source of the quintessence of caliphate" (*hilâfet gevherinin kânı*), and called himself "the caliph of the lands in Iran and Turan (Central Asia)."[182] The Bukharan ruler had offered the sultan the opportunity to "extinguish the irreligious infidels, the Kizilbash, and seize their cities, so that Muslim populations can go back and forth to Mecca and visit that honorable site in safety."[183] In response, Ahmed III had called Sayyid Abu'l Fayz the "khan of Bukhara," denoting a princely status. The Ottoman sultan had underlined religious brotherhood, unity, and affection; nevertheless, he remained silent about the Uzbek offer to

[182] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-176, pp. 277-78. The letter was written on 1 Cemaziyelahir 1124 (July 6th, 1712). "İran ve Turan memleketinin nöbet-i hilâfeti bu niyazmend-i dergah-ı İlahi'de karar eyledi"

[183] "Bu kâfir-i bî-dînleri yani Kızılbaşları aralıkdan kaldırıp, nice vilayetleri ehl-i İslâma makarr ola ki, tâife-i Müslimîn Mekke-i muazzamaya azimet eyledikden sonra, emniyet-i hâtır ile ol makam-ı şerîfe varıb, gelsinler."

eliminate the Safavids.[184] It meant that the Porte had rejected the Uzbek offer to create an uninterrupted Sunni-dominated political zone, i.e., pax-Sunnica, extending from the Central Asia to the Balkans. It is telling that the Bukharan offer to create a pax-Sunnica was justified through appeal to Mecca, the spiritual center of all Muslims in the world. If they had succeeded, the Uzbeks would have gained enormous prestige in the Sunni world and become an alternative to the Ottoman dynasty in the Ottoman domains. As they later would with the Mughal offer of 1756, in the 1710s the Porte had maintained its policy of protecting the Shiite wall to the east.

E.1.3. Holy War under the Leadership of the Ottoman Caliph

The claim of the Ottoman dynasty to universal caliphate was also an effective tool in the mobilization of Muslims outside Ottoman domains in the name of holy war against the Europeans and the Safavids. Muslim principalities in the eastern Caucasus were the main addressees of these Ottoman calls for *jihad*. On different occasions, the Porte asked for Dagestani and Shirvani military help against the Safavids, the Europeans, and the Russians. On these occasions, Caucasian support played significant roles in Ottoman campaigns. As I will investigate in the following chapters, that support was also crucial to the Ottoman successes against the Safavids and Russians in the 1720s.

Besides requests for actual military help from the Caucasian Muslim polities, the Ottomans asked for prayers from the Mughal, Uzbek, and Safavid emperors for Ottoman "holy" wars. With these demands, the Ottoman sultans reminded other Muslim rulers of their "exclusive" religious mission to fight the non-Muslims (*mucâhidîn fi sebîlillah*). In royal letters, Ottoman sultans claimed their superiority and universal caliphate over other Muslim monarchs in clear terms. The Porte used the instances of Ottoman wars against non-Muslims as yet another opportunity to underscore the Ottoman dynasty's exalted status in the Muslim world.

[184] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-178, pp. 279-80, Evasıt-ı Rebiulahir 1125 (May 7th-16th, 1713).

Starting in the sixteenth century, the Porte had interacted mainly with two political entities in the northeastern Caucasus: the Shirvanshahs and the Dagestani khanates.[185] The Shirvanshah dynasty had ruled over Shirvan, Shamakhi, Baku, and Darband for long centuries. For most of their history, they had been vassals of bigger dynasties.[186] In Dagestan, in contrast, there were several local khans who ruled relatively independently.The *shamkhal* of Kumyks was the most powerful khan in Dagestan, and had partial authority over smaller units.[187]

In 1501, Shah Ismail defeated the Shirvanshahs and took them under Safavid suzerainty. The first serious relations between Constantinople and the rulers of the northeastern Caucasus started with Selim I's aforementioned letter to Sheikh İbrahim, the head of the Shirvanshah dynasty in 1517. Selim declared his "exalted caliphate" to Sheikh İbrahim and the head of Shirvanshahs accepted Selim's supremacy over Muslim monarchs. In their correspondence, they even contemplated ways to overthrow the Safavid Shah Ismail with the support of other local emirs in the region.[188] Between 1534 and 1538, the Shirvanshahs accepted Ottoman suzerainty, but Shah Tahmasb I ended the Shirvanshah dynasty and established direct Safavid

[185] It should be noted that the relations between the khans in Dagestan and rulers of the Shirvan province were not necessarily friendly. For instance, an important precursor of the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590 was a fight between the *shamkhal* of Kumyk, the most powerful khan in Dagestan, and the Shirvanis. Following the death of Shah Tahmasb I, local rulers in Shirvan rebelled against the Safavids in 1577 and the new shah, Ismail II, sent 5,000 troops to the *shamkhal* to smash the rebellion. The Dagestanis attacked Shirvan with that force but were defeated. After that attack, a Shirvani committee went to Constantinople and asked for Ottoman military help against the Safavids. See Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran Siyâsî Münâsebetleri (1578-1612)* (İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1993), 30–31.

[186] C. E. Bosworth, "Šervānšahs," in *EI*, 2011; Sara Aşurbeyli, "Şirvanşahlar," in *TDVİA*, 2010.

[187] Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Daghestan during the Long Ottoman-Safavid War (1578–1639): The Shamkhals' Relations with Ottoman Pashas," in *Tributaries and Peripheries of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Kármán (Brill, 2020), 117.

Two imperial orders from Osman II suggest that the Porte considered the *shamkhal*'s status above that of the lesser khans. Osman II asked İbrahim Bey, the son of Gazi Bekir, and Can Emir Bey to maintain their obedience to him and to act in accordance with the *shamkhal*. See BOA, YB.(21) 10-17; BOA, YB.(21) 10-18, Evail-i Cemaziyelahir 1030 (April 23rd – May 2nd, 1621). D. Kołodziejczyk also indicates the higher status of *shamkhal*s in the 1580s. See Kołodziejczyk, 130.

[188] In that correspondence, starting with Selim I's letter in 1517, they wrote five letters in total; Selim I penned three and Sheikh İbrahim two letters. See Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 1858, 1:437–47. See also footnote 37 of this chapter.

rule in the province of Shirvan in 1538.[189] During the second march of Süleyman I on Iran (1548-1549), Shirvanshahid Prince Burhan expelled the Safavids and reestablished Shirvanshah authority in the region in 1548 with Ottoman support. However, this success was short-lived and the Safavids took control of the area back in 1550.[190] The broader Shirvan area with its adjacent cities remained in Safavid possession according to the Peace Treaty of Amasya in 1555.

With Murad III's (r. 1574-1595) campaigns against the Safavids, the Ottomans recaptured the region in 1578. This time not only Shirvanis, but also the khans in Dagestan accepted Ottoman authority.[191] Ottoman-Safavid wars continued for twelve years and the concluding Nasuh Pasha Peace sealed the largest eastern borders of the Ottomans in 1590.[192] Nevertheless, Shah Abbas I led successful campaigns against the Ottomans in the early 1600s and expelled the Ottomans from the most of the Caucasus, including Shirvan province.[193] The Ottomans were able to maintain their formal suzerainty over khans in Dagestan according to two consecutive peace treaties with the Safavids in 1612 (Nasuh Pasha Treaty) and 1618 (Treaty of Sarab). With the Kasr-ı Şirin (Zuhab) Peace of 1639, the Ottomans ceded Dagestan altogether.

Ottoman sovereignty over Dagestani khans in the pre-1639 period had been highly contested and uncertain. First, the Russians and the Safavids continued to claim their suzerainty

[189] M. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi: (1451-1590)* (Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1976), 167–68.
[190] Kırzıoğlu, 183, 203–5.
[191] Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran Siyâsî Münâsebetleri (1578-1612)*, 39–41, 68. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu gives an earlier date for the Ottoman suzerainty over Dagestan, taking it back even to 1474, the time of Ottoman conquest of the Crimea. See Kırzıoğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi*, 307–8.
[192] Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran Siyâsî Münâsebetleri (1578-1612)*, 194–200.
[193] Kaveh Farrokh, "The Military Campaigns of Shah Abbas I in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus (1603-1618)," in *Studies on Iran and The Caucasus*, ed. Uwe Bläsing, Victoria Arakelova, and Matthias Weinreich (Brill, 2015); Carl Max Kortepeter, "Complex Goals of the Ottomans, Persians, and Muscovites in the Caucasus, 1578–1640," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (Routledge, 2011).

over Dagestan in the post-1578 period.[194] Second, Abbas I's exhibitions pushed the Ottomans to the west of Arpaçay river from the late 1600s onwards, and that border was agreed on in the following two peace treatises in 1612 and 1618. In the Caucasus, only western Georgia remained in Ottoman possession. Abbas I's conquests created an unusual map, since Safavid territories in Georgia and Armenia were completely separating Ottoman territories in eastern Anatolia from Dagestan. Third, the Dagestani khans themselves did not want to live under the rule of any of the larger neighboring states. They maintained a policy of balance that would have provided their independence, or at least autonomy, vis-à-vis Constantinople, Isfahan, and Muscovy.[195] None of these capitals were able to exert their central power effectively in these regions, and the khans of Dagestan maintained their autonomy to an important extent for most of the time.[196]

At times when the Porte formed an alliance with the khans in Dagestan and rulers of Shirvan, the unity of the Sunni brotherhood against either the "heretic" Kizilbash or "infidel" Muscovites became the dominant religio-political discourse. Both sides employed that discourse heavily. Significant political reasons propelled these parties to build that alliance. The Shirvanis and local Dagestani khans considered alliance with the Ottomans appealing leverage for breaking the Safavid yoke and countering Russian expansion. Likewise, local Caucasian support was vital for Ottoman expeditions in the region. However, mutual political interest does

[194]Kołodziejczyk, "Daghestan during the Long Ottoman-Safavid War (1578–1639): The Shamkhals' Relations with Ottoman Pashas," 118–23.

[195] Even during the Ottoman-Safavid wars between 1578 and 1590, the khans in Dagestan easily and repeatedly changed sides between the Ottomans and the Safavids. See for example, Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran Siyâsî Münâsebetleri (1578-1612)*, 95–97, 129.

Moreover, in 1584 the *shamkhal* sent troops to the Crimea in support of the rebellion of the sons of the previous Crimean khan against İslam Giray, newly appointed by the Porte. In that rebellion, Russian Nogays also sent troops to the rebels. The rebels successfully dethroned İsmail Giray, who escaped to Kafa and petitioned the Porte about the events. See Kütükoğlu, 145.

[196] Willem Floor, "Who Were the Shamkhal and the Usmi?," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 160, no. 2 (2010): 345.

not overrule the positive effect of common confession[197] and possible religious incentives of political actors.[198] As aptly articulated by Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, sectarian unity was the main asset of Ottoman "soft power" in relations with the people of northeastern Caucasus.[199]

In 1635, the Ottomans turned their face again to local rulers in Dagestan for military help. Abbas I's conquest of Baghdad in 1624 had challenged Ottoman power in the east. Ottoman *padishah* Murad IV (r. 1622-1640) led a military campaign against the Safavids between 1635 and 1638, and reconquered Erevan and Baghdad. The Safavids took Erevan back in 1636, but Baghdad remained in the hands of the Ottomans until the demise of the empire in the twentieth century. The Kasr-ı Şirin (Zuhab) Peace was ratified at the end of these wars in 1639. The border agreed on in this peace would prove to be stable in the centuries to come.

Within the context of the 1630s, it would be fair to assume that Ottoman authority over the Dagestani khans became weak, if it existed at all, despite Ottoman formal suzerainty. As an important support to this situation, in 1635 Murad IV invited the Dagestanis to war on the grounds of his caliphate status, rather than his formal suzerainty over the Dagestani khans.[200] The language of Murad IV's call to these khans was different than usual imperial orders. Usually, Ottoman imperial orders to provincial administrators, including vassals like the Crimean khanate, encouraged them to fight, but also warned of punishment in case they did not comply with imperial imperatives. The Porte would specify the number of troops and other war

[197] The sectarian dynamics of political alliances or hostilities require delicate handling. I discuss that question in the last part of the chapter and offer a new explanation for understanding the sectarian dynamics of inter-state relations.

[198] As discussed in the introduction, the sincerity of intentions behind political actions is beyond the scope of the social sciences.

[199] Kołodziejczyk, "Daghestan during the Long Ottoman-Safavid War (1578–1639): The Shamkhals' Relations with Ottoman Pashas," 132.

[200] There are two documents in the Ottoman archives that were received from the Georgian archives. According to these documents, Murad IV called two khans of Dagestan to his Erevan campaign. The names of khans were Mirza Mehmed Bey and İbrahim Han. The territory of Mirza Mehmed Bey was not specified in the document; however, he was also qualified as one of the beys of Shirvan and as currently ruling in Dagestan. İbrahim Han was specified as khan of Rutul. Rutul is located in the highlands of the eastern Caucasus. See BOA, YB.(21) 12-6, Evail-i Muharrem 1045 (June 17th-26th, 1635); BOA, YB.(21)10-20, Evail-i Muharrem 1045 (June 17th-26th, 1635).

supplies to be provided by these provinces. Murad IV did not write in that fashion in calling the Dagestani khans to join his campaign against the Safavids. He reminded them of his suzerainty, but his caliphal status and the religious cause of the campaign covered most of the call. Rather than an order, Murad's call was more like an invitation to a "holy" cause. The Ottoman sultan asked for Dagestani military help in the campaign on Erevan without specifying any number of soldiers or amounts of provisions. He also demanded a messenger be sent from these khans to tell him their situation and in what way they were going to provide help to the campaign. That demand was also an indicator of the uncertainty of Ottoman authority over the Dagestani khans.

Murad IV underlined his caliphal status twice and stressed the strict adherence of the Dagestanis to the Sunni sect several times. He quoted Qur'anic verses on *jihad* and declared participation in his holy war a religious obligation (*farz*). He also referred to the first four caliphs and Dagestani adherence to them. Murad IV qualified the war as a "*gaza*" and "*jihad*" in the name of Islam and Sunnism and in the way of the first rightly-guided caliphs. Clearly, the sultan's last remark was a reference to the Safavid practice of public calumniation (*sabb*) of the first three caliphs. In the end, the Ottoman sultan promised his favor to the Dagestani khans, in recompense for their services to the first four caliphs, their shared religion, and the Ottoman state.

Toward the end of the long Ottoman war against the Holy League (1683-1699), the Porte again resorted to Dagestani military help. Ottoman grand vizier Elmas Mehmed Pasha wrote a long letter to the *shamkhal* of Dagestan in November 1696.[201] The grand vizier wrote that the Christian nations of Austria, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Venetia had

[201] BOA, A.DVNSNMH 5-97, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1108 (November 17th-25th, 1696), pp. 225-30. In the title of that letter in the Registry, *shamkhal* was written as "Kumuk ve Dağıstan Hakimi Şemhal" (*Shamkhal*, the ruler of Kumyk and Dagestan). This showed a continuation in the Ottoman view of the hierarchy between Dagestani khans throughout the centuries. See also Mehmet Topal, "Silâhdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, Nusretnâme" (PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2001), 349–50.

united against the "exalted Islamic state" (*Devlet-i Aliyye-i İslâmiyye*)[202] and had been attacking for many years. Due to the small number of Muslims (*ehl-i İslâm*) compared to the "infidels," he argued, these invading forces had crossed the "border of Islam" (*hudûd ve serhadd-i İslâmiyye*) and occupied various Islamic lands (*memâlik-i İslâmiyye*). Then, he continued, Mustafa II sat on the seat of caliphate, and passionately restarted the *jihad* with sincere intentions, for the sake of religion, to subdue the infidels and polytheists and to make the situation of Muslims affluent.[203] He further reported the military successes of the Ottoman armies against the Poles and the Venetians. However, the grand vizier stated, the Russians had captured the fortress of Azov, which was located in the frontier of Islam (*serhadd-i İslâmiyye*), from the Muslims (*ehl-i İslâm*), while the soldiers of Islam (*asker-i İslâm*) had been fighting a holy war (*cihâd*) on the western front against the Austrians.

Elmas Mehmed Pasha informed the *shamkhal* that the khan of Crimea, Selim Giray Han, was charged with the task of retaking Azov in the next campaign season. The grand vizier demanded Dagestani military help for the sake of religious zeal (*gayret-i dîn-i Muhammedî*). The grand vizier asked the *shamkhal* to be in touch with Selim Giray. At the end of the letter, Elmas Mehmed Pasha underlined that to help the Ottomans was a requirement of the religious unity and unanimity between the Ottomans and Dagestanis (*ber muktezây-ı ittihâd-ı dînî ve yekcihetî*). He encouraged the *shamkhal* to fight a holy war against the opponents of religion (*muhalifîn-i din*). Throughout the letter, the grand vizier barely named the Ottomans, instead presenting the Ottoman state as an Islamic state headed by the universal caliph, ruling over the Islamic territories, fighting against infidels and polytheists in the cause of Islam, and protecting the borders of Islam. Thus, it became a religious duty and obligation for every Muslim inside

[202] The letter opened with that phrase.

[203] "Uğûr-ı dîn-i mübîn ve tezlîl-i kefere ve müşrikîn ve terfîh-i hâl-i Müslimîn için niyyet-i hâlisa ile tertîb-i esbâb-ı cihâda kemâl vulu' ile şuru'u hüsrevâneleri olmağla…"

or outside Ottoman domains to support the Ottomans in their fights against the Europeans and the Russians.[204]

The Porte's resort to the Ottoman universal caliphate when they targeted the Moroccans in 1697 was also an example of the Ottoman use of *jihad* in foreign policy. Above, I discussed it in the context of Ottoman-Moroccan rivalry for the universal caliphate title. However, the Ottoman emphasis on its universal caliphate in that context had a practical purpose, too: to force the Moroccans to allow the Ottomans in Algiers to fight against the Venetians in 1697. The concept of the Ottoman caliphate became an important foreign policy tool against the Venetians, as it helped eliminate the Moroccans who had been indirectly supporting European expansion in Ottoman lands.

Ottoman sultans also highlighted their universal caliphate status in correspondence with the Uzbeks, the Mughals, and the Safavids by referring to the holy war they were fighting against the united Christian nations. In 1688, Süleyman II dispatched three different envoys with separate letters to the rulers of the other major early modern Muslim empires of the Uzbeks, Mughals, and Safavids.[205] The official reason for these embassies was to let the other kings know that he had been enthroned after Mehmed IV's death in 1687. However, beyond giving that news over a year after his enthronement, all his letters accentuated the exalted status of the Ottoman sultan over the other monarchs. The Ottoman war against the allied European

[204] The Ottoman resort to Dagestani military help to participate in the holy war under the Ottoman caliph recurred in 1717. I discuss it in the next chapter. It suffices here to note that the Dagestanis accepted the Ottoman call to fight against the Austrians and promised to send 30,000 soldiers to the Ottoman army. However, the Ottomans and the Austrians concluded a peace soon thereafter.

[205] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 5-27, pp. 54-61 (to Mughal shah), 28, pp. 61-65 (to Uzbek *padishah*), and 29, pp. 65-69 (to Safavid shah). The letter sent to the Persian shah was dated 1 Zilhicce 1099 (September 27th, 1688) and the one sent to the Uzbek *padishah* was dated 19 Zilhicce 1099 (October 15th, 1688). No specific date was recorded in the letter sent to Aurangzeb. Only the year was written as 1100 (October 26th, 1688 – October 15th, 1689). However, that letter was likely sent around the same time as the other ones. In his article on that letter, Hikmet Bayur does not give further information on the date of the sending of the letter. Bayur, "Osmanlı Pâdişahı II. Süleyman'ın Gurkanlı Pâdişahı I. Alemgîr (Evrengzîb)'e Mektubu."

states provided a solid ground on which the Ottoman sultan could make that claim more confidently.

The main structure and points of these epistles were quite similar. At the beginning of each of the letters, Süleyman II stated that God had chosen a vicegerent (caliph) on the earth (*halîfeten fi'l arz*) for all people (*li'n-nâsi imâmen*) in every age/time (*asr*, *zaman*, *vakt*). And God had commissioned that caliph to undertake the duties of putting the matters of the world in order (*ittirâd-ı umûr-ı kârhâne-i 'âlem*), manifesting the signs of *sharia*, fighting in the name of God, and so on. Süleyman II remarked his exalted status by qualifying his seat as "the throne of universal caliphate" (*evreng-i hilâfet-i cihânbânî*) and "the spiritual sultanate" (*saltanat-ı mânevî*), and himself as the "caliph on the Earth" (*halîfeten fi'l arz*). He then informed the other monarchs about the Ottoman wars against the alliance of European states. The language was again a completely religious one, equating the Ottoman cause with that of Islam. "Idol worshippers and heretic polytheists" (*'abede-i esnâm ve müşrikîn-i dalâlet-irtisâm*) had united and invaded Islamic lands (*memâlik-i İslâmiyye*) to capture the lands of Muslims and shed the blood of the believers (*ahz-ı bilâd-ı müslimîn* ve *sefk-i dimâ-i mü'minîn*). In such a situation, he continued, the "Prophet's green banner" (*liva-i hadra-i Muhammedî*)[206] must be taken to the front and the soldiers of Islam (*asâkir-i İslâm*) should fight a holy war to fulfill their obligation of *jihad*, to uphold the exalted word of God (*i'lâ-i kelimetullâhi'l 'ulyâ*) and to perpetuate the entire Muslim nation (*ibkâ-i millet-i beyzâ*). Having the Prophet's banner added further legitimacy to the religious responsibility of the Ottoman dynasty, which also claimed the caliphate of the Prophet (*hilâfet-i Resûl*). In the end of the letters, the Ottoman sultan asked for prayers from these rulers and from the venerated religious scholars and men in their lands for

[206] The Prophet's banner was taken into Ottoman possession after the conquest of Egypt by Selim I. The Ottomans would carry it on the front when they went to war. It was also called *sancak-ı şerif* or *livâ-i saadet*.

the success of Muslim soldiers. By way of praying, he noted, they might also get a share from the religious reward of *jihad*.

To conclude, the Ottoman claim to the universal caliphate was central to the Porte's foreign policy after the sixteenth century, as well as before. The Ottoman dynasty maintained its claim of supremacy over other Muslim monarchs in its official discourse in the following centuries. However, rather than on a global scale, that claim worked in the regional context of the Ottoman domains and in the vicinity of these territories. Their exalted caliphate status strengthened the religio-political legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty's rule over a vast geography, helped to mobilize troops from non-Ottoman Muslim lands, and provided a pretext for enlarging their territories into lands held by these other Muslim powers.

F. Religio-political Dynamics of Cross- or Inter-Confessional Alliances

Understanding the Ottoman perspective on the sultan's sovereignty and universal caliphate helps us also answer the following questions and their like: What was the reason for the cold and competitive relations between the Ottomans and the Sunni Mughals? Why did the Ottomans not actualize an alliance either with the Sunni Uzbeks or the Sunni Mughals against the Shiite Safavids? Or, why did the Porte always support the Sunni Dagestanis, but object firmly to the Sunni Afghans' takeover of Persia in 1720?

Ottoman scholarship answers these questions in relation to their immediate context, without having a broader view. I argue that, in these and similar cases, the Porte's main priority was maintaining the unrivaled political authority of the Ottoman dynasty in the wider Middle East region. Based on that priority, the Ottomans engaged in cross- or intra-*madhhab* alliances by considering the potential risk of a certain Sunni power in the short- or long-term. The Ottoman case is only an example of the prominence of political considerations in foreign policy decisions. That prominence has led modern scholarship to mostly disregard the importance of sectarian identities and religious considerations in international relations. In the discussion

below, I aim to offer a more balanced view of the relationship between politics and religion in pre-modern foreign policy.

I argue that the way pre-modern political entities defined themselves limited their political actions. Religion worked as a soft power at the level of discourse. The confession of a certain political entity did not prevent "alliance with the infidel," per se. However, cross-sectional alliances provided a challenge for the legitimacy of a ruler, since they created incoherence within the established discourse. On the other hand, co-confessional alliances contributed to a ruler's legitimacy, due to the consistency between religio-political discourse and political action. Moreover, the common religious identity made it easier for governments to form co-religious alliances. Thus, rulers preferred inter-confessional alliances over the opposite in an ideal case in which cross- and inter-confessional alliances had equal risks and advantages.

In his study of Süleyman I's eastern policy, Rhoads Murphey argues that cross-religious and -sectarian alliances in international history prove the ineffectiveness of religion in foreign policy.[207] He gives examples from alliances with the "infidel" in the sixteenth century, like a Gujarati sultan's appeal to the Portuguese against the Mughals in 1535, the alliance between the Shiite prince of Gilan and the Sunni Ottomans against the Shiite Safavids, and Ottoman *timar* offers to Georgian Christian knights if they supported the Ottomans against the Safavids. Based on these cross-religious alliances, he argues that,

> Preoccupation with doctrinal matters in the rather bombastic literary style of sixteenth-century diplomatic correspondence may well have been mostly confined to the pro forma rituals which signaled the initiation and conclusion of military campaigning. It would be a mistake to assume that these statements *actually governed* state actions or *placed any constraint* on the rulers' exercise of those options which they perceived to be the most advantageous to their subjects' welfare."[208]

[207] Rhoads Murphey, "Süleymân's Eastern Policy," in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (The Isis Press, 1993), 238–41.
[208] Murphey, 241. Emphases added.

Recently, Cemil Aydın took that argument a step further. He claims that prior to the nineteenth century the notions of *ummah* and Muslimness had existed for more than a millennium among Muslim empires; however, it was not in the sense of a "solidarity and unity among [the] Muslim world," but "a story of multiplicity, contestation, and change."[209] He demonstrates the multiplicity and contestation in pre-nineteenth century history with the examples of in-fights between Muslim states, and even sometimes fighting against your "brother," in alliance with the "infidels." Aydın explains the reason for the change in the meaning of the notion of the Muslim world in the second half of the nineteenth century in a dialectical process. According to this explanation, first, Western imperialism had denominated Muslim identity as an inferior race. Then, Muslims had fought against imperial racialization with intellectual and political responses. The perpetuation of that dialectic since then had resulted in the emergence of a distinct Muslim world that had no precedent in pre-nineteenth century history.

Regarding Muslim responses, Aydın maintains that as a "competitive edge" against nineteenth-century Western imperialism, Ottoman sultans, especially Abdulhamid II, leaned on the concept of a "Muslim world/*ummah*" to gather international support from Muslims for the weakening empire. He argues that just like any other caliphate after the tenth century, Ottoman sultans of the pre-nineteenth century used "caliphate" as a symbolic political tool having nothing to do with Muslim solidarity but with imperial political interest.

The main base for all these arguments was that religious boundaries were easily surmountable by political actors. Thus, religion functioned only as a passive, instrumental tool for secularly-defined personal and political goals. Indeed, Ottoman history was full supportive examples in which political authorities circumvented religious boundaries. Sometimes, they employed harsh methods like deposing or executing scholar-bureaucrats in top *ilmiye* offices.

[209] Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 15.

Or, religious scholars would come up with juristic formulas fitting the demands of political exigencies. This dissertation adds many more examples to that trend.

However, this was only one side of the coin. Religion as a factor was not as passive as scholarship assumes. Rulers were also vulnerable to challenges on religious grounds, in both legal and communal senses. Hüseyin Yılmaz states that a repeated warning by contemporary moralist authors to the sultan was that "he receives rulership by grace but retains it only by acting moral."[210] He underlines that moralist warnings were "well suited to the political realities of the period."[211] The statistics given by Baki Tezcan in that regard are striking: "Out of the ten reigns by the nine sultans who occupied the Ottoman throne between 1617 and 1730, seven ended with dethronements."[212] Thus, the Ottoman sultan was a potentially objectionable, opposable, even deposable figure. That picture itself calls for a more balanced view of the comparative power of politics and religion in the pre-modern era. Modern scholarship mostly prioritizes the political and neglects the religious in analyzing that multifaceted relation. Thus, the restrictive quality of religion needs to be further underlined.

In the pre-modern world, religion and politics were two inseparable realms that helped define one another. Thus, instead of cataloguing conflicts as either religious or political, we need to examine the ways they interacted with one another at different levels. Religion was related to politics especially with respect to its communal and legal dimensions. In the pre-modern world, religion largely defined communal identity and constituted the main body of the legal system. As I discussed in the beginning of the chapter, sources legitimacy for political authority became a critical intersection point of politics and religion. Religion provided legitimacy for one's rule, but it also limited the ruler's radius of action. And, since legitimacy

[210] Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 177.
[211] Yılmaz, 176–77.
[212] Baki Tezcan, "Lost in Historiography: An Essay on the Reasons for the Absence of a History of Limited Government in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2009): 477.

was a process of "continuous negotiation between ruler and ruled,"[213] rulers needed to gain and regain it perpetually. If required by political exigencies, they crossed the delineated boundaries. Nevertheless, the crossing was not as free and flexible as modern scholarship assumes. Many rulers eventually paid a costly price, sometimes including their lives, as a result of their crossing of limits.

In the Ottoman case, two concrete elements were essential for the restrictive capacity of legitimacy. First, religious legal authority was open to everybody who acquired mastery in Islamic law (*fiqh*). Second, a rival candidate was equally able to resort to objective sources of legitimacy.[214] Regarding the first, jurists gradually gained strength relative to the governing body in the early modern era. Tezcan examines that gradual empowerment of and increasing role for the members of the *ulema* class in the dethronement and enthronement of sultans.[215] The *kadıasker* and *şeyhülislam*, occupying the highest offices in the *ilmiye* bureaucracy, enjoyed outstanding legal powers, like appointing and dismissing members of the *ulema* hierarchy, authorizing military campaigns, and dethroning the sultan. They combined several powers that would today be allocated to the parliament, the head of the executive, the court of appeals, and the supreme court. That comparison is important in grasping the pre-modern fact that religion provided the legitimate legal medium in which politics operated. Thus, jurists checked the boundaries of rulers with their power of representing and articulating divine law.

Consequently, religion enabled the opposition to challenge the government and to take it over. As İnalcık states, in Ottoman history, sovereign power passed to a new ruler as a result

[213] Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order," 55.
[214] For the availability of that opportunity for opposition, see İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," 73; Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 115; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 71.
[215] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*. For some other works on the limiting power of Ottoman legal system on the *padishah*'s actions, see Engin Deniz Akarlı, "Review of Colin Imber's Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition," *Islamic Law and Society* 6 (1999); Haim Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994); Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order."

of a power struggle between interest groups, which were mainly the *ulema*, the janissaries, and the urban population in the capital.[216] Besides actual political and bureaucratic power, the opposition needed legal and popular legitimacy to change present sultan either smoothly or through a rebellion. The openness of religious expertise to everybody became an important factor at that point. Religious knowledge was not under the exclusive authority of a certain political group. The right to speak that language did not depend on blood ties, wealth, or any other structural impediment.[217] Instead, experts in the religious field were the *ulema*, who were not bound by a particular political authority, but crossed the boundaries of political groups. Rival candidates could receive religious authorization to depose the sultan, in legal and moral senses, from the members of the *ulema* class. Thus, the objectivity of the sources of legitimacy made the sultan an objectionable authority. In this sense, no one had the monopoly on religion in all its social, legal, and political functions in early modern Ottoman political life. It would be naive to assume that a sultan enthroned by a competing group to that of the last sultan could have been completely free and flexible in using religious discourse in his policies.

H. Karateke observes that opposing groups challenged the normative legitimacy of the ruler more successfully "in times of crisis or amid struggles over succession."[218] Agreeing with him, I argue that there was an inverse proportion between the comparative power of the military-administrative cadres and the jurists. At times when military-administrative camp

[216] İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," 73. For examples of the influence of guilds in rebellions, see Robert W. Olson, *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations, 1718-1743: A Study of Rebellion in the Capital and War in the Provinces of the Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1975), 65–83; Robert W. Olson, "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20, no. 2 (May 1977): 185–207.

[217] It was true that especially to be a high-class *ulema* member having a post in the higher state bureaucracy was a highly difficult thing and was almost always closed, except to certain families in the eighteenth century. However, first, it was still an open class, and the main requirement of entry was to be an able scholar. Second, there were many scholars outside the state bureaucracy, and they were respectable members of the *ulema* class. Thus, any political group seeking a legal base for their action could get what they needed from any of these scholars. Third, even within the scholar-bureaucrat class, there had always been factions, and it was quite easy for any competing political group to find an appropriate scholar supporting their cause.

[218] Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 18.

established their power solidly, the *ulema*'s influence faded away. These were the times when the rulers dismissed and even executed members of the *ulema*, including the *şeyhülislam*s, relatively easily. However, there were also times when the center of the empire was in serious crisis, and the dynasty and its supporters in the military-administrative class could not control things. In those instances, as a result of the weakening of the executive power, legal scholars became prominent actors in the evolution of events at the highest political level. Thus, even though there was a common tendency among rulers to overrule the law and any other limiting factor, they were mostly unsuccessful when their actual power decreased.

The early modern period experienced a gradual formation of confessional identity at the social level, as well. A growing literature on confessionalization in Ottoman lands discusses that process from different angles. Tijana Kristić defines the era between the 1450s and 1690s as the age of Ottoman confessionalization and argues that this period experienced Ottoman state- and confession-building.[219] She describes that process as a top-down project in its initiation by political and scholarly elite. In the seventeenth century, she claims, it took the form of a bottom-up endeavor with the Kadızadeli movement. Kristić further claims that the trans-regional use of confession by competing imperial powers, namely the Habsburgs, Ottomans, and Safavids, to cement their state-building project in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries caused the linkage of the state and religion in a more intimate way in an age of confessional and imperial polarization. Derin Terzioğlu also discusses religious identity in Ottoman lands within the framework of confessionalization in the early modern era.[220] However, she offers a more gradual explanation than considering this process as a project started as a result of the early modern imperial and confessional polarization. She locates the development of Sunni

[219] Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
[220] Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2012 2013): 301–38.

consciousness within a larger time span starting around the fourteenth century and not ending with the 1690s. Terzioğlu underlines the multiplicity of actors and factors involved in this process, like the empowerment of Islamic scholars and the spread of Islamic literacy in the Ottoman realm over a long period. She shares the idea that top-down and bottom-up forces worked simultaneously throughout the centuries and strengthened Sunni confessional identity in Ottoman political and social culture.[221]

Consequently, this strengthened Sunni identity in the Ottoman Empire enhanced the restrictive capacity of religion over rulers. Political actors' instrumental or sincere resorts to religion for their political goals should be understood within that broader framework. Rulers were not free in their use of religion for political purposes. İnalcık aptly observes that "the oriental ruler was much concerned with his image in the eyes of the masses, because it was a traditionally established fact that potential rivals around him, in the periphery or neighboring lands were all ready to exploit any reversal in public opinion against him."[222] Similarly, in analyzing Ottoman projection of the conquest of Arab lands in the early sixteenth century, Rifa'at Abou El-Haj underlines the necessity of presenting the conquest of Muslim lands in a consistent moral discourse by the Ottomans: "…to be consistent within the 'war' policies of a state that projects an Islamic ethos, the Ottoman rulers would have had to explain, on the 'moral' level at least, why it was necessary for them to take over by force a Muslim territory from another Muslim dynasty."[223]

As highlighted by İnalcık and El-Haj, the preservation of consistency between political actions and established moral, legal, and political discourses was a major concern for the ruler. To that end, Ottoman governments struggled to present their political decisions and actions as

[221] Ekin Tuşalp's work shows the increasing centrality of Sunna-mindedness among the authors of political treatises in the early modern era. See Tuşalp Atiyas, "The 'Sunna-Minded' Trend."
[222] İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," 65.
[223] Abou-El-Haj, "Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles to Two Early Liva Kanunnameler," 373.

politically correct, legally justified, and religiously upright both to domestic and international audiences. However, there was a conflict that was structurally embedded in the relations between actual practice and discourse. On the one hand, politicians in power wanted to be seen as "ever-righteous" rulers in all their political actions, and even in their personal lives. On the other hand, the material conditions of domestic and international politics never presented smooth conditions that were not in conflict with these idealistic depictions and righteousness claims. Hence, all rulers, both past and contemporary, faced the challenge of presenting their seemingly "unfitting" actions as justifiably within the established discourse with which they associated themselves and their expressed goals.

The most challenging part of that work was related to the fact that the effectiveness of a discursive justification depends on its persuasiveness. That requirement made it compulsory for politicians to present their policies in a consistent framework so that they could continue having the consent of their constituents and being secure from the pressure of any opposition. The times of policy change were, arguably, the most troublesome periods for rulers to come up with convincing explanations within the discourse they maintained.[224] During such times, weakness in the ability to persuade made rulers more vulnerable to machinations against them. Any disharmony between the established discourse and current actions caused damage to the credibility and reliability of the political authority. Thus, religion with its social, legal, and discursive dimensions limited rulers' room to maneuver. While the legitimizing power of religion enhanced rulers' authority, its delegitimizing quality actively harmed political actors.

We should understand the dynamics of "alliance with the infidel" within that broader framework. Arguments for the free and flexible use of religion for secular purposes gloss over the relationship between politics and religion, rather than explaining it. Likewise, using cross-

[224] Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate," 18.

confessional alliances as proofs of the free manipulation of religion by rulers has methodological and factual faults. First, that argument is an example of the often-encountered positivistic view that religion is only a means by which to achieve secular political interests. It excludes religion from explaining historical events that were by definition religio-political. Second, even the cases of arguably instrumental utilization of religion present two important effects of religion. First, they show that there was an actual religious ground thought by rulers to be beneficial for political purposes. Second, and more significantly, domestic or foreign rivals of rulers who allied with the "infidel" used these alliances as a discursive weapon against these rulers. Christine Isom-Verhaaren demonstrates the challenges of Charles V (d. 1558), king of Spain and Holy Roman emperor, against François I of France (r. 1515-1547) due to the latter's alliance with Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) against other Christians. Charles V treated François I's action as "exceeding the limits of accepted diplomatic practice by which a ruler could seek to find support against his enemies, by forming an alliance with a ruler who practiced a different religion."[225] As I discussed above, Mustafa II's condemnation against Mawlay İsmail in 1697 depended on the same grounds. In Chapter Eight, I also discuss a similar Ottoman accusation against Nadir, who, according to the Porte, had allied with the Russians against the Ottomans.

Third, as the last point shows, Christian and Muslim worlds existed in a political sense in the pre-modern era, contrary to what Cemil Aydın argues. The extent of the religious influence on these "worlds" is another discussion. However loose these worlds were, they existed as reference points in international politics. Shared belief, together with commonalities in ritual, in holy places and cities, in venerated and authoritative figures, in holy books and a

[225] Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011). For a general account of the pre-modern European debates on the illegitimacy of forming alliances with non-Christians, see Richard Tuck, "Alliances with Infidels in the European Imperial Expansion," in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sandar Muthu (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

significant scholarly corpus on them, and so on created a shared world for believers. The political counterpart of that world was a reflection of that commonality in society at the political level. El Moudden draws attention to the shared diplomatic culture between the Moroccans and Ottomans, due to their common religious identity. Regarding their correspondence, he observes that "parts of these letters supposed to be diplomatic texts turn out to be rather theological ones and corroborate our previous suggestion to look at them as the product of a specific diplomatic culture."[226] The same observation holds true for Ottoman correspondence with all Muslim rulers, Sunni or Shiite.

As for Cemil Aydın's solidarity argument, it also seems highly problematic. Solidarity is one of the key elements, but not the only, in understanding the effect of religion on politics and in understanding whether there was a Muslim world in the *political* sense. The absence of solidarity among family members cannot prove the absence of family. While the conflicts between Muslim states cannot negate the existence of a Muslim world in the pre-modern era, a supposed solidarity among them in the post-nineteenth century does not prove that there exists a Muslim world. It seems Aydın takes the argument too far to highlight the problem of the racialization of Muslim identity in the nineteenth century. His observation is significant with respect to the change in Muslim identity as a result of imperial racialized identity politics. However, claiming the absence of a Muslim world before the nineteenth century in order to highlight the colonial impact is not supported by historical facts. I agree with Barton, who criticizes Aydın's take on concepts like "*ummah*" and "caliphate" "as discontinuous terminology relative to Muslim identity."[227] As I discuss throughout the thesis, international

[226] El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs," 173.
[227] Chandlor Barton, "[Book Review] Cemil Aydin, The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History," *The Maydan*, December 2, 2017, https://themaydan.com/2017/12/book-review-cemi-aydin-idea-muslim-world-global-intellectual-history/.

diplomacy and rivalry among Muslim rulers in the early modern era shows that a common Muslim identity was central to Muslim monarchs' superiority claims in the Muslim world.

Besides, we cannot claim that there was no religious solidarity among Muslim rulers at all. Even though it is not possible to know for certain, the Mamluk demand for Ottoman military help against the Portuguese who attacked the Hejaz in the first decade of the 1500s could have been an example of that sort of a solidarity. Politically, the Mamluk sultan was well aware that to make such a request would increase the political power and prestige of his chief rival, the Ottoman sultan, enormously, which it did. Soon after that help against the Portuguese, Ottomans overthrew the Mamluk empire and replaced the Mamluks in holding the universal caliphate. Thus, the Mamluk demand could well have resulted from a religious desire to protect the Two Holiest Sanctuaries against the "infidel."

As I remarked earlier, political concerns had greater influence in foreign policy decisions than sectarian factors. However, that fact did not make sectarian factors irrelevant to political decisions. Sect as a sole factor could not prevent alliances with the infidel per se, but it nevertheless helped inter-confessional alliances greatly. That is why the ideal type of alliance for rulers was the case in which political interests and sectarian ties overlapped. This kind of cases provided rulers with discursive consistency, which was central to their legitimacy. In opposite situations, political authorities struggled to convince their domestic audience of the righteousness of their decisions.[228]

[228] I discuss various strategies the Porte employed to cover its anti-Afghan and pro-Safavid policy in the 1720s in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER 2: THE OTTOMANS AND THE RUSSIANS BEFORE THE FALL OF ISFAHAN

This chapter focuses on Ottoman-Iranian and -Russian relations in the two decades preceding the fall of Isfahan. Relations between the Ottomans and the Safavids were marked by a long period of hostility from 1501 to 1639: wars were fought in 1514-17, 1533-36, 1548-49, 1552-54, 1578-1590, 1603-1618, and 1623-1639. This fact demonstrates the dangers of a powerful Iran for the security of the Ottoman domains. Nevertheless, the Porte came to realize that it also needed a stable central Safavid authority in Iran for at least two fundamental reasons, which became clearer during the peaceful period between 1639 and 1722. First, as I discussed in Chapter One, in the early modern era Safavid Persia provided a barrier between the Ottoman sultan and his Sunni rivals in the East. Ahmed III's rejection of the new Bukharan ruler's offer of eliminating the Safavids in 1713 was only one example of Iran's role in Ottoman policy. Second, the Ottomans needed a central authority in Iran to check the recalcitrant Kurdish and Bedouin tribes in the frontier zone. Thus, the ideal case for the Porte on the eastern frontiers was the maintenance of a *weak* but *stable* central Safavid authority in Persia. This chapter will demonstrate the way in which the Porte pursued this policy with respect to Iran, and the difficult balance it required, in the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

Regarding relations between the Ottoman and the Russians, I discuss military and diplomatic contacts between 1699 and 1721. I also compare the Ottoman and Russian policies toward Persia prior to 1722. I claim that while the Porte did not aim to invade Persia during the weakness of the Safavids, the Russians targeted the Caucasus militarily. I examine the Eternal Peace Treaty concluded by the Ottomans and the Russians in 1721, and argue that it was only a short-term commitment to peace, unlike its name suggested. As a demonstration of this fact, at the end of the chapter I discuss the Ottoman reinforcement of its defenses against Russia on the northern and north-eastern fronts in the early 1720s .

A. Relations between Constantinople and Isfahan

A.1. Ottoman Policies toward Iran

During the long war of the Ottomans against the Holy League led by the Habsburgs, which started in 1683, on the Ottoman-Safavid border there were two independent, concurrent rebellions by local tribes, the Kurds and the Bedouins. In 1689, a local Kurdish leader named Süleyman Kirmac, seigneur of Bebe, a *sancak* (district) in the city of Şehrizor at the Iranian border, rebelled against Ottoman authority, killed the governor of Şehrizor, and took over the provincial capital of Kirkuk.[229] Expanding his rebellion east, Süleyman Kirmac seized several Safavid forts and continued raiding toward Urumiye and Kirmanshah.[230] The Safavid court commissioned two consecutive armies to crush the rebellion, but in both cases Kirmac defeated the Safavid forces. The Porte replied negatively to the Safavid request to take care of its own vassal, given the Ottoman army's deployment on the western front against the Great Alliance. Only in the summer of 1698 did the Safavids succeed in suppressing this expanded rebellion, although not completely.[231] With the end of the war on the western front, the Ottomans and the Safavids carried out a joint operation against the Bebe insurgents, suppressing the rebellion completely.[232]

The Basra rebellion, a bigger loss for the Ottoman Empire, had been started in 1691 by a coalition of several Bedouin tribes including the Cezayir, Ma'dan, Müntefik, and Âl-i Serrac with the aim of taking over the city.[233] The Bedouin attacks had grown, and, in the summer of 1695, the city had fallen into the hands of the Bedouin coalition.[234] The Ottoman Empire could not have counteracted the loss of Basra. The Ottoman governor-general of Baghdad received an unprecedented offer from Sayyid Farajullah Khan, the viceroy of Huwayza, an Iranian city

[229] Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 259.
[230] Güngörürler, 273.
[231] Güngörürler, 318.
[232] Güngörürler, 344.
[233] Güngörürler, 260.
[234] Güngörürler, 283.

at the Ottoman border, offering, "let us [i.e., Huwayzans] seize Basra for You in accordance with [our] friendship."[235] Upon the acceptance of this offer by the Baghdadi governor, Sayyid Farajullah Khan had taken the city from the hands of the Bedouins in 1697.[236] Soon after the capture, the Safavid shah sent Rustam Khan Zangana to Constantinople; he arrived in the city in March 1698, carrying a letter of friendship together with a highly valuable gift: "a 45-carat diamond symbolizing Basra's keys."[237] After thus receiving the "keys" of Basra, and suppressing the Bebe rebellion, the Ottoman army took control of the city in February 1701.[238]

These uprisings against both the Ottoman and Persian central authorities during the 1690s clearly showed again how fragile the respective capitals' authority over the frontier zone was. More importantly, the rebellions and Ottoman loss of control over the Ottoman-Iranian border for more than a decade was an alarming signal for the Porte to keep its relations with the Safavids friendly and not to undermine Safavid authority in Persian territories, for its own territorial security.

However, this policy did not mean that the Ottoman government was not to benefit from the weakness of the Safavids. Especially in the 1710s, the Ottoman and Safavid sides had changed roles in terms of which was utilizing the weaknesses of the other party.[239] Unlike the 1690s and early 1700s, the Ottoman government had made successful recovery attempts in Europe and to the north of the Black Sea. The Safavids, on the other hand, were weakening in the face of serious rebellions coming from nearly every corner of Persia.[240] Ahmed III's royal

[235] Güngörürler, 301.
[236] Güngörürler, 302.
[237] Güngörürler, 305.
[238] Güngörürler, 357–58.
[239] Güngörürler discusses the way the Safavids quickly converted their military investment of helping the Ottomans in the 1690s into cash. Isfahan demanded and gained one-time privileges of renovating the sepulchers of Ali al-Hadi (10th Shiite Imam) and Hasan al-Askari's (11th Shiite Imam) in 1696, and the sepulchers of Musa al-Kazım (7th Shiite Imam) and Muhammad al-Taqi (9th Shiite Imam) in 1702. See Güngörürler, 285–95 and 380–82.
[240] These insurgencies of the Lazgis, Kurds, Bedouin Arabs, Omanis, Baluchis, Ghilzai Afghans, Abdali Afghans, and Turkmens from all around the Persian territory grew at an increasing pace especially in the 1710s. See Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 222–41.

victory missive (*fetihnâme-i hümayûn*) to Shah Sultan Husayn in the beginning of 1716 announcing the recovery of Morea from the Venetians stressed again the superior status of the Ottoman sultan over the Safavid shah.[241] More importantly, for the first time since 1688, the Ottoman letter made no reference to "alliance."[242] The Safavids were no longer a valuable ally.

The Porte fought against the Republic of Venice between 1715 and 1718. The Habsburg monarchy was involved in the war on the side of Venice in 1716. At the end of the war, under the 1718 Treaty of Passawrowitz Austria acquired Temesvar, Belgrade, and tiny strips in Wallachia and Bosnia from the Ottoman Empire, while the Porte recovered the Morea from Venice.[243] The Treaty was composed of two parts, political and economic, each having twenty articles. The nineteenth article of the economic part stipulated that Iranian merchants were to pay a single 5 percent customs duty when crossing the Ottoman-Austrian border either way.[244] Even though not explicitly mentioned, the meaning and aim of this article was to deprive Russia of the economic gains of Iranian trade by diverting Iranian merchants from the Russian route to the Ottoman route.[245] The article was a response to the Russo-Persian commercial treaty of 1717, which had been concluded with the efforts of the Russian envoy Artemiy Volynsky.

Ahmed III and the Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha sent letters to their Iranian counterparts in 1720, not only informing them about the commercial agreement with Austria,

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[241] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.6-221, pp. 352-62. Ahmed III put forward that both in caliphate and sultanate, he was at the top of the world, like a star and a sun.

[242] Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 432.

[243] Nikola Samardžić, "The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718: An Introduction," in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, ed. Charles Ingrao, Nikola Samardžić, and Jovan Pešalj (Purdue University Press, 2011), 14.

[244] *Muahedat Mecmuası*, vol. 3 (İstanbul: Hakikat Matbaası, 1880), 112–20. "Acem tüccarı Devlet-i Çesariyyeden Nehr-i Tuna ile hudud-ı İslamiyye'ye gelir ise, mutad üzere yüzde 5 hesabı üzere gümrüklerin ve reftiyelerin bir defa eda eyleyip, gümrük ümenasından eda tezkiresi aldıkdan sonra tekrar gümrük talebiyle rencide olunmayalar. Kezalik, Acem diyarından emtialarıyla gelip, hudud-ı İslamiyye'den memalik-i Çesariyye'ye gitmek murad ederler ise, Karadeniz ve yahud Nehr-i Tuna'da bir defa yüzde 5 hesabı üzere resm-i gümrüklerin eda eylediklerinden sonra tekrar gümrük talebiyle rencide olunmayalar."

[245] For the commercial details of the article, see Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 41–43. For the lifting of the Ottoman ban on the passage of Persian merchants through Belgrade, see also Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan et al., vol. 2 (İstanbul: Klasik, 2017), 1165.

but also demanding that the Persians comply with the terms of the agreement. It is of critical importance that, in the end, the Treaty of Passarowitz was between two independent states regarding the way a third independent state, i.e., Persia, should act. Thus, theoretically, it would have been possible for Iran to refuse the agreement that was imposed upon her and to continue using the Russian route. To eliminate that possibility, both the sultan's and grand vizier's letters used threatening language to insist that the shah comply with the Austro-Ottoman agreement.

The content of both letters covered only the issue of Iranian merchants' trade routes without dealing with any other concrete topics or questions. The grand vizierial letter to the *i'timād al-dawla* of Iran clarified the commercial agreement reached at Passarowitz.[246] Regarding the Russian trade route starting at the coastal city of Astrakhan by the north end of the Caspian Sea, both the grand vizier and the sultan wrote that it was a troublesome and detrimental route that should be avoided by the merchants. In Damad İbrahim Pasha's letters to both Shah Sultan Husayn and the *İ'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Quli Khan, he strongly underlined that Persian compliance with this agreement would lead to the confirmation of and increase in the sincere friendship and amity between the two states that had ancient roots in the ancestors of both current rulers.[247] He added that the reason the Ottoman sultan had accepted the Austrian commercial offer on the passage of Iranian merchants was that same inherited ancient friendship and continuing affection toward the Safavids; "the cutoff of the refreshing lights of that friendship and affection was impossible."[248] Without directly asking for the shah's

[246] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-279, pp. 458-60.
[247] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-279 and 280, pp. 458-63. It is of importance that the terminology used in that letter fits mainly into the two categories of *perpetual peace in alliance* and *ancient brotherhood*, signifying the highest levels of unity between the two states. For the four categories established by Selim Güngörürler, see Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 25. I also explain these categories briefly, below. Compared to the letters of earlier in the previous two decades, the Ottomans used these concepts for the first time only after the 1690s. This could have suggested that if the Persians complied with the Ottoman demands, then the Ottomans could have increased the level of good relations, thus potentially helping the Safavids in their times of need, for instance, when they were faced with troublesome uprisings from all over the country.
[248] "inkıta'-i lemaât-i ferrûhası gayr-ı kâbil musâfât-ı kadîme ve muvâlât-ı müsted'ime", BOA, A.DVNSMH.d 6-279, p. 458.

decision on that matter, Damad İbrahim highlighted the efforts of the shah in the illumination and daily increase of the affection, love, unanimity, and unity between the Ottomans and the Safavids,[249] thereby implying that if the Persian shah still wanted to maintain peace with his western neighbor, then he should act in accordance with the Austro-Ottoman commercial agreement and order Iranian merchants to use not the Russian route, but the Ottoman one.

The Porte's pressure during the troubled times of the Persian central authority bore fruit immediately. Shah Sultan Husayn issued a *firman* and ordered the state officials to let the Iranian merchants going to Austria travel only via the Ottoman territories and not to allow them to use the Astrakhan route, specifying the city by name.[250] He also reiterated the reasons for this deviation as the length, danger, harm, and trouble of the Astrakhan route. After informing the officials of the 5 percent customs due, to be paid only once, by referring to Damad İbrahim Pasha by name, Shah Sultan Husayn stated that as the grand vizier had written, the affection between the Safavids and the Ottomans was getting stronger by the day and "today it has reached the level of unity and brotherhood."[251]

The rapprochement between the Porte and Dagestani khanates in the 1710s was another dimension of this trend.[252] I will discuss below in a more detailed way that the Ottoman sultan asked for Dagestani military help for *jihad* against the Austrians in 1717. The *shamkhal* of Dagestan promised to send 30,000 troops to fight, and, in return, Ahmed III made the *shamkhal* governor of the *sancak* and allocated a yearly payment for him. At that time, the Dagestani khanates in the Caucasus were in fact the vassals of the Safavid shah, being formally under the authority of Isfahan. Thus, using the weakness of Shah Sultan Husayn, Ahmed III tried to usurp

[249] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-280, pp. 460-63.
[250] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7, pp. 23-24. The *firman* was written in March 1721 in Tehran, where Shah Sultan Husayn resided.
[251] "Chun az qadîmu'l ayyâm, zâbıta-i muvâlât fi ma bayn in do handân-ı azimuşşân rûz ba rûz istihkâm yafta, imrûz ba martaba-i yagânagî ve muvâhât rasîda"
[252] I will discuss the details of this contact below, when examining Russian policies toward Iran.

the official suzerain-vassal relation between the Dagestani khanates and the Safavids.[253] Still, the Porte's alliance with the Dagestanis was a challenge more to the plans of Peter I than to Shah Sultan Husayn's authority. First, the alliance targeted the Russians and the Austrians, not the Persians directly. Second, as I discuss below and in Chapter Three, the Ottoman sultan was keen to keep relations with the Persian shah peaceful, until the day the latter lost his throne in 1722.

A.2. Corresponding Embassies

A.2.1. The Embassy of Dürri Ahmed Efendi

Dürri Ahmed Efendi, who was a tribute bookkeeper (*haraç muhasebecisi*), set out from Constantinople at the end of August 1720 and arrived in Tehran, where Shah Sultan Husayn resided, on January 25th, 1721. He left Tehran at the end of March 1721.[254] He had two main duties. The first and official duty was to inform the Persians about the commercial deal in the Treaty of Passarowitz. The second and secret duty was observing and reporting on the internal situation of Iran.[255] Below, I will examine Dürri Ahmed Efendi's mission in terms of the Ottomans' dual policy toward Persia: utilizing Safavid weakness and maintaining peaceful relations.

A.2.1.1. Ottoman Utilization of Safavid Weakness

The Ottoman Empire enjoyed a higher status than the Safavid state in the interstate hierarchical order of the early modern world.[256] A clear demonstration of this mutually accepted hierarchy was that the Ottoman grand vizier could have written to Iranian shah directly and also to the *i'timād al-dawla*, while the *i'timād al-dawla* could only address the Ottoman grand vizier, and not the Ottoman sultan. Dürri Ahmed Efendi's general attitude in the Persian court, as he

[253] It is significant to note that even in its powerful days, maintaining centralized control of the Dagestan region was difficult for the Safavids. This also explains why it was not the Lazgis but the Safavids making the annual payment. Besides, there were still several Dagestani tribes living independent of any major power. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 9.

[254] For the travel account of Dürri Ahmed Efendi, see Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1256–69.

[255] "…serâir-i keyfiyyât-ı ahvâl-i memâlik-i İran'ı isti'lâm içün…" See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1165.

[256] Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722."

narrated, went beyond that agreed-upon hierarchy and was in conformity with the threatening language of the letters sent from Constantinople. Suraiya Faroqhi observes that Dürri's primary concern seemed to be impressing Shah Sultan Husayn with the Ottoman sultan's power.[257] The Ottoman ambassador narrated several occasions on which he demonstrated Ottoman superiority over the Persians diplomatically.[258] Through various symbolic means, he conveyed the message that the Safavids were in a weaker position in which they could and should not resist Ottoman will.

Dürri Ahmed Efendi wrote that a diplomatic crisis erupted regarding his return with or without response letters. The *i'timād al-dawla* informed Dürri Efendi that the Safavids would send the letters with an Iranian envoy, not with the Ottoman ambassador. The reason given for this conduct was reciprocation for the 1698 return from Constantinople of the previous Iranian embassy led by Rustam Khan with empty hands;[259] the responses had been carried instead by the Ottoman ambassador Ebukavuk Mehmed Pasha. The Persians also told Dürri that, as an established rule, only one letter should have been sent, not two. Dürri's answer involved the citation of certain examples of the Safavid shah's practices that did not fit the established rules, and the subsequent claim that the rule could be broken again, since it had been broken once. The long discussion between the parties did not result in consensus; however, the *i'timād al-dawla* invited Dürri into his presence again and the Safavids eventually agreed to send replies

[257] Suraiya Faroqhi, "An Ottoman Ambassador in Iran: Dürri Ahmed Efendi and the Collapse of the Safavid Empire in 1720-21," in *Another Mirror for Princes: The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and Its Reception*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (The Isis Press, 2009), 186.

[258] For several examples, see Faroqhi, "An Ottoman Ambassador in Iran: Dürri Ahmed Efendi and the Collapse of the Safavid Empire in 1720-21"; Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 445–58.

[259] For a detailed account of the reciprocal embassies of Rustam Khan Zangana and Ebukavuk Mehmed Pasha in 1698, see Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 305–32.

with Dürri due to the "incomparability" of Dürri to other ambassadors and on the grounds that the Safavid shah had a strong liking for the Ottoman envoy.[260]

A.2.1.2. Maintaining Peaceful Relations

For all the Ottoman diplomatic shows of superiority, the Porte did not target the territorial integrity of Iran and did not aim to overthrow the Safavids. Ottoman letters to Isfahan stipulated only the shah's compliance with the Austro-Ottoman commercial agreement on the passage of Iranian merchants through Ottoman territories instead of the northern route controlled by Russia. Other than this precondition, which was obviously not that harsh compared to territorial demands, the Porte did not send threatening messages to Iran.

Here, I examine the language of the Ottoman letters within the conceptual framework drawn by Selim Güngörürler. He specifies four different levels in Ottoman-Safavid diplomatic relations in the post-1639 peace era. Each level shows a different mode of relational closeness. He names these levels, from the closest to the most basic, as such: *perpetual peace in alliance*, *ancient brotherhood*, *friendly harmony*, and *non-hostility*. Güngörürler also documents the terminology used in diplomatic correspondence at each level. He argues that the terminology changed according to the level of relations and that each side was well aware of the diplomatic meaning of the concepts used to signify these different levels.[261]

When considered through the prism of this framework, there is a significant difference between the Ottoman letters of 1716 and 1720. In the eleven-page royal epistle of 1716, there was only a short reference at the end of the letter to mutual peace (*müsâlemet*), acquaintanceship (*istinâs*), fidelity (*sıdk*), union (*ittihâd*), and affection (*vidâd*).[262] These concepts pertain to the

[260] "amma zahiren egerçi kanun değildir ve lakin siz sair elçilere kıyas olunmazsız. Ve şahımız size gayet mahabbet etmişdür." See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1262.
[261] Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 25.
[262] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-221, pp. 352-62.

level of *friendly harmony*, the third level in rank.[263] The sultanic letter of 1720, on the other hand, included references to inherited love (*hubb-i mevrûs*), ancient concord and mutual affection (*kadîm tehâb ve tevâd*), and ancient love and amity (*kadîm hubb ve muvâlât*).[264] The grand-vizierial letter also underlined the brotherhood (*muvâhât*) and alliance (*ittifâk*) between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran. He signified the quality of the friendship and amity as "disaster-immune"[265] and stressed the continuity of the friendship[266] that had been transferred by inheritance from noble ancestors.[267] At the end of his letter, he asked the Safavid *i'timād al-dawla* to exert his efforts to protect and maintain the union and alliance, as had been the case previously.[268] The Ottoman letters of 1720 had clearly exalted the status of the Ottoman-Safavid relationship to the top level of *perpetual peace in alliance*, a two-level increase in just four years.

In line with the assuring message regarding Ottoman friendliness in the letters sent from Constantinople, the Ottoman envoy was also careful to reassure the Safavid court. In the first encounter between Dürri Ahmed Efendi and the *İ'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Quli Khan, the Ottoman envoy refused to give the grand-vizierial letter to Muhammad Quli Khan before that of the sultan to the shah, which meant that the Persians had to wait another week to see the actual demands of the Porte.[269] Muhammad Quli Khan interpreted this act as an indication of

[263] The letter from the grand vizier also included concepts that showed the relations at the level of *friendly harmony* not included above: mutual fidelity (*musâdakat*), concord (*vifâk*), affection (*vidâd*), love (*tehâb*), and union (*ittihâd*). See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-222, pp. 363-66.
[264] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-278, pp. 455-57.
[265] "masûni'l âfât olan musâfât ve muvâlât," See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-279.
[266] "muvâlât-ı müsted'ime"
[267] "eslâf-ı emcâd ve âbâ ve ecdâd-ı âli nejâdlarından muntakil"
[268] "Cenâb-ı muhâlesât meâbları dahî, kemâ fi'l evvel, inzibât-ı zevâbıt-ı vifâk ve irtibât, revâbıt-ı ittihâd ve ittifâkın devâm ve istimrâr-âsâr sâtı'atü'l envârına sa'y ve himmetleri derkâr buyrulup"
[269] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1257. Dürri even narrated this event as if he had duped the *i'timād al-dawla* by giving him the letters from Hasan Pasha and his *kethüda*. According to his account, when the *i'timād al-dawla* asked for the letters, obviously meaning the grand-vizierial letters, Dürri Ahmed gave the letters he had received from Baghdad without revealing that those were not the letters from Damad İbrahim Pasha. Only after seeing them did Muhammad Quli Khan understood that that were the wrong letters and asked for the grand-vizierial letters.

the Porte's bad intentions and told Dürri Efendi that the Porte was going to realize the plans for attacking Iran dating from the time of Grand Vizier Ali Pasha. After questioning the source of this information and showing its unreliability and falsity, Dürri Ahmed Efendi further stated that eighty-five years had passed since Murad IV's reign, and that Ahmed III was the seventh *padishah*[270] to preserve the peace between the Ottoman Empire and Iran during that long period. Moreover, he argued, the family of Othman had been known for their bravery for five hundred years; "Would it behoove their fame of bravery," he asked rhetorically, "to crush the weak with an evil attempt in this miserable situation of yours?"[271] He also referred to the letters as confirmation of his words about the Ottoman dedication to preserving friendly relations.[272].

In the last meeting between Shah Sultan Husayn and Dürri Ahmed Efendi, the shah implied possible Ottoman attacks from the western border through the rulers of Kurdistan.[273] In response, Dürri Efendi rejected even the possibility of an Ottoman assault in clear terms and by referring to recent history. First, he assured the shah that the Kurdistan *bey*s who were on the frontiers were in complete obedience to the Ottoman *padishah,* and that if they showed even a slight disobedience, after being punished they were replaced either by their sons or brothers. Second, he gave the example of the Ottoman attitude against Bebe Süleyman's uprising in Şehrizor, mentioned above. He reminded the shah that after getting the news of the rebellion and the shah's demand for Ottoman action through a Persian emissary, Mustafa II had crushed Bebe Süleyman, given the territories he occupied back to Persians, replaced him with somebody

[270] Murad IV (r. 1623-1640) Sultan İbrahim (r. 1640-48), Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687), Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691), Ahmed II (r. 1691-1695), Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703), Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730).

[271] "Sizin bu perişanlığınızda suikasd ile zebûn-basanlık itmek şan-ı şecâatlarına layık mı?" That rhetorical question was both right and wrong. In military terms, it was right, since the Ottoman government had not intended to utilize the Safavid central authority's weakness to gain territories from Iran. However, in political and diplomatic terms, as shown above the Porte had forced the Safavids to profit significantly from the troublesome situation of Iran.

[272] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1257. That conversion was significant in that it showed the preparation of the Ottoman envoy on matters of diplomatic history between the two states. Most probably, by calculating Persian anxieties, these points were prepared beforehand and put forward to appease Safavid concerns about the Ottoman attitude.

[273] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1263.

else, and also honored Shah Sultan Husayn with a royal epistle sent via a special envoy.[274] Upon this response, as Dürri relates, the shah was satisfied with Dürri's arguments.[275]

A.2.1.3. Being Cautious about Military Developments

Even if the Porte did not intend to attack the Safavids at that time, the Ottoman government was not indifferent to military developments in Persia. Dürri Efendi had gathered significant information on the current situation of Iran and also on the rebelling groups posing serious challenges to the Safavid central authority especially in the most recent two decades. Dürri allocated the last part of his travelogue to reporting his observations. He started with the economic conditions in Iran and did not remark on any outstanding crisis or problems in the economy of the country.[276] Then, he moved on to the Safavid military power and gave information on the cities with fortresses and what cities received cannon balls and other ammunition. He also underlined the mastery of the Kizilbash soldiers in archery and musketry.[277]

Dürri Efendi named three different ethnic groups rebelling against the Safavids: the Ghilzai Afghans, the Bahadırlı Afghans, and the Lazgis. Of these three groups he mentioned mostly the Ghilzai Afghans, starting from their uprising in the 1700s under the leadership of Mir Uwais in Kandahar, their stronghold, until their most recent raids targeting Kirman in the east, which had been undertaken by Mir Uwais's son Mahmud. He gave brief information about the cavalry of the Ghilzai Afghans; however, he emphasized the transformation of their military power into a political one, unique among the rebelling groups, over the past fifteen years. He stated that starting with Mir Uwais, the Ghilzai Afghans had called their leader's name in the Friday *khutba* and minted coin, again in his name, demonstrating the Ghilzai Afghan's

[274] Dürri's mentioning of the Bebe rebellion even after more than two decades served to underline the importance of that event in Ottoman-Safavid relations.
[275] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1264.
[276] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1267.
[277] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1268.

emergence as an independent political unit similar to other "shah"s in the east.[278] The inscription on the coins was "The renowned Mir Uwais who is a just ruler and shah of the world, / Had sealed the coin in Kandahar, the abode of constancy."[279]

Dürri's report mentions the Lazgis in a more positive light, highlighting their close ties with the Ottomans. He first wrote about their uprising against the Safavids in their strongholds in Dagestan and Shirvan, then about their capture of the city of Shamakhi in the year of Dürri's embassy and their raids on Ganja. Dürri Ahmed Efendi claimed that the Lazgis still recognized the Ottoman sultan as the legitimate ruler, as shown in their minting of coins and in the delivery of the Friday *khutba* in the name of the Ottoman sultan. He mentioned the names of two leaders, İbrahim Sultan and Hacı Davud Beg, as their main chieftains, the latter of whom would become a very significant figure for the realization of Ottoman political and military aims in northern Iran, as will be seen in 1722 and after.[280]

Dürri's account had clearly depicted the Lazgis and other Sunni groups as possible allies in case of a military clash. He even wrote that one third of the Iranian population was composed of Sunnis, encouraging data for an Ottoman campaign against Iran. Faroqhi rightly makes the analogy of a "fifth column" based on Dürri's remarks on Sunnis in Persia. Apparently, the information given about the Lazgis and Sunnis, showing them to be sympathetic toward the Ottoman sultan, pertained to a possible Ottoman military campaign into Iranian territories. If, as Râşid Efendi claimed, Dürri's visit was intended only to learn about the latest developments

[278] Both acts were two major indicators of being the legitimate Muslim authority in a certain territory for centuries in areas ruled by Muslim rulers.

[279] "Sikke zed ber dirhem dâr-ül karâr Kandehâr / Hân-ı âdil, Şâh-ı âlem Mir Üveys nâmdâr." See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1268.

[280] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1268. Bedreddinzâde Ali, *mirliva* in Kars-Erzurum, also reported to the Porte in 1722 that the Dagestanis pronounce the name of the Ottoman Sultan in Friday *khutba*s. See Karslı Bedreddinzâde Mîrliva Ali Beğ, "Kaa'ime, H. 1117-1135 (1705-1723) (Çökmekte Olan İran–Safavî Devleti'nde Afgan Sülâlesi Hâkimiyeti, Şirvan ile Dağıstan Sünnîlerinin İstiklâli ve Moskof Çarı I. Petro'nun İstilâsı Üzerine, Osmanlı Gizli İstihbârâtının Özeti)," ed. M. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, *Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi*, no. 7 (1976): 111–12.

in Iran, it should have sufficed to present the current situation of Iran itself. Most probably, these observations about the Lazgis and Iranian Sunnis were answers to questions asked by Ottoman authorities.

At the end of Dürri's travelogue, he included an executive summary of the situation in Iran, including his forecasts about the near future of the country. He wrote that during his travel and six-and-a-half-month stay in Iran, he had investigated their situation thoroughly, both overtly and covertly. As a result, he would relate that, despite the prosperity of the country, Persia lacked qualified human resource in the administration of the state. He underlined the impotence of Isfahan as the main reason for the inability of the Persian court to suppress military uprisings all over the country, leading to the shattering of the state. Regarding the troops collected to fight against the rebels, he wrote that the court could not control the soldiers, and they were escaping military duty. In that executive summary, when referencing the rebelling groups, he only referred to Ghilzai Mahmud, the son of Mir Uwais, calling him the "archenemy" of the Safavids. To show the greatness of the Afghan challenge, he stated that even the commanders were marching poorly and in desperation against the Ghilzai Afghans. Dürri Ahmed Efendi's last sentence was alarming enough for the Porte: "All of them [the Persians] agree upon the fact that the turn of the shah is over, his state is gone, and his time is up. They express it openly."[281]

A.2.2. The Embassy of Murtaza Quli Khan

In the end of March 1721, Murtaza Quli Khan Sa'dlu set out from Tehran for Constantinople, together with Dürri Ahmed Efendi. Murtaza Quli Khan arrived in Constantinople on December 24th, 1721.[282] He departed from the capital on April 12th, a month after the Ghilazi Afghans had

[281] "Cümlesi müttefikdirler ki, "Şeyhoğlu'nun ya'ni Şahın devri dönmüş ve devleti gitmiş ve müddeti temam olmuşdur" deyü aşikare söylerler." See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1269.
[282] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1270–71.

begun their siege of Isfahan.[283] The main duty of the Iranian ambassador was to persuade the Sublime Porte not to enter into an alliance with the Afghan rebels on the grounds of the shared sectarian identity of both of these Sunni powers.[284] Murtaza Quli Khan informed the Porte about the power of Mahmud and the rebellion of Lazgis in Shirvan.[285] Based on the letters sent by Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim Pasha, it seemed that the ambassador achieved this main goal, since thee letters assured the Safavids regarding the Ottoman firmness in preserving peace with Iran.[286]

Murtaza Quli Khan brought with him three letters from the Persian court.[287] The terminology employed by Shah Sultan Husayn and *i'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Quli Khan confirmed the level of relations as *perpetual peace in alliance*: "inherited friendship and affinity" (*dustî ve vidâd-i mevrûs*),[288]"ancient straight friendship" (*dustî-i kavîm-i kadîm*),[289] and "fortifying the building of union and alliance" (*istihkâm-ı mebâni-i ittihâd ve ittifâk*).[290] In terms of content, as mentioned above, the Persians indicated that they accepted the Austro-Ottoman demand for the passage of Iranian merchants through Ottoman lands in their journeys to Austria instead of through the Russian route. However, the letter from the *i'timād al-dawla*

[283] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1286.
[284] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 215. Lockhart refers to a report from Abraham Stanyan, the British Resident at Constantinople at that time. The date of the related dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Southern Department was February 19th – March 2nd, 1722.
[285] Mary Lucille Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734: As Revealed in Despatches of the Venetian Baili* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1978), 90.
[286] In the primary documents and texts, I could not find information indicating that the Persian court asked for Ottoman military help in suppressing the rebellions with the mediation of Murtaza Quli Khan.
[287] For the letters from the Persian shah and the *i'timād al-dawla*, see BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-5, pp. 24-26 (Ottoman translation of Shah Sultan Husayn's letter to Ahmed III); BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-19, pp. 41-43 (original Persian letter from Shah Sultan Husayn to Ahmed III); BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7, p. 10 (Ottoman translation of Shah Sultan Husayn's letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha); BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-15, pp. 35-36 (original Persian letter from Shah Sultan Husayn to Damad İbrahim Pasha); BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-16, pp. 36-39 (original Persian letter from Muhammad Quli Khan to Damad İbrahim Pasha). There was a mistake in bookbinding of the pages of the Turkish translation of Muhammad Quli Khan's letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha. However, I was able find and combine the parts of the letter in the same Registrar. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7, pp. 34, 610-11.
[288] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-19.
[289] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-15.
[290] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-16.

showed that the Iranians did not want to make this big concession without getting something in return. He had four demands for the Porte. First, the Porte was to permit the passage of French merchants going to Iran. He explained that there was a commercial treaty between Persia and France, and Ottoman permission would make it easier for the French traders to reach Iran, instead of circumnavigating through the Atlantic.[291] Second, the sultan should send orders for the protection of Iranian pilgrims from overcharging by the Ottoman authorities. Third, the sultan should give the shah the right to restore and maintain holy shrines in Iraq. Fourth, Muhammad Quli Khan complained about the plundering of Erevan merchants and people by Kurds at the Erzurum border, and the plundering of the Safavid subjects in Kirmansahan by the community of Baclan at the border of Baghdad. He asked the Porte to establish border security and reminded the sultan about how the Safavids had provided recompense for the plundered goods of Ottoman subjects when the reverse had happened.

The Ottoman reception of Murtaza Quli Khan and their responses to Persia showcased again the dual Ottoman attitude toward Isfahan. Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim Pasha affirmed *perpetual peace in alliance*, as the original letters from Isfahasn had, through their vocabulary: "divine lights of ancient love" (*envâr-ı hubb-i kadîm*),[292] "long duration and time-honored" (*müddet-i medîd ve ahd-i baîd*), "fixed and stable" (*sâbit ve berkarâr*), "firm concord" (*üstüvâr vifâk*),[293] and "alliance" (*ittifâk*).[294] Damad İbrahim Pasha also described the friendship through

[291] He should have referred to the commercial treaty between France and Persia concluded during the embassy of Muhammad-Reza Beg in Versailles in 1715. See Jean Calmard, "FRANCE Ii. RELATIONS WITH PERSIA TO 1789," in *EI*, 2012, 127–31, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/france-ii. For the articles of the treaty, see Herbette Maurice, *Une Ambassade Persane Sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Perrin, 1907), 371–74.
[292] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-36, pp. 47-9. (Ahmed III's letter to Shah Sultan Husayn).
[293] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-37, pp. 49-50. (Damad İbrahim's letter to Shah Sultan Husayn).
[294] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-38, p. 50-53. (Damad İbrahim's letter to Muhammad Quli Khan).

a Qur'anic allegory: "like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens" (*asluhā sābitun va farruhā fi al-samā*).[295]

Out of four Persian demands, the Ottomans accepted the second and fourth ones, which were related to established rights of the Iranians. However, the Persian demands for new rights were declined by the Porte; while the Ottoman government did want to keep the relations peaceful, it also did not want the Safavids to gain extra benefits. This attitude was another example of the Porte's strategy of keeping the Safavids weak but stable, at a time when control of the bilateral relations was mostly in the hands of the Porte.

Regarding the pilgrimage issue, Ahmed III sent imperial orders to all related high-ranking administrators, and Damad İbrahim Pasha informed Muhammad Quli Khan about the orders.[296] He added that the Iranian pilgrims using the Baghdad route to perform the *hajj* were not going to be charged more than eleven *ashrafi*.[297] Indeed, the imperial order to the governor of Baghdad included relatively strict measures to prevent the harassment of the Iranian pilgrims. The Porte ordered the governor to appoint a commander for the *hajj* caravan going through the Baghdad route. Besides protecting Iranian pilgrims, that commander was to ascertain that the Iranian pilgrims were not overcharged in Mecca and Medina and throughout their journey. Moreover, the governor of Baghdad was to ask the Iranian pilgrims whether they had been extorted or taxed regularly by the commander of the *hajj* caravan he had appointed.[298] Even though the way Ottoman officials were instructed to behave toward the Persian pilgrims was

[295] Qur'an 14:24 "Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? - A goodly Word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens." Yusuf Ali translation, see Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an* (Wordsworth, 2000).

[296] In the Mühimme Register numbered 130, these imperial orders were registered confirming what the grand vizier wrote in his letter. The recipients were the *sharif* of Mecca; the *emiru'l hac*s of Egypt and Damascus; the *şeyhulharem* of Medina; the governors of Egypt, Damascus, and Basra; and all other related officials. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-890, 891, 892, 893, 894, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1134 (February 27th – March 8th, 1722).

[297] A gold currency that was prevalent in several Muslim states introduced first by the Mamluks in the first half of the thirteenth century. See "Eşrefî," in *TDVİA*, 1995.

[298] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-894, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1134 (February 27th – March 8th, 1722).

not in itself an affirmation of the Porte's political and military intentions toward the Safavids, the fact that the Porte took this issue seriously and wanted to inform the Safavids about their firm actions to protect Iranian pilgrims' rights was an important message to the Safavid court showing the Ottoman decisiveness in the interest of preserving peace and friendship. As Dürri Ahmed Efendi related in his account, the *i'timad al-dawla* pointed out the protection of Persian pilgrims as a demonstration of the Ottoman *padishah*'s affection for the Safavid shah.[299]

The third demand, the protection of the Iranian border from the assaults of Ottoman subjects on the frontier, was presumably the most important topic in this correspondence. Damad İbrahim Pasha wrote that the solidarity and alliance between the two rulers was a necessity for the welfare and peace of their respective subjects. He continued by stating that based on the sincere friendship, unity, and amity between two states, the Ottoman sultan had released strict imperial orders to Hasan Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, and to İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, to ensure the plundered goods would be returned to the Safavid subjects from whom they had been stolen, and also the punishment of the transgressors.[300] With these orders and grand-vizierial letter, the Ottoman government gave a clear message: they were not aiming at utilizing the vulnerability of the Safavids in any military sense.

Still, the Porte's policy of keeping the Persians weak needs also to be underlined. The long-established protocol between the Ottoman and Safavid embassies had been arranged according to a one-degree hierarchical gap, symbolizing the Ottoman political superiority over the Safavids from 1639 to 1720. But, in the exchanges of 1721 and 1722, this gap was doubled as the Ottoman envoy, Dürri Ahmed Efendi, enjoyed treatment according to the highest protocol in the Persian court, while the Safavid ambassador, Murtaza Quli Khan, received only

[299] "bizim Şâh-ı âli-câh hazretlerine olan mahabbetleri, husûsa Haremeynü'ş-şerîfeyn tarafına varan huccâc ü züvvârımıza olan himâyet ü sıyânetleri bi'l-cümle ma'lumumuzdur." Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1265.

[300] Both of the orders were registered in the Mühimme Register numbered 130 having the same date of Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1134 (February 27th – March 8th, 1722). See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-895 and 896.

the medium treatment while in Constantinople.[301] The Porte clearly considered the Iranian weakness an opportunity to further underline the hierarchy between Constantinople and Isfahan.[302]

In his letter, Damad İbrahim Pasha let the *i'timād al-dawla* know that despite the Treaty of Passarowitz, the Porte was not granting complete freedom to Iranian merchants passing through the Ottoman territories.[303] The grand vizier wrote that the Porte prohibited the passage of those Iranian traders who were transferring silver currency from Ottoman lands into Iran. He explained that the transfer of silver to Iran caused a decline in silver coin both in the internal market and in the reserves of the royal mint.[304] Regarding the Persian demand for passage for French merchants, Damad İbrahim Pasha stated that this issue was something between the Ottoman Empire and France, and that permission might be granted after negotiation with France. He also added the reservation that the granting of that permission depended on the calculation of cost and benefit. Similarly, the Porte rejected the Persian demand to be allowed to maintain the holy sepulchers in Baghdad on the grounds that taking care of the holy shrines was among the actions of highest prestige (*umûr-ı celîleti'l itibâr*) for rulers, and thus, it was not a matter in which altruism (*îsar*) could be shown.

To compare the Ottoman rejection of Persian demand with respect to the holy sepulchers in 1722 with its acceptance of the same demand in 1697 and in 1702 provides us with a

[301] Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 77–78.

[302] The title of the translation of the the *i'timād al-dawla*'s letter in Nâme-i Hümayûn Defteri again underlines the hierarchy between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Muhammad Quli Khan. It reads as "The translation of supplicant letter of the *i'timād al-dawla,* that is uplifted to the foot-dust of charm-like noble grand vizierate" (*Hâkpây-i kimyâsây-i hazret-i sadr-ı a'zamîye merfu' kılınan duâ'nâme-i i'timâdüddevlenin tercümesidir*).

[303] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-28.

[304] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-28, pp. 50-53. The Porte also introduced another solution to the problem of silver shortage. It introduced new silver coins mixed with copper into the market, changing the ratios of silver and *akçe* to prevent the flow of silver into the foreign markets such that there would be enough silver both in the market and in the reserves of the royal mint. This change was effected in September or October 1719, soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Passarowitz. See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1169.

significant insight regarding the dynamics of Ottoman-Safavid relations. As mentioned above, the Ottoman empire was politically vulnerable in 1697. And in 1702, it was in debt to Persia for the Safavid help in Basra and other rebellions. In that context, the Porte accepted the Safavid demands around renovating Shiite imams' sepulchers, though not giving limitless permission. The Ottoman rejection in 1722 demonstrated how the comparative power of each side was influential in determining which would be the conceding party. As long as the balance of power between the Porte and Isfahan was in the advantage of the former, the Ottomans could feel safe from Iranian interference in the Ottoman territories that were receptive to Iranian influence based on the considerable Shiite population living in those regions.

There were two different periods in which Ottoman-Safavid relations had reached the highest friendship levels of *ancient brotherhood* and *perpetual peace in alliance*: the period between 1686 and 1705, and the early 1720s. Tellingly, the increase in their "mutual love" happened only in cases when one party was in major military trouble, having lost land and being forced to make major political concessions, and the other party was enjoying relatively comfortable domestic and foreign conditions. That equation is by itself suggestive of what the increase in mutual affection in the bilateral relations actually meant, and how "genuine" the reciprocal love was between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Obviously, the elevation of the level of relations meant, on the one hand, a guarantee of military non-hostility on the part of the stronger side in that particular context. However, on the other hand, it was also an indicator of the utilization of the weakness of the weaker party by the relatively stronger one in all areas except for territorial expansion. In all other power equations, in which both sides considered themselves to be powerful enough to challenge the other side in political, religious, economic, and diplomatic ways, the level of friendship between the Ottomans and the Safavids continued in the lowest forms of mutual love, namely either *friendly harmony* or *non-hostility*.

B. Relations between Constantinople and Moscow

B.1. The Russians, the Ottomans, and the Caucasus

Between 1683 and 1697, the Ottoman Empire fought against the Holy League of the European powers, which included the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Republic of Venice, and Russia. By the end of the war, the Ottomans had lost much of Hungary, Slovenia, and Crotia to the Habsburgs, and Morea and most of Dalmatia to Venice with the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), and Azov to Russia with the Treaty of Constantinople (1700). However, the Ottoman Empire regained Azov from Russia in 1711, after a humiliating victory over Peter I at Prut. The Treaty of Adrianople (1713) guaranteed a twenty-five-year peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Russia, at least on paper.[305] The new balance between the Sublime Porte and Muscovy proved to be successful for the Ottoman Empire, considering the first Russo-Ottoman war erupted in 1736, twenty-five years after the Prut war.[306]

With regard to Iran, Peter I had ambitious aims to control Caspian Sea trade and to add the lands of the Caucasus into his expanding state. As early as 1698, he ordered Captain John Perry, whom he had brought from England, to work on the construction of the Volga-Don Canal, which was of strategic importance in connecting Russia to the Caucasus and Caspian Sea. The following year, a Danish surveyor named Sheltrup was employed to create a map of the Caspian coasts and the rivers flowing into it.[307] The Russian city of Astrakhan at the northern

[305] *Muahedat Mecmuası*, 1880, 3:222–29.

[306] After this war, the Porte also recovered and strengthened its dominance over the Danubian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia. Both during the Great Turkish War (1683-1697) and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1710 - 11, the Wallachian and Moldavian princes allied secretly with the enemies of the Porte, the Habsburgs and the Russian tsar. In 1711, Dimitrie Cantemir, the prince of Moldavia, allied with Russia and joined an attack against the Ottomans in the Prut war, a culmination of the disobedience of the Danubian Principalities from the viewpoint of the Porte. In the same year, the Ottoman government replaced the Principalities' centuries-old self-rule status with a more direct rule from Constantinople through the appointment of trusted Greek *phanariot*s at the discretion of the sultan. The Sublime Porte was successful in maintaining this new rule for more than a century, until 1821, the start of the Greek War of Independence. See Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Routledge, 2013), 91, 97.

[307] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 60–61. The surveyor Sheltrup was caught and imprisoned by the Safavid authorities.

coast of the Caspian Sea was the Russian gate to the Central and South Asian world. In 1700, a Russian squadron in the Caspian Sea requested entry into the port of Baku; it was declined by the Iranian authorities, who were alarmed considering the poor defenses of the city.[308]

The expedition of Artemiy Volynsky in 1716-17 and resulting Russo-Persian commercial treaty of 1717 was the most concrete Russian endeavor regarding Iran.[309] The main mission of Volynsky was to sign a commercial treaty with Shah Sultan Husayn persuading him of the easiness of travel through Russia via rivers and canals. If Volynsky failed to conclude that treaty, then he would have sought ways to block the Aleppo and Smyrna trades routes over which Armenian merchants exported silk and other Persian products to European states. The orders given to Volynsky by Peter I also included examining the economic and geographic conditions of the northern provinces in terms of land and sea routes, investigating the rivers flowing into the Caspian from the eastern coast and learning whether there was a river linking the Caspian Sea to India, looking for routes and gateways from the southern coast of the Caspian to the province of Gilan, getting detailed information on the military and defense situation in Iran, searching for Armenian notables who were in favor of the tsar, and building amicable relations with the Armenians.[310]

After long negotiations, Volynsky was successful in concluding a commercial treaty with the shah in July 1717. Accordingly, Russian merchants were granted free trade in Persia, were allowed to purchase raw silk unrestrictedly, and would be protected by the Persian authorities. Volynsky reported to Peter I that if Shah Sultan Husayn kept his throne, the Safavid dynasty

[308] Lockhart, 62.

[309] For a detailed account of the Volynksy's voyage, see John Bell, "A Journey from St. Petersburg to Ispahan," in *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1763); Sergei M. Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31: Peter the Great, 1718-1724, Triumph in the West, Campaign to the Caspian*, ed. George E. Munro (Academic International Press, 2017); Okan Yeşilot, *Şah'ın Ülkesinde: Rus Çarı I. Petro'nun İran Elçisi Artemiy Volınskiy'nin Kafkasya Raporu* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2014).

[310] In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I discuss the close contact between the Russians, the Georgians, and the Armenians in Russia's military operations in the 1720s.

would fall in the near future and the coastal provinces surrounding the Caspian Sea would be annexed before the Afghan rebels.[311] Volynksy also contacted Wakhtang VI, the famous king of Kartli, in 1718. Wakhtang demanded Russian help and offered an alliance to invade Persia. Wakhtang also sent a letter to his aunt who was in Russia through Volynsky.[312]

Even though not directly related to Iran, a significant event for Russian aspirations in Central Asia happened in the same year as Volynksy's expedition. Based on the favorable reports of Semeon Malinky and Andrei Semenov, who had recently returned to St. Petersburg from India, Peter I ordered Prince Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky to build a castle in the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. The next move was to revert the Oxus back to its former bed, thereby enabling easy access to India by river from the Caspian Sea. Peter I also ordered the expedition to establish alliances, or at least friendly relations with the khans of Khiva and Bukhara, two major principalities on the way to India. However, the plan did not work out as expected, since the Khan of Khiva opposed the construction with his army and handily defeated the Russians in August 1717.[313] Taken together, Volynsky's and Bekovich's expeditions were clear signs of the Russian plans to expand toward the south-eastern regions of Russia.

Constantinople received constant information about the activities of the Russians in the Caucasus and Central Asia through various sources, including khanates in both regions. These khans offered alliances to the Porte against the Russians on various occasions.[314] The Porte did

[311] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 107.
[312] Lockhart, 108; Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 174.
[313] For a detailed account of the Cherkassky expedition, see Michal Wanner, "Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky's Campaign to Central Asia and India in 1714-1717," *ÖT KONTINENS*, no. 1 (2014): 9–32; Alton S. Donnelly, "Peter the Great and Central Asia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 17, no. 2–3 (1975): 202–17.
[314] In 1710, Ayuki Khan, the khan of the Kalmyks, sent an envoy to Constantinople and demanded to be accepted as a vassal of the Ottoman sultan, breaking his suzerain-vassal relation with Peter I. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-307, p. 519; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600–1771* (Cornell University Press, 1992), 145–49; Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:837. In 1713, Kazakh Gaib Muhammad Khan, who was seated in Tashkent, sent his envoy to the Porte, informed the sultan about the Klamyk-Russian alliance, and demanded to be recognized as an Ottoman khan, as his "brother" Crimean khan had been. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-183, pp. 291-94. In the same year, Abu'l Fayz Sayyid Muhammad Bahadır, khan of Bukhara, sent an envoy to Ahmed III and suggested a dual attack on the Kalmyks, who were

not reply to alliance offers in the affirmative after the Adrianople Treaty of 1713, although they did strengthen long-existing ties with the Dagestani khans in 1717 as a check on Russian plans. The *shamkhal* of Dagestan sent a certain Elhac Yunus to Constantinople in 1717 to inform the sultan that the Russians had sent them an envoy with a lot of presents and demanded permission to construct a fortress in Dagestan.[315] He also let the sultan know that they had responded negatively to the Russian demand. Regarding their military support for the Ottoman war against the Austrians, they stated that in Dagestan, there were 100,000 soldiers and they could send 30,000 of them to fight in the name of God.

In response, the sultan congratulated the Dagestanis for their bravery and support of religion. He informed the *shamkhal* that the Porte was going to provide the necessary military equipment and weaponry to the Dagestan troops. Ahmed III demanded that the troops be ready in the Taman peninsula, situated on the Kerch strait connecting the Azov Sea and the Black Sea, at the beginning of May 1718. Thus, after twenty years, the Porte again resorted to Dagestani military force for *jihad* against "infidels."[316] However, unlike the late 1690s, the Ottoman government this time gave the *shamkhal* the title of "governor of *sancak*" (*sancak beyi*), with a yearly payment of 20,000 *akçe*.[317] A similar decree was sent to the Surhay Bey and to the other rulers/*bey*s in Dagestan, together with the religious scholars in the region, as a

allied with the Russians, to eliminate the "irreligious infidel." See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-180, pp. 295-98. In 1716, another envoy from Gaib Muhammad Khan arrived in Constantinople. Gaib Muhammad asked for Ottoman permission for, if not an alliance in support of, a Kazakh military assault against the Russians, who had invaded Ishtek land, which was populated by Sunni Muslims. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 182-219, p. 350.

[315] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-247, Evail-i Muharrem 1130 (December 5th-14th, 1717), pp. 408-10. This letter is a response from Ahmed III. The letter coming from the *shamkhal* was not recorded in the Register of Imperial Letters, but Ahmed III's epistle gave information about the content of the letter from the *shamkhal*. Even though the name of the ruler was not specified, based on the references to "*shamkhal*" and "*surhay*," that ruler would have been Surhay Mustafa Khan, who was the khan of the Gazi Kumukh people.

[316] See Chapter One.

[317] "…gazâ ve cihâda râğıb olan ricâl-i şecaati ile, vaki olan sefer-i humayûnda iktizâ edip, davet olunduğu halde, fi sebilillahi'l Meliki'l Vedud, gaza ve cihada bezl-i mechûd ve sarf-ı nakdine sa'y-i nâ-ma'dûd eylemek üzere Taman gümrüğü mukataası malından, senevi yirmi bin akçe salyane ile sancak beyliği payesi tevcih ve müceddeden mahalline kayd ve yedine berat verilmek bâbında hatt-ı hümayun şevket-makrunum sadır olmağla," See BOA, C.HR, 6184, 19 Şevval 1129 (September 26th, 1717).

separate decree.[318] The Porte thereby secured a close alliance in the Caucasus against the Russians by using the context of Austro-Ottoman War of 1716-18 as a legitimate pretext and without confronting Russia directly.

B.2. The Eternal Peace Treaty of 1721

In the beginning of June 1719, the Russian envoy Alexis Ivanovich Dashkov arrived in Constantinople carrying letters from the tsar both to Ahmed III and to Damad İbrahim Pasha.[319] Dashkov presented Peter I's offer of eternalizing the Treaty of Adrianople signed six years previous. After long deliberations and amid the protests of Austrian and English ambassadors, Ottoman and Russian delegations started official negotiations in May 1720. Damad İbrahim Pasha signed the new treaty on November 16th, 1720. Peter I penned the letter for his approval of the treaty on February 1st, 1721;[320] it arrived in Constantinople in the end of May 1721.[321] Ahmed III signed the treaty in the beginning of October 1721.[322]

Why did Peter I want to solidify peace with the Ottomans? An important reason was the Russian fear of the Austrians. In the European international political context during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the Austrian Habsburgs, who were allied with England, the Netherlands, and the Republic of Venice, emerged as the dominant power. Making the Habsburgs even stronger, on January 5th, 1719, only a month after Peter I's order to his troops to withdraw from Poland, a treaty of defense alliance was signed between Austria, Great Britain, and Augustus II of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against the Russian threat.[323] In yet another power play, this time increasing Austrian influence over Poland, on August 20th,

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[318] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 126-959 and 960, Evail-i Muharrem 1130 (December 5th-14th, 1717)
[319] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1164. (Evasıt-ı Receb 1131 / May 29th – June 7th, 1719).
[320] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-302, p. 501 BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-304, p. 503. BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-305, p. 504, (21 Kanun-i Sani 1721 [1133].
[321] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1185.
[322] Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1133 (October 3rd-12th, 1721), *Muahedat Mecmuası*, 1880, 3:229. The date of the composition of Ahmed III's letter to Peter I was written as Evahir-i Zilhicce 1133 (October 13th-21st, 1721), see BOA, YB.(1)-21-33, 35, 37.
[323] L. R. Lewitter, "Poland, Russia and the Treaty of Vienna of 5 January 1719," *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 1 (1970).

1719, Maria Josepha, the daughter of Joseph I of Austria was married to Frederick Augustus, the son and heir of Augustus II of Saxony and the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[324]

The Treaty of Passarowitz increased the anxieties of Peter I,[325] who also received news that the Europeans were provoking the Ottomans against Russia.[326] The Russians wanted the support of the Porte against Austria, and if they could not have it, at least to make sure that the Ottomans would not ally with the Habsburgs against themselves.[327] That is why Peter I's envoy Dashkov came to Constantinople with the suggestion of an offensive and defensive alliance between Russia and the Porte.[328] He offered that instead of Augustus II[329], his rival Francis Rakoczy,[330] who was in the hands of the Ottomans at the time, would be enthroned in Poland. Moreover, he requested the Porte's compliance with the entry of Russian troops into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, overruling the first article of the Treaty of Adrianople.[331] Dashkov warned the Porte that the increasing influence of the Habsburgs over Poland would be very harmful to neighboring states over time. He also demanded permission to install a permanent resident at Constantinople.[332]

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[324] Lewitter, 9, 18.

[325] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1164.

[326] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 104. Dashkov expressed this fear during his conversation with the *reisülküttab*, as well. See "mülûk-i Nasârâ'dan düşmenlerimiz olanlardan ahz-ı intikâma ihtimâm olunmağa Devlet-i Aliyye'nin muhârebeye kıyâmı havfı mani' olmak…" Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1173.

[327] Eudoxius von Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, vol. 4 (Socecŭ & Teclu, 1885), 193–96 and 216–17.

[328] B. H. Sumner, *Peter the Great and the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949), 72.

[329] Augustus II was supported by the Habsburgs and Great Britain; the Porte recognized Augustus II as the legitimate ruler of Poland in April 1714. See Sumner, 58.

[330] Francis Rakoczy was a Hungarian prince of Transylvania (1704-11). He was the leader of the Hungarian uprising against the Habsburgs during the period between 1703 and 1711. Rakoczy was a significant figure in the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry, since the Ottoman sultan invited him to Ottoman lands and he landed at Gallipoli on October 10th, 1717, when the Austro-Ottoman war was still going on, to support the Ottoman side against the Habsburgs. Given that, Peter I must have thought that it was possible that the Porte would support Rakoczy's claim to the throne of Poland against his rival Augustus.

[331] The first article of the treaty allowed the entrance of Russian troops into Poland only in case of a Swedish occupation of Poland. See *Muahedat Mecmuası*, 1880, 3:222–23.

[332] Sumner, *Peter the Great and the Ottoman Empire*, 72.

Why did the Porte accept the Russian proposal at a time without a seeming need to eternalize the treaty, which would still be in effect for fifteen more years? First, just as it was for the Russians, the rise of the Austrian power was a primary concern for the Ottomans, whose western borders had been shrunken by the Habsburgs twice in the preceding two decades.[333] The Porte aimed to create a stronger tie with Russia, which had proven to be a less formidable enemy than the Habsburgs. However, the Ottoman government did not choose Russia over Austria completely and maintained a balanced foreign policy toward both of these powers. The Porte sided with Austria against Russia in the cases of Iranian merchants, for instance, and with the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the occasion mentioned above.[334]

Second, despite the Treaty of Adrianople, the Russian military threat to the Ottomans was not over. A probable Russian victory in the end of the Russo-Swedish War that had started in 1700 would have meant the freeing of Peter I's hands. Indeed, Dashkov clearly threatened the Porte with war during his conversation with the *reisülküttab*. He stated that the tsar's broken honor in Prut could not be remedied without another fight and, "in case there is no willingness [on the Ottoman part] to renew the treaty, they [the Russians] cannot remain patient until the

[333] As Karl Roider argues, despite the Passarowitz peace, the Ottoman government regarded the Habsburgs as the "most dangerous enemy." He gives the example of the Ottoman embassy to Vienna in 1719 being "the richest and most magnificent" embassy sent by the Ottomans to Europe, aiming to impress the Viennese populace and government, as a clear demonstration of the high Ottoman esteem for the Austrians. See Karl Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790* (Princeton Legacy Library, 1982), 59.

[334] First, I discussed above how the Porte sided with the Austrians in directing the trade route of Iranian merchants away from Russia. Second, the Porte declined the Rakoczy proposal from Peter I, and sent Rakoczy to Tekirdağ on April 17th, 1720. See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1180. Still, in the second article of the Eternal Peace, the Porte agreed on the entrance of the Russian troops into Poland in case not only the Swedish King, but also "other Christian kings" sent their soldiers into the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Comparatively, the first article of the Treaty of Adrianople (1713) permitted the entrance of Russian soldiers into Poland only in case of Swedish occupation. The Porte's pro-Russian and pro-Austrian moves at the same time shows how the government tried to follow a balanced policy regarding its western and northern neighbors.

expiration of the [Adrianople] peace."[335] Venetian and Austrian observers of the time underlined the Russian military threat to the Ottomans as well.[336]

On September 10th, 1721, the Treaty of Nystad sealed the Great Northern War (1700-1721) with a Russian victory. It seems that the Russian victory was an important factor in the ultimate Ottoman acceptance of the Eternal Peace. The Venetian *bailo* underlined that the Porte's attitude toward Russia became more positive after Nystad.[337] The fact that Ahmed III approved the Eternal Peace about a month after the Treaty of Nystad suggests again the importance of the perceived Russian threat for the Ottoman acceptance of "eternalizing" the earlier agreement.[338]

On the other hand, "eternalizing" the peace did not pose a problem for Ottoman policy regarding the northern frontier. The Porte had no aim of expanding in the north toward Russia. The official court chronicler Râşid Efendi related the reasoning of the members of the consultative assembly (*meclis-i meşveret*)[339] as such:

> "There was no land that the Sublime State is willing to acquire from the hands of the Muscovite infidels, …and thus, there was not even a small possibility to occur a fight between the Muscovite infidels and the Sublime State with the reason of expanding the lands and taking over fortresses and castles…"[340]

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[335] "tecdîde rağbet olunmadığı sûretde inkızâ-yı müddet-i musâlahaya dek sabr u ârâm edemeyeceklerin îhâm eyledi." See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1173.

[336] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 89; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:217.

[337] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 89.

[338] Peter I also wrote a letter to Ahmed III informing him about the Russian victory over the Swedish Kingdom. Mehmet Akbulut and Ensar Köse write that Peter's letter arrived in Constantinople on September 21st, 1721, and that Ahmed III approved the Eternal Peace after receiving this letter. This date seems wrong, as Peter I wrote in his letter that he composed the letter on September 19th, 1721 [September 30th, according to Gregorian calender]. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-17, pp. 39-40. Moreover, considering the ratification of Treaty of Nystad on September 10th in today's Finland, it is unlikely that news of the treaty, let alone a victory letter, could have reached Constantinople in eleven days. See Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 33; Ensar Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması* (İstanbul: Büyüyenay Yayınları, 2017), 48.

[339] For the functions of "*meclis-i meşveret*," see İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleymân," 75.

[340] "Bu husûs âkıbet-bînân-ı umûr ile meşveret olunup Moskov keferesi memâlikinden Devlet-i Aliyye'nin marsûd-ı çeşm-i ârzûsu olacak bir mahall olmayup tevsi'-i memâlik ü bikâ' ve istirdâd-ı husûn u kılâ' ve sâir esbâb-ı cidâl ü nizâ' gibi vechen mine'l-vücûh Moskov keferesi ile Devlet-i Aliyye beyninde muhârebe vuku'unu

The history of Russo-Ottoman relations prior to 1721 apparently suggests that "eternal peace" between these two imperial powers was anything but realistic.[341] Why, then, did they choose to call it "eternal," a very assertive title? The simple answer seems to stem from the fact that the mistrust between St. Petersburg and Constantinople was so rooted that only with that strong wording could each convince the other of their firm intention to keep relations peaceful at least for a while. A more proper qualification for this peace would have been "ephemeral," rather than eternal.

There was no reference to Iran in the Eternal Peace Treaty. It is therefore difficult to discern the relation between the Eternal Peace and the Iranian question. Considered retrospectively, the Eternal Peace Treaty had become a very important stepping-stone on the way to the creation of a Russo-Ottoman alliance, which culminated in the Treaty of the Partition of Iran (June 1724). Moreover, both parties referred to the Eternal Peace quite often either as the affirmation of their mutual friendship or to accuse the other side, up until the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1736.

B.2.1. Comparing the Eternal Peace with the Treaty of Adrianople

The Treaty of Adrianople was composed of eleven articles and the Eternal Peace Treaty entailed thirteen articles in total.[342] The second article of the Treaty of Adrianople, detailing the way the Swedish King Charles XI was going to return to his homeland securely, was removed in the second treaty, as it was a solved issue by 1721. Instead, three new articles (the first, eleventh,

mûcib olacak zerre kadar bir hâl olmamağla te'bîd-i sulhda kat'â mahzûr olmadığı karâr-dâde-i re'y-i cumhûr olmağla, mukaddemâ verilen ahidnâme müeddî-i tahrîf ü tagyîr olunmamak vechi üzre te'bîde müsa'ade olunup…" See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1173.

[341] Râşid's account is full of references to Russian untrustworthiness. He wrote that due this reason, the Porte received Peter's offer with deep suspicion. He characterized the Russians as "trickster," "deceiver," "swindler," and possessing "satanic wile[s]." "Moskov keferesiyle Devlet-i Aliyye miyânında vukû' bulan sulh-ı ma'kûd, habl-i metîn-i devâm ü istihkâm ile meşdûd olup, istidâme-i maslahat-ı musâlaha için bu esnâlarda elçi irsâlini muktazî olur ma'na mefkûd iken, tâife-i mesfûre gâyet *muhîl ü mekkâr* bir kavm-i *hud'a-kâr* olmağın, … ba'zı *desâyis-i şeytâniyye* hayâliyle birkaç gün mukaddem Âsitane-i sa'âdete gelen Moskov elçisi…" See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1168.

[342] For the Eternal Peace Treaty, see BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 6-293, pp. 482-86.

and twelfth articles) were added to the Eternal Peace Treaty. The fifth article of both treaties dealt with Azov. The Treaty of Adrianople obliged the tsar to return the heavy weaponry in the Azov fortress and to demolish new Russian fortresses near Azov. The Eternal Peace Treaty noted that the tsar had already accomplished his duties, and underlined that the Azov fortress was to remain in the hands of the Ottoman state forever. The first article of the Treaty of Adrianople regulated the retreat of the Russian troops from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and specified the conditions of the legitimate entrance of Russian troops to Poland. In 1721, this article became the second article of the Eternal Peace Treaty and an addendum was attached to it authorizing Russian entrance in the case of the occupation of Poland not only by Sweden, but also by any other Christian state. In both treaties articles three, four, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten remained same word for word. The last articles of each treaty – the eleventh article of the 1713 Treaty and the thirteenth of the 1721 Treaty – were on the validity period of the treaties and also on the procedure to be followed in the mutual approval of the treaties by the respective capitals. Thus, these articles were similar in form, though having differences in content.

As is clear from this comparison, most of the clauses of the 1713 treaty were preserved in that of 1721. The third through ninth articles covered the detailed issues of frontier and border, extending from the Dnieper River in the West to the North Caucasus in the East. According to the eleventh article of the Eternal Peace Treaty, the merchants of both sides would follow the same procedures, enjoying freedom of commerce. Here, in keeping with its age-old policy of not letting other states' merchants into the Black Sea, the Porte did not permit Russian merchants' use of the Black Sea in their passages and included the word "by land" when

specifying the Russian merchants' economic rights, thus not authorizing the use of the sea route.[343]

The new articles in the renewed treaty, the first, eleventh and twelfth, show the change in Russo-Ottoman relations, which had become warmer after two big wars. The first article of the 1721 treaty referred to the concepts of "sincere friendship" (*musâfât*), "affection" (*muvâlât*), "amity" (*dostluk*), and "neighborhood" (*hem-civârlık*). The eleventh article allowed Russian laymen and clerics to visit Jerusalem freely and free of charge, so long as they traveled in the right ways and did not stay in Jerusalem for long, based on the eternalized friendship. This permission was a significant symbolic achievement for the Russians in their relations with other Christian sects and states. Russian direct contact with Jerusalem was important in reinforcing the Greek Orthodox party in their rivalry against the Roman Catholic and the Armenian Churches. At the time, the French ambassador Marquis de Bonnac's reports from Constantinople to Louis XV and to the French government were clearly demonstrating the fierce competition between the Orthodox and Catholic churches over the higher position in the Jerusalem patriarchate and in the affairs of the Christian holy places in general.[344] The twelfth article gave permission to the Russians to have a regular resident at Constantinople, on the grounds that "the sustenance of the stability and reinforcement of the friendship perfectly, and

[343] Halil İnalcık, "The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans," in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Eren Yayıncılık, 1998). In the Ottoman version of the Treaty of Adrianople, there was no mention of trade rights. However, in the Prut Peace signed after the Prut war, the same article was included. I assume the omission of that article from the Treaty of Adrianople did not mean the prohibition of free trade for both sides' merchants, as they had continued trading freely after 1713 as well.

[344] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 167–70. For the struggle over the Jerusalem patriarchate and Christian holy places between different Christian churches, mainly Orthodox, Catholic, and Armenian, see Oded Peri, *Christianity Under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times* (Brill, 2001), 97–160. The restrictions written in that clause on the duration of stay and on the ways it was to be used were important in terms of showing the Ottoman alertness regarding the possible influence of the Russians over their Orthodox Greek co-religionists in Ottoman lands. Moreover, Stanyan, the English resident, warned Damad İbrahim Pasha about the contact between Daskov and certain Greek people, by rhetorically asking "Are you really unaware to what extent the Greek nation sides with the Russian?" After that, the grand vizier prohibited the meeting of the Greeks with Dashkov. See Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 106.

the protection of it from possible harms and confusion were integral to the friendship."[345] This permission again was clear evidence of the repair of Ottoman and Russian relations, and of the Ottoman acceptance of Russia's return to European politics in the Constantinople axis.

B.3. Ottoman Defensive Precautions against Russia

Even though the Porte had renewed peace with the Russians, it increased defensive precautions against Russia on the northern front and in West Georgia in the early 1720s. The Porte expected a Russian assault from two possible directions: first, a direct military assault targeting the northern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Moldavia and Azov; second, a military campaign to bring the Caspian shore and Caucasus under the Russian control. The second option would have threatened the northeastern Ottoman territories, namely Azov, the Georgian principalities under Ottoman rule in the western Georgia, and the province of Çıldır. As time went on, with the increase in the likelihood of the second possibility, the intensity of military preparations diverted from the western and northern fronts to the north-eastern front, particularly the Azov region. Below, I discuss this Ottoman military reinforcement, first on the northern and then on the West Georgian fronts.

B.3.1. The Northern Front

Starting in March 1720, the Ottoman government sent several imperial orders to the governors in the Balkans and in Anatolia to strengthen the western and northern fronts. Timar soldiers in many districts were to be employed in the task of repairing four major border fortresses, Niş, Vidin, Hotin, and Azov, to start work in the beginning of May.[346] While the Niş and Vidin fortresses were major strongholds of the Ottomans in the west against the Austrians, the Hotin, Azov, and Özi fortresses were main military bases against the Russians. These construction

[345] "Dostluğun kemal mertebe istikrar ve takviyeti ve zuhuru muhtemel olan halel ve kesl isabetinden sıyaneti lazıme-i muzafatdan olup…" The Russians gained this right in the Treaty of Constantinople in 1700, but the Porte disallowed the Russian resident from the Prut war onward. The states who had representatives in the Ottoman capital were Austria, England, France, the Netherlands, and Venice.

[346] BOA, C.AS 632-26667, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1132 (March 2nd-10th, 1720); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-792, 793, 794, 795, 796, and 797, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1132 (March 2nd-10th, 1720).

activities continued in the following two years, increasingly with the participation of nearly all *sancak*s in central and western Anatolia and many in the Balkans.[347] The governors responsible for the construction work in Niş, Vidin, and Hotin were honored with the robe of the sultan in the beginning of summer 1722, and ordered to complete all repairs and fortifications by the autumn.[348] From that time on, Ottoman preparations for a military campaign against Iran got more concentrated day by day, leading to an increasing transfer of military supply and provisions from the western frontiers to the eastern fronts.

Critically, the janissary companies in Niş and Vidin fortresses were moved to Azov and Özi in the first years of the 1720s. Toward the end of June 1720, three janissary companies from Niş fortress and two companies from Vidin were ordered to transfer to Azov.[349] The reason for the movement of five janissary companies was stated as the immanence of the military campaign season and the need to protect the Azov fortress. Besides, even from Van, eighty-eight auxiliary soldiers (*yamakan*) were commanded to move to Azov in the end of summer.[350] And the rest of the *yamakan* in Van, numbering 227, were ordered to transfer to other frontier fortresses. With imperial orders sent in the end of summer and mid-autumn 1721, two janissary companies from Azov and Niş were ordered to be transferred to the Özi fortress. In both orders, the government argued that Özi needed to be protected with more forces as it was a critical fortress in the border zone.[351] In the following months, the Porte sent an ammunition ship from

[347] See for example, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130 numbers between 707 and 747, except for 731. All the orders are dated as Evahir-i Muharrem 1130 (November 11th-20th, 1721).
[348] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1170, 1171, and 1172, Evahir-i Şaban 1134 (June 6th-14th, 1722).
[349] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-1102 and 1103, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1132 (June 18th-27th, 1720). In addition, in total four companies in Niş were transfered to Morea (two), Euboea (one), and Constantinople (one) in Fall 1720 and 1721. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-1250, Evail-i Zilkade 1132 (September 4th-13th, 1720), BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-1300, 29 Zilhicce 1132 (October 24th – November 1st, 1720), BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-769, Evail-i Zilkade 1133 (August 24th – September 2nd, 1721), BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-770, Evail-i Zilkade 1133 (August 24th – September 2nd, 1721).
[350] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-1235, Evahir-i Şevval 1132 (August 26th – September 3rd, 1720).
[351] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-640, 29 Zilhicce 1133 (October 13th-21st, 1721), BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-770, Evail-i Zilkade 1133 (August 24th – September 2nd, 1721).

Constantinople to Azov to strengthen the northern border further against the Russians.[352] Thus, in the early 1720s, it is clear that the Ottomans expected a military action threatening themselves mainly by the Russians and were less concerned about action by the Habsburgs.

These transfers were also in line with intelligence presented to Ahmed III in a letter from İbrahim Pasha, guardian of Azov.[353] According to it, the Russians were expected to attack Ottoman soil "not this year, but next year,"[354] which is to say, sometime after the autumn of 1721. Ahmed III, in his own handwriting, ordered Ottoman statesmen to feign ignorance and ask the Russian ambassador, Alexis Dashkov, about the Russian attack. However, given the Porte's moves to strengthen the Azov, Hotin, and Özi fortresses, it seems that Ottomans had been worried about Russian intentions even before the arrival of İbrahim Pasha's intelligence. Meanwhile, the government did not allow Murtaza Quli Khan to meet with the Russian permanent resident Ivan Nepluyeff; he met instead with the Austrian dragoman.[355]

When on the one hand peace had been maintained and supposedly strengthened through diplomatic channels between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, military preparations for a conflict between the two gathered speed. Ironically, during the negotiations for the Eternal Peace Treaty in 1720, there had even been talks about Austrian military threats against the Ottomans.[356] The clear incongruity between the diplomatic messages and physical moves of these international actors shows again the significance of evaluating the expressed statements of statesmen against the facts of mobilization in order to have a sounder understanding of historical events.

[352] BOA, AE.SAMD.III 77-7796, 23 Cemaziyelevvel 1134 (March 11th, 1722).
[353] BOA, AE.SAMD.III 231-22174, 1133 (November 2nd, 1720 – October 21st, 1721).
[354] In the document there was no specific date aside from the year, which was written as 1133, corresponding to the period between November 2nd, 1720 and October 21st, 1721.
[355] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 90.
[356] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 108.

B.3.2. The Georgian Front

In western Georgia, the Ottoman Empire had ruled over the kingdom of Imereti (the Bagrationis), and its principalities Guria (the Gurielis) and Mingrelia (the Dadianis),[357] since 1555 with the Treaty of Amasya. The Imereti Ranges divided Georgia geographically into eastern and western Georgia. From 1555 until 1723, when western Georgia – the kingdom of Imereti – was under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, eastern Georgia –the kingdoms of Kakheti (the Bagrationis) and Kartli (the Bagrationis) – had continued to be a part of Safavid Iran.[358]

Even though the range of mountains helped the Ottomans block Safavid and Russian interference from the east and the north,[359] the principalities in western Georgia could have broken their Ottoman ties and allied with the Safavids or the Russians any time.[360] The Georgian kingdoms of Kakheti and Kartli, with the capital Tbilisi, were within the province of Safavid Georgia. They constituted one of the strongest and most loyal military forces of the Safavids since the time of Abbas I, the first decades of the seventeenth century.[361] Besides, the attempts by the Georgian kings and princes to unify the three separate kingdoms was another significant

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[357] The Ottomans called these tributary principalities Açıkbaş (Imeretia), Güril (Guriel), and Dadyan (Mingrelia). In the Ottoman documents, no hierarchical difference is seen between these rulers, each of whom was called "*melik*" (monarch, ruler) of their respective realms. Güngürürler says that "The beğ/hâkim-voivodes of Wallachia and Moldavia, who were reigning-princes in occidental hierarchy and equals of non-vizier pashas in that of the Ottomans, had two tuğs, and the Ottoman-vassal Georgian melik-princes of Imereti, Guria, and Mingrelia were of the same rank." See Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 30. However, between themselves there had been a clear royal hierarchy and they had engaged in fierce throne wars. See the next footnote.

[358] The Georgian royal families inherited their respective territories from the once-powerful Georgian Kingdom, which was a dominant power in the region especially between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The triple political structure in Georgia in the eighteenth century was a continuation of the division decided in 1490. At that time, Georgian rulers agreed that Georgia should be divided into the three smaller kingdoms of Kartli, Kakhetia, and Imeretia, each of which was to be ruled by an independent king. The same treaty established the status of Mingrelia and Guria as principalities under the suzerainty of Imeretia. See Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 162.

[359] Kortepeter, "Complex Goals of the Ottomans, Persians, and Muscovites in the Caucasus, 1578–1640," 60.

[360] Bekir Kütükoğlu discusses how fragile the loyalty of the Georgian principalities to the Ottoman sultan was in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran Siyâsî Münâsebetleri (1578-1612)*, 39–43. Showing the continuity of this fragility, in 1634, the prince of Mingrelia, Levan II Dadiani, had attempted to create links with the Safavids. Upon discovery of this attempt, the Porte launched a punitive campaign on him, making him submit to Ottoman rule. See Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 207.

[361] Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, XXIX, 28, 113–14.

threat to Ottoman rule in Georgia. These attempts even resulted in the successful unification of the three kingdoms in 1661, under Safavid protection, with the enthronement of Archil Bagrationi as the king of Imereti by his father Wakhtang V Shahnawaz Bagrationi, the king of both Kakheti and Kartli. However, upon the firm objection of the Ottoman government, this unification remained short-lived, and the dethroned king Bagrat V (1620-1681) was again placed on his seat in Imereti in 1663.[362] Thus, even prior to the worsening political situation in Iran and the increasing expansion of Russia, the Ottoman government kept a close eye on the Georgian principalities.

There were important links between western Georgian royalty and Russia, in both the further and the more recent past. Starting in the second half of the sixteenth century, after the Russian conquest of Astrakhan in 1554, friendly relations between them and Georgian kings and princes from eastern and western parts had begun. Even as early as 1589, King Alexander II of Kakheti (1507-1605) had pledged an oath of loyalty to the Russian tsar.[363] The first allegiance contract between the western Georgian rulers and Russian tsars was established in the late 1630s. The prince of Mingrelia, Levan II Dadiani (1611-1657), sent an envoy to Moscow demanding to be under the suzerainty of Russian tsar Michael Feodorovich (1596-1645), the founder of the Romanov dynasty. The main reason for this move was Levan II's aim to be the king of Imereti, which he hoped to achieve through Russian protection at a time when the Ottomans and Safavids were fighting each other. In the end of November 1639, the ambassadors of the tsar reached Mingrelia, carrying the text of an allegiance oath to Michael

[362] For the Georgian unification attempts in the seventeenth century, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989), 53; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 199. Other than active political attempts, intermarriages between the eastern and western Georgian royal families served the same unification goal. As a significant case in this regard, see the marriage of Rustam, King of Kartli and Mariam, the sister of the prince of Mingrelia, Levan II Dadiani, in 1638. See Rayfield, 199; David Marshall Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658-1832* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 87. For the Ottoman reaction to the unification of Georgia between 1661 and 1663, see Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 193–94.

[363] Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 49.

Feodorovich.[364] Ten years later, the king of Imereti, Alexandre III (1609-1660), swore an oath of loyalty to Alexis Mikhaylovich (1629-1676), the then-tsar. The main motive behind his allegiance to Russia was exactly the opposite of that of Levan II: Alexandre III demanded Russian military help, through the Don Cossacks, against Levan II, whom he accused of siding with the Ottomans.[365]

All these attempts to get free from the Ottoman and Safavid yokes remained futile in the face of the crushing Safavid and Ottoman powers, which were still the masters of the Caucasus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Russians were neither powerful enough to take the Georgian kingdoms under their protection, nor had they sufficient knowledge about that still-distant geography.[366]

Beyond this potential threat of the Georgian-Russian closeness to the interests of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning and middle of the seventeenth century, a significant Russo-Georgian attempt to take control of western Georgia had been made again in the recent past. The aforementioned Archil Bagrationi had followed a highly mobile career between the Safavid, Ottoman, and Russian courts between 1661 and 1699. During that period, he attained the Imereti throne three times (1661-1663, 1678-1679, 1690-1691) and the Kakheti throne once (1664-75). Between 1682 and 1688 he was a political refugee in Russia, and he spent the last three years of that period in Moscow.[367] Soon after his third capture of the Imereti throne in 1690, he was dethroned by the opposition of the local nobility, headed by Prince Abashidze.[368]

[364] Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 207; Cemal Gamakharia and Lia Akhaladze, *Abhazya/Gürcistan: Tarih-Siyaset-Kültür*, trans. Roin Kavrelişvili (Tiflis: Gürcü Sanat Evi, 2016), 22–23.
[365] Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 208; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 51.
[366] M. Polyevktov, "The Ways of Communication between Russia and Georgia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *The Journal of Modern History* 2, no. 3 (1930): 369–70; Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658-1832*, 86.
[367] Lars Johanson, "Sparwenfeld's Diary," *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 97 (2003): 106.
[368] Lang, *The Last Years of the Georgian Monarchy 1658-1832*, 91.

Archil had continued his guerrilla warfare against the Georgian nobility and the Ottoman forces during the 1690s. After the takeover of Azov by the Russians in 1696 and after the last defeat of the Ottomans in the Great Turkish War at Zenta in September 1697, Archil and his coalition had besieged the fortress of Kutaisi, the capital of the Imereti kingdom, for seven months starting in mid-April 1698.[369] Only after the conclusion of the Treaty of Karlowitz was the Porte able to take action to defeat Archil, backed by the Russians.[370] In 1699, with the arrival of Ottoman provincial troops from the nearby provinces, the siege was lifted without a confrontation with the Ottoman army. Ottoman rule in western Georgia was confirmed again with the installment of Simon Bagrationi as the king of Imereti.[371] Prince Mamia III of Guria revolted against the king of Imereti and assassinated him in 1701. The disorder and subsequent loosening of Ottoman control resulted in a large-scale Ottoman military campaign against western Georgia in 1703.[372] Eventually, the Ottomans suppressed the rebellion, one of the contributing factors of which was the aforementioned Russian support aimed at restoring Archil to the Imereti throne to make Imereti a Russian protectorate.[373]

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[369] Topal, "Silâhdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, Nusretnâme," 372.

[370] Russian support for Archil was underlined by the Ottoman chronicler Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa in *Nusretname*. He also noted the service of Archil's son Alexander Batonishvili in the Russian army. See Topal, 372.

[371] Topal, 372–75. Archil Bagrationi ended up taking refuge in Moscow again in 1699. In the same year, his son Alexander Batonishvili became the first general of ordnance in the Russian army, showing the level of intimacy between Archil and Peter I. See Alexander Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 317. Archil's second arrival in Moscow had coincided with the conclusion of the Treaty of Karlowitz (January 26th, 1699) and the Treaty of Constantinople (July 14th, 1700). After winning a major victory against the Ottomans and gaining control of Azov, the Russian tsar had aimed to stretch Russian territory toward the western Caucasus by creating vassalages in Georgia. Archil Bagrationi had prepared to regain the Imereti throne with considerable Russian support. To that end, major military preparations had been made in 1702, when Peter I ordered the building of 120 war vessels on the Volga River. However, as related by John Perry, due to the internal rebellions and the continuing war against Sweden, that planned campaign against western Georgia was cancelled. See John Perry, *The State of Russia, Under the Present Czar* (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1716), 97–98. Archil spent the rest of his life in Moscow, dying there in 1713. See Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 266 note 14.

[372] Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 1984), 115–17; Ersin Kırca, "Sadaret Yazışmalarını Hâvî Bir Münşeat Mecmuası (1114-1116/1703-1704)" (PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2015), 134–39; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 228.

[373] Gamakharia and Akhaladze, *Abhazya/Gürcistan: Tarih-Siyaset-Kültür*, 281; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 228.

Between 1716 and 1719, there was a serious local power struggle in western Georgia in which the Ottoman pashas and viceroys of Çıldır were involved. In the end, İshak Pasha, the governor of Çıldır reinstalled Giorgi VII on the throne of the Imeretian kingdom in August 1719 and suppressed the rebellion of Bezhan I in Rukhi, Mingrelia.[374] Establishing order in Georgia was not easy. In February 1720, Giorgi VII was murdered by one of his rivals, Simon Abashidze, who was supported by Wakhtang VI of Kartli (r. 1716-1724) and a new phase of political turmoil was unleashed in western Georgia.[375] First, the Porte tried to solve the problem diplomatically by peacefully enthroning Alexander V, son of Giorgi VII on the Imeretian throne.[376] Upon the refusal of the Georgian opposition, the Porte decided to launch another large-scale military campaign in the summer of 1721,[377] and ordered the provincial

[374] For some primary and secondary sources about the conflicts, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 126-1093, Evail-i Safer 1130 (January 4th-13th, 1718); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 127-570, Evasıt-ı Receb 1130 (June 10th-19th, 1718); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 127-573, Evasıt-ı Receb 1130 (June 10th-19th, 1718); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 129-44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 64, 65, Evail-i Receb 1131 (June 20th-29th, 1719); Tsarevitch Wakhoucht, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe, II, Part I*, ed. and trans. Marie-Félicité Brosset (St-Pétersbourg, 1856), 311–13; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 230.

[375] Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, 230. In the Mühimme registers, the names of the figures in the opposition camp were given as Simon Abashidze, Bezhan, Zuhrab, and Eristavi. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-161, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1133 (February 18th-27th, 1721) and BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-95, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1133 (January 10th-19th, 1721). On the other hand, T. Wakhoucht Bagrationi identified the members of the opposition as Simon and Levan Abashidze, Zuhrab Abashidze, and Eristav. See Wakhoucht, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe, II, Part I*, 313.

[376] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-95, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1133 (January 10th-19th, 1721). Wakhoucht Bagrationi related that İshak Pasha had sent the *bey* of Shavshat as an envoy to Wakhtang VI of Kartli, who supported the opposition against Giorgi VII Bagrationi. He also added that Wakhtang VI called Simon and Levan Abashidze and Eristav to take part in his campaigns against the Lazgis, who were the archenemy of Wakhtang VI at the time. The opposition, Wakhoucht Bagrationi continued, accepted Wakhtang VI's call, and participated in the campaign during the summer of 1720, returning with lucrative booty. See Wakhoucht, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe, II, Part I*, 313.

[377] In the first parts of imperial orders, summaries of petitions were included. The Ottoman government received petitions regarding the political conflicts in Georgia not only from İshak Pasha, but also from Tamar Kochibrola, the widow of Giorgi VII and daughter of Mamia III Gurieli (her name was written as "Dudubal" in the Ottoman documents) and from the prince of Mingrelia, Gabriel Lipartiani, the son of Giorgi Lipartiani of Mingrelia and the uncle of Bezhan I. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-161, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1133 (February 18th-27th, 1721) and BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-95, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1133 (January 10th-19th, 1721). Gabriel Lipartiani being mentioned as the prince of Mingrelia in these documents meant that after the suppression of Bezhan I's uprising in the summer of 1719, the Porte had placed his uncle Gabriel on the Mingrelian throne. And, according to the registers numbered BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-162, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (February 28th – March 9th, 1721) and BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-167, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (February 28th – March 9th, 1721), after the killing of Giorgi VII, the opposition took control of western Georgia, and the rebellious Bezhan I again retook the Mingrelian throne, forcing out his uncle Gabriel. İshak Pasha was subsequently ordered to reinstall Gabriel on the Mingrelian throne.

administrators of Çıldır, Kars, and western Georgia, including the guardian of Rukhi fortress, to launch another campaign and crown Alexander V, son of Giorgi VII, in Imereti.

The struggle of the Porte to enthrone Alexander V in Imereti in 1720 and 1721 was actually an indirect fight between the Ottomans and the Russians. As mentioned above, Wakhtang VI had offered Peter I a joint military campaign against the Persians in 1718. Wakhtang's father was the brother of the aforementioned Archil Bagrationi.[378] Within that framework, Wakhtang's policy of enthroning anti-Ottoman candidates on west Georgian thrones had resulted in a pro-Russian unification of Georgia against the Ottomans and the Safavids. Thus, from the viewpoint of the Porte, the reestablishment of Ottoman central authority in western Georgia was necessary to enable them to block the strengthening of pro-Russian local powers on the frontier at this critical juncture.

Between mid-January and the end of May 1721, the Ottoman government issued several imperial orders to the provincial governors of Çıldır and Kars, to *sancak bey*s in these provinces, and to the guardians of the fortresses in Çıldır, Kars, and western Georgia to launch a large-scale and decisive military campaign against western Georgia.[379] In one of these orders, based on statements of a representative of Alexander V in Constantinople, the Porte had clearly pointed to the ruler of Kartli, Wakhtang VI, as the figure behind the murder and regime change in Imereti.[380] It was even stated that the *padishah* had sent an order to Wakhtang VI insisting that he not protect the "bandits" attempting to dethrone and kill Giorgi VII. İshak Pasha, the

[378] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 265 note 10. In 1722, Bedreddinzade Ali, *mirliva* in Kars-Erzurum, sent a detailed report on the recent history of and current situation in Persia to the Porte. He highlighted Wakhtang's alliance with the Russians, referring to earlier relations of his broader family with Russia. See Karslı Bedreddinzâde Mîrliva Ali Beğ, "Kaa'ime, H. 1117-1135 (1705-1723)," 111–12.

[379] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-97, 98, 99, 100, 101, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1133 (January 20th-29th, 1721); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-102, 161, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1133 (February 18th-27th, 1721); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-162, 167, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (February 28th – March 9th, 1721); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-220: Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (March 9th-18th, 1721); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-344, 348: Evasıt-ı Receb 1133 (May 7th-16th, 1721); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372: Evahir-i Receb 1133 (May 18th-27th, 1721).

[380] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-167, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (February 28th – March 9th, 1721).

governor of Çıldır, was again appointed as head of the collective provincial army, whose task was enthroning Alexander V in Imereti and Gabriel Lipartiani in Mingrelia. The Porte also ordered to İshak Pasha to eliminate the opposition completely, unlike in the earlier campaigns, so that it could not revive again. Ahmed III's order qualified these aims as "one of the most important of the important matters" of the Ottoman Empire.[381]

The government blamed İshak Pasha for being unsuccessful in providing order in the previous campaign, soon after which Georgia had experienced worse disarray and turmoil.[382] Similarly, another imperial order remonstrated the governor of Kars with harsh statements for the lack of troops from Kars in the previous year's campaign.[383] İshak Pasha also reported this absence of soldiers from Kars to the Porte. He asked permission from the government to create a register for *timar* and *zeamet* soldiers in Kars. In his petition, he complained that the lack of register had caused the administrative inability to check, control, and hold accountable these soldiers. Moreover, he wrote that their absence had created unrest and disorder in the other components of the army. Upon receipt of this petition, the Porte instructed him to create that register with great accuracy.[384] Thus, as they were getting prepared for the Georgian campaign, the frontier provinces simultaneously became ready for possible bigger clashes in the near future in terms of military discipline and order.

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[381] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-95, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1133 (January 10th-19th, 1721) "melik-i mesfurun (Alexandre V) makarr-ı hükümetine nasb ve takriri ve muhaliflerin kahr ve tedmirleriyle ol memleketin hüsn-i nizâmı umûru devlet-i aliyyemin ehemm-i mehâmından olup…"

[382] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-167, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1133 (February 28th – March 9th, 1721). Apart from imperial orders regarding the military preparations and targets for the Georgian campaign, unlike in earlier campaigns, the Porte had warned İshak Pasha about possible domestic opposition and rebellion in western Georgia, especially around the Akhaltsikhe region. This was another indicator of the Ottoman government's close watch on Georgian affairs in the early 1720s. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-370 and 372, Evahir-i Receb 1133 (May 18th-27th, 1721). Moreover, it seems the Porte took seriously the aforementioned warning of Arslan Mehmed Pasha regarding the possible triggering of a rebellion by an Ottoman military expedition. These orders were intended to prevent the danger of a popular rebellion in western Georgia. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 127-859, 20 Ramazan 1130 (August 7th-16th, 1718).

[383] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-102, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1133 (February 18th-27th, 1721).

[384] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-348, Evasıt-ı Receb 1133 (May 7th-16th, 1721).

The Georgian campaign of 1721 was a successful operation for the Ottoman Empire, and the Porte eventually reached its main goals in the northeastern frontier. Alexander V was installed as the prince of Imereti in that year and the opposition were eliminated effectively in western Georgia, at least for a while. The Ottomans prevented the interference of Wakhtang VI in western Georgian affairs, showing the Ottoman firmness in not relinquishing control of Georgia to either local Georgian unification aims or Russian imperial plans for the Caucasus. Additionally, after long years of military inactivity on the eastern frontier, the Porte reorganized janissaries and *timar* soldiers in the frontier provinces. By spring 1722, when the news about the siege of Isfahan had reached Constantinople, the north-eastern frontier was militarily ready to receive orders to launch attacks into Persia.

> "Thus ended that War betwixt the Turks and Persians, which, whether it was properly a religious War, as some think, or whether purely Political, and for the sake of Territory, which is left to the judicious Reader"
>
> Krusinski, vol. 2, Appendix, 1733, 203.

CHAPTER 3: OTTOMAN POLICIES TOWARD THE SAFAVIDS AND THE AFGHANS IN THE FIRST PERIOD OF WARS IN IRAN, 1722-25

The regime change in Iran in October 1722 was a historic moment in which Sunni Afghans replaced the Shiite Safavids who had been the neighbors of the Ottomans for 221 years. A year later, the Porte broke their eighty-four-year peace with the Safavids. These fundamental changes would challenge the Porte both politically and religiously in the following years. In this chapter and in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I discuss political and military developments between 1722 and 1729 with a focus on the goals, achievements, and failures of the Porte in relation to the Russians, the Safavids, and the Afghans. I will pay particular attention to the way the Porte justified its ever-changing policies through various religio-political discourses.

To discuss these complex developments in a clear way, I divide the seven-year period into two smaller periods, 1722-25 and 1725-29, using the temporary defeat of the Safavids in the fall of 1725 as a turning point. The current chapter and Chapter Four deal with the period between 1722 and 1725; Chapters Five and Six investigate the latter period.

The clarification of what happened and why in that short period of time is essential, since that era witnessed one of the most complicated international conflicts in the history of the Ottomans, and indeed of the region. Francesco Gritti, who had stayed in the Ottoman capital between 1723 and 1726 as the Venetian *bailo*, complained in one of his dispatches that he

"found it most difficult to analyze the Persian question."[385] Thus, we are dealing with a question that was an enigmatic issue even for a contemporary observer in Constantinople in his third year in office.

In the period between 1722 and 1729, there were mainly three actors with whom the Ottoman government was dealing: the Russians, the Safavids, and the Afghans. There was no certainty in the near or distant future of Iran, and both enmity and friendship with all three actors were possible for the Porte. Indeed, the Ottomans fought against and made peace with all three within seven years. The Ottoman government had to justify its changing policies using a religio-political discourse. Wars and peace with the Shiite Safavids, Christian Russians, and Sunni Afghans in such a short span of time made that justification process quite difficult. Especially the Sunni Afghan challenge to the Porte was of a different nature than those of the Safavids or the Russians. I will explore why it was so, locating the Afghan challenge in the framework of early modern Ottoman conceptions of "caliphate" elaborated in Chapter One.

I will argue that the Ottoman insistence on its claim to universal caliphate in the 1720s was neither a revitalization of Ottoman conceptions of caliphate, nor a diversion from the established religio-political discourse. It was instead a more visible manifestation of the long-existing Ottoman self-definition vis-à-vis its Muslim rivals in the early modern era. The sultan had consistently claimed paramountcy over other Muslim monarchs since the early sixteenth century. As I discussed in Chapter One, Ottoman competition with other Muslim monarchs, especially with the Mughals and Moroccans, had occasionally caused serious diplomatic crises and political clashes throughout the early modern period. However, none of them were at the level of the Ottoman-Afghan conflict in the 1720s.

[385] The quote was written in reference to Gritti's dispatch on June 30th, 1726, in his third year as ambassador. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 124.

What made the Afghan challenge special was the dramatic change in the status quo on the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire. For the first time in 221 years, the "Shiite wall" separating Ottoman domains from the rest of the Sunni world fell down in 1722. This development endangered the unchallenged authority of the Ottoman sultan in his safe haven. Ottoman rivalry with the Moroccans and Mughals did not worry the Porte at that level, due to the geographical distance of the contenders, but the Afghans came close to the gates of Ottoman domains and knocked down the religio-politically protective wall at Ottoman borders. The unfriendly Ottoman attitude toward the Afghans in Iran demonstrated that Kınalızade's classification of Ottoman lands and its neighbors in religio-political terms had much to do with practical conditions, rather than being mere theoretical designations.[386] His classification was both an ideal and goal for the protection of "*memâlik-i mahrûse*" and the legitimacy of the House of Osman.

Following that *raison d'état*, the Porte pursued an anti-Afghan and pro-Safavid strategy through most of the 1720s, which was not an easy task. The Ottoman policy of confessionalization had created two opposing situations within and outside the realm of the empire. On the one hand, the long process of top-down and bottom-up confessionalization increased internal cohesion and provided stability and legitimacy for sultanic authority and state order. On the other hand, the same sectarianism worked in the opposite direction when it came to powerful neighbors with a shared confessional identity. So as not to damage its own prestige and legitimacy, the Porte chose to cover its anti-Sunni foreign policy as much as it could. However, the persuasiveness of the government's arguments was a big question. In 1730, the rebellious opposition criticized the Porte's eastern policies from every possible religio-political

[386] For a discussion of Kınalızade's classification, see Chapter One.

angle. When the loss of Tabriz was coupled with the loss of religio-political legitimacy, the powerful reign of Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim Pasha ended disastrously.

A. A Short Chronological Account of the Period from 1722 to 1729

The Ghilzai Afghans started the siege of Isfahan in March 1722, and the city fell on October 22nd, 1722.[387] The siege of Isfahan started two simultaneous military struggles: one between the Russians and the Ottomans as external powers, and the other between the Afghan leader Mir Mahmud and the Safavid Prince Tahmasb, who escaped from the city during the siege.

Peter I began his Caucasus campaign in May 1722, setting out from Moscow. He captured the city of Darband in August, and in September, he started the march back to Russia. However, a sizable Russian army remained in the Caucasus and conquered Rasht, the capital of Gilan province, at the end of March 1723, and Baku in August of the same year. As a response to Russian operations, the Ottomans first took Shirvan under protection in the fall of 1722 and then officially annexed the principality in the first days of 1723. Then, the Ottoman provincial army captured Tbilisi in June 1723. On the south-eastern front, the Ottomans captured Kirmanshah that October.

Ottoman-Russian competition over capturing Caucasian lands brought them closer to fighting each other. However, both powers refrained from military confrontation, and started peace negotiations to partition Iran between themselves. The peace talks started in July 1723 and ended with the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Partition of Iran on June 22nd, 1724. In the post-peace period, the Russians were not successful in advancing further. However, Ottoman provincial armies took control of all the cities in their portion as of the fall of 1725. The conquests included Erevan, Ganja, Tabriz, and Hamadan. The Porte did not stop on the line agreed in the 1724 treaty and had captured Luristan and Ardabil by the beginning of 1726. All

[387] I do not cite sources for the information given in this part, as my discussion of the developments in this chapter and in Chapter Four, Five, and Six include detailed references.

Ottoman battles were fought against the Safavid forces, who, despite losing their capital, were still holding on to their western territories between 1722 and 1725.

As for the rivalry between internal powers, Mir Mahmud gained the upper hand against Tahmasb gradually. In April 1725, Ashraf replaced Mahmud in the Persian throne, and then defeated Tahmasb decisively in July. Upon defeats at the hands of Ottomans and Afghans, Tahmasb fled to the northeastern provinces of Iran, and started his struggle all over again.

In November 1726, the Ottomans and Afghans fought the Battle of Anjudan. The Afghans defeated the Ottomans; however, the Porte did not lose any land and even gained new ones in the Peace of Hamadan, signed in October 1727. A powerful local military commander, Nadir, had joined Tahmasb in September 1726. They together had subdued the eastern and north-eastern provinces of Iran by the summer of 1729. In November 1729, Nadir defeated the Afghans near Isfahan. Tahmasb was enthroned on December 9th, 1729 in Isfahan and reestablished Safavid rule in Persia as Shah Tahmasb II.

B. The First Period of Wars in Iran, 1722-25

B.1. The Siege and Fall of Isfahan

The Ghilzai Afghans were a Sunni tribe who were traditionally located in Kandahar and had lived under Safavid authority for a long time. With their population of around 250,000 people in the beginning of the eighteenth century, they posed a protective shield against the military threats of the Mughals, who had captured Kandahar from Safavids three times in the relatively recent past.[388] In return for their services, the Ghilzais received annual tributes from the Persian shah and remained loyal to the Safavid dynasty. However, the decline in the political power of the Safavid center, especially starting with the onset of the eighteenth century, provided an opportunity for the Afghans to break the yoke.[389] Noticing their serious intentions, around the

[388] The Mughals took Kandahar from the hands of Safavids in the following time periods: 1522-58, 1595-1622, and 1638-49.

[389] The economic reasons for the Afghan rebellion against the Safavids and subsequent invasion of Persia by them are illustrated in a senior thesis written by Eric Haunschield. He argues that the decline in the caravan trade going

year 1706 the Persian governor-general of Kandahar, George XI of Kartli, had sent Mir Uwais, the charismatic leader of the Ghilzais, to Isfahan to be kept in the control of the state center. However, Mir Uwais was able to convince the royal elite of his unquestioned loyalty to the Safavid house and even obtained Shah Sultan Husayn's permission to go on pilgrimage. During his pilgrimage in Mecca, he secured a *fetva* from religious scholars authorizing the Afghans to revolt against the Safavid shah.[390] He returned to Isfahan in the summer of 1708 and was rewarded with a robe of honor from Shah Sultan Husayn, and proceeded to Kandahar.

A short while after his return to Kandahar, he organized the Ghilzai people to revolt against the Persians. In April 1709, the Ghilzais revolted successfully and even killed the governor, George XI. In their military confrontations against the Persian armies, the Afghans were successful, and the central armies turned back to the capital empty-handed. Thus, from 1709 to 1715, under the leadership of Mir Uwais, the Afghans lived independently of the Safavids in Kandahar.[391] Father Krusinski, a Jesuit missionary in Isfahan who was present in the city during the fall of Isfahan, related that the *fetva* Mir Uwais acquired in Mecca was effective in his persuasion of the Afghan elders. Otherwise, these elders were content with their success against George XI and stood against any revolt against the Persian shah, on the pretext that it was unlawful to break one's promise of loyalty to one's master.[392]

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from Persia to India deprived the Afghans in Kandahar of a significant source of their income. Moreover, the worsening of the Safavid economy and also the arrival of George XI as governor in Kandahar caused the cutting off of the monetary subsidy delivered by the Safavid court to the Afghans. Mainly these two reasons, he alleges, were responsible for the invasion of Isfahan by the Ghilzai Afghans. Eric Haunschield, "The Long-Term Changes to the Economic Relationship between Safavid Persia and the Ghilzai Afghans from 1600-1722 and Their Direct Effect on the Fall of the Safavid Dynasty" (Senior Thesis, University of California, Davis, 2015).

[390] Krusinski wrote that "He [Mir Uwais] had also all the Satisfaction on the Part of those Doctors that he expected; for they not only solv'd all his Doubts, according to his Desire, but they also gave him the Decision, or the Fetfa, in Writing, sign'd by the Doctors, seal'd with the Seal of Mecca, and vested in a Word with all the Forms that could render it most authentick." Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 1:171–72.

For more historical sources about the *fetva*, see footnote 1 of D. M. Lang, "Georgia and the Fall of the Ṣafavi Dynasty," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14, no. 3 (October 1952): 531.

[391] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 80–92.

[392] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 1:185–87.

After Mir Uwais' death, he was replaced by his brother Abd al-Aziz, who offered Afghan submission to Isfahan again. In 1716, during the second year of his chieftaincy, he was killed. Eighteen-year-old Mahmud, the son of Mir Uwais, replaced him. In the meantime, the other major Afghan tribe, the Abdalis, who were located in Herat, a city close to Kandahar, rose against Safavid rule in 1715 and defeated the Persian army. The success of their major rival worried the Ghilzais, and Mir Mahmud fought against the Abdalis and defeated them in 1718. That critical military success brought Mir Mahmud the governor-generalship of Kandahar and the title of Husayn Quli Khan from Shah Sultan Husayn.[393]

In the summer of 1719, Mir Mahmud set out from Kandahar to Kirman, took the city over without a fight, and stayed there for nine months. Upon news of insurrection in Kandahar, he turned back and suppressed the rebellion. During that time, a Persian army took Kirman back from the Afghans. Two years later, in August 1721, Mir Mahmud embarked on a great march targeting Isfahan. After winning Kirman back and making an unsuccessful attempt to do the same to Yazd, the Afghan army reached the gates of Isfahan in the spring of 1722. On March 8th, the Afghan army, consisting of around 18,000 troops composed of various groups,[394] defeated the Persian army at Gulnabad. From that moment on, the Afghan army took control of the surrounding districts of Isfahan one by one and besieged the city proper. On October 22nd, 1722, the Afghan army triumphantly entered the exhausted city. In a ceremonial gathering, the last Safavid sultan, Shah Sultan Husayn, took off the *jiqa*, an emblem of royalty, from his own turban, and put it on the turban of Mir Mahmud, symbolizing that the Afghan leader was no more the mir of the Afghans but the shah of Persia.[395]

[393] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 93–101.
[394] The number of soldiers in the Afghan army is given differently in different sources, ranging between 5,000 and 90,000. Lockhart's estimation, based on a comparison of several sources, of around 18,000 seems reasonable.
[395] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 111–72.

It is significant to underline that the Safavid center fell as a result of a long and patient siege by an army having a relatively surmountable size and power. It showed that Isfahan was unable even to gather sufficient forces from its own provinces to save the capital from falling into the hands of a provincial power.[396] The ability to cement the components of the empire is the *sine quo non* of being an empire. The Safavid failure to show that ability even in a life-or-death moment was the clearest manifestation of the fall of the Safavids, as already foreseen by foreign observers in the preceding decade.

B.2. Ottoman Policies in the Period between 1722 and 1725

In the long year of 1722, the Ottoman government had to make critical decisions amid great uncertainty on the Iranian question. Current developments in Persia presented serious challenges, but also rare opportunities to the Porte. From the perspective of Constantinople, the big Iranian question consisted of two separate, but related parts: one was Russia as external major power, and the other was the Afghans and the Safavids as internal rival powers.

To make the distinction between internal actors and external powers in the Persian question is essential in understanding the Porte's complex and changing policies in the post-1722 period. Between 1722 and 1725, the Porte fought two separate wars on Safavid soil. The first started with the Ottoman protection of Shirvan in September 1722 and was intended to check the Russian advancement. This war only occurred in northern Iran, the Caucasus front, without direct military confrontation with the Russian army, and ended with the conclusion of the Russo-Ottoman Partition Treaty in June 1724. The second was against the Safavids, and

[396] Krusinski argues that until the last stages of the siege, the Safavid royal elite had forlorn hopes about the arrival of provincial troops. Prince Tahmasb, who was to be the head of the Safavids from 1722 to 1732, was sent to Qazvin to gather military support with the expectation that his status would attract the necessary number of troops to save the throne. However, when Isfahan understood that the expected support was not going to come, they lost, according to Krusinski, their last hopes, too. Krusinski even related that there were claims that Tahmasb did not bring aid to Isfahan purposefully. According to these claims, he planned to liberate the city soon after the Afghans dethroned Shah Sultan Husayn. In this way, Tahmasb and his close circle would be able to take over the Persian throne. Tadeusz Jan Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia: Taken from the Memoirs of Father Krusinski, Procurator of the Jesuits at Ispahan*, vol. 2 (London: J. Pemberton, 1733), 78–83.

began in September 1723, following the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* authorizing the war in July. Ottoman armies attacked Iranian lands this time on three fronts: the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and Iraq-i Ajam. This second war ended with the Ottoman capture of the targeted Safavid lands at the end of 1725. Even though these two wars were related, the outbreak of the second war was not the outcome of the first. The second war started primarily due to the Safavid and Afghan refusals of Ottoman demands, offered to both of them separately. Nevertheless, the agreement in principle between Constantinople and Moscow to partition Iran peacefully in the summer of 1723 was the external factor allowing the Ottomans to invade western Iran. Being secure from the Russian threat, the Porte decided to acquire Iranian lands by force.

Scholarship on that period presents the Ottoman wars in Iran as one undivided war.[397] An important reason for that negligence is the common scholarly approach to religion as a passive tool in the hands of "omnipotent" political actors. That established assumption has led modern scholars to neglect the timing of the *fetva* against the Safavids.[398] Thus, they have failed to distinguish two different wars in that period. This failure, in turn, has caused a problematic depiction of the policies of the Porte on the Iranian question in the concerned period. M. Akbulut's recent work is a good example of the undivided war narrative. He writes that

> After the fall of Isfahan in 1722, while the northern flank was waiting in indecision, Hasan Pasha *immediately* took the initiative in the south. On 16 October 1723, …exactly one year after the fall of Isfahan, the provincial army of Baghdad had settled in Kermanshah without any serious military confrontation.[399]

[397] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 251–73; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 175–82; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 142–52. An important reason for that misrepresentation may be the way official Ottoman chronicler Çelebizâde narrated the war against Iran. He covered the period between May 15th, 1722 (first consultative assembly meeting) and end of August 1723 (war orders to provincial governors) altogether in a couple of pages. In this narration, he barely specified the dates and wrote as if these developments had occurred over a short span of time, directly following one another. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan et al., vol. 3 (İstanbul: Klasik, 2017), 1330–32.

[398] I discuss this timing in a more detailed way below.

[399] Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 103. Emphasis added.

Clearly, Hasan Pasha's move was not immediately, but a full year after the fall of Isfahan, as Akbulut himself highlights.

Distinguishing between these two wars helps us to grasp the complex relationship between religion and politics more firmly. The different religious identities of the Afghans and the Safavids resulted in a fundamental difference in their challenges to the Ottomans. Afghans posed an equally legitimate alternative to the Ottoman sultan by virtue of sharing the same Sunni Islam. The Afghan shah of Iran could have attracted local rulers in the eastern Ottoman domains, such as the Kurdish lords, to accept his suzerainty. He could even threaten the caliphate status of the Ottoman sultan, if the Afghans were able to enlarge their sovereignty into the Hejaz in the future. However, the Safavid shahs lacked that potential, because the majority of Muslims considered the sect of the Safavids to be deviant, if not heretic. That difference required the Porte to take different political, legal, and military measures against the Afghans and the Safavids, respectively.

The Ottoman government could not pursue open hostility against the Afghans due to legal and communal restrictions resulting from their shared Sunni Islam. Still, the government was able to circumvent these restrictions skillfully and fought an anti-Sunni war under the guise of anti-heretic *jihad*. In the discussion below, I examine the steps the Ottoman government took in pursuing that complex policy in Iran between 1722 and 1725.

I should lastly note that pursing an anti-Sunni and pro-Shiite policy in Iran did not necessarily render Ottoman political actors insincere figures having nothing but secular goals. As I discussed in the introduction, one can pursue a completely sincere cause that could be seen as inconsistent and insincere from the outside. The Ottoman government could have believed that provisional support for the Shiite Safavids served the greater good of the Muslim community within those circumstances. It is a possibility that we cannot rule out. These matters

pertain to hearts and minds, which remain outside the legitimate sphere of the humanities and social sciences.

B.2.1. Ottoman Policies and Discourse toward the Safavids and Afghans

B.2.1.1. From the May 15th, 1722 Decisions to the the Fall of Isfahan

The news of the Afghan siege of Isfahan arrived in Constantinople on April 22nd, 1722.[400] On May 15th, a consultative council/assembly (*meclis-i meşveret*) meeting took place.[401] The council decided to deploy troops to the Persian front and gather military supply and provision against the expected fall of Shah Sultan Husayn. As soon as he fell, the Ottoman provincial armies would enter Iranian territories along the border from the north down to the south. The target was capturing the nearby cities like Erevan, Tbilisi, Ganja, and Tabriz, and others that remained unspecified. In the imperial orders, the Porte limited the cities to be conquered to the ones that had once been in Ottoman possession during the reigns of former sultans. It is important to highlight here that there was no official antagonistic attitude against the Safavids at this point, unlike many historians have argued.[402]

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[400] Official Ottoman chronicler Râşid Efendi wrote that on April 22nd, 1722 (6 Receb 1134), letters from Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, and Hasan Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, arrived in Constantinople. These letters informed the Porte about the Afghan victory over the Persian army at Gulnabad. They also included further information about the seriousness of the situation for Shah Sultan Husayn. See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1287.

[401] For the considerations and decisions of the assembly, see Râşid Mehmed Efendi, 2:1287–88; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1331.

[402] In his book published in 1958, Münir Aktepe wrote that the consultative council came to five decisions. Accepting Aktepe's account, Robert Olson translated these decisions from Aktepe as: "1. That the Afghan tribes under the leadership of Mahmud Khan, son of Mir Uwais, had rebelled in Kandahar and captured a number of Persian cities and that he was besieging lsfahan which was in danger of falling to the rebels. 2. That the rebellion could possibly spread to the borders of the Ottoman frontier provinces. 3. In regard to the existing situation the Ottoman Empire must capture the frontier cities of Erevan, Tebriz, Gence and Tiflis in order to strengthen the eastern borders. 4. Since many respected books of fıkh (jurisprudence) considered the Shi'i (Rafızi) as renegades and cursed men, it was deemed lawful to fight them in war in the same way as fighting unbelievers. 5. Lastly, to strengthen the public peace in the east and to rescue the towns in which Muslim Turks reside from Shi'i oppression, there was no reason why war should not be declared on Persia." Recently, Külbilge also repeated the same incorrect five decisions. See M. Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1958), 74–75; M. Münir Aktepe, *1720-1724 Osmanlı-İran Münâsebetleri ve Silâhşör Kemânî Mustafa Ağa'nın Revân Fetih-nâmesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1970), 13–14; Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 43–44; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 124–25.

For that information, Münir Aktepe refers to an imperial order recorded in a *münşeat mecmuası* located in the Topkapı Sarayı archives. I thank my colleague M. Nureddin Özel for making the source available to me.

The Porte was worried about the possibility of Shah Sultan Husayn's regaining his throne. The Ottoman government had no interest in breaking the peace with the Safavids. Still, it wanted to profit from their vulnerability. This conflict required formulating a justification to capture Safavid land without officially breaking the long-established peace. Râşid's and Çelebizâde's accounts of the May 15th meeting and the government's first military assault orders to provincial governors on the Iranian border following that meeting documented that justification.[403] It goes as follows: Isfahan fell into the hands of *bîgâne*s (alien, indifferent). In that situation it was clear that these *bîgâne*s were going to "invade" (*istilâ*) other Persian territories. It was against the sultan's royal good manners (*tab'-ı mekârim-perver-i padişâhânem*) to attack Persian lands in the weak situation of the Safavid shah, due to the long-existing peace between the Ottoman state and the Safavid shahs.[404] However, several reasons obliged the sultan to cross the Iranian border. First of all, with Shah Sultan Husayn's fall, the agreement between the Ottomans and Safavids became void.[405] In that case, it was a neighbor's right, before anybody else's, to take the other neighbor's territory.[406] Moreover, these territories

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See TSMK.R, no. 1947, 422b-425a. The date of the order was Evail-i Muharrem 1143 (July 17th-26th, 1730). The order addressed provincial administrators in Algiers. The main message was that Aligers should have sent 3,000 troops to the new Persian campaign which was supposedly led personally by Ahmed III. There was no mention of the assembly meeting of May 15th, 1722 and the subsequent decisions. It only briefly documented the reasons for waging war against the Safavids based on their "heresy" according to Sunni belief. The order also did not specify any cities to be conquered. Basically, Münir Aktepe merged the accounts of Râşid and Çelebizâde with that of the imperial order. Other historians have followed his mistake. That mistake also resulted from seeing the Ottoman wars in Iran as a unified one war, instead of two simultaneous wars against two different rivals. Moreover, as I will show below, the Porte embraced an official anti-Safavid stance only after the July 7th, 1723 consultative council meeting.

[403] The imperial orders noted that the consultative assembly had made the decision unanimously. The reason for clarifying Ottoman discourse to provincial governors was to inform them about the diplomatic justification of Ottoman assaults on Iranian lands. Besides correspondence between courts, provincial governors on the frontiers were key diplomatic actors in relations with other states. Letting provincial governors know the Ottoman arguments also ensured the unity of discourse in relations with Iran.

[404] "Devlet-i Aliyye-i ebed-peyvendimle Acem şâhları beyninde müddet-i medîdeden beru pâbercâ olan müsâlemeye binaen, hâlâ Acem şâhının bu gûne za'f-ı hâli vakitlerinde, Devlet-i Aliyyem tarafından memâlikine taarruz olunmak muktezây-ı tab'-ı mekârim-perver-i padişâhâneme mugâyir olup…" See BOA, A.DVNSHM.d 130-103, 104, 105, Evail-i Şaban 1134 (May 17th-26th, 1722).

[405] Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1288. For the validity of treaties in pre-modern diplomacy, see Güngörürler, "Diplomacy and Political Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1722," 63–64.

[406] "بدار الجار جار الدار احق" A Persian proverb: ba dâr al-câr, câr al-dâr ahaq. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:30.

had belonged to some of the earlier Ottoman sultans; thus, they were the inherited lands of Ahmed III.

Second, since Afghan assailants were not like the disciplined and orderly soldiers under the authority of just sultans (*selâtîn-i 'adl-ayîn*), they would have harmed the subjects in the vicinity of the Ottoman borders. The Porte justified the Ottoman sultan's duty to protect these subjects based on two points. First, all praiseworthy just sultans of the past had acted this way and protected the subjects in the vicinity of their borders. It was thus not expectable and congruent with the Ottoman sultan's royal compassion (*re'fet*) and esteemed honor (*hamiyyet-i bülend-rütbet*) for him not to protect the subjects and to prevent their perishing under their oppressors. Second, a large Sunni population (*ehl-i sünnet ve'l cemaat*) lived in Persian lands. To protect them was a requirement of the Ottoman sultan's caliphate. Thus, taking these territories under Ottoman rule was not only legally permissible, but also a necessity and an admired thing (*emr-i müstahsen*). The justification further alleged that the Ottomans were to take the possession of these regions "for now" (*şimdilik*). If, after a while, the shah regained his throne, then the Ottoman sultan and the Safavid shah would solve the issue with justice, observing the procedure of friendship (*dostluk*).[407]

Above all, formulating a justification for two possible but yet unrealized developments, namely the return of Shah Sultan Husayn and the initial loss of his throne, was itself a demonstration of Ottoman caution in the Safavid policy. The Ottoman sultan attached high importance to not being seen as an aggressor who broke the "ancient brotherhood" greedily in the Persian shah's weakness. The main indicator of that caution was the decision to not invade Persian lands as long as Shah Sultan Husayn retained his throne. Unlike Peter I, the Ottoman government did not consider invading Iran during the siege of Isfahan as a reasonable move

[407] BOA, A.DVNSHM.d 130-103, 104, 105, Evail-i Şaban 1134 (May 17th-26th, 1722).

because of its relations with Shah Sultan Husayn.[408] The assembly deemed it improper to rush to enter into Persian domains.[409] However, it was equally important that the Ottoman sultan did not promise to give these lands back to the Safavids in case Shah Sultan Husayn regained his throne. The Porte instead used an equivocal language. This attitude showed the importance of the neighboring territories for the Porte and the government's intention to stay in the newly conquered lands longer.

The Porte's discourse at that stage clearly delegitimized the Afghans and qualified the Safavid dynasty as the rightful rulers of Persia. The official language even did not refer to the Afghans by their names, but always with other denominations, including "others" (*âhar, dîgerân*), "*bîgâne*s," "assailants" (*hücûm eden tâife*), and "their [the Persians'] opponents" (*hasımları*). That discourse enabled the Porte to take Safavid lands without formally breaking the peace and declaring war. It also would have protected the Porte at the level of discourse in the future against possible Safavid accusations, in case the Safavids were able to come back. Moreover, that excuse would have provided an easier transition to peaceful settlement of affairs after the war was over.

In terms of the focuses of this thesis, the Porte's resort to its caliphate status was of utmost significance. I discussed in the first chapter that one of the political functions of the Ottoman caliphate title was capturing the lands of neighboring Muslim states through the justification of that status. The Porte justified the possible expansion of Ottoman territories into Moroccan lands in the 1690s and into Safavid lands in the 1720s by relying on the caliphate discourse. The reasoning was different in these two cases: In the first, the Ottoman government accused

[408] It is true that the Porte ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to march on Tbilisi during the siege of Isfahan. However, I will show in the next chapter that the Ottoman government did not present themselves as being against the Shah. It justified these intrusions with the argument that Shah Sultan Husayn had already lost Tbilisi to the Georgians.
[409] "Devlet-i Aliyye ile şâh-ı Acem beyninde ma'kûd olan sulh u salâha göre Devlet-i Aliyye tarafından dahi nez'-i ba'z-ı memâlike mübâderet ü isti'cal münâsib görünmez." See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1287–88.

the Moroccan ruler of being a rebel against the caliph who performed *jihad* against the infidel. In the second, the Porte put forward the caliph's responsibility of protecting Sunnis, ironically from other Sunnis, i.e., the Afghans, even outside the borders of Ottoman domains. Hence, the caliphate was like a master key in Ottoman soft power, supplementing Ottoman international policies with a wide range of justifications depending on the situation.

There was a silence within these minutely calculated future scenarios: the Ottoman attitude toward the Afghans, in case they established a firm rule in Iran. Logically, if Shah Sultan Husayn lost his throne forever, then the Afghans would become the new neighbors of the Ottomans. How would the Porte have reacted to Afghan rule in Persia in that situation?

The Ottoman government followed a "wait and see" policy with regard to the Afghans during the siege of Isfahan. The major actor in this situation was Baghdad's governor, Hasan Pasha.[410] He objected to the Porte's May 15th decision of beginning the military campaigns in Iran as soon as Shah Sultan Husayn fell. Hasan Pasha wrote to Constantinople that it would have been wiser first to figure out the will of Mahmud after he captured the city.[411] The Porte

[410] Çelebizâde praised Hasan Pasha's qualities as follows: "sinîn-i kesîreden berü Bağdâd-ı bihişt-âbâd eyâletinde vâlî ve ale't-tevâlî tecessüs ü tefahhusdan hâlî olmamağla, devlet-i Acem'in kemâ-yenbagî vâkıf-ı hâli olan Vezîr Hasan Paşa hazretleri…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1331. Hasan Pasha's prominent role in the Iranian question continued until his death in February 1724. Several imperial orders highlighted that the Porte had authorized Hasan Pasha to deal with all the affairs of the region. The Porte also gave the last war order starting the actual march of Ottoman troops on Persia after Hasan Pasha's approval. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504 Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723), "Velhasıl evvel ve ahir, ol havalinin kaffe-i umuru fatk u ratk-ı âmme-i ahvâl-i cumhûru, alâ vechi'l külli senin uhde-i ihtimamına ihale ve duş-i gayret-puşuna havale olunmağla"; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-517, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1135 (July 15th-24th, 1723) "Evvel ve ahir bu hususun temşiyeti senin ra'y-i rezin ve fikr-i sakib-i savâb-zammiyetine ihale ve üç gün mukaddem bu hususda ne vech üzere amel ve hareket eylemeyi istisvab eder isen, ona göre hareket etmeye taraf-ı humayun-ı padişahanemden mezun ve murahhas, ve makul ve münasib gördüğün umur, makbul-i humayunum olduğunu müşir hatt-ı humayun şevket-makrunumla muanven emr-i şerif-i celilu'l kadirim şeref-bahş-i sudur olup, gönderilmiştir."; BOA, A.MKT 13/33, 4 Zilkade 1134 (August 16th, 1722).

Ahmed Pasha, the son of Hasan Pasha, replaced his father in the governorship of Baghdad. Ahmed Pasha remained in this position, like his father, until his death in 1747, with a short break in the early 1730s. Like his father, Ahmed Pasha continued to be the main Ottoman actor, via whom the Porte dealt with the Iranian affair, during his governorship. For a detailed study of Ahmed Pasha's role in the Ottoman-Iranian Wars between 1736 and 1747, see M. Nureddin Özel, "Ambassadors, Spies, Captives, Merchants and Travelers: Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747" (Master's thesis, İstanbul Şehir University, 2018).

[411] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1188, 1189, 1190, Evahir-i Ramazan 1134 (July 5th-14th, 1722). "Bağdad valisi vezir müşârun ileyh tarafından der-i devlet-medârıma mektub ve kâimesi gelip, hulâsa-i mefhûmunda, mû mâ

agreed to wait further and not to attack Persian territories immediately after the fall of Isfahan. Then, the government ordered the frontier governors of Erzurum, Van, and Baghdad, not to cross the border, even if Isfahan fell, referring to Hasan Pasha's letter.[412]

During the Afghan siege, the unknown "will" (*murad*) of Mahmud preoccupied the minds of the Ottoman statesmen considerably. Ottoman documents and chronicles do not explain what they meant by the "will" of Mahmud. Çelebizâde wrote that the conduct and movement (*cümbüş ü reftâr*) of Mahmud Han was not known, in case he possessed Isfahan. The Porte even ordered Hasan Pasha to send Ebubekir Ağa as an envoy to Mahmud and Shah Sultan Husayn with letters to each during the siege. However, on August 16th, 1722, the government wrote to Hasan Pasha that Mahmud's power and the possibility of his success seemed to be decreasing. Thus, if Hasan Pasha was to send Ebubekir Ağa to Isfahan, he would carry only the letter to Shah Sultan Husayn. Still, the Porte delegated full authority to Hasan Pasha to act in the way he thought best, not excluding the option of sending the letter to Mir Mahmud, based on the course of developments.[413] The reports of English and Venetian residents also confirmed the sending of the envoy to Shah Sultan Husayn and Mir Mahmud. The Venetian *bailo* wrote more specifically that one of the reasons for sending an envoy to the latter was figuring out the "intentions of Mahmud."[414]

Even though the available primary sources do not elucidate the "will of Mahmud," it seems the Porte wanted to get information on mainly two questions: first, Mahmud's attitude

ileyh Mahmûd Hân, İsfahân şehrini zabt ve teshir edip, memâlik-i Acem'i umûman kabza-i zabt ve tasarrufuna aldığı haberleri tevârüd eder ise dahi, mâdem ki mû mâ ileyh Mahmûd Hân'ın feth ve teshir-i İsfahân'dan sonra murâdı ne olduğu malûm ve zâhir olmadıkça, taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyyemden bir dürlü hareket makûl ve münâsib olmadığın arz ve inha etmekle, Vezir-i müşârun ileyhin bu ra'y-i savab-karîni istihsân ve istisvâb olunmuşdur."

[412] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1188, 1189, 1190, Evahir-i Ramazan 1134 (July 5th-14th, 1722).

[413] BOA, A.MKT 13/33, 4 Zilkade 1134 (August 16th, 1722).

[414] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 93; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 218. The Venetian ambassador specified the envoy's name as Besich Ağa. It was probable that he confused "Bekir" with "Besich." As I discuss below, the first Ottoman envoy to Mahmud was Osman Ağa, who arrived in Isfahan in the end of January 1723. This means that Hasan Pasha did not send Ebubekir Ağa to Mahmud on that occasion.

toward the Ottoman state, in general, and second, toward the Ottoman primary goal of occupying western Iran, in particular. As I will discuss below, the consultative assembly discussed Mahmud's response letter on July 7th, 1723, and highlighted these two points. The political developments in the following years also confirmed that the Porte was preoccupied mainly with these concerns in its relations with the Afghans.

The intention of the Ghilzai Afghans was a question for everybody, even for themselves, before the fall of Isfahan. The Afghans had been subordinate either to the Safavids or to the Mughals for centuries and had never established a dynasty over a certain territory. Lockhart lists various possible alternatives the Afghans could have followed at that stage.[415] Mir Mahmud could have made a profitable deal with Shah Sultan Husayn and returned to Kandahar with political and economic gains. Or, he could have claimed full successorship to the Safavid shah over the entire Persian territory. Krusinski wrote that on May 17th, 1722, Shah Sultan Husayn proposed to recognize Mir Mahmud as a sovereign ruler of Kandahar and to give a large sum of money if the Afghans lifted the siege and returned to Kandahar. The war council of the Afghans considered the offer and decided to accept it with two more conditions. First, Mir Mahmud was to marry to a daughter of Shah Sultan Husayn; second, Persia should give the Hazara region to the Afghans. Shah Sultan Husayn agreed to give Hazara, but not his daughter.[416] Thus, it was quite possibile that the Afghans themselves would turn back to Kandahar without dethroning Shah Sultan Husayn or becoming the new masters of Persia.

B.2.1.2. From the Fall of Isfahan to the Declaration of War on the Safavids

Isfahan fell into the hands of the Afghans on October 22nd, 1722. The *şeyhülislam* only issued a *fetva* authorizing the Ottoman armies to fight against the Safavids between July 7th and 14th, 1723. The Porte ordered frontier governors to attack Iran in the end of August. Eventually,

[415] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 148.
[416] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:27–35.

provincial armies started their military campaign into Persia in September 1723. Why had the Porte waited for almost a year to wage war on the Safavids after the fall of Isfahan?

The basic answer to that question is that they aimed to gain maximum outcome with minimum cost and risk. There were two dimensions of this waiting: external, which is to say the Russians, and internal, the Safavids and the Afghans. Externally, the Porte was worried about Russian opposition to an Ottoman invasion of western Iran. The Ottoman government refrained from military confrontation with Russia in Iran and pushed for the peaceful partition of Persian territories to the end.[417] Internally, the Porte tried to reach its goals through diplomatic negotiations with alternative powers of the Safavids and the Afghans. The fierce competition between Mahmud and Tahmasb created an opportunity for the Porte to acquire the targeted Iranian territories through diplomacy, rather than forceful means, in the post-October 1722 period. The Ottomans could have attained their goals by offering their support to one of the contenders who agreed to the Ottoman demands. Thus, the Porte did not wage war on Iran for a long time, not until the responses of both Tahmasb and the Afghans arrived in Constantinople. The Ottoman government was worried about backing the "wrong horse" between the Safavids and Afghans in the uncertain future of Iran. In this waiting process, the Porte did not favor a certain competitor over the other.

At that stage, the Porte sought to answer the question of whether the Safavid Tahmasb or Afghan Mahmud would meet the Ottoman demands.[418] The main framework in that tough

[417] I discuss this policy in a more detailed way in the next chapter.

[418] I did not encounter any serious consideration by the Porte to capture Isfahan and became the new masters of Iran in the primary and secondary sources of the time. Joseph Apisalaymian, the Catholic-Armenian interpreter for the French consulate at Isfahan, narrated that in a personal conversation with Osman Ağa, the Ottoman envoy told him that in his return to Constantinople, he was going to advice the Ottoman sultan to conquer the entire Persian lands, including Kandahar. See Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, trans. Caro Owen Minasian (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1959), 33–34.

There was a weak reference to the possible Ottoman aim of conquering Isfahan, from October 10th, 1723. Venetian *bailo* Emo reported his personal conversation with the Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha. According to his record, the conversation went as follows: Emo said to the grand vizier that "Your Excellency could still do him [Mahmud] a favor, and that would be to provide him with the Horses with which he could return to Kandahar.

decision was the long-established Ottoman priority of securing a weak but stable authority in Iran, as I examined in Chapter Two. Then, the practical question became: In what conditions could these alternative powers secure a weak but stable Iran for the Porte?

Even though the existence of the Afghans as a Sunni power in Iran posed a big religio-political challenge, the Porte did not disregard the Afghan alternative altogether. However, from the perspective of Constantinople, for the Afghans to be acceptable neighbors would require stricter conditions than Safavid rule had, due to the potential challenge inherent in their shared belief. First, the Afghans should rule over less Iranian territory than the Safavids.[419] Second, the Afghan ruler must rank at princely level, and not at kingly level as the Safavid shahs did.[420] Third, even if the Afghan ruler enjoyed sovereignty over the subjects in his realm, he should recognize the Ottoman sultan's religio-political superiority, as universal caliph, over himself.[421]

For the ideal Safavid alternative, there was only one condition: the agreement of Tahmasb to transfer to the Ottomans the territories from Shirvan to the Black Sea in the Caucasus and provinces in western Iran from Tabriz to Kirmanshah. The Porte was ready to recognize Tahmasb as shah of Persia as soon as he accepted the Ottoman demands. There were two main reasons for the Porte to acquire the western provinces of Iran. The first and primary reason was the Russian occupation of the Caspian shores, the second being the establishment of Sunni

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The vizier replied also wittily [that he] had recommended that to the Pasha of Babylonia, who was marching with a hundred thousand Men toward Ispahan but that Mirevis [Mahmud] had not been bold enough to wait for him." See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 108.

[419] The Porte decided on this strategy in January 1723, at the latest, soon after the news of the fall of Isfahan arrived in Constantinople. Emo reported that "Two plans resulted: to let Mahmud advance as little as possible; if that did not succeed, then to require him to acknowledge the sultan as emperor of Mecca and Medina." This report was dated January 23rd, 1723. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 98. Moreover, as I discuss below, the Porte ordered the commanders-in-chief to advance on western Persia, limiting themselves to the territories the Afghans had conquered before the Ottomans. I will also discuss this issue in the next chapter, when examining the Porte's further expansionist policies in the period following the summer of 1725.

[420] The clearest indicator of this condition was the Ottoman designation of the Afghan ruler as "Mahmud Hân," instead of Mahmud shah, as Mahmud called himself. The Porte maintained this attitude until the Treaty of Hamadan of 1727.

[421] I discuss this condition both in this chapter and in the following.

Afghan rule in Persia. However, regardless of these factors, the Porte also aimed to gain economic and political benefit from the vulnerability of the Persian central authority.

The cities the Porte targeted created important economic surpluses in terms of international trade, especially silk, and agricultural production.[422] The clearest evidence of the Ottoman aim to expand its borders into Persia for economic reasons was the rapidness of cadastral surveys in the newly conquered cities.[423] Moreover, soon after the conquest of Tabriz, the Porte ordered the building of a minting house (*darbhane*) in the city. Çelebizâde wrote that one of the reasons for the construction of this building was to facilitate the spread and prevalence of Ottoman coins throughout Azerbaijan.[424]

Nevertheless, to acquire new territories and benefit in an economic and political sense was the secondary aim of the Ottoman targeting of western Persia. The primary reason was to safeguard the traditional Ottoman borders against Russia, and, more importantly, against the Sunni Afghans. The Ottoman attitude and actions before and during the siege of Isfahan indicated that if Russia did not occupy Persia, and if the Afghans did not overthrow Shah Sultan Husayn, then the Ottomans would not attack Iran. The Porte could have occupied Iranian lands before the fall of Shah Sultan Husayn, due to the great weakness of the Shah, but it did not

[422] Fariba Zarinebof's thesis showed how the Porte aimed at controlling the silk trade route and trade revenues by conquering Tabriz. See Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725-1730" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1991). For the Ottoman economic motivations for the Iranian war, see also Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 109–22.

[423] The date of the Ottoman capture of Tbilisi was June 10th, 1723. The dates of the imperial order for the cadastral survey of the province were January 27th – February 5th, 1724. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-1070, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1136 (January 27th – February 5th, 1724). The date of the Ottoman capture of Erevan was October 3rd, 1724. The dates of the imperial order for the cadastral survey of the province were October 30th – November 8th, 1724. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-474, Evasıt-ı Safer 1137 (October 30th – November 8th, 1724). The date of the Ottoman capture of Tabriz was August 2nd, 1725. The dates of the imperial order for the cadastral survey of the province were October 19th-28th, 1725. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1461, Evasıt-ı Safer 1138 (October 19th-28th, 1725). The conquest of Hamadan was August 31st, 1724. The dates of the imperial order for the cadastral survey of the province were October 20th-29th, 1724. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-410, Evail-i Safer 1137 (October 20th-29th, 1724). The date of the Ottoman capture of Ganja was September 4th, 1725. The dates of the imperial order for the cadastral survey of the province were October 29th – November 6th, 1725. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-60, Evahir-i Safer 1138 (October 29th – November 6th, 1725).

[424] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1456.

choose to do so. It seems that the Ottoman government calculated that the risk of breaking up of peace with the shah would have been greater to the Ottomans in the long run than the potential benefits of occupation of Iranian lands while the shah was still sitting on the Persian throne.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Ottoman government ensured the Safavids of the non-belligerence of the Porte with the corresponding ambassadors Dürri Ahmed Efendi and Murtaza Quli Khan. Moreover, Ahmed III did not accept the insistent annexation requests of the Shirvanis until Shah Sultan Husayn fell. At that time, even Ottoman public opinion was pushing the government to recognize Shirvan and thereby to save fellow Sunnis from the Russian attack.[425] Thus, I argue that the Ottoman capture of the western provinces of Iran aimed primarily at countering the Russian and Afghan entrance into Iran, and secondarily at weakening the Safavid central authority and gaining economic and political advantage from these territories.

B.2.1.2.1. The Porte's Diplomatic Contacts with Mahmud and Tahmasb

B.2.1.2.1.1. Correspondence between the Porte and Mahmud

Hasan Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, sent Hacı Osman Ağa to Isfahan as an envoy to Mir Mahmud. Osman Ağa arrived in Isfahan in the end of January 1723 and remained there until mid-February.[426] The Ottoman letter to Mahmud is not extant. However, the reports of the Venetian *bailo* provide important clues about the Ottoman message to Mir Mahmud.

In January 1723, Emo reported that the Porte had two alternative plans regarding the Afghans. The first was to limit Mahmud's territorial advancement as much as possible. If this plan did not succeed, then, the second was to "require him to acknowledge the sultan as emperor

[425] I examine this issue in the next chapter.

[426] Willem Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729* (Paris: Peeters Publishers, 1998), 185; Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, 31–34; Louis-André de La Mamie de Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1750), 64–66; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 199–200.

of Mecca and Medina." Even though Emo did not explain the meaning of the emperorship of Mecca and Medina, it clearly referred to the Afghan acceptance of the Ottoman sultan as the universal Sunni caliph.[427] A week later, Emo repeated the intelligence that the vizier's plan was "not to have him [Mir Mahmud] too close because of his power," depending on information from Alexander Ghika, the dragoman of the imperial council. The Venetian ambassador also reported that the grand vizier's intention was "to make Mahmud a friend, if not a subject."[428] However, considering the gap between the Ottoman plans for Mahmud and Mahmud's own aims in Persia, it seemed not possible for the Porte to make Mahmud a friend. As Gilanentz observed, "the Turks [had] not shown any sign of friendship to Mahmud" at that stage.[429]

Reports by Austrian representatives give further information on Ottoman plans regarding the Iranian question.[430] According to their reports, a consultative assembly meeting was held on February 9th, 1723. Austrian representatives reported the reason for this gathering as the Porte's fear of the popularity of Mahmud among people in provinces bordering Persia. They stated that both Mahmud's strictly orthodox Sunnism and his successes against the Safavids made him a political figure widely beloved by Ottoman subjects. According to their reports, that affection made the assembly decide to occupy western Iran, instead of waiting Mahmud's arrival on Ottoman borders.

A letter from the Porte, most probably from Damad İbrahim Pasha, to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha also demonstrated that the Ottoman government wanted to establish its superior religio-political position over Mahmud through Ottoman achievements against the Russians in the field. As I discuss extensively in the next chapter, the Porte annexed Shirvan diplomatically and

[427] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 98.
[428] Shay, 98. The date of the report was February 5th, 1723.
[429] Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, 34.
[430] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:288–89. Hurmuzaki refers to the reports of Nicolo Theyls, the Austrian translator, and Josef von Dirling, the Austrian ambassador in Constantinople. The dates of the reports were February 15th and February 23rd, 1723, respectively.

protected the Sunni Lazgis from a military campaign by Peter I. The letter ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to write of these Ottoman successes to Mir Mahmud in "sincere" language. The author of the letter did not specify the reason for letting Mahmud know about Ottoman protection. He only wrote that doing so had benefits.[431] Above all, informing Mahmud about these developments would have broken Mahmud's monopoly on being the holy warrior in Iran in the eyes of the Sunnis in Ottoman and Persian lands. Second, it would have showed that it was not Mahmud, but Ahmed III, who could successfully protect Muslims, even in Persian domains, from the "infidels." In any case, the Porte wanted to press Mahmud by demonstrating the religiously legitimate Ottoman involvement in the Persian war and annexation of a former Safavid province to which Mahmud most probably wanted to lay claim.

Even though we do not have the Ottoman letter to Mir Mahmud, it seems that the letter included the superiority claims of the Ottomans over the Afghans in a diplomatic manner. Indeed, in the summer of 1723 Emo wrote that the reason for sending an *ağa* by Hasan Pasha to Mahmud was to ask if Mahmud "recognized the sovereignty of the sultan."[432] Mahmud's complete change of attitude toward the Ottoman envoy after reading the letter was suggestive in this sense. Osman Ağa received a warm welcome in the Afghan court in the first ten days before his formal appearance before Mir Mahmud. Even at that instance, it was only Mahmud and Osman Ağa who were sitting in the court room, while everybody else was standing. However, after reading the letter Osman Ağa brought, Mir Mahmud accused the Ottoman envoy of being a spy instead of a genuine envoy. Mahmud even intended to kill him, but the Afghan *mufti* prevented Mahmud from executing the Ottoman envoy.[433] A few days later, the Afghans

[431] "Bu suretde mesfûrun diyar-ı İran'a istila kaydında olduğu ve taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'den men' ve seddi murad olunduğu, Mir Veys-zade Mahmud Han tarafına dahi i'lam olunmakda bazı hüsniyat melhuz olup, Cenab-ı saadetleri münasib görülen tabirat-ı muhalesat ile bu keyfiyet tarafınızdan müşarun ileyhe dahi ilam ve işar olunması ra'y-i savab mülahaza olunmağla,…" See BOA, AE.SAMD.III, 44-4401, 20 Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 26th, 1723).
[432] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 103.
[433] Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, 32.

wrote a response and handed it to Osman Ağa. Osman Ağa had a very difficult return to Constantinople through Hamadan and Baghdad. Mahmud's letter sent with Osman Ağa must have arrived in Istanbul in late May or June 1723.[434]

B.2.1.2.1.2. Contacts between Tahmasb and the Porte

Soon after the fall of Isfahan and Tahmasb's move to Tabriz, Tahmasb sent two envoys to the Ottomans, first in the first months of 1723, then in the beginning of the following summer. In February 1723, the Porte received a letter from Silahdar İbrahim Paşa, governor of Erzurum and the chief commander of the northern front, letting the government know that Tahmasb's envoy was on his way from Tabriz.[435] The Porte did not allow Tahmasb's first envoy, Berhurdar Han, to proceed beyond Kars or Erzurum, and ordered the sending of Tahmasb's letter to Constantinople.[436] In April, the government received the letter and discussed what to do in response in a big consultative assembly meeting.[437]

The only hint about the content of Tahmasb's letter in the imperial order was that Tahmasb claimed his kingship (*şahlık*) over Persia.[438] Çelebizâde gave a little bit more detail on the content of the letter. According to his account, Tahmasb wrote about the bad situation in Iran and said that he had declared his independence in the capital city of Azerbaijan and confirmed the renewal of the long-existing peace between the Ottoman sultans and the Safavid shahs, behaving as if he had inherited the Persian throne from Shah Sultan Husayn.[439]

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[434] In Hamadan, the Safavid governor did not allow Osman Ağa's passage for forty-five days upon the orders of Tahmasb. Then, again with Tahmasb's permission, Osman Ağa proceeded from Hamadan to Baghdad. See Gilanentz, p. 34. The only information I was able to find about the arrival of Osman Ağa in Constantinople was in an imperial letter to Baghdad's Governor Hasan Paşa dated July 5th-14th, 1723. It stated that Osman Ağa had arrived in Constantinople with all the letters he brought from the Afghans and his report. This document confirmed that Osman Ağa arrived in Constantinople in the beginning of July at the latest. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504 Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).

[435] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-145, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 17th-26th, 1723).

[436] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-145, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 17th-26th, 1723).

[437] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-355, Evail-i Receb 1135 (April 7th-16th, 1723).

[438] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-355, Evail-i Receb 1135 (April 7th-16th, 1723).

[439] "şîme-i zemîme-i A'câm-ı bed-fercâm üzre lâf ü güzâf ile dârü'l-mülk-i Azerbaycan'da da'vâ-yı istiklâl ve Devlet-i ebed-müddet-i Osmâniyye ile şâhân-ı Acem miyânında mün'akıd olan sulhü nevbet-i şâhî kendüsüne intikâl itmek zu'mıyla te'yîd ü te'kîd içün nâme vü peygâm irsâline isti'câl idüb Berhûrdâr Hân nâm kimesneyi

Çelebizâde narrated that since at that time Tahmasb was in no position to give what the Ottoman government had asked for,[440] the envoy was not allowed to proceed to Constantinople. As was clear from the May 15th decisions and subsequent imperial orders to frontier governors in 1722, the Ottoman demand referred to by Çelebizâde was the handing over of territories in western Iran to the Ottomans. The imperial order to Silahdar İbrahim Paşa underlined two points: first, Shah Sultan Husayn's dethronement or death was not clear; second, Tahmasb was not able to take back the Persian throne. Accordingly, the Porte once again declared to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha that it was maintaining a "wait and see" policy. Furthermore, the government ordered him to keep Berhurdar Khan under his control either in Kars or Erzurum.[441] Until the summer of 1726, the Porte had maintained the policy of recognizing Tahmasb as the shah of Persia, on the condition that he surrendered the western provinces of Iran to the Ottomans. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Tahmasb recognized Ottoman land acquisition in Iran in the summer of 1726.

Apparently, the Ottoman government did not consider Tahmasb a worthy addressee or an able player in early 1723, and, therefore, had left his message unanswered.[442] After his long stay in Kars,[443] in late November 1723, Berhurdar Khan was sent to Arifî Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Diyarbakr, who became the commander-in-chief in the Erevan campaign and was closer to Tahmasb's headquarters geographically.[444]

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elçi olmak üzre techîz ve Âsitân-ı sa'âdet-âşiyân-ı sultânîye mezbûr ile irsâl-i nâme ve dest-âvîz eyledi." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1336. That was also in conformity with Tahmasb's declaration of himself as shah of Persia since November 10th, 1722 in Qazvin. See Jonas Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia: Containing the Reign of Shah Sultan Hussein; the Invasion of the Afghans...*, vol. 2 (London, 1762), 184; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 193.

[440] "Devlet-i Aliyye'nin murâdı olan hidmetde bulunması çendân muhtemel olmamağla…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1336.

[441] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-354, 355, Evail-i Receb 1135 (April 7th-16th, 1723).

[442] Neither Çelebizâde nor Hurmuzaki mentioned a written Ottoman reply to Tahmasb.

[443] Mustafa Öksüz, "Şem'dânîzâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi'nin Mür'i't-Tevârîh Adlı Eserinin (180B-345A) Tahlil ve Tenkidi Metni" (Master's thesis, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2009), 356.

[444] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-815, Evahir-i Safer 1136 (November 20th-27th, 1723). The Porte sent Berhurdar Khan back to Iran after three years of confinement in Kars and Erzurum, after Tahmasb agreed to recognize

In the beginning of the summer, Tahmasb, pressed hard from three sides by the Afghans, the Russians, and more recently the Ottomans, resorted again to diplomatic channels to prevent the further advancement of the Ottomans and the Russians in the eastern and western Caucasus respectively. On that occasion, he sent İsmail Beg to St. Petersburg and Murtaza Quli Beg to Constantinople and offered certain territorial concessions to the respective capitals.[445] First, the Porte ordered Köprülüzade Abdullah Paşa, the governor of Van, to send the letter and to keep the envoy in Van, as had been the case with Berhurdar Han.[446] Tahmasb's letter arrived at Constantinople on July 5th, 1723. Soon after the July 7th, 1723 meeting, which I discuss below, the Porte changed its mind and ordered Abdullah Pasha to send Murtaza Quli Beg with four men at most in his retinue to the Ottoman capital.[447]

B.2.1.2.2. The High Consultative Council Meeting on July 7th, 1723

A big consultative assembly meeting was held to discuss Mahmud's and Tahmasb's letters comparatively on July 7th, 1723.[448] In the meantime, Nişli Mehmed Ağa, the Ottoman envoy sent to Moscow, had returned to Constantinople in May 1723. The Russian government's messages he carried assured the Porte of the Russian commitment to preserving peace in the

western Iran as Ottoman territory. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-787, Evahir-i Ramazan 1138 (May 23rd – June 1st, 1726). For the start of the peace process, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-849, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726); Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1501–2, Evahir-i Ramazan 1138 (23 May-1 June 1726).

[445] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:123, 127; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:304.

[446] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-556, Evail-i Zilkade 1135 (August 3rd-12th, 1723). This date should be wrong, since the next imperial order allowing Murtaza Quli Beg to depart from Van towards Constantinople was dated as the beginning of July 1723. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-558, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723). Moreover, Clairac gave the date of the arrival of letters to Constantinople as June and of the seeing of the letters by Ottoman government as July 5th (1 Şevval). He even gave the detail that the letter-carriers arrived in the city during the month of Ramadan (which was June that year) and waited until the religious feast at the end of Ramadan. See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:123. Thus, the decision would have been taken after reading and discussing Tahmasb's letter in a big *Divan* gathering on July 7th, as mentioned by Hurmuzaki in a detailed way. See Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:304.

[447] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-558, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).

[448] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:304–8. As I noted above, Mahmud's letter carried by Osman Ağa must have arrived in Constantinople in late May or June 1723. His letter was then read in the consultative assembly along with Tahmasb's new letter for comparison.

Iranian question. The Russian promise freed the Porte to choose whether to wage war on Iran or not.[449]

Tahmasb's letter sent with Murtaza Quli Beg was a more conciliatory letter than his first message sent with Berhurdar Khan a couple of months ago had been.[450] The Safavid Prince asked for immediate help from the Ottomans in his struggle to take back the Safavid throne from the Afghans. He even offered certain lands to the Porte, to be handed over after his successful enthronement in Isfahan. In contrast to Tahmasb's message, Mahmud sent an uncompromising letter, claiming equal status with the Ottoman sultan and refusing to cede territories. He employed a heavy religious discourse in narrating the reasons for his war against the Safavids, which were to eliminate the Persian heresy and to spread Sunnism. He also challenged Ahmed III by asserting that Ottoman sultan should dismiss any aid requests from Tahmasb, since any such help would be against the teachings of the Prophet and the Qur'an. Regarding the Ottoman targets in Iran, Mahmud wrote that he was preparing to conquer Tbilisi. Thus, he added, two Muslim rulers would become neighbors soon. He underlined that the interests of Islam required the Afghans and Ottomans to have friendly, neighborhly relations. In the end, he added that he would have informed the Porte if he needed Ottoman help. With this clear message, the Porte finally came to a full understanding of Mahmud's "will."

[449] I will discuss this process in the next chapter.

[450] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen,* 1885, 4:304. Hurmuzaki did not specify the name of the envoy. However, two points indicate that the letter mentioned by Hurmuzaki must have been the one sent by Murtaza Quli Beg. First, Clairac related that when Murtaza Quli Beg was kept in the east, the letter he carried was transferred to Constantinople and the Ottoman government received the letter on July 5th, 1723. Hurmuzaki wrote that in the big *Divan* gathering on July 7th, the letters from Tahmasb and Mahmud were read and discussed comparatively. Second, the imperial order to Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha to allow Murtaza Quli Beg to proceed to Constantinople was dated July 5th-14th, 1723 (Evail-i Şevval 1135). Clairac added that even though he did not get information about the content of the letter, it would have included positive messages, as the Porte permitted the coming of envoy and the envoy arrived in Constantinople in October. On the other hand, that letter would not have been the one sent by Berhurdar Han, since the Porte received that first letter in the first half of April at the latest. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-354 and 355, Evail-i Receb 1135 (April 7th-16th, 1723).

Neither Tahmasb's nor Mahmud's message was satisfactory with respect to the primary Ottoman goal of acquiring certain lands in Iran. However, Tahmasb's message left space for negotiating Ottoman land demands, while Mahmud's response closed the door completely. His specific mentioning of preparing for the conquest of Tbilisi was a direct rejection of Ottoman goals across the Iranian border. As I will examine in the next chapter, Tbilisi had been the first Ottoman target since October 1722, and Silahdar İbrahim Pasha took the city on June 10th, 1723, a month before the consultative assembly meeting. At that time, Tbilisi was by no means Mahmud's first target. It took nine months for Mahmud to take the countryside of Isfahan alone under full Afghan control. Thus, when he wrote this letter, his rule did not even extend to the countryside of Isfahan.[451] Knowing the primacy of Tbilisi for the Porte, by declaring his intent to conquer it Mahmud thus was showing his clear disapproval of Ottoman border crossing.

However, Mahmud's message unearthed a bigger problem for the Porte than his refusal to leave western Persia to the Ottomans: he claimed equality with the sultan. Moreover, he used the same religio-political discourse the Ottoman dynasty had been maintaining for centuries. Mahmud's challenge had the potential to shake the authority of the House of Osman in wider Eurasia. The monopoly of the Ottoman sultan over his isolated territories was about to be broken by the equal alternative of the Sunni Afghans. Kınalızade's protecting framework was under an immediate threat. If the Ottomans did not take pre-emptive action, then it would only be a matter of time before Mahmud realized his challenge to the Ottoman sultan. The Porte considered Tahmasb's victory over Mahmud with his own power to be unlikely.[452]

Damad İbrahim Pasha explained the challenge in the clearest terms in the meeting. He predicted that if Mahmud reached the current Ottoman-Iranian border and became the empire's

[451] I investigate Mahmud's conquests in Iran under the title "Rivalry between the Afghans and Safavid Prince Tahmasb" below.

[452] There were many imperial orders to and letters from frontier governors underlining the serious weakness of Tahmasb around that time. See for example, BOA, AE.SAMD.III, 183-17743, 4 Şaban 1135 (May 10th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-123, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 7th-16th, 1723).

new neighbor, then he could attract Ottoman subjects to his side. The tribes inhabiting the mountains between the Ottoman Empire and Persia could then leave Ottoman suzerainty and accept Mahmud as their suzerain. This increased power would render Mahmud a very dangerous neighbor and rival of the Ottoman Empire. It is ironic that in 1632 a certain Aziz Efendi had written to Murad IV that Süleyman I praised the Kurds for being "a strong barrier and an iron fortress against the sedition of the demon Gog of Persia."[453] The "iron fortress" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries now became the weakest spot in Ottoman security due to the sectarian identity of the new rulers of Persia.

Damad İbrahim Pasha proposed that only by building a solid and insurmountable levee between Mahmud and those Ottoman lands could the Porte feel secure from the Afghan threat. He clarified that the levee would be the lower lands in western Persia across the mountains that set the current Ottoman-Iranian border. The grand vizier reasoned that only after capturing these areas would the Porte wait for the end of turmoil in Iran. There was a great parallel between Damad İbrahim's remarks in this meeting and in the aforementioned ones reported by Emo in January 1723, and also by Dirling and Nicolo Theyls in February. The Porte basically followed the plans that had been prepared at the latest in the beginning of 1723.

The emergence of Sunni Afghan rule in Persia in 1722 resembled very much the challenge of Shah Ismail in 1501. The followers of the Safavids had lived for around a century in Anatolia. However, they had become a major political problem for the Porte after the emergence of Shah Ismail as a religious and political leader in Tabriz. Zahit Atçıl captures that challenge quite succinctly:

> The existence of Safavid followers in Anatolia became a major problem for Ottoman authority only after the accession of Shah Ismail. The Turcoman nomads showed their allegiance to the Safavids by refusing to accept the Ottomans' strict

[453] Azîz Efendi, "Kanûn-Nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi," in *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures,* ed. Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin, trans. Rhoads Murphey, 9 (Harvard University Office of the University Publisher, 1985), 14.

> taxation and control policies. They found the looser administrative policies of the Safavids far more attractive and so chose Shah Ismail over the sultan. Taking advantage of the political instability due to the rivalry among Bayezid II's (r. 1481-1512) sons, a certain Şahkulu/Shahquli (literally "servant of the shah"), inspired by Safavid propaganda, initiated a major revolt with certain messianic undertones that threatened the Ottoman administration in southern and central Anatolia during 1509-1511.[454]

In the Safavid case, the major risk for the Porte was losing the areas populated by the Kizilbash in Anatolia. However, in the Afghan case, Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking Sunni Muslims in the eastern and southeastern provinces could pledge allegiance to the Afghan ruler. The Ottoman sultan would have lost his monopoly on legitimacy, which had been supported mainly by the existence of the Shiite wall.

Even though Shah Sultan Husayn had lost his throne, local governors in western Persia remained loyal to the Safavids, headed now by Prince Tahmasb. Thus, the Porte could have broken their peace with the Safavids in order to occupy Persian provinces, which required a legal justification. In the same meeting, *Şeyhülislam* Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi provided that justification. He argued that the Safavids were heretics according to law, hence, peace with them was void in essence. He likened the Safavids to the Christians in terms of their legal status and stated that Muslim rulers made "armistice" with them, not formal and binding peace agreements, due to their "heresy." Abdullah Efendi also underlined that to aid the Safavids against Mir Mahmud was unacceptable, since the Safavids were enemies of Islam, and Mahmud was a true Muslim. However, he added, the Safavids were already in a weak situation, and it would not have been just to press them further. Accordingly, he advised, the Porte should watch the struggle between Mahmud and Tahmasb without interfering into it.

Even though the *şeyhülislam* suggested a non-involvement policy first, he later agreed to the grand vizier's policy of "building a levee." If the Porte's plan went smoothly, then the

[454] Atçıl, "State and Government in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Ottoman Empire," 135–36.

Ottomans and the Afghans would become neighbors. Apparently, this neighborhood would have been safer for the Porte than the current Ottoman-Safavid border. In that scenario, Mahmud was to be in control of much less Persian territory in comparison to Shah Sultan Husayn. Still, a Sunni sovereign at the Ottoman border was a legitimate alternative and challenge to the Ottoman dynasty, however small it might be.

In that same meeting, Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi also proposed his legal solution to the problem of the Afghan alternative. He put the caliphate card on the table. Abdullah Efendi stated that once the Ottomans conquered the targeted Persian provinces, the Porte would ask Mahmud to recognize the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan. He alleged that all Muslim rulers should submit to the authority of the Ottoman sultan, since he was the caliph of Prophet Muhammad and also the ruler of Mecca and Medina.[455] Abdullah Efendi concluded that should Mahmud refuse, then the sultan would be perfectly justified in overcoming him through war. As I mentioned above in reference to Emo's reports, the Porte contemplated to use the universal caliphate of the sultan against the Afghans in consultative assembly meetings in January 1723, six months previously. It shows that the Porte had the same view of the rulership of Mahmud after he ascended to the Persian throne.

When evaluated together, the *şeyhülislam*'s considerations were quite important in terms of showing the flexibility of legal options available to the government. He basically provided the government with legal justifications for all four possible cases in relations with the Safavids

[455] The *şeyhülislam*'s rendering of Ahmed III as the "caliph of Prophet" had a special importance. The "caliphate of Prophet" was the preferred formula for the legal definition of the caliphate in the Islamic scholarly tradition, pertaining to the universal caliphate. See Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 2. By using that concept, Abdullah Efendi underlined the legal necessity of recognizing the superiority of the Ottoman sultan. Thus, if Mahmud continued to claim equality with the Ottoman sultan, when the Ottomans conquered Persian provinces, then the Afghan ruler would become a rebel according to the law. In that case, it would have been legally incumbent upon the sultan to fight against the rebel.

Nevertheless, the "caliphate of God" had not always denoted the rule of a Muslim monarch only in his own domains. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, the Persians demanded the Ja'fari legal sect to be recognized as the fifth Sunni legal school from Mahmud I, claiming that the Sultan had this authority by virtue of his title of "caliph of God" (*halîfetullah*).

and the Afghans. Now, the Porte could make war or peace either with the Safavids or the Afghans. The Porte drew its plans and prepared legal justifications to the Iranian question with these considerations in mind. The government clarified that the major threat to the Ottoman interests and existence was not Tahmasb, but Mahmud. In order to keep Mahmud confined to a limited area around Isfahan, the government decided to start military action immediately, instead of relying only on diplomacy.

However, since western Iran was still under Safavid authority, and since Tahmasb had not yet accepted Ottoman territorial demands, the Porte had to declare war on the Safavids to conquer these lands, even though eliminating Tahmasb was not an Ottoman target. In turn, the reasons matched the established Ottoman religio-political discourse perfectly. They enabled the Porte to fight the Sunni Afghans under the guise of conducting a holy war against the "heretic" Safavids.

B.2.1.2.3. *Fetva* against the Safavids

Even though the *şeyhülislam* had provided legal justification for breaking the peace with the Safavids, breaking it was not an easy task after the eighty-four years of peace between the two neighbors, since 1639. Several members of the consultative assembly raised their objections to the breaking of the peace with the Safavids. Mehmed Sebzi Efendi, the head of the armoring department (*cebecis*), reminded the remaining members of the assembly that the sultan had reconfirmed the peace with the Safavids when the Persian envoy came in the spring of 1722.[456] Venetian *bailo* Emo reported that the *kadıasker* and some other members deemed the occupation of Persian provinces illegitimate.[457] The *kadıasker*'s opposition was especially

[456] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:306. Hurmuzaki wrote his name as "Sebczi-Effendi" and characterized him as an aged man. The closest name I was able to find is Cebecibaşı Mehmed Sebzi Efendi. Çelebizâde gave the date of his death as 8 Zilkade 1136 (July 29th, 1724). Thus, most probably Mehmed Sebzi Efendi was also an old man as of 1723. However, mine is only a guess based on sources currently available to me. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1384, 1387. The envoy Sebczi-Effendi referred to was Murtaza Quli Khan.

[457] Mary Lucille Shay did not specify the date of the council, in which the *kadiasker* and some other members of the assembly considered the breaking of the peace with the Safavids illegal. However, Emo reported that after that

important, since *kadıasker*s were at the top of *ulema* hierarchy, after the *şeyhülislam*. Opposing views of the *ulema* continued even after the issuance of the *fetva*, as I discuss below in the example of Kemal Efendi, a former judge of the imperial army, who ended up being exiled to the island of Limnos in April 1724.

In the end, *Şeyhülislam* Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi issued the *fetva* soon after the consultative assembly meeting.[458] The *fetva* was in the form of two answers to two main questions, and the second question included another dependent question. Thus, in total there were three questions and answers. The first question was:

> If a group of people among the heretics (*revâfız*) having power fought openly against a Muslim group in a place belonging to the abode of Islam, but currently under the rule of the Persian heretics, with the permission of the heretic (*râfizi*) who acted in the name of the shah, then would the aforementioned shah have broken the peace he has concluded with the Ottoman *padishah*, who was the *imam* of Muslims and sultan of the sultans?[459]

meeting, the Porte ordered the frontier governors of Van, Erzurum, and Baghdad to start military campaign into Persia from their respective fronts. Since the meeting of July 7th was followed by the campaign orders, it seems safe to assume that the meeting to which Emo referred was the one held on July 7th, 1723. Moreover, Emo reported that the *şeyhülislam* had deemed the breaking of the peace legal, on the basis that "pacts with rebels was not obligatory." As Hurmuzaki recorded, the *şeyhülislam* made that legal justification in that meeting by stating that the Safavids were heretics and rebels according to the law, and peace with them was not binding for Muslim rulers. Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 91; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:306.

[458] I tried to specify the date of the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* declaring the Safavids apostates, breaking the peace, and authorizing Ottoman armies to conquer lands in "*daru'l-harb*" (the abode of war), as it would have given the exact date of the Ottoman government's decision. Since it is considered an unimportant detail, the secondary literature does not help in that endeavor. Based on my research, the date would have been sometime between July 7th and 14th, 1723. Hurmuzaki gives the date of a consultative assembly meeting, where *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi also expressed his opinions, as July 7th. In that meeting it was clear that no decision had been taken, yet, against the Safavids. See Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:304–8. The first imperial order mentioning the issuance of the *fetva* against the Safavids that legally authorized breaking the peace was dated July 5th-14th, 1723 (Evail-i Şevval 1135). BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723). That order was sent to the governor of Baghdad, Hasan Pasha. Thus, the *fetva* would have been issued sometime within that seven-day period.

[459] "Revâfız-ı Acem diyârı taht-ı hükmünde olup şâh nâmına olan râfızînin izniyle revâfızdan sâhib-i men'e olan bir cemâ'at dâr-ı İslâm'da müslimînden bir tâife ile alâniyeten mukātele eyleseler şâh-ı mezbûr, imâm-ı müslimîn sultân-ı selâtîn olan âl-i Osmân Pâdişâhı ile akd eylediği sulhü nakz etmiş olur mu?
EL-CEVAB: Olur. Ale'l-husūs melâ'în-i mezkûrûnun ricâlinin istîsāl vechi üzre katlleri vâcibdir. An-asl vukū' bulan sulh, lutf-ı ilâhî zuhûruna intizâr içün li-maslahatin akd-i mütârekedir. Her ne zamân kudret ü kuvvet-i ehl-i İslâm zuhûr itdikde haklarında vâcib olanı icrâ itmek âmme-i müslimîne vâcibdir." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1332.

Abdullah Efendi answered: "Yes." However, besides this legal reason, he provided another. He maintained that any peace with the Safavids was essentially void, due to their "apostasy."[460] He concluded that it was an obligation for all Muslims to do the required thing, referring to breaking the peace, as soon as they had amassed sufficient power. Abdullah Efendi basically recorded his legal view from the last consultative assembly meeting in this *fetva*.

The second question was a longer one and listed the main points raised by Sunnis traditionally as proofs for the Kizilbash's heresy. In the end of that list, it was asked whether the Safavid lands were to be considered the "abode of war" (*daru'l-harb*), and whether the Safavids were apostates. The *şeyhülislam* answered both questions affirmatively.[461] Then, a further question was asked about the rule about the Safavid and non-Muslim men, women, and children separately. Abdullah Efendi replied that if Kizilbash men did not become Muslim, then they should be executed. The Kizilbash women and children could be taken as slaves. However, no sexual intercourse was allowed with Kizilbash women. For "original infidels" (*kâfir-i aslî*) of Persia meaning other non-Muslims, the *şeyhülislam* maintained that all their men, women, and children could be taken as slaves, and their women could be lawful concubines. [462]

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[460] Abdullah Efendi expressed the Safavids' apostasy not in his first answer, but in the second one. Still, the reason for the nullity of peace was clearly the Safavids' religious identity. Emphasis added for the word "*imam*."

[461] "Şâh İsmail evlâdının taht-ı hükmünde olan diyâr-ı Acem'de mütemekkin revâfız خذلهم الله تعالى Ebûbekir, Ömer, Osman hulefâ-i ale'l-hak olduklarını ikrâr edeni ikfâr idüp ve Hazret-i Ali'den mâ'adâ ekser-i ashâb-ı kirâm رضوان الله تعلى عليهم اجمعين hazerâtına ve Âyişe-i sıddîka رضى الله تعلى عنها hazretlerine, 'mürtedlerdir' ve 'münâfıklardır' deyü alenen sebb ü la'nı ve Âyişe-i sıddîka رضى الله تعلى عنها hazretlerine zinâ ile kazfı kendülere ibâdet bilüp Kur'ân-ı azîmü'ş-şân'dan nice âyât-ı kerîmeye kavâ'id-i Arabiyyeden hâric-i de'b-i zenâdıka üzre re'y-i fâsidleri ile ma'nâlar verüb kefere ve münâfıkīn haklarında olan âyât-ı Kur'âniyye'yi, 'ashâb-ı kirâm-ı mezkûrûn haklarındadır' deyüp ehl-i sünnetden olan müslimînin katllerini mübâh ve nisâlarından esîr itdiklerinin bilâ-nikâh vat'larını helâl bilüp mü'minînin cennetde rü'yetullâhı inkâr ve muhâldür deyüp, ulemâ-i dâllesi bu vech üzre fetvâlar verüp reîsleri olan şâh ve sâir hükkâm-ı güm-râhları ve sâir sâmi'leri bu akvâl-i kâside ve ef'âl-i fâsideyi hakk i'tikād eyleseler, bu makūle akvâl ü ef'âli i'tikād iden melâ'înin temekkün itdikleri diyârları dârü'l-harb olup kendüler üzerlerine ahkâm-ı mürteddîn icrâ olunur mu?

EL-CEVÂB: Diyârları dârü'l-harbdir ve üzerlerine ahkâm-ı mürteddîn icrâ olunur." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1332.

[462] "Bu sūretde müslimînden bir tâife melâ'în-i mezbûrenin ol diyârları üzerlerine hücûm eyleseler zikr olunan mefâsidi mürtekib olanların ricâlleri ve nisâ ve sıbyân ve emvâllerinin ve ol diyârda mütemekkin olup küfr-i aslî ile kâfir olan keferenin nüfûs ve emvâllerinin hükm-i şer'îsi ne vechiledir?

EL-CEVÂB: Melâ'în-i mezbûrenin İslâm'a gelmeyen ricâli alâ tarîkı'l-istîsāl katl ve nisâ ve sıbyânı istirkāk olunup emvâlleri mâl-i ganîmetdir. Nisâ ve sıbyânı katlden gayrı tarîkle İslâm'a cebr olınurlar. NisâlarınIn İslâm'a

There are several important points for our discussion to be underlined in these *fetva*s. First, it nullifies any binding treaty with the Kizilbash, based on their "apostasy." In this sense, Ottoman legal authorities were to treat the Safavid shahs like any other non-Muslim rulers, with whom the law only allowed an armistice, not an actual peace, binding the Muslim side. Second, Abdullah Efendi highlighted the caliphate of the sultan with the preferred legal concept of "*imam*" of the Muslims. It was a direct message to Mahmud, rather than Tahmasb, whom the Porte deemed an apostate. The Porte recorded its firm stance on the caliphate, as a reference to be used in the future against the Afghans, in case of need.

Third, Abdullah Efendi argued that the Safavid shah had already broken the peace with the Ottoman sultan due to an open Safavid fight against a Muslim group. However, neither the *fetva* nor any other available source from the time specified this "Muslim group." Still, the text of the *fetva* clearly suggests that the *fetva* referred to a specific event between the Safavids and another Muslim group. Admittedly, it is not possible to know the identity of the referenced Muslim group with certainty, in the absence of available historical explanation. However, certain hints in the text of the *fetva* can help us discuss the alternatives.

The *fetva* and Ottoman-Safavid relations at that time strongly indicated that that group was not the Ottomans. Historically, there had no open fight between the Ottomans and the Safavids before September 1723. It is true that the Ottoman troops had captured Tbilisi before the issuing of the *fetva*; however, there was no fight in its taking. The city surrendered peacefully without any resistance.[463] The text of the *fetva* also did not qualify that "Muslim group" as Ottoman.

gelmedikce vat'ları helâl olmaz ve ol diyârda mütemekkin küfr-i aslî ile kâfir olanlar harbî hükmünde olmalarıyla ricâl ve nisâ ve sıbyânı istirkāk olunup mâlları mâl-i ganîmetdir. Lâkin bunların ricâl ve nisâ ve sıbyânı İslâm'a cebr olunmaz ve İslâm'a gelmeyen nisâlarının vat'ları dahi helâldir. Ancak ol diyârda olan ehl-i sünnete ta'arruzdan ihtirâz-ı tâm gerekdir." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1332.

[463] I mention this event in the next chapter.

At first glance, the most probable alternative that seemed to be fitting the description in the *fetva* was the Afghans. The Ghilzai Afghans were the biggest Muslim group who had already been fighting against the Safavids for years. However, certain designations in the *fetva* also disqualified the Afghans as the referred Muslim group who fought openly against the Safavids: The *fetva* specified the fighting as occurring between a Muslim group and a strong group among the *rafizî* having permission from the *rafizî* person, who acted in the name of the shah. The Safavids fought against the Afghans directly under the commandership of the shah himself, neither with another "*rafizî* group," nor with the permission of somebody else acting in shah's name.

Moreover, the first question specified the region of the fight between the Safavids and Muslims as the "abode of Islam" that was "under the rule of the Safavids" (*Revâfız-ı Acem diyârı taht-ı hükmünde*). Importantly, in his second answer, the *şeyhülislam* qualified Persia as the "abode of war," not "abode of Islam." Thus, that war would have happened somewhere within Persia that the Porte accepted as the abode of Islam. In Hanafi jurisprudence, there were several conditions for the turning of a certain land into abode of war, once it had become abode of Islam. For instance, if Muslims could live according to the *sharia* in a land that was once abode of Islam, and had later been captured by non-Muslim rulers, then Hanafi jurists still qualified that land as abode of Islam. Imam Shafi, the founder of the Shafi legal school, even deemed the transformation of the abode of Islam into the abode of war impossible.[464]

As I mentioned above, one of the legal justifications for the Ottoman occupation of western Persia was that Ahmed III had inherited these provinces from his grandfathers. Thus, presumably, the Porte reasoned that these provinces were still the abode of Islam, even if they were now "under the rule of the Safavids" (*Revâfız-ı Acem diyârı taht-ı hükmünde*). However,

[464] Ahmet Özel, *İslâm Hukukunda Ülke Kavramı: Dârulislâm Dârulharb* (İklim Yayınları, 1991), 153–202.

the rest of the Persian lands were the abode of war, where the Afghans fought against the Safavids.

So, the specific references in the text of the *fetva* suggest that "the Muslim group" was not the Afghans, but another Muslim group. Most probably, "abode of war" referred to the skirmishes between the Lazgis and Safavid troops somewhere in the Caucasus or Azerbaijan.[465] It seems that the fight was not a big clash between the main bodies of either Safavid or "Muslim" armies.

It would have been legally much easier for the Porte to declare war on the Safavids on the basis of the Afghan-Safavid war, which was much more open and much bigger than the referenced skirmish. I consider the Porte's attempt to disqualify the Afghans as the referred Muslim group as one of conscious neglect. The Ottoman government was highly uneasy about the increasing popularity of the Afghans as the new heroes of Islam, who had overthrown the centuries-old Safavid "heresy" in Persia. Thus, the Porte chose to divert the attention to other fights between the Safavids and "Muslims," instead of advertising the Afghan "*jihad*" against the Safavids.

There is also one further point to be underlined in the text of the *fetva*. Formulating Tahmasb's position as "the heretic (*râfizi*) who acted in the name of the Shah" was a tricky circumvention of the question of Tahmasb's authority in the eyes of the Porte. During that time, the Porte maintained the policy of not recognizing Tahmasb as the legitimate representative of the Safavids, on the pretext that Shah Sultan Husayn was still alive.[466] However, it was clear that the imprisoned Shah Sultan Husayn was not able to order the Safavid troops to fight against the "Muslims." He lacked the necessary means to break the peace with the Ottomans. If the

[465] The fights between the Lazgis and the Safavid forces had continued intermittently in the 1710s and early 1720s.
[466] I mention this issue both below and in the next chapter, when discussing the second phase of peace negotiations between the Russian and Ottoman representatives starting on December 20th, 1723.

Porte maintained its position of not recognizing Tahmasb as the Safavid representative inflexibly, then it could not claim that the Safavids had broken the peace first. However, by alleging covertly that Tahmasb acted in the name of the Shah, the Porte solved the problem. It continued to recognize Shah Sultan Husayn as the Safavid head, but at the same time legally ruled against the Safavids based on Tahmasb's actions. It was true that the Porte was entitled to break the peace due to its nullity "in essence." However, in that case, the Ottoman government would have been the side that broke the peace. Instead, the Porte presented itself as victim, righteous and morally upright in all dimensions, with this discourse. That last point itself also shows how significant it was for the Porte, as it would be for any other state, to have the discursive supremacy.

B.2.1.2.4. The Porte's War Orders

Having obtained the *fetva*, the government was ready to start the war against the western provinces of Persia. However, as had been the case from the beginning of the siege, the Porte asked for Hasan Pasha's view before it finalized the war decision. The government sent him an imperial order soon after the July 7th, 1723 consultative assembly meeting and informed him that the Porte was ready to start the war, if there was no problem at the border.[467] There was frequent correspondence between Constantinople and Baghdad from then until the end of August. Imperial orders to Hasan Pasha during that short period give scant information about the content of Hasan Pasha's letters.[468] However, by the end of August, Hasan Pasha had abandoned all his reservations about starting the three-front military expedition against Iran. A parallel correspondence continued between the Porte and İbrahim Pasha, the governor of

[467] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723). Moreover, in the imperial order it was stated that four or five days previous, the grand vizier had sent a separate letter to Hasan Pasha asking Hasan Pasha's view regarding the war.

[468] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-517, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-518, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).

Erzurum.[469] Official negotiations between the delegates of the Porte and Russia to partition Iran would start on July 25th, 1725. Eventually, toward the end of August 1723, the Porte sent orders to the governors of Erzurum, Van, and Baghdad to set out from their respective frontiers of the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and Iraq-i Ajam into Persian territories.[470] Ottoman troops fought against the Safavid forces from September 1723 until the end of 1725.

As I stated above, the primary Ottoman enemy in this war was not Tahmasb, but Mir Mahmud. The Porte decided to create a wall between traditional Ottoman borders and the Afghans. Since these areas were still under Safavid authority, which denied Ottoman land demands, the Porte waged war on the Safavids. Thus began the Ottoman struggle against the Sunni Afghans, under the name of fighting against the *rafizî* Safavids. Besides the evidence presented above before the start of the war, I will provide three more proofs demonstrating that the real Ottoman target in the battles between 1723 and 1725 was not the Safavids, but the Afghans.

First, imperial orders in July and August 1723 to Hasan Pasha, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, and later to Arifi Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Van, situated Mahmud, not Tahmasb, as the real target of the Ottoman military expeditions. Damad İbrahim's letter to Hasan Pasha in the first half of July 1723 highlighted three points.[471] First, with the embassy of Osman Ağa, the will of Mahmud had been clarified: he wanted to subdue all Persian lands. Second, Mahmud's authority was limited to Isfahan, since the subjects in other Persian cities remained loyal to the Safavids. Third, the Porte had the *fetva* against the Safavids. The letter asked for Hasan Pasha's

[469] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-519, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1135 (July 15th-24th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-572, Evasıt-ı zilkade 1135 (August 13th-22nd, 1723).
[470] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-616, 618, and 634, Evahir-i Zilkade 1135 (August 23rd – September 1st, 1723). Actually, that attack plan was almost identical to the one sent to the three frontier governors back in May 1722 during the siege of Isfahan. See BOA, A.DVNSHM.d 130-103, 104, and 105, Evail-i Şaban 1134 (May 17th-26th,1722). The reasons discussed above caused the implementation of the operation to be delayed for more than a year.
[471] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).

opinion regarding the best option for serving the interests of the state. From an imperial order we learn that Hasan Pasha summarized the situation and offered his war plan as follows:[472] Mahmud's will was to overthrow the Safavids completely. He attracted soldiers from Ottoman lands, including Baghdad, to his side by luring them with the booty of the Safavid Empire. Hasan Pasha maintained that, this year, Mahmud did not threaten the Ottoman borders directly, implying the current fights of Mahmud with Tahmasb. However, he warned, as soon as Mahmud got closer to Baghdad or Şehrizor, it was apparent that there would be "mischief and disturbance" (*fesâd ve ihtilâl*) within the Ottoman domains. To eliminate the problem beforehand, Hasan Pasha suggested that the Porte attack Iran from Erzurum and Baghdad and conquer western Persia before Mir Mahmud. He concluded that after these conquests, the Ottomans could begin a diplomatic process with Mahmud to develop friendly relations, free from the dangers Mahmud currently posed. In reply to the letter of Hasan Pasha, the Ottoman sultan wrote that he accepted this plan, and the Ottoman provincial armies would capture western Iran before Mahmud did. The imperial orders starting the actual war in the end of August also highlighted the same points. Ottoman armies were to conquer those Persian territories that Mahmud "Han" had not already taken.[473]

Emo, the Venetian resident, had a conversation with the grand vizier only ten days after the war orders had been sent. Emo reported his conclusion as "the vizier's plan was to act against Mahmud" and to keep the peace with Russia.[474] Similarly, Austrian resident Dirling

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[472] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-517, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723). Signifying the importance of this order, Ahmed III wrote on the order in his own handwriting "fulfill as required" (*mûcebince amel oluna*).

This fast correspondence between Constantinople and Baghdad seems impossible. However, since there had been incessant correspondence between these two cities in the preceding months on the same subjects, it was reasonable that the dates of incoming letter and outgoing orders were indeed that close. Moreover, due to several impediments in pre-modern communication technology, the same orders from the Porte were sent repeatedly to the same addressee within short intervals.

[473] "Memleket-i İran'dan henüz Mahmud Han tasarrufuna girmeyip, Kızılbaş bed-maaş yedinde olan mahallerden zabt ve teshirinin takdimi ehem ve müstahsen olanlarının zabt ve teshirini takdim ederek…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-616, 618, and 634, Evahir-i Zilkade 1135 (August 23rd – September 1st, 1723).

[474] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 108.

reported that Mir Mahmud's rejection of the Ottoman sultan's sovereignty over himself and his uncompromising attitude had made the Afghan leader a dangerous neighbor in the Porte's eyes. Dirling went on that the Ottoman government had commissioned Hasan Pasha to march on Isfahan and take the city from the Afghans.[475] Reporting a few months later, French resident de Bonnac similarly informed France that the Porte had ordered Hasan Pasha to march directly against Mir Mahmud.[476] Officially, the Porte declared war on the Safavids, not the Afghans. However, contemporary foreign observers, who did not have access to imperial orders and Ottoman internal correspondence, except for their conversations with the government members and people from the palace, underlined that the Ottomans were going to war against Mahmud.

Mir Mahmud, himself, was also aware of the fact that the Ottoman assault targeted the Afghans more than Tahmasb. He sent another letter to Hasan Pasha severely criticizing the way the Porte was involving itself in the Iranian question.[477] Mir Mahmud wrote that the Porte should have protected orthodox Muslims, i.e., Sunnis, and destroyed the unbelievers. However, he claimed, the Ottomans were now doing just the opposite. Mir Mahmud suggested that the Porte could have taken back its European provinces that it had shamefully lost, or deal with its conflict with the Russian tsar. He acerbically concluded that these endeavors would have been more honorable and useful than intending to attack orthodox and peaceful co-religionists. The tone and arguments of Mir Mahmud were exactly what the Porte had been afraid of. The Afghans strengthened their major achievement of overthrowing the Safavids with successful recourse to this religio-political discourse. Certainly, Mahmud's attitude increased the fear of and enmity toward the Afghans in Constantinople.

[475] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:316–17.
[476] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 247. The date of the letter was March 30th, 1724.
[477] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:319–20.

The second piece of evidence showing that the real Ottoman target in this war was the Afghans was that even though the Porte had started the war, it at the same time did not altogether reject the possibility of gaining land through diplomacy. As I mentioned above, following the July 7th, 1723 meeting, the Porte allowed Murtaza Quli Beg to proceed from Van to Constantinople.[478] Ottoman acceptance of Tahmasb's envoy to Constantinople was an important clue indicating that the Porte saw a negotiable ground with Tahmasb after discussing his letter in the consultative assembly meeting.

Murtaza Quli Beg arrived in Constantinople in the beginning of October 1723. The letters he brought were this time not from Tahmasb, but from Tahmasb's *i'timād al-dawla* Abd al-Karim Khan.[479] As discussed above, the Safavid side had a demanding tone in this letter, but the content seemed not to be completely humble. Emo reported that Tahmasb recalled the Porte's reconfirmation of Ottoman-Safavid peace with the last Persian ambassador, Murtaza Quli Khan, in early 1722. Moreover, Tahmasb pointed out the restitution of Basra to Ottomans when the Ottomans were at war against the Holy League in the 1690s.[480] Clearly, he implied, it was now the time for the Porte to pay the Safavids back, in their time of absolute need. The Safavid prince also expressed his grievances about the Ottoman invasion of Georgia and other military preparations targeting Persian lands. He went on by adding that "Persia was not without a king and a royal family; forces were not lacking with which the rebels would be punished and the land defended against aggressive foreigners."[481]

Çelebizâde did not relate the content of Tahmasb's letter, but he wrote that there was nothing in the letter fitting the demands of Ottomans. In Çelebizâde, one finds a relatively detailed account of Damad İbrahim Paşa's response to Tahmasb's *i'timād al-dawla,* in which

[478] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-558, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).
[479] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1336.
[480] For this incident, see Chapter Two.
[481] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 108.

the Ottoman government specifies its territorial demands of Tahmasb. The Porte's offer to Tahmasb was that he should turn cities in western Iran all the way from Azerbaijan to the west of Isfahan over to the Ottomans.[482] In return for ceding these large areas to the Ottomans, the Ottoman sultan would accept Tahmasb as the legitimate shah of Iran, after the reestablishment of calm in Persia.[483]

The Porte emphasized the openness of diplomatic channels with Tahmasb even in the war orders sent to the three frontier governors. The government ordered the governors to first call on Tahmasb to cede Persian provinces to the Ottomans peacefully. If he did not submit, then, it was stated, it was clear that Tahmasb had no chance and Ottoman armies were to occupy these provinces.[484]

The Porte could have waited for Tahmasb's reply to Damad İbrahim Pasha's specific land demands before unleashing the army. There seem to be two probable answers as to why the Porte did not do so. First, as the grand vizier remarked in the consultative assembly meeting, it was urgent for the Ottomans to build a strong "levee" preventing Afghan encroachment. Second, Tahmasb's unspecified land offers to the Porte only after his enthronement did not satisfy the Porte's current urgent needs. His critiques of the Ottoman government should also be added to the reason why the Porte acted without waiting Tahmasb's response

The simultaneity of Ottoman diplomatic and military moves toward Tahmasb is noteworthy. The Porte employed soft and hard measures at the same time to "persuasively"

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[482] Critically, in the Ottoman response, Damad İbrahim Pasha specifically named cities like Erevan, Tabriz, the rest of Azerbaijan, and regions close to Baghdad. If Hurmuzaki's account of Tahmasb's compliance in ceding certain lands even from the beginning -meaning from the time of sending Berhurdar Han- was correct, then it might have been the case that the Ottomans specified the cities by most probably extending their territories to show Tahmasb the acceptable deal for the Ottoman side.

[483] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1337.

[484] "Tahmasb Tebriz taraflarında olmağla, mukaddem kendüyü taraf-ı Devlet-i ebed-müddetim cânibine sevk ve terğib ve davet ederek Tebriz'e âzim oldukda, inşallah memalik-i Azerbaycan zabt ve teshir, ve Tahmasb mutâvaat etmediği suretde avn-i Bâri ile girift ve yâhud firâr edeceği nâsıye-i hâlinde bedîdâr,…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-616, Evahir-i Zilkade 1135 (August 23rd – September 1st, 1723).

achieve the desired goal. The imperial order sent to Van governor Abdullah Pasha permitting Murtaza Quli Beg to come to Constantinople was dated in the first weeks of July 1723. The orders sent to the three frontier governors and chief commanders to start the extensive Persian military operation was dated in the last ten days of August, about one month after the order sent to Van. Consequently, by the time Murtaza Quli Beg was hosted at Constantinople for diplomatic relations in October, Ottoman armies had already entered into Persian territories on three different fronts. That simultaneity is significant in understanding the way Ottoman government dealt with a highly complicated question at the eastern border with all available tools, soft and hard. I will examine the same Ottoman foreign policy method as used against the Russians during the same period in the next chapter.

Tahmasb did not agree to hand over that much land to the Ottomans, and also refused similar Russian territorial demands. However, it was crucially important that even though both Mir Mahmud and Tahmasb refused the Ottoman demands separately, the Porte continued to favor Tahmasb over Mahmud in the rule of Persia. This favoring takes us to the third piece of evidence demonstrating that Ottoman war between 1723-25 did not aim to eliminate Tahmasb, but essentially targeted Mahmud. In January 1724, during the peace negotiations between the Ottomans and the Russians, both sides reached an agreement, in principle, to support Tahmasb against Mahmud. That was only five months after the Porte's war orders to the three fronts. The fifth article of the Partition Treaty manifested this agreement in June 1724.[485] It declared that the Russians and the Ottomans had agreed to support Tahmasb's sitting on the Persian throne, which had rightfully belonged to the Safavids for centuries.[486] Moreover, the sixth article ensured that even if the option of Tahmasb did not work out, Mahmud was to be replaced by a ruler having an inheritance right to the Persian throne. Thus, article six implicitly repeated the

[485] I examine this process in a detailed way in the following chapter.
[486] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1383.

goal of reestablishing the Safavid state, since the Safavids seemed the only family to have inheritance right to the Iranian throne.

B.2.1.3. Rivalry between the Afghans and Safavid Prince Tahmasb

The crown prince Tahmasb fled from the siege on June 8th and declared himself shah of Persia on November 10th, 1722, in Qazvin.[487] The fall of Isfahan and Tahmasb's declaration of himself as shah precipitated a fierce struggle between Mir Mahmud and Tahmasb. Tahmasb started to gather forces especially from the northwestern regions that were the birthplace of the Safavid house and had been their traditional strongholds for centuries. Prince Tahmasb was able to gather thousands of Kizilbash troops, who united under the cause of expelling the Afghans from Isfahan and getting the Iranian throne back.

After a one-month rest in Isfahan, Mir Mahmud started his military campaign to subdue the surrounding cities and provinces with the aim of fully controlling the previously Safavid territories from Hamadan to Kandahar and from the Caucasus to Basra and Oman Gulfs. His first target was Qazvin, where Tahmasb had established his first base.[488] Even though the Afghans took the city under control and caused Tahmasb to flee to Tabriz, on the next day, the people of Qazvin defeated the remaining Ghilzais in the city and expelled them to Isfahan again.[489] Conquering provinces and establishing central Afghan authority proved to be too difficult, as can be seen in the fact that it took Afghans nine months to take Isfahan's surrounding countryside under full control.[490]

During Mahmud's rule, the Afghans and Tahmasb did not confront each other directly. When Tahmasb considered himself insufficiently strong to start an assault on Isfahan under his commandership, the Afghans were also busy with establishing authority in the nearby regions,

[487] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 193.
[488] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:104.
[489] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 179.
[490] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 202.

the populations of which did not yield to Ghilzai domination easily. However, most of the unyielding cities were fighting in the name of the Safavids. Shiraz, for example, had resisted the Afghan siege for more than eight months under the leadership of Tahmasb-appointed Governor Nurullah Khan, only surrendering to the Ghilzais in April 1724.[491] And Kirman, a strategic city on the way between Isfahan and Kandahar, continued to be run by Wali Muhammad Khan, who had been appointed by Tahmasb, for another year, until the mid-summer of 1725.[492] Even though the Afghans had attacked Yazd between April and December 1724, the expedition ended with failure.[493] It was a fiasco for the new rulers of Isfahan enjoying their third year on the Persian throne to not be able to capture Yazd, a city less than two hundred miles distant from Isfahan. After that failure, Mahmud returned to Isfahan and in the end of April 1725, his nephew Ashraf became the new Afghan leader.[494] Perhaps the only good news for the Afghans at that time was the inclusion of Bandar Abbas into Afghan domination on November 3rd, 1724.[495]

When Mahmud died, Afghan rule in Persia was mainly established in the capital, in the southern provinces including the cities of Shiraz and Bandar Abbas, and in the eastern regions including their stronghold Kandahar. However, the city of Yazd had not been captured and in Kirman they were not able to establish effective control. And, in the north, the Afghans were in control of the city of Kashan but had not been able to go as far as Qum.

Tahmasb was also not in a very advantageous position. Being driven away even from Qazvin by the Afghans, and losing the northern province of Gilan to the Russians, he did not

[491] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 197–99; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:129.
[492] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 266. Kirman was taken under full Afghan authority only in the end of August 1728. Floor, 288–89.
[493] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 206; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:148.
[494] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 210.
[495] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 217.

have much room to maneuver. In addition, even before the fall of Isfahan, a fierce competition for achieving dominance over the broader Caucasus geography, including Georgia and Armenia, between the Russians and Ottomans had started. The armies of both empires had entered the region from the east and west, respectively. Tahmasb's attempts to intervene in this struggle over the Caucasus and gaining a base in the region soon disappeared, in the face of decisive aggression of both imperial powers.

Under these circumstances, after he fled to Tabriz in 1723, Tahmasb engaged in an intense endeavor to gather forces who were loyal to Safavid house, most of which were Kizilbash tribes, and willing to participate in Tahmasb's goal of regaining the throne of Persia. When the Afghans were striving to enlarge their realm of authority, Tahmasb's main priority was defending the western provinces of Iran against Ottoman intrusions. He most probably calculated that increasing his strength in the traditional Safavid strongholds, including Qazvin, Tehran, Ardabil, Tabriz, Khoy, Khors, Urmiye, Hamadan, and Kirmanshah, would be the wisest way to be successful against the invaders of his inherited lands. With the power he would have established and gathered in that region, he could have marched against Isfahan more confidently to reclaim his throne. However, that plan did not work out, and between August 1723 and January 1726, he lost to the Ottomans all Safavid territories to the west of the line between Ardabil and Hurramabad.

The unyielding attitude of the Russians and the Ottomans and the sweeping conquests of the Ottomans in the earlier Safavid strongholds in the summer of 1725 left Tahmasb with little choice. Within that limited field, Tahmasb decided to undertake his long-waited plan of assaulting Isfahan on his own with the available Kizilbash forces attacking from different directions.[496] Ahmed Pasha informed the Porte that one of the main reasons for Tahmasb's

[496] "This Prince [Tahmasb] with great Difficulty got 15.000 Men together; and finding he was not strong enough to make head against the Turks, who broke into Persia three several Ways, he resolved to carry on the War against

direct assault on Isfahan was the new enthronement of Ashraf after infighting over throne.[497] Tahmasb was going to attack from Tehran with his army; other Kizilbash forces in Kirman and Fars under the command of Wali Muhammad Khan and Sayyed Ahmad Khan were to assault from the south-east of Isfahan. However, Sayyed Ahmad Khan betrayed his cause in the south,[498] and Tahmasb himself was defeated by Ashraf's army in the north of Isfahan in the end of July.[499] As a defeated prince in conflict with all his enemies, the Russians, Ottomans, and Afghans, Prince Tahmasb fled toward Mazandaran and Astarabad, the northeastern provinces of Iran, in the fall of 1725.[500]

That defeat marked the end of Tahmasb's three-and-a-half-year adventure, which he pursued on his own without getting active outside support, in expelling the Afghans from Isfahan. Even though the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Partition of Iran (June 1724) promised support to Tahmasb, it preconditioned Tahmasb's compliance with Ottoman and Russian territorial acquisition that were agreed upon in the same treaty. In the period approximately between the fall of Isfahan and the beginning of 1726, Tahmasb had maintained a policy of equal stance towards Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The Safavid prince preferred to sit on the Persian throne by the power of his own muscles and to become a more independent ruler, instead of ascending the throne with the help of invading states. Thus, he refused Ottoman and Russian demands on Iranian soil. As a result of this risky choice, he lost both the mentioned territories to his larger neighbors, and also the Persian throne. As of the beginning of 1726, the exhausted Prince had to find internal and/or external helping hands, if he still was willing to maintain his cause.

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the Aghvans." See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:152. Krusinski does not give an exact date but writes that that war happened toward the end of Mahmud's rule.

[497] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1119, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725).

[498] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 245, 264–67.

[499] Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 184.

[500] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 278–79.

The definitive victory of Ashraf over Tahmasb made the Afghan ruler the internally unchallenged ruler of Persia. However, there were still provinces that needed to be subdued under Afghan authority. Moreover, Ottoman and Russian conquests had shrunk the territories of Iran considerably. Rather than being content with the remaining lands, the Afghans aimed at full territorial recovery of Iran to its size in the times of Safavid rule. The resolution of the new Afghan ruler, Ashraf, was a clear sign that new military clashes were on the horizon in Persia's near future.

B.2.1.4. Religio-political Discourse during the War

Between 1723 and 1725, the Porte struggled mainly against Sunni Mir Mahmud, under the guise of fighting against the "heretic" Safavid Tahmasb. This policy was clearly against the self-definition of the Ottoman state. As I discussed in Chapter One, to pursue a policy contradicting the dominant religio-political discourse required governments to justify their "out of line" political actions. Regardless of justifications, these situations always posed great dangers for the legitimacy of rulers. However, instead of justifications, the Ottoman government told an entirely different story than what was actually happening between 1723 and 1725. It chose not even to open the box of inconsistency between established discourse and actual politics. The Porte propagated a story that completely fit into the religio-political definition of the state and the moral values and established legal views of the day.

Until early 1726, the Porte had successfully used Sunni Afghans as discursive leverage and enjoyed full religio-political legitimacy. During the two-year period between 1723 and 1725, there was no serious communication between the Ottomans and the Afghans. However, as demonstrated above, Ottoman-Afghan relations were tense. The Afghans did not comply with any of the Ottoman territorial and diplomatic projections. Still, there was no visible enmity from the outside. That invisibility created a convenient condition for the Porte to present the war as a religious fight on the side of their co-religionists, the Afghans, against the "heretic"

Kizilbash. The Ottoman government enjoyed utmost legitimacy for a costly war, through the perfect matching of religio-political discourse and visible political and military action.

Anti-Safavid Ottoman propaganda started with the *fetva* of *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi characterizing the Safavids as apostates (*mürted*), and their lands as the "abode of war" (*daru'l-harb*). It needs to be underlined here that beginning with Ebussuud, Ottoman jurists did not consider the Safavids to be proper Shiites. According to orthodox Sunni belief, Shiites are Muslims, and not apostates or infidels. Ebussuud differentiated the Safavids from the rest of the Shiites and did not accept them as Shiite Muslims, but argued that they were a Kizilbash group, who were "apostates" and "unbelievers" (*kâfir*). His views on the Safavids became authoritative legal opinions for Ottoman legal authorities in the following centuries.[501] Ottoman legal and political discourse against the Safavids in the 1720s did not include anything about the Shiism of the Safavids, and Ottoman jurists in the eighteenth century continued to differentiate "Islamic Shiism" from "Kizilbash apostasy" carefully.

During my research in manuscript libraries, I found a twenty-page risale written by İlmi Ahmed Efendi to justify the *şeyhülislam*'s two *fetva*s with further legal support.[502] The treatise does not carry a date of composition. However, İlmi Ahmed Efendi wrote that he penned the treatise when [Arifi] Ahmed Pasha was the commander-in-chief on the Azerbaijan front, a role that he took up in September 1723, and before the conquest of Erevan (October 3rd, 1724). He stated the reason for writing the treatise was questions from the Lazgis to Arifi Ahmed Pasha

[501] Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 2 (May 2017): 295–314.

[502] İlmi Ahmed Efendi, *Risâle Fî İkfâri'r Ravâfid*, 4428/1-11 (Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, n.d.). İlmi Ahmed Efendi was among the scholar-bureaucrats who were in the close circle of Damad İbrahim Pasha throughout the 1720s. He was the judge of Aleppo in 1721. He returned to Constantinople in the beginning of 1722 and was actively involved in the political questions of the time. İlmi Ahmed Efendi participated in one of the meetings with Murtaza Quli Khan, the envoy of Shah Sultan Husayn, in the beginning of the spring of 1722. See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2:1282. Again, he took an active part in the official peace negotiations between the Ottoman and Russian delegates. After the first two meetings in the beginning of January 1724, İlmi Ahmed Efendi presented the debates between the delegates to the high-ranking *ulema*. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1372.

about the legality of fighting against the Safavids. İlmi Ahmed Efendi related that some of the Lazgis asked Arifi Ahmed Pasha about the legal justifications to fight against the "heretics," to take their possessions, to enslave them, and to declare them infidels according to the law books. He went on that due to the urgency of war, he had written a concise *risale* and sent it to Arifi Ahmed Pasha.

Here, I will not go into the details of İlmi Ahmed's legal proofs, but will offer an outline. He first "proved" the infidelity of the Safavids based on their beliefs and acts that conflicted with Qur'anic verses and the main pillars of the Sunni creed. Then, he referred to legal views in some authoritative Sunni law books, such as *Kashf al-Kabîr*, *Hulasat al-Fatâwa*, *Manâkib al-Kardari*, *Hızânat al-Mufti'în*, and *Tatarhaniyya*, against the *rafizîs* (heretics). After that, he quoted *fetva*s of Sarıgörez Hamza Efendi (d. 1522), İbn Kemal (d. 1534), and Ebussuud (d. 1574) against the Safavids. At the end of the treatise, İlmi Ahmed Efendi copied the *fetva* of *Şeyhülislam* Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi verbatim. İlmi Ahmed Efendi basically summarized the mainstream Ottoman legal position against the Safavid "heresy" and legally "proved" their apostasy and infidelity. Thus, the Porte could embrace a full-fledged anti-heresy politico-legal discourse against the Safavids in the 1723-25 period.

It is equally important to note that to declare war on the Safavids based on their "heresy" was not an easy task at that time. The questions of the Lazgis and the fact that the Porte felt the need to provide a legal treatise to justify war against the Safavids captured that difficulty effectively. The dissident view of Kemal Efendi, a former judge of Baghdad and of the imperial army, was also illuminating in this sense. We do not know at what point he started to voice his legal opposition to the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam*. However, on April 16th, 1724, the Porte took decisive measures against him. The grand vizier arranged an assembly meeting with the senior

members of the *ulema* bureaucracy.[503] The main reason for the gathering was to discuss the response letter from Peter I to the grand vizier regarding the conclusion of the Partition Treaty. After discussing the matter, *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi brought the dissident legal views of Kemal Efendi to the table. Apparently, Kemal Efendi had voiced his opposition against the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* at some gatherings. Kemal Efendi's main support was the established Sunni legal principle that "those who pray cannot be declared infidels."[504] It pertains to the idea that a Muslim cannot be designated as infidel on the basis of their sins, however grave these sins might be.

Çelebizâde did not give further details about Kemal Efendi's objections. However, the *fetva* compilation of Abdullah Efendi included a *fetva* that seems to pertain to Kemal Efendi's opposition.[505] In the question part of the *fetva*, first the Ottoman "*jihad*" against the Safavids and its authorization by the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* were summarized. Then, the dissident view was given as such:

> What is the legal ruling for Zeyd [meaning "somebody" in legal terminology], who says and believes that *jihad* on the aforementioned heretics and killing of their men are forbidden; to expel and enslave their women and children, and to seize their goods as booty are illegal; and to have intercourse with their women after their entrance into Islam is adultery?[506]

Abdullah Efendi replied that Zeyd had to renew his faith and marriage, meaning he had left Islam. The *şeyhülislam* continued that if Zeyd persisted, then he had to be executed.

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[503] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1360–61.

[504] "Ehl-i kıble tekfîr olunmaz." For a general information on that Sunni principle, see Metin Yurdagür, "Ehl-i Kıble," in *TDVİA*, 1994; Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Tekfir," in *TDVİA*, 2011.

[505] Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetâva*, ed. Süleyman Kaya et al. (Klasik Yayınları, 2011), no.1036, 195-96. I saw the *fetva* first in Mehmet Akbulut's master's thesis. He also interpreted the *fetva* as against Kemal Efendi. See Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 54–55.

[506] Zeyd "Revâfiz-i mezkûrenin üzerlerine cihad ve ricâllerini katl haramdır ve nisâ ve sıbyânlarını seby ve istirkâk ve mallarım ganimet meşru değildir, nisâlarını ba'de'l-İslam vat' zinadır" deyip bu vecih üzere itikad eylese Zeyd'e ne lazım olur?"

Çelebizâde narrated that Abdullah Efendi asked for the opinions of the *ulema* present in the assembly regarding Kemal Efendi's objections. He added that the *ulema* had to express their doubts, if there were any, about the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva*, so that he could clear all these doubts. They replied that the *fetva* of Abdullah Efendi against the Safavids was completely in accordance with the great legal scholars (*müctehidîn*) and earlier authoritative legal opinions. Moreover, they added that Kemal Efendi was deceiving naive people and should be disciplined.[507] They also recommended that Kemal Efendi should have not been given a position in *ilmiye* bureaucracy, and rather must be sent into exile. Abdullah Efendi agreed with them, and the sultan ordered Kemal Efendi sent into exile to the island of Lemnos on the same day.[508]

It was ironic that the Porte exiled Kemal Efendi for his pro-Safavid legal views at a time when the Porte itself was about to sign a treaty to enthrone Tahmasb in Persia. However, there was a critical difference between the seemingly similar attitudes of the Porte and Kemal Efendi toward the Safavids. The Porte supported the reestablishment of the "heretic" and "apostate" Safavids. Kemal Efendi, on the other hand, defended the Safavids as Muslims, however deviant they might have been. If the Porte embraced Kemal Efendi's legal view, then the Safavids would have become like the Afghans in terms of the "Muslim" threat they posed to the Ottomans. Then, from the perspective of Constantinople, the Safavids would have lost their function as the "Shiite protector wall" of the well-protected domains of the Sunni Ottomans. The Porte punished Kemal Efendi in a severe way by exiling him to an island and dismissing him from the *ilmiye* class fundamentally for this reason.

[507] "…sâde-dilân-ı nâsı iğfâl iden şahs-ı kec-hayâl…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1361. Significantly, they attached importance to public opinion that could turn against the official policy.
[508] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1361.

Moreover, Kemal Efendi's views threatened the government's policies within the specific context of the Ottoman-Safavid War. It could have delegitimized both the actual fight against the Safavids in western Iran and the Porte's anti-"heretic" religio-political propaganda. Even the question of the *şeyhülislam* to other *ulema* was not inviting them to discuss the *fetva* against the Safavids, but to "convince" possible opposers to the "righteousness" of the *fetva*. Frequent consultative assembly meetings on the Iranian question in the preceding years had also been suggestive in this sense. War decisions were made by the maximum number of the high-ranking influential figures of the time. It helped the government to acquire wide elite consent, and also eliminate opposing views. At the point when the war had already started, the Porte did not allow any major dissident views. The government safeguarded its long-contemplated plans on Iran with firm measures.

However, that discursive policy carried another risk: how to explain the overthrow of the Afghans and reinstitution of the Safavids, in case the Porte's plans succeeded? The Porte was aware of that risk. To reduce it, the Ottoman government took several discursive and practical measures starting at the latest in early 1723.[509] The Porte had to conceal its real struggle against Mir Mahmud as much as it could.

The first measure of the Porte was refraining from military encounter with the Afghans. Even if the Porte was eager to limit Afghan advancement, it considered that it could not persuasively explain any Ottoman land acquisitions from the Afghans. Ottoman fights with the Afghans and land seizures from them would have distorted the unity of the well-framed religio-political discourse that pitched the Sunni Ottomans against the heretic Safavids. Thus, it became a priority for the Porte not to clash with the Afghans, at all costs.

[509] Here, I will present these measures partly. I will examine this issue again when investigating the process of Ottoman-Russian negotiations over the partition of Iran in the next chapter.

The Porte also considered the possibility of Afghan objection to the Ottoman conquest of the western provinces of Iran, even if the Afghans had not yet taken these lands under control. Indeed, in his letter to the Ottoman sultan, Mahmud claimed his right to rule over the entire Iranian territories once ruled by the Safavids. The consultative assembly meeting on February 9th, 1723 concluded that the Porte should use the pretext against Mahmud that the sultan had the right to capture the western provinces of Iran, since it was "ownerless territory" (*herrenloses Gebiet; royaume abandonné*).[510] The imperial order to Hasan Pasha issued following the July 7th, 1723 assembly meeting maintained the same discourse: Since Mahmud Han was a Sunni, it was clearly against the *sharia* to attack territories that had been previously taken by him. However, if the exalted state conquered areas that had not been captured by Mahmud, "what could he say?"[511] In the imperial orders starting the war, the Porte reminded the three commanders-in-chief that the Ottoman armies should only attack territories that had not been taken by the Afghans.[512]

Ottoman wariness not to violate the law by taking the Afghan lands demonstrates that religion was something more than mere rhetoric and was not as passive as might be assumed. With its legal and communal aspects, religion directly influenced political and military decisions in the field. It had a restrictive capacity on political actions, as much as it served the political interests of the Porte.

Mahmud's popularity among Ottoman subjects, especially among those who were in the bordering regions, was also an important matter in this context. Religion did not remain only in hearts and minds, but prompted and mobilized people to action. The Porte discussed the risk

[510]Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:288–89; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 237.

[511] "Ve Mahmud Han, Ehl-i Sünnet'ten olmağla, bir defa taht-ı tasarrufuna dahil olan bilad ve kazaya taarruz bi hasebi'ş-şer'i şerîf mahzûr olduğu zâhir ve âşikâr olup, lâkin henüz tasarrufuna dâhil olmayan mahaller, taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyyemden zabt ve teshir olunsa ne diyebilir?" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-504, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723).

[512] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-616, 618, and 634, Evahir-i Zilkade 1135 (August 23rd – September 1st, 1723).

created by popularity for the security of the Ottoman borders in February 1723 at the latest. The government concluded in the assembly meeting on July 7th, 1723 that the Ottomans should urgently occupy western Iran to keep Mahmud away from the Ottoman borders. Hasan Pasha's letter in July 1723 proved that the government's worries were not unwarranted anxieties. Ottoman subjects were leaving "*memâlik-i mahrûse*" to join Mahmud's army and to fight against the Safavids. Thus, the alternative status of Mir Mahmud was something quite tangible; the Porte feared most from Sunni Mahmud, more than from the Shiite Safavids or Christian Muscovites, who could only challenge the Ottomans externally.[513]

B.2.1.5. Ottoman Undertakings in the Hejaz

As I examined in Chapter One, the Ottoman sultan's exclusive title of "servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" was the main pillar of his claim to the universal caliphate. The emergence of the Afghan alternative in Iran, with claims of equality with the Ottoman sultan, put Ottoman dynasty's privilege of "serving" Mecca and Medina at risk. Below, I investigate Ottoman endeavors in the Hejaz intended to safeguard its "unquestioned" and "well-deserved" authority over the Hejaz in order to discard the Afghan alternative before it became even bigger. The Sunni challenge from Iran to the universal caliphate of the sultan caused the Porte to deal with the Iranian question as a comprehensive problem for the Middle East, including the Hejaz and Egypt.

Indeed, the Afghans turned their gaze toward the universal caliphate with Ashraf's claim of Qurayshi lineage starting in 1725.[514] Even though his predecessor and cousin Mahmud had not made this claim, Afghan influence on and even conquest of the Hejaz was not a far possibility at that time. French historian Clairac (d. 1752) expressed this probability based on

[513] Stanyan wrote that due to Mahmud's attractiveness for Ottoman subjects, and even possibly for governors, the Porte's fear of Mahmud was more "than of any Christian Prince." See Olson, *The Siege of Mosul,* 50. Stanyan's dispatch was dated February 22nd, 1724.
[514] I discuss this issue in Chapter Five.

two factors: First, Ottoman sovereignty over Arabs in the south was vulnerable. Second, the Porte was not able to pacify local but significant crises in Egypt.[515] A third factor can be added to these two in the Afghans' increasing popularity and legitimacy among Muslims everywhere, due to their elimination of the Safavid "heresy" after 221 years. In Mahmud's letter to Ahmed III, he highlighted the grace of God to himself in allowing his overthrow of the Safavid heresy in Persia. Afghan success overshadowed the established Ottoman "*gazi*" and "*mücahid*" discourse, especially considering the Ottoman "failure" to overthrow the Safavids, ongoing since 1501.[516] Furthermore, the Ghilzai Afghans had already contacted the *ulema* of Mecca and Medina in 1707, when Mir Uwais obtained a *fetva* from the jurists of the holy cities authorizing him to rebel against the Safavids.

It is important to touch upon the turmoil in Egypt here, though briefly, since governors in Egypt were responsible for the protection of the Hejaz and the well-being of its population and pilgrims.[517] There were serious rebellions in Egypt throughout the 1720s. Regarding the seriousness of the situation, Venetian *bailo* Giovanni Emo reported in February 1721 that Ottoman ministers had discussed the possibility of Egypt's separation from the empire in their frequent conferences.[518] First, a rebellion broke out in 1720, and the local administration soon suppressed it. In 1724, Çerkes Mehmed Bey rebelled in Cairo and his insurgency became a major threat to the provincial authority of the Ottomans in the following years. Çerkes Mehmed's rebellion turned into a diplomatic question when he escaped to Vienna in the latter

[515] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:345.
[516] As I argue in this thesis, the Ottomans failed to overthrow the Safavids only in the first half of the sixteenth century. From the Treaty of Amasya (1555) on, it became a *raison d'état* of the Ottoman state to protect the Shiite Safavids.
[517]Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1489; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 164; Tufan Buzpınar and Mustafa Sabri Küçükaşcı, "Haremeyn," in *TDVİA*, 1997; Mustafa Sabri Küçükaşcı, "Şeyhülharem," in *TDVİA*, 2010. Protection of the Hejaz and pilgrims was a joint responsibility of the governors of Jeddah, Egypt, and Damascus. Egypt had a distinguished position compared to Damascus. For example, the cover of Ka'ba was fabricated in Cairo each year and sent to the Kaaba with the *hajj* caravan from Cairo. Similarly, to bring the Sultan's pious donations to the Hejaz was the responsibility of the *emiru'l hac* of the Cairo caravan. More importantly, Egypt sent a military unit to Mecca each year to serve under the governor of Jeddah.
[518] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 24.

half of the 1720s and sought refuge from both Habsburg and French kings. Ahmed III's "strongly-worded letter" to the Habsburg emperor led to the Austrian rejection of Çerkes Mehmed's request.[519] The Porte was eventually able to suppress Çerkes Mehmed's rebellion in early 1730, and Ottoman troops killed and beheaded him during his escape from Cairo. His head was immediately sent to Constantinople. In these rebellions, Çerkes Mehmed's main source of troops was from Bedouin tribes. His last revolt, in 1729, included 40,000 troops. The Porte sent around 20,000 soldiers to suppress the rebellion.[520] Thus, in a sense, the Ottoman government was literally fighting on two fronts, at the Persian front and Egypt, in the 1720s.

Starting in 1724, the Ottoman government engaged in the affairs of the Hejaz more closely and with a special focus. The Porte appointed Ebubekir Ağa, the head of sergeants in the imperial council (*Divân-ı âli başçavuşu*), as the governor of the Ethiopia province and Jeddah *sanjak* on December 30th, 1724.[521] As earlier occupiers of these posts had since 1701, Ebubekir Ağa became also the *şeyhülharem* of Mecca, which made him the supreme provincial authority in the Hejaz.[522] He remained in this position until 1731, with a short interval in 1728. He returned to this position several times in the 1730s, 1740s, and 1750s.

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[519] Jane Hathaway, "Çerkes Mehmed Bey: Rebel, Traitor, Hero?," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1998): 111.

[520] For coverage of Çerkes Mehmed's rebellion, Hathaway, "Çerkes Mehmed Bey: Rebel, Traitor, Hero?" Çelebizâde's official chronicle included many entries and information about Çerkes Mehmed's rebellion. Subhi also gives some information on that rebellion; see Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi: Samî ve Şâkir Tarihleri Ile Birlikte 1730-1744 (İnceleme ve Karşılaştırmalı Metin)*, ed. Mesut Aydıner (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2018), 60, 72, 80, 117. See also Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 24–25; Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 71–72.

[521] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1417–18; Fahameddin Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2018), 143. Ebubekir Pasha remained in this position until September 1728, when he was appointed as the governor of Egypt. However, due to the death of Tevkii Mehmed Pasha, the new governor of Jeddah, he again became the governor of Jeddah in 1729 until September 1731. In 1732, Ebubekir Pasha became admiral in-chief (*kaptan-ı derya*). The following year, he was appointed as secretary of state (*nişancı*). In 1740, he became the groom of Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703, d.1703) by marrying his daughter Safiye Sultan. Ebubekir Pasha died in 1757/1758 (H. 1171). For detailed information about his life, see Sevilay Tosun, "Ebubekir Paşa ve Kıbrıs'taki İmar Faaliyetleri," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 28, no. 2 (December 2004): 205–13.

[522] Küçükaşcı, "Şeyhülharem." However, Ebubekir Pasha appointed the former deputy on his behalf in Mecca for this post. In his letter to the deputy, he wrote that the governors of Jeddah used to appoint deputies for the office of the Meccas *şeyhülharem*. The name of the deputy was not written in the letter. Ebubekir Pasha, "Mekke-i

During my research in manuscript libraries, I found a collection of letters belonging to Ebubekir Pasha's first three years in governorship.[523] The collection included around one hundred incoming and outgoing letters, including a few imperial orders. The earliest letter was dated 10 Cemaziyelevvel 1137 (January 25th, 1725), and the date of the latest one was 18 Rebiulevvel 1140 (November 3rd, 1727).[524] Ninety percent of the collection belonged to the period between January 1725 and September 1726. The letter collection provides rich historical material about a provincial governor's work, local networks, interactions with other governors and high-ranking provincial administrators, relations with the imperial center, and several secret communication methods in one of the most critical provinces of the empire. It presents rare, hard-to-find information on the limits of Ottoman central authority and local administration in a far province. Moreover, since the Porte usually destroyed letters from governors, scholars of Ottoman history get only scant information on the activities and reports of provincial governors. As a result, Ebubekir Pasha's collection of letters is an invaluable source shedding light on the dynamics between local and central politics in the early modern era. Here, my focus will be on the Ottoman government's concern and its activities to safeguard its "servitor" position in the Hejaz during this term, rather than the collection's various attractive qualities for a historian.

Ebubekir Pasha set out from Constantinople for Egypt in the end of January 1725.[525] He landed in Alexandria on April 11th, 1725 (27 Receb 1137) and arrived in Cairo on April 27th, 1725 (13 Şaban 1137).[526] After his stay in Cairo for more than a month, Ebubekir Pasha left

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Mükerreme'nin Şeyhü'l Haremliği Vekâleti Buyruldusudur" in *Ebubekir Paşa Münşeatı*, 592 (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, İzmir Kütüphanesi, n.d.), Gurre-i Zilhicce 1137 (August 11th, 1725), p. 11b.

[523] Ebubekir Paşa, *Ebubekir Paşa Münşeatı*, 592 (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, İzmir Kütüphanesi, n.d.).

[524] The duration of these activities goes beyond the time limits of this chapter. However, I do not cut Ottoman activities in Hejaz according to my periodization. I discuss Ottoman undertakings in the Hejaz between 1725 and 1727 altogether here.

[525] Ebubekir Paşa, "Mısır valisi vezir-i Mükerrem devletlü muhammed paşa hazretlerine tahrir olan kaime suretidir", p. 5a.

[526] Ebubekir Paşa's letter to Damad İbrahim Paşa, dated 15 Ramazan 1137 (May 28th, 1725). See Ebubekir Paşa, pp. 7b, 8a.

Cairo on June 1st, 1725 (19 Ramazan 1137)[527] and landed at the Yanbu port in the Hejaz on June 29th, 1725 (17 Şevval 1137).[528] From there, he proceeded directly to Medina, but due to bad weather conditions, he had to go to Jeddah, where he arrived on July 12th, 1725 (1 Zilkade 1137).[529] After twelve days of rest, Ebubekir Pasha set out for Mecca. He did not give the date of his arrival in Mecca, but it should have taken a few days, since the distance was only 50 miles.[530] Lastly, he returned to Jeddah, from where he administered the affairs of Hejaz.[531]

The Porte commissioned Ebubekir Pasha with certain general and specific tasks, all of which demonstrate the Ottoman government's extra care for the Hejaz in this period. Çelebizâde explained Ebubekir Pasha's duty to control the distribution of custom revenues in Jeddah port, where goods from India and Yemen entered the Hejaz. These revenues constituted the main bulk of the income of the people of Mecca and Medina, and also of the *sharif* of Mecca. Çelebizâde implied that the *sharif*s of Mecca took extra money by oppressing the merchants and local notables.[532] Thus, one of the major tasks of Ebubekir Pasha was to prevent oppression and to maintain the economic well-being of the people of the Hejaz. The register of provincial appointments (*eyâlet tevcîhâtı*) provided a broader definition of Ebubekir Pasha's

[527] Ebubekir Pasha's letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha, dated 28 Ramazan 1137 (June 10th, 1725). See Ebubekir Paşa, p. 10a.
[528] Ebubekir Paşa, "Devlete Silahdar İsmail Ağa ile irsal olunan Kaime," 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 30th, 1725), pp. 14a-15b.
[529] Ebubekir Paşa, "Devlete Silahdar İsmail Ağa ile irsal olunan Kaime," 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 30th, 1725), pp. 14a-15b.
[530] He wrote that he was at the Kaaba on 20 Zilkade 1137 (July 31st, 1725). See Ebubekir Paşa, "Devlete Silahdar İsmail Ağa ile irsal olunan Kaime," 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 30th, 1725), pp. 14a-15b.
[531] I was not able to specify the dates of Ebubekir Pasha's arrival in Medina, Mecca, and Jeddah. However, he was on the way to Jedda from Mecca in November 1725. See Ebubekir Paşa, "Mekke-i Mükerreme'den Cidde'ye azimet esnasında Mekke Kadısına ve Yedi Ocak Serdar ve Zabitanına Refah-ı Hal-i İbad İçin Tahrir olunan Buyruldu," 16 Rebiulevvel 1138 (November 24th, 1725), p. 17b.
[532] "Bender-i Cidde aksâ-yı memâlik-i sultânî ve müntehâ-yı kalem-rev-i hâkânîde vâki' olduğundan gayrı Haremeyn-i muhteremeyn ahâlîsinin kilar-ı ma'âş ve şürefâ-i Mekke'nin revâtıb-ı ma'lûmeleri mezkûr benderde ilkâ-yı lenger eyleyen sefâyin-i Hind ve Yemen'in gümrüğünden ta'yîn olunmağla sermâye-i ta'ayyüş ü inti'âşları iken şürefâ fursat-yâb oldukca tüccâr ve a'yân-ı ahâlî-i diyâra ıtâle-i dest-i te'addî vü cefâ itdiklerinden nâşî Cidde sancağını bir vezîr-i kâr-dâna tevcîh ü ihsân ile dâmân-ı ümmü'l-kurâyı âsîb-i pençe-i erbâb-ı hevâdan sıyânet ve ol aktâr u enhâda mekîn olan müsâfirîn ü mücâvirîni tetâvul-i eydî-i zalemeden kemâ-yenbagî hıfz u hırâset ehemm-i umûr-ı devlet olmağla…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1417.

mission as ordering the affairs of the entire Hejaz region (*aktar-ı Hicâziyyenin tânzim-i umûru*).[533]

The first specific order to Ebubekir Pasha was to construct three galleons at the Suez Port. The ships were to function for military purposes and also for other logistical works.[534] The second task was to properly move some of the marble stones in the wall of the Ka'ba back to their original positions. The judge of Mecca had reported earlier that these stones had become dislodged over time and were about to fall. Third, floor coverings in a specific prayer location in the Ka'ba had been damaged and prayers had difficulty in praying there.[535] Thus, the coverings should be replaced with stone ones. Fourth, Ebubekir Pasha was to repair the *madrasa* of Süleyman II in Mecca. Damad İbrahim Pasha's letter to Ebubekir Pasha underlined that the repairs should be so sturdy that no repairs should be necessary for a long time.[536] Fifth, the underground waterways in Medina should be cleaned and the damaged water holes, or air shafts, repaired.[537] Sixth, some of the walls of the Masjid al-Nabawi (Prophet's *masjid*) had been damaged and should also be repaired. Seventh, the floor coverings in the center of Masjid al-Nabawi were to be renewed.[538] Eighth, the floor covering of the *mihrab* of Masjid al-Nabawi, called the *mihrab* of Osman, the third caliph, was to be renewed with special carpets from Egypt. Ninth, Ebubekir Pasha should supervise the building of a wall at the port of Yanbu in order to protect the provisions of people of Mecca and Medina and the goods of merchants from assaults by the Bedouins.[539]

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[533] Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)*, 143.
[534] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1420–21.
[535] Çelebizâde specified the location as the area between the gate of Nebî (Bâbü'n-Nebî) and the gate of Ziyâde (Bâbü'z-Ziyâde).
[536] Ebubekir Paşa, "Hala zivermend-i sadaret-i uzmâ devletlü saadetlü ibrahim paşa hazretleri tarafından gelen kaime suretidir," 6 Ramazan 1137 (May 19th, 1725), pp. 6a, 6b.
[537] Çelebizâde specified the locations by their names.
[538] Çelebizâde specified the location as the area between the room of the Prophet and the *minbar*.
[539] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1422–23. The correspondence between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Ebubekir Pasha as recorded in the compilation of Ebubekir Pasha's letters gives more detailed information about these tasks. I will refer to them below, especially regarding the fulfillment of these duties.

As is clear from that list, the Porte engaged in an unusually large-scale work in the Hejaz, including infrastructure, superstructure, protection, and repairs to the most symbolic places at the same time. Çelebizâde highlighted the extraordinariness of these works. Regarding the galleons, he wrote that previously galleons had worked between the Suez and Jeddah, but that they had long since disappeared. He emphasized that Damad İbrahim Pasha had reintroduced these highly important but forgotten galleons by building them anew.[540] Çelebizâde's introduction to the other tasks was intended to single out Ahmed III both from non-Ottoman Muslim rulers and also from earlier Ottoman sultans. He stated that the Ottoman caliph was distinguished from the rest of the world rulers by his privilege of having the honor of serving the Two Holy Sanctuaries. He stressed that Ahmed III wished to surpass earlier Ottoman sultans by accomplishing the mentioned works, which were the requirements of God's caliphate, and which earlier Ottoman sultans had not been able to achieve.[541]

Neither these orders nor the correspondence between Ebubekir Pasha and the Porte referred to the Afghan challenge to the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan. However, it was equally unusual for the Ottoman government to engage in that kind of extensive undertaking in the Hejaz while in the middle of a highly costly war in Iran. Çelebizâde's emphasis on the Ottoman caliph's prerogative of serving Mecca and Medina helps us construct the relation between the challenge of Sunni Afghans and the Porte's inauguration of comprehensive infrastructural and symbolic works in the Hejaz.

The first letter specifying the tasks from the grand vizier recorded in the compilation was dated March 18th, 1725 (3 Receb 1137), when Ebubekir Pasha was in Fethiye. See Ebubekir Paşa, "Mekri Nam Mahalde Sadrazam Devletli Saadetli İbrahim Paşa Hazretlerine İrsal Olunan Arz-ı Muhabbet Suretidir," 4 Receb 1137 (March 19th, 1725), p. 4b, 5a.

[540] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1420–21.

[541] "Şeref-i hidmet-i Haremeyn-i muhteremeyn ile mecmû'-ı mülûk-i âlemden ser-efrâz ü mümtâz olduğu bî-şeyn ü meyn olan Şehinşâh-ı dil-âgâh ve Pâdişâh-ı Süleymân-bârgâh cenâb-ı hilâfet-meâblarının hem-vâre murâd-ı fuâdları envâ'-ı ibâdât ü müberrât ile tahsîl-i rızâ-yı Kirdgârî ve tekmîl-i muktezâ-yı hilâfet-perverd-gârî olup, husûsâ Haremeyn-i muhteremeyn شرفهم الله تعالى da vâki' olan âsâr-ı kadîmenuin nicesini ta'mîr ile ihyâ ve mülûk-i sâlifenin muvaffak olamadıkları nice hayrât-ı celîle inşâsı murâd-ı hümâyûnları olmağın..." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1422.

As I discussed above, as early as January 1723, the Ottoman government was dealing with the Afghan question on the grounds of the Ottoman sultan's universal caliph title. Mir Mahmud's subsequent claims of equality increased the Ottoman stress on Ahmed III's exalted caliphate status over the rest of the Muslim rulers. The Ottoman armies started their Iranian campaign in September 1723 aiming mainly to limit Mir Mahmud's expansion toward Ottoman borders. Only a few months after the Ottoman march into Iran, the Porte engaged in highly costly and exceptional undertakings in the Hejaz, stressing the exclusive caliphate privilege of serving the Two Holy Sanctuaries.

The simultaneity of these operations in Iran and the Hejaz, alongside that in Egypt, suggests that the Porte wanted to achieve at least two things with that special attention to the Hejaz. First, the Ottoman sultan might have wanted to underline his superiority over Mir Mahmud in respect to his universal caliph title. Second, and more importantly, Ahmed III seemed to be intent on safeguarding his exalted position over the rest of the Muslim monarchs, including Mir Mahmud. With these comprehensive undertakings, he showed that he was still in full control of the affairs of the Hejaz; he was able to provide all the necessary needs of the people of Mecca and Medina, whether protection from the oppression of administrators and Bedouin attacks, or provision of clean water and food. Moreover, Ahmed III asserted that he could provide the best security to the pilgrims. No one else but Ahmed III paid the utmost respect to the most sacred places and symbols of Islam with delicate care. Thus, the Porte intended to curb a possible inclination to Mahmud in the Hejaz and among global Muslims.

Karateke captures the meaning of these activities quite well in his general discussion of Ottoman sultans' activities in the Hejaz. After he enumerated the Ottoman sultans' usual services in the Hejaz, he wrote that "[b]y publicizing all these services among those actually making the pilgrimage, and also among potential future pilgrims, an attempt was made to promote among Muslim peoples generally the notion of the *Ottomans as the rightful rulers of*

the Hijaz."[542] While his observation is valid in general, the abrupt emergence of an Ottoman sultan's unusual care for the affairs of the Hejaz was more meaningful in the midst of the Sunni Afghan challenge.

Damad İbrahim's letter to Ebubekir Pasha regarding putting the marble stones into their place was a perfect example of this argument. The letter was dated May 19th, 1725, a day when Ebubekir Pasha was in Cairo.[543] The grand vizier first wrote that the Porte had received a petition from Zülali Hasan Efendi, the judge of Mecca, requesting the sultan's permission to relocate the marble stones on the Ka'ba's wall.[544] Damad İbrahim highlighted that the relocation required royal permission.[545] He ordered Ebubekir Pasha to make the relocation in a ceremonial way, with the gathering of all upper-class members of Mecca: the judge of Mecca, all local notables and *sharif*s, the *ulema* of four Sunni law schools, and other religious and pious persons.[546]

It seemed that the actual work was not an urgent or even a large task. Even if some stones of the wall had come loose, it could not be an urgent need, since the judge of Mecca had petitioned the sultan for his permission to repair. It took several months just to communicate between Mecca and Constantinople. However, even that kind of small repair on the building of the Ka'ba itself had considerable symbolic importance. It required royal permission, and the task needed to be done in a ceremonial and highly respectful manner. The big ceremonial aspect of the task, compared to its quite simple technical aspect, manifested the symbolic importance

[542] Hakan Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for the Ottoman Sultan," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Brill, 2005), 123. Emphasis added.

[543] Ebubekir Paşa, "Hala zivermend-i sadaret-i uzmâ devletlü saadetlü ibrahim paşa hazretleri tarafından gelen kaime suretidir," 6 Ramazan 1137 (May 19th, 1725), pp. 6a, 6b.

[544] He was the same Hasan Efendi who would play a major role in the deposition of Ahmed III in the Patrona Rebellion of 1730.

[545] "Mahall-i kadimine irca'ı hususu izn-i humayun-ı mülükaneye mevkûf olmağla"

[546] "Mekke-i Mükerreme kadısı Efendi ve cümle ayan ve eşraf ve mezahib-i erbaa uleması ve sair zühhad ve suleha marifetleriyle, bir hıyn-i şeref kurbunda, bu emr-i meymenet-rehine şuru' ve mübaderet…"

of the Ka'ba for the legitimacy of a ruler. The Ottoman sultan was able to maintain his exalted position over other Muslim monarchs by exposing his prerogative to "serve" the holiest sites of Islam in the most visible way.

Ebubekir Pasha started to fulfill the above-mentioned comprehensive tasks even before he landed in the Hejaz.[547] He informed Damad İbrahim Pasha about the stages of his tasks with frequent, detailed letters. As soon as he arrived in Jeddah, the first work he accomplished was relocating the marble stones on the wall of the Ka'ba. He narrated how carefully and respectfully they had fulfilled the task and that the royal permission was read out loud in the presence of everybody. After that, Ebubekir Pasha wrote that a water shortage was the biggest problem in Mecca, and he started an exploratory study on August 10th, 1725, with the judge of Mecca and some other local notables. He also informed the grand vizier that the reparation of the *madrasa* of Süleyman II was not urgent and would require 5,000 *kuruş*. Instead, he suggested using the money for the reparation of waterways. For the other works to be done in Yanbu and Medina, and the construction of galleons, he wrote that he was in close contact with local administrators and had already finished some of the exploratory study.[548]

In April 1726, Ebubekir Pasha informed the Porte of the completion of the construction of three galleons.[549] However, it took a longer period of time to complete the other tasks. The compilation of his letters did not give specific information about the exact times of finishing those tasks. Nevertheless, letters and papers from August 1727 provided a detailed sum of the finished works with the expenses of each.[550] It documented that all the tasks had been completed by then, except for two. First, the wall at Yanbu Port was still under construction. Second, the

[547] Ebubekir Paşa, "Esnay-ı Tarik-i Hicaz'da T…(?) nam mahalde devletlü sahibuddevlet hazretleri tarafına irsal olunan kaime suretidir," 28 Ramazan 1137 (June 10th, 1725), pp. 9b, 10a.
[548] Ebubekir Paşa, "Devlete Silahdar İsmail Ağa ile irsal olunan Kaime," 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 30th, 1725), pp. 14a-15b.
[549] Ebubekir Paşa, "Arnavud Ali ile bahren irsal olunan kaimenin suretidir," Gurre-i Şaban 1138, (April 4th, 1726) pp. 20b, 21a.
[550] Ebubekir Paşa, pp. 25a-26a.

reparation and construction of the *qanat* in Mecca was still continuing. Ebubekir Pasha wrote that the water shortage had been mostly eradicated in Mecca; however, he was going to solve the problem completely with a last big repair job.[551] As he stated, one specific waterway had been constructed by İbrahim Bey, the defterdar of Egypt in 1561/2, during the reign of Süleyman I (d. 1566). After its building, it deteriorated and was not able to carry sufficient water to Mecca. Ebubekir Pasha gave details of the hard work and high cost required to accomplish this task. To show the difficulty, he highlighted that nobody had engaged in repairing that waterway after İbrahim Bey, until his time. Beyond the ordered works, Ebubekir Pasha also completed some other important reparations, like repairing a minaret in the Ka'ba complex.[552]

Ebubekir Pasha's letters also reveal how the turmoil in Egypt affected the well-being of the Hejaz.[553] To provide sufficient food to pilgrims and residents of the Hejaz was one of the top priorities of the Porte and, thus, that of Ebubekir Pasha.[554] However, he informed the Porte of the miserable situation people in the Hejaz were in, due to the not coming of the usual provision ships from Egypt. He wrote that because of the turmoil in Egypt, instead of seventy or eighty ships, only two ships had arrived from Egypt to the Hejaz carrying a small amount of wheat.[555] Ebubekir Pasha also worked hard to ensure that the people of Mecca and Medina got

[551] Ebubekir Paşa, "Kapı kethüdasına Mekke'den irsal olunan Kaimedir," 18 Rebiulevvel 1140 (November 3rd, 1727), p. 26b.
[552] Ebubekir Paşa, p. 25a.
[553] Besides this, Ebubekir Pasha reported the situation in Egypt to the Porte in detail. Moreover, he exchanged letters with Çerkes Mehmed Bey several times. These letters are in the collection of letters. Ebubekir Pasha even had a personal conversation with Çerkes Mehmed Bey.
[554] See for example, Ebubekir Paşa, "Cidde naibi Efendi ve mütesellimi El-hac Mustafa Ağa zide kadruhu'ya inha olunur ki," 13b, 14a; Ebubekir Paşa, "Cidde'de mütesellim sefineleri yükleri bir gün mukaddem tahmil edip Süveys'e irsali için buyruldu," 8 Muharrem 1138 (September 16th, 1725), pp. 16a, 16b.
[555] Ebubekir Paşa, "Çukadar Hasan ile İrsal Olunan Kaimenin Suretidir," Gurre-i Rebiulahir 1138 (December 7th, 1725), pp. 18a-19a.

sufficient coffee from Yemen. Other than coffee, matters of customs in Yemen was another issue with which Ebubekir Pasha regularly dealt.[556]

Ebubekir Pasha also worked hard to establish security in the Hejaz. Soon after his arrival in Jeddah, he combatted a longstanding crime gang in Medina and successfully eliminated it in December 1725.[557] However, the major security problem was the Bedouin tribes, who attacked *hajj* caravans, robbed merchants, and plundered provisions going to Mecca and Medina. Ottoman provincial authorities in the Hejaz had agreements with several different Bedouin tribes for the protection of pilgrims and provisions. The governor paid these tribes certain amount of money in return for their protection service. Among several Bedouin tribes, the most challenging one to Ebubekir Pasha was the Harb tribe. Ebubekir Pasha wrote that their population was around fifteen to twenty thousand, and they had settled in Mecca. He described them as "people having nothing to do with Islam." He argued that they never prayed in their lifetime and described them as worse than the Kizilbash.[558] The Bedouin challenge to Ottoman authority affirms Clairac's observations regarding the weak obedience of the subjects in Arab lands to Ottoman suzerainty.

As early as August 1725, Ebubekir Pasha issued an order affirming the prohibition of selling rifles and powder to the Bedouins decisively. He ordered the enlisting of all shopkeepers selling rifles and powder in Jeddah. He stated that from now on, all rifle and powder trafficking from the Jeddah Port to the troops in the Hejaz would be done under close state supervision.[559]

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[556] See for example, Ebubekir Paşa, "Çukadar Hasan ile İrsal Olunan Kaimenin Suretidir," Gurre-i Rebiulahir 1138 (December 7th, 1725), pp. 18a-19a; Ebubekir Paşa, "Tüccar ile Şam tarafından irsal olunan kaime," 15 Cemaziyelahir 1138 (February 18th, 1726), pp. 19a, 20b.

[557] Ebubekir Paşa, "Çukadar Hasan ile İrsal Olunan Kaimenin Suretidir," Gurre-i Rebiulahir 1138 (December 7th, 1725), pp. 18a-19a.

[558] Ebubekir Paşa, "Arnavud Ali ile bahren irsal olunan kaimenin suretidir," Gurre-i Şaban 1138, (April 4th, 1726) pp. 20b, 21a. "Kızılbaş'dan dahi eşedd ve eş'âm olduğu bî-iştibâhtır."

[559] Ebubekir Paşa, "Taife-i Urban'a Tüfenk ve Barut ve Rasas Furuht Olunmamak Üzere Tenbih Buyruldusudur," 14 Zilhicce 1137 (August 24th, 1725), p. 12a.

A couple of months later, Ebubekir Pasha issued another order warning those merchants who had sold provision to the Bedouins of the death penalty.[560]

Troops under Ebubekir Pasha's command fought against the Bedouins several times. Three galleons in Jeddah helped his struggles also. He informed the Porte that in one occasion the Bedouins had attacked the ships from Egypt laden with provisions, as they had been doing regularly. However, this time the galleons sunk the ferries of the Bedouin, who stopped harassing ships in the Red Sea from then on. Ebubekir Pasha proposed an extensive military solution to get rid of the Bedouin problem altogether.[561] It seems that the Porte did not respond positively in the middle of the Iranian problem, though the government supplied Jeddah with more military equipment, like cannons, and soldiers.

The security problem continued to be an issue in the Hejaz. However, Ebubekir Pasha's reports in 1727 suggested the suppression of the Bedouins was progressing well, compared to his reports in 1725 and 1726. He wrote to the grand vizier that the people of the Hejaz were saying that they had not seen so much safety for thirty or forty years.[562] In his letter in November 1727, Ebubekir Pasha asserted that the roads between Hejaz and Raqqa were now completely safe, so that not grain of any person was not stolen.[563] We cannot certify Ebubekir Pasha's reports; however, it was clear that the Porte prioritized the security of the Hejaz at that time and struggled to establish safety for pilgrims and residents of Mecca and Medina.

Ebubekir Pasha's letters also reveal that the Porte's projections regarding the region encountered many local impediments. For example, the Bedouins pillaged the carpets of the

[560] Ebubekir Paşa, "Cidde Mütesellimine Yedi Nefer Kimesnenin İtlafı İçin İrsal Olunan Buyruldu," 7 Rebiulevvel 1138 (November 18th, 1725), p. 17a.
[561] Ebubekir Paşa, "Arnavud Ali ile bahren irsal olunan kaimenin suretidir," Gurre-i Şaban 1138, (April 4th, 1726) pp. 20b, 21a.
[562] Ebubekir Paşa, "Silahdar-ı sabık El-hac İsmail Ağa ile Sahib-i Devlete İrsal Olunan Kaimenin Suretidir," 20 Zilhicce 1139, (August 8th, 1727), pp. 25b, 26a.
[563] Ebubekir Paşa, "Kapı kethüdasına Mekke'den irsal olunan Kaimedir," 18 Rebiulevvel 1140 (November 3rd, 1727), p. 26b.

Prophet's *masjid* on the way between Cairo and Medina. As a result, the renewal of the carpets took much longer than planned.[564] In another case, Damad İbrahim Pasha ordered Ebubekir Pasha to send a letter to the Porte when he left Cairo. However, Ebubekir Paşa wrote that he was not able to send the letter, because it was nearly certain that the Bedouin followers of Çerkes Mehmed Bey were going to capture the letter. Due to that risk, Ebubekir Paşa would send the letter from a place far from Cairo, over Gaza.[565] Even the 120 paid troops sent from Egypt yearly were not reliable. Ebubekir Paşa consulted with some of the soldiers in the fortress of Al Tor, Egypt. He figured out that the mentioned 120 troops were not renewed yearly. In the beginning they had been from Anatolia (*Rûmiyu'l asl*); however, with the passage of time soldiers from Bedouin tribes were recruited and replaced the troops from Anatolia. Thus, he concluded, even considering their fights against the Bedouins, they nevertheless obeyed the Bedouins and helped them in case of need.[566] Above all, an insufficient budget was a fundamental problem causing difficulty in fighting against the Bedouins, completing the infrastructural tasks, and providing provisions in Hejaz. Ebubekir Pasha mentioned this financial difficulty in nearly all his reports to the Porte, with detailed calculations.

Still, Ebubekir Pasha accomplished most of the tasks commissioned to him in two-and-a-half years. The Porte had ensured the unquestioned authority of the House of Osman in the Hejaz. Ahmed III had demonstrated factually and symbolically that he was the rightful universal caliph of all Muslims. The firm Ottoman stance on the Hejaz prevented potential attempts by the Afghans regarding Mecca and Medina, at least for the time being.

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564 Ebubekir Paşa, "Vali-i Mısr Vezir-i Mükerrem saadetlü mekrametlü Mehmed Paşa hazretlerinden gelen mektubun suretidir," 8 Rebiulevvel 1138 (November 14th, 1725), p. 17a.

565 Ebubekir Paşa, "Esnay-ı Tarik-i Hicaz'da T...(?) nam mahalde devletlü sahibuddevlet hazretleri tarafına irsal olunan kaime suretidir," 28 Ramazan 1137 (June 10th, 1725), pp. 9b, 10a.

566 Ebubekir Paşa, "Vali-i Mısr vezir-i mükerrem devletlü saadetlü Mehmed Paşa hazretleri tarafına neviştedir," 7 Ramazan 1137 (May 20th, 1725), 6b; Ebubekir Paşa, "Esnay-ı Tarik-i Hicaz'da T...(?) nam mahalde devletlü sahibuddevlet hazretleri tarafına irsal olunan kaime suretidir," 28 Ramazan 1137 (June 10th, 1725), pp. 9b, 10a.

CHAPTER 4: OTTOMAN POLICIES TOWARD RUSSIA IN THE FIRST PERIOD OF WARS IN IRAN, 1722-25

I divide the period between the siege of Isfahan in 1722 and the spring of 1725 into three in terms of the Russo-Ottoman relations. Close diplomatic contact without guarantee of peace characterized the first stage, which lasted until July 1723, when the official peace negotiations between Ottoman and Russian delegates started. The second phase was the official negotiation process, and it ended with the conclusion of Partition of Iran Treaty between the Porte and Moscow on June 22nd, 1724. The last phase continued until the spring of 1725. During the last phase, both powers struggled to capture their share according to the treaty in a harmonious way. Below, I will discuss historical developments according to this periodization.

I argue that three major factors shaped the course of Russo-Ottoman relations throughout these phases: First, the Russians and the Ottomans wished to enlarge their territories given Persia's weak condition. Second, both powers considered each other's expansion a threat to their own security. Third, the Porte and the Russians refrained from military confrontation with one another as much as possible. These dilemmatic determinants of the relations between the two major powers led to a very complex diplomatic relation and military competition over the three-year period. The changes in the perceived weights of each of these determinants by the Russian and Ottoman governments caused shifts in bilateral relations accordingly.

Establishing a balance between these conflicting interests and concluding the Partition Treaty in June 1724 was a diplomatic success for both governments. From then until the spring of 1725, Russo-Ottoman relations experienced a short honeymoon period. However, as I will discuss in the following chapters, the spring of 1725 was a turning point in their relations. Russo-Ottoman political and military competition escalated in the decade that followed, culminating in the 1736-39 Russo-Ottoman war.

A. Close Diplomatic Contact; No Guarantee of Peace

Russia and the Ottoman Empire both considered the weakening of the central authority in Iran an opportunity for territorial expansion. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, there was a clear difference between the attitudes of the Russian and Ottoman governments toward the weakening of Safavid power before 1722. Peter I had the clear aim of taking the Caucasus and the Caspian shores under Russian authority. He was in preparation to reach this aim from the beginning of the 1710s. During that period, the Porte showed no ambition toward territorial expansion into Safavid lands. Even after the siege of Isfahan, the Ottoman government maintained a reactionary policy in Persia against both the Russians and the Afghans for a considerable time. However, the reactionary stance did not mean that the Porte remained passive either to Russian advances or to the later fall of Isfahan into the hands of the Afghans. In the previous chapter, I discussed the Ottoman reaction to the challenge of the Afghans, through first diplomatic, then military means. The Porte's reaction against Russian military operations followed a similar path.

In line with the pre-existing policies of the Ottomans and the Russians toward Iran, the first external power to attack Iran was the Russians.[567] Until the Porte's declaration of war on the Safavids in the summer of 1723, the Porte directed its military actions in Iran mainly against the Russians, not the Safavids. These actions were the Ottomans' "first" war in the Iranian question, as I argued at the beginning of the previous chapter. However, this war did not entail any military confrontation between the Ottoman and Russian armies. Instead, the Porte

[567] The Russian historian P. G. Butkov, who provided a chronological account of Peter's campaign based on his own witnessing of the events, stated the reasons for Russian military expedition as "the growing interest shown by Turkey in Persian affairs and the news of Mahmud's second invasion of Persia." The quoted part belongs to Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 178. Lockhart gives the reference as Butkov's Materiali, vol. 1, p. 10. P. G. Butkov, *Materialiy delya novoi istoriia Kavkaza c 1722 po 1830 god* (St. Petersburg, 1869). It is not easy to substantiate this claim. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Ottomans preferred to have only a watchful eye on the Persian border. And, in the process starting with the siege of Isfahan, it was always Russia that was the proactive actor invading Persia until the summer of 1723. It is probable that as a member of Russian expedition, Butkov aimed to justify Peter's intrusions into Persia by pointing out other "outsider" intentions. Whatever the case, it seems reasonable that apart from the individual aims of these states, the mutual fear of two neighboring imperial powers of each other's expansions in the regions that were critical to both were also responsible for their invasions.

maintained the war on Safavid soil. In this sense, it was similar to the second war, in which the Ottomans fought against the Safavids between September 1723 and the end of 1725, in terms of form. In both of these wars, the Ottoman government fought the actual war on Safavid soil, but the Porte's primary target was not the Safavids but the Russians, in the first war, and the Afghans, in the second.

Starting in 1721, conditions were favorable for Peter I to actualize his longstanding plans regarding the Caucasus campaign. He was victorious in the long Great Northern War against Sweden in September 1721.[568] The increasing weakness of the Persian shah in the face of rebellion, the biggest of which was by the Afghans, convinced the Russian government that it was time to start a military campaign. Jacques de Campredon, the French resident at Moscow, reported Peter's preparations for an expedition starting in January 1722 at the latest. On March 3rd, 1722, he reported that it was certain that Peter I was going to attack the Caucasus, based on some "reliable" intelligence he had received.[569]

The uncertain Ottoman reaction to a Russian expedition on Caucasus was one of the major concerns of the Russian government. Peter I did not want a military confrontation with the Ottomans;[570] thus, the Russian government decided to let the Ottomans know about the expedition. The Marquis de Bonnac and Jacques de Campredon, French residents at Constantinople and Moscow respectively, were key diplomatic players mediating between the Porte and the Russian government. On April 21st, 1722, Ivan Nepluyev, the permanent Russian resident at Constantinople, informed the Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha about Peter I's Caucasus campaign.[571] This information was only a day before the arrival in Constantinople of

[568] Aleksandar Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South: Army Reform and Battlefield Performance in Russia's Southern Campaigns, 1695-1739" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2017), 169.
[569] *SIRIO*, vol. 49, 1885, 70.
[570] "Whatever his ultimate aims may have been, Peter had not, at this stage of his career at any rate, any desire to renew the struggle with Turkey." See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 218–19.
[571] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 200.

the news of the start of the Afghan siege of Isfahan. The tsar's intention in the Caucasus campaign was only to punish criminals in Shamakhi, a city under the authority of the Shirvani Lazgis on the grounds that, allegedly, people in Shamakhi had pillaged the goods of Russian merchants, and even killed some of them, in 1721.[572] The Russian side expressed that the tsar's expedition aimed only to chastise the Lazgis, nothing more.[573] Apparently, this was not a convincing excuse for anybody, including the Ottoman government. In this meeting, the Marquis de Bonnac warned Nepluyev that "if the Tsar confined his attentions to Persia's Caspian provinces and made no attempt to strike inland in the direction of the Turkish frontier, the Porte would remain indifferent; it might even, he said, annex some Persian territory itself."[574]

The French ambassador's remarks capture the main pillars of the Ottoman policy on the Iranian question with regard to Russia. In the following years, the Porte followed the policy of keeping Russia in the east of the Caucasus Mountains and thus away from the Ottoman borders. This line was also critical for preventing direct Russian contact with the Georgians and the Armenians. An essential feature of this policy was stretching the Ottoman borders toward inland Persia in order to protect the traditional Ottoman borders more effectively. This policy against the Russians was again similar to the Ottoman policy of keeping the Afghans away from their borders.

It was equally important for the Ottoman government to avoid an outbreak of war with Russia, similar to Peter I's concern. The close Russian contact with the Georgians and the

[572] For the details of the Shamakhi incident, see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 127–28. Lockhart shows that the Russian official arguments regarding their loss were a "gross exagerration." Lockhart maintained that the Lazgis did not kill any Russian merchants, but seized half a million roubles from them.

[573] Lockhart, 127–29, 178. The Russian campaign had two clear contrasts with the war's pretext, among other inconsistencies. First, the Russians did not enter Shamakhi, which had been taken under the protection of the Ottomans. Second, the Russian advances did not stop with the western shores of the Caspian, but extended from Astarabad to Darband, thus covering the entire southern and western coastal areas of the Caspian Sea.

[574] Lockhart, 220.

Armenians produced great anxiety for the Porte. A possible alliance between the three could have seriously threatened the eastern Ottoman provinces. Moreover, the future of Iran was unknown, and the attitude of Mir Mahmud was similarly unpredictable: the fight between Shah Sultan Husayn and Mir Mahmud could have forced the Ottoman government to launch a military operation in Persia. The Porte was also afraid of the Austrian threat, which could attack from the west if the Porte was preoccupied by conflict with Russia and possibly with other internal powers in Iran.[575]

Thus started the war between the Ottomans and the Russians, which entailed a fierce military competition without any actual fighting. I agree with A. Stoyanov's usage of the term "Cold War" for this war.[576] The Russians started to implement their expansionist policies into northern Iranian lands, not waiting for the fall of Isfahan. On May 13th, 1722, with a sizable army, Tsar Peter set out from Moscow toward the Caucasus, over Astrakhan via the sea route, and in the end of June had landed at Agrakhan Bay. After meeting with the other part of the Russian army, which had come over land, the combined Russian army started their campaign in the beginning of August. In the same month, Darband, the strategic coastal city, surrendered to the Russian tsar.[577]

As more information reached Constantinople, the Porte wanted to be sure about the tsar's non-violation of Ottoman priorities. The communication between the courts was unusually frequent on that occasion. Mustafa Ağa, an Ottoman envoy, was in Moscow and St. Petersburg between March 13th and June 1722. He even witnessed the marching of the tsar's

[575] For the Ottoman anxiety regarding the Austrian threat at that time, see Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 94–95; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:284; Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 203.

[576] Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 178.

[577] For the itinerary and logistic details of this campaign, see Stoyanov, 165–201. Bedreddinzâde Ali's report included a detailed account of possible routes for the Russian army into the Caucasus, and approximate durations of each route. See Karslı Bedreddinzâde Mîrliva Ali Beğ, "Kaa'ime, H. 1117-1135 (1705-1723)," 133–37.

army on June 7th in Moscow.[578] The Russian government assured Mustafa Ağa that the military expedition was limited to Shamakhi.[579] Simultaneously, Ivan Nepluyev, who got orders from the tsar, struggled in Constantinople to assure the Ottoman government that the tsar was not going to cross the Caucasus Mountain range.[580]

Peter I pursued an equivocal policy in his Caucasus campaign with regard to different actors. To the Ottomans, he promised to stay in the shores of the Caspian, although during the campaign he accelerated his policy of close communication and alliance with the Georgians and the Armenians, a policy that he had pursued since the 1700s.[581] He sent messages to Wakhtang VI, the Georgian king of Kartli, to unite with the Russian army somewhere between Darband and Baku,[582] and shortly thereafter the Porte received the news of Wakhtang's alliance with the tsar.[583] Moreover, the Russian construction of fortresses near the Caucasus assured the Porte that Peter I's aims were serious.[584] Also during this period, consecutive missions from Shirvan frequented Constantinople. From February 1722 at the latest, the demand of the Shirvanis was to enter under Ottoman suzerainty, and thus protection.[585]

The Porte had at least three instruments to check the Russian advancement: first, direct military intervention with the provincial army of the Crimean khanate;[586] second, a new military

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[578] *SIRIO*, 1885, 49:74, 117.
[579] Igor Vladimirovich Kurukin, *Persidskiy Pohod Petra Velikogo. Nizovoy Korpus Na Beregah Kaspiya (1722-1735)* (Kvadriga, 2019), 57.
[580] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 217; Kurukin, *Persidskiy Pohod Petra Velikogo. Nizovoy Korpus Na Beregah Kaspiya (1722-1735)*, 57; Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 202–3.
[581] George A. Bournoution, "Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times: Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 87–88; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 178.
[582] Kurukin, *Persidskiy Pohod Petra Velikogo. Nizovoy Korpus Na Beregah Kaspiya (1722-1735)*, 62.
[583] BOA, AE.SAMD.III 226-21756; BOA, AE.SAMD.III 221-21301. The main sources of intelligence for the Porte were the khan of Crimea, the pasha of Azov, and the Lazgis of Shirvan.
[584] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 202.
[585] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 216; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1310–12.
[586] The Crimean Khan himself suggested that the Porte lay siege to Astrakhan so that the Ottomans could block the Russian tsar's way. However, the Porte did not accept this suggestion. See Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:200.

campaign from Erzurum against Georgia and Armenia, if not against the tsar's army as well; and third, the recognition of Shirvan as an Ottoman province.

The government employed the third option first, and initiated the second one following the first option. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Porte sent orders to the governors of Erzurum, Van, and Baghdad in July 1722 directing them not to enter into Persia, even if Isfahan fell.[587] However, the Shirvan card was easier to play and effective against further advances by Peter I. The Ottoman government officially recognized Shirvan as a dependent khanate in a royal letter dated the end of 1722 and beginning of 1723.[588] Ahmed III proclaimed Hacı Davud Bey, the leader of Lazgis, khan of Shirvan under Ottoman suzerainty, and sent him a robe of honor.[589] However, the government acted in the field as if the sultan had accepted the Shirvani call for recognition earlier than the official acceptance. The evidence below suggests that Ottoman protection of Shirvan started in the beginning of September 1722.

In a relatively surprising move, Peter I did not remain long in the Caucasus and on September 6th started his march back to Moscow, which he reached in mid-December. His swift return upset the Georgians and the Armenians, who had long been in communication with Russia and were hoping to conquer all of the Caucasus with Russian help.[590] There are discussions of the reasons for Peter's sudden retreat in the secondary literature, particularly as to whether it occurred mainly due to logistic and climatic reasons or to Ottoman diplomatic intervention.

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[587] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1188, 1189, 1190, Evahir-i Ramazan 1134 (July 5th-14th, 1722). Gilanentz also confirmed that Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, received an imperial order to not proceed in the latter half of August 1722. He added that the Porte stated two reasons for this order. First, the Russians had entered Persia; second, Shah Sultan Husayn had agreed with Mir Mahmud. The mentioned imperial order does not refer to these reasons. It was probable that Gilanentz received incorrect intelligence about the reasons. See Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, 43.

[588] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d, 7-36, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1135 (December 29th, 1722 – January 8th, 1723), pp. 65-66.

[589] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 176–77, 188–89.

[590] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 188–89.

The logistical difficulties and losses in the army due to climate challenges are given in the scholarship as the main reason, and sometimes only reason, for Peter's swift retreat.[591] However, that explanation does not seem satisfactory, since the Russian army continued its military operations in the western and southern Caspian regions. Moreover, over the course of a few months, Peter had sent 17,000 Cossack and Kalmyk soldiers to the Caucasus.[592] So, there must be a more substantial reason for his seemingly abrupt return.

Russo-Ottoman negotiations provide a more grounded explanation for Peter's retreat. According to this line of reasoning, as agreed with the Ottomans, the Russian tsar did not enter into the inland Caucasus, remaining instead in the coastal area. The eyewitness account of Peter Bruce, an English military officer who participated in Peter's campaign, provides significant insight about the reasons for the return. He wrote that when the army was preparing to continue its march to seize the cities of Rasht, Shamakhi, and Baku, an Ottoman envoy from Shamakhi came to Darband bringing the sultan's message to Peter. The sultan's message informed Peter of the annexation of Shirvan into Ottoman territory and warned him that further Russian marches would cause a confrontation between the Ottoman and Russian armies. Bruce maintained that over the next two days (September 6th and 7th), the envoy accompanied the returning army until they entered Dagestan.[593]

The only known primary source detailing the Ottoman sending of an envoy was for a long time this eyewitness account by Peter Bruce. Confirming his account, I discovered two Ottoman documents mentioning the sending of a special agent to Peter I to urge him not to cause any harm to the Lazgis and to return with his army from wherever they were at that moment. These documents stated that any Russian attack on Lazgis would cause the breaking

[591]Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 172; Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 96; Michael Axworthy, "Basile Vatatzes And His History Of Nadir Shah," *Oriente Moderno* 25, no. 86 (2006): 334; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 121.
[592]Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 198.
[593] Peter Henry Bruce, *Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce,* (London: Author's Widow, 1782), 288–90.

of the perpetual peace between the Ottomans and the Russians. The messages mentioned in these Ottoman documents and in Bruce's account are nearly identical, and indicate that Ottoman diplomatic intervention was most probably the main reason for Peter's sudden halting of the expedition and return to Russia.[594]

Peter's other actions at a time when he came closer to the Caucasus also supports the view that one of his main concerns was not to create a conflict with the Ottomans. In his manifesto sent to Persia and the Caucasus, he proclaimed that his aim was only to punish the Lazgis and to aid the Safavids against the Afghans. He assured the recipients of his manifesto that Ottoman subjects and their interests would be protected.[595] Moreover, while still in Astrakhan, Peter sent Prince Boris Turkistanov to the governor of Georgia, Wakhtang VI, and warned him about not causing hostilities with the Ottomans.[596] G. Bournoution also mentioned

[594] The first document is a letter from Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, Erzurum governor and commander-in-chief of the army charged with capturing Tbilisi. It is dated 20 Cemaziyeevvel 1135 (February 26th, 1723) and registered as BOA, AE.SAMD.III, 44-4401. It reads: "Moskov Çarı bundan esbak 'Şemahı'da olan tüccarını Lezgi taifesi bilcümle katl ve helak ve yedlerinde bulunan emval-i bi-hesabı garet ve hasaret eylediler' avazesiyle geçen sene makarrından hareket ve Timur kapu'ya [Darband] azimet eyledikten sonra, taife-i mezburun mahzarları ve Hacı Davud Han'ın kağıtları geldikde, çar-ı mesfurun Asitane-i saadette mukim kapı kethüdası getirtilip, taife-i mezbure ehl-i İslam'dan olmalarıyla hala mahzarları gelip, Devlet-i aliyyeme iltica ve iltimasları karin-i kabul olmağın, bu hususu Çar dostumuza tahrir ve taife-i merkume ile beynleri telif olunmak üzere, her ne mahalde bulunur ise, dostluğa binaen geri ricat eylemeleri için *mahsus bir adam ile* serian ve acilen irsal eyle deyu *tenbih olundukdan sonra*, bazı husus ile dergah-ı ali kapucubaşlarından Nişli Mehmed Ağa *dahi* sefaret ile ba's ve irsal olunmağın, ona *dahi* bu husus gereği gibi tavsiye olunmuş idi." [Emphases added to higlight that Nişli Mehmed Ağa was not the person the Porte sent to Peter I when Peter I was in the Caucasus].

The second document is an imperial order sent again to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. The main message was that he was to capture Baku and other strategic coastal locations before the Russian army. To eradicate İbrahim Pasha's hesitations regarding possible trouble with the governor of Shirvan, Hacı Davud Han, caused by Russians, it was written how a previous Ottoman declaration to Peter had been effective in cancelling his campaign against the Lazgis. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-572 Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1135 (August 13th-22nd, 1723) "Mukaddema Lezgi taifesi taraf-ı Devlet-i aliyyeme iltica eylediğin, Çar-ı müşarun ileyhe inbâ ve taife-i merkumeye sui-kasd mabeynde olan müsaleme-i müebbedeye mugayir olduğu iş'ar ve inha olundukda, gerek Han-ı müşarun ileyhe [Hacı Davud Han] ve gerek sair Lezgi taifesi üzerlerine azimetden fesh-i niyyet etmekle, ol gaile ber taraf olduğu sana ilam olunmuştur."

[595] Gerhard Friedrich Müller, *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte Des Herrn Collegienraths Müllers in Moscow*, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, 1762), 219–20.

[596] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 179.

Peter's fear of inciting Ottoman animosity as the main reason for the limitation of his campaign on the Caspian coast.[597]

In any case, it is clear that the Porte's protectionist policy towards the Shirvanis and later official annexation of Shirvan were significant in curbing the Russian military advancement in the Caucasus. This policy was basically to block the way of Russians in case they intended to cross over the Caucasus Mountains toward the south and west, which would have threatened the Ottoman frontiers. The Ottoman reaction to Peter's move was an effective combination of soft and hard power.

Çelebizâde's account also supports the existence of an Ottoman protectionist policy toward the Shirvanis even before the formal recognition of Shirvan as an Ottoman khanate.[598] Çelebizâde wrote that a consultative assembly meeting was held upon the Shirvanis' request for recognition,[599] which ultimately decided to accept the request. The assembly also discussed that Ottoman annexation of Shirvan might have caused a war either with the Russian tsar or the Safavid shah. However, Çelebizâde maintained that the assembly recommended taking the risk of inciting war, since the glory of the state depended on its help to the weak among the Sunnis.[600] Çelebizâde added that, due to certain considerations, Damad İbrahim Pasha postponed the official appointment of Hacı Davud for a number of months.[601]

The Ottoman chronicler did not specify these considerations. Most probably, one of them was that Shah Sultan Husayn was still sitting on the throne. The major difference between

[597] Bournoution, "Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation," 88.
[598] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1310–12.
[599] He did not specify the date of the assembly meeting, but later wrote that it was a couple of months before the official annexation of Shirvan. Moreover, Çelebizâde noted that the Porte sent Nişli Mehmed Ağa following the assembly meeting. Thus, most probably the meeting was held in early October 1722.
[600] "Şâyân-ı şân-ı devlet dâimâ zuâfâ-yı ehl-i sünnete emânetdir." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1311.
[601] "ba'z-ı mülâhazalar ile eyâlet-i Şirvan'ın iltimâsları üzre Hacı Dâvud Bey'e tevcîhi birkaç ay avk u te'hîr kılınmışidi." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1311.

January 1723, the time of the official annexation of Shirvan by the Ottomans, and the fall of 1722 was the clarification of the fall of Isfahan and the deposition of Shah Sultan Husayn. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Ottoman government did not want to break the peace with the Safavids at that stage. However, after the fall of the Safavids, the Porte easily annexed Shirvan without breaking the already-annulled peace with the Shah, as they reasoned in a meeting on May 15th, 1722.

The assembly's decision to risk war with the Russians or the Safavids was a critical one. Apparently, on that occasion the Safavid shah did not pose a challenge to the Ottomans, but the Russian tsar did. Even though the assembly proposed a possible breaking of the peace with Shah Sultan Husayn to protect Sunnis, the Porte did not dare to actually break the peace any time before the fall of Isfahan. I will also show in the below example that the Porte cared to protect the peace with the Safavids even in October 1722. Thus, only Russia remained as the addressee of the assembly's decision, according to which the Porte would consider the Russian invasion of Shirvan their *casus belli*. This consideration was the exact position Damad İbrahim Pasha delineated in the spring of 1722.

Following the assembly meeting, the Porte decided to send Nişli Mehmed Ağa to Moscow to formally learn Peter I's plans regarding Iran and to let the Russians know the Ottoman position clearly. Nişli Mehmed Ağa set out from Constantinople on October 14th, 1722. [602] He arrived in Moscow on February 4th, 1723.[603] The Porte aimed for clearer answers about the possibility of a Russo-Ottoman agreement over the peaceful actualization of the Ottoman plans in Iran. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Porte had two main concerns

[602] Aydın Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)" (Master's thesis, Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, 2005), 68.
[603] Mertayak, 85.

to address before starting their military operations in Persia: the Afghans and Safavids as internal powers, and the attitude of Russia.

Simultaneously with the departure of Nişli, the government assigned Silahdar İbrahim Pasha as the commander-in-chief and ordered him to march on Tbilisi to capture the city as soon as possible.[604] Clearly, the Porte was not satisfied with the "soft" protection of Shirvan and had decided to engage in the Caucasus question militarily. The main reason for the operation was to check the Russian advance and protect Ottoman lands from possible attacks by Wakhtang VI, who had allied with Peter I. At that time, Shah Sultan Husayn was still the ruler of Persia, according to the information available at the Porte.

The imperial order counted three justifications for the Ottoman march on Tbilisi not being in violation of peace and friendship with the Persian shah. First, Wakhtang had rebelled against Shah Sultan Husayn and broken his yoke. Çelebizâde further explained that the reason for the expedition against Wakhtang was his allegiance to the Russian tsar.[605] Second, Wakhtang's military operations threatened the Ottoman border seriously. Third, the Ottoman sultan was to protect the Lazgis in Shirvan from Wakhtang's future attacks. The order qualified protecting the Lazgis as a religious requirement for the Ottoman sultan, due to religious unity, the Lazgis' devout Sunnism, and their request for asylum and help. The imperial order also used the famous statement of "community of Muhammad" (*ümmet-i Muhammed*) in referring to the Lazgis, who were part of that community.[606] It was important that Çelebizâde highlighted

[604] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1325, Evail-i Muharrem 1135 (October 12th-21st, 1722).

[605] "Moskov Çarı'na ittibâ' ile izhâr-ı tanassur [to become Christian] etmesi Âstâne-i pâdişâh-ı âlem-penâhdan Tiflîs'in feth ü tahlîsine sipâh-ı zafer-destgâh ta'yîn ü irsâlini iktizâ etmeğin..." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1323–24. See also Karslı Bedreddinzâde Mîrliva Ali Beğ, "Kaa'ime, H. 1117-1135 (1705-1723)," 111–12.

[606] "Lezgi ehl-i İslam'dan Sünni ve müttaki bir vâcibu's-sıyâne tâife olup, ittihâd-ı din ve irtibât-ı yakîn muktezasınca, taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyyeme ilticâ ve istiânet ve istiğâseden hâlî olmamalarıyla, üzerlerinden mesfûrun [referring to Wakhtang VI] şer ve mazarratı def ve serhâdd-i mansûremin dahi fitne ve ihtilâl sirâyetinden hıfz ve sıyâneti için…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1325, Evail-i Muharrem 1135 (October 12th-21st, 1722).

Wakhtang's turn to Christianity at that occasion, a point that added further legitimacy to the "holy" duty of the Ottomans to protect Muslims from "infidels."

It should be noted here that, strangely, the imperial order did not mention the Russian threat to the Lazgis. However, from the beginning, all the matter was the Russian campaign on the Caucasus. Thus, the silence of the Porte should have been a deliberate decision. In fact, all the attacks on the Lazgis purported in the imperial order to have been perpetuated by Wakhtang were expected primarily from the Russians. Çelebizâde also underlined that Wakhtang was dangerous mainly due to his allegiance to the Russian tsar. A reasonable explanation for the silence in the order was probably that the Porte did not want to cause an outbreak of war with the Russians as a result of Silahdar İbrahim Pasha's campaign. So, instead of naming the Russian tsar, the Porte put all the blame on Wakhtang at the level of discourse. That discourse enabled the Porte to struggle against the Russians militarily without engaging in an actual fight. Indeed, referring to an Austrian report dated October 26th, 1722, Hurmuzaki wrote that Damad İbrahim Pasha had informed Nepluyev that the Ottoman operation on Tbilisi was a friendly reminder to the tsar not to take any action that would break the peace with the Ottoman sultan.[607]

Ten days after the imperial order, the Porte sent another order to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha warning him to be attentive to two matters. First, his army should not pillage the goods of Tbilisi's residents, who were still the subjects of the shah. Second, the army should not act in a way violating the peace between the Ottomans and the tsar.[608] Obviously, the Porte struggled to exert its hard power delicately so as not to cause bigger conflicts with the shah and the tsar.

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[607] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:284.

[608] "Sen ki, vezir-i müşarun ileyhsin, memur olduğun üzere Tiflis canibine azimetinde Şâh-ı müşârun ileyhin taht-ı hükümetinde vâki şehr ve kurada mütemekkin olan ahali ve reayasına maiyyetinde olan tavaif-i askerden yağma ve gâret misüllü hâlet zuhûr etmeyip ve kezâlik Çar-ı müşârun ileyh tarafına dahi mugâyir-i sulh u salâh bir dürlü teaddî ve tecâvüz olunmamak üzere zabt ve rabtlarında ve mâbeynde olan dostluk merâsiminin riâyetinde ziyâde tekayyüd ve ihtimâm eyleyip, hilâfına rızâ ve savlet göstermemen bâbında fermân-ı âl-i şânım sâdır olmuşdur." See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1365, Evasıt-ı Muharrem 1135 (October 22nd-31st, 1722).

Despite the imperial order of October 1722, the Ottoman provincial army were not able to cross the border until the end of spring 1723. The start of winter prevented the advance of Ottoman troops. The Porte allowed the army to winter somewhere close to border, without returning to Erzurum.[609] There had been frequent communication between the government and Silahdar İbrahim Pasha until the end of May 1725 regarding the Tbilisi expedition.[610] Several imperial orders and correspondence between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Silahdar İbrahim Pasha documented that there were three possibilities Wakhtang might follow in the near future. First, he was in touch with the Russians, and most probably he would surrender the city to the tsar. Second, he could join Tahmasb. Third, he had promised Silahdar İbrahim Pasha that he would accept Ottoman suzerainty under certain conditions. The Porte considered the last option a trick rather than a real possibility. The grand vizier's letters in March ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to move to Tbilisi as soon as he could. He underlined that "others" also eagerly wanted to capture Tbilisi; thus, the Porte should take it as early as possible, before the others.[611] Indeed,

[609] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 130-1396, Evasıt-ı Safer 1135 (November 21st-30th,1722).

[610] I gathered the information in this paragraph and the next from the following sources: BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-123, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 7th-16th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-277, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 27th – March 8th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-278, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 27th – March 8th, 1723); BOA, AE.SAMD.III 123-12090, 3 Cemaziyelahir 1135 (March 11th, 1723); BOA, A.DVN 963-76, 16 Cemaziyelahir 1135 (March 24th, 1723); BOA, AE.SAMD.III 183-17743, 4 Şaban 1135 (May 10th, 1723); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-412, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1135 (May 17th-26th, 1723); Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1322–24.

In his discussion about the Ottoman expedition to Tbilisi, Mehmet Akbulut makes two documentary mistakes. First, he incorrectly gives the date of the document BOA, AE.SAMD.III 183-17743 as November 14th, 1722 by reading the month, "Şaban," as "Safer." The correct date is 4 Şaban 1135 (May 10th, 1723). Akbulut argues that on November 14th, Damad İbrahim Pasha ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to move to Tbilisi. See Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 46. Actually, that was not the case. In November, the Porte allowed Silahdar İbrahim Paşa to wait until the beginning of the spring of 1723.

Second, Akbulut cites a letter allegedly sent from Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to Damad İbrahim Pasha on March 11th, 1723. He does not give a reference for this information. There is a correspondence between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Silahdar İbrahim Pasha on March 11th, 1723, and the letter was registered in BOA, AE.SAMD.III 123-12090. However, the way of correspondence was just the opposite. The sender was Damad İbrahim Pasha, and the addressee was Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. On the basis of these two mistakes, he argued that Silahdar İbrahim Pasha presented certain excuses for "his failure to move towards Tbilisi." See Akbulut, 46–47. The Porte did not order Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to move towards Tbilisi in November 1722. And, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha did not write these excuses on March 11th, 1723 to Damad İbrahim Pasha.

[611] "Benim devletlü karındaşım hazretleri, Tiflis memleketinin zabtına aharların dahi talep ve hahişleri derece-i kemalde iken, bir gün evvel Devlet-i Aliyye zabtında bulunması nice hüsniyatı müstelzim, ve nev'an rehavete

Tahmasb's moves in Tbilisi were highly effective. After figuring out Wakhtang's contact with Peter I, Tahmasb dismissed the former and appointed his rival Muhammad Quli Khan (Constantine III) as the khan of Tbilisi. Muhammad Quli Khan was able to take the city under complete control on May 8th, 1723.[612]

The grand vizier ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to send a certain İsmail Ağa to Tbilisi with an offer of peaceful surrender. He added that in case news of such a surrender did not come within a few days of the offer, then the military operation to capture the city forcefully should start.[613] Both the operations of Tahmasb in Tbilisi and the cooperation between Wakhtang and Peter I led the Ottoman government to urge Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to conquer Tbilisi, beginning in October 1722. The Porte considered Tbilisi the first "lock" in Persia to be opened. Damad İbrahim Pasha ordered Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to prioritize Tbilisi over any other cities, like Erevan or Ganja, since all other matters were dependent on the conquest of Tbilisi.[614]

Eventually, the Ottoman troops under the command of İbrahim Pasha took control of Tbilisi on June 12th, 1723.[615] Muhammad Quli Khan surrendered the city without a fight. In the meantime, Wakhtang met with Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. After certain disagreements with the Ottoman pasha, Wakhtang escaped Tbilisi and accepted the tsar's call to take the former under

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cevaz ile vakt-i fırsat fevt olmak lazım gelir ise, mahzurat-ı kesire zuhuru melhuz idiği taraf-ı şerifinize mahfi ve aşikare tahrir ve işar kılınmış idi." See BOA, A.DVN 963-76, 16 Cemaziyelahir 1135 (March 24th, 1723).

612 Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 253–55; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1323–24.

613 BOA, AE.SAMD.III 123-12090, 3 Cemaziyelahir 1135 (March 11th, 1723); BOA, A.DVN 963-76, 16 Cemaziyelahir 1135 (March 24th, 1723). For the Ottoman *emân-nâme* to the rulers and people of Tbilisi, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-277, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 27th – March 8th, 1723).

614 BOA, AE.SAMD.III 183-17743, 4 Şaban 1135 (May 10th, 1723). "El haletü'l hazihi, memur olduğunuz vechle şiddet-i şita bertaraf olduğu gibi, maiyyetinize memur asker-i nusret-müesser ile mütevekkilen alellah hareket ve bir gün evvel Tiflis üzerine azimet ve tav'an ve kerhen zabt ve teshirine bezl-i cell-i himmet buyurasız. Şimdiki halde, bunun husulünden akdem bir emr mültezim olmayıp, umur-ı saire bi'l cümle bu emr-i hatîrin ber-vefk-i me'mûl netice-pezir olmasına mevkûfdur."

615 Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:120. An imperial order dated July 5th-14th, 1723 mentioned the conquest of Tbilisi. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-499, Evail-i Şevval 1135 (July 5th-14th, 1723). Çelebizâde wrote that the keys of the city had arrived in Constantinople on 6 Şevval 1135 (July 10th, 1723). See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1324.

his protection. Wakhtang arrived in Russia in August 1724.[616] With this conquest, the Ottoman government was directly involved in the Iranian question with its own military power for the first time after the fall of Isfahan. Over the next twenty-three years, Ottoman military fights continued with periodic breaks until 1746.

On the other hand, even though Peter returned to Russia, a significant number of Russian troops remained in the conquered lands both to establish control in these regions and also to engage in further territorial expansion on the western and southern shores of the Caspian.[617] After Peter's retreat, the strengthened Russian armies continued their operations on the Caspian coast and entered the Gilan province in November 1722, capturing its capital, Rasht, at the end of March 1723.[618] In addition, signifying the intention of staying permanently in their newly-conquered lands, the Russians built several new fortresses and deployed a large number of troops to them.[619]

A.1. Religio-Political Discourse against Russia

Ottoman religio-political discourse against the Russians requires special attention to understand the comprehensive policy the Porte employed in the Iranian question. In the previous chapter, I discussed the Porte's pro-Sunni discourse and the idea of the universal caliphate as the main underpinnings of the Ottoman strategies against Iran's internal actors –the Safavids and the Afghans– in the period between the siege of Isfahan and the end of 1725. The Ottoman government put forward the same two arguments against Russia. However, as a significant difference, the Ottoman religio-political discourse used against the Russians also included an

[616] For the developments in Georgia after the Ottoman capture of the city, see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 255, 257.
[617] The Porte got the news of the military reinforcements of Russia from Hacı Davud Han and Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. See BOA, AE.SAMD.III, 44-4401, 20 Cemaziyelevvel 1135 (February 26th, 1723); Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 198–99.
[618] Gilanentz, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz*, 1; Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:201.
[619]Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 198–99.

alliance of the Sunni powers, under the leadership of the "universal caliph," against Christian Russia.

The sultan's universal caliphate and his alleged duty of protecting the Sunnis were two essential constituents of Ottoman soft power, which could, if necessary, be converted into hard power with some preparation. As I examined in Chapters One and Two, the Porte had asked for Dagestani help in the Ottoman "*jihad*" against the Europeans and the Russians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and could play that card again at any time. The most recent example of this conversion was the annexation of Shirvan into the Ottoman domains with a one-page letter sent by Ahmed III to Hacı Davud. The Porte fluctuated in maintaining the discourse of the Ottoman sultan's Sunni leadership against Russia in the 1720s and 1730s.

There were three main local Sunni powers in the broader Caspian region with which the Porte could form alliances against the Russians: the Shirvanis, the Dagestani khans, and the Sunni khanates in Central Asia. The Porte stood against Russia in complete alliance with the Sunnis of the Caucasus. It also had communications with Central Asian Sunni polities to challenge Russia, though to a more limited extent. There was another surprising Sunni power that the Ottoman government saw as a natural ally against Peter I: the Afghans in Isfahan. The Porte played the Sunni unity card to intimidate Moscow effectively until January 1724. The Ottoman government officially promised that it was not going to back the Afghans in June 1724 with the Partition Treaty. As I will show in Chapter Five, the Porte nevertheless returned to Sunni unity discourse between the fall of 1725 and winter of 1726. Following that short period, the Ottoman government again dropped Sunni unity discourse in the Iranian question.

This discourse did not aim to justify an already-decided war on the Russians, but rather to force Peter I not to interfere with the Ottomans, not to encroach on Ottoman borders, and to accept the Ottoman terms surrounding the Iranian question. It would not have been so difficult, however, to convert this discourse into actuality, in case the Russian government did not comply

with the Ottoman conditions. That easy convertibility was what made the discourse an effective deterrent in foreign policy.

The Porte had a more or less regular relationship with the Central Asian khanates, especially due to the Ottoman sultan's *hâdimu'l Haremeyn* title. These khans sent envoys and letters to the sultan primarily to get permission for the *hajj* for notable people in their service, although political relations were also discussed in these correspondences from time to time. The long correspondence between the Porte and the Uzbek *padishah* Nazr Muhammad and Bukharan khan around the middle of the seventeenth century, which I discussed in Chapter One, was an outstanding example of that relationship. In Chapter Two, I mentioned the 1713 demand of Kazakh Gaib Muhammad Khan, who was seated in Tashkent, to enter under Ottoman suzerainty with the same status as the Crimean khanate. Muhammad Khan's request was related to the increasing Russian threat in Central Asia. Despite these ties, Central Asia remained outside the reach of the Porte; thus, it was hard to form a military alliance with local powers in Central Asia against Russia. However, the Porte did not discard that alternative completely.

Nepluyev wrote to Moscow in November 1722 that the Porte was in a relationship with the khanate of Khiva to build a defensive and offensive alliance against Russia.[620] I did not encounter any information confirming the existence of that alliance in the Ottoman sources I consulted. However, in January 1724 the grand vizier himself threatened the Russians through the Marquis de Bonnac with building an alliance with the Central Asian Sunni khanates against Russia.[621] The Khiva khanate was of importance since it had defeated a Russian expedition under the leadership of Prince Bekovich in 1717.[622] The Porte's contact with Central Asian

[620] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 204.
[621] I will mention the grand vizierial letter to the Marquis de Bonnac under the title "The Second Phase of the Official Negotiations" below.
[622] See Chapter Two.

Muslims was thus a concern of Peter I. He ordered Prince Volynski, the governor of Astrakhan, not to allow any Ottoman or Crimean envoys to reach them.[623] Peter's order showed that the Russians were well aware of the effectiveness of Ottoman soft power as a concrete impediment to Russian plans.

The aforementioned consultative assembly meeting and the subsequent imperial order to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha in October 1722 employed a heavy pro-Sunni discourse against the "Christian" Russians and Georgians. The religious discourse surrounding the unity of Muslims was striking there. The Porte clearly situated itself in the position of protector of all Sunni Muslims, recalling the concept of *ümmet-i Muhammed*.

Ottoman primary sources and foreign representatives' reports unanimously suggest that the religious feelings of the public in Constantinople were highly aroused during the time of Peter I's Caucasus expedition.[624] It is not possible to measure the people's reactions, but it seems that popular opinion was an important factor in the government's position. People worried about Russian oppression of the Sunnis in the Caucasus and urged the Porte to take serious action, including war, to prevent Russian harm.

I should highlight here that even though the Ottoman government was reluctant to break the peace with Russia, the public opinion in favor of war was not against the position of the Porte per se. It was a priority of the Ottoman government to prevent Russian expansion into the Caucasus. The Porte decided to treat the Russian entrance into Shirvan as *casus belli*. Thus, public outrage was to the advantage of the Ottoman government, which could use the aroused religious sentiments as a trump card in their negotiations with Russia. However, to submit to

[623] Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 175.
[624] Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)," 64; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:280; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 96–97; Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 204.

the will of the public completely would have been risky for the Porte, since the government was adamant about keeping peace with Russia as much as possible.

In November 1722, Nepluyev reported to Moscow that there was a rumor in Constantinople regarding the victory of the Lazgis over the Russian army and that even Peter I had barely escaped to Astrakhan by the Caspian Sea. He added that most probably the Porte had disseminated this information to calm people.[625] Giovanni Emo, the Venetian *bailo*, gave further information on that rumor and the adjacent propaganda. According to his report, on November 24th, two pashas came from Erzurum and brought the news that the Russian army had been defeated, suffering 50,000 losses. This news created great joy and euphoria among the public, so that they hugged each other in the streets of Constantinople, "as if they had escaped from a shipwreck."[626] Emo continued that in reality the grand vizier had received reports from other couriers that the news was not completely true, but had kept the correct information secret and "maintained its account of the victory."[627] Nepluyev and Emo reasonably interpreted the Porte's false propaganda as aiming to appease the outraged people. Presumably, the propaganda also helped the Ottoman government to prepare the public for a peaceful relationship with Russia. It was true that Peter I's Caucasus campaign turned into a catastrophe for the Russian army and the tsar had returned to Russia. It seemed that the Porte exaggerated the calamity by adding Peter I's reported defeat onto it. Even though the Russian expedition proved to be a catastrophe, they had still managed to achieve most of their military goals in the western Caspian.

The Porte's strong emphasis on Sunnism also showed itself in the declaration of Shirvan as an Ottoman khanate in its clearest sense. Ahmed III wrote that Shirvan had been under

[625] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 204.
[626] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 96.
[627] Shay, 97.

Ottoman authority beforehand.[628] The "heretic" Kizilbash had taken it due to its geographical proximity to the Safavids. He continued that, for a long time, the Ottomans had been performing *gaza* and *jihad* against the Christians in the West, and had not been able to devote their attention to the East.[629] Ahmed III congratulated Hacı Davud for his liberation of the Shirvanis, "a Sunni community," from the yoke of the "heretic" Kizilbash. He stated that Damad İbrahim Pasha had informed him about Hacı Davud's request to become an Ottoman khan. The titles he used for the grand vizier, "complement of the honor of the exalted sultanate" (*mükemmil-i nâmûsu's-saltanati'l uzmâ*) and "arranger of the ranks of the great caliphate" (*mürettib-i merâtibi'l hilâfeti'l kübrâ*), highlighted the universal caliphate of the Ottoman sultan. Ahmed III then stated that his "noble caliph person" (*cenâb-ı hilâfet-meâb*) would accept Hacı Davud's demand and appoint him as the khan of the Shirvan province (*Şirvan eyaleti hanlığı*). The sultan clarified that Shirvan was going to enjoy the same status as the Crimean khanate.[630]

The Porte's pro-Sunni religio-political discourse was not limited to the annexation of Shirvan. When Nişli Mehmed Ağa was in Moscow negotiating with the Russian representatives, the Porte increased the intensity of the Sunni unity discourse it was using against Moscow. Apparently, the Ottoman government was pressuring the Russians using all their available foreign policy tools in order to persuade the Russian side to come to terms with the Porte. Even at a time when the Porte had not yet received Mahmud's and Tahmasb's letters, on January 29th, 1723 the imperial council decided to "support" Mir Mahmud due to the "religious brotherhood" between the Ottomans and the Afghans.[631] In the previous chapter, I

[628] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d, 7-36, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1135 (December 19th, 1722 - January 8th, 1723), pp. 65-66.
[629] "Millet-i Nasârâ ile husûmet-i dîniyye müstedâ'sı üzere gazâ ve cihâd ile iştigâlden hâlî olmadığından nâşi"
[630] Çelebizâde also wrote that the decision of the consultative assembly meeting, the one I mentioned above about Shirvan, was to accept Shirvan with the same status as the Crimea. "..taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'den sülâle-i Cengiziyye'ye ihsân olınan Kırım Hânlığı gibi eyâlet-i Şirvan hânlık unvânıyla Hacı Davud Bey'e tevcîh ü ihsân…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1311.
[631] Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 163.Ensar Köse refers to a report sent by Nepluyev to Moscow dated February 8th, 1723. The source he cites: AVPR, f. Snoşeniya Rossii s Turtsiyey, 1723, d. 5, ç. 1, l. 73-74.

extensively discussed the lack of Ottoman support for Mahmud. Religious brotherhood caused political competition and fighting instead of leading to political alliance. However, the Porte did not refrain from using its arch-rival Afghans as a component of the Sunni unity argument it brought to bear on the Russians.

Next month, the grand vizier told Nepluyev that if Peter I was to continue military operations in Iran, the Russian tsar was going to find a united Sunni alliance; Mir Mahmud and the Ottoman sultan, as the defender of Muslim peoples, were going to fight against the Russians. The grand vizier's concluding remarks emphasized that the Porte was not going to allow such a break in the balance of power. He expressed that the Porte also wished, for example, to conquer Italy; however, other sovereigns would not have allowed the Ottomans to do so. He concluded that, similarly, the Porte looked after Persia.[632] His words clearly highlighted that the Porte considered Persia to be within the Ottoman zone of influence and did not want any other similarly strong major power in the region.

Around this time, the grand vizier reiterated similar points in a letter to Nepluyev. French resident Marquis de Bonnac recorded the French translation of the letter.[633] In it, Damad İbrahim stressed the Sunni unity that existed between Hacı Davud, Mir Mahmud, and the Ottoman sultan, and demanded the renunciation of further Russian operations in Persia. He underlined that if Russia was not going to stop, then the Porte would consider this action to be a violation of the perpetual peace between the Porte and Moscow. Quite interestingly, the grand vizier added that Mir Mahmud had declared his dependence on Ahmed III and even had prayers read in the name of the Ottoman sultan.[634] There was, of course, nothing like an Afghan

[632] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 205–6.
[633] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 200–201.
[634] What Damad İbrahim Pasha meant was most probably the pronounciation of the Ottoman sultan's name in the Friday *khutba*s in Isfahan, as a demonstration of Mahmud's recognition of Ahmed III as the legitimate sovereign over himself.

The Russian sources affirm that Nepluyev related the Porte's message that the Afghans were currently subjects of the Ottomans. See Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 206.

recognition of the Ottoman sultan as superior. The grand vizier went on that, thus, Persia was now completely in the hands of Muslims, and there was nothing for Russia to do in Persia. What Damad İbrahim Pasha was doing was using the Sunni faith shared by the Ottomans and the Afghans as a diplomatic threat against the Russians, even though Mahmud had not, in reality, submitted to Ahmed III. Without noticing Damad İbrahim's deception, Lockhart noted that "This was a misconception on the Grand Vizier's part; he had not at that time received 'Osman Āqā's report on his treatment by Mahmud."[635] The Russian sources added that a few days after the conversation between the Grand Vizier and Nepluyev, the Marquis de Bonnac warned Nepluyev that he should have led the Russian government know that continuing the war in Persia meant the end of Russo-Ottoman peace, and that staying away from Persia meant the continuation of peace.[636]

After these remarks, Damad İbrahim Pasha sent an *ağa* to Moscow to inform Nişli Mehmed Ağa about the last Ottoman position. The *ağa* departed from Constantinople on February 25th, 1723. The grand vizier threatened Nepluyev that unless friendly messages came from Moscow within two months, the Porte was going to understand this silence as a breaking of the peace between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.[637] Campredon, the French resident at Moscow, reported that upon the arrival of the *ağa*, together with letters from Marquis de Bonnac, he held a meeting with Peter I and the representatives of the Russian government.[638] The Ottoman claim of Mir Mahmud's subjugation to the Porte was received with suspicion by the Russians, though not with direct rejection. However, the firm Ottoman stance against further Russian advances persuaded Peter I not to violate Ottoman priorities. Still, Campredon reported

[635] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 223.
[636] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 206.
[637] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:289.
[638] *SIRIO*, 1885, 49:335.

that the Russian government was not willing to suspend its military operations in Persia completely.

Nişli Mehmed Ağa depended on the "protection of Sunnis" discourse in his negotiations with the Russian representatives. However, his embassy book did not include any points on the topic of the the Ottoman-Afghan alliance and its roots in religious brotherhood. Regarding the Ottoman annexation of Shirvan, he put forward that the Lazgis of Shirvan had asked for refuge, and it was not possible to reject any such demand due to religious unity (*ittihâd-ı dînî*), as authoritative books ruled,[639] the same reasoning Damad İbrahim had used against Nepluyev when justifying the annexation of Shirvan.[640]

The religio-political discourse of the Russian government is not my focus here. However, the influence of the Ottoman "protection" discourse on Russian discourse was of significance. Nişli Mehmed Ağa wrote that as a response to his religious justifications for the annexation of Shirvan, the Russians said that the Georgians, Abkhasians, and Circassians were their co-religionists. They asked rhetorically, "would you be contented, if we take them under our protection?"[641] In the following years, Moscow would come to depend on that discourse.

Alexander Rumyantsev, a general who was the Russian commissar of border demarcation, brought the version of the treaty ratified by Peter I to Constantinople in the end of December 1724.[642] He also related Peter I's message that he would "allow Armenians and other Christians to settle in his new dominions, as it was his duty, as a Christian ruler, to afford

[639] Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)," 103–4 and 108. "Lezgi tâ'ifesi Devlet-i Aliyye'ye arz u mahzarlar gönderüb iltica eyledüler. İttihâd-ı dini muktezâsınca kabul olınmamak imkânda değildir." See Mertayak, 104. "[B]iz de ümmet-i Muhammed'deniz bizi pây-mâl ittirmen deyü recâ eyledüler. Kitablarımız kavlince kabul itmemek mümkin değildir." See Mertayak, 108.
[640] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 206.
[641] "Hem-dinimizdir deyü hıfzınıza alursız; öyle oldukda eğerçi biz almıyoruz lâkin Gürci ve Abâza ve Çerkes de bizim hem-dimimizdir, anları biz de alsak hazz ider misiniz?" See Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)," 108.
[642] Tofiq T. Mustafazade, *Azerbajdžan i Russko-Tureckie Otnošenija v Pervoj Treti HVIIIv.* (Baku: Elm, 1993), 88.

them protection and grant them asylum."[643] The Russian tsar instructed Rumyantsev that should the Porte not find this promise suitable, he was to reply to the Ottomans that just as the Porte was obligated to accept the calls for aid from the Shirvanis, by the same token Russia must accept the protection demands from Caucasian Christians.[644] The Russian policy of attracting the Georgians and the Armenians was not only a diplomatic move, but also a serious one. As I will mention in the next chapter, Peter also instructed Rumyantsev to undertake field research for a possible military march from Baku to Georgia. Peter I died in February 1725, before actualizing his plans for conquest of the entire Caucasus. However, five years later, Abraham Stanyan, the English ambassador, reported that "the Russians draw great Numbers of Christians from Georgia and Armenia into their new Conquests, by which means the Turkish Frontiers are almost become desert."[645] Stanyan pointed to this fact as one of the reasons for friction between the Porte and Moscow.

When analyzed altogether, at least from the May 15th, 1722 decisions onwards, the Ottoman government based its discourse on the exalted caliphate of the sultan, who had the duty to protect Sunnis as a requirement of his universal leadership status. The Porte used this "protection" argument, flexibly and for some time, to cross its borders into Iran; against the "savage" Afghans during the siege of Isfahan; against the Christian Georgians, if not explicitly against the Russians, during the Russian campaign on the Caucasus; against the "heretic" Kizilbash after the fall of Isfahan in the Ottoman annexation of Shirvan; and, ultimately, against the Russians in the winter and spring of 1723 during Nişli's ambassadorial term. However, the main justifier remained stable: the protection duty of the great caliph and exalted sultan. This consistency is no doubt related to the applicability of the caliphate discourse to these diverse

[643] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 249.
[644] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 213.
[645] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 359. The date of the dispatch was May 13th-24th, 1729.

situations. This powerful applicability made the concept of the caliphate a central element of the Ottoman religio-political discourse in foreign relations.

B. Agreeing on Peace in Principle: Official Peace Negotiations

For all the Ottoman religio-political discourse against Russia resorting to universal caliphate and Sunni unity, Nişli Mehmed's embassy increased the likelihood of peace with Russia, rather than of war. Nişli Mehmed Ağa stayed in Moscow for around a month and a half between February 4th, 1723 and the latter half of March 1723.[646] The official responsible for hosting the Ottoman embassy was Alexis Dashkov,[647] who had been in Constantinople between 1719 and 1721 as the Russian representative in the conclusion of the Eternal Peace between the Porte and Russia. His hosting was a clear sign that Peter I did not want the Iranian question to cause any deterioration of Russian relations with Constantinople. The conciliatory Russian attitude continued until the last day of Nişli's embassy. Nişli repeatedly informed the Porte about the friendly attitudes of the Russians to him, and thus to the Ottoman state. During his stay in Moscow, he had three meetings with the Russian tsar and five with the Russian government.

Peter I let Nişli Mehmed know the Russian priorities clearly. The tsar told him that just as the Porte did not allow any other power in the Black Sea, Moscow considered the Caspian Sea in the same way.[648] Thus, should the Ottoman government accept to leave that area to Russia, there would be no reason to break the peace. The Porte maintained the same position with regard to provinces bordering the Caspian at least from April 1722 onwards. In the spring of 1723, the Ottoman government again ensured the Russians, through the Marquis de Bonnac, that the Porte was not against the Russian plans in the Caspian.[649] In the last meeting between Nişli and Peter I, putting his hand on his heart, the Russian tsar stated that "I keep the eternal

[646] The date of the last entry in his ambassadorial book was March 7th, 1723 (7 Cemaziyelahir 1135). See Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)," 126.
[647] Mertayak, 87.
[648] Mertayak, 110.
[649] *SIRIO*, 1885, 49:342. The letter of Campredon to the French king was dated May 31st, 1723.

peace like my heart, and expect the same thing from the puissant padishah!"[650] Ahmed III's October 1722 royal letter to Peter I also made reference to keeping the eternal peace intact.[651]

Nişli Mehmed Ağa arrived in Constantinople in May 1725[652] with the news that the Russo-Ottoman peace was not to be broken, at least in the near future.[653] Nişli's mission was the main serious attempt preparing the ground for the peaceful partition of Iran between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. It proved that although the Ottomans and Russians still continued to consider each other serious threats to their own interests, they both agreed that they could benefit more from the miserable situation in Iran by being allied with each other.

Peaceful relations with Russia required the Porte to abandon the threatening Sunni unity discourse. Indeed, the ground was already prepared for that rapprochement. An August 1722 conversation between Nepluyev and Damad İbrahim Pasha is striking in this sense.[654] In it, the grand vizier told Nepluyev that the Porte wanted to conclude a defensive and offensive alliance with Russia. He went on that this alliance would have great power against the alliance of the Holy Roman Emperor, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Venice. Damad İbrahim's vision highlighted again how the Porte took the western, mainly Austrian, threat seriously. His concluding words showed how versatile the relations between religion and politics were. The grand vizier stated that "Although we Turks do not have the same religion as the Russians, in this world one concludes alliances not on the basis of one's faith but according to state interest."[655]

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[650] "[B]ir elini göğsüne koyub "Ben sulh-i mü'ebbedi yüreğim gibi saklarım, şevketlü pâdişâhdan dahi böyle umarım." See Mertayak, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Rusya Sefâreti ve Sefâretnâmesi (1722-1723)," 118.

[651] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-35, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1134, (October 2nd-11th, 1722), pp. 63-65.

[652] Mary Lucille gives the date as May 25th, depending on Emo's reports; Ensar Köse gives it as May 15th, referring to Nepluyev's report. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 103; Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 174.

[653]Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:285–86; Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:200.

[654] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 203.

[655] Soloviev, 203.

B.1. General View

Not long after the return of Nişli Mehmed Ağa, the official negotiations between the delegates of Russia and the Porte began in Constantinople. Moreover, the conquest of Tbilisi relieved the Porte before any official negotiations with Russia.[656] Thus, Russo-Ottoman relations entered into the second phase, covering the period between July 25th, 1723, the beginning of the official peace negotiations, and June 22nd, 1724, the ratification of the Partition Treaty.[657] The official mediator in the peace talks was the Marquis de Bonnac.

The intermediacy of France in the peace negotiations caused a triple rapproachament between France, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. Austria considered the agreement of these three states to constitute a dangerous encirclement of the Austrian domains from the west, east, and north. England was also against the conclusion of the peace. The English resident at Constantinople worked hard to convince the Porte that the goals of the Russians were harmful to the Ottoman interests in Persia.[658]

Peace negotiations were composed of two main parts, and the second part was divided into three periods based on the city of meeting: Constantinople, Moscow, and Constantinople

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[656] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:321.

[657] A recent book by Ensar Köse covers the negotiation process between the Porte and Russia. The book utilizes many primary sources from different languages, and documents the process in a detailed way. However, there are certain important problems with the use of primary sources in the book. Thus, the information he gives needs to be checked from the sources themselves.

For example, the author confuses Çelebizâde's account of the January 1724 negotiations with that of July 1723. Thus, Köse cites Çelebizâde wrongly for the first phase of negotiations between July 25th and August 6th, 1723. When discussing the conference on July 25th, 1723, Köse first correctly gives the Russian representative's arguments, citing the Marquis de Bonnac's *Mémoire*. However, the Ottoman representatives' arguments he gives as replies to the Russian side are from the January 1724 negotiations. Repeatedly, the author makes up dialogues by mixing the Russian representative's and French mediator's statements in July and August 1723 and the Ottoman representatives' statements in January 1724. See Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 186–204.

He makes a similar mistake when giving an account of negotiations in the second phase, starting from December 20th, 1723. There, he confuses the Ottoman representatives' statements of January 7th, 1724 with those of December 20th, 1723. He basically does not understand Çelebizâde's narration well. This time the author notices a difference in the Austrian and Ottoman accounts. However, without problematizing it, he simply states that they were different. See Köse, 226–27. I was able to detect these problems by checking the detailed accounts of Çelebizâde, Hurmuzaki, and the Marquis de Bonnac.

[658] See Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 47; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 219–20, 223, 229, 237, 538. Basically, the position of the European Powers was the same as it had been in the Eternal Peace Treaty.

again. The first part was between July 25th and August 6th, 1723 in Constantinople. The second part started on December 20th, 1723 and ended on June 22nd, 1724.

The first phase of relations between the Porte and Moscow made two facts certain. First, both the Russians and the Ottomans wanted to profit in territorial terms from Iran's vulnerability. Second, they agreed not to clash with each other. Thus, the next task was "how" to partition Iran between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. There were many conflicting matters in the negotiations. However, I argue that the major unsettled problem was the question of which internal candidate, Mahmud or Tahmasb, was to be backed up by the Russians and the Ottomans. That is why, instead of investigating other issues, I will focus on the Tahmasb-Mahmud options. Below, I will first present the military campaigns in which the Russians and the Ottomans engaged in Persia. Then, I will examine the negotiation process.

Even though the start of negotiations was an indication of a mutual intention for the preservation of peace, the competition and arm wrestling in the battlefield had not yet reached a point satisfactory to both powers. Thus, the parties gave a three-month break to their negotiations and continued military operations on the ground.[659] The first major rivalry was over Baku. The Russians, who were stopped in September 1722 on the way to Baku, became successful in capturing the city before the Ottoman army, as of the beginning of August 1723.[660]

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[659] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-572, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1135 (August 13th-22nd, 1723). Çelebizâde gives the detail that for this decision to be made, the consultative assembly met twice, on the 6th and 7th of August. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1328–30.

[660] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 246. The Porte stripped Silahdar İbrahim Pasha of his posts and commandership with accusations of not complying with Porte's orders and causing the loss of Baku to the Russians. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 131-810, Evasıt-ı Safer 1136 (November 10th-19th, 1723). However, the Baku affair seems not to have been as clear as presented by the Porte. There were at least two curious points waiting for explanation. First, the date of the order to Silahdar İbrahim Pasha to capture Baku was August 13th-22nd, 1723. The conquest of Baku by the Russians was already accomplished by the beginning of August. If that was the case, and it seems it was by all accounts, then it was an impossible order to fulfill. The second problem is related to geography. For the Ottoman army in Tbilisi to help out the Shirvanis and go together to reach the Caspian coasts, Ganja should have been crossed. Ganja was in the hands of Safavids at that time. Thus, it seems that it would have been impossible to discharge the task due to temporal and geographical impossibilities, and the reasons for İbrahim Pasha's deposition need to be reevaluated.

I come across an imperial order sent two years later to Erzurum's governor Mustafa Pasha who was appointed in İbrahim Pasha's place. In that order, it was clearly written that Ganja was an obstacle between Tbilisi

Nevertheless, Russian troops could not invade and control the other territories they had targeted in the southern shores of the Caspian.

The Ottoman assaults during that period were also unsuccessful. As I examined in the previous chapter, the Ottoman armies began a three-front offensive against Iran from the Caucasus (north-east), Azerbaijan (east), and Iraq-i Ajam (south-east) in September 1723. The Ottomans were successful in gaining new lands only on the south-eastern front under the commandership of Hasan Pasha. In these campaigns, the provincial army captured Kirmanshah (October 15th, 1723), Ardalan (November 10th, 1723), and Sinna (November 10th, 1723). In the two other fronts, no land was brought under Ottoman control. The Ottoman failure on the most contested front, the Caucasus, was significant. During the three-month break, the Ottomans were not able to enlarge their territories beyond Tbilisi.

Thus, the competition on the ground proved that dividing the Persian territories in a competitive manner was neither easy nor beneficial for the actualization of the imperial aims of both the Ottomans and the Russians. This mutual realization that they could gain more, if they could reach a peaceful agreement over sharing the Persian territories, should have been the main reason for a restart of the second phase of negotiations in December 1723.[661]

B.2. The Start of Negotiations in July 1723

A major problem in the official negotiations between the Ottoman and Russian representatives was Russian support for Tahmasb and ostensible Ottoman backing of their co-religionist Mahmud. The Russian stance in favor of Tahmasb became clear long before the clarification of Ottoman support for Tahmasb. The Ottoman government learned that Russia was going to back Tahmasb and oppose the Afghans in Persia with the return of Nişli Mehmed Ağa from

and Shirvan, which means it would have been with Baku, as well; since Ganja had been conquered, there was no reason for a delay in Mustafa Pasha's march toward Shirvan. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1369, Evahir-i Muharrem 1138 (September 29th – October 8th, 1725).

[661] Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 62.

Moscow in May 1723, at the latest.[662] As I discussed above, the Porte had maintained a fervent pro-Sunni discourse against Russia until the start of official negotiations. During the negotiations, it continued to use the Sunni brotherhood argument as a bluff against Russia, in order to gain more in the resulting treaty.

At the first meeting on July 25th, Nepluyev put forward that the Porte should cease its operations in Persia. He stipulated that he could not start the peace talks until the Ottoman armies paused their advancement. The Ottoman side rejected this precondition categorically. Hacı Mustafa Efendi, the chief Ottoman negotiator, stated that the Porte was not interested in acquiring new lands in Persia. He gave the longstanding Ottoman military inaction with regard to Iran as proof of this disinclination. The Marquis de Bonnac confirmed Mustafa Efendi's assertion, referring to one of his earlier conversations with Damad İbrahim Pasha during the embassy of Murtaza Quli Han, the last envoy of Shah Sultan Husayn. Hacı Mustafa Efendi maintained that an unknown man had come to the Persian capital from the remote lands of Persia with a troop of brigands. This man overthrew a king, whose family had been ruling the country for more than two hundred years and who himself had reigned for more than thirty years.[663] The Ottoman delegate expressed clearly that even though this man was of the same religion as the Ottomans, he was even more dangerous, because the Afghan expedition he led was so attractive to those who were eager to pillage Safavid lands. He declared that the Afghan movement could have easily seduced Ottoman subjects and commanders living in the border provinces.[664] Thus, he claimed, it was a necessity for the Porte to take action in Persia, first and foremost to keep the Ottoman borders safe, before anything else. Mustafa Efendi concluded his

[662] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 103.
[663] In reality, Shah Sultan Husayn reigned for 28 years between 1694 and 1722; according to the Hijri calender, it amounted to 29 years.
[664] Mustafa Efendi stated that even though the Afghans had a limited number of troops currently, their numbers could have easily increased to 200,000. The Afghan army consisted of approximately 20,000 troops. Even if Mustafa Efendi might have been exagerating, presumably the Porte expected that a great number of Ottoman subjects would align with Mir Mahmud.

speech with a rhetorical question: How can Russia demand that the Porte suspend its military campaign in such an urgent situation?[665]

Mustafa Efendi's reasoning was nearly identical to the arguments Damad İbrahim Pasha had used in the consultative assembly meeting of July 7th, 1723. The contemporary French historian Clairac's observations affirm the Ottoman anxiety. He suggested that the Ottoman ministers feared not so much Mahmud's actual power, but his potential power, due to the religion they shared. Clairac related that the Porte was certain that Ottoman troops would have refused to fight against Mahmud, who was regarded as "a hero of religion" by virtue of his destruction of the Safavids.[666] With Mustafa Efendi's statements, the Porte disclosed one of its real concerns in Persia for the first time, a breaking point in the Ottoman usage of Sunni unity against Moscow.

After the first three meetings, the sides decided to suspend the negotiations for three months, as mentioned above. Normally, the Ottoman position on Sunni unity would have lost its power after the words of Hacı Mustafa Efendi on July 25th. However, the Porte was still able to use that rhetoric against the Russians. For example, Campredon reported that the possible Ottoman backing of Mir Mahmud was of great concern to the Russian government as late as September 1723.[667] Similarly, a month later, Nepluyev reported to Moscow that the Porte had claimed that Mir Mahmud was going to obey to the Ottomans, but that it was still uncertain whether he would indeed obey or not.[668]

One reason why the Ottoman's Sunni unity rhetoric was still valid was apparently the unsettled conflicts between the Porte and Moscow in Persia. On the other hand, the Ottoman

[665] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 201–8.
[666] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:114.
[667] *SIRIO*, 1885, 49:387. Campredon's letter to the French king was dated September 20th, 1723.
[668] Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 224. The date of Nepluyev's report was October 27th, 1723.

ability to use the Sunni card even after the words of Hacı Mustafa Efendi showed how the established religio-political position was influential in politics. Stanyan's and the Marquis de Bonnac's reports from the first half of the 1720s give more detail about the power of the established religio-political stance.

In early 1722, Stanyan reported about the embassy of Murtaza Quli Khan to Constantinople. He wrote that the Persians were more complaisant with the Porte, since they were afraid of possible Ottoman support for Mir Mahmud. Stanyan's thoughts about that potential support are highly interesting. He wrote that,

> "…[T]he Grand Signior should give Succour to the Chief of the Rebels in Persia on account of his being of the Mahometan Sect; and if he [Mir Mahmud] should demand the Protection of the Port, as it is said he will, they [the Ottomans] will be puzzled how to behave themselves, since their Religion will not allow them openly to refuse it, nor their Interest to grant it."[669]

Stanyan claimed that to help the Afghans was not in the Porte's interest, since any such help could have caused war with the Persians, and even with the Russians, due to the Shamakhi incident of 1721. He clearly suggested that the Porte was going to be caught flat-footed due to the clash between the established religio-political stance and the current interests of the state. His observations about the restrictive capacity of religion on state policies was of high significance.

The Marquis de Bonnac also pointed to the difficulty of this clash between religion and state interest for the Porte. In his long executive summary of the events covering his embassy at Constantinople (1716-1724), he praised Damad İbrahim's policy on the grounds that it had been able to fight successfully against the "strongest of popular passions, that is, superstition." Certainly, the French resident was referring to the common sense of religious unity and the masses' identification with the Sunni Afghans on the basis of belief. Thus, even though the

[669] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 215. Stanyan's dispatch was dated February 19th – March 2nd, 1722.

Porte declared that Mir Mahmud was even more dangerous to the Ottomans than Tahmasb, it was still able to maintain an equivocal position with regard to the Afghans. The Russian government, as a result, could not feel itself safe about the Ottoman adversity toward the Afghans until the end of March 1724.[670]

B.3. The Russo-Tahmasb Treaty

Tahmasb's envoy İsmail Beg arrived in St. Petersburg in September 1723 and signed a five-article treaty on behalf of Tahmasb on September 23rd, around the same time as Murtaza Quli Beg's embassy at Constantinople. The treaty left Darband, Baku, Gilan, Mazandaran, and Astarabad to Russia. Tsar Peter was to provide military help to Tahmasb until they expelled the "usurper" Mahmud from Isfahan. There was to be free trade between Russia and Iran. The last article was that "Persia and Russia were to regard as friends and enemies respectively the friends and enemies of each other."[671] However, Tahmasb rejected the treaty in April 1724, and even declared İsmail Beg a traitor.[672]

Regardless of Tahmasb's rejection, the Russians pretended as if the treaty was valid up until the conclusion of the Partition Treaty in June 1724. The news of a Russo-Safavid agreement reached Constantinople on December 23rd, 1723, on the fourth day of the second phase of the negotiations after the three-month break.[673] The Porte showed open disapproval of the agreement, especially due to the last article's creation of a defensive alliance between Russia and Tahmasb.[674] The Marquis de Bonnac and Russian representatives in Constantinople struggled to assure the Porte that that article referred to the Afghans and not to the Ottomans.

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[670] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople,* 247.
[671] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 247.
[672] Lockhart, 248; Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union to 1921," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 319; Tofiq Teyyuboğlu Mustafazade, "Safevî Hanedanı'nın Son Yılları," in *Türkler*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel, Kemal Çiçek, and Salim Koca, vol. 6 (Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), 927.
[673] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 217.
[674] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 228.

Even though the Ottoman government maintained a cautionary stance in the face of this development, these guarantees relieved the Porte to an important extent.[675]

There are arguments in the secondary literature that the Russo-Tahmasb treaty weakened the Porte's hands and affected the Ottoman plans badly.[676] They write as if the Porte's main enemy among the internal powers of Iran was Tahmasb, not Mahmud.[677] In truth, the Russian side wanted to use this "agreement" as a lever in the negotiations. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the primary enemy of the Ottomans within Persia was the Afghans; and the Porte's goal was to arrange a deal with Tahmasb that would be similar to the one İsmail Beg had negotiated in St. Petersburg. That is why Damad İbrahim Pasha sent Murtaza Quli Beg back to Tahmasb, with similar conditions for concluding a treaty between the Ottomans and Tahmasb. The Porte did not have similar diplomatic contact with Mahmud or demand any political or territorial concession from the Afghans. The challenge of the Afghans, unlike that of Tahmasb, sufficiently convinced the Porte that the Ottoman government could solve the Afghan problem only by military advancement, instead of diplomatic negotiations.

Thus, the Russian treaty with Tahmasb's envoy was not in conflict with the grand Ottoman policy in Iran. It was nevertheless problematic for the Porte for two other reasons. First, it would have strengthened Russia's hand in Persia; second, it might cause the annulment of the Russo-Ottoman peace, due to the last article, given that the Porte was newly at war with the Safavids.

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[675] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 217–18; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 228. In the meeting for the Russo-Ottoman peace negotiations on January 3rd, 1724, the Ottoman representatives again brought this issue to the fore by referring to the specific article in the Russo-Tamasb agreement. They accussed the Russians of having an adversarial attitude toward the Porte from September on. See Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:353.

[676] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 192; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 156–57. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 192; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 156–57.

[677] Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 243.

B.4. The Second Phase of the Official Negotiations

The three-month break was over, and on December 20th, 1723 the first phase of the second part of the official negotiations began in Constantinople. The Russian government gave Nepluyev no authority except for presenting the tsar's peace proposal, composed of six articles. Nepluyev was to approve a treaty only if the Porte accepted all the articles in the Russian proposal.[678] The Russians aimed to exploit their agreement with Tahmasb's envoy to the maximum level in the negotiations with the Ottomans. According to the proposal, the Russian side would recognize Ottoman authority in Shirvan. However, since the Russians had concluded a peace agreement with Tahmasb, they did not consent to the continuation of war in Iran. Nepluyev openly demanded the termination of Ottoman military campaigns in Persia. He put forward that should the Porte continue its advances in Persia, the Russian army would come to the aid of the Persians.[679] He suggested that the Ottoman government conclude an agreement with Tahmasb similar to the one the Russians had made.

Apparently, the Russians utilized their agreement with Tahmasb to press the Porte and to reduce the Ottoman share in Persian territory in the negotiations from December 20th onward. The Russians wanted to keep the Ottomans within their traditional eastern borders as much as possible. Nepluyev's demand was not that different from his insistence in the beginning of the first phase of the official negotiations in July 1723, when the Russian side had demanded the suspension of Ottoman military operations; in December, the demand became complete termination.

The month roughly following December 20th was a very tense period in Ottoman-Russian relations. The possibility of breaking the peace with Russia was seriously brought to the table again. The Porte declared the agreement invalid and categorically rejected Nepluyev's demand

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[678] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:333–36; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 216–24. Nepluyev declared the six articles in the meeting on January 3rd, 1724, first. However, he stipulated the termination of the Ottoman advancement from the very start of the negotiations on December 20th.

[679] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:342.

for the halting of Ottoman military advances in Persia.[680] During that period, the Porte struggled to determine whether Nepluyev really held no power at all or whether he was authorized to concede at least some of the articles in the Russian proposal. The Porte's pressure on Nepluyev in the conferences was intended to produce these possible further orders and to determine the limits of the Russian side.[681]

The Ottoman delegates called Peter's agreement with Tahmasb a disgraceful act due to Tahmasb's illegitimate kingship in the eyes of the Porte at a time when Shah Sultan Husayn was still alive. Tahmasb had no power, no land, and no subjects at all; any agreement with him was thus meaningless and ineffective. As the Austrian resident reported, the Ottoman representatives even went so far as to call Tahmasb a "wretched bastard" twice. Moreover, the Ottoman representatives asked rhetorically whether the Russian tsar intended to introduce a "donkey," referring to Tahmasb, to the game of chess. They claimed that the Porte would have already signed a similar treaty with Tahmasb, since the Safavid prince kept asking for help from the Ottomans, but they did not consider it proper to help Tahmasb, as helping him would have been degrading. Moreover, the Ottoman delegates alleged that western Iran was the rightful inheritance of the Ottomans, so there was nothing for the Porte to negotiate with Tahmasb regarding these provinces. Lastly, they called the proposal of Peter I a "shameful imposition" that would result in war between the Porte and Russia.[682]

Furthermore, the Ottoman side demanded the complete Russian withdrawal from the Caspian provinces and a return to their traditional borders. Resorting to religious discourse again, the Ottoman representatives argued that the Porte did not consent to the Russian

[680] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1371–72; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:317. As I noted in the previous chapter, the Porte maintained the policy of not recognizing Tahmasb as shah unless he recognized the Ottoman acquisiton of the western provinces of Persia.
[681] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:358; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 218–19.
[682] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:348–49.

acquisition of coastal provinces that had always been possessed by Muslims.[683] It was basically a counter proposal to the Russian stipulation of the halting of Ottoman operations.

The way the Porte defended its diplomatic position against the Russians did not reflect reality in terms of their arguments about Tahmasb's situation. As Murtaza Quli Beg's embassy at Constantinople had showed only a few months ago, the Porte was willing to accept Tahmasb's kingship in the case that the latter consented to give the western territories of Iran to the Ottomans. The Porte and Moscow were in fact in the same position in terms of the status of their current relations with Tahmasb. Both of them sent the conditions under which they would agree to help Tahmasb via Tahmasb's ambassadors. Indeed, at that time, Murtaza Quli Beg and İsmail Beg were on their return journeys from the respective capitals, carrying Russian and Ottoman proposals to the Safavid prince. The Porte's reaction to the Russo-Tahmasb agreement was to discard the utilization of Tahmasb by Russia as a lever being used against the Porte and as a diplomatic force intended to stop the Ottoman advance.

To counterbalance the Russian decisiveness, the Ottoman government initiated a dual strategy of simultaneous war and peace. In the same meeting on January 7th, 1724, Çelebizâde related that Ottoman representatives had told Nepluyev that the sublime state's power was beyond expression and it was ready for both peace and fighting, having the pen of peace in the one hand and the universe-seizing sword (*tîğ-i âlem-gîr*) in the other.[684] That dual strategy was the same that the Porte had been using to convince Tahmasb since July 1723. The Porte again put that strategy into operation against Russia, combining hard and soft power to keep diplomatic and military means at hand until the ratification of the Peace Treaty in June 1724.

[683] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 219.

[684] "Devlet-i Aliyye'nin lillâhi'l-hamd kuvvet ü kudreti ta'bîr mertebesinden ziyâde ve el-hâletü hâzihî bir elde hâme-i sulh ve bir elde tîğ-ı âlem-gîr, müsālaha vü mükâfahaya hâzır u âmâdedir." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1371.

In the meeting on January 7th, 1724, the Marquis de Bonnac asked Nepluyev to leave the room and conversed with the Ottoman representatives alone.[685] The Marquis de Bonnac then proposed to the Ottoman representatives that the Russian tsar could mediate between the Porte and Tahmasb for a peaceful relinquishing of the western Persian provinces to the Ottomans. With this offer, he aimed to convince the Porte of the suitability of Tahmasb, instead of Mahmud, for Ottoman goals. The Ottoman representatives firmly rejected this offer on the grounds that the Porte did not need the Russian mediation to acquire Iranian territories, since Tahmasb craved to be under the protection of the Ottoman state.[686] They added that if the tsar was ready to fight against the Ottomans, the Ottomans were not less prepared; Muslims from around the world would flock to the aid of the Ottomans in the fight against Russia.[687] The Porte was once again playing the Sunni unity card. The Ottoman government did not accept the intermediacy of Russia between the Porte and Tahmasb by any means,[688] insistently maintaining this position for most of the negotiations.

Critically, the Ottoman delegates also told the Marquis de Bonnac that the Ottoman rejection of the Russo-Tahmasb treaty was actually not due to the illegitimacy of Tahmasb, but because the treaty was in direct conflict with proven Ottoman rights.[689] This remark was highly significant, since it revealed that the Porte was not categorically against the recognition of Tahmasb as a legitimate power in Persia, the first important signal that the Porte and Russia could find a common ground in the negotiations. The Porte took an important step in disclosing its main priority in Persia: agreeing with Tahmasb and dethroning Mahmud.

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[685] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:355–58; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1371.

[686] "Eğerçi Tahmasb Devlet-i Aliyye'nin zîr-i himâyesinde olmağı bin cânla recâ ve hâlâ elçi nâmında olan âdemîsi Revân Ser'askeri Ahmed Paşa'nın yanında ilticâ ederken Devlet-i Aliyye'nin memleket almakda Çar'ın tavassutuna ihtiyâcı yokdur." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1372.

[687] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:357.

[688] Regarding the Ottoman rejection of Russian intermediacy, see also Hurmuzaki, 4:364.

[689] Hurmuzaki, 4:357.

Another conference was held between Nepluyev and the Ottoman representatives on January 10th. Both sides maintained similar positions as they had in the earlier conferences, and nothing came of the meeting. The Ottoman representatives again declared that the peace between Russia and the Ottoman state was about to be broken, unless the Russians cancelled their agreement with Tahmasb and withdrew the condition of the termination of Ottoman advances in Persia.[690]

Even though the Porte maintained its firm rejection of Tahmasb in the negotiations, it continued to give warmer messages about the acceptability of Tahmasb to the French ambassador. The Marquis de Bonnac reported that, on the same day, Ghika, the dragoman of the imperial council, told him that the Ottoman government, and even the sultan himself, had received the Russian treaty with favor. Ghika recommended that the Marquis de Bonnac offer to the Ottoman side that the Porte should ask the tsar to convince Tahmasb to seek the protection of the Porte. The Marquis de Bonnac made this offer to the Ottoman representatives in the presence of Nepluyev, but they replied that the Porte was not going to ask the tsar anything like that, and that the Marquis de Bonnac could himself have asked the tsar, if he liked, and, furthermore, that the negotiation with Nepluyev was over, as long as he did not withdrew the termination condition.[691] The last Ottoman bluff was again not successful in breaking the resolution of Nepluyev, who told the Marquis de Bonnac next day that he needed three months to get new orders from the Russian government and continue the negotiations.

The Marquis de Bonnac related Nepluyev's message to the grand vizier through Ghika. On January 13th, 1724, Damad İbrahim Pasha sent a letter to the Marquis de Bonnac.[692] The grand vizier's reply was the severest of all until that point. He employed the Sunni unity discourse stronger than ever and threatened the Russians with a comprehensive assault by the

[690] Hurmuzaki, 4:358–59; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 219–20.
[691] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 220.
[692] Bonnac, 214–15.

allied Muslim powers. The grand vizier wrote first that the Porte was not willing to break the peace, but that the Russian tsar's "unjust proposal" that was "inept to friendship" had angered all high-ranking people in the government, the learning and legal bureaucracy, and the military administration to an inexpressible degree. Damad İbrahim Pasha then began his religio-political threats. He first asked rhetorically what the Russian tsar had to do in a "Muhammadan kingdom." Then, he continued that with united forces of Anatolia, Chaldea,[693] *l'Arabie pétrée*,[694] Balkh, Bukhara, Herat, Kandahar, and all the other "Muhammadan nations" would fight against the Russians. The grand vizier stated that, thanks to that war, the Porte would be able to extend the religion of Islam, and also the borders of the Ottoman Empire, with the grace and help of God. Apparently, the Porte still maintained that the religious brotherhood between Mir Mahmud and the Ottomans led them to be united against a non-Muslim state. And, this time, the Ottoman government even enlarged their claim of religious unity by extending it to all Muslims, especially the ones living in Central Asia.

Moreover, the Ottoman grand vizier transmitted a message to Nepluyev via the French ambassador indicating that the peace negotiations were over, and Nepluyev now had three options. He could stay in Constantinople or accompany the Ottoman army progressing in Persia. He was also free to return to Moscow.[695] Damad İbrahim Pasha's harsh letter and declaration of the cessation of negotiations was still not enough to force Nepluyev to step back. Nepluyev told the Marquis de Bonnac that he did not have further authorization, and started preparations to return to Moscow. He even demanded passports for his journey. However, despite the grand

[693] Mostly today's Syria and Iraq region.
[694] The region of *l'Arabie pétrée* referred to the shores of Arabian Peninsula from Dead Sea and today's southern Jordan down to Al-Wajih.
[695] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 222; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:360.

vizier's three options, the Porte did not allow Nepluyev to depart. The government notified the Russian resident that he should wait until the next *Divan* gathering, to be held in two days.[696]

The Marquis de Bonnac's letter to the French Foreign Affairs Minister dated January 14th demonstrated that the probability of war between the Porte and Russia was high. He reported that in the eyes of public, Russo-Ottoman relations were entirely broken, and he himself confessed that it would be quite difficult to return to the negotiation table.[697]

The last hope for peace was an extensive consultative assembly meeting, in which around four hundred members of the Ottoman governing elite gathered on January 15th, 1724.[698] That meeting was a historic moment in several respects. Probably, Damad İbrahim Pasha used it as the last strategy to break the resistance of the Russian representative.

After the grand vizier explained the situation in the negotiations, he presented two possible options the Porte could follow to the attendees. He asked the assembly to discuss the options freely and left the room together with the *şeyhülislam*. It is noteworthy that the *şeyhülislam*'s leaving with the grand vizier indicated how close Abdullah Efendi was to Damad İbrahim Pasha. The representative of the *ulema* did not stay with the *ulema*, but went out with the head of government.

The grand vizier's first option was "ending the Persian campaign that was started as the requirement of the glorious *sharia* and as a result of unanimity of opinions." Damad İbrahim Pasha presented the second option as,

> Religious endeavor and the honor of the sultanate of the House of Osman could not have borne the tsar's peremptory attitude. The Sublime State was not unable to oppose one or two enemies with its overwhelming power and manifest majesty. The

[696] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 222; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:360.
[697] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 217.
[698] For the developments during and after the meeting, see Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:360–61; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 225–30 and 232–34; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1372–74.

> rough proposal of the tsar was clearly in violation of the peace. Thus, the Porte should also start military preparations against the Russians.[699]

Apparently, the grand vizier's formulation of the options favored the war option over the peace. In line with the attitude of Damad İbrahim Pasha, the assembly agreed on the suitability of declaring war against the Russians. Damad İbrahim Pasha re-entered the assembly meeting as the participants were about to conclude the meeting with the decision to make war on Russia. However, surprisingly Ghika came to the assembly with a message from the Marquis de Bonnac.

The Marquis de Bonnac had three points he hoped would dissuade the Porte from breaking the peace. First, the Porte's rejection of the tsar's stipulation of the ending of the Ottoman military progress did not require breaking the peace with Russia. He maintained that the Porte could both continue its operations in Iran and maintain the peace. The second point was that the main goal of the Russians was to capture only the coastal provinces in the Caspian region. He strengthened his argument by putting forward that the Russo-Tahmasb treaty did not include any Russian territorial claim to Georgian or Armenian territory, which had top priority for the Porte. The Marquis de Bonnac assured the Porte that he was completely convinced that if the Ottoman armies did not threaten the provinces bordering Caspian and targeted by the Russians, then the Russian tsar would have no intention of breaking the peace with the Porte. He added that the tsar could mediate between the Porte and Tahmasb, to conclude a similar agreement so that the Porte could gain their targeted Persian territories without war. The first and second points were different from what Nepluyev had stipulated up to this point. Nepluyev had always insisted that further Ottoman advances in Iran would be countered by the Russian

[699] "İmdi muktezâ-yı şer'-i garrâ ve ittifâk-ı ârâ ile mübâşeret olınan Acem seferinden ferâgat mı olunsun, yâhûd gayret-i dîniyye ve nâmûs-ı saltanat-ı Osmâniyye Çar'ın bu makûle tahakküm-âmîz mu'âmelesine mütehammil olmadığından gayrı, lillâhi'l-hamd Devlet-i Aliyye'nin kuvvet-i kâhire ve şevket-i bâhire ile bir iki düşmene mukâvemetden 'aczi olmayup, Çar'ın bu teklîf-i 'anîfi nakz-ı sulhü müstelzim olacağı müte'ayyin olmağla Moskov üzerine dahi sefer levâzımını tedârike mübâşeret mi kılınsun?' deyü buyurup…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1373.

army. Third, the Marquis de Bonnac claimed that there were four major actors in Persia besides the Ottomans, namely Russia, Mir Mahmud, Tahmasb, and the Persian people. He argued that the Porte was already in conflict with the last three. If the Ottomans broke their peace with Russia, as well, then it would be quite difficult for the Porte to achieve their territorial aims in Iran.

Upon listening to the Marquis de Bonnac's message, the assembly decided that the Porte should not break their peace with the tsar, unless Peter I showed belligerence toward the Ottomans. Then, the grand vizier went to Ahmed III with a group of representative members of the assembly and informed the sultan about the assembly's decision. Ahmed III approved the decision by delivering an order to "Start the preparations for campaign immediately and keep the door of negotiations open!"[700] The Ottoman *padishah*'s decision officialized the Ottoman strategy of using hard and soft power at the same time against Russia. His characterization of Peter I was also indicative of the Ottoman attitude. When showing his discontent with the tsar's proposal, Ahmed III called Peter I "the game I manumitted" (*nahçîr-i âzâd-kerdem*), clearly referring to the Prut incidence. It was a significant warning about the attitude the Porte would assume, should the option of war prevail in the future.

The French mediator narrated these events as if it had been his genius that convinced the Porte not to break the peace. However, his "guarantees" about the Russian peacefulness, even in the case of the Ottoman armies' advancing in Persian was in direct conflict with the tsar's proposal and Nepluyev's stance. Clearly, what the Marquis de Bonnac brought to table on January 15th was something different than earlier propositions. The only addition in the message of the Marquis de Bonnac to the Ottoman government was the guarantees of Russian ministers, via Campredon, that they would not be the first side to break the peace.[701] Probably, the Marquis

[700] "Hemân sefer tedârüküne âgâz ve bâb-ı mükâleme yine küşâd ve bâz kılınsın." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1374.

[701] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 234. The Marquis de Bonnac reported that Ghika told the Sultan that the Marquis de Bonnac had received letters from Campredon verifying that

de Bonnac assured the Porte of the non-belligerence of the tsar, based on Campredon's message. Moreover, it was also probable that the big consultative assembly gathering broke Nepluyev's resistance, and that he might have told the Marquis de Bonnac to transmit these messages. In any case, it was certain that Nepluyev gave consent to a change in the original Russian proposal based on the Ottoman offers in the next conference on January 17th.

The bizarreness of the situation might lead one to think that Damad İbrahim Pasha might have staged Ghika's intervention in the consultative assembly meeting, changing the entire attitude of the participants. The Marquis de Bonnac wrote that Damad İbrahim Pasha had again asked the assembly, after he approved the war decision, what their new decision was in the wake of the Marquis de Bonnac's message.[702] Thus, the grand vizier presented himself as equally ready for war and peace. This move would have helped him to guard against criticism of his inclination toward peace with the Russians. I will show below that it was difficult for the Porte to make peace with the Russians, who had attacked Sunnis in the Caucasus, and who had recently concluded a peace agreement with the Shiite Tahmasb against the Sunni Mahmud.

The critical point in the moderation of the Ottoman attitude was that the French mediator assured the Porte that the Russian proposal was not as solid as Nepluyev had purported. The Marquis de Bonnac remarked that it was the Porte's turn to offer its own peace proposal to Peter I.[703] Since the Ottoman motive for peace was strong, as well, the Porte decided not to be the first to break the peace. Thus, the Ottoman government decided to continue peace negotiations by presenting its own proposal, reciprocating Peter's.

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the Russian ministers had assured Campredon that they were not going to be the first side breaking the peace. It is probable that Ghika also informed the assembly about this "guarantee."

[702] Bonnac, 233.

[703] Bonnac, 235.

B.5. Negotiations after the Consultative Assembly Meeting

On the side of the "pen of peace," *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi issued a *fetva* guaranteeing the Ottoman side's commitment to the existing peace.[704] The question was:

> Is it religiously permissible to break the peace with the Russian tsar, in the case where the tsar, who is the eternal friend of the Ottoman state, asked for the termination of the Ottoman campaign without attacking Ottoman troops or borders, when the Islamic Sublime State marched on the lands of Kizilbash as a requirement of *sharia*?

Abdullah Efendi ruled that the *sharia* did not allow the breaking of the peace.[705] In the negotiations, the Ottoman representatives referred to the *fetva* as the guarantee of Ottoman firmness in the protection of the eternal peace with Russia.

It needs to be underlined here that *fetva*s also functioned as internationally valid legal documents.[706] Thus, historical analyses should take their content and timing seriously, instead of treating them as simple religious justification materials. I discussed in the previous chapter how not taking *fetva*s into serious consideration led modern scholars to misunderstand and misrepresent historical developments in the example of the *fetva* against the Safavids in 1723. A recent book written on the Partition Treaty repeats a similar mistake in its treatment of this *fetva* of Abdullah Efendi on not breaking the peace with the Russians.

Ensar Köse claimed that the Porte had received a *fetva* from Abdullah Efendi on the legality of a peace treaty with Russia in June 1724, since the latter was a Christian state.[707] In

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[704] The date of the *fetva* is unknown, however, it was certainly sometime before January 17th, 1724, when the Ottoman and Russian representatives held another conference. The *Şeyhülislam* issued the *fetva* most probably after the January 15th assembly meeting, as it was the agreed-upon decision of the assembly, the grand vizier, and the Sultan.

[705] "'…Şeyhülislâm efendi hazretleri iktizâ-yı şer'-i şerîf üzre Devlet-i Aliyye-i İslâmiyye Kızılbaş memleketlerine azîmet eyledikde müebbed dostu olan Moskov Çarı 'memâlik-i Acem'den ferâgat idin' deyü haber gönderse Devlet-i Aliyye işinden girü kalmaz ve mâdâm ki Çar tarafından ısrâr olunmayup Devlet-i Aliyye'nin hudûdlarına ve askerine ta'arruz olunmaya, Çar ile olan sulhün nakzı şer'an câiz olmaz' deyü iftâ itmeleriyle…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1375.

[706] For a recent study on the inter-imperial diplomatic role of *şeyhülislam*, see Joshua M. White, "Fetva Diplomacy: The Ottoman Şeyhülislam as Trans-Imperial Intermediary," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2 (2015): 199–221.

[707] "Rusya gibi bir hıristiyan devletle böylesi bir antlaşma yapılmasında, dini yönden sakınca bulunmadığına dair Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi'den fetva alındı." See Köse, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Rusya Arasında Kafkasların Taksimi - 1724 İstanbul Antlaşması*, 307.

fact, the *fetva* Ensar Köse cited verbatim was the *fetva* of Abdullah Efendi, issued in mid-January 1724, not in June. The mistake in the dating of *fetva* is most likely a result of an ignorant view of the importance of *fetva*s as legal and political documents. Historians have made similar mistakes in dating the Ottoman *fetva* against the Safavids in June 1723, as well.

Since Abdullah Efendi issued the *fetva* on Russia in mid-January 1724, there was naturally nothing either about the treaty or about the partition of Iran in it. Köse acknowledged that fact, but rather than problematizing it, he concluded that the Porte did not need to support the partition of Iran in terms of *sharia*. There is a clear inconsistency in this argument. On the one hand, Köse alleged that the Porte had needed a legal justification for that treaty in the beginning. On the other hand, he easily concluded that the Porte did not need that justification.

He explains why the Porte did not feel the need for legal support. According to his line of reasoning, "it is known in the last analysis that these kinds of *fetva*s were decisions that were issued under political direction, which were thought of as legitimizing tools for the decisions of politicians, and the pragmatic aspects of them outweighed [the legal aspects] in a sense."[708] Clearly, that explanation does not explain anything about the inconsistency. The Porte had already signed eternal peace with Russia only three years previous, so there seems to have been no reason for another *fetva* on the legality of making such a treaty with the Christian Russians. However, more importantly, the author utilized the positivistic reductionist perspective to treat religion like a master key explaining the unexplainable in a magical way. First and foremost, the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* pertained to the fields of domestic and international law. Thus, it needs to be discussed within that context. It was true that *fetva*s had also an aspect of acquiring public legitimacy through legal support for a certain political action. However, the overemphasis on that aspect overshadows its other highly significant qualities and functions. As a result,

[708] "Fetvadan beklenen şey, bu paylaşıma şer'i dayanak oluşturacak bir argüman ileri sürmesiydi. Ancak buna ihtiyaç duyulmamıştır. Zaten son tahlilde bu nevi fetvaların, politik yönlendirmelerin altında verilmiş, siyasilerin kararlarını meşrulaştırma aracı olarak düşünülen ve bir anlamda pragmatik yönü ağır basan kararlar olduğu bilinmektedir." Köse, 308.

positivistic short-cuts and readymade arguments do not help us understand even the political aspects, let alone the propaganda features, of this *fetva*.

Soon after the *fetva*, another conference was held between the Russian and Ottoman representatives, including Damad İbrahim Pasha, and the Marquis de Bonnac on January 17th, 1724.[709] They discussed the borders on a map. The Ottoman proposal basically envisaged that the Russians would take the Caspian provinces, and the Porte would take the provinces located to the west of the vertical line between Ardabil, Hamadan, and Kirmanshah. Should the Russians accept the proposed borders, Ottoman side would declare their support for Tahmasb instead of Mahmud. Damad İbrahim Pasha told Nepluyev and the Marquis de Bonnac that Shah Sultan Husayn was a friend of the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Thus, Shah Sultan Husayn could be considered a father who had left his property to be divided among his heirs, Tahmasb, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. The grand vizier concluded that the French ambassador should assume the role of *kassâm*[710] and divide the Persian land among these parties. The Ottoman manifestation of accepting Tahmasb on the Persian throne removed the main obstacle to an agreement between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Nepluyev approved the Ottoman draft.[711] The rest of negotiations continued in a smoother way, although they were not conflict-free.

In that meeting, Damad İbrahim remarked that the triple alliance between the Ottoman Empire, France, and Russia was "capable of trembling [sic] the rest of the universe."[712] The

[709] Hurmuzaki also gave an account of an inconclusive meeting on January 16th. See Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:361–65. For the discussions in the conference on January 17th, see Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 234–40; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:367–68; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1374–78.
[710] The official who divides the inheritance among the heirs according to *sharia*.
[711] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 234–40; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:368.
[712] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 236. Çelebizâde also affirmed that statement. Directly quoting from Damad İbrahim, he wrote that "…when these three states [Ottoman empire, France, and Russia] were in alliance, it was more obvious than sun that all Christian kings would have been in fear and fright." "…fî-nefsi'l-emr bu üç devlet ittifâk üzre olduklarında cümle mülûk-i Nasârâda havf ü haşyet azher mine'ş-şemsdir." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1378.

grand vizier's vision was the same as his strategy in August 1722 had been. As I mentioned above, he had told Nepluyev at that time that the Porte wanted to create an alliance with Russia against the alliance of the Holy Roman Emperor, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Venice. Now, Damad İbrahim Pasha was close to the realization of his project.

Nevertheless, the Ottoman side maintained its war option as strongly as the peace option. Damad İbrahim Pasha told Nepluyev and the Marquis de Bonnac that he would lead an army to Adrianople in the spring to be ready for a negative reply to the Ottoman proposal.[713] In a personal meeting, the Marquis de Bonnac convinced the grand vizier to wait at least until the arrival of the tsar's response, which would arrive in Constantinople at the end of April at the latest. Damad İbrahim conceded the French ambassador's demand and agreed to wait until the return of Dusson D'Alion, who had carried the Ottoman proposal to Russia, from Moscow.[714] However, to show the readiness of the Porte for a fight against Russia, the grand vizier shared a relatively detailed plan of war with the Marquis de Bonnac, which the Marquis transmitted to Nepluyev. Among other points, the French resident warned Nepluyev that a potential Ottoman attack either in Persia or in Azov was going to use Trebizond as the transportation port for war supplies, whence it would be easy for the Porte to divert its ammunition from Persia to Azov and to target Russia.[715] Indeed, the Porte sent considerable war supplies to Georgia through the Black Sea while waiting for the tsar's response.[716] The Marquis de Bonnac's comments on his own role in the Russo-Ottoman negotiations shows the main constraints. He wrote that it was impossible to prevent either the Russians or the Ottomans from entering Persia. Thus, he aimed at least to prevent a war between the Porte and Moscow.[717]

[713] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 239–40.
[714] Bonnac, 240–41.
[715] Bonnac, 241.
[716] Bonnac, 250. Confirming the French resident's report, there were many imperial orders for the sending of war supplies to the fronts in the Mühimme register numbered 131.
[717] Bonnac, 243.

Thus ended the negotiations in Constantinople. Dusson D'Alion, the Marquis de Bonnac's nephew and secretary in the negotiation conferences, and a certain Mehmed Ağa, set out to carry the agreed-upon plan to the Russian tsar on January 21st, 1724. They arrived in Moscow on March 8th, 1724.[718] The Russian tsar accepted most of the articles in the draft, making certain changes in the Constantinople draft and sending back again with D'Alion, who arrived in the Ottoman capital on May 13th, 1724.[719] However, by the end of March, the first positive responses from the Russian government had already arrived in Constantinople.[720] New official conferences started on May 20th. The main disagreement was on Tabriz. The Russians initially insisted that Tabriz should be left to Tahmasb,[721] but eventually gave in to the Ottoman proposal and accepted the inclusion of Tabriz within the Ottoman share. Hurmuzaki related that Nepluyev accepted the cession of Tabriz to the Ottomans in return for the Ottoman promise to help Tahmasb's enthronement more actively.[722]

Eventually, both parties agreed on all the articles negotiated, and signed the treaty on June 24th, 1724.[723] Under the new treaty, the southern and western provinces of the Caspian coast were left to the Russians, and the territories allocated to the Ottomans included the entire Caucasus region except for the Caspian coastal cities, and the provinces to the west of a vertical line, including Ardabil, Hamadan, and Kirmanshah. It was upon each power alone to carry out the military campaigns needed to acquire the territories allotted to them, although they agreed to not help each other's enemies. Significantly, both sides agreed that Prince Tahmasb should

[718] BOA, A.DVN, 1073-65. I calculated the arrival date from the information Mehmed Ağa provided regarding the dates and the duration of their voyage as March 8th, 1724 (12 Cemaziyelahir 1136).
[719] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 232. Campredon gave a summary of the discussions in the Russian court and the main points of the draft in his letter to Marquis de Bonnac dated April 16th, 1724. See *SIRIO*, vol. 52, 1886, 190–208.
[720] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 243–47.
[721] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:372; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 254–63.
[722] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1885, 4:372.
[723] For the IItalian version of the treaty, see Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 267–73. For the Turkish version, see Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1379–84.

be supported and enthroned in Persia by ousting the Afghans. And the last article established that even if Tahmasb did not regain the throne, Mahmud was to be dethroned by all means. Russia and the Porte were jointly going to enthrone a person having hereditary right on the Persian throne.

B.6. How to Publicly Declare Ottoman Support for the Shiite Tahmasb against the Sunni Mahmud?

Clairac, the French historian of the time, captured the religio-political aspect of the Partition Treaty succinctly. In analyzing the Ottoman policy of post-summer 1723, Clairac wrote that the Porte was to enter

> into an alliance with a Christian power, not only to share between them the different provinces of a monarchy ceded by the abdication of Shah Hussein to Maghmud, but likewise to dethrone him, and to substitute in his stead Tæhmas, a prince of the sect of Ali.[724]

It happened exactly as Clairac described. The universal caliph of the Sunni world allied with the Christian Russians to partition Iran and to enthrone the Shiite Safavid prince by dethroning the Sunni Mahmud. Signing that treaty was certainly difficult for the Porte in terms of its legitimacy in the eyes of public. Without regard to the specific context, the treaty went against the established religio-political position and discourse of the Ottoman Empire. The Marquis de Bonnac remarked that "it is a new kind of treaty" for the Ottomans, who were now acting "diametrically opposite" to their religion. He explained that the reason for the newness was the Ottoman alliance with a Christian ruler to wage joint war on a Sunni ruler.[725]

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[724] "qu'il s'agissoit de s'allier avec une puissance Chrétienne, tant pour partager differentes provinces d'une Monarchie cedée par l'abdication de Chah-Hussein à ce fameux rebelle, que pour le chasser du thrône & y faire monter à son préjudice un Prince de la Secte d'Ali." See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:114. Translation belongs to Hanway, see Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:201.

[725] "Si les Turcs se sont montrés difficiles et réservés sur quelques termes, on n'en doit point être surpris, car c'est un traité d'une nouvelle espèce pour eux, puisqu'il contient non seulement une alliance formelle avec un prince chrétien et qu'ils l'y déclarent l'auteur de leurs résolutions, mais aussi que cette résolution est de faire la guerre conjointement, pour me servir de leur terme, à un prince musulman, chose diamétralement contraire à leur superstition qui, jusques à présent, a été le premier principe de leur gouvernement." See Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 280.

The immediate context was also not favorable to concluding that kind of an agreement for the Porte, considering Russian belligerence toward the Sunnis in the Caucasus; the Russo-Safavid agreement to fight against the Sunni Mahmud;[726] and Mahmud's popularity among Ottoman subjects as a hero of religion, due to his overthrow of the Shiite Safavids. English resident Stanyan's reports in February confirmed the Ottoman anxiety about Mahmud's potential power. He claimed that the reason the Porte had agreed to make a treaty with the Russians and in support of Tahmasb was to help their fight against Mir Mahmud, due to the

> real Jealousy they have of Mir Ubeys [Mahmud] who sets himself up as a sort reformer of Religion, pretending to restore the pure ancient faith, and purge it from the modern heresies and corruptions crept into it, by which he is esteemed by his followers as a sort of prophet, and more of his success to that character than to his quality of prince and general. The opinion of his sanctity has spread so far that even in Constantinople he has a great many partisans, and the Pasha of Babylon writes that for the same reason he fears if he should come to an engagement with him, that most part of his army would go over to him, so that the ministers of the Porte are now endeavouring to get him declared by the Mufti and the men of the law a rebel and usurper in order to put a stop to the high opinion the common people so greedily entertain of his merits.[727]

Two weeks later, Stanyan again reported that the Porte was more afraid of Mahmud "than of any Christian Prince." According to him, the reason for the appointment of Ahmed Pasha, the son of the late Hasan Pasha, as the governor of Baghdad was the fear that even Ahmed Pasha could rebel against the Porte and join Mir Mahmud.[728]

Thus, the established Ottoman religio-political discourse, with which the state had been defining itself for centuries, created the major obstacle. The Porte had to overcome that difficulty in order to actualize its strategy with regard to Russia, Tahmasb, and Mahmud with minimum risk and domestic challenge. Between January and June 1724, the Ottoman government resorted to several practical tactics and discursive formulations to reduce the

[726] On January 14th, 1724, the Marquis de Bonnac reported that public opinion had begun to favor war against Russia since the news of the Russo-Tahmasb agreement arrived in Constantinople. See Bonnac, 231.
[727] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 48. The date of Stanyan's report was February 8th, 1724. Stanyan wrote "Mir Uwais" instead of his son Mahmud. The Austrian resident also called Mahmud Mir Uwais sometimes in his reports.
[728] Olson, 50. Stanyan's dispatch was dated February 22nd, 1724.

potential risks of helping the Safavids and targeting the Sunni Afghans. The Marquis de Bonnac attributed the successful ratification of the treaty to the "patience and skill" of Damad İbrahim Pasha.[729] Below, I discuss Ottoman endeavors in that period to sign the Partition Treaty with Russia with minimum internal reaction.

As mentioned above, the Porte declared its support for Tahmasb as opposed to Mahmud in the negotiation meeting on January 17th, 1724. Starting from that very day, the Ottoman representatives clearly expressed to the Russians that their common religion with Mahmud made it legally impossible for them to openly help Tahmasb and attack Mahmud.[730] In his overall analysis of the treaty after the ratification, the Marquis de Bonnac wrote that there had been much discussion about how to formulate the Ottoman help to Tahmasb against Mahmud in the text of the treaty.[731]

Apparently, what was actually restricting the Ottoman government was more the fear of domestic opposition than the law. Even in the negotiations on January 17th, the Ottoman side presented the legal formula to circumvent the problem, which was that Mir Mahmud should have been under the Ottoman patronage but that his attitude so far had demonstrated that he was going to oppose the Ottoman and Russian land acquisitions by claiming that he possessed Isfahan and that those lands therefore belonged to him. On that occasion, the Porte would show belligerence toward Mahmud by way of a *fetva*.[732]

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[729] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 156.

[730] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1377; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 238.

[731] "On a beaucoup disputé, à l'occasion de cet article, sur la forme des secours que la Porte donneroit à Tamasip, avant la rupture déclarée avec Mir Mahmoud, étant impossible absolument aux Turcs de déclarer ouvertement leurs intentions là-dessus dans un traité public." See Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 279.

[732] "Ancak Mîr Mahmud sünnî olmağla merkûma karşu imdâd ü i'ânet şer'an câ'iz olmadığı zâhir, lâkin akd-ı musâlaha ile taht-ı himâyemizde olması kendüsüne lâzım ve nice fevâidi müstelzim idiği âşkâr ü bâhirdir. Mîr Mahmud'un ise 'ben taht-ı Isfahân'a mâlik olup bu memleketler bana tâbi'dir' deyü gerek Devlet-i Aliyye gerek Çar'ın zabt itdiği memleketlere çeşm-i adâvetle nazar ve irâde-i gezend ü zarar eylemek sevdâsına düşeceğine zâhir hâli güvâh ve ol vakitde fetvâ-yı şerîf muktezâsınca izhâr-ı husûmet lâzım gelmekle işin başka suret-i kabûl ideceği bî-iştibâhdır." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1377.

The legal reasoning the Porte employed was again dependent on the universal caliph title of the Ottoman sultan. The Ottoman government argued that Mir Mahmud, as a Sunni, should have accepted the Ottoman sultan's superiority and protection, since Ahmed III was the great caliph. *Sharia* rendered any Muslim ruler opposing the caliph a rebel. Thus, should Mahmud oppose the Ottoman land acquisitions in Persia, the Porte could declare him a rebel and fight a legal war against their co-religionist Afghans.

It should be underlined here that the Porte was already convinced and had foreseen that the course of events in Iran required a war between the Ottomans and Afghans in the near future. Thus, even though the Ottoman armies were fighting against the Safavids in Persia, the real Ottoman enemy continued to be Mahmud, not Tahmasb. However, the Porte wanted Tahmasb to overthrow Mahmud, with as little visible Ottoman help as possible. If Tahmasb had achieved this goal, then the Ottoman government could have justified its position to its domestic audience much more easily. In that case, the government would have been able to elude the thorny problem without messing with it.

In the same meeting on January 17th, 1724, the Marquis de Bonnac reported Damad İbrahim Pasha's reply to his question about the type of help the Ottoman government would give Tahmasb. Damad İbrahim Pasha answered that the Porte could not help Tahmasb openly, due to the shared belief between the Ottomans and Mahmud. However, the grand vizier declared that, first of all, Ottoman non-unification with Mahmud should be sufficient help for Tahmasb. He added that the Porte was going to provide Tahmasb with weapons, ammunition, and purveyance. What is more, if Mahmud asked for the Porte's help, the Porte was going to refuse. Lastly, if Mahmud did not recognize the Ottoman land acquisitions, then the Porte was going to declare war on him. The grand vizier concluded that after that war, the Porte and the Russian

tsar would install Tahmasb on the Safavid throne.[733] The grand vizier's support plan was a gradual but decisive one: the Porte was going to increase its help to Tahmasb against Mahmud step by step until the last point. The reason for the gradualness of this help was obviously the restriction of religion for the actualization of a plan that contradicted the well-established Ottoman religio-political claims. It presented an excellent opportunity for those who were in opposition to challenge the current government.

In February and March 1724, the government collected a war tax (*imdâd-ı seferiyye*) from the subjects. The Porte stated the reason for collecting this tax as "the military campaign against the infidel Muscovites."[734] It was in fact not the Muscovites, but the Afghans, whom the Porte targeted. The Porte's propaganda was a radical one. As I discussed in the previous chapter, during that period, the Porte maintained an anti-Afghan war under the guise of an anti-Safavid fight. Now, the Porte also added anti-Russian campaign into that discourse.

Why did the Ottoman government "misrepresent" what was actually happening? The need to preserve a consistent religio-political discourse led the government to tell an entirely different story than the actuality. That kind of a religio-political maneuver would help the government to circumvent possible internal challenges that would have objected to a war on

[733] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 238.

[734] These orders were to the Kütahya governorate and Edremid *sanjak*. The date of the order to Kütahya and Edremid was 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1136 (February 20th, 1724). The order reads as "İş bu 1136 senesinde vaki Moskov keferesi üzerine musammem olan sefer-i humayun vaki olmağla…" Then the Porte sent a separate and more detailed order to Edremid, dated 22 Cemaziyelahir 1136 (March 18th, 1724). "İş bu sene-i mübarekede musammem, Moskov keferesi üzerine memur olan Anadolu valisi vezir-i mükerrem Osman Paşa hazretlerine..." See Ş.S.D., Balıkesir-Edremit Kısmı, Demirbaş No:1230, Mikrofilm No:5807, The year digitized:1998, pp. 17-18.

I encountered this information in Münir Aktepe's book about Patrona İsyanı. The author discusses the tax in the context of the increasing tax burden due to long wars throughout the 1720s. He demonstrates how economic problems also led to the Patrona rebellion of 1730. Aktepe does not discuss the inconsistency of collecting a tax for war against Iran as if the war was against the Russians. See Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 8.

Münir Aktepe mistakenly specified the page of the order as "nr. 50, 28." He cites two different orders from the same register, on the same page of this book, writing that both of them were from the same page of the register. However, the other information he cites is from page 28 of the register. The orders about "Moskov keferesi" were recorded on pages 17 and 18, not 28. Meanwhile, "nr. 50" should have been the number of the entry in the register. However, it is not readable today from the digital copy of the register. Most probably, Aktepe was able to read it from the hard copy of the register itself and to specify the number of the order.

the Sunni Afghans. Even if the government maintained successful propaganda for the time being, that propaganda itself also showed the limits of the Porte. The government was not so powerful as to be able to openly demand tax to partition Iran with Russia and to help Tahmasb against Mahmud.

As mentioned above, the first positive responses of the Russian government to the Ottoman proposal arrived in March 1724, and the Marquis de Bonnac, Nepluyev, and the Ottoman representatives, including Damad İbrahim Pasha, met on March 30th. The grand vizier told the Marquis de Bonnac that if the Porte was not able to act against Mir Mahmud openly, then it would help Tahmasb "in secret." Then, he expressed that the Porte would see the tsar's enthroning of Tahmasb on the Persian throne with pleasure.[735] Again, "religion," with its several aspects, prevented the Porte from actualizing its real policy in an open way. Damad İbrahim's statements captured both the flexibility of political actors in their decisions regardless of possible religious restrictions, and also their boundaries drawn by religion. The established religio-political system and discourse did not allow the government to arbitrarily ignore religion in legal and communal senses without taking the consequences of their actions into serious consideration.

In a letter dated April 16th, 1724, Campredon wrote to the Marquis de Bonnac that the Russian government had accepted the Porte's demand to be excused for not being able to act in an openly offensive way against Mir Mahmud.[736] The Russian decision would have relieved the grand vizier, who could then follow the two-faced policy in an easier way. It is of critical importance that the Russians accepted the Ottoman religio-political concerns sympathetically. The Russians considered a religious pretext as a legitimate excuse in the bargaining process.

[735] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 245.
[736] Sbornik, vol 52, p. 206. *SIRIO*, 1886, 52:206.

The fifth article of the Partition Treaty was mostly dedicated to the way the Porte was going to help Tahmasb against Mir Mahmud. The fact that one of the six articles dealt with that question is self-explanatory regarding the difficulty of the task for the Ottomans. The Turkish version of the entire article reads as:

> In case the territories allocated to my sublime state in the third article is given to my sublime state with the mediacy of the aforementioned tsar smoothly, then Tahmasb is going to be recognized as shah of Persia by my sublime state. And complete confidence shall be given to him for his stability. By this way, he is going to get help from my sublime state in an appropriate way, and a peace treaty is going to be concluded with him, through the sending of a royal letter. After that, as a requirement of the Russo-Tahmasb agreement, the aforementioned honorable tsar shall actively help Tahmasb to liberate Isfahan, that is the inherited throne of Tahmasb, and Persian domains from the hand of domination of Mir Mahmud. In the meantime, if the rebelliousness of Mir Mahmud, the son of Mir Uwais, towards my sublime state became apparent, and if as a requirement of sharia, it became necessary to send troops on him, then, at that time, my sublime state is also going to march on him. The spark of the rebellion fire is going to be extinguished completely. And it is going to be expelled from the Persian domains. There is going to be communication with the honorable tsar, and Isfahan is going to be seized with the operations of both sides. At that time, my sublime state and the aforementioned tsar shall agree to reestablish Tahmasb in his throne, by virtue of the treaty between the sublime state and Tahmasb.[737]

This article included many stipulations for the Ottoman help to Tahmasb. In a way, these stipulations reflected the preconditions Damad İbrahim articulated in the conference on January 17th. First, the Ottomans were going to support Tahmasb, if Tahmasb agreed to cede the provinces in the Ottoman share to the Porte. However, the method of help was not specified

[737] "Üçüncü mâddede zikr olındığı üzere Devlet-i Aliyye'me tahsîs olunan memleketler Çar-ı müşârün-ileyhin tavassutıyla sühûlet ile Devlet-i Aliyye'me teslîm olunduğu hinde, ol vakitde Devlet-i Aliyye'm tarafından Tahmasb'a Acem Şâhlığı'nı teslîm ve istikrârı husûsunda kendüye emn-i küllî verilmekle Devlet-i Aliyye'mden münâsib olan vechile i'ânet ve nâme-i hümâyûn irsâliyle akd-i musâlaha olundukdan sonra müşârün-ileyh Çar-ı bâ-vakâr, Tahmasb ile olan ta'ahhüdü muktezâsınca Tahmasb'a taht-ı mevrûsesi olan Isfahan'ı ve memâlik-i Acem'i Mîr Mahmud'un yed-i tasallutından tahlîs içün akd olınan mevâdın muktezâsı üzre i'ânetini fi'le getürüp icrâ eyleye. Ve bu esnâda Mîr Üveysoğlu Mîr Mahmud tarafından Devlet-i Aliyye'me bağy ü tuğyânı zâhir olup ber-muktezâ-yı şer'-i kavîm, üzerine ba's-i ecnâd olunmak lâzım gelür ise ol vakitde Devlet-i Aliyye'm dahi şer'an üzerine hareket ve şerâre-i bağy ü tuğyânın bi'l-külliyye itfâya dikkat ve tamâmen memâlik-i Acem'den tard u ib'âdına mübâderet ve müşârün-ileyh Çar-ı bâ-vakâr ile haberleşüp tarafeynin hareketiyle işbu mevâd muktezâsınca Isfahan teshîr olundukda Devlet-i Aliyye'm Tahmasb ile musâlaha üzre bulınmak takrîbiyle pâyitahtında istikrârı husûsunda Çar-ı müşarün-ileyh ile muvâfakat edeler." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1383.

and only written as an "appropriate way." Second, after the acquisition of Persian lands by the Porte and Russia, it was not the Porte, but Russia that was going to provide active help to Tahmasb against Mahmud. It is noteworthy again that unlike the Ottoman "appropriate" help, the Russian help was specified as "active." Third, if on that occasion, Mahmud "rebelled" against the Ottoman state, and if the Porte had to send troops against the Afghans, only then could the Porte engage actively in the war. The last sentence of the article is also critical. Even after the seizure of İsfahan, the Porte's recognition of Tahmasb as the shah of Persia depended on Tahmasb's peace treaty with the Porte. As I discuss in the next chapter, when relations between the Ottomans and the Russians worsened in the following year, the Porte declared the Partition Treaty void due to Tahmasb's refusal to accept the Porte's conditions. In any case, the Porte and Moscow agreed that the Ottomans would intervene in Persian affairs directly against Mahmud as a last resort. All these formulations were to guard the Ottoman government from internal challenges either from the people in the capital or from those in the bordering provinces, where the attraction of Mahmud was considerable.

The last article of the Treaty was also important in terms of the Ottoman decisiveness to get rid of Sunni Afghans and to reestablish the Safavid state, either with or without Tahmasb. Both sides agreed that if Tahmasb opposed the shares of the Porte and the Russians, then these powers would capture the specified provinces by their own force. Then, they would recognize a suitable person, having the inheritance right for the Persian throne, as the shah of Persia. That shah would enjoy all the rights enjoyed by the former Safavid shahs. However, Mir Mahmud's rulership was not going to be accepted in any way.[738]

This article did not rule out the possibility of Tahmasb's enthronement, even if he might oppose to the Russian and Ottoman conquests, and it also implied the reestablishment of

[738] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1383; Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 272.

Safavid dynasty by stipulating that the would-be ruler should have inheritance rights. Lastly, the Porte and Moscow categorically rejected the option of Mir Mahmud's remaining on the Persian throne. Thus, it officialized the Porte's real target as Mahmud, rather than Tahmasb.

C. Post-June 1724 Peace

The Partition Treaty marked the end of the "Cold War" between the Porte and Moscow that had started in the spring of 1722 with the preparation of the Russian expedition in the Caucasus. If Tahmasb agreed with the Ottoman and Russian land acquisitions in return for their support against Mahmud, then the war of external powers in Iran could end as soon as June 1722. However, Tahmasb did not accept either of these proposals and decided to defend his territories against the Afghans, the Ottomans, and the Russians all at once.[739] In terms of Ottoman-Tahmasb relations, the real Ottoman war on the Safavids in the 1720s began with Tahmasb's refusal of the grand vizier's proposal, which had been sent with Murtaza Quli Beg. Tahmasb's rejection caused the Porte to pay a high price, in economic and manpower terms. However, it helped the Ottoman government to pursue its anti-Afghan war under the guise of anti-Safavid *jihad* in an easier way in terms of managing public opinion. Thus, the Porte continued to deploy anti-"heretic" discourse in the post-June 1724 period, at least until the fall of 1725.

The Partition Treaty had opened the way for the Ottoman armies, and as of fall 1725, the Ottomans had conquered all the regions in their portion.[740] Among others, the conquest of Tabriz on August 2nd, 1725, after it had successfully resisted Ottoman attacks for two years, marked a definite Ottoman victory over the Safavids.[741] With this conquest, the most important stronghold of the Safavids, who had experienced around ten thousand casualties by the end of

[739] P. G. Butkov, *Materialy Dlja Novoj Istorii Kavkaza, s 1722 Po 1803 God,* vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1869), 85. Butkov related that the Russian resident Avramov struggled to convince Tahmasb to accept the Partition Treaty, but Tahmasb did not accept.

[740] The cities conquered on the three fronts after the Partition Treaty were as follows: on the Caucasus front, Ordubad (August 1724), Nahcevan (September 7th, 1724), Erevan (October 3rd, 1724), Lori (August 3rd, 1725), and Ganja (September 4th, 1725); on the Azerbaijan front, Tabriz (August 2nd, 1725) and Urmiye (October 1725); on the Iraq-i Ajam front, Maraga (April 1724) and Hamadan (August 31st,1724).

[741] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1439–44.

the war, had fallen.[742] It is important to note that one of the major factors enabling the Ottoman army to capture the city was the fact that Tahmasb was caught between two fires at the same time. As narrated in the previous chapter, Tahmasb confronted Ashraf's army in the north of Isfahan around the same time. Informed about Tahmasb's major march on Isfahan, the Porte urged Köprülüzade Abdullah Paşa, the commander-in-chief, to go and take the city under control, emphasizing the "opportunity" due to the decreased amount of Kizilbash troops as a large group of them had gone to join Tahmasb's army with the aim of capturing Isfahan.[743]

In his congratulatory message to Abdullah Pasha, written in his own handwriting, Ahmed III called the city the "capital of Azerbaijan."[744] Unlike other conquered cities in Iran, the capture of Tabriz had resulted in great celebrations both in Constantinople[745] and in several cities and provinces, including Bursa, Adrianople, Egypt, Algiers, and Tunis.[746] The Meccan emir was also informed about the news of the conquests of Tabriz and other cities with a royal epistle.[747] Tellingly, the fall of the Ottoman government headed by Damad İbrahim Pasha, his execution, and the dethronement of Ahmed III happened as a result of the Patrona rebellion that was ignited by the fall of Tabriz in 1730, again in August.[748]

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[742] Abraham of Erevan, *History of the Wars (1721-1738)*, ed. George A. Bournoution (Mazda Publishers, 1999), 36.

[743] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1214, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725). The same order was sent to Mustafa Pasha, commander-in-chief on the Caucasus front, urging him to conquer Ganja with the same explanation. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1214, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725).

[744] "Darü'l mülk-i memalik-i Azerbaycan olan şehr-i Tebriz"

[745] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1444. The city celebrated the conquest for five days and four nights, embellishing the streets and shops with ornaments, and lightening the kiosks at nights.

[746] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1262, 1263, 1264, and 1265, (date not given in the document). The governors in these cities and provinces were ordered to proclaim celebrations for three days and nights. Bursa and Edirne were selected due to their prestigious position as earlier Ottoman capitals. Curiously, the other provinces included only North African territories, where Cezayir-i Garb, Tunis, and Trablusgarb were specifically named as cities to celebrate the conquest of Tabriz.

Moreover, unlike in other cities, the heads of these three North African regions were alone ordered to include cannonball shots from the fortresses. It was probable that against the Moroccan sultans' claims of caliphate, the Ottoman sultan wanted to show his grandeur and unchallenged ownership of the title of caliph as being the best servant of religion with his overwhelming political and military power.

[747] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-68, pp. 107-08, 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 31st – September 8th, 1725).

[748] I discuss the relationship between the fall of Tabriz and the Patrona Halil rebellion in Chapter Seven.

There were many examples of the continuation of Ottoman religio-political discourse of "*jihad* against the heretics" in the post-June 1724 era. I content myself here only with the example of the Porte's discourse in celebrating the conquest of Tabriz. The content of the imperial orders extensively referenced *sharia*, the holy war on heretics and apostates, and the elevated position of the Ottoman sultan as caliph of the Muslims. One fifth of the order was a preamble documenting the legality of *jihad* against the Safavids. The order referred to several *fiqh* books and the *fetva* of Abdullah Efendi that declared the Kizilbash apostates and infidels.[749] The order also mentioned certain specific actions of the Kizilbash that rendered them apostates. Then, the Porte claimed that the Ottomans had been fighting to conquer Persian provinces for several years, with the aim of "upholding the word of the manifest religion and exalting the *sharia* of the Master of the Messengers" (*i'lâ-i kelime-i dîn-i mübîn ve i'zâzı şeriat-ı Seyyidi'l Mürselin için*). When narrating the conquest, the imperial order stated that the Muslim *gazi*s (*guzât-ı Müslimîn*) had defeated the band of the apostates (*gürûh-i mülhidîn*) by trusting in God, by depending on the Prophet, and by asking for help from the pure spirits (*rûh-ı tayyibelerinden istimdâden*) of the first four caliphs. Thus, Tabriz, the capital of Azerbaijan, was conquered by force (*anveten*) and added to the domains of the noble caliph (*cenâb-ı hilâfetmeâb*).

The letter to the Meccan *sharif* on the conquest of Tabriz highlighted similar points. The main body of the letter was quite similar to the imperial orders sent to several cities mentioned above. In the last part, rather than asking for celebration, the sultan requested the prayers of the scholars and ascetics for the longevity of the Ottoman state, the grandeur of the sultan, the increasing success of holy warriors, and the demolition of heretics. Even though it was not demanded that the Meccan *sharif* directly announce the Ottoman victory, it was clearly implied

[749] The *fiqh* books cited were *Bezzaziye*, *Tatarhaniyye*, *Hulasa-i Fetava-i Şerife*, *Şerh-i Hidaye*, and *Fetavay-i Zahriyye*.

with a reference to a Qur'anic verse (93:11) in which the Prophet was asked to "proclaim the bounty" of His Lord.[750] Orders to other cities included that verse, as well.

Thus, the Porte maintained an intensely anti-Safavid religio-political discourse for a period of three years. Again, the Ottoman war on the Safavids did actually not aim to destroy the Kizilbash. The main reason for the fight was Tahmasb's non-compliance with the Ottoman offer to help install him on the Persian throne in return for surrendering the western provinces of Iran. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were basically three reasons for the Ottoman demand to take these provinces. The first two were keeping the Russians and Afghans as far away as possible from the traditional borders of the Ottoman state. The other goal was to economically and politically exploit the turmoil in Iran, considering the richness of these provinces. The Porte deployed anti-heretic discourse until the conquest of the targeted provinces in Persia. The function of that discourse was helping the Ottoman government achieve these goals with maximum religio-political legitimacy. After the Porte successfully incorporated these territories, it intended to help Tahmasb or another person from the Safavid family regain the Safavid throne from the Afghans. As articles five and six of the Partition Treaty stipulated, the Ottoman government was adamant in expelling the Afghans from Iran. Thus, sooner or later, the Porte was going to abandon its anti-Safavid discourse and embrace an anti-Afghan one, instead.

While the Ottomans were successful in implementing the treaty on the ground, it turned out to be not as fruitful as expected for the Russians. The Russian troops were not even able to capture the territories in their portion, like Mazandaran and Astarabad.[751] There were at least two apparent reasons for their failure: First, the serious geographical and logistic problems that the Russian troops encountered showed that the Caspian region was still beyond the effective

[750] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-68, pp. 107-08, 20 Zilhicce 1137 (August 31st –September 8th, 1725).
[751] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:235, 247.

reach of Russia as of the first half of the eighteenth century.[752] Second, Peter I, who had been on the Russian throne for forty-three years and who had diligently pursued ambitious aims in the Caucasus and Caspian regions, died on February 8th, 1725. His death marked the end of active Russian involvement in the Persian affair, at least until the resurgence of the Safavid dynasty five years later.[753]

Thus, the first and most intense period of the military fights among the four powers in Persia ended and a new phase began. In the new phase, as is clear from the absence of Safavids and Russians, the confrontation would be between the Ottomans and Afghans, both of whom had strengthened their positions in Iran significantly compared to the period before the fall of Isfahan. Direct confrontations between the Ottomans and Afghans between 1726 and 1729, a relatively less-known historical period, is one of the most curious and intriguing occasions in the history of co-confessional competition and fighting between Sunni powers.

[752]Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 179–202. After a detailed analysis of the logistical conditions of Peter's campaign, Stoyanov concludes that "Although as a military achievement the campaign was fully successful in terms of securing the Caspian Sea for Russia, the logistics failed to demonstrate the ability of the northern Empire to march adequately its armies outside Europe." See Stoyanov, 202.

[753] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 250. Hanway attributed the passivity of the Russians in Persia after Peter's death to the fact that his heirs were not able establish a seat so that they could interfere in the affairs of Persia, in a situation where the Ottomans increased their aggression. Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:239.

CHAPTER 5: THE SUNNI ENCOUNTER: OTTOMANS AND AFGHANS, 1725-1727

Following the conclusion of the Treaty of Partition on June 22nd, 1724, the Marquis de Bonnac sent a letter to Campredon, the French resident in Moscow. De Bonnac informed Campredon about the debates between the representatives of the Porte and Russia on each article of the agreement. He finished the letter with the following warning:

> Besides, it should not be believed that there is nothing left to do once this treaty is signed and ratified. It should be considered that, to the contrary, it will open a new and perpetual negotiation, which should be carried out and managed with more delicacy than the previous one, and with much more openness and more resources.[754]

It took less than a year for the realization of de Bonnac's prophecy. The year 1725 witnessed the ending of the honeymoon between Constantinople and Moscow. A new phase of enmity was opened, escalating until 1739, when the war between the allied Russian and Austrian forces and the Ottomans that had begun in 1736 ended.

After the Ottoman conquest of the provinces in its share of Iran in the fall of 1725, the long-waited time for actualizing the Russo-Ottoman promise to help Tahmasb recover his throne came. However, conditions had considerably changed within a year following the Partition Treaty. The increased power of the Ottomans, the ineffectiveness of the Russians, and the defeat of Tahmasb by Ashraf led their respective policies to oppose one another. By the spring of 1725, at the latest, these external powers were conducting their Iranian policy in opposition to one another. This disagreement was the major factor differentiating the new phase from the previous one, which had started in 1722. In a broader perspective, from 1725 on, Russo-Ottoman relations experienced an ever-increasing cleavage that would not become as

[754] "Au reste, il ne faut pas croire que ce traité signé et ratifié, il ne reste plus rien à faire. Il faut considérer, au contraire, qu'il va s'ouvrir une nouvelle et perpétuelle négociation qui doit être conduite et ménagée avec autant et plus de délicatesse que la précédente, et beaucoup plus d'ouverture et plus de moyens." See Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'Ambassade de France à Constantinople*, 280. I thank Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak for his translation of the excerpt into English.

close again until the end of the eighteenth century. In this chapter and in the next, I argue that the Russo-Ottoman conflict was the main reason that the Ottoman territories were won back by Iran, a process that eventually ended in 1735.

Under the new conditions of 1725, the Porte reevaluated the possibility of recognizing Ashraf as the ruler of Iran, should he accept the Ottoman conditions. Contrary to the expectations of the government, Ashraf proved to be more challenging and formidable than Mahmud. Ashraf claimed that he was also a caliph in Iran, enjoying equal status with Ahmed III. He also demanded that the Porte cede control of the Persian provinces they had conquered. Ashraf's clear unconformity with Ottoman interests and his serious religio-political threat made the Safavids again the foremost alternative for the Porte as of February 1726. I argue in this chapter that the Porte therefore returned to its earlier policy of supporting Tahmasb in 1726 and fought against the Afghans with the aim of replacing Ashraf with Tahmasb.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the divergence of policies between the Porte and Russia on the Iranian question in the beginning of the latter half of the 1720s. Then, I will investigate the changing policies of the Ottoman government with respect to the Afghans and the Safavids between 1725 and 1727. As in the previous chapter, here I examine the religio-political discourse of the Porte toward these powers within their related political contexts.

A. The End of the Russo-Ottoman Honeymoon

A.1. Change in the Balance of Power

The shift in the balance of power in Iran in favor of the Ottomans was a major change in bilateral relations following the Partition Treaty of June 1724. That shift was arguably the main source for the cleavage between the Porte and St. Petersburg, at least initially. In the pre-1725 period, the major impediment to the realization of Ottoman and Russian goals in Iran was each other's aggressive and strong military involvement in the Persian question. However, especially after Peter I's death, both the Russians and the Ottomans realized that Iran was still beyond the

effective reach of Russia, which meant the freeing of the Porte from the major check to its power in Persia.[755] In this new situation, the Ottoman government gradually became inclined toward a new strategy that did not exclude the possibility of ousting the Russians from Iran completely. Starting in the summer of 1725, if not earlier, the Porte began to press Russia to decrease the latter's power and share in Persia. The diverging policies of the Porte and Russia brought the end of the Russo-Ottoman alliance in Iran in practice, if not on paper.

A.1.1. Russian Policy Change in Iran

The Russian demarcation commissioner, General Rumyantsev, arrived in Constantinople at the end of December 1724.[756] Before the general left Moscow, Peter I gave Rumyantsev instructions, in his own handwriting, to accomplish seven tasks. The first was to be careful to draw the boundary exactly as agreed upon in the treaty; the remainder were about a possible Russian march from Baku to Georgia. The Russian tsar ordered Rumyantsev to determine the best route to reach Georgia from Baku with an army, and the duration of that march; how to find provisions for the march; whether the Armenians were far from Georgia and from that route; whether it was possible to reach Georgia using small ships to navigate the Kura River; and current strength of the Georgians and the Armenians.[757] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Peter I also instructed Rumyantsev to tell the Porte that the Russians were going to accept Armenians and Georgians emigrating from the Ottoman domains to the new Russian territories, on the basis of "protecting their co-religionists."

Apparently, Peter I was not that committed to the Partition Treaty. His medium-term plan seems to have been to conquer the entire Caucasus region from the Caspian Sea to the Black

[755] Based on Venetian resident Gritti's dispatch dated April 15th, 1725, Mary Lucille Shay wrote that "Its [the Porte's] attitude could and did become more independent after the death of Peter the Great. When that event was known in Constantinople, Gritti wrote that the Turks flattered themselves that vast plans had fallen, since they considered the czar only an apparent friend and really a hidden enemy." See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 121.
[756] Mustafazade, *Azerbajdžan i Russko-Tureckie Otnošenija v Pervoj Treti HVIIIv.*, 88.
[757] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 31*, 213.

Sea, in case an opportunity, like the weakening of the Porte, arose.[758] His instructions highlighted again how aptly the Venetian *bailo* observed the Ottoman view of Peter I: "an apparent friend and really a hidden enemy."[759] Çelebizâde Asım's entries on the the deaths of Peter I and Catherine I are suggestive of a similar mindset. The title for the entry on the death of the former was "Perishing of the Muscovite tsar"; for the latter, "The Death of the Muscovite tsarina."[760]

Ironically, exactly the opposite of what Peter I envisaged happened. The Porte had the opportunity to exploit a weakening Russia less than a year after the conclusion of the Partition Treaty.[761] The death of Peter I in February 1725 eased the Porte's decision-making on the Iranian question. After the news of his death reached Constantinople, Rumyantsev wrote to tsarina Catherine I that Russian troops in Persia should not have been withdrawn or decreased, since both he and Nepluyev were being pressured by the Ottomans over the Russian forces' inadequacy for the implementation of the treaty in Persia.[762] In August 1725, after the capture of Tabriz by the Ottomans, Rumyantsev wrote again to St. Petersburg, complaining that it became daily more difficult to prevent the Ottomans from advancing further into Persia and that the Porte continuously expressed concern about the inactivity of the Russian troops in Gilan.[763]

Compared to the aggressive military expeditions and conquests in which Russia had engaged in Persia in the first half of the 1720s, they were clearly inactive in the rest of the

[758] Tofiq Mustafazade also underlines that Peter's instructions meant that he had not abandoned the policy of expanding toward Georgia and Armenia, even after the Partition Treaty. See Mustafazade, *Azerbajdžan i Russko-Tureckie Otnošenija v Pervoj Treti HVIIIv.*, 88.
[759] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734,* 121.
[760] "Helâk-i Çar-ı Moskov Petro Alekseviç;" "Mürden-i Çariçe-i Moskov." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1423 and 1557.
[761] I discuss the Porte's new policies in the next chapter.
[762] Sergei M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii c Drevneyşikh Vremen*, vol. 19 (St. Petersburg, 1867), 950. Catherine I's envoy to Constantinople brought the news of the death of Peter I on April 7th, 1725 (23 Receb 1137). See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1423.
[763] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:950.

decade. However, that inaction should not be exaggerated and interpreted as Russian passivity in Persia. It needs to be remembered that during that period Russia still had control of Gilan, Baku, and Darband. Moreover, it had stationed a considerable military power, tens of thousands of soldiers, in these footholds, all strengthened by new fortifications.[764]

After the death of Peter I, the Russian government was seriously considering a policy change in Iran. In March 1725, the members of Supreme Privy Council gathered to discuss the current situation in Persia.[765] They agreed on the main points and policy suggestions of Andrey Ivanovich Osterman, the vice-president of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main perceived threat was Ottoman increased power in Iran. Osterman pointed out that as stated in the 1724 treaty, the application of the treaty depended on Russian persuasion of Tahmasb to agree to the terms of the agreement. If Russia was not able to persuade Tahmasb, then another figure was going to be installed as shah. The Russians feared that, should this possibility come to pass, the Ottomans would be further strengthened and might even oust the Russians from Iran.

Thus, Russia was in a tough situation as of the spring of 1725. On the one hand, it did not want to make any more investments in Persian affairs. On the other hand, it also did not want a powerful Ottoman presence in Persia. These two goals were in clear conflict with one another, since Russian passivity in Persia would mean leaving Persia to the Ottomans. In that scenario, Iran would become something like the Ottoman backyard, and the Ottomans would be able to establish their undisputed influence over Persia, being freed from their main counterbalancing power.

Having agreed about the concerns shared by Osterman, Council members presented a completely new Iranian policy to the tsarina on March 30th. According to this policy, Russia

[764] Both Ottomans and Russians gave that number at around 30,000. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-596, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1139 (August 9th-18th, 1727); Soloviev, 19:947.
[765] Soloviev, 19:946–47.

would move away from Persia gradually, but would simultaneously force the Ottomans to do the same until the Ottomans returned to their pre-1722 borders. Regarding the first phase of withdrawal from Persia, they suggested ceding all provinces south of the Caspian to the Safavids, which in actuality only meant ceding Gilan to Tahmasb. The Russians had not been able to take the provinces of Mazandaran and Astarabad. Catherine I agreed with this new policy.[766] Thus, a new phase started in the Iranian question.

The main pillar of this dual strategy was the establishment of an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Safavids in Iran, so that the Ottomans could also be forced to retreat. Soon after reaching a consensus on the new policy, in April 1725, the government decided to send an order to General Mikhail Matyushkin, the commander-in-chief of the Russian forces in Persia, to postpone the conquests of Mazandaran and Astarabad for a while.[767] The order underlined the importance of strengthening Russian rule in Gilan. Clearly, Russia wanted to be as strong as possible in Gilan in order to be an effective ally to the Safavids in ousting the Ottomans from Iran.[768]

In the beginning of October 1725, Ottoman aggression in Persia beyond the 1724 treaty was clarified.[769] On that occasion, the Russian government ordered General Vasily Yakovlevich Levashov, commander of the Russian forces in Gilan, to offer military help to Tahmasb against the Ottomans. The government stated that since the Ottomans had advanced deep into Persia, beyond their agreed-upon boundary, Tahmasb was being pressed by the Afghans and the Ottomans at the same time. In this situation, the order continued, the Russian forces should offer him shelter in Gilan and reassure him of Russian support for his restoration to the Persian

[766] Soloviev, 19:947.
[767] Soloviev, 19:945–46.
[768] In 1725, 10,000 new Russian troops were sent to the Iranian provinces under Russian possession and fifty-four ships carried military supplies to Darband and Baku. See Tofiq Mustafazadə, *XVIII Yüzillik – XIX Yüzilliyin Əvvəllərində Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri* (Baku: Elm, 2002), 36.
[769] I examine Ottoman aggression under the next subtitle, "The Increasing Tension between the Porte and Moscow."

throne.[770] In the same month, Levashov wrote to Tahmasb offering Russian military assistance should the Safavids march on the Ottomans to force them out of Ardabil and beyond.[771] From the course of events, it seems that Tahmasb did not respond positively to this offer.[772] Around this time, Catherine I also sent Wakhtang, who was currently in St. Petersburg, to Astrakhan. Clairac aptly observed that this action was nothing but an "unspoken threat" to the Porte.[773]

However, in early 1726, Tahmasb sent two separate envoys to the Ottomans and the Russians from Astarabad, as he had in the beginning of the summer of 1723,[774] again asking for their help against the Afghans. The Safavid envoy to Russia was detained in Gilan by the Russians and was not allowed to proceed to St. Petersburg. Instead, his message was conveyed to the Russian capital. In line with the newly-adopted Iranian policy, tsarina Catherine offered the surrender of Astarabad, Mazandaran, and Gilan[775] to the Safavids in return for Tahmasb's compliance with Russian demands.[776] However, Russia would keep its portion in Shirvan and

[770] Butkov, *Materialy Dlja Novoj Istorii Kavkaza, s 1722 Po 1803 God*, 1:85.
[771] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 345.
[772] Lockhart, 345–46.
[773] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:343–44. As I discuss in the next chapter under the title "Shahseven Rebellions," Wakhtang's sending to Astrakhan became a point of dispute between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Nepluyev in 1727. St. Petersburg sent Wakhtang with Prince Dolgurki, the new commander of the Russian forces in Iran. Their duty was gathering Armenian, Georgian, and even Muslim communities to fight against the Ottomans. See Mustafazade, "Safevî Hanedanı'nın Son Yılları," 1640; Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 36.
[774] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:246–47; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 342, 345. I discuss Tahmasb-Ottoman communication below under the title "Ottoman-Tahmasb Agreement."
[775] These were all southern Caspian provinces Russia claimed for herself since the Partition Treaty of 1724. However, the Russians could only capture Gilan, and were not able to take Mazandaran and Astarabad.
[776] Neither Butkov nor Lockhart specified the Russian demands in exchange for these generous concessions. However, it was not a secret that Russia had proposed an anti-Ottoman alliance to the Safavids. As indicated by Levashov's letter of October 1725, the Russians had offered help to the Safavids should they decide to attack the Ottomans to expel them from Iranian lands completely. As the reason for the Russian promise to cede Gilan, Mazandaran, and Astarabad to Safavids, Lockhart gives the tenderheartedness of the tsarina. Rather than explaining that kind of major foreign policy change by appeal to the personal traits of rulers, here, I offer a rational foreign policy explanation within the framework of Russo-Ottoman regional competition. "The Empress Catherine, who had a kind heart, had been appalled at the news which reached her of the sufferings of the Russian troops in Gilan and of their terrible death-rate. She therefore instructed Dolgoruki to offer to surrender all claim to Gilan, Mazandaran and Astarabad if Tahmasp would satisfy her demands, one of which was the recognition of Russia's sovereignty over her portion of Shirvan and Daghistan." See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 345.

Dagestan. This agreement was not concluded, as, among other reasons, the tsarina died in the spring of 1727.[777]

Apparently, what Russia intended was to create an anti-Ottoman alliance between Russia and Tahmasb. It approached Tahmasb as a friendly power, or at least compared to the Ottoman antagonism that extended even to Tahmasb's portion of the Persian lands as agreed upon by the Ottoman and Russian Empires in 1724. There were two major impediments to this Russian logic: First, to confront the Ottomans, Tahmasb first needed to regain the Persian throne, and the Russians were not directly helpful in Tahmasb's struggle against the Afghans. Second, as I discuss below, at that time the Ottomans had offered Tahmasb exactly what he needed first: the defeat of Ashraf by Ottoman military power and subsequent installation of Tahmasb on the Persian throne.

A.1.2. The Increasing Tension between the Porte and Moscow

The Porte was reluctant to apply the terms of the Partition Treaty in the field until mid-winter 1726. This reluctance resulted both from the increasing passivity of the Russians and the successes of the Ottomans on the battlefield.[778] Moreover, Tahmasb had neither accepted the Partition Treaty nor conformed to Ottoman territorial demands. According to the treaty, the Porte was to help Tahmasb, should he ratify a separate peace with the Ottoman sultan. Besides, Ashraf defeated Tahmasb in the summer of 1725. Under these circumstances, to support the defeated and uncompromising Tahmasb, who had no Russian support, became more costly for the Porte in religio-political, military, and economic senses. The lure of gaining more land and even the possibility of ousting the Russians from Persia seem to have also been influential in

[777] It is important to note that the Russians increased their promises to Tahmasb compared to their October 1725 offers. That policy of increasing the offered help to the Safavids gradually to encourage them against the Ottoman presence in Iran had continued until the very last day the Ottomans were forced out of Iran completely, in the end of 1735. See Chapter Seven.

[778] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 352. Confirming the unbalanced superiority of the Ottomans over the Russians in Persia, Krusinski wrote that due to that reason the Porte became discontent with its original share allocated by the 1724 treaty. See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:187–88.

this policy shift.[779] Consequently, the Ottoman government assumed an equivocal stance on helping Tahmasb. Surprisingly, the Porte decided to give the alternative of Afghan rule in Iran another chance, even considering the new Afghan leader, with whom no official contact had yet been made.

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Ashraf's replacement of Mahmud triggered Tahmasb's direct attack on Isfahan. The Porte's stance in this war shows the transformation of the Ottoman government's Iranian policy. Ahmed Pasha asked the government how to act in prospective cases of Ashraf's or Tahmasb's victory. He also added his own recommendations in that regard. The Porte ordered Ahmed Pasha to wait somewhere between Hamadan and Isfahan, around Farahan, for the conclusion of the war between Tahmasb and Ashraf. The Porte advised Ahmed Pasha to send letters to Ashraf showing religious affection and unity with the aim of attracting Ashraf to the Ottoman side, considering the possibility of Ashraf's victory.[780] Should Ashraf win, then Ahmed Pasha was to conquer Luristan, located in the south of Hamadan, and/or other possible nearby areas. This policy was in line with the continuing policy of leaving the Afghans as little land as possible in Iran. In the other alternative scenario, in which Tahmasb became victorious over Ashraf, Ahmed Pasha was to continue waiting and not advance toward the Safavid territories.[781]

The Porte soon sent another order to Ahmed Pasha, simultaneously answering one of his letters other than the one referred in the first imperial order. In this letter, Ahmed Pasha strikingly asked permission to conquer Isfahan under certain conditions. These conditions were that Tahmasb had defeated Ashraf, but had not yet been able to establish his firm authority in

[779] There were "unofficial raids" from Ottoman territories to Gilan in early 1726. See Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:239–40; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 358.
[780] "Ve Eşref Han ile mükâtebe ve mürâsele ile izhâr-ı meveddet-i dîniyye ve arz-ı ittihâd-ı yâkîniyye ile taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyyeme celb ve imâlesine ihtimâm ve dikkat…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1119, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725).
[781] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1119, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725).

Isfahan. In reply to this letter, the government highlighted that conquering Isfahan was a major decision regarding religion and politics.[782] Ahmed Pasha was to march on Isfahan after ascertaining at least two things. First, he should be completely confident that the Ottomans could take Isfahan and establish firm rule there. There should not be any possibility of losing to others. Second, he should make the decision to conquer Isfahan with the unanimous agreement of those with whom he consulted.

Both Ahmed Pasha's offer and the Porte's acceptance of it, even under specific conditions, represented a radical shift in the Ottoman government's policies in the recent and far past. Since Süleyman I's expeditions in Persia, which had ended in 1555, the Ottomans had not aimed to conquer Isfahan. This new target demonstrated the euphoria of both the frontier pashas and the Porte in the summer of 1725. Looking retrospectively, this radical change seems to have been the main reason for the Ottoman loss of Persian lands a decade later. It caused Russian enmity, and the Russo-Safavid alliance successfully ousted the Ottomans from Iran in the coming years.

At the end of August 1725, resplendent celebrations of the conquest of Tabriz were continuing with great joy and enthusiasm in several places, including Sadabad's kiosks and gardens, the central location of the so-called Tulip era.[783] It was around this time that the Porte received the news that Ashraf had defeated Tahmasb and initiated the policy that followed from an Ashraf victory. Amid these celebrations, the Ottoman government, headed by allegedly "peace-loving" and "leisure-seeking" Damad İbrahim Pasha, ordered Abdullah Pasha to capture

[782] "Bu husûs, muazzamât-ı umûr-ı dîn u devletden olmağla, mebâdi ve avâkibine dikkat-i temmet ve em'ân-ı nazar, ve hayr-hâhân-ı Devlet-i Aliyyemden ol tarafda olan erbâb-ı istişâre ile müşâvere, ve hüsn ü kubhunu tefekkür ve tezekkür eyleyesin." See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1215, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725).

[783] The news of the conquest of Tabriz arrived in Constantinople on August 22nd, 1725 (12 Zilhicce 1137). See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1444. For the celebrations in Constantinople, see Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1444.

Urmiye in Azerbaijan as soon as possible.[784] And, about a week later, the Porte ordered the three commanders-in-chief to march further east, transgressing the borders delineated in the Partition Treaty with the Russians.[785] The orders highlighted Ashraf's victory and urged the commanders-in-chief to advance as much as possible.

Upon these orders, the Ottoman forces in the Caucasus conquered Ganja (September 4th, 1725), a city within the Ottoman portion. The Ottoman troops were not able to advance further on the Caucasus front, although they made progress on the Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam fronts. Iraq-i Ajam, Luristan, and Hurramabad (September 6th, 1725) and several towns and fortalices closer to Isfahan were taken under Ottoman control.[786] In Azerbaijan, Ottoman troops entered Ardabil in the last months of 1725.[787] Ardabil was within Tahmasb's share according to the Partition Treaty. During the peace negotiations, the Russian side had rejected the draft Ottoman map that included Ardabil within the Ottoman portion, and the Porte had relented. On that front, Ottoman troops could not capture the new targets of Qazvin and Sultaniyya, which remained again beyond Ottoman borders. Thus, the capture of Ardabil marked the broadest extent of the Ottoman border and ended the series of Persian campaigns that had started in fall 1722 (Caucasus) and fall 1723 (Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam).

The transgression of agreed-upon boundaries was another turning point in the Ottoman Iranian policy. With these orders, the Porte explicitly demonstrated its non-compliance with the terms of Partition Treaty of 1724. Due to Ottoman over-advancement and continuing Russian inactivity, the last months of 1725 and early months of 1726 were one of the tensest periods in Russo-Ottoman relations since the beginning of the Persian question. The warnings

[784] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1267, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1137 (August 21st-30th, 1725).
[785] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1306-07, Evahir-i Zilkade 1137 (August 31st – September 8th, 1725).
[786] To support the conquests in that front, five thousand Crimean Tatar troops were transfered from the command of Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha to that of Ahmed Pasha. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1269, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1137 (August 21st-30th, 1725)
[787] The news of this conquest arrived in Constantinople in the beginning of January 1726. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1470–71.

Rumyantsev had made about Ottoman intrusions went unheeded in Constantinople and his demand to go to Shirvan to demarcate the borders was rejected by the Ottoman government.[788] Moreover, Rumyantsev and Nepluyev criticized the Porte for entering into negotiations with Ashraf, violating the 1724 treaty. To these two objections, the Ottoman government's responses were, first, that the treaty did not bind the Porte, since Russia had not been able to persuade Tahmasb to accept the treaty.[789] Second, they argued, Ashraf was in possession of Isfahan, and it was quite normal for the Ottoman government to negotiate peace with the rulers of Persia. They added that it would have been strange if they had done the opposite: expelling a ruler sharing the same Sunni faith as the Ottomans and attempting to install a Shiite on the Persian throne. Lastly, Damad İbrahim put forward that rather than trying to help someone to establish his authority in Persia, it would have been better for Russia and the Ottoman Empire to have divided Persia entirely between themselves, in alliance and concord.[790]

Ottoman responses indicated a totally new vision of the Porte regarding the Iranian question. In this vision, the treaty was abrogated, and the government felt no further commitment to installing Tahmasb on throne. The Ottoman government was right that the Porte had no obligation to help Tahmasb, according to the treaty, whose fifth article stipulated that if Tahmasb agreed on the Ottoman share, then the Porte would support him in Iran. However, this condition was not enough to abrogate the treaty altogether. Article six regulated the course of action in case Tahmasb opposed the Partition Treaty. It prescribed that the Porte and Russia were to enthrone someone else having the inheritance right to the Safavid throne. Moreover, that article also concluded that Mir Mahmud would not be accepted as the ruler of Iran. Thus, Tahmasb's rejection did not render the Partition Treaty void, as the Porte claimed.

[788] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:240; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 123.
[789] It was incumbent upon Russia to persuade Tahmasb to accept the treaty as agreed by both sides.
[790] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:950–51.

The second point of the Porte's new vision was an apparent example of flexibility of religio-political discourse based on changes in actual political goals. The government quickly embraced a pro-Sunni discourse on the Iranian question, counter to the Russians. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the Porte maintained a pro-Sunni discourse only on the surface, addressing Sunni populations both within and outside the Ottoman realm. In reality, it struggled to enthrone a Shiite in Isfahan to replace the Sunni Afghans. However, when conditions changed in 1725, the government considered that giving another chance to the Afghans, rather than remaining committed to the Partition Treaty, was in the interest of the Porte. So, contrary to earlier promises and agreements, it started to employ pro-Sunni discourse against the Russians, too. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it was not difficult for the Porte to convert the soft power of Sunni unity into hard power. The short period between the fall of 1725 and mid-winter 1726 was another example of this ease.

The grand vizier's suggestion to partition Iran without helping any internal power to ascend to the throne meant nothing less than Ottoman dominance in Persia. Both sides knew well that Russia had no power even to capture its designated portions, let alone to advance further in Iran as would be required under a new partition schema.

In September 1725, a tense meeting took place between the grand vizier, the Ottoman secretary of state (*reisülküttab*), Nepluyev, and the French ambassador Vicomte d'Andrezel regarding the reconsideration of the Partition Treaty of 1724. In that meeting, the *reisülküttab* blamed the Russians for their passivity and for not being able to capture their allotted zones, let alone oust Ashraf from Isfahan. Under these new conditions, he asserted, the possibility of a renewal of the peace with changed terms should be considered. Allegedly, he even told Nepluyev that Rumyantsev was free to return, if he wished. Upon these serious remarks,

Nepluyev stated that he needed to consult St. Petersburg.[791] Late 1725 and early 1726 witnessed a quasi-repeal of the treaty between the Ottomans and Russians.[792]

Golovkin, the Russian prime minister, sent an uncompromising letter to the Ottoman grand vizier regarding the matter, most probably after the meeting the previous September.[793] He wrote that the Porte had persisted in delaying the demarcation work and had not allowed the Russian commissioner to travel to the border. If, he asserted, the demarcation was to be postponed the coming Spring for a reason that the Ottomans hid from the Russians, then the Russian government would call Rumyantsev back.[794] It is clear that the "hidden reason" Golovkin implied was the Ottomans' complete breaking of the peace with Russia and their new and different project in Persia.

As a characteristic feature of the Porte's foreign policy, in the face of Russian pressures, the grand vizier preferred to stay equivocal as long as possible to have the maximum number of available choices at hand for the longest possible period. At that time, the main question that would have determined the Ottoman attitude toward Russia was the viability of the choice of the Afghans over the Safavids. Considering Mir Mahmud's unrelenting attitude, the probability

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[791] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 352. Lockhart depends on Stanyan's dispatches for these conversations. The dates of the dispatches were September 29th – October 10th, 1725 and October 3rd-14th, 1725.

[792] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 122.

[793] That letter was not contained in the Nâme-i Hümayûn Defteri, in which all correspondence between St. Petersburg and Constantinople was usually recorded. The reason may have been the harsh content of the Russian letter. Even though I was unable to locate the original version of the letter, I could get at least the summary of it as written in Damad İbrahim Pasha's reply. The reply was also not registered in the Nâme-i Hümayûn Defteri. However, it is accessible today in the Ottoman archives in the foreign sources section. That letter was among the archival documents copied by the Ottoman archives from the Russian archives. BOA, YB.(1) 022-11,13,15,17. For more information about that section in the Ottoman archives, see *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (İstanbul: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2017), 276–77. I discuss Damad İbrahim Pasha's letter in the next chapter.

The dates of these two letters are not written either on the document or within the text itself. However, Damad İbrahim's letter would have been sent sometime between February (Ottoman learning of Ashraf's non-compliance) and April 1726 (Ottoman authorization of demarcation commissioners). According to this timeline, Golovkin's letter could have been written in late 1725. The English ambassador Stanyan related that Nepluyev told the Ottoman *reisülküttab* to ask about the matters raised by the Ottomans to the Russian governments in a meeting in September 1725. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 352.

[794] This seems an in-kind response to the Ottoman bluff about the freedom of Rumyantsev's return.

that his successor, who had recently dispensed with Tahmasb, could accept Ottoman superiority was distinctly low. However, in the face of Russian and Safavid military inability, and due to the religio-political risks of fighting Ashraf, the Porte had considered giving a chance to that possibility. Ottoman territorial advances that left Ashraf a very limited area of control would also have encouraged the Ottomans and given them hope regarding Ashraf's inclination to accept Ottoman terms. Under these circumstances, the Porte's cold and even increasingly negative attitude toward the Russian representatives continued until the government learned the content of Ashraf's letter.[795]

The coming of the Afghan ambassador created another diplomatic crisis between the Porte and Russia. The Russian representatives at Constantinople protested the Ottoman government's acceptance of the Afghan ambassador. They claimed that it was completely in violation of the terms of the treaty of 1724. In response, the Porte again resorted to the caliphate argument, according to which Afghan envoy was not an official ambassador, but a messenger from a Sunni prince whose message could not be left unheard by the caliph, leader of all Muslims.[796] As I demonstrated in several other examples earlier, the "universal caliph" title of the sultan had a multi-functional use in justifying a wide range of the Porte's actions.

Two other developments showcasing the divergence between the Porte's and Moscow's policies were the postponing of the demarcation of borders according to the 1724 treaty and the conclusion of a defensive alliance between Austria and Russia in August 1726. I investigate both developments in the next chapter.

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[795] During that time, the European residents, including the Russian one, were not allowed to meet with the Afghan envoys, who were closely guarded and isolated by fifty janissaries. See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:298. Moreover, the government even considered cancelling Rumyantsev's authorization as envoy and decreasing his daily allowance from sixty to ten piasters. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 123.

[796] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:189–90; Mohammad-Ali Hekmat, "Essai Sur l'histoire Des Relations Politiques Irano Ottomanes de 1722 á 1747" (PhD diss., Universite de Paris, 1937), 173; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 283.

B. Ottoman-Afghan-Safavid Triangle, 1725-727

Ottoman conquests beyond the agreed upon borders targeted the Afghans as much as Russia. As of the summer of 1725, Ashraf emerged as the only able power within Persia. The Porte's goals were to keep the Afghans as far from the traditional Ottoman borders as possible and outmaneuver Ashraf within the limited territories in Persia to which he could lay claim.[797] For a long time, the Porte had projected the proper place of Afghan rule in Persia as the acceptance of Ottoman superiority and even suzerainty, as I examined in Chapter Three. These conquests would have helped to persuade Ashraf to bow down before Ottoman authority, and even if not, these acquisitions would provide the Ottomans with a relatively more advantageous position in a possible military confrontation.

The reciprocal military victories of the Ottomans and the Afghans over the Safavids prepared the ground for the actualization of the long-waited diplomatic confrontation between the two Sunni powers. Soon after crushing Tahmasb, Ashraf had sent Abd al-Aziz and Mulla Abd al-Rahim as envoys to the Ottoman capital in the beginning of September 1725, and they arrived in Constantinople on January 20th, 1726.[798] The only question the Porte sought to answer was whether Ashraf, unlike his cousin and predecessor Mahmud, would accept the superiority of the Ottoman sultan.[799]

B.1. Religio-Political and Legal Debates between the Ottomans and the Afghans

B.1.1. Afghan Claims

The Afgan envoy submitted three letters to the Porte: first, from Ashraf to Ahmed III; second, from Zela Khan, Ashraf's *iʿtimād al-dawla*, to Damad İbrahim Pasha; third, from the Afghan *ulema* to the Ottoman *ulema*.

[797] 132-1215, Evasıt-ı Zilkade 1137 (July 22nd-31st, 1725); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 132-1306-07, Evahir-i Zilkade 1137 (August 31st – September 8th, 1725).
[798] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 244; Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:296.
[799] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 283–84.

The addressees of the letters showed the main Afghan claim in a diplomatic way: three letters from the Afghans to their Ottoman counterparts, indicating diplomatic equality between the Afghans and the Ottomans. The scholarship on Ottoman-Afghan relations has omitted this Afghan claim, despite the fact that, as I discussed in Chapter Two, the international status quo between the Ottoman state and the Safavids rendered the Safavids one level below the rank of the Ottomans. Afghan letters of 1725 thus meant a diplomatic revolution in the existing hierarchy between the Ottomans and Persia. Ashraf penned his letter to Ahmed III alone, not Damad İbrahim Pasha.

B.1.1.1. Ashraf's Letter to Ahmed III

Ashraf's letter was a long one. The original Persian version was eleven pages. The *münşeat* also included a shortened Turkish translation of it spanning two pages.[800] Ashraf started by stating that his predecessor Mahmud had fought to destroy the "heretic" and "infidel" Safavids with only the sincere religious intention of attaining the pleasantness of God. With the help of angels, the Afghan holy warriors (*gâziyân*) defeated the Kizilbash, who were evil in conduct (*Kızılbaş-ı bed-ma'âş*). Then, he narrated how the Afghans conquered several cities in Iran following their conquest of Isfahan.[801] After that, Ashraf started to narrate his enthronement and reign. He wrote that he, who had been helped by God (*müeyyed min 'indillah*) and holy warrior on the path of God (*mücâhîd fî sebîlillâh*), had attained the caliphate and sultanate by heredity.[802] Ashraf claimed that the only reason for his acceptance of this post was his desire to spread the rules of the Prophet's *sunnah* and to declare the signs of the saved party (*fırka-i nâciye*), meaning the Sunnis.

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[800] For the original Persian letter, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân (Devlet-i Aliyye Ile Eşref Hân Beyninde Tevarüd Eden Nâmeler)*, CD 7310 (Old number: 3353) (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library: Esad Efendi Collection, n.d.), 37a–42a. For the Turkish translation, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 46b–47b.

[801] The Turkish translation did not include these parts.

[802] The Turkish version only includes "*müeyyed min indillah*," but not "*mücâhid fî sebîlillah*." That omittance was quite telling, suggesting the Porte's desire to protect its "monopoly" over holy war, one of the fundamental legitimacy sources of the House of Osman for centuries.

Then he narrated that Tahmasb was hiding in Azerbaijan due to his fear of the soldiers of Islam (*sipâh-ı İslâm*), referring to Afghan troops. Ashraf stated that he had expected that the Ottoman pashas in the region would have captured and killed him and that it had surprised him that the Ottomans could not do so. He then described his war with Tahmasb in the summer of 1725 in a detailed, boastful manner.[803] He again referred the Afghan soldiers as holy warriors, and mentioned how the Afghans became victorious with invisible help from God, as a manifestation of the blessing of the pure spirits of the first four caliphs. Ashraf continued to boast about his victory, needling the Ottoman sultan. He argued that it was apparent that the sultans carrying the ring of *sharia* showed negligence and weakness in their failing to take back the right to the sultanate from the "usurper," referring to the Safavid shahs.[804]

Then, Ashraf demanded the withdrawal of the Ottomans to the pre-1722 border. He argued that the Porte had maintained the border with the *revâfiz* for more than two hundred years, let alone the religious brothers. Moreover, he said that he knew that the Porte did not prefer hypocrisy (*nifâk*) over concord (*vifâk*).[805] He added that to protect the *sharia* was among the fundamental religious obligations (*zarûriyât-ı dîn*). Ashraf stated that he had heard that the reason for Ahmed Pasha's arrival in Hamadan was the protection of religion (*himâyet-i dîn*) and to help the victorious Muslim Afghan soldiers (*muâvenet-i cünûd-ı Müslimîn-i Afgâniyye-i nusret-karîn*). He claimed that the "help of invisible soldiers" (*imdâd-ı cünûd-ı gaybî*) for the "holy warriors on the path of God" (*mücâhidân fî sebîlillâh*) had been sufficient for the conquest of Isfahan. It would thus be improper to ask for help, now, from anybody other than God.

Ashraf warned the Porte that if the reason for Ahmed Pasha's presence in Hamadan was to bring the two co-religionists face to face in opposition, it would be against the will of God.

[803] The Ottoman translation mentions that event in just a few sentences.
[804] It was also a clever move on Ashraf's part to turn the usurper argument against himself upside down. Besides, the Turkish translation did not include the part "sultans carrying the ring of *sharia*."
[805] While "*nifak*" referred to the Safavids, "*vifak*" referred to the Afghans.

He purported that in that case the attorney was God, who took "the vessel wherever He wills".[806] Ashraf added that his only intention was to spread the exalted path of the sect of the first four caliphs (*intişâr-ı sünnet-i seniyye-i mezheb-i çâr yâr*) and to conceal the markings of the "heretics." Ashraf's last message was that he had sent troops to capture Tahmasb, who might have escaped toward the Ottoman borders. He warned the Porte not to provide shelter to Tahmasb. He concluded that with the elimination of Tahmasb, peace and tranquility would be achieved. His last words highlighted the centrality of religious unity for the achievement of peace in the region.

Above all, Ashraf's letter was a bold manifestation of his political equality with the Ottoman sultan. He showed no sign of compliance or humility. He purposefully specified that he had inherited both caliphate and sultanate. Ashraf's claim challenged the caliphal title of the sultan in two fundamental ways. First, if it was accepted, there would be two legitimate caliphs enjoying equal status in the region, which would mean the breaking of the monopoly of the Ottoman sultan over the coveted title of caliph. Second, Ashraf deemed the caliphate of the House of Osman a regional caliphate (*halîfe*), instead of a universal one (*halîfe-i kübrâ*). As I discussed in Chapter One, since Selim I, the Ottoman dynasty had maintained that it possessed not only *hilâfet*, but also *hilâfet-i kübrâ*.

The Afghan ruler depended on a well-framed religio-political discourse, which he also ornamented with many references to Qur'anic verses. Indeed, the Afghan discourse was almost identical with that of the Ottomans, in many respects. Ashraf was fighting only for the sake of

[806] Lockhart's comment on Ashraf's words is noteworthy. He writes that

> "Khudā kashtī ānjā kih khwāhad barad;
> Agar nākhudâ [or nā-khudā], jāma bar tan darad.

It may be translated as follows:

> God takes the vessel wherever He wills,
> Although the captain (or atheist, if one reads *nā-khudā*) tears the clothes on (his) body.

The sense that these lines were intended to convey was, apparently, that, while God could do whatever He pleased, the captain or atheist (namely, the Sultan of Turkey) tore his clothes because he was helpless." See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 284.

God and to glorify the orthodox religion. His aim was not worldly conquest, but to eliminate the Safavid heresy. His soldiers were the soldiers of Islam, and as such they were holy warriors. God endorsed the Afghan holy war and supported the Afghans through invisible soldiers.

Ashraf did not stop there, however. He accused the Porte of not eliminating Tahmasb despite the tremendous Ottoman military power. His words implied that the Porte had willingly let Tahmasb go, and even supported the Safavid prince. Moreover, he disdained the House of Osman for being unsuccessful in overthrowing the Safavids for centuries, a task the Afghans had achieved in a very short time.

Ashraf formulated his demands from the Porte again within the same religio-political discourse. He purported that it was expected from the Ottoman sultan to agree on a reestablishment of the earlier borders with the Sunni Afghans, considering that the sultan had maintained the same border with the "heretics" for centuries. Moreover, he turned the Porte's pro-Sunni discourse in its Iranian wars against the Ottomans quite skillfully. He claimed that he had heard that the aim of Ahmed Pasha was to help Sunnis. Logically, he argued, there was no further need for any Ottoman help, since Ashraf himself had recently defeated Tahmasb. Ashraf's point revealed that beneath the pro-Sunni guise, which the Porte had successfully maintained for more than two years, the Ottoman war was in fact pro-Safavid.

Certainly, the Porte's aim was to stay in the conquered provinces, not to withdraw. Ashraf's argument addressed that possibility, too. In such a case, a fight would become inevitable, and the unrightful side would become the Ottomans, whose real aim would become not "protecting religion," but opposing to its co-religionists. The framework he presented was a simple and powerful one. In fact, the main reinforcer of his claims was the Ottoman confessional identity, which the Porte had fostered for centuries. The House of Osman had suppressed lesser, alternative Sunni powers with the same religio-political claims. The Shiite wall in the east had provided the Ottoman sultan the ability to maintain that discourse with

relative comfort. Now, a Sunni Afghan ruler, sitting on the throne of the Safavids shahs, directly challenged the bases of the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty using the same religio-political discourse.

B.1.1.2. The Letter of the Afghan Ulema

Unlike the Persian letters of Ashraf and Zela Khan, the Afghan *ulema* penned their letter in Arabic, the common language used for the Islamic sciences, including law (*fiqh*).[807] The letter included the legal opinions of the Afghan *ulema*, nineteen of whom signed the letter. The first two were Mulla Za'faran, the *mulla bashi*, and Mulla Süleyman, the judge of Isfahan. Other signatories were among different ranks of the *ulema* class, like *müdarris*, *mufti*, *imam*, *hatib*, and the head of *muezzin*s. Clearly, the Afghans wanted to increase the weight of this religious opinion on which the *ulema* of the highest rank agreed.[808]

The letter started by addressing the Ottoman *ulema* as "O community of brothers in religion and close friends in the path of certainty!"[809] The Afghan *ulema* continued that the Safavids were the most deviant group, so that they had become infidels according to religious law. They purported that it was a religious obligation for Muslim rulers to eliminate the Safavids; however, no one had been successful in this regard so far. Mahmud Shah, they maintained, had overthrown the heretics and established Sunni rule in Iran.

This preamble again showed the main position the Afghans assumed. First, they emphasized religious brotherhood, which they knew well was the soft spot for the Porte. The Ottoman sultan did not want his brother in religion to be his neighbor. Second, they highlighted Mahmud's outstanding success against the "heretics," whom no one, including the Ottomans,

[807] For the original Arabic letter, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 44a–46b. For the Ottoman translation, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 49b–51a.
[808] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1479–80.
[809] "Yā ma'shar al-ikhvān al-dīn wa khallān-ı fī tarīq al-yaqīn" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 44b. "Ey din karındaşları ve tarîk-i Hak yoldaşları" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 49b.

had been able to overthrow. Thus, the Afghan religio-political discourse targeted exactly the points that hurt the Ottomans most.

Then, the Afghan *ulema* moved on to two legal questions and presented their legal opinions. The first question was that whether Ashraf's imamate was legitimate while there was already an *imam*, the Ottoman sultan.[810] The Afghan *ulema* argued that the authoritative books of theology and law permitted the existence of multiple *imams* at the same time, in case the realms (*belde*) of these *imam*s were far from each other. Regarding the remoteness of the Ottoman and Persian realms, the Afghan *ulema* argued that Isfahan was in the third geography (*iklim*), and Constantinople was in the sixth. Thus, they were sufficiently distant from one another to legally permit the existence of two *imam*s at the same time.[811] According to the Afghan *ulema*, the legal measure for this sufficient remoteness was whether one of the two *imam*s could extend his rule over the other, which was clearly not the case regarding the rulers of Constantinople and Isfahan.[812]

They warned the Ottoman side about the serious consequences of not following the *fetva*, which had been justified through conclusive proofs and evidence. The Afghan *ulema* stated that they sought refuge in God from whoever objected this *fetva*. They quoted two traditions of the Prophet following their legal opinion. The first one was "whoever draws sword against us is

[810] As I mentioned in Chapter One, there was no difference between the concepts of "caliph" and "imam" in this context. However, the preferred concept for that position in Islamic legal terminology was "imam." Afghan letters also exemplified this difference. While Ashraf's and Zela Khan's letters referred to Ashraf as "caliph," the Afghan *ulema*'s letter utilized the concept of "imam."

[811] Pre-modern geographers divided the geography between the equator and the north pole into seven regions. The Afghan *ulema* referred to that division. For more detailed information on the pre-modern geographical concept of *iklim*, see Mahmut Ak, "İklim," in *TDVİA*, 2000.

[812] "…bizim beldemiz İsfahan, haffet bi'l emn ve'l eman, iklim-i sâlisden ve Kostantiniyye iklim-i sâdisten olmağla, gayet ile baîd vaki olup, ehadehumânın hükmü âhara vâsıl olmaz…" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 50b. The Arabic original of the excerpt was: "Siyyamā bilād al-Kostantiniyye sānaha Allahu ta'ālā 'an al baliyyāti fa innahā fī ghāyat al-bu'd min baladinā Isfahan haffat bi al-amn wa al-amān idh hiya min al iqlīm al-sālis, wa lā yasilu hukm-i ahadahīmā ilā al-āhar" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 45a.

not from us,"[813] while the second stated that those who draw sword against "my people" (*ummatî*) would enter hell.

Then, the Afghan *ulema* moved on to the second question: the Ottoman legal obligation to leave the conquered provinces in Persia to Ashraf. They came up with two separate arguments. The first explained the reason why the Porte's claim of "inherited lands" in the western provinces of Persia was legally groundless.[814] The second argument justified the necessity of Ottoman cession of these lands to Ashraf.

The Afghan *ulema* presented a fictive scenario in which heretics captured certain goods from a Muslim ruler and other Muslims took these goods from the hands of the heretics. In that case, who should be allowed to keep the goods? The Afghan *ulema* replied to their own question by alleging that earlier jurists had ruled that these goods should be shared among the holy warriors who took the goods from the heretics. Thus, the goods were not to be returned to the first Muslim owner. By way of analogy, the Afghan *ulema* claimed that, by analogy to the goods, the land was nobody's possession. Thus, they argued, the Ottoman claim of inherited lands had no legal support.

However, the problem of justifying the Afghan claims was still not completely solved. It was not the Afghans, but the Ottomans who had retaken the western provinces of Persia from the "heretics." Here the second legal argument of the Afghan *ulema* came into play. This argument depended on three premises. First, the Persian realm's integrity was indivisible. Second, dividing a certain realm (*belde*) between several Muslim rulers was legally

[813] "Man salla al-sayf alaynā, fa laysa minnā."

[814] The direct Afghan reply to the Ottoman "inherited land" argument was significant. It showed that Afghans had received the knowledge of that Ottoman justification. It was probable that the Porte let the Afghans know about that justification with Osman Ağa's embassy in February 1723. However, at that time the Porte had not entered into Persia yet. Thus, it is probable that the Afghans received that information in another way. In any case, it shows the circulation of information between the Porte and Isfahan in these critical matters.

impermissible. Third, whoever took the capital of a realm first would have the legal right to take all the other areas within that realm.

The Afghan *ulema* argued that nearby provinces within the same *iklim* were legally considered one realm. And in a case where the throne of one *padishah* was transferred to another one, all the provinces within the same *iklim* and under the rule of the former *padishah* entered into the possession of the latter.[815] Through deductive analogy (*kıyas*), they compared Isfahan and the entire Persian realm to *harîm* (the precincts of real-estate property) in Islamic law. Islamic jurists had agreed that if a person recreated a pristine wilderness area, then a certain area for the purposes of recreation, located next to the recreated area, became the *harîm* of that person. Nobody else could claim right on that *harîm*. For example, if a person drilled a well for the purpose of watering his flock, then a certain piece of land encircling the well that was large enough to fit the flock would become the *harîm* of that person.[816]

The Afghan *ulema* alleged that the provinces of Persia were like the *harîm* of Isfahan.[817] They further argued that it was exactly in such a case where multiple imams (*ta'adûd al-imâm*)

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[815] "Husûsan bilâd-ı karîbe ki bir iklimden ola, belde-i vâhide hükmündedir. Ve şol bilâd ki bir iklimden bir padişahın taht-ı tasarrufunda ola, mülk bir melikten melik-i âhara intikal eylediği halde, darüssaltana olan mahalle tâbi olur. Bilâd, darüsaltana tahtında dahildir." See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 50b.

[816] Salim Öğüt, "Harim," in *TDVİA*, 1997.

[817] They quoted the Prophetic *hadith* of "man ahyā ardan mayyitan fa hiya lahū, wa laysa li 'irqin zālimin haqq." It means "Whoever revives dead land, it is his, and that which is unlawfully planted confers no rights." See Abu Dawud, *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 19, the Book of Kharāj, Fai'and Imārah (Leadership), Chapter 35/37: Reviving Dead Land*, ed. and trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, vol. 3, hadith no. 3073 (Maktaba Dar-us-salam, 2008), 541. Imam Malik's explanation of *'irqin zālimin* is as follows: "It was reported from Malik, who said: "Hisham said: 'That which is unlawfully planted refers to a man who plants things on someone else's land, so that he may be entitled to it.'" Mâlik said: 'That which is unlawfully planted refers to all land that is taken, dug, and farmed unlawfully.'" See Abu Dawud, *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 19, the Book of Kharāj, Fai'and Imārah (Leadership), Chapter 35/37: Reviving Dead Land*, ed. and trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, vol. 3, hadith no. 3078 (Maktaba Dar-us-salam, 2008), 542–43.

Mehmet Akbulut confuses *harîm* with *haram*, the prohibited zone in Mecca and Medina. He quotes another *hadith*, to which which the Afghan *ulema* did not refer. He writes that,

> They [the Afghan ulema] referred to a well-known hadith about the status of the city of Medina. The hadith, which is not cited in full in the letter, goes thus: "(Prophet) Ibrahim declared Makkah sacred and supplicated for its people, and I declare Al-Madinah sacred as Ibrahim declared Makkah sacred, and I supplicated concerning its Sâ' and Mudd (units of measurement) twice (the blessings) Ibrahim supplicated for the people of Makkah." In an obvious reference to this hadith, the Afghan

were legally forbidden, since multiplicity led to disorder (*fesâd*). They concluded that among the Muslim rulers it was the Afghan rulers (*melîk*) who had conquered Isfahan, the capital of Persia. Thus, it was the legal right of the Afghans, not of any other Muslim ruler, to take all the former Safavid provinces into their possession.

The Afghan *ulema*'s mentioning of *ta'adûd al-imâm* is noteworthy. As I will examine below, the illegitimacy of *ta'adûd al-imâm* was the fundamental argument of the Ottoman *ulema* at that time. The reference to *ta'adûd al-imâm* shows that the Afghan *ulema* predicted the Ottoman legal response to the Afghan claim for the legitimacy of Ashraf's imamate having equal status with the Ottoman sultan. They forestalled Ottoman justifications for the illegality of multiple *imam*s with this argument. Thanks to this foresight, the Afghan *ulema* even turned the future Ottoman argument against the Ottomans themselves as a justification for the demand that the Ottomans cede the western Persian provinces to the Afghans.

B.1.2. Ottoman Response

From its beginning, the Afghan challenge had presented a double problem for the Porte. Externally, the challenge was the Afghans themselves. Internally, the Ottoman public was also against any anti-Afghan policies of the Porte, due to the Sunni belief shared between the two groups. In this sense, the Ottoman-Afghan encounter was also an intense propaganda war between two Sunni states. The Porte had lost the ability to utilize an "us" and "them" distinction, on the basis of Sunni and Shiite strife and to confront an external threat, for the first time since 1501. Their shared belief with the Afghans completely blurred this distinction. The Afghans were "them," as they ruled in another realm. But they were also "us," by virtue of their Sunni belief.

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ulama called the area around Isfahan harîm as Prophet Muhammad had done for Medina. The Afghans had this right because they had conquered all these lands without any help.

See Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 139.

Ashraf's first open move against the Ottomans depended completely on this "us" argument, the soft spot of the Porte in this competition. As aptly captured by Hanway in 1762, "Religion was the object on which the Afghans founded their pretentions."[818] In the face of this challenge, the Porte no longer had the comfort of leaning on the religious discourse of fighting against the heretic infidels in the name of Islam easily. It had to emphasize the "them" side and convince its internal audience about the righteousness of the Ottomans and wrongness of the Afghans to an extent that a holy war could be fought against the coreligionist Afghans.

Clairac wrote that after the news of the coming of Abd al-Aziz had reached in Constantinople, a rumor started to circulate in the city. According to this rumor, the reason for his coming was (1) to declare Ashraf's recognition of the Ottoman sultan as an *imam*; (2) and to cede to the Ottomans all the provinces of Persia that he had conquered, including Isfahan. The only condition he allegedly laid down was the Porte's recognition of him as the sovereign prince, i.e., khan, of Kandahar. Clairac noted that the rumor also included the reasons for Ashraf's so-called proposals: Ottoman conquests in the last campaign had intimidated Ashraf and "persuaded" him to step back. As mentioned above, in the months following the end of the summer of 1725, news of the conquests of big cities like Tabriz, Ganja, Ardabil, and Luristan had created euphoria in Constantinople. Clairac remarked that Ashraf's purported decisions led to an outpouring of joy among the people of the Ottoman capital.[819]

The fact that the rumor was so specific and exactly the opposite of what Ashraf proposed, and also the ideal situation for the Porte, increases the possibility that the source of the rumor was the Porte itself. We cannot be sure about the source with the available information at hand. However, we know that the government learned about Ashraf's main proposals from Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, who sent a letter to the Porte after questioning the Afghan

[818] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:242.
[819] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:296.

envoy in Hamadan.[820] Even the Dutch East India Company (VOC) agents in Persia reported the proposal of Ashraf's envoy to the Porte as "to get the treaty confirmed which had been concluded between Shah 'Abbas and the Porte."[821] Thus, Ashraf's demands were no secret in Iran, and the Porte had this information already.

In any case, that rumor seems to have perfectly served the Ottoman government's purposes of preparing the public to form a negative attitude toward the Afghans. It described the most appropriate behavior to be assumed by Ashraf, who was a lesser ruler. It also flattered the public's pride in being Ottomans whose sultan was the great caliph of all Muslims. Those who circulated this false rumor might have aimed for the following situation: When the real proposal was heard by people, they would be angered at Ashraf for not assuming the attitude suitable to a Muslim prince. Then, they would support Ottoman policies against Ashraf, at whom the public had always looked with great sympathy so far.

Çelebizâde's reaction against the Afghan demands as voiced by Zela Khan, Ashraf's *iʿtimād al-dawla*, is also suggestive. Çelebizâde stated that instead of requesting help and support from the post of the world-protecting *padishah*, which was the direction of worship for the kings in the world, the Afghans had made some inappropriate demands regarding the demarcation of borders.[822] These remarks match with the probable results of the rumor circulated in the Ottoman capital.

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[820] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d, 133-123, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1138 (November 17th-26th, 1725). "Bu hâlet-i mu'azzamât umûr-ı dîn ü devletden olmağla, sadrıa'zam-ı dûr-endîş hazretleri bu husûsu mukaddemâ İran tarafı ser'askerlerinden istihbâr ve mezbûr Eşref Hân'ın kurb u civârlarında bulunmaları hasebiyle reftar ü güftârından teferrüs ve istimâ' itdikleri ahvâlini istiş'âr buyurduklarında, anlar dahi kâimeleriyle merkümun aceb ü pindâr ve sû-ı girdârı taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'den haddini bildirmeği iktizâ itdiğine cezm ü imzâ itdiklerini ihbâr itmişler idi." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480.

[821] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 244.

[822] "Zelâ Hân'ın mektûbu feth ü kırâat olundukda, kıblegâh-ı şehriyâr-ı rûy-ı zemin olan dergâh-ı gîtî-penâh-ı pâdişâhiden recâ-yı i'ânet ü imdâd yerine tahdîd-i hudûd u sınura müte'allık biraz kelâm-ı nâ-muvâfık tahrîr olunduğu zâhir…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1479. Çelebizâde repeated the same point in narrating the Anjudan Battle: "Eşref Hân'ın nizâm-ı devlet ve devâm-ı hükûmeti, dâ'iyei ittihâd-ı mezheb ü millet ile Şâhenşâh-ı a'zam, Halîfetullâh-i fi'l-'âlem, Hâdim-i Haremeyn vâcibü't-ta'zîm hazret-i Pâdişâh-ı *heft-iklîm* cenâb-ı hilâfet-meâblarının dergâh-ı âlem-penâhlarına arz-ı niyâz ü recâ, ve sâye-i şeref-mâye-

The Porte had the choice to not accept the Afghan envoy at all. It had rejected several of Tahmasb's envoys. The government could have decided to reply to the "outrageous" proposal directly, with its immense hard power. However, neither the public opinion, nor the views of the members of Ottoman army left the Porte that kind of a choice. The general view of people was against any military assault targeting the Sunni Afghans. Thus, if the Porte started a war without even officially listening to the Afghan proposition, it would be too difficult for the government to carry out the war in the field in the face of internal civil and military opposition. As I discuss below, it was even quite troublesome for the Porte to acquire internal support for an offensive against the Afghans after the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* against Afghan claims, let alone an assault without hearing Afghan demands.

That is why Çelebizâde stated that despite the reports of commander-in-chiefs along the border urging the necessity of taking military action against Ashraf, Damad İbrahim Pasha decided to respond with soft power first, in this "major religious and political question," (*muazzamât-ı umûr-ı dîn u devlet*) in order to protect Ottoman domains and subjects.[823] Çelebizâde's description of public and army opinions is remarkable. He wrote that due to the sectarian unity of the Ottomans with the Afghans, "the simple-hearted of the *ummah*" (*sâde-dilân-ı ümmet*) and some novices who wished the harming of the state (*sevâd-hân makûlesinden ba'z-ı bedhâhân-ı devlet*) created turmoil by asking rhetorically, "Is it legal to draw the sword against Muslims?" Çelebizâde's next sentence shows that the opposition was not composed only of "simple-hearted" people or "some novices." He wrote that the spread of that kind of voice prevented the soldiers' movement to an extent that was certain to cause disorder. He remarked that the opposition could only be soothed by a *fetva* from *şeyhülislam*, which would

i inâyet ü i'ânetlerine ilticâya vâbeste vü mevkūf bir hâlet iken…" Emphasis added. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1524. Çelebizâde's writings were critical specifically on this matter, since besides being the official chronicler, he was an active figure in the meetings during the Afghan embassy.

[823] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480–81.

render the Ottoman sultan the imam of all Muslims and the Afghans rebels who should be killed according to *sharia*.[824]

Similarly, Abraham Stanyan reported two reasons for the Porte's hostile attitude toward Ashraf: first, Ashraf's growing popularity among Ottoman subjects; second, the fear of breaking peace with the Russians, whose new rapprochement with Austria caused great worry in the Porte. Regarding the first reason, Stanyan wrote that

> Eschreff setting up for a strict and pious Mussulman is become very popular among the Grand Signor's own subjects, insomuch that they look upon him as a sort of Rival, who may in a favourable juncture set up for their chief, whereas they have no such thing to apprehend from a Persian who is a bred heretic…[825]

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Stanyan's observations verify that the Porte was more afraid of Ashraf's potential power in his posing of an alternative to the Ottoman dynasty, rather than his actual political and military power. Around this time, Ashraf also sent manifestos to the inhabitants of Maraga and other border cities newly captured by the Ottomans. He asked the people to leave the Ottomans and come under the authority of the new shah of Persia.[826] Thus, the Porte was caught between the two fires of internal opposition and external challenge.

This occasion was one of the historical moments in which the restrictive capacity of religion, with all its dimensions, manifested itself visibly. The Porte had to convert the public opinion to its side in order to be able to actualize its plans. Ottoman subjects and soldiers had

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[824] "Ancak tâife-i merkûme ile ittihâd-ı mezheb sebebiyle sâde-dilân-ı ümmet ve sevâd-hân makûlesinden ba'z-ı bedhâhân-ı devletin, "ehl-i İslam'a kılıç çekilir mi?" deyü bî-hûde kīl ü kāl ve an-cehlin miyânlarında bahs ü cidâl vukû'u gâlib-i hâl ve bu gûne kelimâtın şüyû'u tavâif-i askeriyyenin pây-i azîmetlerine fütûr vermekle, bâ'is-i ihtilâl idiği emr-i mukarrer olduğuna binaen, tâife-i merkûmenin imâm-ı müslimîn olan Pâdişâh-ı rûy-ı zemîne beyât ü itâ'at itmedikleri hâlde bâğî olmalarıyla âmme-i müslimîne mezbûrlar ile vücûb-ı kıtâlin meşrû'iyyetini işâ'at lazım olmağın…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1481. Çelebizâde's remark is also important in showing the expected popular impact of the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* by the Porte.

There was a very exceptional and curious event happened in Constantinople around these times. Çelebizâde reported that the Beşiktaş palace was stoned for a couple of nights during the stay of Ahmed III in the beginning of August 1726. Many houses of Ottoman grandees were stoned, as well. He wrote that the palace was not able to solve the mystery. However, the sultan transferred his residence from Beşiktaş to Karaağaç Garden on August 7th. Whatever might have been the reason and whoever was behind this stoning, it seems that it was an act of serious opposition to the government. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1505–6.

[825] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 51. The date of Stanyan's report was February 8th, 1726.

[826] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:295.

found one of the most legitimate grounds for opposing the government: the very religio-political discourse through which the Porte had been defining itself and legitimizing its policies for centuries. Beyond the question of whether those in opposition had sincere religious intentions or not, the justification of opposing views on religious grounds was perfectly legitimate. The fact that the Porte did not have a monopoly on religious interpretation in moral and legal senses made the government vulnerable to the powerful deployment of its own religio-political arguments against itself. As I will discuss below, the Porte was unable to punish even those commanders and soldiers who caused the Ottomans to lose the war against the Afghans in 1726, due to their refusal to fight against their "coreligionists."

Olson aptly observed that "The religious propaganda so useful against the Persians was impotent against Eşref Shah who mounted a propaganda attack of his own against the Porte."[827] Thus, the Ottoman government had to come up with a new religio-political argument to use against the new neighbor. As I discussed in Chapter Three, the Porte had already formulated an argument against the Afghans, as soon as Mir Mahmud captured the Safavid throne: declaring the Afghans rebels for not obeying the Ottoman sultan, the *imam* of Muslims. Now, the time to deploy that justification had finally arrived.

Even though the Porte did not accept the Afghan envoy as an official ambassador, it fulfilled the diplomatic requirements of hosting one and received him in a highly ceremonious way. It was thus not only the universal caliph's acceptance of messengers from a Sunni ruler, as the Ottoman representatives said to justify the Afghan embassy to the Russians, who were displeased by this reception.[828] Moreover, it was only foreign observers who reported the information that the Porte did not give the Afghan envoy official ambassadorial status. The

[827] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 51.
[828] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:300.

Ottomans' own sources, including the official chronicler, did not mention any non-acceptance of the Porte in that regard.

Çelebizâde describes luxurious ornamentation and expensive preparations for the arrival of the Afghan envoy. With this luxury, the Porte aimed to show the "imperial glory and majesty" of the Ottoman state, rather than respect or friendship to the Afghans.[829] Çelebizâde's other remarks show that the Porte received the Afghan embassy with great distaste. The Ottoman chronicler uses unusually exceptional derogatory language regarding both the Afghan envoys and Ashraf, even openly likening the Afghans to donkeys twice.[830] He calls the Afghans "unperceptive" people (*tâife-i Afgan-ı bî-iz'ân*), whose character was silliness and rudeness.[831] He also likens their clothes to the clothes of the "infidel heretics" (*refâvız-ı bî-dîn*). The chronicler's likening of the envoys' clothes to the "Safavid" clothes does not seem random. As I will show below, after the Ottoman defeat by the Afghans in the end of 1726, the Porte had initiated propaganda that Ashraf had converted to "heresy." Similar Ottoman propaganda continued in the following years, until the fall of the Afghans in 1729. It seemed this counter-propaganda started around the time of the first real encounter between the Ottomans and Afghans, during the embassy of Abd al-Aziz in the beginning of 1726.

Çelebizâde's narration also includes a significant detail regarding the Afghan claim about the indivisible integrity of Persia. As I related in discussing the Afghan claims above, the

[829] Çelebizâde states the reason for the splendid preparations as follows: "Mükemmil-i nâmûs-ı devlet ve mütemmim-i merâsim-i saltanat olan sadrıa'zam hazretleri Devlet-i ebed-müddet-i Osmâniyye'nin şân ü şevketini elçi vü etbâ'ına iraet içün..." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli,* 3:1478.

[830] The first one was "Eşeğinden çulu yeğ, doğru meseldir hakka." The meaning of the saying is "the cover on the donkey is more valuable than the donkey itself." Çelebizâde quotes this saying with endorsement, when he mentions the expensive Persian clothes of the Afghan envoys. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1478. The second one was a Persian statement: "*Khûrî va câhilî bâ mardûm-i Afgân dâdand*." It means, asininity and ignorance are given to the Afghans. Çelebizâde wrote that the statement belongs to Sâdi Shirâzî. He refers to this statement in characterizing the alleged foolish behaviors of the Afghan envoy Abd al-Aziz. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1479.

[831] "tâife-i Afgan-ı bî-iz'ânın ru'ünet ü huşûnet merkûz-nihâd ve cibilliyetleri olmağla…" Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480.

Afghans always referred to Iran as "*memâlik-i İran*" (Iranian domains) in their letters and legal opinions. That concept underlined the indivisibility of Persia, which, in turn, required the Ottoman cession of the former western provinces of Iran to the Afghans. In response, Çelebizâde referred to the territories under Afghan control as "the domain of Isfahan" (*kalem-rev-i İsfahan*). The Porte designated the realm of the Afghans with a new name, different than that it had used for the Safavids. The Ottomans had always called Safavid lands *memâlik-i İran* or *memâlik-i Acem*. The Porte's new naming of the Afghan realm showed the swift adaption of Ottoman diplomatic language to the actual changes in the field. The Ottoman government was quick to name the neighboring country in a way that fitted its own perspective and interests.

In parallel to Çelebizâde's tone, the Ottomans responded to these political, religious, and military challenges in kind by highly escalating the tone on all three fronts. A grand-vizierial letter and a letter from the *ulema* with the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* were sent to Ashraf.

B.1.2.1. Damad İbrahim Pasha's Response to Ashraf

First of all, the Porte deemed Ashraf's letter so diplomatically improper that it did not deserve to be presented to the sultan.[832] Thus, no royal letter was sent to Ashraf in response. In his chronicle, Çelebizâde refers to Ashraf's initial letter as a "petition" (*arîza*), "paper" (*kâğıd*), and "page" (*sahîfe*) consistently whenever he mentions the letter. He even describes the letter as a "foolish and unacceptable paper that astonishes reasonable people."[833]

[832] "Şevketlü azametlü mehabetlü padişah-ı alem-penah tavvallallahu omruhu ve ebfahu hazretlerine Eşref Han'dan gelen namenin mazmunu adab-ı mulukaneye muhalif olub, bir vechle dergah-ı ismet penahlarına arz ve takdime şayeste olmamağla devletlü inayetlü amme-i aleme merhametlü efendimiz hazretleri taraf-ı aliyelerinden tahrir buyurulan cevabnamedir." See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 2a. The characterization of the grand vizier as "compassionate to all the world" is noteworthy. The Porte presented the grand-vizierial letter to the ruler of Persia, who claimed to be the shah, as a show of mercy. Çelebizâde also wrote that "…ol makûle şân-ı saltanatdan gâfil şahs-ı mütegallibin sahîfe-i sehîfesi rikâb-ı Şehinşâhîye arz olunmağa şayeste olmamağla cevâb-ı bâ-savâbı taraf-ı bahîrü'ş-şeref-i Âsafî'den kendüsüne tahrîr ü ifâde..." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480.

[833] "…hayret-efzâ-yı erbâb-ı ukûl bir sahîfe-i sehîfe-i nâ-makbûl…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480.

Damad İbrahim responded to Ashraf's letter mostly in symbolic terms, rather than in order to engage in a debate about the Afghan claims. In the *salvele* part of the preamble, Damad İbrahim quotes a *hadith*: "I was a prophet, when Adam was still between water and clay."[834] Islamic scholars and Sufis interpreted this tradition as saying that the Prophet Muhammad was created as prophet when Adam was still in a form between spirit and body. It was a very specific *hadith* that did not usually occur in the *salvele* parts of diplomatic letters. Presumably, Damad İbrahim likened the position of Ottoman dynasty to that of the Prophet Muhammad, and the position of Ashraf to that of Adam in this Prophetic tradition; the Ottoman sultans were caliphs when Ashraf's predecessors were nobody. Fifteen years later, Mahmud I referred to the same *hadith* in encountering challenges from Nadir, who demanded to share the privilege of the Ottoman sultan in the Ka'ba.[835]

Following the introductory parts, the grand vizier enumerated a long list of Ashraf's titles over ten lines. Damad İbrahim finished his praise of Ashraf by calling him the "very illustrious Ashraf Khan" (*Eşref Hân-ı vâlâ-şân*). Obviously, long and pompous epithets for Ashraf and the status of "khan" do not match with each other. The grand vizier gave the clear message that however magnificent Ashraf might be, his acceptable status for the Porte was a khan, not sultan, let alone having equality as a caliph.

The grand vizier's mentioning of the envoy's bringing of the letter was also full of symbolic indications of Ottoman superiority over the Afghans. He called Ashraf's letter a "petition" (*arîza*) twice. He wrote that "the petition letters had arrived in the abode of the Great Sultanate and great caliphate" (*dâr-ı saltanatü'l kübrâ ve beyti'l hilâfet-i uzmâ*) and had been

[834] "*kuntu nabiyyan wa Ādama bayna al-mā'i wa al-tīn*." See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 2b. This was a weak *hadith*. Muslim scholars and Sufis discussed it within the debates on creation. For further information, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 215; Mahmut Ay, "İşarî Tefsirlerde Hakîkat-i Muhammediyye Anlayışı," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 23 (2010): 98–100.

[835] I discuss this letter in the last chapter.

escalated to this great post.[836] All these detailed emphases were to underline the hierarchy between Ahmed III and Ashraf in overt and covert ways. By calling Ahmed III the great caliph, the grand vizier ruled out the possibility of equality between Ahmed III and Ashraf, since the Ottoman sultan was the universal caliph, unlike regional caliphs.

Damad İbrahim continued that the Ottoman state appreciated Ashraf's struggle against the heretics and apostates (*rafaza ve zenâdıka*), and that the Porte had sent commanders-in-chief to the region with no hostile aim regarding the Afghans. However, he maintained, Ashraf's petition was not suitable to the current required conditions and was loaded with meanings of independence and oppression.[837] The grand vizier wrote that for that reason, this petition did not deserve to be presented to the grandiose post of the sultan. He listed Ahmed III's titles over sixteen lines. All of the sultan's epithets highlighted the superiority of Ahmed III in all respects: the sultan of the sultans (*sultânu's-selâtîn*), the refuge of kings (*melâzu'l mülûk ve'l havâkîn*), reviver of Prophet's *sunnah* and *sharia* and religion (*muhyi's-sünnete ve'ş-şerîate ve'd-dîn*), destroyer of innovators and polytheists, (*mâhiye'l mübdiât ve'l müşrikîn*), possessor of the Great Imamate (*mâlik'ul imâmeti'l uzmâ*), inheritor of the great caliphate (*vârisu'l hilâfeti'l kübrâ*), cleaner of the fronts of Persian kings and Roman emperors (*muaffir-i cibâhi'l ekasire ve'l kayesira*), suppressor of the buildings of immorality and rebels (*kâmi-i bukai'l fecerate ve'l buğât*), illuminating sun of the apex of caliphate and kingship (*âfitâb-ı âlem-tâb-ı evc-i hilâfet ve şehryâri*), servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (*hâdimu'l Haremeyn eş-Şerifeyn*), and so on.

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836 "Tarika-i me'lûfe-i sefâret ve vetîre-i ma'rûfe-i risâlet üzere, firistâde kılınan arîza-i resâilleri kıdve-i hüccâc'ül Haremeyn Abdülaziz Sultan refi'i Molla Abdurrahim ile mashûbu's-selâme dâr-ı saltanatü'l kübrâ ve beyti'l hilâfeti'l uzmâ'ya vâsıl ve berdaşte arz-ı tebliği olan mekâtib-i müsta'cibetü'l esâlibin mefâhim ve mezâminine ıttılâ-ı tâm hâsıl olup…" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 2b–3a.

837 "bu defa vârid olan arîzaları muvâfakat-ı muktezây-ı hâlden hâli ve manây-i istiklâl ve istibdâd ile mâli olmağla," See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 3a.

The grand vizier continued that since it was the custom of the exalted Ottoman state to resort to religious law (*sharia*) in all matters, they had gathered with *ulema* and asked religious scholars about the legal ruling of this question. He did not give the content of the *fetva*. However, he underlined that the Ottoman *ulema* had given their *fetva* unanimously based on authoritative legal books and Qur'anic verses and authentic *hadiths* (*nusûs-ı sahîha*). Thus, the grand vizier concluded, it was obligatory to obey the *fetva*. Damad İbrahim called the Ottoman *fetva* a reminder to Ashraf, quoting the verse that reads "But continue to remind. For certainly reminders benefit the believers."[838]

The grand vizier informed Ashraf that the Porte had authorized Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, to deal with all matters regarding Persia. It meant that the Porte did not even accept to continue correspondence with Ashraf, instead delegating the task to Ahmed Pasha as the future addressee for Ashraf's letters. Lastly, Damad İbrahim Pasha concluded that should Ashraf obey the *sharia*, then he would be awarded in this world and the world to come.

B.1.2.2. *Fetva* of the *Şeyhülislam* and Letter of the Ottoman *Ulema*

The Porte gave the actual answer to Afghan claims, both in the *fetva* of *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi and the letter of the Ottoman *ulema*, in a very detailed way. First the letter was written, then the *şeyhülislam* issued the *fetva*.[839] Çelebizâde describes the letter of the Afghan *ulema* as a "discredited letter of nineteen men in the name of his [Ashraf's] ulema."[840] He even characterized them as "the simple-hearted of the *ummah*" (*sâde-dilân-ı ümmet*).[841] Against nineteen Afghan *ulema*, 159 top-ranking Ottoman *ulema* signed the counter-*fetva* of the *şeyhülislam*. The signing of *fetva*s by many *ulema* from both sides clearly demonstrated the propaganda aspect of the Ottoman-Afghan religio-political encounter. Especially the Ottoman

[838] Qur'an, 55:51. Translation belongs to Mustafa Khattab. See Mustafa Khattab, trans., *The Clear Quran* (Message for Humanity, 2016).
[839] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:308.
[840] "…ulemâsı nâmına olan on dokuz nefer âdemin mektûb-ı gayr-ı mu'teberlerinin…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1480.
[841] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1524.

number of 160, including the *şeyhülislam* himself, was highly exceptional. It was a massive show off of both quality and quantity.

The same members of the ulema signed both the *fetva* and the letter separately. Sixty pages of the *risale* were dedicated only to these signatures. Jurists wrote their names, their position, and a prayer in their own words. Some of them also added a phrase indicating that the *fetva* of *şeyhülislam* was correct according to religious law. Getting this number of signatures required a separate organization. Çelebizâde narrated that the members of the *ulema* had visited the office of *şeyhülislam* in order according to their rank for several days.[842]

B.1.2.2.1. *Fetva*

Abdullah Efendi's *fetva*s are in the form of two answers to two consecutive questions.[843] The first question asks, "Can the people of Islam take an oath of allegiance to two persons at the same time and nominate them as imams?"[844] Abdullah Efendi answered that there was a consensus among the Prophet's Companions on the illegality of the existence of two *imam*s at the same time. He maintained that the only acceptable situation was that should there be a "huge barrier like the Indian Ocean between the kingdoms of each one of them, such that each of them is unable to administer and protect the land of the other."[845]

> The second question asked about the specific problem. It reads as:
>
> In this way, the Muslim public has given an oath of allegiance and nominated Sultan Ahmed Han (sultan of the two continents and servant of the two holy places, whose respectable fathers and glorious grandfathers were kings and imams, may God increase his glory) to imamate, and after his imamate has been fixed in his hand for

[842] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1481.

[843] For the text of the fetvas, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 4a–4b; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1482; Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetâva*, 209. For an English translation of them, see Gerber, "An Early Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Ottoman Caliphate," 122–23.

[844] Translation belongs to Haim Gerber. See Gerber, "An Early Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Ottoman Caliphate," 122. The original question: "Ehl-i İslam asr-i vâhidde iki kimesneye biat edip imâm nasbetmek caiz olur mu?"

[845] Gerber, 122. The original answer: "İki imâmın asr-i vâhidde ictimâının adem-i sıhhati icma-i ashâb ile sabittir, meğer her birinin memleket ve eyaletleri beyninde bahr-i Hind gibi bir hâciz-i azîm ola ki her biri âharın memleketinde tedbir ve himayeye kadir olmayalar."

> so many years, Zayd, who took control of the city of Isfahan and its environs, attached to the land which [the said sultan] had conquered and administered, made a claim to the imama and the sultanate, and some of the Muslims have given him the oath of allegiance and nominated him for imam, and he [then] sent a man and a letter to the said sultan saying: "The said city of Isfahan used to be the center of government of the kingdom of the Rawafiz, and is now in my control. Do hand over to me the areas which the said caliph [Sultan Ahmed] may God preserve the pillars of his state, has taken from the Iranian Rawafiz." If Zayd persists in this demand, what is the shar'i rule concerning him?[846]

The description of the Afghan realm again showed the perspective of the Porte. The question characterized the Afghan realm as "the city of Isfahan and its environs" (*belde-i İsfahân ve kurbunda ba'z-ı bilâd*), instead of "Iranian domains" (*memâlik-i İran*).

Abdullah Efendi replied that "Zayd is a rebel, and his deposition is a religious obligation. If he accepts the oath of allegiance of the said Shadow of God and undertakes to obey him, so be it, but if persists in his demand and refuses to obey, then his killing is an obligation incumbent on all Muslims,"[847] according to the following Qur'anic verse and Prophetic *hadith*. The part of the verse he cited was "…but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah."[848] The *hadith* reads, "If allegiance has been sworn to two caliphs, then kill the second one."[849]

The *fetva*s of the *şeyhülislam* established that the Ottoman sultan was the universal caliph, whose authority must be accepted by all Muslims. Those who did not accept were legally deemed rebels, and the ruling for rebels was execution. A multiplicity of *imam*s was only acceptable in cases where the rule of one *imam* could not reach the realm of the other *imam*.

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[846] Gerber, 123.
[847] Gerber, 123.
[848] The full verse reads, "And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both, but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah; then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily! Allah loves those who are equitable." Translation belongs to Muhammad Muhsin Khan. See Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, trans., *The Noble Quran: Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* (Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2011), 49:9.
[849] Abu Dawud, *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 19, the Book of Kharāj, Fai'and Imārah (Leadership), Chapter 35/37: Reviving Dead Land*, ed. and trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, vol. 3, hadith no. 4799 (Maktaba Dar-us-salam, 2008), 186–87.

This situation requires a big separator like an ocean, which was not the case for the distance between Constantinople and Isfahan. Thus, if Ashraf was insistent on his two claims of imamate and ceding of Ottoman lands in Persia, then it became obligatory upon every Muslim to kill Ashraf.

By referring to this *fetva*, İnalcık claims that the Ottomans accepted the Mughal emperor's equal imamate. He states that "Around 1137/1725 the view was accepted that two *imāms* coexisted, the Ottoman sultan and the Indian Mughal emperor, whose separate existence was made possible by the ocean which divided their respective dominions."[850] I do not agree with his interpretation. First and foremost, neither the *fetva*, nor any other document from the time stated that the Porte accepted the Mughal shah as caliph of equal status with the Ottoman sultan. Second, the Indian Ocean was not a separator (*hâciz*) between Ottoman and Mughal realms, geographically. There was an active land route between Ottoman domains and India. Third, as I discussed in Chapter One, there had been a fierce competition between Ottoman and Mughal rulers for centuries, starting in the second half of the sixteenth century. Thus, considering this rivalry and the Ottoman sensitiveness about the protection of the universal caliphate title, it seems unlikely that the Porte accepted the Mughal emperor's imamate indirectly by virtue of this *fetva*. Fourth, Çelebizâde clearly stated that the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* qualified Ahmed III as the universal caliph. He referred to the Ottomans sultan as the "*imâm* of Muslims and caliph of the Prophet" (*İmâm-ı Müslimîn ve Halîfe-i Resûl-i Rabbü'l-'âlemîn*).[851] The last evidence, together with the others, renders the claim of the Ottoman acceptance of Mughal shah as equal caliphs as implausible.[852]

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[850] İnalcık, "Appendix: The Ottomans and the Caliphate," 323.

[851] "…fetvâ-yı şerîfe ve mektûb-ı mergûb ile tasaddî itdikleri da'vânın fesâd ü butlânı ve İmâm-ı Müslimîn ve Halîfe-i Resûl-i Rabbü'l-'âlemîn hazretlerine izhâr-ı inkıyâd ü itâ'at itmeyenlerin bağy ü tuğyânı nice delîl ü bürhân ile beyân ü ifâde kılınmışidi." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1524.

[852] The *fetva* was followed by a further explanation of one page in Arabic. The points in that explanation were almost identical with the supports in the letter from the Ottoman *ulema*. Thus, I prefer to discuss them under the title of "The Letter from the Ottoman Ulema," below.

B.1.2.2.2. The Letter from the Ottoman *Ulema*

The letter from the Ottoman *ulema* was the main document defending the theses of the Ottoman side. It aimed to justify the Ottoman arguments and to refute the Afghan claims. It was a long letter at six pages.[853] The letter defends five main arguments, and supports each of them with several points one by one. Here, I will only summarize the arguments and points in the letter.

The Ottoman *ulema* addressed the Afghan *ulema* in the same manner that the Afghans had used to address their Ottoman counterparts. The letter began with the following greeting: "O brothers from Afghan *ulema*, who were guides of Muslims and evidence of certainty! Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings."[854] Apparently, both parties spoke the same language, were on the same page, and tried to convince both the other side and also the third parties as to the correctness of their arguments. Each side tried to present itself as peaceful and non-belligerent, as opposed to the hostility and incorrectness of the other side. The audience was the Sunni subjects, governors, and soldiers in the Ottoman and Afghan realms.

The first argument of the Ottoman *ulema* was a response to the Afghan accusation of the Ottoman peace with the "heretic" Safavids as having been illegitimate. The Ottomans supported the peace with the Safavids with three points. First, since "unbelief is one nation,"[855] countless enemies of Islam had attacked the Ottomans, mostly in alliance with each other. Second, in this case, the Porte had considered it wise to make peace with the heretics, depending on the Qur'anic verse[856] that allowed the making of peace with non-Muslims when they inclined

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[853] For the Arabic version of the letter, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 20a–23a. For the Ottoman translation of the letter into Turkish, see *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 51b–55b.

[854] The Arabic version: "*Ma'āshar al ikhvān min 'ulamā al Afghan, alladhīna hum hadāt al-dīn wa adilla al-yaqīn, salāmun alaikum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuhū*." See Muhaberat beyne, p. 20b. The Turkish translation of the Ottomans: "Ey ulemâ-i Afgân'dan rehber-i ehl-i dîn ve delîl-i tarîk-i yakîn olan ihvân" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 51b.

[855] This was a Prophetic tradition.

[856] Qur'an 8:60 and 61: "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power including steeds of war to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies and others besides whom ye may not know but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you and ye shall not be treated unjustly. But if the enemy incline towards peace do thou (also) incline towards peace and

toward peace with Muslims. Third, the *ulema* claimed that as soon as the conditions were ready, the *imam* of Muslims, meaning the Ottoman sultan, had ordered the army to march on the heretics, as had been the case in the last several years. They described the Ottoman victory over the Safavids pompously.

The second argument was the illegitimacy of a multiplicity of *imam*s at one time. First, the Ottoman *ulema* quoted three Prophetic traditions to support their claim about the illegitimacy of the imamate of the latter claimant. Moreover, referring to Abu'l Barakât al-Nasafi (d. 1310), they claimed that only the deviant schools of Rafaza (heretics) and Karamiyya[857] approved of the multiplicity of *imam*s. Then, the Ottoman *ulema* referred to a discussion on the nomination of the first caliph. They maintained that the people of Medina (*ensâr*) had offered that there be two *imam*s, one from the *muhacirûn* (the Meccans who migrated to Medina) and one from the *ensâr*. Abu Bakr, the first caliph, replied that "two swords in one time do not bring good."[858] The Ottoman *ulema* used this statement, and the Companions' acceptance of it, as proof of the consensus among the Companions of the Prophet (*icmâ-i ashâb*) for the illegitimacy of a multiplicity of *imam*s at one time. In addition, the Ottoman *ulema* cited Abu'l Muin Nasafi's (d. 1114) argument that if two *imam*s are to be accepted, then, logically, an unlimited number of *imam*s, even one for each village, should be accepted, too. They argued that one *imam* was sufficient to fulfill the duties of the imamate. Moreover, multiplicity led to disorder and weakening of Muslims, overall. The Ottoman *ulema* referred again to the exceptional case in which the existence of two *imam*s at one time is

trust in Allah: for He is the one that heareth and knoweth (all things)." Yusuf Ali's translation. See Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*.

[857] For the Karamiyya school, see Sönmez Kutlu, "Kerrâmiye," in *TDVİA*, 2002.

[858] "*Lā yuslih seyfān fī ahdin vāhidin*." In the Turkish version of the letter, the Ottoman *ulema* translated it as "iki seyf-i sarim bir kına salih değildir." The Turkish phrase can be translated into English as "two sharp swords are not proper for one scabbard." See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 52b–53a.

legitimate, which they claimed was lawful only in the case where one of them was unable to help the other due to a separating ocean.

The third argument had two components: (1) the legal obligation to kill the second *imam*, (2) and the insufficiency of the distance between the Ottoman and Afghan realms to legally allow a second *imam*. Regarding the first argument, the Ottoman *ulema* brought legal proofs from several authoritative law books for the unlawfulness (*harâm*) of the emergence of a second *imam* and the religious obligation to kill him. The second argument is a little more detailed and had three main points. First, the Ottoman *ulema* claimed that Omar, the second caliph, had ruled over territories including Mecca, Medina, Nahavand, and Hamadan. They stated that Mecca was from the first, Medina was from the second, and Nahavand and Hamadan were from the fourth *iklim*. They maintained that in that era of bliss, there were many Companions who met the requirements to be caliph, but none of them claimed imamate or made the multiplicity of *imam*s licit, and the *imam* continued to be singular. Second, the Ottoman *ulema* argued that even the opinion that considered a multiplicity of *imam*s in vast lands (*bilâd-ı muttasıʻa*) was an exceptional (*şaz*) legal opinion. Referring to Imam Nawawi's (d. 1277) exegesis of Sahih al-Muslim, they claimed that the multiplicity of *imam*s was illegitimate, whether it was in vast lands (*bilâd-ı muttasıʻa*) or limited lands (*bilâd-ı mutezayyika*). Third, the Ottoman *ulema* claimed that even if they accepted the multiplicity of *imam*s based on the *bilâd-ı muttasıʻa* argument, it did not fit the current situation. They maintained that the distance between the lands under the authority of the Ottoman sultan and the country of Isfahan was not legally far enough to render these realms *bilâd-ı muttasıʻa*. The Ottoman *ulema* supported this claim by putting forward that the sultan's help reached even into Persian provinces (*bilâd-ı Fars*) and Azerbaijan; how could it be, then, that his help could not reach to the realm of Isfahan (*belde-i İsfahan* and *hıtta-i İsfahan*)? It should be underlined here again that there was a clear consistency in the concepts employed by Çelebizâde, *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi, and the

Ottoman *ulema*. They never called the Afghan territories the "domains of Iran," but the "domain of Isfahan" (*kalem-rev-i İsfahan*, *belde-i İsfahan*, *hıtta-i İsfahan*, and *belde-i İsfahân ve kurbunda ba'z-ı bilâd*).

The fourth Ottoman argument was about the unsoundness of the Afghan claim that it was the legal right of the conqueror of a capital to acquire the other provinces in that realm. The Ottoman *ulema* referred to certain law books and argued basically that the Afghan claim had no legal support.

The fifth argument was against the applicability of the *harîm* example to the current case. The Ottoman *ulema* alleged that *harîm* was about movable and immovable properties (*mülk-i rakabe*), and had nothing to do with the kingship (*mülk*) that was the topic of the current discussion. They defined the concept of *mülk* within this discussion as "general leadership over Muslims in worldly and religious matters" (*Müslimin üzerine umûr-ı dîniyye ve dünyeviyyede riyâset-i âmme*). Then, they contended that the Afghan *ulema* had fallen into the methodological fallacy of "analogy with a discrepancy" (*qiyās ma'al-fāriq*). This fallacy pertains to the famous problem of inapplicability of the cause of analogy "to the new case in the same way as to the original case."[859] Moreover, the Ottoman *ulema* alleged that the Afghan *ulema* was engaging in *ictihâd* (legal reasoning) through analogical deduction. They referred to the commonly accepted Muslim legal principle that today there was no person capable of *ictihâd*. Thus, the Afghan legal claim was deemed improper in that respect, too.

[859] Analogy with a discrepancy is defined as such: "The effective cause of analogy must be applicable to the new case in the same way as to the original case. Should there be no uniformity, or substantial equality between them, the analogy is technically called *qiyas ma'al-fariq*, or '*qiyas* with a discrepancy', which is invalid. If, for example, the *'illah* [reason] in the prohibition of wine is intoxication then a beverage which only causes a lapse of memory would differ with wine in respct of the application of *'illah*, and this would render the analogy invalid." See Hasbollah bin Mat Saad, *The Basic Concepts of Shariah* (Pena Hijrah Resources, 2015), 108.

In the end, the Ottoman *ulema* again addressed the Afghan *ulema* in a compassionate and brotherly manner by calling them "O brothers and friends from among Afghan intellectuals!"[860] The Ottoman *ulema* warned their Afghan counterparts about the day of judgement, reminding the Afghans that on that day everyone would be called to account for what they had done in this world. They underlined how significant the crime of causing the shedding of Muslim blood was. They ended the letter with the prayer that God might guide all of them to the right path (*sebîlü'r-reşâd*).

Other than the *fetva* and *ulema*'s letter, there was another medium through which the Ottomans defended their juristic claims. Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib Efendi translated around two thirds of İbn Haldûn's *Muqaddima* between 1725 and 1730.[861] He was a high-ranking scholar-bureaucrat who was within the close circles of Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim Pasha in the latter half of the 1720s; later, he became *şeyhülislam* between 1745 and 1746.[862] In his translation, he added his views especially on the imamate question. For example, he claimed that the title "the leader of the Muslims" (*emiru'l Mu'minîn*) belonged only to Ahmed III in that age.[863] He also wrote a one-page addendum to the discussion about the multiplicity of *imam*s. He opposed İbn Haldun's view that there could be multiple *imam*s at one age.[864] There, without referring to the fetva of the *şeyhülislam*, Pîrîzâde summarized the *fetva* and the *ulema*'s justifications regarding

[860] The Arabic original: "*Yā ayyuha al-ikhvān min 'urafā al-Afghān…*" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân,* 23a. The Turkish translation: "Ey urefâ-i Afgan'dan ihvân ve hallânımız…" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân,* 55a.

[861] İbn Haldûn, *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn,* ed. Yavuz Yıldırım et al., trans. Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015), 35.

[862] İbn Haldûn, 1:33–35.

[863] İbn Haldûn, *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn*, ed. Yavuz Yıldırım et al., trans. Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015), 101.

[864] He even made changes in İbn Haldun's text, exceeding the acceptable limits of translation. For İbn Haldun's view on the acceptability of multiple *imam*s in one age, see İbn Haldûn, *Mukaddime*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (Dergâh Yayınları, 2007), 427. Yavuz Yıldırım also noted that Pîrîzâde had made changes in the text. See Yavuz Yıldırım, "Giriş: Mukaddime'nin Osmanlı Tercümesi," in *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn,* ed. Yavuz Yıldırım et al., trans. Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015), 45.

the illegality of the existence of two *imam*s in one age and the legal obligation to execute the second one.[865]

B.1.2.3. Return of the Envoy and Start of the Propaganda

The Afghan embassy departed from Constantinople on March 12th, 1726 (8 Receb 1138).[866] Çelebizâde related that the final imperial decision had two options. If Ashraf accepted the Ottoman *fetva*, then there was not going to be a war. If he insisted on the Afghan claims, then Ahmed Pasha, the commander-in-chief in Hamadan, was to eliminate the problem for good by military means.[867]

The Porte had started a counter-propaganda campaign when the envoy was still in Constantinople. As soon as the Ottoman *ulema* wrote their response letter, the government publicized it, even before the issuing of the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva*. Clairac and Hanway remarked that the letter "served as a manifesto," and aimed to conciliate the minds of the people "to a rupture with the Afghans."[868]

Clairac further claimed that the Porte had ordered provincial administrators to imprison the Afghan envoy somewhere near Diyarbakr upon his return. As he related, the Porte declared the reason for imprisoning the envoy was a retaliation for the earlier imprisonment of Ahmed Pasha's envoy by the Afghans.[869] Clairac argued that many people believed there was a real, hidden reason, that the Ottoman sultan did not want Ashraf to be informed of the repugnance of this war to both the public and soldiers.[870]

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[865] İbn Haldûn, *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn*, 1:544–45.
[866] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1481.
[867] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1480.
[868] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:308; Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:243. The first quote belongs both to Clairac and Hanway, and the second to Hanway. I did not encounter any verifying information for that publication in the Ottoman sources.
[869] I was not able confirm this information in the Ottoman archives. Besides, it is true that Osman Ağa, Ahmed Pasha's envoy to Mahmud, was imprisoned in Iran for forty-five days. However, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, it was the Safavid governor of Hamadan who did not allow Osman Ağa's passage, not the Afghans.
[870] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:311.

Even though we cannot verify both of these claims, it was quite probable that they reflect reality. It was Çelebizâde himself who acknowledged the common antipathy against any military confrontation with co-religionist Afghans. Imperial orders to Ahmed Pasha on the eve of the war, which I discuss below, also show the great anxiety of the Porte to convince its own subjects to fight against the Afghans.

Moreover, the Porte prohibited the entrance of any Afghans into Ottoman territories, but "especially" into the Two Holy Sanctuaries at that time. To that end, the government sent orders to the governor of Baghdad, the *emiru'l hac* of Damascus, and most probably to the *emiru'l hac* of Egypt at the same time as the departure of the Afghan envoy from Constantinople.[871] The letter stated that Ashraf had crossed a line with respect to the Ottoman sultan, who was the caliph of the Prophet (*Halîfe-i Resûl-i Rabbi'l 'âlemîn*), and that the Porte had thus asked him to obey and swear allegiance to the Ottoman sultan. However, the letter maintained, since the Afghans were a rebellious (*tâğî ve bâğî*) group, their entrance into Ottoman domains and especially into the Two Holy Sanctuaries was completely impermissible.[872] The government let the Egyptian authorities know that the same order had also been sent to Baghdad and Damascus. The Porte underlined that the Ottoman provincial administrators should not allow the passage of the Afghans into Hejaz even for pilgrimage.

The order did not specify the reason for the prohibition, other than the "rebelliousness" of the Afghans. It was quite likely that the Porte was afraid of any further spreading of the Afghan propaganda among Muslims through the Hejaz on the eve of war with Ashraf. The

[871] BOA, A.MKT 15/29, 15 Receb 1138 (March 19th, 1726). I was not able to find information regarding that prohibition in the Mühimme registers. The document to which I refer was a letter from the government, presumably written by Damad İbrahim Pasha, either to the *emiru'l hac* or the governor of Egypt. It was more likely that the Porte sent the order to the *emiru'l hac* of Egypt, since one of the other two orders was sent not to the governor, but the *emiru'l hac* of Damascus. The letter specified that the other orders were sent to the governor of Baghdad and *emiru'l hac* of Damascus.

[872] "Lâkin, taife-i Afgan, tâğî ve bâğî bir alay eşhâs olup, memâlik-i mahrûseti'l mesâlik-i şehenşâhîye bir ferdin vaz-ı kademi ve husûsan Haremeyn-i Şerîfeyn cânibine murûr ve ubûrları kat'a câiz olmayan umûrdan olmağla…" See BOA, A.MKT 15/29, 15 Receb 1138 (March 19th, 1726)

Ottoman reflex of closing the Hejaz to a specific group of Muslims with whom the Porte had political conflict is noteworthy. As I discussed in Chapter One, in 1697, the government declared Mawlay Ismail, the Moroccan ruler, a rebel and threatened the Moroccan pilgrims with the same ban. When it came to the 1720s, the closeness of the Afghan threat led the Porte to actualize this prohibition policy. The sultan's universal caliph title allowed him to declare the opposing Muslim political groups rebels, and his actual control over Hejaz enabled him to close Hejaz to the "rebels" even for pilgrimage.

B.2. Ottoman-Tahmasb Agreement

The scholarship on the period discusses the reasons for the Ottoman-Afghan war more or less fairly. However, it overlooks the question of the aim of the Ottoman government in declaring war against Ashraf. Here, I argue that the aim of the Ottoman government in this war was replacing Ashraf with Tahmasb in Isfahan.

Simultaneously with the Porte's extensive preparations for a war against the Afghans, in the spring and summer of 1726, Tahmasb and the Ottoman government were communicating. As mentioned above, Tahmasb sent two separate envoys to the Ottomans and the Russians in early 1726. In the letter the Safavid envoy took to the Ottomans,[873] Tahmasb expressed his severe disapproval of the Ottomans for their abuse of the Safavid weakness in gaining Persian lands. He added that since the Russians were religious enemies, he had refused Russian offers to help him in his endeavor against the Afghans.[874] In the critical part of the letter, he asked for

[873] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:246.

[874] This was also a reply to Damad İbrahim's critique of Tahmasb's demand of help from Russia, through his envoy Murtaza Quli Beg at Constantinople in October 1723.

Regarding the claim that he refused Russian help, it seems that is not exactly how it happened. As mentioned above, the Russians replied positively to Tahmasb's request for aid. However, what was critical regarding the Russian offer was that it was not an offer to enthrone Tahmasb in Persia, but simply passive support for Tahmasb's aims in Iran.

a three-year truce and Ottoman help to enthrone him in Persia. In return, he promised the recognition of all Ottoman land acquisitions in Iran.[875]

Tahmasb's letter reached Constantinople through Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha, who was in Tabriz at the time.[876] Given the Afghan unconformity with Ottoman goals and the great danger that they posed to Ottoman claims of sovereignty over all Muslims, the Porte approached Tahmasb's request quite favorably. As a matter of fact, the Safavid prince's offer was the same as the Ottoman offer of Fall 1723, which had been conveyed by Murtaza Quli Beg.[877] Thus, there remained no reason for the Porte not to conclude a peace treaty with Tahmasb.

As a gesture showing Ottoman goodwill, the first thing the Porte did was to send Tahmasb's first envoy, Berhurdar Khan, back to Iran after three years of confinement in Kars and Erzurum.[878] Then, the government sent Mustafa Efendi, who had worked as a master in the top financial bureaucracy for years, to Tabriz to conclude a peace treaty with Tahmasb's envoy and delegate who was to wait for the Ottoman delegate in Tabriz. The imperial order that authorized Mustafa Efendi to conclude the peace included no additional conditions. His job was a relatively easy one: concluding a treaty on the same conditions that Tahmasb had offered.[879] The Porte assigned Mehmed Râgıb, a scribe who was in Tabriz at the time and would become a grand vizier in the coming decades, to be the scribe of the peace treaty.[880] The government instructed Mustafa Efendi to deliberate with Abdullah Pasha during the negotiations, and to be careful to fulfill the procedural tasks of signing a peace treaty.[881] Thus, the conditions for the

[875] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-849, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726); Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:246; Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1501–2, Evahir-i Ramazan 1138 (May 23rd – June 1st, 1726). Both Ottoman and European sources agree on the content of Tahmasb's offer.
[876] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-849, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726).
[877] Indeed, Clairac wrote that Tahmasb considered that he had no choice but to accept the Ottoman offer of 1723, and thus sent this letter to the Porte. See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:324.
[878] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-787, Evahir-i Ramazan 1138 (May 23rd – June 1st, 1726).
[879] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-850, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726).
[880] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-935, Evahir-i Zilkade 1138 (July 21st-30th, 1726).
[881] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-850, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726).

long-waited official agreement were ripe and the conclusion of peace between the Ottomans and the Safavids for the reestablishment of the Safavid dynasty in Persia seemed only a matter of time.

Damad İbrahim Pasha told Russian resident Nepluyev that Russia should also send a representative to the peace talks with Tahmasb, as it was time to actualize one of the main objectives of the 1724 Partition Treaty.[882] However, there is no historical source telling us whether the Russians accepted that offer or participated in the Tabriz negotiations with Tahmasb's representative. It was significant that the Porte had presented Tahmasb's offer within the framework of the Partition Treaty of 1724. That call for Russian participation meant, presumably, that the Ottomans were still committed to the goal of enthroning Tahmasb in Iran and did not consider conquering Isfahan and ruling over Persia directly.

Curiously, there is no surviving Ottoman source indicating whether the negotiations succeeded, or indeed whether they actually took place.[883] Among the contemporary sources, Clairac claimed that Mustafa Efendi was not able to convince Tahmasb to sign the agreement, a strange statement, since Mustafa Efendi went to sign the very conditions offered by Tahmasb himself, not to convince the prince to accept any other condition.[884] In parallel with the silence of the Ottoman sources, the secondary literature remains almost completely indifferent to the

[882] See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 342.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, in a letter to his Russian counterpart Golovkin, Damad İbrahim confirmed the shared Russo-Ottoman objective of reestablishing Safavid rule in Iran by enthroning Tahmasb in 1726. His call to Nepluyev to participate in the negotiations was, however, declined by the Russians. Obviously, due to the divergence of Russian and Ottoman interests in Persia, the Russians preferred to have their own treaty with Tahmasb separately from the Ottomans.

[883] In my relatively deep research in the Ottoman archives to get at least a clue about the result of these negotiations, I could not find any document mentioning the aftermath of the peace meeting in Tabriz. I was only able verify the reality of the meeting between the Ottoman and Safavid representatives in Tabriz indirectly, through the letters Tahmasb sent in 1728, when the context had changed. I will discuss these letters in the following pages and in the next chapter under the title "The Ottoman Reaction to Afghan-Safavid Competition in the late 1720s." For the letters sent by Tahmasb and his chief commander Nadir, see BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-128, 129 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, pp. 206-19.

[884] As Tahmasb's own letter, which I discuss below, proved, Clairac's claim seems factually unfounded.

results of this Ottoman-Safavid meeting. As a result, no work in the modern scholarship digs into the aftermath of this highly critical historical moment that embodied a complete contradiction to the established enmity between the Sunni Ottomans and the Shiite Safavids.

Even though it was quite difficult to discover the result of the Ottoman-Safavid meeting in Tabriz from primary sources, there were still important indicators that they reached an agreement for the fulfillment of Tahmasb's proposals. Among the non-Ottoman sources of the time, first, VOC agents in Persia reported that the main objective of the Ottoman declaration of war on the Afghans was the liberation of Shah Sultan Husayn and the ousting of the Afghans from Persia.[885] Clearly, what that objective implied was that Ottoman-Safavid agreement had been concluded and that the Ottomans were moving into action to fulfill their part of the treaty. Moreover, even after the Ottoman defeat at Anjudan and the conclusion of the Hamadan peace treaty between the Afghans and the Ottomans in October 1727, VOC agents reported that the Persians believed that the Ottoman peace with the Afghans was only for "appearance's sake," implying that the Ottomans were still committed to their goal of reestablishing the Safavid dynasty in Persia.[886]

Second, Krusinski related that in the period between Fall 1725 and the Treaty of Hamadan, October 8th, 1727, the Ottomans and Tahmasb were in agreement on the enthronement of Tahmasb in Persia, in return for his recognition of the Ottoman land acquisitions.[887] Specifically, in the summer of 1726, he wrote that Constantinople had accepted Tahmasb's offer, but that due to the Ottoman defeat by the Afghans, that agreement had not been put into practice.[888] Similarly, based on English resident Stanyan's reports, Lockhart

[885] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 246–48.
[886] Floor, 248.
[887] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:188.
[888] Krusinski, 2:191–92.

indicates the Ottoman defeat at Anjudan as the primary reason for the inconclusiveness of the Ottoman-Tahmasb negotiations.[889]

Third, a contemporary Persian account also verifies the Ottoman aim of reestablishing Safavid rule in Iran by dethroning Ashraf in 1726. Muhammad Mirza Astarabadi, the official chronicler of Nadir Shah, wrote in his history that Ahmed Pasha, the *serasker*, had sent a letter to Ashraf before the war.[890] In this letter, he excoriated the Afghans as a people not worthy of ruling over Persia, since only sons of sultans deserved to be sultans. Ahmed Pasha remarked that he would reinstall Shah Sultan Husayn on the Persian throne.

I was able to detect only one historical source written by the Ottomans themselves on the aftermath of these negotiations: Çelebizâde's official chronicle in which the issue was mentioned indirectly and passed over without much detail, in the entry on the death of Mustafa Efendi, Ottoman negotiator in Tabriz. Çelebizâde wrote that the work of Mustafa Efendi in Tabriz for the conclusion of the peace remained "inconclusive."[891] The selection of the word "inconclusive" seems important, since Çelebizâde neither stated that these negotiations were not held, nor did he state that they had failed. Thus, it would not be a strained interpretation to infer that they remained inconclusive in truth, since the Ottomans could not have defeated the Afghans, as argued by the non-Ottoman observers of the time. What we know for sure is that Mustafa Efendi did not return to Constantinople after these negotiations to bring the Safavid-signed copy of the treaty as ordered.[892]

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[889] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 342. However, Lockhart was even doubtful about the reality of these negotiations, as he writes, "Nothing came of these negotiations, if indeed they took place at all…"

[890] Mirza Muhammad Khan Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri* (Bombay, 1849), 12.

[891] "Mukaddemâ Şehzâde Tahmasb tarafından recâ-yı sulh ve müsâlemeye binâen mükâleme içün Tebriz'e irsâl ve husûs-ı mezbûr netîce-pezîr olacak hâl olmamağla,…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1533.

[892] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1244 Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1139 (December 16th-24th, 1726). In that imperial order, which was issued just after the arrival of the news of the defeat at Anjudan, Mustafa Efendi was promoted to Tebriz defterdarlığı instead of Yeşillizade Mustafa Efendi. On February 6th, 1727 (14 Cemaziyelahir 1139), Ruznamçe-i Evvel Mustafa Efendi passed away and Yeşillizade Mustafa Efendi retook his seat. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1533.

I found stronger evidence about the conclusion of a treaty in the letters sent by Tahmasb and his commander-in-chief, Nadir, in the summer of 1728.[893] Throughout his letter, Tahmasb gave a good account of events starting from the fall of Isfahan until the present day from his perspective. Regarding the events of 1726, he wrote that he had heard[894] about the appointment of *seraskers* to march on the Afghans and that he himself had been ordered by the Ottoman sultan to sit on the Persian throne.[895] As Nadir's letter exposed, upon getting these "glad tidings," Tahmasb prostrated himself in great thankfulness to God.[896] Nadir's letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha also verified that Ottoman envoy Mustafa Efendi, who had been sent from Constantinople to meet with the Safavid envoy in Tabriz, went even further and met with Tahmasb in Iran.[897] The meeting between Mustafa Efendi and Tahmasb is more clear proof of the agreement between the Ottomans and the Safavids to oust the Afghans and to enthrone Tahmasb in Isfahan.

It was ironic that in the imperial order regarding the replacement of Yeşillizade by Ruznamçe-i Evvel Mustafa Efendi, it was alleged that Yeşillizade was a corrupt man, and that it was due to this reason he was dismissed from the office. Moreover, Yeşillizade was called back to Constantinople with an imperial order dated December 1726. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1247, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1139 (December 16th-24th, 1726). However, based on what Çelebizâde recorded, it seemed the Porte's order was not carried out and the "corrupt" high bureaucrat continued to work as the head of finance in Ottoman Tabriz.

[893] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, pp. 206-19. These letters were sent by Tahmasb in the summer of 1728. However, the date they were registered was early November 1729. The reason for that interval was the Ottoman confinement of Wali Muhammad Khan, Tahmasb's envoy, for more than a year in Tabriz, Ganja, and Erzurum. The envoy only arrived in Constantinople in early November. See for example, a financial document regarding the expenditure of the envoy, BOA, AE.SAMD.III 63-6343, Evasıt-ı Rebiulahir 1142 (November 3rd-12th, 1729).

As I will discuss in the next chapter, Tahmasb steadily reinforced his power in Iran during that time. With the invaluable support of Nadir, he was able take Horasan and Herat under his control. Tahmasb sent these letters when the Safavids were getting ready to march on Isfahan with their own force. Tahmasb requested Ottoman help, or at least non-interference, in his fight against the Afghans.

[894] In Nadir's letter, when the same events were narrated, it was clearly stated that they had learned this news from the grand vizier's letter to Tahmasb. That letter would have been carried and handed over by Mustafa Efendi, the Ottoman envoy. Moreover, Nadir also gave the detail that *seraskers* were going to move from the Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam fronts. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-132, 133.

[895] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-128, 129, 130, 131. Tahmasb wrote two letters, one to Ahmed III, the other to Damad İbrahim. The contents of both letters were similar, though with certain differences in details.

[896] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-132, 133.

[897] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-132, 133. Nadir wrote that the Ottoman envoy was present when Tahmasb prostrated in thankfulness.

As will be discussed below, the Ottoman military preparations for the upcoming war with the Afghans were even greater than the preparations for earlier Ottoman wars in Persia against the Safavids. The extent of these military deployments should also be underlined within the context of the Ottoman-Safavid agreement. Importantly, the objective of that war was not an expansion of lands as in the earlier campaigns, but to drive the Afghans out of Iran completely.

Tahmasb's relations with Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the summer of 1726 presented a curious new situation in the Persian question. Similar to the pre-1725 period, both neighbors were still committed to the goal of restoring Safavid rule in Iran. However, there was a critical difference this time. Unlike the mutual agreement and alliance in the recent past between the Ottomans and the Russians, they now struggled for the same goal in rivalry with one another. Retrospectively, that difference proved to be a well-grounded one and in the next decade it became the main determining element in the power struggles in Iran first between the Afghans and Tahmasb (1726-29), then between the Safavids and the Ottomans (1730-32) and Tahmasb and Nadir (1730-32), and, lastly, between the Ottomans and Nadir (1732-35). Even though the Russian policy of alienating the Safavids from the Ottomans to expel the latter from Iran was not successful initially, it actually proved to be successful in the long run. By following that policy consistently and patiently, the Russians were able to shrink the Ottomans back to their traditional borders in the east by the end of 1735.

B.3. The Ottoman-Afghan War at Anjudan

The Ottoman government considered the war with the Afghans to be the last decisive war in Persia. An imperial order to Ahmed Pasha stated that this fight would be the end of the war campaign that had been ongoing for the past few years, and that at the end of it, the Porte would

have perfected its conquests.[898] The order also warned him that the good order of the conquered provinces depended on Ottoman success in this last war. The Porte informed Ahmed Pasha about the goal of this war as early as April 1726. Ahmed III stated that "the *ulema* issued the *fetva* in a consensus that as long as he [Ashraf] did not accept to obey and swear allegiance to my noble caliphate, then the law prescribed that he should have been *expelled and removed completely*."[899] The same order highlighted that "there is no other matter bigger than this one at this occasion."[900] Consecutive imperial orders urged Ahmed Pasha to complete the mission that year; he was asked to carry out a final victorious military expedition by any means (*her ne tarikle olur ise olsun*) without postponing it to the following year.[901] Considering the fact that Ahmed Pasha was given the title of "*İsfahan seraskeri*," that is, the "commander-in-chief of (the military campaign of) Isfahan," the Porte's firmness in its decision to capture the Persian capital and thus oust the Afghans from Persia is clear.

As I discussed extensively in Chapters Three and Four and in this chapter, from the fall of Isfahan in 1722 onward, the Porte's short-term goal was to conquer the western provinces of Persia before the Russians or the Afghans could. The Ottomans reached this goal by the end of 1725. From the summer of 1723 onward, the Porte's medium-term goal was to replace the Afghans with the Safavids. The points highlighted in the imperial orders to Ahmed Pasha completely match with these short- and medium-term plans. The Porte was going to install Tahmasb on Persian throne after expelling the Afghans completely in this "final" war in Iran.

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[898] "Bu husûs, 'atiyyât-ı İlâhiyyeden olan fütûhât-ı celîliyyenin hâtimesi ve senin şimdiye dek vücûda gelen mesâi-i meşkûrenin, temîme-i bâzuy-i neticesi olub, hüsn-i cemâl-i urûs-ı bîhemâlin bununla kemâl bulacağı . . . hüveydâ olmağla…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-909, Evail-i Zilkade 1138 (July 1st-10th, 1726).

[899] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-841, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1138 (April 14th-23rd, 1726). Emphases added.

[900] "bu esnâda Devlet-i Aliyyemin bundan büyük mehâmı olmamağla…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-841, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1138 (April 14th-23rd, 1726).

[901] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-841, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1138 (April 14th-23rd, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-909, Evail-i Zilkade 1138 (July 1st-10th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1226, Evail Rebiulevvel 1139 (November 16th-25th, 1726).

The possibility of defeat was not on the table at Constantinople. Without waiting for Ashraf's response, or even for a final decision from the consultative assembly meetings, the government started to send a series of orders to the provinces telling them to dispatch soldiers to Iran and to supply the army with necessary munitions and provisions. Çelebizâde interpreted this behavior on the part of Damad İbrahim Pasha as a clear demonstration of the grand vizier's prudence (*'âkıbet-endîş*). He stated that after seeing Ashraf's impertinent arrogance, to imagine that Ashraf would comply with the Ottoman reply would have been a pure dream (*mahz-ı hayâl*).[902]

Reflecting the Ottoman resolution to oust the Afghans from Isfahan, there was an enormous amount of military preparation for this war.[903] When the war started, in comparison to Ottoman troops, over 50,000 with heavy artillery, the Afghan army numbered around 15-20,000 soldiers, with insufficient munitions.[904] In Resul Hâvi's history, both in troop numbers and artillery, Ahmed Pasha's army visibly exceeded the size of previous Ottoman armies on the Persian front.[905]

The scale of the military preparations and the Ottoman hurry to fight the Afghans had a lot to do with the propaganda aspect of the war. As I mentioned above, Çelebizâde himself acknowledged that without a *fetva* from the *şeyhülislam*, the disorder of the army if it went up

[902] See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1524. As recorded in the Mühimme Registers (no. 133), the government started to send a series of orders to governors as of January 1726. See for example, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-258, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1138 (January 5th-14th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-262, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1138 (January 15th-24th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-282, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1138 (January 15th-24th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-288, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1138, (January 25th – February 3rd, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-293, Evail-i Cemaziyelahir 1138 (February 4th-13th, 1726).

[903] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1525–26.

[904] Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 155.

[905] Resul Hâvî Efendi, *Târih-i Devhatü'l-Vüzerâ ve Zeyl-i Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 34 Atf 1883 (Baghdad: Atıf Efendi Mansucript Library, Atıf Efendi Collection, 1830), 17b. Resul Hâvi was a historian from the city of Kirkuk. He wrote *Devhatü'l Vüzerâ* in 1830. The book was an addendum to Nazmizade Murtaza's (d. 1720s) *Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, which was a history of Baghdad from its foundation until 1718. Resul Havi's history covers the history of Baghdad in the period between 1720 and 1825.

against the Afghans was certain. However, it seems that the *fetva* was not sufficient to make the Porte feel safe from this military risk. Consecutive imperial orders to Ahmed Pasha between April and November 1726 demonstrate that fact clearly.

The orders enumerated several problems that the postponement would have entailed. One of them was that postponing the war to the following year might affect the soldiers' morale negatively. An imperial order clarified that to work to enhance the wish (*arzû*), desire (*rağbet*), and excitement (*heyecân*) of the troops was one of the most important things.[906] In July, the Porte reiterated the same point by underlining the importance of strengthening the enthusiasm (*şevk*) and desire (*hâhiş*) of the soldiers.[907]

The Porte's unusual insistence on keeping the motivation of the soldiers high in this war, unlike in the earlier wars, showed the worry of the government. Imperial orders in mid-November to Ahmed Pasha and to all other pashas and commanders, including Kurdish emirs, reveal the fundamental reason for this worry.[908] The Porte warned all of them not to listen to the "tricks" (*dek*) and "frauds" (*ihtiyal*) of the Afghans. The order repeated this point again by calling the Afghan propaganda "false words" (*lâf-ı durûğ*) and "lusterless statements" (*kavl-i bî-furûğları*). At the end of the order, the government expressed in clear words that "it is legally established and apparent that the claims of the Afghans are invalid, and the right is with my imperial side."[909] To express it with that clarity and simplicity shows that the Porte was still having trouble convincing its own troops to fight against the Sunni Afghans. It also

[906] "Bu sefer-i nusret-esere memur ve gayrı-memur müteveccih olan efvâc-ı 'asâkir-i zafer-müesserin vakt-i kemâl arzû ve rağbet ve hengâm-ı heyecân himmet ve gayretlerinde i'mâl etmek, ehemm-i umûrdan olup…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-841, Evasıt-ı Şaban 1138 (April 14th-23rd, 1726)

[907] "Bu hatb-ı hatîrde terâhî ve te'hîr olunmayıp, lâzıme-i kâra mübâşeret ve tahsîl-i merâma kemâ yenbağî ihtimâm ve dikkat olunmak, tavâif-i asâkirin gerek bu husûsda olan şevk ve hâhişlerine bâis-i takviyyet ve izhâr-ı kuvvet-i kâhire-i Devlet-i Aliyye ederek, hasma verilen cevâba muvâfık hareket ...melhûz olup..." BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-909, Evail-i Zilkade 1138 (July 1st-10th, 1726)

[908] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1224 and 1226, Evail Rebiulevvel 1139 (November 16th-25th, 1726).

[909] "Taife-i Afgan'ın iddiaları batıl; ve hak, taraf-ı humayunumda olduğu şer'an sabit ve zahir olmağın…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1226, Evail Rebiulevvel 1139 (November 16th-25th, 1726).

demonstrates that Afghan propaganda was still effective on Ottoman soldiers as of November 1726, nine months after the *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva*. Tellingly, the imperial order underlined the importance of acting together in complete alliance and obeying the orders of Ahmed Pasha, the commander-in-chief, twice.[910] Especially warnings like being of one-heart (*yekdil*) and unanimous (*yekcihet*) were unusual reminders in imperial orders. These are important signs that the Porte had anxieties about the unanimity of the soldiers fighting against the Afghans.

A week or two weeks before this imperial order, the two armies confronted each other on November 8th at Anjudan.[911] As a result of the ensuing two-day fight, the nightmarish possible outcome for the Porte shockingly came true: a clear Afghan victory over the Ottoman army.[912]

B.3.1. Several Reasons for the Defeat

There were several explanations for the Ottoman defeat.[913] Nearly all the accounts, including that of the Ottoman government itself, agreed that Kurdish forces in the Ottoman army left fighting at the outset of the war after having contacted Ashraf beforehand.[914] The withdrawal of around 20,000 Kurdish troops became the key factor in the Ottoman defeat.

The accounts of Clairac and Krusinski underlined the importance of the Sunni propaganda Ashraf deployed. Especially from Clairac's account, we get more information about the content

[910] "Siz nan u nemek-i hidivânem hukûkuna riâyet ile, kemâl-i ittifâk ve serasker ...Ahmed Paşa'nın ra'y-i rezîn-i isâbet-karînine muvâfakat ve her husûsda yekdil ve yekcihet olup,…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1226, Evail Rebiulevvel 1139 (November 16th-25th, 1726).

[911] Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 247.

[912] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 290–91.

[913] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1527–28, 1564, 1570; Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:342–43; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:192. Resul Hâvi also narrates different explanations for the defeat. See Resul Hâvî Efendi, *Târih-i Devhatü'l-Vüzerâ ve Zeyl-i Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 17a–17b.

[914] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1527. Damad İbrahim Pasha also underlined in his letter to Ahmed Paşa that "Kürdistân askerinin dahi vehle-i ûlâda firârı ve dahi bunlara benzer nice taksîr ü gaflet zuhûru düşmenin galebesine bâ'is ü bâdî olmağla…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1570. See also Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:342–43; Resul Hâvî Efendi, *Târih-i Devhatü'l-Vüzerâ ve Zeyl-i Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 17a. Only Krusinski did not mention the Kurds. See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:192–93.

of the Afghan propaganda. Clairac narrated that Ashraf disseminated a manifesto among the Ottoman soldiers before the war. He expressed that,

> it was with the greatest concern he saw mussulmen bent upon the destruction of each other; that this war, unlawful in itself, and dishonourable to religion, had already lasted too long. In regard to himself, he called God and Mahommed to witness, that he wished for nothing with so much earnestness, as to enter into a reasonable accommodation.[915]

Ashraf did not stop there. The Ottoman and Afghan armies encamped in close proximity to one another for a few days before the war began. During that time, Ashraf sent four elderly *ulema* to the Ottoman camp, and they conversed with Ahmed Pasha in his *divan*. Their points were: first, Ashraf had sent them to Ahmed Pasha so that the Ottomans would not draw sword against Muslims who had overthrown the Shiites by following *sharia*. Second, Ashraf was astonished that the Ottomans were treating him as enemy and aimed to dethrone him by allying with the Christians, i.e., the Russians. Third, Ashraf had the right to rule due to his being from the tribe of the Prophet, and because of his conquests. Fourth, they had complained to God about the Ottomans for the blood to be spilled in this impious war and for forcing the Afghans to defend themselves against their own brothers.[916]

Ahmed Pasha's answer was that religious law forbade the presence of two caliphs at the same time, and Ashraf had to accept the Ottoman sultan as the successor of the caliphs. Clairac narrated that at that moment the call for prayer was sounded, and the Afghan *ulema* preferred to pray the noon prayer in one congregation with the Ottomans, instead of replying to Ahmed Pasha in words. After the prayer, the Afghans prayed loudly "that the Almighty would please to open the eyes, and to touch the hearts of these musselmen their brethren."[917]

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[915] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:332. Translation belongs to Hanway; see Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:248.
[916] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:333–34.
[917] Clairac, 2:335. Translation belongs to Hanway; see Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:247.

Krusinski related that Ashraf protested during the war that "it was Death to him [Ashraf] to be forced to draw his Sword against them [the Ottomans], and almost ask'd them pardon for killing them."[918] Afghan propaganda seemed to have been effective. Clairac remarked that praying in one congregation with the Afghans impacted the Ottoman soldiers. He wrote that 5,000 Ottoman Kurdish soldiers left the Ottoman side and went to the Afghan camp with the Afghan *ulema*.[919] As mentioned above, the refusal to fight by the Kurdish soldiers in the Ottoman army when the war started was a decisive decision.

However, the effectiveness of the Afghan Sunni propaganda overall is debatable. The Ottoman army was comprised entirely of Sunnis, but it seems that Ashraf only managed to convince the Kurds.[920] The scholarship does not give an answer as to why only Kurds were convinced by the Sunni propaganda, but Çelebizâde's account provides a critical explanation. According to him, a few days before the war, Ashraf secretly offered to increase the rank of the Kurdish *bey*s to principality (khanate) and to give them territory, should they accept his suzerainty and relinquish that of the Ottomans. Ashraf wrote to the Kurdish *bey*s that "if the Ottomans possessed Isfahan, then it is apparent that you are going to be located within the interior and enjoy the same status as the rest of the subjects."[921] There was a significant difference between being in the interior (*iç*) and on the frontier (*uç*). Those who were on the frontier enjoyed much autonomy, due to the dependence of the center on them in the defense of the borders. Since Selim I, the autonomy of the Kurdish *bey*s had been a contested issue

[918] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:192–93.
[919] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:335–36.
[920] Krusinski wrote that "This Defeat was so entire, that the Janisaries and Tartars intimidated by certain Prophecies which Aszraff spread among them by his Emissaries, surrender'd themselves Prisoners of War." See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:192. It was quite probable that certain soldiers from among the janissaries or Tartars refused to fight against the Afghans. As I discuss in this chapter, there was a general repugnance toward fighting against Ashraf among the Ottoman subjects and troops. However, neither Ottoman nor European sources point to a large group who refused to fight or changed sides other than the Kurds.
[921] "…'Osmâniyân Isfahan'a mâlik oldukları hâlde sizler İç-il'de kalup sâir re'âyâ makâmında olacağınız zâhir lâkin bana tarafdârlık itmekle mansûr oldığum sûretde Hâne Mehmed Paşa'ya ber-vech-i ocaklık eyâlet-i Hemedan ve sâirlerinize birer güzîde hânlık veririm' deyü nihânî kâğıdlar irsâliyle…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1527.

between the Porte and Kurdish *bey*s.[922] Constantinople had struggled to have more control and authority over the Kurdish *bey*s for centuries. And it had succeeded to an extent. However, as of the first half of the eighteenth century, these *bey*s still retained some of their privileges. For example, they continued to be from the same families.[923] When discussing the reasons for the autonomy of some of the Kurdish *mir*s (*bey*), Bruinessen states that

> His [The *bey* of Bitlis] independence can only be understood from the frontier position of the emirate. Not only is Kurdistan, due to its natural constitution, difficult to keep permanently under control without the consent of its inhabitants; it also lay at this time between two competing empires. In order to ensure the emirates' loyalty, the Ottomans had to grant many privileges to the mirs.[924]

Given this framework, it is understandable that the Kurdish *bey*s preferred to be located on the frontier of the Afghan state rather than in the interior of the Ottoman state for the first time. It also shows that Damad İbrahim's prophecy in the consultative assembly meeting on July 7th, 1723 came true. As will be remembered, he argued that if the Afghans advanced to the traditional Ottoman-Iranian borders, then the Porte would not be able to keep the Kurdish tribes loyal to the Ottoman sultan. For this reason, he suggested the building of a "levee," which was the conquest of western Persia, to cut the connection between the Kurds in Ottoman lands and the Afghans. However, even establishing that levee did not prevent the Kurdish-Afghan connection in 1726, which proved to be detrimental for the Ottoman government. The Ottomans confronted one of the worst scenarios when the Shiite wall fell down.

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[922] Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan,* Revised edition (London: Zed Books, 1992); Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 53–59.

[923] Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State,* 59. Clairac's discussion of the Kurdish non-involvement in the war shows also that the rule still belonged to families. See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle,* 1750, 2:342–43. Dürri Ahmed Efendi's travel account also confirmed this privilege as of the 1720s. See Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli,* 2:1263.

[924] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State,* 174. Bruinessen refers to travelers Evliya Çelebi and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, both of whom traveled these areas in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

B.3.2. The Porte's Reactions After the Defeat

The Porte reacted to this shocking defeat by deploying soft and hard measures at the same time. Soft measures included issuing another *fetva* opposing Ashraf's claims to Qurayshi lineage and the dissemination of counterpropaganda. The hard instrument was preparing a bigger army utilizing the empire's vast resources.

B.3.2.1. Religio-political Propaganda

Ashraf not only defeated the Ottomans in the war, but also effectively continued his religio-political propaganda against the Ottomans. For example, he sent one of his men to Ahmed Pasha and invited the Ottomans back to the battlefield to reclaim lost Ottoman possessions. Ashraf declared that to take the properties of Muslims was not legally permissible and that the Afghans were not "robbers" who would steal the goods of their "brothers."[925]

Besides his propaganda, his claim to come from Qurayshi family was a new and striking one. There had been no claim of being Qurayshi in the letters the Afghans sent to Constantinople in 1725. Thus, instead of submitting to the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam*, Ashraf even took a step further, coming closer to universal caliphate than the House of Osman, whose non-Qurayshi lineage had always been a question for the legitimacy of the great caliphate of the sultans.

The Porte responded to that claim at least in three ways. The first and more direct reply was another *fetva* from Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi.[926] The question asked was: if the Afghans (1) did not obey to the first *fetva* sent by the Ottoman *ulema*, (2) asserted that Ashraf was from the Quraysh family and there was a Prophetic tradition that "*imam*s are from the Quraysh," and (3) insisted on the multiplicity of *imam*s in one age, what is the ruling regarding them? The *şeyhülislam* answered that the tradition was authentic, but only pertained to the thirty-year era of the first four caliphs. Moreover, it was not certain whether Ashraf in fact had Qurayshi genealogy. Regarding the multiplicity of *imam*s, Abdullah Efendi concisely repeated the earlier

[925] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:341–42.
[926] Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetâva*, 210.

ulema response. In the end, he ruled again that Ashraf and his followers were rebels, and it was obligatory for all Muslims to kill them.

The second reply came from Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib's translation of *Muqaddima*. He made an addition to İbn Haldûn's views on the conditions of being an *imam*. Pîrîzâde alleged that the necessity of having Qurayshi lineage to be *imam* and caliph was no longer valid in the current age.[927] The Porte's third response was to add another attributive to Ashraf's name in imperial orders sent after the war. Now, the orders started to refer Ashraf as "a person with unknown genealogy" (*bir şahs-ı mechûlü'n-neseb*).[928]

Other than these reactive responses, European observers reported that the Porte also initiated offensive counterpropaganda after the defeat: the news that Ashraf had embraced Shiism and left Sunni belief.[929] Stanyan, the English resident, wrote to London that it was "only a politick Invention, to set the Minds of their Peoples against him [Ashraf], and to prevent their going over to him."[930] However, this propaganda seems not to have been effective in convincing the Ottoman subjects.[931]

Though ineffective, the propaganda shows again how religion could actively work against the interests of those who were in the government. The Sunni propaganda of Ashraf was so restrictive that the Porte could only invalidate it by declaring him as heretic. The limiting power of religion on the actions of the government can also be seen in the example of the

[927] "Kezâlik mülk ü saltanatda neseb-i Kureyşî î'tibârı dahî fî zamâninâ sâkıt olup, imâm Kureyşiyyü'n-neseb olmadığı sûretde dahi imâmet ve hilâfeti sahîhdir." See İbn Haldûn, *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn*, 1:345.
[928] See for example, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-386, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1139 (June 1st-10th, 1727); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-397, Evahir-i Şevval 1139 (June 11th-19th, 1727). İbn Haldûn was also of the same opinion that the Qurayshi condition was no longer valid in his age.
[929] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:345–46.
[930] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 291. The date of the dispatch was December 27th, 1726 – January 7th, 1727.
[931] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:345–46; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 291.

Kurdish soldiers, whose action Çelebizâde called treason.[932] The government ought to have punished those "traitors." Indeed, the Ottoman *şeyhülislam* issued a *fetva* against those who had left the fighting against Ashraf. The question asked was, if the soldiers who were sent by our *padishah*, the foremost *imam* and sultan of Muslims, to fight against the rebel Mir Ashraf do not fight against the rebels and escape, what is the legal ruling regarding those soldiers? The *şeyhülislam* ruled that they should be severely punished in this world and would deserve painful torment in the hereafter.[933]

However, the Porte could punish neither the Kurdish soldiers who left the fighting, nor those who went over to Ashraf's side. It is important to clarify here that both Clairac's and Çelebizâde's accounts agreed that (1) some of the Kurdish soldiers did not fight against the Afghans, but remained on the Ottoman side and (2) another Kurdish group, whose numbers were given by Clairac as 5,000, had shifted sides and left the Ottomans. We learn from Çelebizâde that those soldiers who escaped to Ashraf returned to the Ottoman army in Kirmanshahan only a year later, when the Ottomans and the Afghans agreed to conclude a peace agreement.[934]

The first imperial order to Ahmed Pasha and all pashas and commanders after the defeat had a very compassionate tone. Ahmed III wrote with his own handwriting on top of the order

[932] "Sene-i sâbıka vekâyi'i hılâlinde tahrîr olunduğu minvâl üzre hod-re'y-i sipeh-sâlâr ve bî-vefâyî-i Ekrâd-ı hıyânet-şi'âr sebebiyle sahrâ-yı Encidân'da karîn-i vukû' olan nakş-ı bed-nümâ-yı nâ-matbû…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1564.

[933] Bilâd-i acemden İsfahan ve havâlisinde olan bilâdı bundan akdem tegallüb ile zabtedip imâmet ve saltanat iddiasında olan Mîr Eşref nam şahıs davasından fârig olmayıp imâm-i akdem sultanü'l müslimîn padişahımız hazretlerine itaat ve inkıyâd etmemekle kendi ve etbâı bâğîler olup kıtâlleri vacib olmakla sultan-i müşârun-ileyh hazretlerinin taraflarından mezbûrlar ile mukâtele için tayin olunan asker ol bâğîler ile mukâtele etmeyip firar eyleseler ol firar eden kimesnelere şer'an ne lazım olur?
el-Cevab: Kebîreyi mürtekib olmalarıyla ism-i azîm ile âsim olup dünyada ta'zîr-i şedîde, ukbâda azab-i elîme müstehak olurlar." See Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetâva*, 211.

[934] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1568.

that Ahmed Pasha should not feel sorrow for what God had ordained.[935] The Porte underlined that the defeat was nobody's fault, but only God's ordaining. All the commanders were asked to maintain the unity of hearts among one another. The government also motivated Ahmed Pasha to keep his heart strong and start military preparations immediately.[936] It is important that there was no word about those who had left fighting or escaped the army.

Six months later, the Porte sent a long imperial order to Ahmed Pasha. By that time, the government had already decided to wage a second war on the Afghans, and Ahmed Pasha had been preparing for this war for several months. Ahmed III wrote again with his own handwriting that should the soldiers leave their honor like patsies, there would be no escape for them from the flames of his imperial wrath.[937] The imperial order touched on the same point by alleging that each of the soldiers would be punished according to *sharia*, since the Ottoman army had been defeated due to the wrong actions and returning of some patsies. However, the order continued, those soldiers who had left the fighting had not expected an assault from the Afghans, thinking that the latter would obey the *sharia*. The government declared that it was for this religious reason that the Porte did not punish the soldiers.[938]

To know the exact reasons of the government's "forgiveness" is not possible. However, given the conditions, two explanations seem plausible. First, the Porte lacked the physical

[935] "Hayr ve şer Allah-u teâlanın irâde-i 'aliyyesindedir. Keder iktiza etmez. 'Avn u inâyet-i Bâri tealaya istinâd ile emr-i muhâfaza ve sâir husûslarda ke'l evvel ihtimâm üzere olasın" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1326, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1139 (December 25th, 1726 – January 3rd, 1727)

[936] "Sen dahî kemâ fi'l evvel kaviyyu'l kalb olub…"

[937] "Meâzallahu teâla öyle bir tâife-i kalîle ve rezîlenin mukâtelesinde, sâbit akdâm ile ikdâm eylemeyip, muhannesler gibi terk-i nâmus ve gayret ile yüz çevirip bed-nâmlığı kabul edecek olursanız, nâire-i gadab-ı husrevânemden bir vechle halâs ve necât bulmayacağınızı muhakkak bilesiz." See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-397, Evahir-i Şevval 1139 (June 11th-19th, 1727).

[938] "Bazı muhanneslerin sû-i hareket ve edbârları sebebiyle, bi kazâillahi teala muktezây-i zâhir hâle göre bilâ mûceb münhezimen perişan olmanız ile her biriniz şer'an terettüb-i cezâya sezâ iken, bu emr-i fazi', taife-i merkûm cidden muhârebeye tesaddi edeceği meczûmunuz olmadığına binaen, şer'a ittibâ ve hakkı kabul eder mülâhazasıyla düşmanın mekr ve hîlesinden gaflet olunmakdan naşi olmağla, zuhûra gelen sû-i hâl u kasd-ı ef'âlin mücâzat ve mükâfatına mübâderet ve isti'câl olunmayıp…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-397, Evahir-i Şevval 1139 (June 11th-19th, 1727).

ability to punish these soldiers on the frontier of the empire, when it was unable even to make them fight in the name of the Ottomans. Clairac noted that the government could not have punished even Ahmed Pasha, due to the weakness of the central authority on the eastern frontier.[939] Second, it seems that punishing those who refused to fight against their religious brothers was not easy for the Porte. As mentioned above, the public opinion and army's inclination was against the war with Ashraf. The Kurdish soldiers could easily have utilized, and maybe did utilize, this justification.[940] Clairac remarked that people in Constantinople interpreted the Ottoman loss as the manifestation of divine justice, since the Porte had fought against those who overthrew the heretics in Persia.[941] Thus, it is quite probable that the government found itself limited in punishing the Kurdish soldiers. In this case, the established religio-political discourse, which had helped the government most of the time, worked in the opposite direction in the hands of a powerful opposition.

B.3.2.2. Military preparations

Since an Afghan victory was outside the realm of acceptability for the Porte, the biggest-ever military preparation for another campaign in Persia had immediately started. The grand vizier Damad İbrahim Pasha's aim was to eliminate the Afghan "problem" completely, so that there remained no need for any further action.[942] The military expedition against Ashraf was officially qualified by the Ottomans as a "total operation" (*hareket-i külliye*),[943] displaying the utmost expression of the Porte's decisiveness. As a critical parallel, the same statement had been

[939] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:346–47. He claimed that if the Porte tried to punish him, it would be possible that even Ahmed Pasha would declare his independence, with the protection of Ashraf.

[940] The aforementioned imperial order in June 1727 referred to the fact that the Kurdish soldiers had resorted to religious justifications.

[941] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:345–46.

[942] "Eşref Hân gâilesinün avn-i Bârî ile bi'l-külliyye ber-taraf olup, hamle-i uhrâya hâcet kalmamak vechi üzre âyîne-i zamîr-i ilhâm-pezîrlerinde rû-nümâ olan suver-i tedbîrât-ı enîkayı kâr-âgâhân-ı ricâl-i devlete arz u irâ'et ve dakâyık u hakâyıkından kemâ-yenbagî bahs ü meşveret iderek, ashâb-ı harb ve esbâb-ı darbın tedârüküne kıyâm idüp…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1564.

[943] Both Çelebizâde and Damad İbrahim's letter to Ahmed Pasha underlined the comprehensiveness of the operation. See 3:1564 and 1572, respectively.

written in the fifth article of the Partition Treaty, according to which, if at the time of the end of the Ottoman and Russian conquests, Mir Mahmud was still on the Persian throne and declared his rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, then according to *sharia*, the Ottomans were going to march on Mir Mahmud to suppress his rebellion "totally," and to oust him from Persia "completely."[944]

These extensive military preparations had sped up by the spring and continued until the mid-summer. However, this time, rather than relying mostly on Kurdish troops, who proved to be not reliable against another Sunni power,[945] provincial soldiers from the Balkans, Egypt, and the Crimea were deployed and transferred to the Persian border.[946] According to Çelebizâde, more than 150,000 soldiers were summoned for the second campaign against Afghans.[947] Even though this exaggerated number does not show the actual troops that arrived in Hamadan,[948] there were important indicators of the extraordinary size of the troops in imperial orders to Ahmed Pasha and several other provincial administrators. For example, Ahmed Pasha was ordered to distinguish able warriors and those who were fresh soldiers and unable to participate in combat, on the grounds that the Porte had summoned too many soldiers for this war and had

[944] Article 5 of the Partition Treaty. "…bu esnâda Mîr Üveysoğlu Mîr Mahmud tarafından Devlet-i Aliyye'me bağy ü tuğyânı zâhir olub ber-muktezâ-yı şer'-i kavîm üzerine ba's-i ecnâd olunmak lâzım gelür ise ol vakitde Devlet-i Aliyye'm dahi şer'an üzerine hareket ve şerâre-i bağy ü tuğyânın bi'l-külliyye itfâya dikkat ve tamâmen memâlik-i Acem'den tard u ib'âdına mübâderet…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1383.

[945] The reason for raising troops from Rumeli was clearly stated by Stanyan as "Asiatics are suspected of inclining to Eschreff." SP 97, 25, July 24th, 1727. Quoted by Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 54.

[946] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1565–67.

[947] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1569. He gave a detailed account of the number of soldiers coming from each province and district. The fact that the army had the highest numbers of soldiers gathered for a campaign was underlined by Damad İbrahim Pasha in his letter to Ahmed Pasha as well. "Bi-tevfîkullâhi'l-melikü'l-müte'âl, bu sâl-i meymenet-iştimâlde avn-i Îzed-i müte'âl ile tertîb ü irsâl olan asâkir ve zehâir hiç bir seferde vâki' olmayup, icrâ-yı muktezâ-yı hamiyyet-i saltanatda bezl-i makdûr olunmuşdur." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1572.

[948] In the beginning of the summer, Ahmed Pasha was ordered to create a list of absentee and attendee troops separately, and send them to Constantinople. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-378, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1139 (June 1st-10th, 1727). Moreover, there was another imperial order to all provincial administrators located between Üsküdar and Erzurum, informing them about the escape of janissaries and ordering the firm prevention of escapes from the army. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-394, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1139 (June 1st-10th, 1727).

not been able to make that differentiation beforehand.[949] Moreover, as Clairac observed, the sultan "opened his treasures,"[950] and the war expenditure exceeded that of earlier campaigns.[951]

B.4. The Treaty of Hamadan (1727)

Despite all this preparation, a second Afghan-Ottoman war did not occur, and both sides agreed to make peace with one another. There were two main reasons for the Afghan inclination toward peace with the Ottomans: first, the enormous size of the Ottoman troops deployed; second, the growing threat of Tahmasb, who had started to expand his influence with the support of his powerful commander Nadir.[952] On the Ottoman side, the main reasons were the risk of increasing the religio-political challenge posed by Ashraf in the case of a second defeat; and the heavy cost of wars in the preceding five years both in economic and manpower terms.[953]

Even though the Porte claimed otherwise, it seems that it was the Ottomans who first sued for peace. In any case, there was exchange of envoys between Ahmed Pasha and Ashraf in the spring of 1727.[954] Ahmed Pasha informed the government of the peace talks. After consultative assembly meetings, the Ottoman government authorized Ahmed Pasha to make peace on the

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[949] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-241, Evail-i Ramazan 1139 (April 22nd – May 1st, 1727); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-374, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1139 (June 1st-10th, 1727); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-379, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1139 (June 1st-10th, 1727). It could also be rightly argued that the raising of troops unable to engage in combat was a sign of weakness for the Porte, which was not able send only fighting forces to the war.

[950] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:348.

[951] Akbulut, "The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729," 164.

[952] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 54.

[953] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:350–54; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:193.

[954] For the Ottoman version of the story regarding the peace process, see *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 2017, 3:1564–70; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-552, Evahir-i Zilkade 1139 (July 10th-19th, 1727) - the official document authorizing Ahmed Pasha to make peace with Afghans.

Regarding the Ottoman readiness for peace, Venetian *bailo* Dolfin reported that he heard "from a good source" that besides the unrelenting Ottoman letters to Afghans, Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim had written letters to "temper the bitterness and facilitate peace." See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 125. Confirming his report, Willem Floor writes based on the VOC agents' reports that "Ahmad Pasha however gave the Afghan mulla a better welcome in Hamadan at the orders of Istanbul which wanted peace." See Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 247.

Moreover, Clairac and Krusinski also highlighted that the Porte was in difficulty in religio-political, economic, and military terms. And these challenges inclined the Ottoman government to peace with Ashraf. Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 2:350–54; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:193.

condition that it preserved the esteemed honor of the sultanate and caliphate.[955] Needless to say, the official Ottoman accounts narrate that process in an extremely pompous language, and only highlight the reasons underlying the Afghan demand for peace, omitting the Ottoman weaknesses.

The imperial order authorizing Ahmed Pasha to make peace with Ashraf in the name of the sultan dictated two stipulations: first, preservation of the conquered lands, and second, holding in high esteem the grandeur of the exalted royalty of the Ottoman sultan in the treaty.[956] On October 8th, 1727, the Peace of Hamadan was signed by both parties, putting an end to the intensive Ottoman military activities of the preceding five years in Persia. Even though the Ottomans had lost the war, they did not lose any land, and even incorporated new areas: Huwayza, a strategic place to control the Bedouins in the broader Iraq region, and the cities of Zanjan, Sultaniyya, Tarum, and Abhar were left to the Ottomans. In the remaining areas that could have been taken under Afghan control, Ashraf's legitimate rule was accepted by the Porte.[957]

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[955] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-552, Evahir-i Zilkade 1139 (July 10th-19th, 1727). That imperial order also exists in the book *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis…* verbatim (55b–57a). In the book it was called a "*ruhsatname*" (authorization) to Ahmed Pasha to make peace. The information included in Çelebizâde's account and in the imperial order and *ruhsatname* were parallel to each other. Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1568.

"hulâsa-i ârâ-yı erbâb-ı şûrâ Eşref Hân'ın bağy ü tuğyânı sâbit ü nümâyân olmuş ise dahi sülûk-i menhec-i insâf-ı acz ü kusûruna i'tirâf ile şân-ı devlet-i kâhireye lâyık ve nâmûs-ı hilâfet-i bâhireye muvâfık vech üzere sulhe gerden-dâde-i teslîm ü rızâ olduğu hâlde ve Müslimânlığa binâen âsâyiş-i sipâh ü reâyâ ve ârâmiş-i halâyık u berâyâya vesîle olmağla, cânib-i sulh râcih ve gerden-firâz-ı 'ucb ü gurûr olur ise cevâbı havâle-i zebân-ı tîğ u sinân kılınmak lâzım geldiği vâzıh olmak üzre karâr-dâde olduğuna binâen…" See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1568.

As an additional note, the decision-making process should have taken maximum around one month, because that was the maximum possible time between the dates of orders for war and peace to Ahmed Pasha. For war, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-397, Evahir-i Şevval 1139 (June 11th-19th, 1727); for peace, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-552, Evahir-i Zilkade 1139 (July 10th-19th, 1727). The exact date of the peace decision can be discerned, if the date of the arrival of Ahmed Pasha's letters can be identified.

[956] "dîn u devlet-i aliyyeme lâyık ve şân u şevket-i saltanat-ı seniyyeme muvâfık…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-552, Evahir-i Zilkade 1139 (July 10th-19th, 1727). Also included in the book *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis…* verbatim (55b–57a).

[957] *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 69b–70b.

The second article of the treaty guaranteed the superior position of the Ottoman sultan over Ashraf, who was now recognized as "shah," as had been the case in Ottoman-Safavid relations. The recurrent expressive sign of this inequality was clarified in terms of who should send letters to whom in diplomatic correspondence between capitals.[958] More than just accepting Ottoman superiority in diplomacy, Ashraf also recognized the Ottoman sultan's unique leadership over the global Muslim community as the holder of the "supreme caliphate" (*evc-i hilâfet*).[959]

Ottoman recognition of Persia as a separate state headed by Ashraf Shah was a significant achievement on the side of Afghans. Based on that recognition, in the eighth article of the treaty, both sides agreed to help each other should a third party invade either Ottoman or Afghan domains in Persia.[960] Even though not explicitly stated, it is clear that it was Tahmasb who was implied here, especially with regard to the Afghan territories in Persia. With that article, the Ottomans affirmed their commitment to the legitimacy of the newly-established Afghan state against the Safavids, or any other possible emerging rivals.

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[958] The Ottoman sultan shall only send letters to the Afghan shah and receive letters only from the said shah. The Afghan shah will send letters to both the sultan and the grand vizier. The Ottoman grand vizier shall send letters to both the Afghan shah and the *i'timād al-dawla*. The Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* could only send letters to the Ottoman grand vizier. "Şah İsmail zamanından Şah Hüseyin vaktine gelince, Acem şahları tarafından rikâb-ı kamyâb-ı padişahaneme ve vezir-i azam olanlara name ve mektupları ne vechle yazılagelmiş ise yine ol merâsime riâyet olunup, Eşref Şah âl-i makam ve ahlaf meâl-i irtisâmlarından rikâb-ı hümayûn şevket-makrûnumuza name geldikçe, vekîl-i mutlak-ı devlet-i aliyyem tarafına dahi mektupları gelip, taraf-ı hümayûndan mûtad üzere şahlara name yazıldıkda, şâhân-ı Aceme yazılan vücûh tevkîr ile yazılıp, ve vezir-i devlet aliyyemden itimadüddevle-i şâhân-ı Acem'e yazıldığı vech üzere itimadüddevlelerine mektup yazılıp, taraf-ı hümayûndan itimadüddevleye kağıt yazılmamak şartına müraat oluna." *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 69a–69b.

[959] This was the term used by Ashraf in the Afghan version of the Treaty sent to the Ottoman sultan. He also qualified the Ottoman sultan as the greatest king in the world (*a'zamu-s'selâtin fi'l-'âlem*). *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 63b.

There was an agreement on this matter among historical sources, both Ottoman or European. European historical accounts gave even more detail about Ashraf's acceptance of the sultan's political and religious superiority. Accordingly, they claimed that Ashraf agreed to send 1500 Purses annual monetary gift to the "commander of the faithful" (Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 2:Appendix, 201) and to mention the sultan's name during the Friday prayers in mosques all over Persia (Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia: Containing the Reign of Shah Sultan Hussein; the Invasion of the Afghans...*, 2:253).

[960] *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 70a.

It would be fair to observe that, regarding major conflictual matters, namely the recognition of land acquisitions and the corresponding political status of the rulers, the agreement reached was somewhere in the middle, though closer to the Ottoman side. The ideal situation for the Ottomans was the meeting of the following two conditions: first, Ashraf's acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty, and thus superiority, and second, Ashraf's recognition of the lands conquered by the Ottomans in Iran. The ideal conditions for the Afghans were: first, Ottoman recognition of the Afghan ruler as an equal and separate legitimate Muslim ruler, second, Ottoman withdrawal from Persian lands. In the end, the Ottomans got their second goal and half of the first goal, and the Afghans achieved half of their first goal.

Another important article of the treaty was the Ottoman recognition of the Afghan right to send pilgrimage caravans from Persia each year under their command. There was a difference in the wording of that commanding position in the sources as to whether the responsible person was an *emiru'l hac* or not.[961] Either way, that right was a novelty that had not been given to the Safavids for centuries, a novelty clearly resulting from the fact that the Afghans were Sunnis

[961] In the Ottoman and Persian versions of the treaty, the term "*emiru'l hac*" was not used. Instead, Ottoman sultan were authorized to ensure the secure passage of pilgrims from Iran through the Ottoman domains. See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 65a and 69b. As related by Mary Lucille Shay, the Venetian *bailo*'s account also used a similar wording stating that "a Persian caravan direct to Mecca" was to be allowed by the Porte. However, Hanway and Krusinski wrote that there was going be an Afghan *emiru'l hac* for pilgrims from Iran. See Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:254; Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:Appendix, 201; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 125. Even though in the Ottoman and Persian versions, there was no reference to an Afghan *emiru'l hac*, the phrase "authorization by the sultan" indicated more or less the same point. Rather than taking the job totally on his own responsibility, the sultan delegates it to the Afghans themselves in both cases. The sultan's job was only providing security to the Persian passage. The Ottoman version of the third article reads "Memâlik-i İran'dan iskât-ı farîza-i Hacc-ı Beytullâhi'l-haram ve ziyâret-i Ravza-i Seyyidi'l-enâm aleyhi efdalu's-salavât vesselam için zâmile-bend azîmet olan hüccâc-ı hidâyet minhâcın memâlik-i mahrûseti'l mesâlik-i pâdişâhânemizden emîn ve sâlim zehâb ve iyâblarına ruhsat-ı humayûnumuz erzânî buyrula" See *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 69b.

Moreover, I read all related imperial orders I could find related to the protection of pilgrims using the Damascus route in the concerned years of 1728 and 1729. These orders were registered in the registers numbered 134 and 135. I did not encounter any reference to either Persian pilgrims or an Afghan *emiru'l hac*. As usual, the only reference to an *emiru'l hac* was to the *emiru'l hac* of Damascus; who, then, was to be responsible for taking the pilgrims from Damascus to Mecca in safety and protection? BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-1257 and 1268 (Beginning of March 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-868-880 (February 1729).

like the Ottomans.[962] With a delicate play on words, Ottoman recognition of the Afghans as Muslims was underlined in that article, too. In Ottoman imperial orders during Safavid times, Iranian pilgrims had been called *huccâc-ı hidâyet-muhtâc* (pilgrims who are in need of [guidance to] the right path), while other pilgrims were referred mostly *huccâc-ı zevi'l ihtiyâc* (pilgrims who are needy). Now, Persian pilgrims under Afghans were called *huccâc-ı hidâyet-minhâc* (pilgrims who are in the right path), [963] clearly showing the change in the Ottoman perception regarding pilgrims from Iran due to the sectarian change in the Persian rule.

Other articles of the treaty established common rules for traders of each side, including the appointment of corresponding residents in the respective capitals to observe the proper conduct of economic affairs of traders in the host state. There was also agreement on not providing shelter to the fugitives of each side. Lastly, the Ottoman heavy artillery seized the previous year by Ashraf after the battle of Anjudan were to be given back to the Ottomans. With the Hamadan Peace, the Ottoman aggression in Iran that had started politically in Fall 1722 and militarily in Summer 1723 came to an end. Sealing the war period, the Ottoman government removed the extra war taxes soon after the conclusion of peace.[964]

After getting a copy of the treaty, the Porte sent an imperial order to Ahmed Pasha to march on Huwayza and establish Ottoman control there.[965] Ahmed Pasha set out from Baghdad to Huwayza on March 4th, 1728 with an army.[966] Ahmed III also sent an *emanname* to the *sheikh*s of Huwayza guaranteeing the safety of their tribes if they agreed to willingly submit to

[962] The Persian pilgrims had been accustomed to going on the *hajj* by participating in the Ottoman *hajj* caravan in Damascus under the leadership of the Ottoman Damascus *emiru'l hac*.
[963] To ensure the correctness of my reading from the manuscript, I compared it with the printed version of the Treaty, and they were same. For the printed copy, see *Muahedat Mecmuası*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Hakikat Matbaası, 1880), 312–15.
[964] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1578. The date given by Çelebizâde was Evasıt-ı Rebiulahir 1140 (November 26th – December 5th, 1727).
[965] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-745, Evasıt-ı Rebiulevvel 1140 (October 27th – November 5th, 1727).
[966] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1599, 22 Receb 1140.

the sultan.[967] There, the Ottoman sultan underlined that the obedience of the Huwayzans to his noble caliphate was obligatory and incumbent.[968] The rulers in Huwayza agreed to obey the Ottoman rule without opposing. They qualified Ahmed III as the "caliph of Prophet" in their letter of obedience, signed by thirty-nine notables.[969]

The Treaty of Hamadan was also a moment in which the cleavage between the Ottomans and Russians was formalized. The Partition Treaty of 1724 did not recognize the Afghans as legitimate rulers in Persia. Ottoman recognition of Ashraf as shah of Persia violated the Partition Treaty. Moreover, the Porte concluded a separate peace with the Afghans regarding Iran, omitting the Russians. Thus, the Treaty of Hamadan overrode the Partition Treaty. In 1729, the Russians also concluded a separate treaty (Rasht) with the Afghans. Both Hamadan and Rasht treaties recorded the end of Russo-Ottoman cooperation in Iran.

[967] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-1051 (Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1140) December 25th, 1727 – January 3rd, 1728.
[968] "Cenâb-ı hilâfet-meâbıma itaatiniz lâ-budd ve lâzım ve emr-i vâcib ve mütehattim…"
[969] "*Hazrat-i Sultan al-barrayn wa khāqān al-bahrayn zillullāhi ta'ālā 'alā al-'ālam wa khalīfati Rasūlillāhi sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*" See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-102, p. 161.

CHAPTER 6: THE LAST PHASE OF STRUGGLES IN IRAN, 1726-29

This chapter deals with the last phase of struggles in Persia. The latter half of the 1720s witnessed the deepening of the cleavage between the Porte and Moscow. I will trace the further divergence of the Iranian policies of the Ottomans and the Russians in this chapter. During that period, the main military competition was between Ashraf and Tahmasb, who was now strengthened by Tahmasb Quli Khan. I will examine the Safavid-Afghan competition and how the Ottoman government reacted to this rivalry through its changing policies.

A. The Deepening Cleavage between the Porte and Moscow

The gradual breaking of the already-weak Russo-Ottoman alliance is showcased by three major simultaneous developments. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the first was the bifurcation of the policies of the Porte and Russia with regard to Tahmasb. The second was a belated finalization of the demarcation of the border in February 1727 according to the Partition Treaty of June 1724. The third development was the conclusion of the Austro-Russian defensive alliance in August 1726. Here, I will investigate the second and third developments separately.

A.1. Demarcation of Border

The arrival of General Rumyantsev, the Russian demarcation commissioner, in Constantinople in December 1724 did not start the demarcation process. The grand vizier told Rumyantsev not to start the demarcation work and to wait until the weather had warmed up and the Ottomans had captured Ganja. Damad İbrahim Pasha stated that the Safavid city blocked the route between Tbilisi and Shirvan, preventing the marching of Ottoman armies.[970] However, a more

[970] Mustafazade, *Azerbajdžan i Russko-Tureckie Otnošenija v Pervoj Treti HVIIIv.*, 88.

To an extent, it could be a justifiable argument to put forward Safavid Ganja as a security problem for the demarcation of the border. Still, the border to be drawn was between Shirvan and Darband, which were under Ottoman and Russian control respectively. So, it was possible to start demarcation process before the conquest of Ganja, as long as no attack was received from Ganja. Moreover, Ganja had been conquered by Ottoman armies in the beginning of September 1725 and the Ottoman unwillingness to demarcate the borders continued after that conquest, too.

essential reason for the Ottoman reluctance was the tension between the Porte and Moscow that increased from 1725 until mid-winter 1726, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Only after the clarification of Ashraf's challenging position in February 1726 did the Ottoman government's attitude toward the Russian representatives swiftly become cordial. In a meeting with Nepluyev, Rumyantsev, and Vicomte d'Andrezel, Damad İbrahim Pasha assured the Russians of the Ottoman commitment to the 1724 treaty. The grand vizier underlined that the Porte considered Ashraf a usurper.[971]

The grand vizier also sent a response to Golovkin's letter, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, together with another one to Tsarina Catherine I.[972] After the clarification of the Ottoman policy in Persia as a result of the elimination of the Afghan option, Damad İbrahim Pasha was now in a position to unequivocally advocate for an Ottoman pro-Treaty policy. Accordingly, he first declared the Ottomans' firm commitment to both the Eternal Peace (1721) and the Partition Treaty (1724) signed with Russia. He added that the Ottoman demarcation commissioner Derviş Mehmed Ağa, who was currently at Ganja, had been sent to the border two years previous as a clear indication of the Ottoman resolution. The excuses he used for the delay of the commission's work were, first, that the Ottomans had been about to capture Ganja, and, second, that the Russians had still been unable to conquer their zones. Considering the dangers of the uncontrolled border zone, he continued, it had not been possible to demarcate the border. He wrote that the only reason for not sending Rumyantsev to the border was to provide him a more comfortable resting place in Constantinople than he would have found were he to have waited at the border. After the conquest of Ganja, he alleged, the conditions had become convenient to carry out the demarcation task and the Ottoman and Russian

[971] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 123.
[972] Shay, 123.

commissioners were authorized to start the process in spring 1726 in the city of Shirvan.[973] Indeed, both Derviş Mehmed Ağa and Rumyantsev set out from Constantinople in April 1726.[974]

Derviş Mehmed Ağa was authorized to start the demarcation in the beginning of June 1726.[975] However, the commission could not start its work before September 13th, 1726.[976] The commission worked together and agreed on most of the borders until October 29th, 1726. Seemingly due to protests and uprisings alongside the border, especially in Darband and further south, the commissioners had to cease the demarcation process. The second part of the delimitation started again toward the end of 1727 and the joint task would only be finished on December 24th, 1727.[977] The Porte approved the lines agreed upon by both sides' representatives in February 1728.[978]

It is difficult to detect the real reasons for the further delays of demarcation process, which had already been delayed until the spring of 1726, as discussed above. A frank conversation between Damad İbrahim and Nepluyev after Rumyantsev's departure is illuminating as to the main concerns of both sides, even after the approval of the demarcation process.[979] In that meeting, Nepluyev raised three objections against the Ottoman policies in Persia. He condemned Ottoman conquests beyond the agreed-upon boundaries, the proximity of the Ottomans to Gilan after these new advances, and the probable capture of the Persian throne by the Ottomans. The Russian resident underlined the last two points as unacceptable developments for Russia. The Russians would not let the Ottomans cross these lines. The grand

[973] BOA, YB.(1) 022-11,13,15,17.
[974] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 353.
[975] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-825,6, Evail-i Şevval 1138 (June 2nd-11th, 1726); Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1519.
[976] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1520, 16 Muharrem 1139.
[977] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-106, p. 163-5; BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-107, pp. 165-66.
[978] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-1187, Evail-i Receb 1140 (February 12th-21st, 1728).
[979] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:952–53.

vizier replied that Russia not only did nothing in Persia but also advised the Ottomans to do the same. He argued that Ottomans had captured these cities only to prevent them from falling into the hands of Ashraf, who was a usurper and the common enemy of the Ottomans and the Russians. Moreover, he added, it was also the duty of the Russians to conquer as much land as possible to weaken this "usurper." Not being satisfied with these answers, Nepluyev underlined that the increased proximity of territories controlled by the two big powers was a dangerous thing. In addition, he continued, Ashraf was not a formidable enemy, since he was not liked by the Persian subjects and his contact with Kandahar was being cut due to the emergence of his uncle as a competitor there.[980] According to this line of reasoning, it would be easy to take him down with an alliance of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Lastly, Nepluyev pointed out that Ardabil was far from Ashraf's area of control and, therefore, justifying the capture of Ardabil on these grounds was not possible.

In response, Damad İbrahim also replied in a bold manner. He stated that Russia was not going to be able to persuade Tahmasb to accept the 1724 Partition Treaty, since it was not helping Tahmasb in the field. He continued by alleging that the only serious military deployment in Persia was from the Ottomans, whose troops numbered around 150,000. He clearly detailed the money and soldiers sacrificed to achieve military successes. He again accused Russia of not having enough soldiers and suggested that those soldiers who were in Persia were just staying passively. He called Nepluyev's objections pretexts raised to save time for the Russians. Moreover, even if Tahmasb accepted the Partition Treaty, the grand vizier asserted that, first, Ashraf would have to be defeated, and second, many independent khans would have to be taken under Tahmasb's authority—both of which required the exertion of hard power, he repeated. Lastly, he said that if the Porte knew that in one or two months

[980] In July 1728, Dolfin, the Venetian resident, reported that Ashraf had been weakened when his uncle occupied Kandahar. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 126.

Tahmasb was going to accept the treaty, then the Ottoman armies could suspend their operations in Persia. Upon the remarks of the Grand Vizier, Nepluyev asked for four months to persuade Tahmasb. Damad İbrahim agreed to that request.

As narrated in the previous chapter, it was at that time that both the Russians and the Ottomans started their separate negotiations with Tahmasb. In practice, the agreed-upon four-month waiting period had nothing to do with the Russian persuasion of Tahmasb to acknowledge the Russo-Ottoman Partition Treaty. Both of these neighbors envisaged a future of Iran in which Tahmasb would be enthroned and establish an alliance with one of them against the other.

What that conversation demonstrated was that the change in the balance of power between the Ottomans and the Russians in Persia led to a reconsideration of the 1724 treaty. In the post-1725 period, Russia considered the treaty to have been an advantageous deal compared to its weakened position in Iran. The Russian main objectives were, first, to get its share of Persian land as agreed in the treaty, and second, to use this land as concessions to the Safavids to encourage the expulsion of the Ottomans from Persia. On the other hand, the Porte did not want to give the Russians disproportionally more of Persia than what the Russians had been paying for. In this new balance of power, the Ottoman government was not satisfied with its share and wanted to advance further into Iran. Even if the Porte was not able to oust the Russians from Iran immediately, its most urgent short-term goal was to independently oust the Afghans and install Tahmasb on the Persian throne, discarding the Russians. If this goal was achieved, the Russian influence in Iran would be weakened to a great extent, especially after their weakening in the aftermath of the death of Peter I. Hence, even if the commissioners were sent to the border for demarcation, both sides were far from where they had been in 1724 and worked to undermine their “eternal friends.”

However, the Ottoman plans failed due to their shocking defeat at the hands of the Afghans at Anjudan in November 1726. After that failure, one could expect that the Ottomans would place their anti-Russian designs aside and continue the process of demarcation without further reservation. Instead, the demarcation process had to be postponed once again, at least in part because, as revealed by tracing the developments in the post-Anjudan period until the approval of the borders by the Porte in February 1728, the Ottoman-Afghan war had not been finalized either in the decisive victory of one side or with a peace agreement.

On August 16th, 1726, Mustafa Pasha arrived in Shamakhi with a sizable army to start the demarcation of the border, and the commission began its work on September 13th.[981] However, due to the protests and opposition of the people living between Shamakhi and Caspian and in Darband, the commission was not able to continue its work.[982] The Porte sent imperial orders between September and December 1726 addressing the governor of Ganja, Mustafa Pasha, and Derviş Mehmed Ağa, after receiving frequent reports from both.[983] Even though we do not have these letters, some of their contents can be reconstructed based on their summaries included in the imperial orders. According to these summaries, the Russians demanded the help of the Ottoman pasha to suppress the objections of the Sunni Dagestanis living near the Russian part of the border. The Ottoman government instructed Mustafa Pasha that this opposition was a Russian problem, and that the Ottomans had no obligation according to the 1724 treaty to persuade Russian subjects to be loyal to the Russians. The orders maintained that the Ottomans had full control over the subjects on their side of the border and

[981] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1519, 17 Zilhicce 1138.
[982] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1520.; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1271, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1139 (December 16th-24th, 1726).
[983] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1087, Evahir-i Muharrem 1139 (September 18th-27th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1166, Evahir-i Safer 1139 (October 18th-26th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1218 and 1219, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1139 (November 16th-25th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1271, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1139 (December 16th-24th, 1726).

were ready to progress to demarcation.[984] Moreover, the government added that it was highly expensive to keep thousands of troops at the border just to supervise the commission's work. Mustafa Pasha was ordered to allocate 150-200 soldiers to the retinue of Derviş Mehmed Ağa[985] and to return immediately to Ganja. Lastly, the orders maintained, whenever Russia was able to establish peace on their side, the commission would continue with their duties. In November and December, the Porte recalled Derviş Mehmed Ağa from Shamakhi to either Ganja or Constantinople, according to the place Rumyantsev would go.[986]

Clearly, the Ottoman government had shown no sign of anxiety to complete the demarcation process. Neither in the imperial orders nor in Çelebizâde's account was the reason for that act of gaining time expressed. It was narrated as if everything was normal, and it was just a local Russian problem with which the Ottomans had nothing to do and in which the Porte had no interest. In the discussion below, I aim to show that the Ottoman slowness in the process of demarcation was in fact related to the finalization of its conflict with the Afghans in Iran.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, after the defeat at Anjudan, the Ottomans began major military preparations, mobilizing nearly all the provinces in the empire to attack Ashraf. In the spring of 1727, peace talks started between the Ottomans and the Afghans. In mid-July 1727, the Ottoman government authorized the commander-in-chief Ahmed Pasha to conclude

[984] Even though it was not included in imperial orders, Çelebizâde related that even in Shamakhi, local *ulema* and people protested the proximity of the Russian border to themselves and even threatened an attack against the Russians. He narrated that the Shirvanis opposed the demarcation by asking "why the Muscovites came that close to us and why many of our religious brothers remained within the infidels?" (Moskov bizim bu kadar yakınımıza niçin gelir ve bu denlü dîn karındaşlarımız kefere içinde niçin kalır?). He argued that Mustafa Pasha persuaded them by emphasizing the closeness and protection of the Ottomans. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1519. The persuasion of Mustafa Pasha is a big question mark. Besides, this event is an important example of the way the opposition used religious discourse against the government. Governments were not free in "utilizing" religio-political discourse in the pre-modern era.

[985] The Russians had 250 soldiers with them. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1166, Evahir-i Safer 1139 (October 18th-26th, 1726).

[986] It was written that if Rumyantsev waited at Derbend, then Mehmed Ağa was to wait at Ganja; and if Rumyantsev went back to Russia, then Mehmed Ağa was to return to Constantinople. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1271, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1139 (December 16th-24th, 1726).

a peace treaty with Ashraf. In Spring 1727, before any sign of Ashraf's inclination toward peace with the Ottomans, the government had sent a message to Russia requesting military aid against Ashraf, as the joint operation against him was a matter agreed upon in the 1724 treaty. The Russian response was not a surprising one: "she had faith in the Porte."[987] It was a further confirmation of the annulment of the treaty in practice. Then, in the summer of 1727, the Venetian resident in Constantinople reported that after the start of the peace process with Ashraf, the Ottoman government had foreseen a favorable future in Persia for itself. In a meeting, Nepluyev announced the death of Tsarina Catherine I to Damad İbrahim Pasha. The grand vizier refused to talk about the matters in Persia with the Russian resident in that meeting.[988] Thus, the Ottomans again became dismissive of the Russians.

Moreover, although the Ottoman Empire entered peace negotiations with the Afghans, it continued to press the Russians in Persia, as if the Ottomans were going to have a fight with Ashraf soon. In mid-August 1727, the government sent a relatively long imperial order to Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, the governor of Tabriz.[989] The first half of the order stated the mutual agreement and obligations of the Ottomans and the Russians as laid out in the 1724 Partition Treaty. It continued by articulating that it was the responsibility of both states to oust the Afghans from Persia jointly and to enthrone Tahmasb in Isfahan. The order emphasized that thus far Russia had done nothing regarding that obligation. However, it was added, at the time of writing the Russian tsar had agreed to support the Ottomans and authorized Prince Dolgoruki, the commander-in-chief of the Russian troops in Persia, to talk about the details of that military support.[990] With this order, the government authorized Ali Pasha to talk with Prince Dolgoruki as the Ottoman representative.

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[987] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 125. Shay refers to a dispatch dated April 17th, 1727.
[988] Shay, 125. The date of the dispatch was August 23rd, 1727. Catherine I died on May 17th, 1727.
[989] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-596, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1139 (August 9th-18th, 1727).
[990] In the Russian agreement to send military support, the Ottoman *reisülküttab*'s threat to Nepluyev should have been effective. He told Nepluyev that if Russia did not help the Ottomans in this campaign, then the Ottomans

The imperial order prescribed in detail to Ali Pasha the acceptable Russian support for the Ottoman Empire. It stated that the Ottoman army in Persia was composed of over 100,000 troops and the Russians already had a standing army of 30,000 in their regions in Iran. According to the Ottoman view, the Ottoman expenditure for that expedition was too high. The order maintained that the Russian aim in sending this military help was the protection of their provinces in Persia. The Porte concluded that in order to attain that goal, the Russian presence should be equal to half of the Ottoman forces, or at least 40,000 soldiers. The government warned Ali Pasha not to accept any offer of fewer troops.

There were at least two critical points to that Ottoman condition. First, by demanding a number higher than the current number of Russian troops in Persia, the Ottomans were clearly forcing the Russians to send a considerable number of soldiers from Russia. Sending the demanded amount of soldiers was nearly impossible at that time for Russia, since it had already given up an offensive policy in Iran and these troops were urgently needed on the western front.[991] Second, in line with the *reisülküttab*'s threat to Nepluyev, by clearly expressing the Russian goal as the protection of its own territories in Iran the Porte implicitly threatened Russia with a possible loss of those Russian territories if Russia did not accept the Ottoman condition. Moreover, that order was sent at a time when the peace talks with the Afghans were already underway. Thus, it is probable that the Porte had designed the condition as a future pretext to expel the Russians from Persia.[992] During the process of peace talks between the Ottomans and

would not recognize the Russian regions in Persia. See Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1116. That threat was also a clear indicator of the relation between the demarcation of border and finalization of the Ottoman-Afghan conflict.

[991] Soloviev, 19:1115–16.

[992] Two years later, upon the arrival of the Afghan ambassador Namdar Muhammad Khan Baluc in Constantinople, Nepluyev's fears of Ottoman support for Ashraf against Tahmasb increased. The Venetian *bailo* explained the reason for the Russian fear as, after establishing their full control in Persia, "the Afghan would be ready to invade Russia in case of trouble between the sultan and the czar." See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 129.

the Afghans, the Russian government was well aware that an Ottoman-Afghan peace posed a great threat to their holdings in Persia.[993]

Only few months after this order, and a short while before the conclusion of the Treaty of Hamadan peace in October 1727, the border commission gathered again and finished the remaining parts of the border. The contacts and negotiations between Ottoman and Russian authorities in the spring and summer of 1727 clearly show that there was no more "eternal peace" of 1721 and alliance of 1724 between the two. However, they were still not in open military confrontation against one another and completed the demarcation of the border at the end of the year. Still, similar to the case of their different ultimate goals underlying the common short-term goal of installing Tahmasb on the Persian throne, the demarcation of borders did not indicate peace or friendship between Constantinople and St. Petersburg.

A.2. The Austro-Russian Defensive Alliance of 1726

The mid-1720s were a time when the old balance of power in Europe was being shaken and major European powers were seeking to form new alliances. The Austrian Habsburgs expanded their rule to the Southern Low Countries as a result of the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1714).[994] In December 1722, the Habsburgs founded the Ostend Company, a colonial chartered company, in Ostend, located in Southern Low Countries. The company's activities targeted Mocka, Guinea, China, and the Indian Malabar Coast.[995] These activities were in direct conflict with the overseas trade of the English and the Dutch; both of them raised concerns about the establishment of the company.[996] The more threatening news was yet to come. In the short period between the end of April and beginning of June 1725, Austria and Spain formed a

[993] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1115. They discussed possible harms of that peace on November 17th, 1727 at the Supreme Privy Council.
[994] Jelten Baguet, "Politics and Commerce: A Close Marriage? The Case of the Ostend Company (1722-1731)," *TSEG - The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 12, no. 3 (September 15, 2015): 55–56.
[995] Baguet, 56.
[996] Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 64.

defensive alliance and signed a peace and commerce treaty at Vienna. These developments posed a great danger to the existing balance of power in Europe.[997]

More than the acquisition of Southern Low Countries and the establishment of the Ostend Company, the Austro-Spanish alliance caused anxiety in the rest of Europe. That alliance was apparently against the Quadruple Alliance of 1718, which had been formed to deter the probable aggression of Spain.[998] Opposing the Austro-Spanish alliance, on September 3rd, 1725, Britain, France, and Prussia had signed into being a counter-alliance with the Treaty of Hanover (Herrenhausen). As an immediate reaction to the Hanover alliance, in November 1725, Spain and Austria agreed on another alliance of a more offensive nature, and a marriage contract that would have possibly made the Spanish Don Carlos of Bourbon-Parma the heir to the entire Austrian, French, and Spanish domains.[999] As Gibbs argues, the Austro-Spanish alliance in different fields challenged the existing political, economic, and religious landscape of the continent by disproportionately empowering Austria and Spain vis-à-vis the rest of Europe.[1000] In that rivalry, the outbreak of war between these opposing alliances was not considered too distant a possibility,[1001] and both parties tried to enlarge their influence and exert pressure on the opposing side to deter the enemy as much as they could.[1002]

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[997] W. N. Hargreaves- Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain 1700–1788: A Political, Diplomatic and Institutional History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1979), 57; Graham Gibbs, "Britain and the Alliance of Hanover, April 1725-February 1726," *The English Historical Review* 73, no. 288 (1958): 404.

[998] Frederik Dhondt, Mediation Rituals and Balance-of-Power Language: the Quadruple Alliance's Italian Investitures (1718-1727), 2000: the European Journal, XIII (2012), No. 2, p. 5. Initially, it was a triple alliance agreed on in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) between France, Britain, and the Dutch Republic. In 1718, Austria joined that alliance. For a narration of events regarding the rivalry between Spain and other European powers during that period, see Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain 1700–1788*, 45–54.

[999] Mawdsley, 57; Gibbs, "Britain and the Alliance of Hanover, April 1725-February 1726," 414–16.

[1000] Gibbs, "Britain and the Alliance of Hanover, April 1725-February 1726," 409, 411, 416.

[1001] Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain 1700–1788*, 57. An important conflict zone for the outbreak of war was Gibraltar, over which Spain and England were in fierce competition at that time.

[1002] For example, in 1727, as a result of the pressures by the Dutch Republic and England, the Ostend Company's operations were prohibited temporarily, and the company was closed in 1731. See
Baguet, "Politics and Commerce," 58. In the last months of 1725, the Austrians captured an English merchant-courier who had letters from London to Constantinople intended to incite the Ottomans to war against the Habsburgs. See Walter Leitsch, "Der Wandel Der Österreichischen Rußlandpolitik in Den Jahren 1724-1726," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 6, no. 1 (1958): 84–85.

In that new situation, not feeling secure with the friendship of a weakening Spain,[1003] Austria had sought for other partners to combat the aggression of England, France, the Netherlands, and the kingdom of Denmark-Norway.[1004] As a result of months-long debates among Habsburg ministers in Vienna, the Austrians decided that Russian support from northeastern Europe would best serve the empire's interest. Together with blocking the Ottomans, that support would have also pressured the Prussians and balanced British and Dutch powers in the Baltic Sea.[1005] However, Russia and Austria had developed a mutual mistrust in the preceding twenty-five years, and it did not prove easy to create a concrete alliance between these two powers. Even though that mistrust continued in the first months of the rule of Tsarina Catherine I, the increasing threat to Austria and Russia from third parties and simultaneous decrease in the Russian ambitious attitude after the death of Peter I brought these two powers closer again starting with Spring 1725. [1006]

When the major Austrian concern was the extended Hanover alliance, and to an extent their possible incitement of the Ottomans against the Habsburgs, for the Russians the concern was the Ottoman threat more than anything. The unbalanced power of the Ottomans in Persia and their robust implementation of that power against Russia as seen in the violation of the Partition Treaty resulted in changes in Russian attitudes toward the Ottomans in the Iranian question and beyond. The establishment of the Austro-Russian defensive alliance of August 1726 was achieved primarily for that reason, as far as St. Petersburg was concerned. Together with this reason, as Russia had established dominance in north-eastern Europe with the

[1003] Lavender Cassels, *Struggle for the Ottoman Empire, 1717-1740* (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966), 28.
[1004] Prussia left the alliance after three months. However, it was the Austrian concord with Russia and promises of territories that persuaded the Prussian king to leave the alliance. See Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 66. The kingdom of Denmark-Norway became a part of this alliance informally through the Treaty of Copenhagen signed with Great Britain and France in April 1727. See Frederik Dhondt, *Balance of Power and Norm Hierarchy: Franco-British Diplomacy After the Peace of Utrecht* (Leiden: Brill - Nijhoff, 2015), 415.
[1005] Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 65.
[1006] Leitsch, "Der Wandel Der Österreichischen Rußlandpolitik in Den Jahren 1724-1726," 57–63.

conclusion of the Treaty of Nystad, conflicts between the Russian interests and those of especially Britain and Denmark-Norway began to arise in the 1720s.[1007] These conflicts constituted another reason for the Russian willingness to enter into an alliance with Austria, an enemy through the preceding decades. The Austrian recognition of the Russian presence in the Baltic Sea and support for its dominance were significant achievements for Russia in European international politics.[1008]

The Ottoman threat played an important role in the alliance negotiations between Austria and Russia. After some futile Austrian attempts to make an alliance with Russia in 1724 when Peter I was alive, the issue become more concrete for both sides starting in spring 1725, after Peter's death. In that new process, first, Austria tried to utilize the long-standing Ottoman-Russian rivalry as an attraction tool to persuade the Russians to make an alliance with Austria. After receiving instructions from Vienna, in April 1725, Nicolaus von Hochholzer, the Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, warned the Russians that they needed support against the Ottomans and that they could find that support only in the Habsburg emperor.[1009]

The Austrians considered the Ottoman threat to be one of the most effective cards to attract the Russians to their sides. Yet, as Leitsch observes, that argument was not effective in St. Petersburg at the time. That inefficaciousness was a clear indicator of the good concord between the Ottomans and the Russians in the immediately preceding years and the Russian confidence in the Russo-Ottoman "eternal peace" as of April 1725. However, in parallel with the Ottoman transgressions of the Partition Treaty in the following months and the ensuing Ottoman establishment of dominance in Persia, the climate at St. Petersburg began to turn against Constantinople. The Porte expressed to Nepluyev its discontent with a possible alliance

[1007] Leitsch, 37–38.
[1008] Leitsch, 90.
[1009] Leitsch, 67.

between Russia and Austria. In its response dated April 16th, 1725, the Russian government replied that it was also disturbed by the Ottoman activities in Iran, and that Russia would not establish an alliance with Austria if the Ottomans did not continue their adverse activities in Persia.[1010] As a result, the Ottoman situation indeed proved to be the most persuasive element in the Russian acceptance of the Austrian alliance offer in the next months.[1011]

Soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Hanover, on November 10th, 1725, Habsburg Emperor Charles VI offered to establish an alliance with Tsarina Catherine I through the agency of Hochholzer.[1012] Two days later, in the first meeting with Russian ministers, when Hochholzer explained the Austrian proposals for alliance, he again touched upon the advantage of that alliance against the Ottomans. However, he used careful language and stated that geopolitically, the Austrians and the Russians were strategically located so as to be potentially quite helpful to each other regarding the "Orient."[1013] On November 24th, Hochholzer received a reply from Catherine I accepting the alliance proposal in principle.[1014] Thus, during the most tense and insecure days on the Constantinople-St. Petersburg axis, the Russians approved the formal start of negotiations for an Austro-Russian alliance.

In the first Austrian cabinet meeting in which the Russian representative Lanczynski participated on January 3rd, 1726, he asked the ministers for a clarification of Hochholzer's

[1010] Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 36.
[1011] Leitsch, "Der Wandel Der Österreichischen Rußlandpolitik in Den Jahren 1724-1726," 63, 66. Leitsch writes that the Russians started to take the issue of alliance with Austria more seriously in the summer of 1725. He adds that all the influential decision-makers at the Russian court had supported the alliance with Austria. So, clearly, there was a complete shift in the Russian attitude toward making an alliance with the Habsburgs in the very short period from April to November 1725. Like most of the scholars writing on European diplomatic history, Leitsch is focused on Austrian-Russian alliance in the European context, and he does not discuss the reasons for this shift with respect to Russo-Ottoman relations. He only touches on the victorious Ottoman position in Persia and the probability of a war between the Russians and the Ottomans in one sentence. See Leitsch, 83. However, as was clear from the Russian insistence on the inclusion of the Ottomans to the extent of defensive alliance, the main reason for the change in the Russian attitude in favor of making an alliance with Austria would have been related to the worsening of relations in the axis of Constantinople and St. Petersburg due to the change in the balance of power in Iran in favor of the Ottomans.
[1012] Leitsch, "Der Wandel Der Österreichischen Rußlandpolitik in Den Jahren 1724-1726," 78–79.
[1013] Leitsch, 79.
[1014] Leitsch, 79.

proposition on the "Orient." After some vague replies, Prince Eugene, who was leading the negotiations, stated that the "Orient" implied the Ottomans.[1015] Toward the end of March, as the Austrians wanted to speed up negotiations for the conclusion of the alliance due to anxiety over French intervention in the process, Hochholzer's report from St. Petersburg arrived in Vienna. He informed the imperial council that the Russians attached particular importance to the application for a defensive alliance against the Ottomans.[1016] In mid-April 1726, after getting new instructions from St. Petersburg, Lanczynski repeated the tsarina's firmness on the Ottoman question and stated that it was one of the indispensable conditions for Russia. In her message through Lanczynski, the tsarina threatened the Habsburg administration that unless Russian demands were met, the alliance could not be concluded.[1017]

In the face of Austrian resistance, especially by Count Bussy-Rabutin, the Austrian ambassador at St. Petersburg,[1018] the firm Russian stance yielded results and the Russians were successful in adding a secret article to the defensive alliance that was signed on August 6th, 1726.[1019] This secret article declared that, "in the event that the Porte contravened the Russo-Turkish treaty of 1724 and a war broke out, Emperor Charles VI obliged himself to aid Russia by sending a 30,000-strong army comprised of 20,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 dragoons."[1020] That statement itself was clear proof of the need the Russians felt to counterbalance the increasing Ottoman strength in Iran. In a nutshell, considering the relatively long negotiation process between Austria and Russia, the twenty-five-year defensive alliance between these two

[1015] Leitsch, 83.
[1016] Leitsch, 86.
[1017] Leitsch, 87. In that message the tsarina included two matters as her fundamental stipulations: first, the Ottoman question, second, the Schleswig-Holstein region in today's Germany.
[1018] Iskra Schwarcz and Plamen Mitev, "The 'Loyal Ally:' Russian Troops in the Army of Eugene of Savoy as a Historical Problem," in *Empires and Peninsulas: Southeastern Europe Between Karlowitz and the Peace of Adrianople, 1699-1829* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010), 46.
[1019] Specifically on that matter, Prince Eugen had insisted that in the alliance treaty a military cooperation against Ottomans should not have taken place. See Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 66.
[1020] Schwarcz and Mitev, "The 'Loyal Ally:' Russian Troops in the Army of Eugene of Savoy as a Historical Problem," 46.

rival powers was made possible by the increasing threats for Russia in the east and for Austria in the west.

A.2.1. Diplomatic Relations between Vienna and Constantinople

Even though Vienna and St. Petersburg concluded the defensive alliance, there was a clear difference between Austrian and Russian attitudes toward the Ottomans. As seen in the negotiations between Austria and Russia, it was not the Romanovs but the Habsburgs that cared about not disturbing the Ottomans. In the post-Passarowitz period, one of Austria's critical foreign policy strategies was keeping relations with the Ottomans peaceful,[1021] and as of the mid-1720s the Habsburg administration had no idea of the peace's deterioration.[1022] Austria was thus in a delicate situation within the triangle of Western European powers, Russia, and the Ottomans. To counterbalance the western European powers, it needed the Russian help. However, that Russian help could turn the enmity of the Ottomans against Vienna; in that scenario, the Ottomans could ally with Britain and France. Thus, in that process, the Austrians had to be and were very careful to assure the Ottomans of their loyalty to the peace established in Passarowitz.[1023] In the face of persistent Russian pressure, Austria maintained an equivocal position with regard to the Ottomans for a considerably long time. In March 1726, Prince Eugen sent a personal message to the Ottoman grand vizier assuring him that Austria had not intended to go to war with the Ottomans. Only after the grand vizier's reply confirming his understanding did the Austrians withdraw their reservations about the validity of their defensive alliance against the Ottomans. Even after the conclusion of the alliance treaty in August, Eugen instructed the Austrian resident at Constantinople to let the Porte know that the defensive alliance was in no way against the Ottoman Empire.

[1021] Schwarcz and Mitev, 44.
[1022] Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 66.
[1023] Roider, 66.

What was the Ottoman attitude toward the unexpected and potentially detrimental rapprochement between its two major neighbors? During Austro-Russian negotiations, the Ottoman government continuously received up-to-date intelligence and information from at least two sources; first, the letters of the prince of Wallachia, Maurocordato[1024] and, second, the French and English residents at Constantinople, who were trying to prevent the Austro-Russian talks from achieving success. The Venetian resident reported that the Austro-Russian alliance caused worry for the Porte.[1025]

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Ottoman policy toward Austria after the Treaty of Karlowitz of 1699 was to keep relations peaceful. The war with Austria in 1716-18 had not been caused by Ottoman aggression against Austria, but by Austria's interference with the Venice-Ottoman conflict to take advantage of that conflict for further territorial enlargement into the Ottoman domains in the Balkans. In the mid-1720s, there was no change in this general Ottoman foreign policy toward Austria. Moreover, extensive ongoing military operations on the eastern front rendered any military conflict with the Habsburgs completely undesirable for the Porte. Thus, during that period, the Austrian desire to have friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire matched the Porte's goals and conditions. As a result of that foreign policy choice, the Ottoman government had firmly rejected the incitements of the British and French residents at Constantinople to propel the Ottomans against Austria and Russia. Especially the French resident Vicomte d'Andrezel had struggled to lead the Porte to stand against the Austro-Russian rapprochement, even going so far as to warn the Ottoman government that the real target of their alliance was not the Western European powers, but the Ottomans themselves. Upon repeated Ottoman rejection, d'Andrezel threatened the Porte with his withdrawal from the mediation between the Ottomans and Russians for the implementation of the border

[1024] Eudoxius von Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, vol. 5 (Socecŭ & Teclu, 1886), 7.
[1025] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 123–24.

demarcation stipulated in the Treaty of Partition. Damad İbrahim Pasha's answer was that it was up to the French resident whether to continue doing the job or not, showing that French mediation was not needed anymore.[1026]

To ensure the non-hostility of the Austrians during this period, the Ottoman government took two important steps that have not been touched upon in the modern scholarship on the subject: first, they concluded maritime peace treaties between the Habsburg emperor and the rulers of Tunis and Tripoli separately in the fall of 1725 and the spring of 1726;[1027] second, in accordance with the Treaty of Passarowitz, they sent a permanent resident to Vienna to carry out merchant affairs there for the first time in the fall of 1725.[1028]

The Austro-Russian defensive alliance marked the divergence of Ottoman and Russian foreign policies, which had converged temporarily in the immediately preceding years. As Roider observes, even though the Austrians did not aim to break the peace with the Porte, the defensive alliance was valid against the Ottomans, as well.[1029] Thus, the treaty could well bring these two neighbors against each other in the future, which it did within a decade, with the outbreak of the war of 1736-39 between the Ottomans and the Russo-Austrian alliance. In this sense, the defensive alliance of 1726 would play a major role in the eventual loss of all the Ottoman-conquered territories in Iran as of late 1735.

B. Restarting the Afghan-Safavid Rivalry

B.1. Revival of Tahmasb and His Enthronement in Isfahan (1726-1729)

Being left with an empty hand after three years of fight, Tahmasb started a new adventure in northeastern and eastern Persia in the beginning of 1726. He was still adamant about reestablishing the Safavid state as the only legitimate heir and last hope of the dynasty. In

[1026] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1886, 5:7–8.
[1027] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-73, 15 Muharrem 1138 (September 23rd, 1725); BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-78, Şaban 1138 (April 4th – May 3rd, 1726).
[1028] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-135, Evahir Rebiulevvel 1138 (November 27th – December 6th, 1725); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-283, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1138 (January 25th – February 3rd, 1726).
[1029] Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, 66.

pursuit of that aim, Tahmasb set forth to the northeast both to find new local allies and to subdue newly-emerged powers in different parts of eastern Persia. First, in the first months of 1726, he met with Fath Ali Khan Qajar,[1030] a Qajar leader, who had 2,000 followers in Sari, Mazandaran. Fath Ali Khan joined Tahmasb with his forces and they went to Astarabad. Soon, Tahmasb made his new supporter *wakīl al-dawla* (Deputy of the State) and increased the support he received, along with other Qajar chiefs.[1031] Second, having heard the fame of a successful Afsharid military leader, Nadir, Tahmasb invited him to join Safavid cause.[1032] At that time Nadir's base was at Kelat and his area of influence was growing as a result of his military activities in the surrounding area, like Abivard (today's Dargaz). The main bulk of Nadir's forces was composed of Afsharid and Kurdish tribesmen.[1033]

Nadir accepted Tahmasb's invitation and joined Tahmasb's service in Khabushan in September 1726 with a force of 2,000 to 5,000 troops.[1034] The target was a big regional power, Malik Mahmud Sistani, who had declared his independence in Mashhad several years previous, and who was the major regional enemy of both Fath Ali Khan and Nadir. [1035] Strengthened by the participation of two important regional leaders, Tahmasb set forth to Mashhad from Khabushan toward the end of September.[1036] The expedition ended successfully and Mashhad

[1030] He was the leader of the Ashaka bash (*aşağı baş*) tribe in Astarabad and also the grandfather of the founder of the Qajar state, Agha Muhammad Shah (1741-1797). See Sadiq Sajjadi, "Feth Ali Han," in *TDVİA*, 1995; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 6.
[1031] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 15–16.
[1032] Lockhart, 24.
[1033] Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 57–61.
[1034] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 24; Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 67–68. In their meeting, he was given the nickname of "Tahmasb Quli Khan" by Tahmasb. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 308.
[1035] Nadir entered into the service of Malik Mahmud in 1723 or 1724. See Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 58–60; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 21–22.
[1036] See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 308.

There was a critical detail in a contemporary book about Nadir Shah written by James Fraser on . He wrote that during the march against Malik Mahmud, Tahmasb sent an envoy to Constantinople regarding the agreement. (The envoy mentioned would have been the one hosted by the Ottomans in Tabriz.) As Fraser related, Tahmasb ordered the envoy to "get sick" on the road to make his arrival in Ottoman territory late. His plan was to achieve some success in the field during that time and show that he was still a worthy ally and capable power in Persia. See James Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah, Formerly Called Thamas Kuli Khan, the Present Emperor of Persia* (London, 1742), 91.

was taken under Safavid control on November 11th, 1726, only three days after the Ottoman defeat at Anjudan.[1037]

Thus, for the first time, when news of success came from the Safavids, the Ottomans had bitterly failed in Persian lands. Retrospectively, if the Ottomans had won the war against the Afghans, most probably, Tahmasb would have marched on Isfahan to be enthroned as the conqueror of Mashhad. However, history did not follow that course, and Tahmasb had to continue his struggles in the east for a longer time.

The successful start of Tahmasb's journey soon turned again into a thorny road for the Safavid prince. Significant disagreements and conflicts began to emerge between Tahmasb and Nadir.[1038] The height of these conflicts happened in October 1727 at Sabzavar, where the two forces clashed, and Nadir was victorious. Upon this triumph, Nadir imprisoned Tahmasb and sent him to Mashhad. Moreover, Nadir took Tahmasb's seal and started to send orders in the name of the prince.[1039] Although Nadir successfully took his master under his control, he still needed Tahmasb, as the prince's royalty was the most critical power for the quarrelsome partners. In December 1728, Nadir took Mazandaran under his control by defeating Zulfiqar Khan, the ruler of Mazandaran, who had been encouraged to go against Nadir by Tahmasb.[1040] With that victory, Nadir's control over Tahmasb was further strengthened. Tahmasb increasingly became a puppet in Nadir's hands, albeit a precious one due to his royal blood.

[1037] Importantly, during the siege Nadir convinced Tahmasb to order the capital punishment of Fath Ali Khan, due to his alleged treachery. Soon after the execution of the punishment, Nadir became the *qurchi bashi* (head of soldiers). See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 308–11; Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 73. Mashhad became Nadir's central stronghold for the rest of his life until his death in 1747.
[1038] For a detailed history of the Tahmasb-Nadir conflicts, see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 316–20.
[1039] Lockhart, 318–19. It should be remembered that it was in the beginning of that month that the Treaty of Hamadan was signed between the Ottomans and the Afghans.
[1040] Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 79; N. D. Miklukho-Maklai, "Zapiski S Avramova Ob Irane Kak Istoricheskii Istochnik," in *Uchenye Zapiski Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, Seriia Vostokovedcheskikh Nauk, part 3, 128 (Leningrad, 1952), 103.

From then on, they maintained their partnership and continued to expand the Safavid influence over other local leaders in eastern Persia.

After several inconclusive attacks by Nadir against the Abdali Afghans in Herat, the major power in eastern Persia, the joint military expedition of Tahmasb and Nadir ended successfully with the defeat and submission of the Abdalis in the summer of 1729.[1041] Having subdued their most powerful rival in Persia, Nadir set out from Mashhad to Isfahan to encounter the major enemy in Isfahan on September 12th, 1729.[1042] The Safavid army was composed of Kizilbash soldiers, and Turkomen, Kurdish, and several other tribal groups under the leadership of Nadir. In a series of three battles between September 29th and November 12th, 1729 outside of Isfahan, the Afghan army was defeated.[1043] On November 16th, 1729, Nadir triumphantly entered the city, sealing the end of the short-lived Ghilzai Afghan rule in Persia.[1044] In a message to Tahmasb immediately following his entry to the city, Nadir invited the Safavid prince to travel from Tehran to Isfahan to claim the Persian throne that had been lost seven years previously. Tahmasb entered Isfahan on December 9th, 1729 and was enthroned as Shah Tahmasb II.[1045]

C. The Ottoman Reaction to the Afghan-Safavid Competition in the Late 1720s

The Ottoman government did not involve itself in the rivalry between Ashraf and Tahmasb in the late 1720s. The main priority of the Porte during that time was the protection of its territories in Iran, as the turbulent situation in Persia could have caused a loss of Ottoman lands. The Porte did not want to lose these territories after exerting considerable political, economic, and military power to keep them over the preceding years. The divergence of the Russian and Ottoman policies in Iran also gradually became a great concern for the Porte. The Russo-Ottoman

[1041] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 322–26.
[1042] Lockhart, 320. He sent Tahmasb to Tehran and aimed to fight against the Ghilzais without Tahmasb.
[1043] Lockhart, 330–34.
[1044] Lockhart, 333–34.
[1045] Lockhart, 334. Tahmasb I was the second Safavid shah and ruled between 1524 and 1576 in Iran.

alliance was a significant factor in the Ottoman advances in Persia until 1725. The breaking of the alliance worsened conditions for the Porte, rendering the arrival of Tahmasb not as welcomed as would have been the case just a few years previous.

C.1. Ottoman-Safavid Relations

C.1.1. Shahseven Rebellions

Nearly simultaneously with Tahmasb's reentry, accompanied by new allies, to the game in Iran, big insurrections began to erupt in the traditional Safavid strongholds of Azerbaijan, and especially in the cities of Tabriz and Ardabil. The Shahseven tribal confederation was at the center of all these uprisings. However, there were many other smaller tribes, including the Muqtat, Eylat, Akhshamat, Anbarlu, and Shiqaqi, that joined in the uprisings against the Ottomans in Azerbaijan. The Shahseven were a confederation composed of several Turkish-speaking, Kizilbash, half-nomadic and half-pastoral tribes in the Mughan and Ardabil region and in the districts between Zanjan and Tehran.[1046] Shahseven uprisings continued until 1730, when the Ottomans were expelled from Azerbaijan.

First, in the spring of 1726, as a result of letters from Tahmasb urging Shahseven to revolt, several Kizilbash tribes, whose numbers were estimated around 3,000, rose against the Ottomans in Ardabil and were defeated in May 1726 by a considerable Ottoman force of 10,000 or 20,000 soldiers.[1047] After this Ottoman victory, the government warned Tabriz's and

[1046] Richard Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24–25. The name of the confederation is descriptive of their political attitude, "Shah-lover." As we learn from an imperial order, there were at least thirty-eight tribes in the Shahseven confederation. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-606, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1141 (October 5th-14th, 1728).

[1047] *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1496–97; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-847, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-848, Evail-i Zilkade 1138 (July 1st-10th, 1726).

There were two imperial orders related either to these uprisings or a to new one sometime in the summer of 1726. In the first order, a letter from Tabriz's Governor Ali Pasha was summarized. According to this summary, Ali Pasha had accused the Russians of provoking the Ottoman Kizilbash subjects to revolt against the Ottomans. He also named certain Shahseven groups who had revolted against Ottomans as a result of Russian incitements. However, this was a complex matter, because, again based on the same imperial order, the Russians blamed the Ottoman provincial forces led by Abdurrezzak Pasha for invading towns that were not in Ardabil, but in Gilan. Ali Pasha categorically rejected that claim and argued that all the towns mentioned by the Russians had traditionally belonged to Ardabil. What complicated the problem further was the fact that either at that time or soon after that, Abdurrezzak Pasha revolted against the Ottomans, as will be seen below. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-1448, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1139 (January 14th-23rd, 1727). There was a second imperial order to Ali Pasha around

Baghdad's governors to keep a close eye on "heretic Kizilbash" who were enemies of religion and who were going to rise again as soon as they found the opportunity.[1048] The following year, the Shahseven insurrections were repeated, and in battles in July and August 1727, Ottoman forces of 15,000 defeated the rioters, who numbered approximately 7,000, on the way between Karadagh and Tabriz.[1049]

Significantly, the official Ottoman chronicler and provincial governors did not hesitate to accuse the Russians of providing shelter for the escaping rebels.[1050] In a meeting between the Ottoman grand vizier, the *reisülküttab*, and Russian resident Nepluyev, Damad İbrahim Pasha argued that the former King of Kartli, Wakhtang VI, who had been in Russia since 1724, had been sent by the Russian government to Gilan in the summer of 1726 to induce Kizilbash populations under Ottoman rule to revolt against the Ottomans. According to Damad İbrahim's claim, the pretext that Wakhtang had gone to Gilan to negotiate the agreement with Tahmasb was only a cover.[1051]

Despite the Ottoman victory in both revolts, the Porte received the news of another Shahseven uprising in fall 1727.[1052] At the end of 1727, the Porte decided on a bigger military

two months later. In that order, Ali Pasha was ordered to create a joint committee with the Russians to determine the disputed regions. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-49, Evahir-i Receb 1139 (March 14th-23rd, 1727).

[1048] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-847, Evahir-i Şevval 1138 (June 22nd-30th, 1726); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 133-848, Evail-i Zilkade 1138 (July 1st-10th, 1726).

[1049] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1554–55.

[1050] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1554.; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-1173, Evahir-i Cemaziyelahir 1140 (February 3rd-11th, 1728). The Ottoman accusation that Russia had provided shelter for Kizilbash rebels became an important point of conflict between the Ottoman government and Russian resident Nepluyev and Russia itself in 1729. I touch upon that conflict at the end of this section.

[1051] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1116–17. Soloviev did not relate any rejection of this accusation by Nepluyev. Whatever answer Nepluyev gave, it seems clear that the Russians were supporting the Shahseven tribes. See Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran*, 102; Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 17.

[1052] Provincial forces under the command of Baghdad's Governor Ahmed Pasha were also ordered to go to Tabriz to help suppress the revolt. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-856, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1140 (November 16th-25th, 1727). Based on the Mühimme registers, it seems that the last revolt was an unexpected one for the Ottoman decision-makers in Constantinople. Only ten days previous, the governor of Baghdad had been ordered to choose provincial forces to take with him through Huwayzans and to let the rest go back to their provinces. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-810, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1140 (November 6th-15th, 1727). Forces from Kastamonu were also among those to return to Anatolia. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-845, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1140 (November 16th-25th, 1727). However, these orders were canceled within the same ten days and the district governor of

operation to put a decisive end to Kizilbash uprisings in their newly-conquered lands. This time, in addition to Tabriz, the pasha of Ganja and forces from various other provinces that happened to be in Baghdad at the time were charged with suppressing the revolt.[1053] However, the Ottoman forces could not defeat the rebels, whose numbers were increasing by the day and who got the upper hand in several regions.[1054] As a result of that failure, the Porte dismissed Tabriz's Governor Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha from office and replaced him with Yusuf Pasha, the governor of Ardabil, in June 1728.[1055] In mid-June, the Porte was also aware that the governor of Karadagh, Abdurrezzak Pasha, was the leader of the Shahseven uprising and that the khan of Mughan Muhammad Quli[1056] was also among the rebels. As Zarinebaf points out, Abdurrezzak Pasha was at the top of the hierarchy of Ottoman officials in Tabriz in terms of the size of the land he controlled and the economic revenue he received.[1057]

Moreover, a new figure named Qalandar İsmail, a pretender claiming to be the son of Shah Sultan Husayn, also rebelled in the region of Gilan and Khalkhal.[1058] The government ordered the governor of Anatolia, Mustafa Pasha, who was in Hamadan, to go to Tabriz and lead the armies against the rebels.[1059] The Porte also summoned an influential local notable named Hacı Taceddin to Constantinople to answer certain questions, as he was "knowledgeable

Kastamonu, İbrahim, was assigned as the head of all military forces transferring from Baghdad to Tabriz to put down the Shahseven rebels. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-857, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1140 (November 16th-25th, 1727).

[1053] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-856, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1140 (November 16th-25th, 1727); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 134-1173 and 1174, Evahir-i Cemaziyelahir 1140 (February 3rd-11th, 1728).

[1054] Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran*, 100–101.

[1055] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-305, Evail-i Zilkade 1140 (June 9th-18th, 1728). Ali Pasha was transferred to the governorship of Şehrizor.

[1056] In another Mühimme order, the rebellious Mughan khan was named Safi Quli Khan. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-561, Evasıt-ı Safer 1141 (September 16th-25th, 1728). Çelebizâde also gave his name as Safi Quli Khan. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1608.

[1057] Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725-1730," 24–25.

[1058] For Qalandar's rebellion, see Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 249; Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 15–16; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 127–28.

[1059] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-305 and 306, Evail-i Zilkade 1140 (June 9th-18th, 1728).

in all affairs of that land."[1060] Only a week ago or so before the Porte summoned Hacı Taceddin, Abdülbaki Pasha (Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana), former khan of Kirmanshah under the Safavids, arrived in Constantinople to discuss the situation in Iran.[1061]

At around the same time, in the summer of 1728, the Porte received a letter from the governor of Tabriz letting Constantinople know that Tahmasb had sent an envoy, Wali Muhammad Khan, to the Ottomans and that he was being kept in Tabriz.[1062] The Porte did not allow him to proceed to Constantinople and after hesitating about where to keep the envoy, it ordered him to be detained in Ganja. The government sent Süleyman Efendi, a senior bureaucrat in the finance department, to interrogate the envoy.[1063] In the meantime, the news arrived, via Armenian merchants, that many khans who had joined Tahmasb were coming to Constantinople.[1064] The Ottoman capital was beginning to feel the seriousness of the situation in Iran. The Ottoman anxiety was captured quite well by the Venetian resident, who recorded the sending of envoys from Constantinople to Tahmasb and Ashraf around the same time.[1065]

[1060] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-307, Evail-i Zilkade 1140 (June 9th-18th 1728). After the death of Yusuf Pasha, the new Tabriz's governor Mustafa Pasha was again ordered to send Hacı Taceddin to Constantinople for the same reason. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-579, Evahir-i Safer 1141 (September 26th – October 4th, 1728).

[1061] Abdülbaki Pasha ceded Kirmanshah to the Ottomans without a fight and declared his loyalty to them. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1598. Following the Safavid capture of Isfahan, Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana again entered into the service of the Safavids. He was Nadir's envoy to Constantinople in 1736 to discuss the Ja'farism proposal. For more information on his career, see Fariba Zarinebaf, "Rebels and Renegades on Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Porous Frontiers and Hybrid Identities," in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (Palgrave, 2012), 92–93.

[1062] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-427, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1140 (July 29th – August 6th, 1728). It seemed the Porte received the news of Tahmasb's envoy in the beginning of July at the latest. Lockhart refers to English resident Stanyan's report dated June 27th – July 8th, 1728. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 342.

[1063] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-513, 514, and 515, Evahir-i Muharrem 1141 (August 27th – September 5th, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-539, 540, and 541, Evasıt-ı Safer 1141 (September 16th-25th, 1728). Even though the reason for these changes was not stated in the Mühimme entries, most probably the ongoing rebellions in Tabriz and Ardabil rendered Tabriz insecure for that kind of questioning.

I was not able to confirm the date of the arrival of letters from Tahmasb and his commander-in-chief Nadir to Constantinople, but it is probable that Tabriz governor Mustafa Pasha sent these letters along with his own letter.

[1064] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 127.

[1065] Shay, 126. Süleyman Efendi was ordered to set out from Constantinople in the end of July or beginning of August 1728. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-427, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1140 (July 29th – August 6th, 1728). The date Râşid Mehmed Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador to Ashraf, departed from Constantinople was August 20th, 1728. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1610–11.

He argued that the reason for the sending of these envoys was to assess the strength of both rivals and to adjust the Porte's position in favor of the stronger party.

At the end of July, seeing that the Kizilbash rebellion was spreading, the Porte sent a new series of orders to Tbilisi, Van, and Diyarbakr, ordering all their forces to Tabriz to put down the uprising.[1066] As Çelebizâde narrated, the number of rebels had reached 20,000 in Ardabil.[1067] Simultaneously with these orders, the Porte also sent an order to the governor of Karadagh, Abdurrezzak Pasha, the head of rebellion, as a final olive branch. In return for his stopping the uprising, the government assured him that he would not be punished for what had happened thus far. The imperial order admitted that the former governor of Tabriz, Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, had been overtaxing his subjects, who were left with no options other than escape or revolt. It also alleged that, besides his personal suffering under Ali Pasha, what Abdurrezzak Pasha, had done was just being on the side of the oppressed. Thus, the order continued, the actions he had taken against Ali Pasha were completely understandable. The government added that the Porte had dismissed Ali Pasha due to his wrongdoings, so Abdurrezzak Pasha should go to the new governor, Yusuf Pasha, to turn over a new, peaceful page in Azerbaijan.[1068] Using soft power backed by hard power to obtain a desired result was a classical tactic of the Porte. Soon after that order, Constantinople received the news that Yusuf Pasha had passed away; his death accelerated the rebellion even further.[1069]

The Porte gave the governor of Anatolia, Mustafa Pasha, the post of the Tabriz governorship as an addendum and made him the chief commander of the gathered provincial army. This army was newly supported by the pashas of Ganja and Ardalan, and by the governor

[1066] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 408, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1140 (July 19th-28th, 1728).
[1067] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1609.
[1068] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-416, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1140 (July 19th-28th, 1728).
[1069] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-560, 27 Muharrem 1141 (September 2nd, 1728)

of Shirvan, Surhay Han.[1070] An important detail in the order to Surhay Han was that the Porte specified his itinerary from Shamakhi to his target and warned him not to interfere with the Russian border.[1071] Çelebizâde noted that while the route over Russian soil would have taken only three days, Surhay Han spent twenty-nine days to reach his target.[1072] That was a relatively long time that should not have been sacrificed in the time of rebellion. The fact that the Ottomans preferred to take routes ten times longer was a significant indicator of how far relations between Constantinople and St. Petersburg were from the 1724 treaty.

The Ottoman provincial armies were successful, defeating the Kizilbash rebels in their skirmishes in August; the first news of Ottoman victory arrived in Constantinople in September 1728.[1073] However, it was not a decisive victory, and the Porte decided to increase the number of soldiers in Tabriz and Ardabil with an additional 3,000 troops from Erzurum, Kars, Kayseri, and Kırşehir.[1074] Due to the Ottoman failure to suppress the rebellion completely, provincial governors on the frontier were chastised with harsh orders.[1075] The Porte sent further imperial orders to provincial governors and khans to suppress the Kizilbash rebels totally the following spring.[1076]

Eventually, the long-waited news of the surrender of Abdurrezzak Pasha[1077] and other heads of rebellion arrived in Constantinople in February 1729, at the latest. The Ottoman *padishah* sent robes of honor to governors, khans, and higher officials who had participated in

[1070] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-560, 27 Muharrem 1141 (September 2nd, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-504 and 512, Evahir-i Muharrem 1141 (August 27th – September 5th, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-521 and 522, Evail-i Safer 1141 (September 6th-15th, 1728).
[1071] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-522, Evail-i Safer 1141 (September 6th-15th, 1728).
[1072] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1619.
[1073] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-536, Evasıt-ı Safer 1141 (September 16th-25th, 1728); Çelebizâde, 1607-09.
[1074] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-561, Evasıt-ı Safer 1141 (September 16th-25th, 1728).
[1075] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-662, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1141 (October 25th – November 3rd, 1728).
[1076] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-688, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1141 (November 4th-13th, 1728).
[1077] He was first kept in the fortress of Seddulbahir and then the execution order was issued in March 1730. See A.DVSMHM.d 136-130, Evahir-i Şaban 1142 (March 11th-19th, 1730).

these campaigns.[1078] Nevertheless, just as in the earlier Shahseven rebellions, the joy of success did not last long. In the beginning of July 1729, the Porte received the news that Qalandar İsmail[1079] had revived the Shahseven uprising.[1080] This time, the Porte ordered the Kurdish *bey*s in the Van and Diyarbakr provinces to fight against the rebels.[1081] It seems that the Ottomans put down the uprising in a few months, since the news of a Shahseven surrender and the giving of three of their leaders' sons as hostages to the Ottomans was reported to Constantinople at that time.[1082] Significantly, the pasha of Tabriz sent a certain *divan* scribe, Abdullah, and Hacı Taceddin, who would have returned from Constantinople recently, to dictate the conditions of their surrender and *istimalet*.[1083]

Even though the Shahseven uprisings had seemingly been suppressed by the end of the summer of 1729, it was just half of the bigger picture. First, as indicated above, there had been a clear link between the reemergence of Tahmasb and the start of large-scale Kizilbash rebellions, as the uprisings had begun with the instigation of Tahmasb himself. Moreover, the expansion of Tahmasb's control in north-eastern Iran also went hand in hand with the increase in the strength of the rebellions against Ottoman rule in Azerbaijan. Except for Qalandar

[1078] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-950, 951, 952, 953, 954, Evasıt-ı Receb 1141 (February 10th-19th, 1729); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-966, Evahir-i Receb 1141 (February 20th – March 1st, 1729).

[1079] It should be noted that unlike other Shahseven rebels, Qalandar İsmail was not allied with Tahmasb and was rather Tahmasb's rival, as he claimed the throne for himself. Similarly, Qalandar İsmail was not allied with the Russians, and Russians expelled him from Gilan toward Ottoman territories after military encounters. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 31–32. That Russian move also seemed logical, since by forcing İsmail into Ottoman domains, they created further trouble within Ottoman domains.

[1080] The Venetian *bailo* at Constantinople related that in the beginning of August 1729, the head of Qalandar İsmail arrived at the capital and was exposed at the door of Palace. See Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 128. However, Richard Tapper writes based on Muhammad Kazım that the Shahsevens beheaded İsmail and gave his head to Russians. See Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran*, 101.

[1081] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1287, Evail-i Zilhicce 1141 (June 28th – July 7th, 1729); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1303, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1141 (July 8th-17th, 1729). Together with this rebellion, there was another in Hamadan by the Zend tribes, who were seemingly independent of both Safavids and Afghans. BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-985, Evail-i Şaban 1141 (March 2nd-11th, 1729).

[1082] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1631, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1142 (September 24th – October 3rd, 1729). Fariba Zarinebaf pointed out that these hostages were taken only from rebellious tribes. See Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725-1730," 33.

[1083] "*İstimalet*" was an established Ottoman policy of putting relatively light financial burdens on the populations in newly-conquered areas to attract these populations to the new Ottoman rule and to prevent them from revolting against the Ottomans.

İsmail's uprisings, all the others had been in support of Tahmasb, although even İsmail's rebellion was in the name of reestablishing the Safavid state, showing that there was a great amount of dislike of Ottoman rule and a strong loyalty to the Safavid dynasty in the region. Thus, in as much as Tahmasb became stronger and increased hopes for a Safavid revival among the Kizilbash populations, there seemed to be neither an end to the rebellions nor a decisive Ottoman victory over the rebels.[1084]

Second, despite eventual Ottoman success over the rebels within the lands under Ottoman authority, thousands of Kizilbash subjects escaped from these Ottoman lands with the help of the Russians in the southern Caspian region. The Porte was not only struggling against the Kizilbash who were buoyed by Tahmasb's successes, but also against the Russians who were supporting the Shahseven. Thus, the suppression of these rebellions was actually not as complete as the Porte might have wished, as the external factors of Russia and Tahmasb continued to fuel the fire of revolt in the major cities of Ottoman-controlled Azerbaijan.

C.1.2. The Embassy of Wali Muhammad Khan

Not long before the arrival of news of the surrender of Abdurrezzak and suppression of Shahseven rebellion, the Porte received a report sent by Süleyman Efendi based on his questioning of Wali Muhammad Khan, the Safavid envoy.[1085] The initial Ottoman reaction to Wali Muhammad Khan in summer 1728 had been to underestimate him. Apart from detaining him in Ganja, Ottoman government let him know that he would not be taken seriously until Tahmasb proved himself with concrete successes in Iran.[1086] Moreover, Damad İbrahim Pasha informed the Russian resident, Nepluyev, that the Ottomans were not going to interfere in the

[1084] In addition to these, Ottoman government should have received the news of the coming of an Ashraf-Tahmasb military confrontation in the beginning of summer 1729 at the latest. The Ottoman envoy Râşid Mehmed Efendi sent a letter to Constantinople on April 7th, 1729 letting the Porte know that Ashraf was preparing for that confrontation. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 293, 328. Thus, the Porte was aware that as time passed, the power of Tahmasb increased so that he was going to confront Ashraf soon.

[1085] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-826, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelahir 1141 (January 12th-21st, 1729). Letters from Tahmasb would have arrived earlier than Süleyman Efendi's report.

[1086] Stanyan's dispatch dated June 27th – July 8th, 1728. See Lockhart, *Fall*, p. 342.

rivalry between Ashraf and Tahmasb after so much expenditure on the wars in Persia in recent years.[1087]

The Porte learned from the reports of Süleyman Efendi that Tahmasb had taken the Horasan and Herat region under his control and that he could change the regime in Isfahan with his sizable army.[1088] Upon receiving this news, the Porte ordered the envoy to be transferred from Ganja to Erzurum, a closer city to the capital.[1089] Eight months later, observing the military successes of Tahmasb and the commander of his army, the Ottoman government summoned Wali Muhammad Khan to Constantinople,[1090] where the envoy arrived in the beginning of November. The envoy's slow progress to Constantinople, nearly in parallel with Tahmasb's military achievements, indicates how meticulously the Ottomans followed their policy of taking Tahmasb seriously only after seeing his successes.

In the end of November and beginning of December 1729, the Porte received the news that the Safavid forces had defeated the Afghans outside Isfahan twice.[1091] With this news, the foreign residents at Constantinople began to believe more strongly that the time had come for the tide to turn in Persia.[1092]

I was not able to find Süleyman Efendi's report in the Ottoman archives; however, the registers of Nâme-i Hümayûn recorded the letters from Tahmasb and Tahmasb-Quli Khan (Nadir). Stanyan wrote that as the reports coming from Iran showed that the Safavids were

[1087] Stanyan's dispatch dated August 20th-31st, 1728. See Lockhart, *Fall*, p. 343.
[1088] Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia*, 2:270–71.
[1089] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-826, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelahir 1141 (January 12th-21st, 1729).
[1090] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1577, Evasıt-ı Safer 1142 (September 5th-14th, 1729).
[1091] In these fights, Nadir defeated Ashraf on September 29th and October 2nd. Among other possible sources, the Porte got this news from the letters of Hamadan's Governor Abdurrahman Pasha. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-8, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (December 2nd-11th, 1729). The first part of that imperial order was not in its correct place, due to wrong bookbinding. After some research, I was able to locate the first part, registered 136-70. For the arrival of this news, see Stanyan's report dated November 24th – December 5th, 1729, quoted in Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 343. See also Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 130.
[1092] Stanyan's report dated November 24th – December 5th, 1729, quoted in Lockhart, *Fall*, p. 343. For the Venetian resident's report based on Nepluyev's view, see Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 130.

succeeding against the Afghans in late November and early December, the attitude of Ottoman government toward Wali Muhammad Khan became more positive.[1093] It seems that even as soon as the envoy arrived in Constantinople in the beginning of November, he was received with high esteem, since it was at that time that letters from Tahmasb and Nadir were recorded in the registers of Nâme-i Hümayûn.[1094] It was not usual for the Ottomans to register letters from people having no warranted political seat and position. Sometimes, even letters from royal family members were not registered, if they were not deemed respectful enough.[1095] Indeed, it was the first time that Tahmasb's letters had appeared in the Ottoman registers of royal letters. Moreover, in the title of Tahmasb-Quli Khan's letter, he was described as the person "who was in the position of *i'timād al-dawla*."[1096] Thus, even at the beginning of November, it can be alleged that the Porte showed the letters of the Safavids a level of esteem that was closer to that paid to an independent ruler.

Four letters had come from the Safavids: two from Tahmasb to Ahmed III and Damad İbrahim, one from Nadir as *i'timād al-dawla* to Damad İbrahim, and the last one from Tahmasb's *serasker*, who could not have been anybody but Nadir, again to Damad İbrahim.[1097] These letters stated the reason for sending the envoy as a counterpart to Mustafa Efendi, whom the Porte had sent to Tahmasb in 1726, before the Anjudan War. Thus, letters sent with Wali

[1093] Stanyan's report dated November 24th – December 5th, 1729, quoted in Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 343.

[1094] At the end of each of the letters the date of the registration was added, with a note "registered" (*qayd shod*) in Persian or "the date of registration" (*tarih-i kayd*) in Turkish. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7, pp. 209, 211, 215.

[1095] Golovkin's letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha in 1725 and Nadir Shah's letter to Mahmud I in 1743 can be given as examples from the concerned period.

[1096] "Devletlü İnayetlü Sahib-i Devlet Hazretlerine Şehzade Tahmasb'ın İtimadüddevlesi Makamında Olan Tahmasb Kulu Han'dan Elçi Veli Muhammed Han ile Gelen Mektubun Suretidir." See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-132, p. 212.

[1097] In the Appendix of Krusinski's book, there is also a translation of Tahmasb's letter. The English translator who added that information stated with reservation that some have argued for the forgery of the letter, due to its lack of a beginning in the usual style of praising God.

When compared to the letter in the registry of Nâme-i Hümayûn, that letter seems to have been a shortened version of Tahmasb's letter, as they have many points in common. See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:207–10.

Muhammad Khan served two diplomatic purposes: first, reciprocity and response to the previous Ottoman envoy and grand-vizierial letter; second, discussing the most recent developments in and near future of Iran.

Despite having certain differences in content, the main messages of all four letters were quite similar. In his epistles, Tahmasb wrote that his father had instructed him to send an envoy to the Ottoman sultan, who was expected to help the Safavids based on the established peace and friendship between the two states. Then, he explained how happy he had been to receive the news of the Ottoman military campaign to overthrow Ashraf and to install Tahmasb on the throne.[1098] In his current situation, he asked for Ottoman support against Ashraf, whom he called a usurper. Nadir's letters were complimentary regarding the Safavid demand. He asked the Ottomans, if they had the slightest sympathy for the Safavids, to at least not help or favor Ashraf, who, allegedly, had already been taken down by the Safavids.[1099]

All four letters were written in quite careful language designed not to cause any perception of threat to the Ottoman sultan's and state's superiority. Among many other titles, they did not miss the opportunity to praise Ahmed III with the titles of the greatest king of the time, the caliph, and the servant of Two Holy Sanctuaries.[1100] Throughout the letters, they demanded help not from someone who was equal with the Safavids, but someone who had an unchallenged religio-political authority and superiority over all other rulers, positioning themselves at a lower status relative to the Ottoman sultan and state. Tahmasb's letter to the grand vizier was the official demonstration of this diplomatic hierarchy. Tahmasb even called Ahmed III "uncle" (*'amm*) three times in the letter, based on the sultan's "brotherhood" (*uhuvvet*) with his father.

[1098] See Chapter Five.
[1099] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-132, 133.
[1100] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-128, 129, 134, 135.

Both Tahmasb and Nadir assured the Ottomans that they had no aim to recover Iranian lands. For example, in his letter to Ahmed III, Tahmasb wrote that the Ottoman sultan should actually consider all Iranian lands to belong to the sultan himself. Moreover, Nadir went one step further and compared the Ottoman acquisition of Iranian lands to the march of the prophet Süleyman's army that unintentionally threatened to crush ants on the earth.[1101] By this comparison, when he justified Ottoman conquests in Iran, he also showed one of the rarest examples of diplomatic humility by equating the Safavids to ants and the Ottoman sultan to Süleyman, who was believed to have enjoyed the highest-ever political authority in the world. It was also clear that being crushed under the feet of an army was the ants' mistake, not the army's.

Nadir continued by explaining the Safavid stance on the points raised by Damad İbrahim in his letter of 1726. We learn that the grand vizier had stated that should the Safavids attack the Ottomans, then the Ottomans would respond. Nadir wrote that it was impossible for the Safavid ruling elite even to think about attacking against the Ottomans. In explaining that impossibility, by referring to philosophical concepts, he compared the two states to the "essence" and "form" of substance, which were impossible to separate.[1102] Regarding the wars before 1726, he explained them away by calling them "exigencies" (*muktezîyât*).[1103] Similarly, the detainment of Berhurdar Khan for around three years was also not discussed with contempt by Tahmasb, who also called the refusal to allow Berhurdar to enter Constantinople an exigency of time.[1104]

[1101] He made this reference by quoting an excerpt from a Qur'anic verse (27:18). The excerpt he quoted was: "an ant said, 'O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not.'"
[1102] *Heyula* (substance) and *suret* (form). He also likened both states to *cevher* (quintessence) and *araz* (secondary things and features that must depend on quintessence).
[1103] "Muktezay-ı çarh-ı bi-vifak"
[1104] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-128, 129.

Under the conditions of the late 1720s, the Safavids and the Afghans competed to persuade the Ottomans that not their rival but themselves were the best choice for the Ottoman interests. The Safavid letters of 1728 are a clear example of the aim to persuade the Ottoman government to ally with the Safavids as opposed to the Afghans in the competition for the Persian throne. First, both Tahmasb and Nadir paid utmost respect and reverence to the Ottoman sultan and state. Second, they recognized Ottoman authority over the newly conquered lands in Persia.[1105] That carefulness of the Safavids with respect to these two priorities of the Porte showed that they had learned important lessons from the Afghan-Ottoman conflict.

C.1.3. Ottoman Hard and Soft Policies toward the Kizilbash

It must be remembered that the Porte received these letters at the latest in January 1729, and most probably sometime in the second half of 1728.[1106] Within that context, Tahmasb's demands were seemingly not in conflict with Ottoman interests. The Safavid prince basically reiterated the same conditions of the earlier proposals of 1723 and 1726 discussed in previous chapters. Tahmasb was going to take the Persian throne back; the Afghans would be ousted from Isfahan; and he was going to recognize the Ottoman territories in Persia.

However, under the conditions after the summer of 1728, there were at least two new factors that changed Tahmasb's position in the eyes of the Porte, even though the proposals appeared nearly identical. First, Russia was clearly not on the side of Ottomans this time, as there had been a divergence growing between the two since the summer of 1725. Second, if Tahmasb could be successful in his journey, it was not going to be with others' help this time, but with his own dynastic charisma and actual military and political power. Thus, unlike his

[1105] It is noteworthy that while Tahmasb had played an important role in the Shahseven rebellions, he assumed a different attitude in the diplomatic relations.

[1106] In the Appendix of Krusinski's book, the translator mentioned that Tahmasb's letter was sent by "Signior Effendi, an able and trusty minister," who was sent to Van and Georgia by the Ottoman government. That Efendi would have been Süleyman Efendi, since he was the person fitting almost exactly to the description. If we accept that information, then Tahmasb's letter would have arrived in mid-January 1729, at the latest. See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:Appendix, 207-8.

humble self-representation, Tahmasb's arrival, especially with a powerful commander like Nadir, created a major problem for the Ottoman domains in Iran. The incessant rebellions were only clear manifestations of that reality. Thus, protecting the newly-conquered lands became the top priority of the Ottoman government in the face of an ever-strengthening Tahmasb.

In pursuit of that goal, the Ottoman government initiated a simultaneous policy of exerting hard and soft power in the Iranian lands under Ottoman authority. It was basically a carrot and stick method to "persuade" populations who had been living under Safavid authority for centuries to be loyal to their new masters and to not incline toward the revival of their earlier state. The critical point in all these approaches was that the Ottoman government wanted to give the message to the Kizilbash populations that the Porte was firm in its will to remain in these lands permanently. Even though it had demonstrated that clear will before the summer of 1728, the new conditions led the Ottomans to take further precautions, as extensively as possible.[1107]

C.1.3.1. Hard Measures

As examined above, the main action of the Ottoman state was the suppression of the rebellions as completely as possible. However, there were some other important hard policies and precautions in addition to the attempts at military suppression. First, in mid-October 1728, the Ottoman government initiated an extensive land reform targeting both all land revenues of Shiite *waqf*s (public endowments) and even their very existence in Tabriz.[1108] The Porte sent a long and detailed imperial order to a certain Halil, who had earlier been charged with the *tahrir* of lands in the province of Tabriz. The longest part of the order mentioned his earlier assignment and his report after his first inquiry regarding the *tahrir*. His first task had been to turn four-fifths of the Shiite *waqf* lands into state land as *has*, *zeamet*, and *timar*, as had been the example

[1107] The Ottoman decision to stay in these newly-conquered lands permanently was an important dimension of Ottoman conquest needing to be dealt with on its own. Even the *tahrir* of all the conquered territories according to traditional Ottoman land law soon after their incorporations was a clear indicator of that will. However, within the limits of this thesis I do not go deep into that policy.

[1108] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-606, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1141 (October 5th-14th, 1728).

of Erevan. The remaining one-fifth would have been left to these *waqf*s. Halil presented a detailed picture of the conditions of *waqf* lands, naming also large *waqf*s such as Sheikh Safiyuddin, the Cihanshah Mosque, the Hasan Beyzade Mosque, the Mirza Sadiq Mosque, the Mirza Ibrahim Mosque, and so on. After a summary of analysis of the type and the shareholder structure of these lands, it was concluded that all these *waqf* lands were completely complicated and disordered (*muhtel ve müşevveş*) due to their multiple-sharer structure. The imperial order argued that due to this disorder, it was not possible to regulate these lands according to traditional Ottoman land law. It further alleged that even if a way was found to regulate them according to Ottoman custom, it was obvious that there was going to be conflict over their shares in future.[1109]

Some of these *waqf*s, especially the Sheikh Safiyuddin *waqf* among others, were receiving outstanding land revenues from villages all around the province. The Sheikh Safiyuddin *waqf*, which had revenues from lands over three hundred villages, had been established in the name of the founder of Safavids, who had been a Sufi *sheikh* (1252-1334) who lived and died in Ardabil. Critically, the imperial order underlined the economic links between the Sheikh Safiyuddin *waqf,* the Shahseven tribes, and Karadagh.[1110] In this sense, Ottoman land reform meant an enormous symbolic and economic blow to well-established and deeply-rooted Shiite institutions in Azerbaijan, a clear message to Kizilbash populations living under Ottoman authority that however new the Ottoman rule in these lands might be, the Ottomans were going to be their masters in perpetuity.

As a second hard measure, the Porte sent two types of orders to governors of frontier provinces on the Iranian border, based on the letters and reports of these governors to

[1109] The kind of land reform that had deprived the Kizilbash of their earlier revenues would also have been influential in the Shahseven uprisings.

[1110] It was stated that in the lands belonging to thirty-eight different Shahseven tribes, the Sheikh Safiyuddin *waqf* had a share. Moreover, other than the 299 villages in which the Sheikh Safiyuddin *waqf* had land shares, the *waqf* also had shares in the lands in Karadagh, Kuban, and Khalkhal.

Constantinople: first, increasing the number of soldiers on the frontier, especially in Hamadan, with the transfer of troops from various cities and provinces;[1111] second, not allowing and even punishing those who were trying to join Tahmasb's army from Ottoman-controlled lands.[1112] Thus, the fall of 1729 was a time of great panic and anxiety in Constantinople, whose highly strict precautions and policies against Kizilbash populations in recent years seemed to still be ineffective. The imperial orders declared that Kizilbash populations were joining Tahmasb's army partly and gradually (*ceste ceste*).[1113] The fact that the Porte even ordered Baghdad's governor to stop these outflows from the province was enough to show the extent of the excitement created by the Safavid army's march on Isfahan.[1114] Considering the fate of these lands less than a year later, these further actions designed by the Porte also proved to be futile in the face of the Safavid wave.[1115]

A very long imperial order to Baghdad's governor Ahmed Pasha was quite significant in terms of laying out the Ottoman government's considerations for the different possible scenarios for Iran's near future.[1116] The Porte sent this order after the news of Nadir's victory over the Afghans in the first two battles arrived in Constantinople. The order stated that if another war occurred between Ashraf and Tahmasb, and Tahmasb's army won, causing Ashraf

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[1111] Cities and provinces ordered to transfer soldiers were Ardalan, Mosul, Şehrizor, and Baghdad. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1142 (November 13th-21st, 1729); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (December 2nd-11th, 1729).

[1112] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1718, 1727, 1729, 1730, 1732 Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1142 (November 13th-21st, 1729), BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-8, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (December 2nd-11th, 1729).

[1113] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-8, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (December 2nd-11th, 1729).

[1114] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1732, Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1142 (November 13th-21st, 1729).

As a significant detail, it needs to be mentioned that Baghdad's Governor Ahmed Pasha was deposed in July 1728 with the accusation of being greedy for more wealth especially from Hamadan and Luristan. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-397, Evasıt-ı Zilhicce 1140 (July 19th-28th, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-487, Evasıt-ı Muharrem 1141 (August 17th-26th, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-647, Evahir-i Rebiulevvel 1141 (October 25th – November 3rd, 1728). However, on February 1st, 1729, he was pardoned and again appointed as the governor of Baghdad. Moreover, his debts to the central treasury were also postponed for two years, unlike the urgent demands only three months previous. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-890, Evail-i Receb 1141 (January 31st – February 9th, 1729); Fahameddin Başar, p. 136, 2 Receb 1141 (February 1st, 1729).

[1115] As of August 12th, 1730, all the Ottoman provinces in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam had fallen into the hands of the Safavids.

[1116] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-8, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (December 2nd-11th, 1729).

to flee to Kandahar or Ottoman domains, there were two possible actions expected from the Safavids. Tahmasb would either send an envoy to Constantinople to sign a peace treaty, or attack Ottoman lands in Iran to take them back.[1117] As a precaution for the second possibility, which the government considered a distinct option, the Porte instructed Ahmed Pasha to send skillful persons to all bordering provinces and towns, namely Hamadan, Luristan, Sultaniyya, Tarum, Abhar, and Zanjan, with the aim of gathering information about Tahmasb's intentions. Should Tahmasb intend to march on Ottoman lands, and the governor of Hamadan also called Ahmed Pasha for help, then Ahmed Pasha should not wait but immediately go to Hamadan to protect the border as the *serasker* over all Ottoman troops. The imperial order added that if only regional skirmishes occurred without Tahmasb's clear orders, then Ahmed Pasha should not take any military action targeting Tahmasb. Apparently, the Porte was not satisfied with the humble demands and expressed guarantees Tahmasb and Nadir had conveyed a year and a half previous.

Third, in the summer of 1729 another figure claiming to be Safi Mirza, a son of Shah Sultan Husayn, emerged in Shushtar and gathered people around him with the aim of ascending the Persian throne. Contemporary Persian sources give his original name as Muhammad Ali Rafsanjani and proclaim that he was just an imposter and not the real Safi Mirza,[1118] who would have been killed in the massacre of 1725 by Mir Mahmud.[1119] He was soon ousted by the ruler of Shushter, and the pretender arrived in Baghdad through Basra. Soon after this news arrived in Constantinople via a letter from Ahmed Pasha, the Porte ordered Ahmed Pasha to send the

[1117] Ironically, Tahmasb did both of these things at the same time in the beginning of 1730. Similar to many preceding Ottoman moves, the Safavids deployed hard and soft tools to get what they wanted from the Ottomans.
[1118] Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 14–15. Moreover, Tahmasb's ambassador Riza Quli Khan also called him imposter in his meetings with Ottoman authorities. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 344.
[1119] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 207.

pretender to Constantinople,[1120] where he arrived in mid-February 1730.[1121] The imperial order underlined that both the popular support for him and Ahmed Pasha's investigations proved that he was the real Safi Mirza, not an imposter.[1122]

The Porte's Safi Mirza move was apparently intended to restrain Tahmasb from the possible targeting of Ottoman territories, in case he sat on the Persian throne. Stanyan reported that the aim of the Porte was to use this Safi Mirza as a bargaining tool in the "adjustment of matters" with the new shah of Iran, whoever he should be.[1123] As an equally legitimate alternative to the throne, the so-called Safi Mirza would be going to function as a check on any moves Tahmasb made that were detrimental to Ottoman interests. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, the pretender Safi Mirza was going to be one of the key instruments of the Porte in the final war between the Ottomans and Nadir in 1743-45.

There was another policy to uproot Safavid practices in the newly conquered territories, though it might not be called "hard." The government ordered the pashas of Baghdad, Tabriz, Ganja, Erevan, Tbilisi, Kirmanshahan, and Hamadan to circulate only Ottoman coins. The order

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[1120] Evahir-i Rebiulahir 1142 (November 13th-21st, 1729).

[1121] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 48. For the story of Safi Mirza from Iran to Constantinople, see also Louis-André de La Mamie de Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, vol. 3 (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1750), 254–58. For more information on Safi Mirza, see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 301 and 344; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 231 and 247.

[1122] It was a great irony that in the Turkish translation of Krusinski's book by İbrahim Müteferrika, it was argued that the real Safi Mirza was killed in Mahmud's massacre in 1725. Thus, even according to Ottoman sources that person could not have been a real heir to the Safavid dynasty. Müteferrika finished his translation in June 1729 and the book was published on August 26th, 1729, so a short number of months before the arrival of the news of "Safi Mirza's" rebellion. There was also an important detail that needs to be noted regarding that anecdote. Müteferrika's was not offering a direct translation of Krusinski's book; rather, he made certain additions and changes after a fact-check with informants coming from Persia at that time. And Krusinski (at least in its English translation, published in 1732) narrated that Safi Mirza really had escaped Isfahan and the enraged Mahmud had also killed all the heirs of Shah Sultan Husayn. See Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:148–49.

After giving a more detailed account of these claims, Müteferrika argued that all these claims were clear fabrications that had been raised to justify Mahmud's massacre of all the Safavid princes. See Tadeusz Jan Krusinski, *Tarih-i Seyyah Der Beyan-ı Zuhur-ı Ağvaniyan ve Sebeb-i İnhidâm-ı Bina-i Devlet-i Şahan-ı Safeviyan*, trans. İbrahim Müteferrika, no. 2003 (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Lâleli Collection: Müteferrika Matbaası, 1729), 87a.

[1123] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 344.

also emphasized calling these coins "Sultânî," after the Ottoman sultan, and prohibited calling them "Abbâsî," after the Safavid Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629).[1124] The government alleged that despite earlier orders demanding the same thing, there were still Abbâsi coins, the signatures of which had not yet been cleansed from the mints in Tabriz, Tbilisi, and Erevan, and that people were still calling the circulating coins "Abbâsi". The imperial order reminded that circulation of the Ottoman coins was a requirement of the dignity of sultanate (*lâzıme-i şân-ı saltanat*). The order continued that no coins should be left without the Safavid signature being scraped off and people who continue calling the coins "Abbâsi" instead of "Sultânî" should be punished.

C.1.3.2. Soft Measures

As for the soft methods, or "carrots," initiated to prevent earlier Safavid subjects from aligning themselves with Tahmasb, I will mention three examples. First, the Porte rewarded local Safavid elites who remained loyal to the Ottomans with bountiful economic and political privileges and titles. The government gave the title of *Rumeli beylerbeyliği* to Abdülbaki Pasha (Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana), who had been the governor of Kirmanshah under the Safavids and was currently the ruler of Tuy, Sargan, and Burujard,[1125] on December 24th, 1728. Çelebizâde stated that Abdülbaki's prestige under the Safavids was the only reason for this appointment. Abdülbaki Pasha was in Constantinople at the time to discuss critical developments in the Iranian lands under Ottoman control.[1126] During his stay, he secured other significant political and economic privileges from the sultan as well. The government issued an

[1124] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135, 1613, 1614, 1616, 1617, 1618, 1619, 1625, Evahir-i Safer 1142 (September 14th-22nd, 1729). "Diyâr-ı İran'da feth ve teshîri müyesser olan memâlik ve buldâna sikke-i hümâyûn-ı cihândârî ile meskûke olan nukûdun neşr ve tervîci lâzıme-i şân-ı saltanat olmağla, herkesin yedlerinde bulunan Abbâsîlerden tam altın olanları ahz ve ateşe girmeksizin Acem sikkesinin nukûşunu mahv ve izale için Tebriz ve Tiflis ve Revan darphabelerinde sikke-i humayûn darb ve fi mâ ba'd Sultâni nâmıyla tesmiye olunub…"

[1125] He was granted the rulership of Tuy and Sargan on November 21st, 1724 (4 Rebiulevvel 1137) and with Burujard on October 25th, 1725 (17 Safer 1138). Abdülbaki Pasha's governorship over these three cities was confirmed again on August 2nd, 1728 (25 Zilhicce 1140) when he was still in Constantinople. See Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)*, 167, 169. Abdülbaki Pasha changed sides again in 1730 and became a Safavid khan from then on. As Abd al-Baqi Khan, he came to Constantinople being the ambassador of Nadir Shah. I discuss his embassy in Chapter Eight.

[1126] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1617.

order to the judges in the *sancak*s of Burujard, Tuy, and Sargan in the summer of 1728 to the effect that the family of Abdülbaki Pasha, not the governors, *voyvoda*s, and *mültezim*s, would rule autonomously (*ale vechi'l istiklâl*) in these *sancak*s.[1127] The following year, another imperial order to the pasha of Hamadan underlined that the aforementioned *sancak*s should be left to the deputies of Abdülbaki Pasha, and should not be considered lands that could be turned into *timar* or *zeamet*, meaning state lands.[1128]

The aforementioned Hacı Taceddin, an influential member of the local elite and a landowner who had revenues from the lands of twenty-four villages, was a key and loyal player for the Ottoman government in Tabriz. An order dated August 14th, 1729 freed him from paying taxes, which would have amounted to 1590 *kuruş*, on twenty villages, with the expressed reason that most of these villages had been ruined.[1129] The government asked him to pay only 600 *kuruş* for the remaining villages under his authority. Moreover, the order specified that Hacı Taceddin would not be required to pay taxes on these twenty villages even after their recovery. The Porte explained the reason for this sultanic allowance as Taceddin's loyalty and obedient service to the Ottoman government. In May 1730, a few months before the fall of Tabriz to the Safavids, the government "forgave" him even that yearly 600 *kuruş*. The following month, upon his petition, Hacı Taceddin was given the revenues of two more villages, based on his claim that originally these other two villages had been combined with those he already held.[1130] Furthermore, the government granted him a yearly stipend of 137.5 *kuruş* from the provincial treasury.[1131] Thus, Hacı Taceddin was in possession of twenty-six villages, receiving their full

[1127] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-425, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1140 (July 29th – August 6th, 1728).
[1128] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1627, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1142 (September 24th – October 3rd, 1729).
[1129] BOA, MAD.d 960, p. 63.
[1130] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-292, Evahir-i Zilkade 1142 (June 7th-16th 1730).
[1131] Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725-1730," 145. Fariba Zarinebaf also discusses Hacı Taceddin's relationship with the Ottomans. However, she only remained within the context of Ottoman-local *ayan* relations and did not look at the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry at that time.

revenues, plus an annual stipend from the treasury, and he did not pay even one *kuruş* into the Ottoman treasury, as a generous reward for his obedience to Ottoman rule in Tabriz.

Second, the newly-initiated benevolence toward obedient local notables by the Porte included the sons of khans who had ruled during the Safavid era. In the fall of 1728, there were several imperial orders issued with regard to the return of village revenues to sons of Safavid khans who had been ruling in the newly-conquered Iranian lands before Ottoman arrival. All these orders listed the names of sons of khans and the names of villages and hamlets to be returned to these sons. The orders expressed the reason for the initiation of this policy, which was underlined as the sons' due, as the delay caused by turmoil in the newly-incorporated lands. Ironically, the time during which these orders were issued was one of the most tumultuous and disordered times in these lands during Ottoman rule. In just one month, between October and in November 1728, in total, twelve sons of khans were granted at least seventeen villages and thirty-two hamlets, the revenues of which would have been tax-free.[1132] The imperial orders highlighted the obedience of these sons or their fathers to Ottoman authority during the conquests of Iranian lands.

A third method was gaining the hearts of people in more direct ways through several regulations. A big consultative assembly meeting was held at Constantinople, soon after the news of an envoy from Tahmasb reached Constantinople. The government sent an imperial order to many provinces and cities following the meeting.[1133] The order stated the aim of this

[1132] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-610, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1141 (October 5th-14th, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-707 and 708, Evasıt-ı Rebiulahir 1141 (November 14th-23rd, 1728); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-761, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1141 (November 4th-13th, 1728).

[1133] The names of places for the imperial order to be sent were listed as: Hamadan, Ganja, Erevan, Tbilisi, Tabriz, Maraga, Magri, Ardalan, Rumiye, Hoy, Kirmanshahan, Sultaniyya, Zanjan, Abhar, Tarum, Ardabil, Savukbulak, and Luristan. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-457, Evail-i Muharrem 1141 (August 7th-16th, 1728). The same order was issued again addressing the pasha of Hamadan in the beginning of January 1729. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-817, Evail-i Cemaziyelahir 1141 (January 2nd-11th, 1729). As mentioned earlier, Süleyman Efendi was sent to meet with Tahmasb's envoy Wali Muhammad Khan sometime in the end of July or the beginning of August 1728. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-427, Evahir-i Zilhicce 1140 (July 29th – August 6th, 1728).

meeting as having been to prevent provincial administrators from harming people, especially in and economic sense, and to make former Safavid provinces more prosperous under Ottoman rule. The order contained very detailed and long regulations regarding the protection of subjects from the oppression of administrators. All these new rules, twenty-three in total, were enumerated with specific details for each rule, all of which were about determining the lines that should not be transgressed by administrators in their dealings with subjects. For example, the order banned the taking of provisions from subjects by soldiers or governors without direct cash payment; it specified the custom dues and listed all goods that were exempt; it prohibited the buying and selling of Persian slaves; it abolished all new taxes introduced by local judges; it granted free passage for merchants to Iranian or Russian territories, it forbade local authorities from buying from local producers and selling these products themselves, privileging instead producers selling in markets for high prices; it abolished additional taxes to *jizya* collected from non-Muslim subjects, and so on. To strengthen the applicability of these new regulations, the order declared that these rules would also be distributed to local notables and subjects, so that they could defend themselves in cases of transgressions.

There was a critical detail in the new rule prohibiting the buying and selling of Persian slaves that demonstrated the Porte's change of attitude toward these subjects after learning of the coming of Tahmasb's envoy.[1134] In the end of May and beginning of June 1728, so only around a month before this order's promulgation, the government sent a different imperial order

[1134] The enslavement of subjects and soldiers was arguably the most visible demonstration of Ottoman-Safavid enmity as articulated in religious terms. It was where religious strife was experienced by populations themselves on a large scale. It was not a direct result of Sunni-Shiite conflicts continuing for long centuries, since even though they conflicted with one another, both sides still considered each other Muslims, however deviant they might have see each other. And, according to Islamic law, it was not allowed to enslave co-religionists. At that point there was a critical detail making it permissible for Ottomans to enslave Safavids. Since the early 1500s, all authoritative Ottoman jurists were of the religio-legal view that the Safavids were also deviating from classical Shiism, and as Kizilbash they were not within the framework of Islam, but were heretics and apostates. Thus, once they were declared non-Muslim, then it became licit to enslave Safavid subjects. In the long Ottoman-Safavid wars, both sides enslaved the captives captured from other side. As will be discussed in the last chapter, the problem of enslaving each other's subjects was one of the major issues negotiated between the representatives of Nadir and Ottomans.

to the same large groups of recipients on the subject of the enslavement of Shiite subjects even after the conquest, and the buying and selling of said subjects.[1135] The Porte warned all provincial rulers and administrators that to enslave people after the conquest was against religious law and whoever had been taken as slave after the conquest should be set free. However, importantly, the same order deemed lawful the buying and selling of Persian slaves who had been captured during the conquest. The government's warning meant that the Porte gave the Kizilbash populations in the conquered areas the status of *zimmi* (non-Muslims living under Muslim rule), and protected them accordingly.[1136]

Thus, the Ottoman government abrogated its own decision within about a month, and disallowed the trafficking of Persian slaves, even if they had been possessed legally during the conquest. According to new regulations agreed on in the general assembly meeting, the Porte ordered that all slave-holders should keep their Persian slaves for the slave's lifetime and were not permitted to sell them to others. Moreover, the government ordered that in cases of rebellion by Kizilbash subjects, their men should be killed, but that it was prohibited to take women and children as slaves.

More action from the Ottoman government on the subject of Persian slaves was yet to come. In the first days of 1729, the buying and selling of Persian male and female slaves was prohibited within Constantinople.[1137] For those who already had slaves, the Porte ordered them to sell in Anatolia, where the practice was still allowed. The imperial order explained the reason for the prohibition only by appeal to the various unspecified harms of selling these slaves in Constantinople. Giving a little bit more detail, Çelebizâde mentioned economic and bodily

[1135] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-253-263, Evasıt or Evahir-i Şevval 1140 (May 21st – June 8th, 1728).
[1136] For these new regulations about Persian slaves, I was not able to find a *fetva* from the *şeyhülislam* in his *Behcetü'l Fetava*. Moreover, imperial orders and Çelebizâde's account alike do not refer to a *şeyhülislam*'s *fetva* regarding these orders.
[1137] BOA, İE.DH 35-3031, Gurre-i Cemaziyelahir 1141 (January 2nd, 1729); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-794, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1141 (December 23rd, 1728 – January 1st, 1729); Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1617.

harms, and interestingly compared Persians to Jews in their enmity toward Sunnis.[1138] If these justifications were true, the problems they articulated would have been the same for centuries. Moreover, why was the prohibition active in Constantinople and not in Anatolia? Presumably, the prohibition in Constantinople was in continuity with the new policy on Persian slaves enacted by the Ottoman government during that period. Thus, the prohibition in Constantinople, in addition to all newly-conquered Iranian lands, could have been a symbolic gesture to the sultan's Kizilbash subjects. The Porte might have aimed to convince its Kizilbash populations in Persia of the sultan's firmness in his new policies toward his subjects in Iran.

There is evidence that the Ottoman government had actually been scrutinizing the actions of provincial administrators in newly-conquered Iranian lands, as promised in the general regulations in August 1728. In the last week of 1728, the Porte sent a series of orders to the governors of Hamadan, Tbilisi, Erevan, Tabriz, and Ganja, warning them against the wrongdoings of top-level provincial administrators, including the viziers and judges.[1139] All these administrators were said to be oppressing people in various ways, especially by taking extra money from their subjects. The orders ended with serious warnings to the governors to prevent all these wrongful actions.

In mid-summer 1729, the government ordered the governors of Hamadan, Tbilisi, and Kirmanshah to resettle those people who had escaped from their lands due to the wars over the recent years.[1140] The tone of the imperial orders, especially the ones sent to Hamadan and Tbilisi, was one of utmost care and sympathy toward the "miserable" subjects who "suffered" a lot due to military operations in the region. Clearly, another reason for these relocations was

[1138] Even that comparison was seemingly an awkward one. It seems that the official chronicler tried to present an apparent concession toward the Safavids or the Kizilbash subjects, as if it only stemmed from the independent decision of the Porte. It should not have been easy to convince people in Constantinople to renounce their privilege of possessing Persian slaves, especially after paying high costs in the war against the Safavids.
[1139] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d, 135-780, 781, 782, 783, 784, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel 1141 (December 23rd 1728 – January 1st, 1729).
[1140] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1370, 1371, and 1375, Evail-i Muharrem 1142 (July 27th – August 5th, 1729).

to increase the land revenue by adding more cultivated lands to be taxed. However, the Porte paid great attention to minimizing harm for these populations, whose rights were recalled in the orders using a Qur'anic verse and two apothegms on justice and compassion.[1141]

Even though the government sent strict orders, it seems that the Porte was not successful in stopping provincial administrators from wrongdoing, as two further orders indicated.[1142] First, the Porte chastised the Hamadan governor, since tax-farmers (*mültezim*) and soldiers had continued to commit at least three transgressions of the regulation.[1143] Tax-farmers were apparently still collecting abolished taxes from the time of the Safavids and were charging people higher sums than the determined tax rate; soldiers spent winters in towns and oppressed subjects in various ways. A second imperial order addressed the judge of Revan and the provincial district governor due to the alleged transgressions of İbrahim Pasha, governor of Revan.[1144] The order itemized İbrahim Pasha's extra tax charges and stated that the people of Erevan had sent representatives to make a complaint against him, submitting a detailed registry of their taxes. In both cases, the order solved the problems it articulated in favor of the subjects and punished those who oppressed people in their respective provinces. Thus, together with showing the limits of central regulation in the provinces, the Ottoman government was still adamant in ensuring the protection and well-being of its subjects in the newly-conquered areas who were attracted by the Safavid Tahmasb.

[1141] Qur'an (16:90) "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct…;" "*Valin adlin hayrun min matarin vabilin*" (A just governor is more beneficial than rain with big drops -fertile rain-); "*birrıfki tuslihul raiyye, ve bi'l adl temlikul beriyye*" (the subjects are brought peace by clemency and the lands are possessed by justice). See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1370, Evail-i Muharrem 1142 (July 27th – August 5th, 1729).

[1142] Besides these orders, the Russian archival documents also indicate the lack of Ottoman central or provincial control over the janissaries in Tabriz. See Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 46.

[1143] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-41, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1142 (November 22nd – December 1st, 1729).

[1144] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-110, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelahir 1142 (January 1st-10th, 1730). İbrahim Pasha was appointed governor of Erevan on February 22nd, 1729 (23 Receb 1141). See Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)*, 164.

C.2. Ottoman-Afghan Relations

Following the Treaty of Hamadan of 1727, ambassadors from each side visited the neighbors' capital. The ninth article of the Hamadan Treaty set forth the exchange of great embassies. Former Ottoman official chronicler Râşid Mehmed Efendi was given the title of governor of Rumeli and departed on August 20th, 1728 from Constantinople,[1145] bound for Isfahan, where he arrived on March 5th, 1729.[1146] On March 27th, he met with the Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Amin Khan and then with Ashraf, and left the city on April 6th, 1729.[1147] After a one-month stay in Isfahan,[1148] Râşid Mehmed Pasha departed from the Persian capital and arrived back in Constantinople at the end of June 1729.[1149]

The Afghans received Râşid with luxurious ceremonies in Isfahan.[1150] Together with other gifts, Ashraf sent an elephant to the Ottoman sultan as an outstanding and unusual gift.[1151] Regarding Râşid's visit to Isfahan, there is not so much available information. As referenced by Lockhart, Râşid Mehmed Pasha wrote a letter, which might be called a *sefaretname*, to Constantinople at the beginning of his departure from Isfahan.[1152] Lockhart gives Râşid's main observations as follows: Râşid Efendi was not allowed to meet with other people and was kept in a palace; otherwise, the envoy had been well treated. Quite similar to Dürri Ahmed Efendi's

[1145] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1610–11.
[1146] *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*, 89a, 4 Şaban 1141.
[1147] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 294.
[1148] Cavid Baysun gave the departure date as March 31st, 1729 and Münir Aktepe as April 14th. See Cavid Baysun, "Müverrih Râşid Efendi'nin İran Elçiliğine Dâir," *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, no. 9 (1951): 150; M. Münir Aktepe, "Vak'anüvis Raşid Mehmed Efendi'nin Eşref Şah Nezdindeki Elçiliği ve Buna Tekaddüm Eden Siyasî Muharebeler," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 12 (1955): 173. However, the date given by Lockhart seems to be the most reliable one, since he depended on Râşid's own letter, a copy of which is currently preserved in the French archives.
[1149] Baysun, "Müverrih Râşid Efendi'nin İran Elçiliğine Dâir," 150.
[1150] Confirming Râşid Pasha's observation about the misery of people in Isfahan, VOC agents in Persia reported that the preparations in Isfahan had caused great economic suffering. See Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721-1729*, 250. See also Butkov, *Materialy Dlja Novoj Istorii Kavkaza, s 1722 Po 1803 God*, 1:272.
[1151] However, the elephant could not resist the cold and died in Diyarbakr, without being able to reach Constantinople. See Resul Hâvî Efendi, *Târih-i Devhatü'l-Vüzerâ ve Zeyl-i Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 17a–18b. Nadir also sent two elephants to Constantinople, first after his ascension to the Persian throne in 1736 and second after his conquest of India in 1741.
[1152] A copy of the letter is currently preserved in the French archives. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to see that copy of the letter, which seems the only extant copy. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 293–94.

account of his own embassy, Râşid, too, described how the Ottoman sultan had high esteem in the Afghan court. According to his account, Ashraf received Ahmed III's letter while standing and after kissing the letter, put it on his head, as an expression of utmost reverence. Since there is no other historical source narrating the meeting, we cannot confirm whether it happened that way. Regarding the general situation of the Afghans, Râşid Efendi wrote that people lived in great misery and poverty in Isfahan. As for the political situation, he wrote that the Afghans were preparing for a military confrontation with Tahmasb.[1153] There seems to be an interesting detail in Râşid's account. He wrote that the grandees of the court surrounding Ashraf were all Kizilbash.[1154] This information could be related about the Ottoman anti-Afghan propaganda that aimed to discredit the Afghans in the eyes of the Ottoman public by comparing them to the Safavids at least since 1726.

In his short history of the Patrona Halil Rebellion, Abdi made a parallel claim to that of Râşid. Abdi related from others that, in the war against the Afghans, Nadir had been able to defeat Ashraf since Afghan soldiers did not fight against the Kizilbash. The reason he narrated was that the Afghans disliked Ashraf on the grounds that Ashraf had inclined toward the Kizilbash after marrying the daughter of Shah Sultan Husayn. Allegedly, Ashraf appointed Kizilbash to most of the highest administrative positions. Abdi added that many Afghans believed that Ashraf had become Kizilbash. Thus, he wrote, most of the soldiers in the Afghan army did not fight for Ashraf.[1155] Abdi's remarks are important in terms of the circulation of anti-Ashraf propaganda in Ottoman domains.

Ashraf sent as his own envoy Namdar Muhammad Khan Baluc, the governor of Fars, who arrived in Constantinople on July 22nd, 1729[1156] and left the capital on August 30th,

[1153] Lockhart, 293–94.
[1154] Lockhart writes that Râşid referred to the Kizilbash with the term "Persian schismatics." See Lockhart, 294.
[1155] Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, ed. Faik Reşit Unat (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1943), 10.
[1156] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1625, 25 Zilhicce 1141. Especially Çelebizâde and Clairac covered the reception of Namdar Khan at Constantinople in a detailed way. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım

1729.[1157] The length of his stay was impacted by a big fire in Constantinople on the same night he arrived in the city, in which twelve thousand houses burned in less than ten hours according to one account.[1158]

In Constantinople, among other preparations for Namdar Khan's arrival, highly costly and detailed renovations were done to the Topkapı Palace and Sublime Porte; all the houses and places on the route of Afghan ambassador were ordered to be cleaned, painted, and beautified.[1159] These orders caused protest among the public, who called the envoy the "plasterer khan" (*sıvacı han*)[1160] or "painter envoy" (*boyacı elçi*).[1161] A foreign observer even reported that some people painted dogs red, the color of houses, to mock the government.[1162] These were serious indicators of people's discontent with the government around a year before the Patrona rebellion.

The aim of all these luxuries was not to show close friendship between the Ottomans and the Afghans but to bewilder and demean the Afghans by the unmatched Ottoman magnificence. Çelebizâde repeated this objective quite clearly several times in narrating the preparations and ceremonies for the Afghan envoy.[1163] The bitter and derogatory language

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Efendi, 3:1624–29; Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:79–89. Clairac copied the report of Thomas de Jovenille, the Consul of France in Salonika in 1738, in his history. Clairac noted that de Jovenille had sent the report to him in 1738.

[1157] During his return to Isfahan, Namdar Muhammad Khan got the news of takeover of Isfahan by Nadir. By escaping from Ottomans in Baghdad, he reached Nadir and handed the Ottoman letters to Nadir. See Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 48; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 204–5.

[1158] Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 1733, 2:206; Öksüz, "Mür'i't-Tevârîh," 380. Robert Olson argued that during the 1730s, the opposition started fires as a part of their rebellion. See Olson, "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire," 340. Thus, the fire in 1729 could have been arson, as well.

[1159] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1626–27.

[1160] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 294.

[1161] Öksüz, "Mür'i't-Tevârîh," 379. Clairac narrated that the government's strict orders to residents to paint their homes created so much unrest among the population that Damad İbrahim Pasha had to ease the orders with a second order. Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:80–81.

[1162] The letter of Abbé Sevin from Constantinople to the Comte de Caylus is dated August 14th, 1726. See François Sevin, *Lettres sur Constantinople, de M. l'abbé Sevin* (Chez Obré et Buisson, 1802), 12–13.

[1163] "…ol şâh-ı nev-devlet ü câhun ilçisine her vechile 'arz ü şevket ve irâ'et-i kuvvet-i devlet muktezâsı 'akl ü hikmet oldığına binâ'en…" (p. 1625); "…kuvvet-i devlet ve şevket-i şân-ı hilâfetini zümre-i Afgâniyân-ı bî-iz'âna 'arz ü irâ'et içün…" (p. 1625); "…kuvvet-i devlet-i pâdişâhîyi i'lâm ve şevket-i şehenşâhîyi ifhâm kasdı ile…" (p.

Çelebizâde Asım used to target the Afghans in general, and the ambassador and his retinue in particular, was also an important indicator of the general Ottoman view of the Afghans at that time. There was not one single positive statement about the Afghans in his narration. Çelebizâde even did not mention that Namdar Khan met with the Ottoman sultan, but referred only to the meeting between Damad İbrahim Paşa and Namdar Khan. There, the official chronicler again berated the Afghan envoy for not observing the diplomatic customs properly. The Venetian resident reported that the Afghan envoy had an audience with the sultan.[1164] Çelebizâde's passing over that meeting seems another indicator of the Ottoman disregard for the Afghans.

Çelebizâde portrayed the Afghan envoy and his retinue as "heretic" Kizilbash due to their Persian-style clothes. The Afghans were shown around the city for six hours. Çelebizâde remarked that after seeing the Afghans looking like heretic Persians, simple-hearted and short-sighted people's positive views about them disappeared and they developed complete hatred toward the Afghans.[1165] It is not possible to confirm whether Çelebizâde's observation was true. However, it reveals again that the government wanted to portray the Afghans as Kizilbash to discredit them in the eyes of the public.

In his translation of Krusinski's book as *Tarih-i Seyyah*, which was published during the stay of the Afghan envoy, İbrahim Müteferrika discussed the roots of the Afghans. According to him, the strongest possibility was that the Afghans were an Armenian group whom Timur had transferred to Kandahar from the broader Shirvan region. Müteferrika came up with linguistic explanations, as well, to make this connection. He wrote that they had become

1626); "'arz-ı haşmet" (p. 1627); "tekmil-i namus-ı devlet" (p. 1627). See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*.

[1164] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 129.

[1165] "Elçi hân ve tevâbi'i nâmına olan gürûh-ı Afgân'ın destârdan mâ'adâ libâs ü etvârları hem-reng-i revâfız-ı 'Acem والظاهر عنوان الباطن [The exterior is indicator of the interior] ma'nâsı 'inde'l-cumhûr müsellem olmağla tâ'ife-i merkūme hakkında lâ'an-şey'in salâh u sedâd ü safvet-i i'tikād iddi'âsında olan sâde-dilân-ı kûtâh-bînin hüsn-i i'tikādları zâ'il ve nefret-i külliyyeleri hâsıl oldu." See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1626. See also Öksüz, "Mür'i't-Tevârîh," 329.

Muslim after making contact with the Indian Muslims. Müteferrika alleged that the Afghans had retained many of their Christian customs after becoming Muslims. He argued that they still put a cross-like mark on their bread.[1166] Considering Râşid's, Çelebizâde's, Abdi's and Müteferrika's accounts, it seemed that there was systematic propaganda by the Porte against the Afghans that portrayed them as not being proper Muslims. The Porte's endeavor can reveal the popularity of the Afghans in the eyes of the people of Constantinople, who had received Sunni Afghan's triumph over the Shiite Safavids with excitement.

Namdar's response to the pompousness of welcoming ceremony was quite noteworthy and did not seem so compliant and friendly. During his entrance to the city with a boat from Üsküdar to Eminönü, there was a great roar of cannon shots from naval ships at Haliç and from Topkapı Palace "celebrating" his arrival,[1167] and, as stated above, all the roads and buildings on the envoy's way were cleaned and decorated in a fashionable style. However, he neither gave heed to cannon balls nor took a glance at the decorations prepared for his reception.[1168] This nonchalant behavior was a clear message that he did not regard highly or care about the Ottoman show of magnificence. Moreover, in a surprising and challenging move, the Afghan envoy continued to read his Qur'an during his passage through the decorated roads that aimed to degrade himself and his master in Isfahan.[1169] Namdar Khan's behavior was definitely a well-

[1166] Krusinski, *Tarih-i Seyyah Der Beyan-ı Zuhur-ı Ağvaniyan ve Sebeb-i İnhidâm-ı Bina-i Devlet-i Şahan-ı Safeviyan*, 13a–13b. The book was published on August 26th, 1726 (Gurre-i Safer 1142).

[1167] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1625–26; Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:84–85; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 129. Clairac wrote that the envoy disembarked at the Great Customs on the European side. Çelebizâde also named the place as having been the customs office. Çelebizâde added that the envoy entered the city from Balık Pazarı Kapısı. Balık Pazarı İskelesi is today where the European leg of the Galata bridge is located. Thus, Namdar Khan departed from Üsküdar and landed in Eminönü. See Gülin Işık Yılmaz, "Haliç Kıyı Şeridinde Sanayileşme Ile Ortaya Çıkan Kentsel Dönüşüm" (PhD diss., Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, 2008), 44.

[1168] As summarized by Mary Lucille Shay, the Venetian resident reported that "During his [Namdar Khan] formal entrance, a ride of five hours and a half, he held himself erect, not giving any sign of admiration or of curiosity, not casting a glance at the beautiful view of Constantinople." Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 129. Clairac narrated that he toured the city on a horse. See Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:87.

[1169] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:84–85.

designed historical example of public diplomacy aiming to turn the Ottoman preparations upside-down by indicating that real magnificence in Islam was not attained through luxury and pompousness but by solemnity and dignity.

As reported by Stanyan, aside from his protesting attitude during the long welcoming ceremony, Namdar Khan did not seem to be interested in fostering and developing relations with the Ottomans given his "stiff and reserved" stance toward Ottoman authorities. Commenting on the departure of the envoy, Stanyan stated that during his forty-day stay, the Afghan envoy did not take any steps toward bolstering Afghan-Ottoman relations.[1170]

C.2.1. Ottoman-Afghan Correspondence

The corresponding letters carried by Râşid Mehmed Efendi and Namdar Muhammad Khan Baluc depict a different picture than the ambassador's experiences. The letters from both sides affirmed the "firm cord,"[1171] peace, friendship, alliance, and unity between religious brothers with strong expressions and promises full of quotes from Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions. As a matter of fact, the reason for the exchange of great embassies was stated as the "consolidation and persistence of the peace and friendship" as recorded in Treaty of Hamadan.[1172] They were mainly epistles of diplomatic good intention confirming the newly-established peace of 1727. Another important dimension of the letters was that they were the first official correspondence between the Ottomans and the Afghans, thus they set the example for the way future epistles would be composed.[1173] More importantly, the new political context,

[1170] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 295.

[1171] This was an established phrase in the Muslim scholarly tradition and was used in general with reference to the Qur'anic phrase "*Hablu'llah*" (Allah's cord) (Qur'an 2:103). Both "*hablu'l metin*" and "*hablu'llah*" were referenced in the letters exchanged by both parties.

[1172] "akd olunan musâlaha ve musâfâtın istihkâm ve istikrârı"

[1173] In total, twelve royal epistles, which can be grouped according to ambassador, were exchanged in these embassies. With Râşid Mehmed Efendi's visit to Isfahan three letters were sent: from Ahmed III to Ashraf, from Damad İbrahim to Ashraf, and from Damad İbrahim to the Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Amin Khan. With Râşid Mehmed Efendi on his return went letters: from Ashraf to Ahmed III, from Ashraf to Damad İbrahim, and from Muhammad Amin Khan to Damad İbrahim. With Namdar Muhammad Khan on his visit to Constantinople went letters: from Ashraf to Ahmed III, from Ashraf to Damad İbrahim, and from Muhammad Amin Khan to Damad İbrahim. With Namdar Muhammad Khan on his return to Isfahan went letters: from Ahmed

with the revival of Safavid Prince Tahmasb in Iran, added a significant agenda to that diplomatic exchange.

Before discussing the messages exchanged in these letters, it needs to be noted that an integral dimension of the correspondence between the Ottomans and the Persians had always been their elegant literary style. The first, and also ironically last, piece of correspondence between the Ottomans and the new representatives of Persia confirmed that tradition. All the letters exchanged in this period, especially the ones written by the Afghans, were full of analogies and references to verses from the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, the Islamic sciences, philosophy, history, and so on. While giving their political messages, the authors of these letters also aimed to show their mastery of language and all the contemporary sciences and to prove their intellectual and literary superiority over the other party.[1174] In this sense, literature and the intellectual level of the time became the medium in which political messages, claims, and challenges were transmitted and expressed between rulers of the Ottomans and the Persians.

In his letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha sent with Râşid Mehmed Pasha, the Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Amin Khan's statement was a good example of the importance attached to the writing of these letters. He wrote that "I found every line of your letter congruent with each other, and every letter in harmony with and suitable to one another."[1175] As clearly demonstrated by these lines, both sides exerted considerable effort to compose royal epistles that were as perfect as possible and in the highest literary style of the age. A significant result

III to Ashraf, from Damad İbrahim to Ashraf, and from Damad İbrahim to the Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* Muhammad Amin Khan.

All these letters were recorded in the following source: *Muhâberat Beyne'l Ahmed-i Sâlis ve Eşref Hân*.

[1174] Just to give an example, in Ahmed III's and Damad İbrahim's letters sent with Namdar Muhammad Khan, when his submission of Ashraf's response letter to Ahmed III was mentioned, the Arabic verb "*rafa'a*" (to lift up) was preferred. The Ottoman side implied that the letter had been elevated from the inferior position of the Afghan shah to the exalted seat of the Ottoman sultan.

[1175] *İ'timād al-dawla*'s original statement: "*Wajadtu muvafiqan li kulli satirin satiran ve mulayimun kulli harfin harfan*." Ottoman translation: "[Namenizin] her satırını satır-ı âharine muvâfık ve her hurûfunu harf-i diğerine mülâyim ve mutâbık buldum."

of that endeavor is that it is quite difficult to discern the messages, implications, and references overtly and covertly included in these rich texts. The Ottoman-Afghan correspondence of 1728 and 1729 was only one example of that general difficulty, which requires the reader to be competent in the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, the Islamic sciences, the rational sciences, history and literature, and also in the Turkish, Persian, and Arabic languages. Thus, before starting to discuss the political messages in these letters, I should admit that I might have missed important implications and hidden messages that were transmitted in these densely written epistles.

As for the contents of the letters between the Ottomans and the Afghans, other than the confirmation of peace there was no specific issue touched upon explicitly. Even in the correspondence between the Afghan *i'timād al-dawla* and Ottoman grand vizier, no particular issue or problem was raised.[1176] In a nutshell, the Ottoman letters sent with Râşid Mehmed Pasha underlined the following points: the Ottoman sultan was the unquestionable possessor of "*saltanatu'l uzmâ*" and "*hilâfetü'l kübra*"; the Ottoman government would adhere to its promise to preserve the peace at Hamadan; and provincial governors in the frontiers had been reminded and warned to keep the borders safe and unviolated. The reply letters from the Afghans also confirmed these points. Ashraf's letter to Ahmed III contained one of the longest lists of royal titles in praise of another ruler in world diplomatic history at one-and-a-half pages and thirty-seven lines containing all the titles claimed by the Ottoman sultan, including even "the king of the Arab and Persian kings."[1177] Similarly, Muhammad Amin Khan, the *i'timād al-dawla*, included the phrase "*eşref-i şahan*"[1178] when listing the Ottoman sultan's many titles.

[1176] In the early modern diplomatic correspondence between states, usually letters written by rulers were of a more procedural nature, and the letters of grand viziers discussed specific topics and problems.
[1177] "Malik-i mulûku'l Arab ve'l Acem"
[1178] It can be translated literally as "the most honorable or esteemed of all rulers." However, in a skillful usage of language, he utilizes the meaning of his master's name, thereby showing a clear acknowledgment of Ahmed III's superiority over Ashraf.

Strikingly, in his letter with Namdar Muhammad Khan, Ashraf even called Ottoman sultan "overthrower of the rebellious" (*kâmi'-i buğât*). The entire legal reason for the Ottoman declaration of war against Ashraf had been due to him being a rebel (*bâğî*) against the supreme caliph of Muslims. Thus, it can be argued that Ashraf showed the most humility and respect to the Ottoman sultan that could have been expected by Constantinople.

Regarding the preservation of peace, the Afghan letters stressed the importance of peace in the region in lengthy passages. Besides confirming their commitment to the Treaty of Hamadan, they stressed the vitality of that commitment more than their Ottoman counterparts. In his letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha sent with Râşid Mehmed, Ashraf made detailed analogies between the human body and the world. He underlined that just as the well-being of the body depends on the proper functioning of its parts in coordination, the order of the world can be sustained through unity and alliance between rulers. Consequently, he asked for the preservation of peace for the sustenance of the good order achieved after tumultuous times in Persia. Ashraf's letter to Damad Ibrahim sent with Namdar Khan resorted again to detailed and eloquent analogies. In an allusion to the Prophet Ibrahim's divine rescue from burning, in which the fire became a flower garden, Ashraf compared Persia to a garden with blossoming flowers after the coming of spring.

Ashraf referred both to the Ottoman-Afghan conflict and to the Safavid era in mentioning Iran's troubled past, the only reference to the Safavids that I was able to discern in the epistles, and even that was a covert one. Ashraf stated that for a short while, Iran had been ruled by the enemy of Islam. However, he continued, with the alliance between the Afghans and the Ottoman caliph, Muslim rule had again been established in Persia. Arguably, the main message with all these analogies was that the Ottomans should keep their promises in the Treaty of Hamadan, so that both peace in the region could be preserved and the Sunnis continue to rule. All the Ottoman replies to Namdar Khan again confirmed the Porte's commitment to the

established peace and Ahmed III affirmed again that all Muslims found utmost security and peace under the shadow of his caliphate and sultanate.

The Afghans presumably aimed to convince the Ottomans of the idea that keeping the peace would serve Ottoman interests better than restoring the Safavids to the Persian throne. First, the Afghans showed one of the highest levels of respect that could be paid to another state's ruler and affirmed the political and religious superiority and leadership of the Ottoman sultan over all Muslims. That much esteem was hardly possible for the Safavids to pay, who had a more equal relationship with the Ottomans considering the Afghan-Ottoman diplomatic asymmetry. Second, the Afghans emphasized the vitality of preserving the peace more than the Ottomans and elaborated the necessity of that preservation through philosophical, historical, and religious explanations. Moreover, by strongly underlining the religious brotherhood between the two states and also the Ottoman sultan's caliphate, they also implicitly forced the Porte to pursue a policy consistent with its religio-political discourse. This emphasis would have given the Ottomans bitter memories of the Battle of Anjudan.

Soon after this exchange of letters, alarming news for the Porte continued to come to Constantinople not only about the Kizilbash rebellions, but also from Huwayza, a strategic province for the security of Ottoman lands both in Iraq-i Ajam and in Iraq-i Arab. Bedouin tribes in Huwayza had direct links with other Arab populations living in Basra and in the vicinity of Baghdad, and had created major trouble for the Ottoman central government and provincial authorities, nearly since the Ottoman capture of Iraq. Even though Huwayza had been left to the Ottomans in the Treaty of Hamadan and the Huwayzans had submitted to Ottoman authority in 1727, in the summer of 1729, certain Bedouin *sheikh*s revolted against the Ottomans and took refuge in the Afghan lands.[1179] Then, as declared in the imperial order

[1179] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-1649, Evail-i Rebiulevvel 1142 (September 24th – October 3rd, 1729).

to Baghdad's Governor Ahmed Pasha, these *sheikh*s told the Afghans that their regions were actually not on the Ottoman side, but in Afghan territory. The order added that the Afghans had accepted these claims and agreed to the incorporation of these lands. The order to Ahmed Pasha was to solve the problem by sending a copy of the Treaty of Hamadan to Sayyid Muhammad, khan of Huwayza, and if necessary to also let Ashraf know about the developments. Soon after the issuing of that order, Ashraf was overthrown, and the problem was not solved by either soft or hard methods. The Ottomans began to lose their territories in Iran, starting with Huwayza, the province last incorporated.

The final Ottoman contact with the Afghans was a direct one that clearly revealed the lack of Ottoman support for the Afghans, despite the agreed-upon terms of the Treaty of Hamadan and the firm confirmations in the correspondence exchanged earlier that same year. After Ashraf's two defeats at the hands of Nadir and before the final war near Isfahan, Ashraf asked for 5,000 infantry janissaries to be sent by Hamadan's Governor Abdurrahman Pasha, paying for them with thirty thousand pieces of gold.[1180] However, as narrated by Abdi, the pasha took the money and did not send the soldiers to the Afghan army. In the end, according to Abdi, due to the article in the Treaty of Hamadan requiring the Afghans and the Ottomans to help each other in case Afghan or Ottoman territories were attacked by third parties,[1181] Abdurrahman Pasha was obliged to send troops. However, the soldiers numbered only five hundred, insufficient compared to what had been asked and paid for. Clearly, that weak help had been sent just for appearance's sake and not to provide real support to the Afghan army against the Safavids.

On the one hand, the case of Abdurrahman Pasha was an example of using war as an opportunity for profit-making by a provincial governor. However, what enabled him to act so

[1180] Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 9–10. For the Persian sources on this subject, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 38.
[1181] This was the eighth article of the Treaty.

freely and abusively at a very critical moment of regime change in Iran was obviously his knowledge of the central government's policy. Abdurrahman Pasha was aware of the Porte's displeasure with the Afghans and also of the government's policy of not interfering with the Tahmasb-Ashraf conflict. This Ottoman reluctance was quite consistent with the Ottoman discontent with the Afghans as expressed in various symbolic messages from the early 1720s until the last diplomatic contact. The reluctance at the last instance only sealed the Ottoman discontent with the Afghans as neighbors; the brotherhood between them was conceived of more as a religio-political threat than as friendship, alliance, and unity, contrary to what was claimed by the ostentatious literary expressions in royal epistles and the Treaty of Hamadan.

D. Worsening of Russo-Ottoman Relations

The cleavage that had opened in 1725 in Russo-Ottoman relations had continued to widen as time passed. As mentioned above, one of the constant quarrels between Russia and the Ottomans in 1728 continued to be violations of border from each side.[1182] The nature of relations between two capitals remained the same: "outwardly cordial, in reality rather cool."[1183] The Venetian resident's dispatches between October 1728 and August 1729 show that it was common knowledge in Constantinople that the Russians supported and even secretly protected Tahmasb in his struggle against Ashraf.[1184] On the other hand, as another cause of friction between the Ottomans and the Russians, the English resident Stanyan pointed to the Russian policy of transferring Christian populations from Georgia and Armenia into the Russian-controlled regions of Iran. He even argued that as a result of the continuous application of this policy since the time of Peter I, Ottoman lands had almost turned into "desert."[1185]

[1182] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1118.
[1183] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 127. The date of dispatch was September 1st, 1728.
[1184] Shay, 127–29.
[1185] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 359. The date of dispatch was May 13th-24th, 1729.

In 1729, Nepluyev reported to Russia that it was highly probable that the Ottomans were going to attack Russian holdings in Persia in the fall of 1729. He suggested that the reason for choosing fall was that the cold would limit the movement of the Russian troops that could come to assist. Furthermore, he complained that the Ottomans were neglecting him, dismissing his proposals, not sharing information with him, and not allowing him to send couriers.[1186] Thus, with the passage of time, the "eternal peace" and alliance faded away and the enmity between two capitals came into clearer view.

In the same year, the Ottoman accusation that the Russian general Rumyantsev had provided shelter to the Shahseven rebels appeared again. This time, the Porte turned this conflict into a bigger diplomatic crisis via a grand-vizierial letter to the Russian grand-chancellor Gavriil Golovkin, in March 1729.[1187] Damad İbrahim Pasha asked Russia to punish Rumyantsev for sheltering Ottoman enemies[1188] and for his alleged occupation of certain Ottoman villages at the border. Even though the letter itself is not available, an imperial order dated mid-April 1730 gives a relatively good summary of it and also of the developments in its wake.[1189] According to the order, when the Ottoman commanders of İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Ganja, and Surhay Han, the khan of Shirvan, followed the rebels Abdurrezzak Pasha and Safi Quli Khan, they discovered that the Russians had opened their borders to the Shahseven rebels with all their goods and livestock. It was stated that the Russians had provided these rebels and their families with boats and let them cross over the River Kori and then let them into the Russian fortress at Salyan. Moreover, allegedly, the Shahseven families had given one third of their goods and the fee for boats in exchange for their reception. It was also related that these crossings had been

[1186] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1119.
[1187] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 128.
[1188] This was the major Shahseven uprising that culminated in the summer of 1728 and beginning of 1729 under leaders like Abdurrezzak Pasha, Safi Quli Khan, and Qalandar İsmail. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-247, Evahir-i Ramazan 1142 (April 9th-18th, 1730).
[1189] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-247, Evahir-i Ramazan 1142 (April 9th-18th, 1730).

continuing through the preceding years. The order added that questions by the Ottoman commanders to their Russian counterparts regarding their sheltering the Shahseven rebels had been left unanswered. Damad İbrahim Pasha had sent a letter to his Russian counterpart asking for the rebels to be sent back to Ottoman territory, and Golovkin had replied that the Russians had not sheltered the Shahseven rebels. On the contrary, the rebels had also pillaged the villages on the Russian side after they had crossed into Russian territory. The order ended by informing the recipients that a joint committee was going to be formed with Ottoman and Russian representatives who were going to investigate the matter.

Besides direct Russo-Ottoman conflicts and their disputes in Persia, Russia had closely maintained its new policy of alienating the Safavids from the Ottomans and creating an anti-Ottoman alliance with them in the second half of the 1720s. A quite influential figure in this close Russian contact with the Safavids was Semeon Avramov, who was from Erzurum.[1190] In 1719, he had been sent by Peter I to Shah Sultan Husayn to be the first Russian consul in Iran, where he arrived in October 1720.[1191] From 1720 until the beginning of 1729, he stayed in Persia. It was again he who mediated the sending of Ismail Beg as Tahmasb's envoy to St. Petersburg in 1723.[1192] Moreover, Avramov had tried to convince Tahmasb to accept Levashov's October 1725 offer of Russian assistance in the reclaiming of Iranian lands from the Ottomans.[1193] Significantly, between 1726 and 1729, he was the Russian secretary to Tahmasb and he was "almost constantly in attendance on Tahmasp until January 1729, when he returned to Russia."[1194] Avramov had also nearly always accompanied Nadir, whose joining

[1190] Hrand D. Andreasyan, ed., "Nadir Şah Devrine Ait Bir Anonim Kronoloji," in *Osmanlı-İran-Rus İlişkilerine Ait İki Kaynak*, trans. Hrand D. Andreasyan (İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1974), 98.
[1191] Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 222. Avramov's mission was to finalize Volynski's treaty with the Persians. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 177.
[1192] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 241.
[1193] Butkov, *Materialy Dlja Novoj Istorii Kavkaza, s 1722 Po 1803 God*, 1:85.
[1194] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 346.

in Tahmasb's service, subsequent fights with the Safavid prince, and undisputed dominance over Tahmasb were witnessed by the Russian consul.[1195] Avramov also negotiated the cession of Gilan to the Safavids with Nadir, when it became clearer that Nadir was actually the leading figure in the revival of the Safavid dynasty.[1196]

An eighteenth-century Greek merchant-traveler and writer, Vasileios Vatatzes, who was born in Constantinople in 1694, was also an important figure in the Russo-Iranian contacts of the 1710s and 1720s. Vatatzes was an admirer of imperial Russia as the center of Orthodox Christianity and enemy of the Ottomans, against whom he depicted Nadir as hero, due to the latter's victories over the former. Starting in 1708, he traveled to many European cities, Russia, Iran, and Central Asian states and principalities.[1197] In all these travels, which also included several visits to Constantinople, Moscow became the intersection point.[1198]

Vatatzes went to Iran and Central Asia first in 1716, at the same time as the Volynsky expedition, then again in 1727.[1199] In both trips to Iran, he set forth from Moscow.[1200] On his second visit to Iran, he had two or three personal audiences with Nadir and remained with him in Mashhad until Nadir set out for Herat in May 1729.[1201] Vatatzes narrated that he carried Nadir's secret messages to General Levashov at Resht on his return to Moscow via Astrakhan.[1202] It would be fair to assume that he would have shared all the information he gathered during his travels in Iran and Central Asia with the Russian government in Moscow.

[1195] Lockhart, 531.
[1196] Lockhart, 346–47.
[1197] Axworthy, "Basile Vatatzes And His History Of Nadir Shah," 331–33.
[1198] Marinos Sariyannis, "An Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Greek's Travel Account in Central Asia," in *CIEPO Interim Symposium: The Central Asiatic Roots of Ottoman Culture*, ed. İlhan Şahin, Baktıbek Isakov, and Cengiz Buyar (İstanbul, 2014), 48.
[1199] On the first trip he visited Darband, Shamakhi, Gilan, Qazvin, Qum, Kashan, and Isfahan; on the second, he traveled to Khiva, Bukhara, Kelat, Mashhad, Mazandaran, and Gilan. See Axworthy, "Basile Vatatzes And His History Of Nadir Shah," 332.
[1200] Axworthy, 332; Sariyannis, "An Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Greek's Travel Account in Central Asia," 48.
[1201] Axworthy, "Basile Vatatzes And His History Of Nadir Shah," 332.
[1202] Vasileios Vatatzēs, *Voyages de Basile Vatace En Europe et En Asie* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1886), 223–24.

Beyond his personal contributions to the communication between Russia and Iran, his endeavors show that an anti-Ottoman alliance between Russia and Iran seemed attractive to a contemporary Ottoman Greek, who was an admirer of the Russian leadership of Orthodox Christians in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 7: THE CHALLENGE OF NADIR, 1730-1736

Similar to the 1720s, the 1730s started with four major players, two internal and two external, in the battlefield of Persia. This time, Afsharid Nadir replaced the Afghans. The divergence between the Porte and Russia widened in the 1730s, which significantly altered the balance of power between the engaging powers. At the end, while the winners of the 1720s in Persia had been the Ottomans and to an extent the Safavids, the winners of the 1730s were the Russians and Nadir.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the arrival of the Safavids alarmed the Ottoman government, which initiated hard and soft policies to keep the conquered lands in Persia under possession. The main reason for the Ottoman reaction was that a possible loss of these lands back to the Persians endangered the Porte's long-existing eastern policy of having a weak but stable Shiite central authority in Iran. Moreover, the Russians still retained the southern and western coastal provinces of Caspian. Thus, the absence of Sunni Afghans did not end the wars in the Constantinople-Isfahan axis between 1730 and 1736. On the other hand, the conflicts and wars between the Ottomans and the Iranians in the period between 1736 and 1747 were clashes between the Sunni powers, just like the Ottoman-Afghan conflicts of the 1720s.

I will study two main topics from the post-1730 era in this chapter and in the next. This chapter will deal with the withdrawal of the Ottomans to their traditional eastern borders in 1735. Chapter Eight will examine the foundation of Nadir's state in 1736 and his Ja'farism proposal to the Porte between 1736 and 1747. In this chapter, I will first provide a short historical account of the seventeen years between 1730 and 1747. Then, I briefly examine the reasons for the easy loss of Ottoman territories in Iraq-i Ajam and Azerbaijan within few months in mid-1730. After that, I discuss the religio-political discourse of the rebels in the Patrona Halil Revolt, which was triggered by the loss of Tabriz. There, I demonstrate how

religious discourse actively worked against the government due to its availability to opposing groups, as well. Lastly, I investigate the steps of the gradual Russian help for Nadir's quest to expel the Ottomans from the Caucasus between 1730 and 1735. I aim to show that despite changes to the Russian throne, the Russian policy of establishing an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Persians, which Catherine I had initiated in 1725, remained the major Russian strategy in Iran in the 1730s. Besides Nadir's own strength, it was mainly thanks to this Russian strategy that the Porte returned the Caucasus to Nadir Shah.

A. A Short Historical Account

In June 1730, Riza Quli Khan Shamlu, the Safavid envoy, arrived in Constantinople.[1203] He demanded the cession of the Safavid lands that the Ottomans had occupied in Persia since 1722. The Ottoman government and Riza Quli Khan agreed on the cession of Tabriz, Kirmanshah, Ardalan, Huwayza, and Luristan to the Safavids. According to the agreement, Erevan, Tbilisi, Ganja, Shirvan, and Dagestan were to remain on the Ottoman side. The Safavids were to pay 100,000 gold pieces to the Ottomans. Probably even before the arrival of the news of the Ottoman cession of land to Isfahan, Nadir recovered the provinces of Nahawand, Hamadan, Kirmanshah, and Tabriz over the course of a few months leading up to early August 1730. The Ottoman pashas showed little resistance and surrendered the provinces to Nadir. The news of the fall of Tabriz, after that of Hamadan, triggered a rebellion in Constantinople headed by Patrona Halil in the end of September 1730. The Patrona Halil Revolt led to the dethronement of Ahmed III and execution of Damad İbrahim Pasha, together with his own *damad*s, Kaymak Mustafa Pasha and Mehmed Pasha. Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754), the nephew of Ahmed III, was enthroned on October 2nd, 1730.

[1203] I do not cite sources for the information given in this part, as my discussion of the developments in this chapter and the following one include detailed references.

Nadir set out toward the east in August 1730 and suppressed the Abdali revolt in Herat in February 1732. While he was fighting in Herat, Tahmasb II set forth from Tabriz to conquer Erevan in March 1731, without Nadir's consent. In the following battle, the Ottoman armies resoundingly defeated the Safavids and recovered all the western Persian provinces. However, Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, signed a treaty with Tahmasb II on January 8th, 1732 leaving Tabriz, Kirmanshah, Hamadan, Luristan, Ardalan, and Huwayza to the Safavids. The treaty mostly repeated the same conditions as the 1730 agreement between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Riza Quli Han. The Ottomans still kept Erevan, Ganja, Tbilisi, Shirvan, and Dagestan under their control.

Nadir rejected Tahmasb II's treaty with Ahmed Pasha and sent *firman*s to all the Persian provinces that the treaty was not valid. In the same *firman*, he referred to his victories over the Afghans as "the victory of the Shii sect," which was accomplished with the help of Ali, the fourth caliph, and the twelve Imams. Simultaneously, General Levashov, commander of Gilan, and Baron Shafirov, ambassador of Tsarina Anna Ivanovna (r. 1730-1740), signed the Treaty of Rasht with Nadir and Tahmasb II on February 1st, 1732. This treaty was signed based on the orders of the new Russian tsarina, who increased Russian help to the Safavids. Russia agreed to return Gilan, the only Russian territory in the southern Caspian, to the Safavids in five months, due to the Ottoman expulsion from Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam. It also agreed to return the territories in the Caucasus until the Safavids expelled the Ottomans from the Caucasus. The treaty granted freedom of trade to Russian and Persian merchants in both states. Lastly, they agreed to have a representative in their respective capitals.

Russian troops evacuated Gilan before waiting the full five months, during Nadir's march back to Isfahan. The victorious Nadir dethroned the defeated Tahmasb II in August 1732, soon after the former arrived in Isfahan. Nadir installed the infant Abbas III, the son of Tahmasb II, on the Safavid throne. In the post-August 1732 era, Nadir became the *de jure* ruler of Persia,

with his new title of "regent of state" (*Wakīl al-Dawla* and *Nā'ib al-Saltana*), instead of "Tahmasb's slave" (Tahmasb Quli Khan).

Nadir sent messages to Ahmed Pasha and to the Porte demanding the return of all the previously Safavid provinces to them shortly before dethroning Tahmasb II. Upon the Ottoman rejection of this demand, Nadir first directly attacked the Ottoman domains in Iraq. He besieged Baghdad for seven months between January and July 1733. The Porte sent an army under the command of Topal Osman Pasha from Erzurum to rescue Baghdad. Topal Osman Pasha defeated Nadir in July 1733. Nadir laid another unsuccessful siege on Mosul, but captured Kirkuk in November 1733. Osman Pasha was killed during the fights in Kirkuk.

To relieve Baghdad, the Porte opened the northern front with an army reinforced by Crimean Tatar forces. In the beginning of August 1733, the Ottomans captured Tabriz. Moreover, Muhammad Khan Baluc revolted against the Safavids in Shiraz. Upon these developments, Nadir and Ahmed Pasha agreed on a protocol, according to which the Ottomans were to return all the Persian provinces to the Safavids; prisoners of war and cannons were to be exchanged; and Ottoman authorities were not to collect taxes from Persian visitors to the sacred Shiite places in Ottoman domains. Ahmed Pasha asked for ninety days to confirm the conditions with the Porte. Nadir accepted and left Ottoman territory.

Nadir suppressed Muhammad Khan's uprising in February 1734. The Porte's envoys informed Nadir in April 1734 that the Porte did not agree to leave the Caucasus. The government also dismissed Ahmed Pasha from the governorship of Baghdad in June 1734 and appointed him first as governor of Aleppo, then of Raqqa. Upon the negative reply of the Porte, Nadir set out from Isfahan in June 1734 and started his first Caucasus campaign. He captured Shamakhi at the end of August and Gazi Kumukh in October 1734.

While Nadir was in Shamakhi, he started peace negotiations anew with the Russian representatives for the return of Baku and Darband to the Persians. When negotiations were continuing, he besieged Ganja on November 3rd, 1734. Unsuccessful after a five-month siege, Nadir set out for Kars in May 1735. On March 21st, 1735, only four days before Nadir abandoned the siege of Ganja, Russia and Nadir signed the Treaty of Ganja. According to the terms of the treaty, Russia promised to cede all the remaining territories to Persia within two months. The Safavids were to sell Persian silk only to Russian merchants. Russia and Persia agreed to be perpetual allies, and to not abandon the war against the Ottomans until the Ottomans returned to their pre-1722 borders.

Nadir set forth for Kars and started to besiege the city on May 24th, 1735. In the June 19th battle between the two armies near Arpaçayı, the Persians defeated the Ottomans, and Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha, the Ottoman commander-in-chief, was killed. On July 9th, 1735, Ganja surrendered to Nadir. Following it, Tbilisi and Erevan were left to Nadir, on August 12th and October 3rd, 1735, respectively. Thus, the Porte lost all the Persian territories it had conquered between 1722 and 1727 over the five years between 1730 and 1735. Genç Ali Pasha, the Ottoman representative, negotiated the terms of peace with Nadir's representatives at Mughan in February and March 1736.

After this success, Nadir overthrew the Safavid dynasty and established his own dynasty at a big council (*kurultay*) in Mughan in 1736. Thus, he became Nadir Shah (r. 1736-1747). In a revolutionary way, he declared the official religion of the new Afsharid state to be Sunnism – Ja'farism as its legal school. He banned several Shiite practices, like cursing the first three caliphs, that were the focus of Sunni objections. This coronation started the second phase of Nadir's career. In this new phase, he struggled to become a great conqueror as a self-made second Timur, from whom he also claimed to inherit.

Nadir offered five proposals to the Porte to conclude a peace after long years of fighting. Unusually for diplomatic relations, one of the two envoys carrying these proposals to Constantinople was Mirza Abu'l Qasım, the highest religious authority in Persia. His proposals were (1) the appointment of a Persian *emiru'l hac* for Persian pilgrims; (2) the recognition of the Ja'fari school as the fifth Sunni legal school; (3) the establishment of a Ja'fari prayer location (*rukn*) at the Ka'ba; (4) the appointments of permanent consuls in respective capitals; and (5) an exchange of prisoners.

Long negotiations took place between the Ottoman and Persian representatives in Constantinople between July and September 1736. The second and third demands were the most controversial ones. In response, unlike the common narration in modern scholarship, the Porte implicitly accepted Ja'farism as an acceptable Sunni legal school. However, it rejected the prayer location at Ka'ba. Mahmud I sent the draft treaty to Nadir with the conditions to which the Ottomans had agreed. Nadir received the Ottoman letters and peace draft in May 1738, when he was in Kandahar on his way to the Indian campaign. In response, Nadir insisted on the explicit recognition of Ja'farism and the establishment of a prayer location. This time, the Porte rejected Ja'farism explicitly on legal grounds. The correspondence between Nadir and the Porte lasted for six years, between 1736 and 1742. In the meantime, Nadir enlarged his empire toward India, Balkh, and Bukhara in 1741, as a result of successful military expeditions against the Mughal shah and Central Asian khanates. The Porte also fought against the Austro-Russian alliance between 1736 and 1739. It defeated both of them and recovered Belgrade from the Austrians after twenty-one years.

In the face of Ottoman rejections and after being named "king of kings" (*shahenshah*), Nadir threatened the Porte with the acquisition of those lands in the Ottoman domains that he had inherited from Timur. This mutually uncompromising attitude resulted in a new war between the Ottomans and the Persians between 1743 and 1745. The visible and declared reason

for this war was the Porte's rejection of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school. Nadir was the offensive side in the first front, Iraq. He started the offensive in June 1743 and had captured Hilla, Şehrizor, Kirkuk, and Arbil as of August 1743. However, Nadir's sieges of Mosul and Basra in the fall of 1743 were unsuccessful, and he abandoned the campaign and reached an agreement with Ahmed Pasha in the beginning of December 1743. Nadir returned the cities to the Ottomans, renounced his demand for the Ja'fari pillar in the Ka'ba, but insisted on the acceptance of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school. To increase the weight of the Ja'farism proposal, he organized a council among the prominent Shiite *ulema* of Iran and Iraq, and Sunni Afghans and Transoxianans in Najaf. He asked for an umpire from Ahmed Pasha. Ahmed Pasha sent Abdullah Suwaydī Efendi, a prominent scholar, to the Council of Najaf. At the end of the council, organized under the shadow of Nadir's sword, the Shiites accepted all the conditions demanded by the Sunnis. Consequently, all parties accepted Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni school and signed a document declaring the former Shiites brothers in religion.

However, the Porte did not recognize the agreement between Ahmed Pasha and Nadir. On the second front of Kars and Erevan, the Ottomans were the offensive side. The Porte sent Safi Mirza, an impostor Safavid prince, to Kars at the end of 1743, to reestablish the Safavid state after defeating Nadir. Nadir laid an unsuccessful siege on the Kars fortress between July and October 1744. He stipulated two conditions for peace during the siege: first, the surrendering of Safi Mirza to Nadir; second, the Ottoman acceptance of Ja'farism. In reply, Şehla el-Hac Ahmed Pasha, the commander-in-chief, rejected both demands and emphasized the Ottoman aim to replace Nadir with Safi Mirza. Nadir returned to Erevan with empty hands. However, the Ottomans did not stop there and marched on Erevan. In the battle of Muradtepe in August 1745, Nadir defeated the Ottomans. Thus, just as the Ottomans successfully defended the Iraq front, Nadir was also able to stop them on the northern front and protect his domains.

The war was devastating but inconclusive for both sides. At the end, Nadir withdrew his demand for the explicit recognition of Ja'farism in the ensuing peace treaty of Kerden in 1746. He also renounced the territorial demands he had claimed as his inheritance right in the Ottoman domains. The Porte drew Safi Mirza back to Constantinople. The Ottoman government also acknowledged Nadir's state as a Sunni state, thus implicitly recognizing Ja'farism as a Sunni school, as had been the case in 1736.

B. Ottoman Withdrawal to pre-1722 Borders

B.1. The Ottoman Loss of Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam

The Safavid territorial demands with the embassy of Riza Quli Khan Shamlu in 1730 ran counter to their earlier supplicant attitude as conveyed in the Safavid letters to the Porte in 1728. Tahmasb II had asked for the withdrawal of the Ottomans to the pre-1722 borders, a demand Ashraf would repeat five years later. As I mentioned in the account above, Damad İbrahim Pasha agreed to cede the Ottoman lands in Persia, except for the Caucasus.[1204] Ottoman governors in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam swiftly left their provinces to the Safavids.[1205] Why did the Porte withdraw so easily, after paying considerable economic costs and suffering many casualties in the 1720s?

A first possible answer to this question seems the internal opposition that made it difficult for the Porte to keep Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam under control. As I discussed in Chapter Four, the Marquis de Bonnac had warned the Ottoman government in January 1724 to conclude a peace treaty with the Russians, since the Persian people were against the Ottomans, among other dangers. The Shahseven rebellions throughout the latter half of the 1720s proved de Bonnac's argument correct. The Porte suppressed these uprisings by the end of summer 1729 to an important extent. However, Nadir's first victory over Ashraf on September 29th, 1729 led

[1204] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 17; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 344; Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 89; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 133–34.
[1205] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 48–50.

many Persians under Ottoman authority to leave the Ottomans to join the Safavid army.[1206] The enthronement of Tahmasb II ignited the fire of rebellion in a more substantial way. Tahmasb II sent declarations of his enthronement on Isfahan to populations in the Ottoman-controlled provinces of Persia. It created euphoria among the Iranians, and the Shahseven tribes in Azerbaijan, the Civanshir tribes in Karabagh, and the Sıghınak Armenians revolted against Ottoman rule in early 1730.[1207]

Abdi narrates that as soon as Tahmasb II became shah, people in Hamadan refused to obey the Ottoman authorities. They did not even pay their taxes and turned the tax collectors away by arguing that now Tahmasb II was the shah of Iran, not Ashraf, and that they were not going to pay their taxes twice. It meant that they would only make payments to the Safavids, not to the Ottomans.[1208] Abdi argues that upon this development, Abdurrahman Pasha, the governor of Hamadan, wrote a letter to Tahmasb II asking for a Safavid official who could help the Ottoman tax collectors. Allegedly, Tahmasb II sent one of his men to Hamadan, and his arrival caused further attraction toward the shah's side. Tahmasb II's official then drove the Ottoman collector off, without giving him any money. Abdi maintains that Abdurrahman Pasha encouraged people to sell provisions to Isfahan, to get money from illicit trade. The *ağa* of the

[1206] See the previous chapter.

[1207] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 198; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 215. Both Uzunçarşılı and Külbilge refer to several imperial orders that narrated Tahmasb's sending of papers to people in Ottoman Persia. I read these orders to get more information on these papers. They only mentioned the spread of Tahmasb's orders by a certain Abram, an Armenian from the Sıghınak tribe, and that people were escaping to the side of this Abram. "Bundan akdem İsfahan tarafından bazı erâcîf şuyûuyla Sığınak'dan olan Abram nam şakî, gûya ki Şâh tarafından olmak üzere müzevvir rakam ihdâs ve sûretlerin etrafa perâkende etmekle, eğerçi cümle ukalâ-yı A'câm vücûd vermeyib, lâkin mezbûrlardan ve sâirden bazı cühelâ gerçek sanıb, şaki-yi mesfûr Abram'ın yanına firâr sadedinde oldukları…" See for example, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-138, Evahir- i Şaban 1142 (March 11th-19th, 1730). The Porte ordered several pashas and governors, including those of Ganja, Tbilisi, Shirvan, Kars, Erzurum, and Diyarbakr, to suppress the rebellion. See 13-238, Evahir- i Şaban 1142 (March 11th-19th, 1730). This is a Mühimme Zeyli register, numbered 13. For a transcription of the register, see Zeynep Kurt, "13 Numaralı ve 1727-1730 Tarihli Mühimme Zeyli Defteri" (Master's thesis, Fırat Üniversitesi, 2005).

[1208] "[H]ele görelim bundan sonra nice olur. Şimdi İsfahan'da Eşref Han yoktur Tahmasb Şahdır. Bizden gayri sizlere bir türlü faide yoktur ve iki defa mal-i mîrî vermek bizlere elvermez. Hemen varup başınıza tedarük göresiz..." See Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 11.

pasha explained the reason for the encouragement of the pasha as Abdurrahman Pasha's having to pay 750 purses to the central administration per year; in the absence of tax revenue, he resorted to this solution. Abdi further claims that the Kizilbash in Hamadan secretly sent weapons, together with provisions, to the Safavids.[1209] Abdi's account could be correct, considering the incessant rebellions in the region and the quick Ottoman renunciation of the provinces to Tahmasb II.

Second, Russian support for the Safavids seems to have been another factor discouraging the Porte from fighting the Safavids to keep these lands. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the Ottoman government was highly uncomfortable with the Russian support for the Kizilbash rebellions. In the beginning of 1730, this support created a crisis between the respective governments, which agreed to form a joint committee to investigate the claims of each side regarding the Shahsevens.

Third, the Porte might not have considered waging another war as a viable option due to their internal economic and military difficulties. An imperial order sent to several governors and administrators in Anatolia and Syria in March 1730 is suggestive in this sense. The government declared that cadastral surveys in Hamadan, Tabriz, and Ardalan had been finished and invited "courageous soldiers" to acquire these lands as *zeamet* or *timars*.[1210] However, the cadastral survey of Hamadan, for example, had in fact been completed in 1728.[1211] The government's call to soldiers suggests that the Porte had experienced difficulty in attracting its own soldiers to a rebellious and unstable frontier.

Moreover, there was a parallel between the Ottoman withdrawal from Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam in 1730 and the Ottoman priorities in Iran in 1722. As I discussed in Chapters Three

[1209] Abdi Efendi, 11–14.
[1210] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d. 136-164, Evahir-i Şaban 1142 (March 11th-19th, 1730).
[1211] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 135-488, Evahir-i Muharrem 1141 (August 27th – September 5th, 1728).

and Four, the Porte was in a reactionary position in Iran, vis-à-vis the advancements of the Russians and the Afghans, until the fall of Isfahan. The Ottoman occupations in Iran, except for the Caucasus front, aimed, first, to cut the connection between the Afghans and Kurdish tribes, and, second, to leave the Afghans a limited area in Persia. Now that the Afghans were gone, and the Russians had abandoned their expansionist policies, the Porte could feel relatively safer about the two major threatening powers on their eastern borders. Certainly, no government can be willing to cede that much territory after paying such high costs. However, the Porte could have considered the returning of these provinces as a less costly concession, considering both the difficulties of keeping them and the absence of expansionary powers. Importantly, the government preserved the Ottoman territories in the Caucasus, as long as the Russians did not leave Baku and Darband.

B.2. The Patrona Coup

People in Constantinople heard about the agreement between Damad İbrahim Pasha and Riza Quli Khan to relinquish the western provinces of Persia while the envoy was still in the city. Soon after the rumors, the news arrived in the capital that Hamadan and Kirmanshah had fallen into the hands of the Safavids, who were about to attack Tabriz. This news created a serious disturbance among the public and resentment especially toward the grand vizier.[1212] Upon this disturbance, the government declined the agreement and declared that the Porte was going to wage war on the Safavids in July 1730.[1213] The government also detained Riza Quli Han. Soon, the government began major preparations for a military expedition, headed, unusually, by

[1212] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 17–20; Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 6–7; Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 134.

[1213] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Şem'dânî-zâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Târihi: Müri't-Tevârih*, ed. M. Münir Aktepe, vol. 1 (İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976), 1–2; Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 92; Jean Neaulme, ed., *Relation Des Deux Rebellions Arrivées à Constantinople En M. DCC. XXX. et XXXI., Dans La Déposition d'Achmet III. et l'Elevation Au Trône de Mahomet V. Composée Sur Des Mémoires Originaux Reçus de Constantinople* (Lahey, 1737), 4–5. For a study of the book and a Turkish translation, see İbrahim Tolga Kara, "1730-1731 İsyanları Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı: Relation Des Deux Rebellions Arrivées à Constantinople En M. DCC. XXX. et XXXI., Dans La Déposition d'Achmet III. et l'Elevation Au Trône de Mahomet V. Composée Sur Des Mémoires Originaux Reçus de Constantinople. (İnceleme Ve İzahlı Tercüme)" (Master's thesis, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2021).

Ahmed III himself. Installation of military camp at Üsküdar began on July 27th, 1730, and Ahmed III crossed the Bosphorus and entered the camp on August 3rd.[1214] The army's march east was to start soon, but for several reasons, the army did not proceed and continued to wait for almost two months at Üsküdar.[1215] At the same time, the government did not cancel the expedition. The situation was completely ambiguous. Above all, it clearly showed the paralyzed condition of a government being squeezed by internal conditions and developments in Iran.[1216] The postponement and probable cancellation of the campaign also caused financial loss for the janissaries, who had their own businesses in the city.[1217]

During this tense and ambiguous occasion, the news of the fall of Tabriz arrived in Constantinople in early September 1730[1218] and triggered the flame of revolt in the capital.[1219] As Subhi related, people claimed that pashas in the Iranian provinces had ceded their territories to the Safavids without fighting, upon receiving letters from Damad İbrahim Pasha ordering them to cede.[1220] The revolt started on September 28th, while Ahmed III was still at Üsküdar. The sultan and the government of his son-in-law fell in a few days. Ahmed III executed Damad İbrahim Pasha and Damad İbrahim's *damad*s (sons-in-law) Mehmed Pasha and İbrahim Pasha upon the demands of the rebels. The rebels elevated Mahmud I to the throne on October 2nd, 1730.

[1214] Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 92–94.
[1215] For some of these reasons, see Aktepe, 95–101.
[1216] The report of the Marquis de Villeneuve dated September 17th, 1730 demonstrated the ambiguity of the situation. He wrote that the government changed its decisions constantly. Moreover, the circulation of rumors based on these changes exacerbated the seriousness of the situation. See Aktepe, 96–97.
[1217] Aktepe, 38–39.
[1218] Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 223. The document to which he refers is: BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 136-759, Evahir-i Safer 1143 (September 5th-13th, 1730). The order was addressed to İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Ganja. It highlighted that the Porte had agreed with Riza Quli Khan by accepting some of the Safavid demands out of "compassion." The order continued that Tahmasb Quli Khan had invaded Ottoman domains and Tabriz, violating the treaty. The government informed İbrahim Pasha that it was sending an army of 40,000 and warned him to protect Ganja until the arrival of the army.
[1219] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:3.
[1220] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 20.

Certainly, there were several underlying economic, social, and political reasons for the Patrona Revolt, beyond the loss of Tabriz. Scholarship covers these reasons fairly.[1221] The economic burden of the wars, public discontent with the government, but perhaps more immediately the consolidation of power in the hands of Damad İbrahim were among the important reasons. In fact, a meeting with Namdar Khan, the last Afghan envoy, demonstrates the governance of empire by sons-in-law in 1729.[1222] There were nine Ottoman pashas in the meeting, and eight of them were relatives in a way and all of them had the title "son-in-law" (*damad*) before their names: Damad İbrahim Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III), Tevkii Ali Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III and nephew of Damad İbrahim Pasha), Kaptan Mustafa Pasha (son-in-law of Damad İbrahim Pasha), Musahib Mehmed Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III and son of Damad İbrahim Pasha), Küçük Osmanpaşazade Hafız Ahmed Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III), Deli Hüseyinpaşazade Mustafa Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III), Silahdar Mehmed Paşa (son-in-law of Ahmed III), and Mustafa Pasha (son-in-law of Ahmed III). It was only Abdullah Pasha, the governor of Aydın, who did not seem to have a familial relation with Ahmed III or Damad İbrahim Pasha.

The loss of Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam as part of a treaty meant the official declaration of the collapse of government's policies in Iran after paying costs too high in all senses in the preceding decade. Few governments could survived such an enormous loss of legitimacy. The last attempts of the Ottoman sultan and grand vizier were not enough to prevent them from falling.

The religio-political discourse of the opposition, in particular that of the rebels, targeted the government's policies from different angles as well. On the one hand, they accused the Porte of relinquishing lands to the "heretic" Kizilbash. They also protested against the

[1221] Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 41–130; Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 65–75.
[1222] Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1628.

government for causing the execution of many Muslim soldiers and civilians (*guzât-ı muvahhidîn*, *ehl-i İslâm*, *ümmet-i Muhammed*, *müslümanlar*) at the hands of the heretics in Hamadan, Kirmanshah, and Tabriz.[1223]

There was also another line of criticism of the government. Some members of the *ulema* and janissaries claimed that fighting against the Safavids, who were "brothers" in religion and had long been the rulers of Persia, had been an unrighteous war from the beginning. God had punished the Ottomans for the horrible crime of fighting against their brothers. It was a warning from God to turn the weapons against Christians, not the Safavids.[1224] The Venetian resident reported that those *ulema* who "declared the war unjust and against their religion […] rejoiced over the lack of success."[1225]

Marvi, a contemporary Persian court historian, narrated similar opposing arguments from the janissaries and their *ağa*s in Ottoman Persia.[1226] He wrote that the janissaries objected to the agreement between Riza Quli Khan and Damad İbrahim Pasha. The first point of contention was that if the government was to cede a city to the Persians, it should give another city to the janissaries. Second, they argued that if relinquishing these cities pertained to state matters (*mîrî*), they did not agree to it, since they had purchased these lands.[1227] However, if the relinquishing was due to the illegality of taking Persian blood and property according to the *sharia*, then why had they marched on Iran and shed blood among the *ummah*? Why did they

[1223] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 20; Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 7; Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:2–3.
[1224] Sieur De Crouzenac, *Histoire de La Dernière Révolution Arrivée Dans L'Empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1740), 2–3.
[1225] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 135. The quoted part belongs to Lucille Shay, who referred to Emo's dispatch, dated November 1st, 1730.
[1226] Muhammad Kazim Marvi, *'Alam Ara-i Nâdîrî*, ed. Muhammad Amin Riyahi, vol. 3 (Naqsh Jahan, 1985), 1051–52.
[1227] The reports of Nepluyev, the Russian resident at Constantinople, affirm the protests of the janissaries in Tabriz. He wrote that janissaries in Tabriz demanded restitution of their money, which they had paid to the treasury to purchase homes, shops, and so on. Nepluyev further reported that Damad İbrahim Pasha sent them 70,000 *kuruş* to compensate for their losses. See Tofiq T. Mustafazade, "Bir Yabancının Gözü Ile Eylül 1730 İsyanı," *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları* 17, no. 33 (2018): 14.

wake up the *fitna*, that had been asleep, and bring sedition to the peaceful world? If, on the other hand, it was legally permissible, then why would they give these cities back?

Thus, the religio-political discourse of the opposition challenged the government from different angles. It accused the Porte either of leaving lands to the "heretic" Kizilbash, or of fighting illegally against Kizilbash "brothers." The rebellion also started with chanting by the rebels in the streets, such as "O, Muhammad's community, we have a claim in the name of Muhammad's *sharia*! Close your shops, block the bazaar!"[1228] The discourse of the rebels was a significant example of the way religious discourse, in legal, social, and political senses, empowered the opposition to take down the government. One of the main arguments of this dissertation is that governments were not free to "utilize" religious discourse for their goals.[1229] Religious knowledge and authority was not exclusive to a closed group in Sunnism. Its openness and availability to groups besides the government made the ruling group vulnerable to the deployment of the same discourse against themselves. When incorporated into the discourse of opposition, religion became an active force restraining the government, rather than being a passive instrument of the rulers.

Another claim of this dissertation is that the political power of the *ulema* increased during times of turmoil vis-à-vis the military-administrative cadres. They could have become king-makers on these occasions, by virtue of their legitimate authority in religious/legal knowledge. As Tezcan clarifies, the *ulema* "did not necessarily compose a homogenous group, and they did not act continuously in harmony. […] Nevertheless, they all enjoyed being part of a privileged minority and were in a position to exert power in the imperial capital."[1230] In the

[1228] "Şer'-i Muhammedi üzere ümmet-i Muhammed dâvamız vardır. Dekakini seddedip, bedesteni çevirin." See Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 29. Subhi quoted the same statement as "da'vâ-yı şer'îmiz vardır. Ümmet-i Muhammed'den olan dükkânlarını kapayup bayrak altına gelsün." See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 22.
[1229] I use the word "utilize" in quotation marks to highlight that even if we accept that religion was a mere instrument for secularly-defined political goals, political actors were still not free in their recourse to religious discourse.
[1230] Tezcan, "The Ottoman Mevali as 'Lords of the Law,'" 396.

case of the Patrona Revolt, certain members of the *ulema*, such as İspirizade Ahmed Efendi, the preacher of the Ayasofya Mosque; Zülali Hasan Efendi, a former judge of Constantinople and Mecca;[1231] Mirzazade Şeyh Mehmed Efendi, the former *kadıasker* of Rumelia;[1232] and Paşmakçızade Abdullah Efendi, another former *kadıasker* of Rumelia, became highly influential. Even an unknown figure, Deli İbrahim Efendi, a teacher at a mid-level (*hariç*) madrasa, played an important role in the expansion of the revolt.

During the rebellion, the rebels made İbrahim Efendi the judge of Constantinople. At that time, the rebels had gathered in Et Meydanı and aimed to increase their numbers with people from different strands of society, like janissaries, shopkeepers, *ulema*, etc. İbrahim Efendi, as the legal and administrative head of the city, sent letters inviting influential figures of these groups to come to Et Meydanı and support the rebellion.[1233] Several members of the *ulema*, who were at the palace, also helped the rebels, directly or indirectly. In the first governmental meetings, Damad İbrahim Pasha proposed that he himself suppress the revolt with military force. Paşmakçızade Abddulah Efendi rejected this idea by arguing that it would cause significant turmoil and the shedding of Muslim blood, which was against the *sharia*.[1234] İspirizade Ahmed Efendi and Zülali Hasan Efendi became intermediaries between the palace and the rebels, although they were secretly on the side of the rebels. Şemdanizade pointed to Zülali Hasan Efendi as the mastermind of the coup.[1235] Destârî Sâlih Efendi, a contemporary observer from the palace, claimed that Zülali Hasan Efendi had formulated the religio-political

[1231] Zülali Hasan Efendi was the judge of Constantinople between December 3rd, 1728 and July 6th, 1729. Mehmed Râşid Efendi, the official chronicler of the Porte, replaced Zülali Hasan Efendi as the judge of Constantinople. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1616, 1624. He was also appointed the judge of Mecca in the summer of 1724. See Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, 3:1368. I was not able to find until when he maintained his position in Mecca. However, Ebubekir Pasha's letter to the Porte dated August 30th, 1725 (20 Zilhicce 1137) shows that he was still the judge of Mecca at that time. See Ebubekir Paşa, *Ebubekir Paşa Münşeatı*, 16a.
[1232] He was also the son-in-law of Feyzullah Efendi (d. 1703), the deposed and executed *şeyhülislam*. Between 1721 and 1730, when Damad İbrahim Pasha was powerful, he did not occupy a bureaucratic position. See Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 111.
[1233] Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi*, 34–35.
[1234] Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 139.
[1235] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:6.

discourse of the revolt according to which the rebels defined themselves as a Muslim group whose members demand the head of an arch-traitor only with a religious zeal and as a requirement of the *sharia*, to restore the hearts of Muslims. They accused Damad İbrahim Pasha of being a traitor to the state, religion, Muslims, and the *sharia*.[1236] Besides Zülali's role, İspirizade Ahmed Efendi was the person who announced to Ahmed III that his reign was over.[1237] On the second day of the insurrection, Mirzazade Mehmed Efendi prevented the issuing of a *fetva* for the execution of the rebels by opposing the views of *şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi, Damad İbrahim Pasha, and Kaptan Mustafa Pasha.[1238]

Damad İbrahim Pasha tried to suppress the rebellion using counter-actions. He struggled to find soldiers from among the janissaries, *bostancı*s, and mariners, even paying extra money. However, the grand vizier was not successful in convincing soldiers to fight on the side of the government. The mariners resorted to religious discourse when declining the order to suppress the rebels. They claimed that they would not fight against Muslims.[1239] The grand vizier also detained some members of the *ulema*, whom he considered the organizers of the revolt, including Mirzazade and Zülali.[1240] However, it had no effect on the rebellion. "Lords of the law" had more say than the grand vizier in this time of the turmoil. Mirzazade Mehmed Efendi became the new *şeyhülislam* with the unanimous approval of the *ulema* even before the fall of

[1236] "Bu tarîk ile redd-i cevab eylediler ki: 'Bizler gayret-i dîn-i mübîn ile muktaza-yı şer'-i metîn üzre taleb-i re's-i rüûsü'l-hainîn ve imâret-i kalb-i mü'minîn ve muvahhidîn için bir gürûh-ı Müslimîn-i sahibu'l-yakîniz; hâin-i dîn ü devlet ve mühîn-i mü'minîn u şerîat olan İbrahim Paşa'nın katl olunmasın isteriz' deyu Zülâli ta'rif eylediği hîle-i şer'iyye ile cevab eylediler." See Destârî Sâlih Efendi, *Destârî Sâlih Tarihi: Patrona Halil Ayaklanmasına Dair Bir Kaynak*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1962), 10.

[1237] "Efendim, saltanatınız hitam bulmuştur, kullarınız artık sizi padişahları olarak kabul etmezler." See Kara, "1730-1731 İsyanları Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı," 73.

[1238] Destârî Sâlih Efendi, *Destârî Sâlih Tarihi*, 10–11.

[1239] "Biz Müslümanlar ile ceng edemezüz." See Destârî Sâlih Efendi, 11. The French account of the rebellion narrated that the mariners tried to suppress the rebellion, but in the face of Patrona's firm stance, they themselves were suppressed. See Kara, "1730-1731 İsyanları Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı," 64–66.

[1240] Mustafazade, "Bir Yabancının Gözü Ile Eylül 1730 İsyanı," 14; Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, 128.

Ahmed III. Around that time, the three *damad* pashas were strangled in the palace. Zülali Hasan Efendi was appointed the *kadıasker* of Anatolia, again during the last days of Ahmed III.[1241]

Damad İbrahim Pasha tried to save his life by sacrificing Mustafa Pasha and Mehmed Pasha, his sons-in-law, and *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi. However, in the meeting in the presence of Ahmed III, Zülali Hasan Efendi pointed to Damad İbrahim Pasha and said that both God and his servants cursed the grand vizier, who deserved the most despicable death.[1242] The grand vizier sent his sons-in-law to their deaths and dismissed Abdullah Efendi, after which, Damad İbrahim Pasha went to inform Ahmed III, but Paşmakçızade Abdullah Efendi stopped the grand vizier at the entrance of the room. Ahmed III dismissed Damad İbrahim Pasha from the office and sent him to his death.[1243]

The Patrona Halil Revolt executed the most powerful pashas of the military-administrative class. However, Abdullah Efendi, the head of the *ulema* hierarchy, whom the rebels wanted to execute, was only expelled to Bursa. Primarily, his being from the *ulema* class saved his life. He implored İspirizade and Zülali in the presence of other *ulema* not to turn him over to the rebels. In response, all the *ulema* promised to protect him against the rebels.[1244] The rebels also agreed to forgive *Şeyhülislam* Abdullah Efendi, due to his position as the head of the *ilmiye* hierarchy.[1245] This example again demonstrates the increased power of the *ulema* class compared to that of the military-administrative class during times of turmoil.

[1241] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 32; Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:11.
[1242] Kara, "1730-1731 İsyanları Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı," 100.
[1243] Destârî Sâlih Efendi, *Destârî Sâlih Tarihi*, 14. It was ironic that after Damad İbrahim Pasha had tried to save his own life by sacrificing his *damad*s, Ahmed III did the same thing and executed Damad İbrahim Pasha.
[1244] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:8.
[1245] "Mamafih Sultan, veziri İbrahim Paşa'nın hayatını kurtarmak için bir teşebbüste daha bulunmayı can u gönülden arzulamışsa da asiler edepsizce, 'Müftüyü affederek zaten çok bile yaptıklarını, bunun da Zat-ı Şahanelerinin kendisine ve ehl-i şer'in başında bulunan o hizmetkârına duydukları hürmetten ileri geldiğini; lâkin sû-i idarelerinin hesabını vermeleri için Veziriazam ile iki damadının kendilerine irsal olunmasında mutlak surette ısrarcı oldukları' cevabını vermişlerdi." See Kara, "1730-1731 İsyanları Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı," 69.

B.3. Wars between the Ottomans and Russia-backed Nadir until 1735

The Porte relinquished Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam relatively easily, but it did not do the same with the Ottoman territories in the Caucasus. The continuing presence of Russians in the eastern Caucasus was the primary reason for the Porte's resistance to keeping these territories under its control. Moreover, the Shirvanis and the Dagestanis were still loyal to the Porte, unlike the Kizilbash populations in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam. Thus, the Porte did not change its policy of balancing the Russians in the north-eastern frontier during the reign of Mahmud I, either. This continuity after a complete change in the governing body at the Porte shows the importance of geopolitics in determining foreign policy.

The Russians, on the other hand, had a simple and clear goal: to oust the Ottomans from Persia at all territorial costs. The successors of Catherine I did not change this Russian strategy, which had been decided in 1725, either. The Russians reached this goal during the reign of Anna Ivanovna, who pursued a more active foreign policy than her predecessors. Between 1730 and 1735, the Russians ceded their lands in Persia to Nadir, sometimes as a reward for Nadir's successes against the Ottomans, and sometimes as prepayment to strengthen him against the Porte. Emo, the Venetian *bailo*, captured this fact as early as December 1730. He reported, "that these Acquisitions of Muscovy are no less a thorn in the heart of the Persians than of this Empire [the Ottomans], nothing is more certain."[1246] Four years later, Halisa Efendi, the *kahya* of the grand vizier, told the representatives of England and Holland that Russia had provoked the Iranians to fight against the Ottomans, as if the Porte was in fight against Russia, not Persia.[1247] Two main cornerstones in the gradual Russian support for Nadir were the Treaty of Rasht (February 1st, 1732) and the Treaty of Ganja (March 21st, 1735). Here I will follow the steps of

[1246] Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734*, 135. The dispatch of Emo was dated December 17th, 1730.
[1247] Tevfik Teyyuboğlu Mustafazade, "XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Kafkaslarda Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri," Osmanlı, Vol. 1, Ed. Güler Eren, 1999," in *Osmanlı*, ed. Güler Eren, Kemal Çiçek, and Cem Oğuz, vol. 1 (Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 567. Teyyuboglu gives the date of the conversation as July 7th, 1734, based on Russian archives.

the multidimensional Russian aid to Nadir in expelling the Ottomans from the Caucasus from 1730 until the end of 1735.

B.3.1. Before the Treaty of Rasht (pre-1732)

The 1730s started with new conflicts between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. During the negotiations between Riza Quli Khan Shamlu and the Porte in the summer of 1730, Nepluyev contacted the Persian envoy. The Russian resident convinced Riza Quli Khan not to yield to Ottoman pressure, arguing that Tahmasb II was in a better position than before. Nepluyev also told Riza Quli Khan that the Russian tsarina supported Persia against all its enemies, but especially against the Ottomans.[1248]

The Porte also manifested its discontent with Russia after the ascension of Mahmud I to the throne. The government sent Yirmisekizzâde Mehmed Said Efendi, the son of Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi and later a grand vizier, to the Russian court to notify the Russians of the change in the Ottoman throne. However, his rank was lower than those of the Ottoman envoys sent to the courts of France and Austria. Nepluyev protested this appointment and insisted on a promotion to the rank of Said Efendi.[1249]

As I examined in the previous chapter, in the late 1720s Russia had closely watched the activities of Tahmasb and Nadir through its representatives, like Avramov. The Russians even militarily helped the Safavids against the Afghans in their fights to retake Isfahan.[1250] The 1730s only escalated the diplomatic contacts between Russia and the Safavids. Anna Ivanovna approved a new Iranian policy on June 3rd, 1731, four months after her enthronement. This new policy preserved the main strategy decided in 1725 and prescribed certain ways of achieving this strategic goal under the new conditions of the reestablishment of the Safavid state. First,

[1248] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1228–29.
[1249] Soloviev, 19:1229.
[1250] Clairac, *Histoire de Perse, depuis le commencement de ce siècle*, 1750, 3:100–102. Levashov also underlined the Russian ammunition support for the Safavids against the Afghans in his talk with the representative of Nadir in 1730. See Mustafazade, "Safevî Hanedanı'nın Son Yılları," 1645.

Russia was to work to prevent an agreement between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Second, Russia was to conclude a treaty of friendship with Tahmasb II as soon as possible. The agreed-upon policy also envisaged territorial concessions to Tahmasb II, in case the shah stipulated it. However, Russian territorial concessions depended on two conditions. First, Tahmasb II had to firmly establish his authority in Persia. Second, he was to avoid friendships with the Ottomans. The Russian government feared the possibility of an Ottoman takeover of territories they had evacuated.[1251]

In August 1730, the government commissioned Baron Peter Shafirov as ambassador to Tahmasb II to conclude a treaty. General Levashov became the other authorized negotiator.[1252] The Russian government also elevated Levashov's rank by combining the dual generalship in the Russian lands in Persia and making him the major general. Moscow called Rumyantsev, the other general, back to Russia,[1253] allowing Russia to pursue its Iranian policy in a more direct and effective way. Even before the formal approval of the new Iranian policy by the tsarina, the Collegium of Foreign Affairs requested that General Levashov let Tahmasb II's envoy know that Russia consented to cede its territories south of the Kura River, meaning the province of Gilan.[1254] After learning of Nadir's march on Ottoman lands in Persia, the same Collegium authorized Levashov to return Gilan to the Safavids without waiting for the conclusion of Russian-Safavid treaty.[1255]

The order given to Shafirov underlined that Shafirov should let the shah know that when things normalized in the region, Russia was going to return the other provinces on the Caspian cost, referring to Baku and Darband, as well. Moreover, Shafirov was to inform Tahmasb II that the Porte had offered an alliance to Russia to conquer Persia. The Russian ambassador

[1251] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1223–24.
[1252] Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 56; Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1224.
[1253] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1224.
[1254] Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 56. The date of the order was May 1730.
[1255] Mustafazadə, 56.

should highlight that the Russian tsarina was against such a plan. However, if the shah did not agree to sign a treaty of friendship and alliance with her, then Russia would accept the Ottoman offer. Together, they would work to install the impostor who was in Constantinople on the Persian throne.[1256]

Russian direct and indirect help to the Safavids in ousting the Ottomans from Persia started at the latest by the end of 1730. The Ottomans left Hamadan, Kirmanshah, and Tabriz in the summer of 1730. However, Bosnevî Rüstem Pasha, the governor of Ardabil, whom Surhay Han, the khan of Shirvan, supported with his own troops, did not yield to the Safavids. The Russian government ordered General Levashov to help the Safavids expell the Ottomans from Ardabil. Levashov sent Russian officers and artillerymen in Persian clothes to Nadir's army. At the same time, he offered shelter to Rüstem Pasha in Astara, a nearby Russian city on the Caspian cost.[1257] He tried thereby to facilitate the expulsion of the Ottomans from Ardabil in every possible way. In the end, the Ottomans left Ardabil on January 5th, 1731.[1258]

Ottoman territorial losses in Persia facilitated the Russo-Safavid agreement, as the Russians could now relinquish Gilan securely given the Ottoman absence from the nearby geography. In October 1730, Anna Ivanovna penned a letter to Tahmasb II. She emphasized that "as Gilan was now free from danger from the Turks, she could withdraw her troops, which, she said, had been sent there and to the other provinces to protect them from the Turks and Afghans."[1259]

[1256] Mustafazadə, 56–57.

[1257] Mustafazadə, 55. Indeed, after evacuating Ardabil, Rüstem Pasha proceeded to Shamaki under the Russian guarantee of safe conduct. See also Lockhart, *Nadir Shah,* 50.

[1258] Mustafazade, "Safevî Hanedanı'nın Son Yılları," 1643–44.

[1259] Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 348. Lockhart mentions the same letter from Anna in his book *Nadir Shah*, published in 1939. There, he writes that "In October, 1730, the Empress Anna Ivanovna, alarmed at the heavy mortality from fever and plague of the Russian troops in Gilan, sent a letter to Tahmasp in which she laid down the principles on which Russia would evacuate that province." See Lockhart, *Nadir Shah,* 58. It seems that he preferred to highlight the rational foreign policy reasons in his new book, rather than the earlier psychological explanations.

At that time, the Porte was aware that the Russian possessions in Persia were a real "thorn" in the Ottomans' side. In a meeting, Nepluyev asked the chief admiral (*kaptan-ı derya*) why the Porte did not want to act together with Russia in the Persian affair. The pasha replied that the Ottomans were going to take their revenge on the Safavids, who had attacked the Ottomans recently, and eliminate them. He added that the Porte demanded only one thing from the Russians: to not help the Persians and to not cede the Russian territories, which the Ottomans were not going to enter or intervene.[1260]

Despite the Russian territorial concessions, Russian officials were not able to conclude a peace agreement with the Safavids in 1730 and 1731. This failure resulted from two principal factors: first, the sharing of Persian rule between Tahmasb II and Nadir, and second, the victory of the Ottoman armies over the Safavid forces led by Tahmasb II and the Ottoman reconquest of the provinces in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam.

Between July 30th and December 4th, 1731, the provincial Ottoman armies under the command of Ahmed Pasha and Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha recaptured Kirmansah, Hamadan, and Tabriz.[1261] Levashov and Shafirov wrote to Moscow at the end of September 1731 that the Ottomans were winning against the Safavids and Tahmasb II was about to conclude an agreement under any terms the Porte stipulated. Mirza İbrahim, the representative of Shah Tahmasb II, also indicated that the Safavids would not sign a treaty with the Russians unless the latter evacuated Gilan. Levashov and Shafirov asked for a governmental decree to act upon in this tough situation. They also informed the government that they had secretly sent an envoy to Nadir. This envoy encouraged Nadir to fight against the Ottomans and promised him Russian

[1260] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1230.
[1261] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 219–21.

support. He also reassured Nadir about Anna Ivanovna's backing of Persia and especially of Nadir himself.[1262]

Andrey Osterman, the vice-chancellor, reasoned that to cede Gilan would further strengthen the Ottomans, who would again gain the upper hand in Persia. The Russian government ordered Levashov and Shafirov to keep Gilan until such a time time as the Safavids gained sufficient power to expel the Ottomans.[1263] It also warned the Russian representatives to prevent the ratification of an agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Persia.[1264]

As I mentioned in the above historical account, Ahmed Pasha, whom the Porte had authorized to negotiate the treaty, signed an agreement with Tahmasb II on January 8th, 1732. In it, the Ottomans returned all the provinces in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i Ajam to the Safavids,[1265] recreating the conditions of post-summer 1730, which Anna Ivanovna herself considered sufficient to relinquish Gilan to the Safavids. Under these circumstances, Levashov and Shafirov agreed to conclude the long-waited peace with the Safavids on February 1st, 1732.[1266] As agreed upon in the treaty, the Russians soon evacuated Gilan. For Nadir, this was the first major confirmation of the Russian commitment to the policy of helping the Persians oust the Ottomans from Iran.

B.3.2. After the Treaty of Rasht (post-1732)

In the post-August 1732 period, Nadir was the de jure ruler of Iran, facilitating the diplomatic interaction between Russia and Persia as compared to the recent past. This period also witnessed more direct Russian help for Nadir against the Ottomans. In early 1733, the Porte sent orders to

[1262] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1227.
[1263] Soloviev, 19:1225–27; Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 57.
[1264] Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 19:1227.
[1265] The Ottoman cession of the recaptured provinces is of importance in terms of the changes in the Porte's priorities in Persia. Moreover, it created a disagreement between Constantinople and Baghdad. Thus, the agreement was also significant in terms of center-periphery relations in foreign policy making. However, here I do not discuss these aspects of the peace.
[1266] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 58.

Kaplan Giray, the khan of Crimea, to send 10,000 troops to the Caucasus to defend the Ottoman provinces there against Nadir. Nepluyev opposed this plan, arguing that there was no way other than through Russian territory for the Crimean Tatars to reach Shirvan. The Ottoman grand vizier and *reisülküttab* insisted on the Russian acceptance of the passage of the Crimeans, due to the urgency of the Persian threat toward the Ottomans. They also argued that the route taken by the Tatars would not violate the Russian territories, since Kabarda did not belong to the Russians, but to the khan of Crimea.[1267] On May 21st, 1733, the Ottoman government showed Ahmed III an earlier letter from Peter I, in which the former assured the Ottoman sultan of his refusal of patronage to the Kabardian princes.[1268] The Russian government, in return, ordered the Russian commanders on the Tatar route to block their march. In a decree in July 1733, Anna Ivanovna declared that a fight the Crimean Tatars was inevitable, and it was to the Russian advantage to urge the Persians against the Ottomans. In March 1733, Kaplan Giray sent 10,000 soldiers to Shirvan; the army entered Shirvan at the end of July 1733. However, there were serious skirmishes between the Crimean Tatars and the Russian forces in June and July, during the passage of the Tatars.[1269]

Apparently, the Russians fought against the Ottoman soldiers to protect Nadir from confronting a considerable Ottoman military contingent, one of the most significant instances of Russian support for the Persians against the Porte. These skirmishes were also the first open confrontations between the Ottomans and the Russians since the early 1710s. It is true that

[1267] Sergei M. Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34: Empress Anna, Favorites, Policies, Campaigns*, ed. Walter J. Gleason (Academic International Press, 1984), 165–66; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 63–64; Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 60–61.

[1268] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 166. I checked the letter in the Ottoman archives, and it verifies Soloviev's account, which is based on Russian archival sources. Peter I assured Ahmed III that contrary to the claims of the khan of the Crimea, the tsar had not provided protection to the Kabardian princes in their hostility against the Crimean khan. "Bizim tâbilerimize hiç emir olunmamışdır ki, Kabartay beylerinin birisine sahib çıkıp, ve Kırım Hanı ile adâvete mübâşeret ve yâhud kalalarına ve yâhud onlara muâvenet edeler." See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-30, pp. 56-57. For further information, see Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1699-1739)*, vol. 7 (C. A. Hartleben, 1831), 416–19.

[1269] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 63–64; Mustafazadə, *Osmanlı-Azərbaycan Münasibətləri*, 60–61.

Surhay Han had attacked the Russians in the late 1720s. However, the Porte did not accept responsibility for his incursions. In 1733, the fights occurred between Ottoman and Russian troops upon direct orders from their respective capitals, showcasing the gradual turning of recent tensions into actual fights.

In the meantime, Nadir's long siege of Baghdad ended with failure in 1733. He returned to Isfahan, where he first received the Ottoman embassy in the end of April 1734. The envoy informed Nadir that the Porte did not approve of Ahmed Pasha's protocol of ceding the Caucasus to the Safavids.[1270] Soon after the Ottoman embassy, Nadir granted an audience to Prince Sergei Dimitrievich Golitzin, the Russian ambassador, on May 20th, 1734. Unlike the Ottoman envoys, who immediately departed from Isfahan, Golitzin stayed with Nadir for a year. Golitzin assured Nadir of the Russian help against the Ottomans and urged him not to make a truce with the Porte.[1271] Nadir set forth for the Caucasus in June 1734, accompanied by Golitzin. On the way, Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha demanded that Nadir postpone his territorial demands from the Ottomans for two years. Nadir did not heed the Ottoman offer and proceeded to Shamakhi.[1272]

Nadir had captured Shamakhi and Gazi Kumukh as of late 1734, though Surhay Han escaped. After taking Shamakhi, Nadir again pressured the Russians to leave Baku and Darband. During negotiations between Nadir and the Russian representatives, Nadir besieged Ganja from November 1734 to March 1735. Seeing the Persian military weakness in the face of the Ottomans, Golitzin asked for military support from General Levashov, who was at Baku, in November 1734. Levashov sent an engineer officer, four bombardiers and some heavy

[1270] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 227; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 261–62.
[1271] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 81–82; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 267.
[1272] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 83.

artillery to the Persian army.[1273] However, they proved insufficient in the face of the Ottoman defense.

Upon this failure, Golitzin lent another helping hand to Nadir. The Russian ambassador informed Nadir of his new instructions from St. Petersburg on December 27th, 1734. The Russian court replied that to relinquish Baku and Darband before the Persian expulsion of the Ottomans went against the Treaty of Rasht. However, it added, Russia would do so, if Nadir signed a treaty declaring the enemies of Russia the enemies of Persia. Clearly, Russia did not want to lose its territorial influence without making sure that its lands would not fall to the Ottomans and that the Ottomans would be expelled from Persia.[1274] However, it is critical that Russia took a step back from the Treaty of Rasht to strengthen Nadir against the Porte at this critical juncture of Nadir's fights in the Caucasus, glad tiding for Nadir. After hearing Golitzin's offer, Nadir turned toward Ganja, that he had been unable to capture, and shouted "Woe unto you! All of you and your sultan as well will, God permitting, perish at the hands of Persian steel."[1275]

Even after this major Russian incentive, Nadir was unsuccessful against the Ottomans in Ganja, similar to his failure in Baghdad. VOC agents remarked that Nadir's reputation was in danger due to his failure in Ganja.[1276] The Persians suffered a severe loss at the hands of the powerful Ottoman defense. Then, without further loss, Nadir signed the Treaty of Ganja with the Russian ambassador on March 21st, 1735 and lifted the siege four days later.[1277] Nadir accepted the main Russian demand: not to abandon the war against the Ottomans until expelling

[1273] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 188; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 85.
[1274] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 84.
[1275] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 188.
[1276] Willem Floor, *The Rise and Fall of Nader Shah: Dutch East India Company Reports, 1730-1747* (Mage Publishers, 2009), 41.
[1277] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 85–86; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 267.

them from Persia completely.[1278] The parties also agreed that neither Persia nor Russia was to conclude peace with the Ottoman Empire without the consent of the other.[1279] The Russians in return evacuated Baku and Darband within two months, as stipulated in the agreement.[1280] Thus ended the Russian adventure in Persia, thirteen years after Peter I's Caucasus campaign.

B.3.3. After the Treaty of Ganja (post-March 1735)

Having received another lifeline from Russia, Nadir set out for Kars, whence all kinds of Ottoman military support arrived in Ganja and other Ottoman cities in the Caucasus. Nadir defeated the Ottoman army headed by Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha at Arpaçayı River near Erevan on June 19th, 1735.[1281] This victory was an important turning point in the faith of the Ottoman possessions in the Caucasus. However, it was not enough to bring down the Porte completely. Both the Porte and the Ottoman cities in the Caucasus continued to resist Nadir's attacks.[1282] On that occasion, as contemporary and modern historians highlight, it was the increasing belligerence of the Russia attitude toward the Porte from the summer of 1735 on that eventually broke the Ottoman firmness against Nadir.[1283] It would be a safer argument to suggest that the Porte gradually inclined towards peace after Arpaçayı, due both to the defeat itself and to Russia's threatening attitude.

[1278] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 285–87; Mariya V. Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774: Russian-Ottoman Diplomatic Encounters" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016), 137. The Porte received a Latin version of the Treaty of Ganja from Pylyp Orlik (d. 1742), *hetman* of Ukraine. See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 285.

[1279] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 86.

[1280] Lockhart, 86.

[1281] Lockhart, 87–88.

[1282] After Arpaçayı, only Ganja surrendered to Nadir on July 9th. It took another month for the surrender of Tbilisi, which happened on August 12th. And Hüseyin Pasha, the governor of Erevan, only returned the city to Nadir on October 3rd, after Ahmed Pasha, the commander-in-chief, ordered him to do so, upon receiving instructions from the Porte. After the surrender of Erevan, Nadir started another campaign against the khans in Dagestan, who had sided with the Ottomans and were strengthened with the arrival of Kaplan Giray. Local Dagestani khans also submitted to Nadir after the Porte's renunciation of the Caucasus. Around 50,000 Tatar troops who arrived in Dagestan in October 1735 did not fight against Nadir, after the peace decision of the Porte. See Lockhart, 89–92.

[1283] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:53; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 90; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi 4. Cilt 1. Bölüm*, 231, 252.

Before the Arpaçayı incident, the Porte's goal had been to protect its territories in the Caucasus.[1284] In pursuit of that goal, the Ottoman government had ordered the Crimean Tatars to march to the Caucasus in May 1735. It had also ordered the khans in Dagestan to meet with the Tatars and fight under the command of Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha against Nadir.[1285] The Ottoman decision created a diplomatic crisis with several European states. Only the French representative backed the Ottoman decision, which could have caused war with Russia.[1286] The Russian representatives protested the decision in a more serious way than they had two years previous. The British, Austrian, and other European representatives put pressure on the Porte to moderate the Ottoman-Russian relations.[1287] Nevertheless, these reactions did not prevent the Ottoman government from ordering Kaplan Giray to move on Dagestan.[1288]

The news of the defeat and death of Abdullah Pasha arrived in Constantinople in the first days of July 1735.[1289] Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha demanded Mahmud I appoint him the new *serasker* in Kars. The sultan, or actually Beşir Ağa, the chief black eunuch, did not accept Hekimoğlu's request.[1290] Still, the government sent orders to Kars and ensured the pashas and soldiers that a "military campaign with great military supply," without considering its cost, was certainly going to overwhelm the enemy "by all means."[1291] However, the defeat

[1284] See for example, the last imperial order to Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha, BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1453, Evahir-i Muharrem 1148 (June 13th-22nd, 1735).
[1285] Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 268–69. Thus, the Porte resorted again to the support of Tatar military forces, as had been the case in 1733.
[1286] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1886, 5:24; Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1699-1739)*, 7:448–49. France's attitude was the opposite of its pro-peace policy in the first half of the 1720s.
[1287] Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1699-1739)*, 7:450–52; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 90.
[1288] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 90.
[1289] Lockhart, 89.
[1290] Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1699-1739)*, 7:347; Mehmet Yılmaz Akbulut, "XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Siyasi ve Sosyal Örgüsünde Bir Devlet Adamı Biyografisi: Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa (1689-1758)" (PhD diss., İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, 2020), 310–12.
[1291] "Bundan böyle bi-inâyetillâhi teâlâ mâl ve hazîne sarfına kat'â bakılmayıp, düşmanın ne tarîk ile ve ne gûne olur ise olsun kahr u tedmîri ve avn-i Rabbâni ile memâlik-i mahrûsemden tard ve ihrâcı aksâ-i murâd-ı humâyûnum olduğuna binaen, bu bâbda fevka'l murâd külliyetli tedârikât ile hareket ve azimet mukarrer ve muhakkak olup…" See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1489, Evasıt-ı Safer 1148 (July 3rd-12th, 1735). For similar orders, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1490-1509, Evasıt-ı Safer 1148 (July 3rd-12th, 1735).

at Arpaçayı caused the deposition of Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, whom Gürcü İsmail Pasha replaced on July 14th, 1735.[1292] On the same day, the new government, which practically meant Beşir Ağa in the absence of the new grand vizier, appointed Ahmed Pasha, the current governor of Rakka and previous governor of Baghdad, commander-in-chief in Kars. Ahmed Pasha was ordered to move to Kars immediately. The Porte also repeated its orders to the Crimean khan to march toward Dagestan.[1293] Around 50,000 Crimean troops headed by Kaplan Giray started their march in July 1735 and arrived in Dagestan in October.[1294]

It is not easy to trace the transformation of the Porte's decision regarding the Caucasus. The deposition of Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha from the grand-vizierate and appointment of Ahmed Pasha as *serasker* instead of Ali Pasha suggests that the Porte was open to peace with Nadir in mid-July 1735, even if it had not decided to leave the Caucasus completely as yet. Ahmed Pasha was the person who had made a deal with Nadir the previous year to return all the Ottoman lands in Persia. Thus, his appointment tells us that the Porte was inclined toward peace compared to the previous year. However, the appointment of Ahmed Pasha as *serasker* did not necessarily mean that the Porte had already agreed to leave the Caucasus by mid-July. Available historical sources suggested that the Porte did not opt out of the war until August 1735.[1295] As another indicator of the Porte's inclination toward peace, the new government did not start a "military campaign with great military supply." Likewise, the news of the fall of Ganja, which

[1292] Gürcü İsmail Pasha was the governor of Baghdad and called to the capital after his appointment as grand vizier. He arrived in Constantinople on September 29th, 1735. See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 259–60. This meant that highly critical decisions between July 14th and September 29th were given by others at Constantinople, mainly Beşir Ağa, the chief eneuch.

[1293] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 254.; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1519, Evahir-i Safer 1148 (July 13th-21st, 1735).

[1294] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 90; Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 287–91.

[1295] I discuss the peace process below in a relatively detailed way. The imperial order declaring Ahmed Pasha's appointment as commander-in-chief did not include any authorization for making peace. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1519, Evahir-i Safer 1148 (July 13th-21st, 1735). Muhammad Astarabadi, Nadir's official chronicler, noted that the Porte appointed Ahmed Pasha as *serasker* with authorization for both peace and war. A century later, Resul Havi reiterated the same claim. Even if their accounts could be true, it shows that the Porte had not yet ruled out the war option. See Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 161; Resul Hâvî Efendi, *Târih-i Devhatü'l-Vüzerâ ve Zeyl-i Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 30b.

would have arrived in Constantinople toward the end of July, did not cause a new military mobilization to recapture the city, the only city in the Caucasus that had been lost at that point. On the contrary, it precipitated the peace process, as I discuss below.

However, the move of the Crimean forces to Dagestan between July and October still showed a possible Ottoman willingness to fight. As I discuss below, in July 1735, Count Osterman threatened the Ottomans with a military operation against Tatars if they continued their march. Despite the threat, the Porte did not recall the Tatar forces to the Crimea. The Porte's action against the Russian pressure could suggest an Ottoman inclination to protect and recover the Caucasus from Nadir by military force. However, the available historical sources suggest otherwise. Mahmud I sent a letter to Kaplan Giray sometime between September 29th and October 8th, 1735 more than two months after the reception of Osterman's letter by the Porte. At that time Kaplan Giray was still on his march toward Dagestan. Mahmud I informed him of the Ottoman decision to make peace on the conditions proposed by Nadir. Thus, actually there was no remaining reason for Kaplan Giray to continue his march. However, the Ottoman sultan ordered him to participate in the peace process with Nadir. Mahmud I instructed Kaplan Giray to ensure the inclusion of the following two articles in the treaty: (1) the annihilation of the Russo-Persian Treaty of Ganja of March 1735 and (2) the complete severing of relations between the Dagestanis and the Russians. Thus, Kaplan Giray was in Dagestan not to fight against Nadir, but to enforce the aforementioned articles in the ensuing peace treaty.[1296]

The Porte's decision to let Kaplan Giray continue his march to Dagestan against the Russian threats would have made the Crimea vulnerable to Russian attacks. Probably, the Porte considered the coming of winter as a hindrance for possible Russian attacks on Azov and the

[1296] See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-253, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1148 (September 29th – October 8th, 1735), pp. 397-98. However, a month later, the Porte withdrew these two conditions and let Kaplan Giray and Ahmed Pasha know about the withdrawal. Mahmud I wrote that the reason for the Ottoman renunciation was the elimination of the possibility of further Russian connection with Dagestan. See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-255, Evahir-i Cemaziyelahir 1148 (November 8th-16th, 1735), pp. 400-01.

Crimea. Thus, it seems that the Porte calculated that the risk of a Russian offensive targeting the Crimea was lesser than the advantages of Kaplan Giray's presence in Dagestan during the peace negotiations with Nadir. Indeed, as I discuss below, the Russian campaign in the Crimea in October 1735 had failed due to the harsh winter, among other reasons.

The Porte's last order to Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha before Arpaçayı was to defeat Nadir and to save Ganja, the rescue of which was a necessary "obligation."[1297] How was it possible for the Porte to give up that strong obligation relatively quickly? The Russian factor enters the scene at this point. Ottoman-Russian relations in the early 1730s were the opposite of their status at the beginning of the preceding decade.[1298] While one apparent reason for the increase in tensions was the conflicts in Persia, another was the rivalry between St. Petersburg and Constantinople over the Polish succession question. After the death of Augustus II in February 1733, succession wars started, with the interference of the international powers. Russia, Austria, and Prussia supported the claim of Frederick Augustus, the son of Augustus II, to the crown. France, Spain, Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire were in favor of Stanisław Leszczyński. As a result of a two-year war, Augustus III (r. 1734-1763) became the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[1299] The Porte did not enter into the fights, due mainly to its preoccupation in Persia.[1300] However, the Tatar military forces, which could interfere in the

[1297] "Ancak o makule a'dânın gereği gibi kahr ve tenkîli ve sekiz aydan beri muhâsara üzere olan Gence kalasının tahlîsi farz ve vâcib olduğu ecilden…" BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1453: Evahir-i Muharrem 1148 (June 13th-22nd, 1735).

[1298] Subhi, the official Ottoman chronicler at the time, gives a summary of Russian violations of the Eternal Peace between 1730 and 1736, the year when the Russo-Ottoman war started. He also accused Anna of understanding state administration as only the expansion of borders. See Subhi, pp. 282-4. Regarding the cooperation between the Russians and the Persians in the early 1730s, Subhi writes that the Russians had always encouraged the Persians through envoys and letters. According to him, the Russians had told the Iranians to keep fighting against the Ottomans, while the Russians were fighting in areas close to the Ottoman border: "İran Şâhı ile 'ale't-tevâli mükâtebe vü mürâsele idüp pey-der-pey âdemler irsâl ve 'bizler hudûd-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'ye karîb mahallerde tecemmu' u taharrub eylemekdeyüz, sen dahi gayreti elden koma' deyü dâimâ tahrîk eylediğinden başka,..." See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 283.

[1299] For a detailed account of the conflict, see John L. Sutton, *The King's Honor & the King's Cardinal: The War of the Polish Succession* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980).

[1300] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 284.

conflict anytime, posed a major threat to the Russians.[1301] Against this threat, Anna Ivanovna ordered the military administration in Ukraine to make military preparations as early as 1732, "in case the Ottomans decided to support France's policy toward Poland-Lithuania."[1302]

The entrance of Russian troops into Poland in 1733 was a violation of the Treaty of Adrianople (1713) and the Eternal Peace Treaty (1721). These treaties had allowed a Russian entrance into Poland only in the case that Austria invaded Poland. In January 1734, Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha wrote a letter to Golovkin, his Russian counterpart, protesting that Russian military intervention in Polaid was a violation of the existing treaties.[1303] Fights between Crimean and Russian forces on the Caucasus in the same year showed the increasing tensions between Constantinople and St. Petersburg. After the defeat of Topal Osman Pasha in 1733, Nepluyev suggested that his government attack the Ottomans, due to the vulnerability of the Porte.[1304] In the beginning of 1734, Count Levenwold, an envoy of Tsarina Anna, went to Vienna. He conveyed the message that the Porte was against Austro-Russian interests in Poland, and the Tatars kept attacking the Russian borders. Levenwold demanded Austrian help for a possible Russian fight against the Ottomans. Austria refused the Russian offer of a joint military operation against the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the Polish crisis.[1305]

In June 1734, Danzig surrendered to Russian forces in Poland, leading to the end of the fights within Poland. After this Russian victory, Nepluyev wrote to St. Petersburg that if Russia finished the Polish affair in the current year, it should start a war against the Ottomans the following year, during the Ottoman-Persian war. He reasoned that Russian fighting against the Ottomans would encourage the Persians, to whom Russia could provide further assistance

[1301] Sutton, *The King's Honor & the King's Cardinal*, 58–59.
[1302] Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 205.
[1303] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1886, 5:17; Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches (1699-1739)*, 7:448.
[1304] Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774," 135.
[1305] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 146–47.

during the war. He also shared his guesses that if the Porte were to solve the Iranian conflict while there was still war in Europe, then it would attack the Russians with all its forces. Thus, he advised St. Petersburg to declare war on the Ottoman Empire before the latter was finished with its war in Persia.[1306] In the fall of 1734, Nepluyev again urged St. Petersburg to start a war against the Ottomans "at this opportune moment, which might not recur perhaps in hundreds of years."[1307]

In 1735, Russia reached most of its aims both in Persia and Poland, and thus became ready to fight the Ottomans. Count Osterman, who had been against an Ottoman war until that time, started to incline toward a belligerent policy, as well.[1308] By August 1735, the Russian capital and its representatives at Constantinople were on the same page in terms of waging war on the Ottomans. The Porte was also aware of the Russian war preparations and had been making its own preparations since at least the beginning of 1735.[1309]

The vulnerability of the Crimea due to the transfer of Tatar troops to Dagestan created a more favorable situation for Russia. Moreover, Nadir's victory at Arpaçayı in June 1735 encouraged the Russians to further develop an offensive policy against the Ottomans. Upon hearing of Nadir's victory on July 2nd, 1735, Nepluyev wrote to his government that the situation was favorable for the Russians to weaken the Ottomans by waging war on the Porte.[1310] Nepluyev envisaged that the Russian attack while the Porte's position was so weak

[1306] Soloviev, 179–80.
[1307] Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774," 136. What made the fall of 1734 so favorable in the eyes of Nepluyev was probably two simultaneous developments in Poland and Persia: France's manifest weakness in supporting Stanisław Leszczyński and Nadir's occupation of Shirvan. Nepluyev raised these points in his report to the Russian capital in November 1734 as reasons why the Porte would not have participated in the war in Europe. See Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 181.
[1308] Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774," 137.
[1309] Amelicheva, 140; Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 181. For example, the Porte sent 2,000 troops to the province of Ozi against the Russian and Cossack "bandits." See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 140-1407, Evail-i Muharrem 1148 (May 24th – June 2nd, 1735); BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 141-3, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1148 (September 19th-28th, 1735).
[1310] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34*, 183.

would force the Ottoman government to accept a reversal of the Treaty of Prut,[1311] which would mean the reconquest of Azov by the Russians. Soloviev highlights that the Russian court was eager to undo the Prut embarrassment and to compensate for their territorial losses in Persia with Azov.[1312]

Thus, the outbreak of war was only a matter of time from the summer of 1735 on. Count Osterman wrote a harsh and long letter to Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha on July 12th, 1735.[1313] The letter should have arrived in Constantinople around the end of July or the beginning of August.[1314] It is important that the news of Ganja's fall into Nadir's hands reached Constantinople around the same time. Osterman showed no tolerance for the march of Crimean Tatars. He claimed that Russian suzerainty over Dagestan was long-established and unquestionable. He stated that the march of the Tatars through Dagestan would discomfort both the Ottomans and the Russians. Osterman also threatened the Ottomans that should the Porte not call the khan of Crimea back, the Russian tsarina would defend her lands and people. Nepluyev left Constantinople in September 1735, after having served for fourteen years.[1315] His leaving marked another cleavage in the relations between the Ottomans and the Russians. In August 1735, a Russian army was gathered under the command of General Graf von Münnich. In the same month, Münnich ordered Lieutenant General Leontyev to attack the isthmus of Perekop, which links the Crimea to the mainland of Europe. After a month and a half of preparation, 28,000 Russian troops under Leontyev started their march from Ukraine toward the Tatar lands on October 1st, 1735. The campaign ended with failure on October 16th. The Russians had killed around 4,000

[1311] Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774," 139–40.
[1312] Soloviev, *History of Russia, Volume 34,* 189.
[1313] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-251, July 12th, 1735, pp. 393-96.
[1314] I could not find a grand-vizierial reply letter in the same registrar. However, Mahmud I's letter to Anna Ivanovna, dated August 21st-30th, 1735, is registered within the registrar. Thus, it is at least certain that Osterman's letter arrived in Constantinople in August at the latest. For Mahmud's letter to Anna, see BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-252, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1148 (August 21st-30th, 1735), pp. 396-97.
[1315] Amelicheva, "The Russian Residency in Constantinople, 1700-1774," 140.

Nogai-Tatars and lost over 9,000 soldiers both in the fights and due to severe weather conditions.[1316]

B.3.4. The Porte's Acceptance of Peace with Nadir

Russia's military activities at least from August on and the imminence of war helped break Ottoman resistance to Nadir. The Porte decided to start peace negotiations with Nadir on the basis of his territorial demands in August 1735. It is important to determine the time when the Porte first agreed to surrender the Caucasus to Nadir. Unfortunately, Ottoman primary sources do not directly help answer this question. The epistle of Mehmed Râgıb Efendi, who worked as a *defterdâr* and *muhasebeci* and was at that time under *serasker* Ahmed Pasha, gives some information, however.[1317] Genç Ali Pasha, the pasha of Ganja, had met with Nadir on the Gökçe Plateau between Ganja and Erevan after surrendering the city on July 9th, 1735. Nadir told the pasha of his desire for peace, should the Ottomans return to their pre-1722 borders.[1318] Genç

[1316] Christopher Hermann von Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs of Russia from the Year 1727 to 1744* (London, 1856), 91–93; Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 90; Brian Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe: Russia's Turkish Wars in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), 190–91; Stoyanov, "Russia Marches South," 205–7.

[1317] Norman Itzkowitz, "Mehmed Raghib Pasha: The Making of an Ottoman Grand Vezir" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1959).

[1318] In his account, Râgıb Efendi did not mention Nadir's territorial demand or any other conditions for peace. He just wrote that Nadir invited Genç Ali Pasha to the Gökçe Plateau and showed a complete inclination toward peace and friendship. "taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye ile akd-i müsâleme vü musâfâta ızhâr-ı kemâl-i rağbet eylediğini…" See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik: Osmanlı-İran Diplomatik Münasebetlerinde Mezhep Tartışmaları*, ed. Ahmet Zeki İzgöer (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), 26. Subhi, the official Ottoman chronicler, had a similar attitude regarding the peace process. First, like Râgıb, he did not provide a detailed account of what happened and when. He wrote that the consultative assembly had discussed Nadir's letter, which congratulated the new grand vizier on his appointment and asked for a peace offer during the month of Cemaziyelevvel 1148 (September 19th – October 18th, 1735). He gave no account of either the discussion of Genç Ali Pasha's letters, or the authorization of Ahmed Pasha to start the peace process with Nadir. Second, Subhi portrayed Nadir as the party that asked for peace. He wrote that Nadir had been asking for peace since the beginning and his letter demanded the exalted state's permission and request for peace. "Tahmasb-Kulu Hân'ın sadrıa'zam hazretlerine tebrîk-i sadâret ve kadîmden niyâz-mend olduğu emr-i sulha taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'den müsa'ade vü recâsını müş'ir mektubu…" See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 261. Both Râgıb's and Subhi's accounts are good examples of official Ottoman historiography. Apparently, Nadir's "asking for peace" was nothing but an Ottoman acceptance of defeat and agreement to cede the Caucasus to the Persians. However, official Ottoman authors did not mention what Nadir's "request" was. They simply tried to portray Nadir as a supplicant. It is important to remember here that on occasions of both war and peace, the Porte usually portrayed itself diplomatically as the party that did not initiate. Regarding war, the Ottomans blamed as the initiator the side that broke the peace, and, thus, was the offender. Regarding peace, they "demonstrated" the power of the Ottoman state, which forced the other side to beg for peace from the "exalted" state. The portrayal of the start of peace negotiations in the fall of 1735 by Ottoman writers is an example of this general diplomatic attitude.

Ali Pasha sent Nadir's message to Constantinople.[1319] Two imperial orders in the last ten days of August 1735 verify the arrival of Genç Ali Pasha's men to Constantinople and their departure from the Ottoman capital back to Genç Ali Pasha.[1320] Besides Genç Ali Pasha, the Porte also informed Ahmed Pasha about Nadir's peace message.[1321]

Râgıb did not write the decision that the Porte sent to Ahmed Pasha regarding Nadir's demand. However, from the subsequent actions of both Ahmed Pasha and the Porte, it is clear that the Ottoman government had authorized Ahmed Pasha to make peace with Nadir, agreeing to leave the Caucasus to the latter. Indeed, a letter from Mahmud I to Kaplan Giray in the beginning of October 1735 clearly stated that Nadir had accepted peace on the conditions of established borders and treaties.[1322] The same letter revealed that the Ottoman *padishah* had approved peace on the same conditions. Thus, in August 1735, after getting the news of the fall of Ganja and receiving Osterman's threats, the Porte decided to make peace with Nadir completely.

Upon receiving these new orders from the Porte, Ahmed Pasha sent a certain Hacı Hüseyin Ağa with a letter to Nadir. Hüseyin Ağa met with Nadir at Kars. Râgıb Efendi wrote that Nadir showed an inclination toward peace in his meeting with Hüseyin Ağa,[1323] which actually means that Ahmed Pasha, and thus the Porte, accepted Nadir's condition of returning the Caucasus to the Persians. Unlike official Ottoman sources, contemporary Persian and

[1319] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 26.
[1320] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 141-86 and 88, Evail-i Rebiulahir 1148 (August 21st-30th, 1735). The first one was to the local administrators on the way Genç Ali Pasha's men took from Constantinople to Kars. The government ordered the administrators to provide security and fast horses (*menzil bargiri*) to those men. The second one was addressed to Genç Ali Pasha. The Porte informed him that his papers had arrived in Constantinople. The government thanked him for his services and ordered him to stay at Erzurum and act according to the orders of Ahmed Pasha.
[1321] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 26.
[1322] "Bu esnada hala vezir-i azam ve sadr-ı efham taraflarına Tahmasb Kulu Han canibinden kemal-i hahiş ile uhud ve hudud-ı kadime üzere tecdid-i musalaha olunmak niyazını havi varid olan kağıtta…" See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.7-253, p. 397.
[1323] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 26.

Armenian sources narrate the Ottoman submission to Nadir's demands in a clearer way. According to these sources, Ahmed Pasha also sent some notables from Erzurum, who went to Nadir together with some other notables of Kars. The Ottomans agreed to return Erevan to Nadir under the condition of Nadir's granting of pardon. Nadir accepted the Ottoman requests and the Ottomans left Erevan on October 3rd, 1735.[1324] Nadir sent Hüseyin Ağa back to Ahmed Pasha, who was in Erzurum, with his treasurer Mirza Muhammad. Nadir requested that Ahmed Pasha send an authorized Ottoman negotiator to him.[1325] The Porte accepted Nadir's demand and send Genç Ali Pasha back to Nadir to conclude a peace agreement with the Iranians.[1326]

As soon as the Porte felt secure about the peace process in Iran, it ordered Kaplan Giray to come to Constantinople to discuss the Russian question.[1327] Tatar forces were also sent back to the Crimea to fight against the Russians. Thus, Leontyev's campaign, though unsuccessful, caused the Porte to send the Tatar forces from Dagestan back to the Crimea.[1328] On April 23rd, 1736, Russia declared war on the Ottomans.[1329] In sum, the Ottoman government did not dare to lose the Crimea at the expense of saving the Caucasus. Thus, the Russian strategy established by Catherine I in 1725 to oust the Ottomans from Persia by allying with the Persians reached its goal over the course of a decade. During that ten-year period, the Russians continuously increased their political and military aid to the Persians. Their last aid was to declare war on the Ottomans directly, distinct from their earlier indirect support of Nadir. It is true that Nadir's military prowess was significant in ousting the Ottomans. However, it is questionable whether

[1324] Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri,* 161; Abraham of Crete, *The Chronicle of Abraham of Crete*, ed. George A. Bournoution (Mazda Publishers, 1999), 45–46.
[1325] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 27.
[1326] For the full authorization of Ahmed Pasha to negotiate for peace, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 141-200, Evasıt-ı Cemaziyelevvel 1148 (September 29th – October 8th, 1735). For the authorization of Genç Ali Pasha to conduct the negotiations in the name of the Porte, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 141-201, Evahir-i Cemaziyelevvel (October 9th-18th, 1735).
[1327] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 291–92.; BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-256, Evasıt-ı Ramazan 1148 (January 25th – February 3rd, 1736), p. 401.
[1328] Mustafazade, "XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Kafkaslarda Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri," Osmanlı, Vol. 1, Ed. Güler Eren, 1999," 568; Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 291.
[1329] Mustafazade Tevfik Teyyuboglu, *Osmanlı*, vol. 1, 1999, p. 569.

he could have succeeded against the Ottomans without six years of generous Russian backing. From a broader perspective, it seems that even though Russia was not the most powerful actor in Persia in the 1720s and 1730s, it played a key role in determining the winner. In the first half of the 1720s, the Porte was able to conquer large Iranian territories in alliance with the Russians. After Russia changed sides in 1725, the Persians triumphed over the Ottomans in the 1730s. However, this role did not make the Russians the ultimate winner in Persia. Russia also lost its territories in Persia as a direct result of its post-1725 strategy.

> "…[E]şref's powerful propaganda had severely shaken the underpinnings of the Caliphate. The legacy of his short rule left an ill-omened future for the 'shadow of God on earth.' A more powerful leader than Eşref, relying on the same propaganda methods, would be in a powerful position to challenge the claims of the Ottoman Caliph to sole rights as head of all Muslims. Such a leader, one who was to present a continued challenge to the Porte for the next two decades, was already consolidating his influence in 1727."
>
> Robert Olson, *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations, 1718-1743*, 55

CHAPTER 8: NADIR'S JA'FARISM PROPOSAL, 1736-1747

This chapter is devoted to Nadir Shah's Ja'farism proposal. There is a consensus in modern scholarship that from 1736 onward the Porte had refused to either accept Ja'farism as a fifth Sunni school or to establish a Ja'fari prayer location (*rukn*) in the Ka'ba. As the reason for the rejection, scholars have mainly pointed to the established Sunni identity of the Porte. There is also another trend in scholarship depicting Nadir Shah's Ja'farism proposal as solely a pious attempt, void of political goals, to remove conflicts rooted among Muslims.[1330] This chapter challenges both of these views. Regarding the first view, I argue that what mattered for the Porte was not the legitimacy of Ja'farism according to Sunnism, but the religio-political nature of the offer through which Nadir Shah challenged the Ottoman dynasty. My discussion on

[1330] Some authors consider Nadir's Ja'farism project to have been an effort toward Islamic ecumenism. Cemil Hakyemez writes that "Sonuç olarak; Nadir Şah'ın, Caferiliği beşinci Sünni mezhep olarak kabul ettirip Şiilerle Sünnileri birleştirme girişiminin, aslında iyi niyetlerle düşünülmüş bir arayışın güzel bir örneği olduğunu söyleyebiliriz." "To conclude, we can say that Nadir Shah's attempt to unite the Shiites and the Sunnis by making Ja'farism accepted as the fifth Sunni school was indeed a good example of a search having good intentions." Translation belongs to me. See Cemil Hakyemez, *Osmanlı-İran İlişkileri ve Sünni-Şii İttifakı* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayinevi, 2014), 69. Similarly, Muhammad Ali Hekmat argues that Nadir's was a project for Muslim unity. It would have ended fights among Muslims, but Mahmud I, the Ottoman caliph, refused the project "stubbornly" and even launched a military campaign against the Persians. See Hekmat, "Essai Sur l'histoire Des Relations Politiques Irano Ottomanes de 1722 á 1747," 252–53.

Ja‘farism will also reveal “pan-Islamism” arguments as naive approaches, due to the very political agenda of the Ja‘farism proposal.

After a close investigation of the Ottoman responses, and Persian, Ottoman, and European sources of the time, I discovered that in the first reply in 1736, the Porte tacitly acknowledged Ja‘farism as a legitimate Sunni legal school. This is a very critical point neglected in modern scholarship. My discussion will show that unlike modern historians, contemporary historians captured that detail quite well. The Ottoman government only explicitly rejected the demand to establish a prayer location for Ja‘faris in the Ka‘ba in 1736. In response, in his letter of 1738 Nadir Shah asked for *explicit* recognition of the Ja‘fari legal school and also insisted on his proposal of a Ja‘fari rukn in the Ka‘ba. He refused to sign the peace treaty that Mahmud I sent. From that point on, the Porte rigidified its rejection, now naming Ja‘farism a clearly unacceptable legal school according to *sharia*.

Why did the Porte change its attitude toward the Ja‘farism proposal from implicit acceptance to explicit rejection within two years? There were two aspects of Nadir Shah’s Ja‘farism proposal, internal and external. The internal aspect was related to the strengthening of Nadir Shah’s newly-established rule in Persia. The great caliph’s acceptance of Ja‘farism as a Sunni school would have reinforced the legitimacy of the new shah within Iranian domains. The external aspect pertained to a sharing of the caliph’s exclusive privilege of “serving” The Two Holy Sanctuaries. As I discussed in Chapter One, Muslim rulers expressed their challenges to the Muslim ruler possessing Mecca and Medina through “pious” demands regarding the Ka‘ba or other holy sites in the Hejaz. Nadir’s *rukn* demand was not different from earlier precedents. The implicit recognition of Ja‘farism by the Porte would have sufficed for Nadir’s internal goals. However, by insisting on visible signs, Nadir showed that his external aims were as essential as his domestic ones. The Porte’s rejections crystalized the external challenge of the proposal further. In 1742, Nadir demanded certain territories from the Ottoman domains

that he had allegedly inherited from his ancestor Timur, if the great caliph were not to accept two of his demands. Eventually, the external aspect prevented Nadir and the Ottomans from making peace and ignited a major war in 1743.

In the war of 1743-45, the Porte decided to eliminate the underlying reason for the problem: the Sunni identity of the new Persian state. In pursuit of that goal, the Ottoman government reinitiated its strategy of the 1720s, which was to replace Sunni rule with the Shiite Safavids. The Porte sent Safi Mirza, an impostor Safavid prince, to Kars, in order to install him on the Persian throne in 1743. The same reflex shown by different Ottoman governments in the 1720s (replacing Mahmud and Ashraf with Tahmasb) and 1740s (replacing Nadir with Safi Mirza) demonstrates how vital it was for the early modern Ottomans to protect the Shiite "wall" in the east.

As in the 1720s, the question of the caliphate was at the center in the Perso-Ottoman conflict between 1736 and 1747. Even though the Porte implicitly accepted Nadir's Ja'farism proposal, it underlined the universal caliphate of the sultan even in the first responses. Mahmud I qualified himself as the *emiru'l Mu'minîn* (commander of the faithful), an exclusive title that no Ottoman *padishah* had conferred upon himself before, to the best of my knowledge. The Ottoman emphasis on the caliphate of the sultan in all its correspondence between 1736 and 1747 shows the way the Porte perceived the challenge of Nadir and his Ja'farism proposal. Nadir Shah himself attached utmost significance to the great caliph title of the Ottoman sultan throughout this period, even during the war between 1743 and 1745. By analyzing the discourse Nadir employed, I will also show that he challenged the caliphate of the sultan by playing the weak side more effectively than the Afghan rulers of the 1720s, who made the same challenge more boldly.

In this chapter, I will first explore Nadir Shah's inauguration of the Ja'farism proposal. Then, I will investigate the long negotiation process, from 1736 to 1742, between the Ottomans

and the Persians. Then, I will deal with how and why a seemingly scholarly conflict over a juristic proposal evolved into a major fight between the Ottomans and the Persians in 1743. After that, I will analyze the dynamics of peace-making during a time of war. At the end, I will offer a comparison between the Ottoman peace draft of 1736 and the Treaty of Kerden of 1746.

A. Establishment of Nadir's State and His Ja'farism Proposal, 1736-1747

Nadir's victory over the Ottomans in the Caucasus opened a new page in the history of Persia. The victory completely closed the era of the Safavid state, which even its fall in 1722 had been unable to do. Nadir gathered provincial governors, army commanders, members of the *ulema*, judges, and nobles on the Mughan plain in the winter of 1736. The mission of this national council (*kurultay*) was to choose a person to be enthroned as the ruler of Persia. As may be expected, the council chose Nadir to be crowned. Nadir accepted rulership on the following conditions: no one should support any member of the Safavid dynasty, and "the Sunni faith should be adopted in place of the Shi'a, whose obnoxious and heretical practices must cease."[1331] Having no other option, the members of the council accepted Nadir's conditions. Nadir ascended the Persian throne with a great ceremony on March 8th, 1736 and became Nadir Shah.[1332]

Genç Ali Pasha, the Ottoman representative in the peace negotiations, arrived in Mughan on February 1st.[1333] During the peace talks, which started on February 10th, Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana, the Persian representative, proposed five articles on behalf of Nadir:

> (1) The Persians, having given up their former beliefs and chosen the religion of the Sunnis, were to be recognised as a fifth sect, to be known as the Ja'fari.
>
> (2) Since each of the Imams of the four existing sects had a column (*rukn*) in the Ka'ba assigned to them, a fifth column was to be provided for the Imam Ja'far.

[1331] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 96–99. See also Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 38–39.
[1332] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 101–4.
[1333] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 10.

> (3) A Persian Amiru'l-Hajj (leader of the Pilgrimage), with a position equivalent to that of the Amirs of the Syrian and Egyptian pilgrims, should be appointed, and be allowed to conduct the Persian pilgrims to Mecca.
>
> (4) The prisoners on both sides were to be exchanged, and none of them was to be allowed to be bought or sold.
>
> (5) Each country was to maintain a representative at the court of the other.[1334]

Genç Ali Pasha replied to the Persian representative that the Porte had only authorized him to make peace on the basis of the pre-1722 borders. Upon this answer, Nadir decided to send Abd al-Baqi Khan as ambassador to Constantinople. Mirza Abu'l Qasım Kashani, the *sadr* (highest religious authority) of Persia, and Mulla Ali Akbar, the new Chief Mulla, also took part in the mission to discuss religious matters with the Ottoman *ulema*. The Ottoman and Persian ambassadors left Mughan for Constantinople on March 7th, 1736, a day before Nadir's coronation.[1335]

How did Nadir conceptualize Ja'farism, and why did he inaugurate such a seemingly radical change in Persia? This is a complex question that does not have an easy answer. Ernest Tucker highlights a significant aspect of Nadir's Ja'farism proposal, helping to decrease the complexity to an important extent. He demonstrates that,

> Nadir presented his plan differently to different audiences. When addressing a domestic audience, as recorded in this court chronicle, Nadir moderated his rhetoric just enough to convey to them that his true intention was to criticize certain anti-Sunni rituals, not Shiʿism as a whole, while in letters to the Ottomans, he depicted Iran as an essentially Sunni country that had been corrupted by the Safavids.[1336]

The selection of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Shiite imam, was a smart move to appeal to both domestic and external audiences. Shiites in Iran had already been following Imâm Ja'far's legal school. Thus, it would have been an easy transition for them.[1337] Sunnis also venerated

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[1334] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 101. See also Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 30.
[1335] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 102; Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 31.
[1336] Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 40.
[1337] Hamid Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 7, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 707; Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 40–41.

Imâm Ja'far as an inarguably authoritative religious figure.[1338] Nadir prohibited the most objectionable Shiite practices for the Sunnis, such as the public cursing of the first three caliphs (*sabb*) and the denial of their legitimate rule (*rafd*).[1339] For the Porte, to prohibit these practices could have been sufficient to show Nadir's firmness in his Sunnism project. In the previous peace treaties of 1590 and 1639, the Porte had made the Safavids agree to prohibit *sabb* in Persia.[1340] On the other hand, Nadir's "Sunnism" did not bring anything serious, except for the *sabb* prohibitions, for the Persians, who could keep their religious beliefs and practices.

Modern scholarship discusses several internal and external reasons for Nadir's Ja'farism proposal. Internally, it would have weakened the legitimacy of the Safavid dynasty, which could have reemerged against Nadir at any time. Moreover, there were many Sunni subjects in Persia and in Nadir's army. To find a middle way between Sunnis and Shiites would have helped to conciliate the differences in Persian society.[1341] Externally, if Ja'farism was accepted as a Sunni legal school, the Ottomans could not have easily justified their attacks against the Persians on the basis of the Iranian "heresy." Besides this protective function, Ja'farism would have worked as a facilitator for Nadir's imperial aims. An important reason for Nadir's surprising shift from Shiism to Sunnism seems to have been that he found the Afghan example an ideal one for challenging the Ottoman sultan, rather than trying to oppose Constantinople with a Shiite, and thus "ineligible," identity. As Nadir's ambitions extended beyond the boundaries of Iran, embracing an ecumenical religious view would have matched with his universal ideals perfectly.[1342]

[1338] See for example, Necmeddin Şeker, "Cafer Es-Sâdık'ın Hadis İlmindeki Yeri ve Sünnî Hadis Kaynaklarındaki Rivayetleri," *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 29 (June 2017): 105–28; Mustafa Öz, "Ca'fer Es-Sâdık," in *TDVİA*, 1993.

[1339] Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," 707; Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 39.

[1340] Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 39.

[1341] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 100; Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," 709–10.

[1342] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 100; Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," 708; Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 40.

Ottoman acceptance of Nadir's proposals would have provided a solid legitimacy for Nadir's new venture. Internally, Ottoman support would have helped the Sunni subjects of Persia to identify themselves with Nadir's regime. Ottoman recognition could also have weakened the domestic opposition of Shiite subjects. Externally, and more importantly, as Algar underlines, the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* at Ka'ba would have been the "outward sign" of the Ottoman acceptance of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school.[1343] In the discussion below, I argue that this "outward sign" was the most important element in Nadir's proposal with respect to his external aims.

B. Inauguration, 1736-38: Negotiations in Istanbul

Genç Ali Pasha and the Persian mission of Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana, Mirza Abu'l Qasım Kashani, and Mulla Ali Akbar arrived at Constantinople on August 23rd, 1736. The Ottoman delegation to discuss Nadir's proposals consisted of Genç Ali Pasha, İsmail Efendi, the secretary of state (*reisülküttab*), Tavukçubaşı Mustafa Efendi, the secretary of the imperial council (*Divan beylikçisi*), and Mehmed Râgıb Efendi, who was working as the *cizye muhasebecisi* at the time. There was also a second Ottoman delegation commissioned to negotiate the juristic questions in the proposal, composed of Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib Efendi, the *padishah*'s imam; Neyli Ahmed Efendi, the *kadıasker* of Anatolia; Mestçizade Abdullah Efendi, the former judge of Constantinople; İlmi Ahmed Efendi, another former judge of Constantinople; and Abdullah Efendi, *fetva emini* and the former judge of Egypt.[1344] The Ottoman and Persian delegations discussed Nadir's proposals over eight conferences that included thirteen sessions between August 30th and September 24th, 1736.

B.1. Nadir's Letters

Nadir Shah sent letters to Mahmud I, to the grand vizier Dimetokalı Mehmed Pasha, and to *Şeyhülislam* Dürri Mehmed Efendi, who was replaced by Feyzullahefendizade Mustafa Efendi

[1343] Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," 707.
[1344] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 48–49.

in April 1736.[1345] In his letters, he presented the declaration of Ja'farism as a complete shift from Shiism to Sunnism in Persia. He singled out Shah Ismail as the infamous ruler who had started "heresy," *sabb* and other intolerable acts according to Sunni doctrine. Nadir accused Shah Ismail of causing disunion (*nifâk*), hatred (*münâferet*), and bloodshed among Muslims. Then, he styled himself as the person whom God had commissioned for the good order of Muslims and the vast Iranian lands. Nadir narrated that he had gathered the Persian *ulema* at Mughan. Once the right school (*mezheb-i hak*), referring to Sunnism, was explained to them with evidence, they all agreed to leave Shiism and embrace Sunnism with heart and tongue. He added that he had required the *ulema* to swear that they would not renege on their agreement with him by renewing their loyalty to the Safavid dynasty. Nadir explained the reason for this act was to establish Sunnism firmly in Iran, by opting out of the possibility of Safavid rule, the backbone of Shiism in Persia. All three of Nadir's letters included these messages with slight differences. However, he expressed his five proposals only in the letters to the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam*. Râgıb Efendi interpreted this behavior as Nadir's observance of diplomatic procedure.[1346]

Nadir positioned himself before Mahmud I at a lower status. He maintained this diplomatic attitude even during the 1743-45 war. So, there was a clear discrepancy between his actions and his diplomatic language. Nadir's humble tone also contrasted with Mir Mahmud's and Ashraf's challenging stances earlier in the eighteenth century. It seems that Nadir had learned an important lesson from the Ottoman-Afghan conflict and preferred to challenge the sultan subtly, rather than directly. He praised Mahmud I with the titles of "the star of the sky of sultanate and caliphate" (*necmen li feleki's-saltana ve'l-hilâfet*), "God's shadow" (*zillullah*),

[1345] For Feyzullahefendizade Mustafa Efendi, see Mehmet İpşirli, "Feyzullahefendizâde Mustafa Efendi," in *TDVİA*, 2006.
[1346] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 49.

and "the greatest of the sultans in the world" (*a'zam-ı selâtîn-i cihân*).[1347] In his letter to the *şeyhülislam*, Nadir qualified Constantinople as "the seat of the great caliphate of Rûm" (*dâru'l hilâfeti'l uzmâ-i Rûm*).

Still, there was a slight but critical difference between his letter to Mahmud I and his letters to the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam*. In his letter to Mahmud I, when mentioning his enthronement, Nadir refers to himself only as a "supplicant of God's court" (*niyaz-mend-i dergâh-ı Îzed-i Mennân*).[1348] In the other two letters, he claimed that he had been chosen as shah of Iran due to his inheritance of this post from the Turkomans. Nadir did not specify from which Turkoman dynasty he inherited the kingship of Persia in these letters.[1349] However, in a letter written in 1742, he would name Timur as his ancestor and even demand territories from the Ottomans based on his alleged inheritance. In this sense, the Turkoman detail in 1736 was significant. His dynastic claim showed that he was not so humble as he presented himself otherwise in the first correspondence in 1736.

The bureaucratic positions of the members of the Persian mission, especially the two scholars, also suggested Nadir was taking a humble stance. It was a rare diplomatic act to send jurists occupying the two highest posts in *ilmiye* bureaucracy to another country as negotiators. Mirza Abu'l Qasım Kashani himself highlighted his coming and that of Ali Akbar to another country as an unusual act in international relations.[1350] Also, Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana, the ambassador of Nadir, was a Sunni.[1351] He was even one of the first Safavid khans who changed

[1347] For Nadir's original letter to Mahmud I, see *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları: 3 Numaralı Nâme-i Hümâyûn Defteri* (İstanbul: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2014), 367–66. The book included original letters, as well, and in this chapter I refer to original letters rather than transcriptions. As the editors added Roman pagination to the original Nâme-i Hümayûn Defteri, I refer to the new pagination. That is why, the page numbers I cite are in reverse order.
[1348] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 367.
[1349] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 366–65.
[1350] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 90.
[1351] Zarinebaf, "Rebels and Renegades on Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Porous Frontiers and Hybrid Identities," 92.

sides to join the Ottomans in late 1724. As I discussed in Chapter Six, the Porte had called Abd al-Baqi Khan to Constantinople, where he arrived in mid-1728 and stayed for almost two years, until early 1730.[1352] Nadir was therefore sending a figure who had enjoyed good relations with the Porte for a considerable duration in the recent past. Indeed, during the long negotiations in Constantinople, Abd al-Baqi Khan always positioned himself as an impartial mediator between the Ottomans and the Persians and referred to his earlier service to the Ottoman sultan with respect and gratitude.[1353] It was not likely that the Persian ambassador behaved this way at his own discretion without being instructed by Nadir Shah.

B.2. Conferences

In the first conference on August 30th, all three letters of Nadir were read aloud, and no further discussion occurred.[1354] The delegates negotiated the proposals between the second and fifth conferences over the course of nine sessions. The sixth, seventh, and eighth conferences were more procedural talks. During these last three conferences, the Ottoman side tried in vain to convince the Iranian ambassador to give them a binding document (*temessük*) showing his acceptance of the peace agreement.

In the first session of the second conference on August 31st, both sides agreed to divide the proposals into two categories: juristic (*şer'î*) and political (*mülkî*). The juristic ones were (1) the acceptance of Ja'farism, (2) the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba, and (3) freeing and exchanging prisoners. The political ones consisted of (1) the appointment of residents to the respective capitals and (2) the nomination of an Iranian *emiru'l hac*. The delegates also agreed to negotiate the political topics first, as they were easier to handle. They followed this plan throughout the meetings for the most part. However, the proposal of

[1352] BOA, AE.SAMD.III 5-425, Evasıt-ı Şevval 1143 (April 19th – May 8th, 1730); Çelebizâde İsmaîl Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3:1598.
[1353] See for example, Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 55, 56, 64, 65, 71.
[1354] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 49.

Ja‘farism came onto the agenda in all the conferences. In the first session, the Ottoman representatives informed their Persian counterparts that there were certain inconveniences with the proposals related to Ja‘farism. They added that all the other Persian demands were acceptable to the Ottomans.[1355]

The delegates solved the *emiru'l hac* question in a single session on September 2nd. Pilgrims from Iran were to travel to Mecca through the routes of Najaf or al-Hasa (Lahsa).[1356] The question of appointing ambassadors was also solved within a session, on September 4th. Both sides agreed to appoint ambassadors to each other's court, to be changed every three years.[1357] Thus finished the negotiations on the political demands, relatively easily.

The delegates discussed the first juristic demand, which was prohibiting the enslavement of prisoners of war and exchanging currently enslaved prisoners, in five sessions between September 4th and 13th, and reached an agreement. Actually, they agreed to prohibit the buying and selling of prisoners on September 4th, the first session on this subject. What they discussed in the other sessions on prisoners was the freeing of Persian slaves whom the Ottomans had taken as prisoners of war during their fights against the Safavids. This freeing meant a considerable economic burden on the Ottomans.[1358] Eventually, the Ottoman side approved the freeing of Persian prisoners from the Safavid era.[1359]

The Ottoman acceptance of the prohibition enslavement of Persian prisoners, rather than the exchange of current prisoners, was the critical point in terms of the religious aspect of the question. It showed, in a legal sense, that the Porte had accepted the new Persian state and its subjects as Muslims. During the time of the Safavids, the Ottomans had bought and sold Persian

[1355] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 50.
[1356] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 53–54.
[1357] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 59.
[1358] The Ottoman representatives highlighted that economic aspect, as well. See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 95.
[1359] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 59–69.

prisoners of war as slaves. Sunni jurisprudence prohibited enslavement of fellow Muslims, whether Sunni or Shiite.[1360] Nevertheless, since the Ottomans considered the Safavids to not be proper Shiites but infidels, this juristic prohibition did not prevent the Ottomans. Indeed, in the first talks on the prisoner question, the Ottoman delegates objected to the freeing of Persian slaves whom the Ottomans took during the time of the Safavids, on the basis of the "infidelity" of the Kizilbash.[1361] The Porte's acceptance of the prohibition of the enslavement of prisoners of war meant its recognition of Nadir's state as a Muslim state, regardless of the legal school the new Persian state followed.[1362]

During the discussions on prisoners, the Ottoman delegates expressed the sultan's contentment with Nadir's accomplishment of returning Iran to Sunnism.[1363] Moreover, they showed the Ottoman recognition of Nadir's new state as Muslim from the beginning of the conferences.[1364] Above all, the Ottoman agreement to discuss a juristic matter with the Persian *ulema* was a clear indicator that the Porte accepted the Persians as Muslims, as opposed to their stance during the Safavid era. If they had not, there would not have been ground and logic to discuss a juristic matter with "heretic infidels." Besides, the permission of the Porte for the travel of the Iranian *hajj* caravan under an Iranian *emiru'l hac,* which was not a juristic but a

[1360] Mehmet Âkif Aydın and Muhammed Hamîdullah, "Köle," in *TDVİA*, 2002.
[1361] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 60.
[1362] As I discussed in Chapter Six, the Porte prohibited the selling of Persian slaves only in Constantinople in 1728. Thus, prohibition on the selling of the Safavid prisoners was not something completely new. However, what was new in 1736 was the prohibition of the "enslavement" of Persian prisoners on the legal basis that the new Persian state is a Muslim state and to enslave Muslims is illegal. Critically, this prisoner question was among the legal issues in the negotiations, and the Ottoman delegates accepted the Persian demands only after getting the approval of the şeyhülislam. See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 66. Studies on the Persian slaves in Ottoman lands also underline the novelty that 1736 negotiations brought regarding the prohibition of the enslavement of Persian slaves. See for example, İzzet Sak, "İranlı Kölelerin Satışının Yasaklanması Ile İlgili Fermanlar," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 1 (1994): 259–66; Murat Tuğluca and Ülkü Küçük, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Savaş Esirlerinin İadesi: 1736 Osmanlı-İran Anlaşmasına Göre Acem Esirlerin Teslimi Meselesi," in *Osmanlı'da Siyaset ve Diplomasi*, ed. Mehmet Yaşar Ertaş, Haşim Şahin, and Hâcer Kılıçaslan (İstanbul: Mahya Yayınları, 2016); Ümit Güler, "Osmanlı Diyarbekiri'nde Köle ve Cariyeler (18. ve 19. yy.)," *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 60, no. 60 (June 21, 2021): 29–56.
[1363] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 68.
[1364] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 51.

political matter, indirectly showed the Ottoman acceptance of Nadir's state as Muslim. The Porte had deprived the Safavids of this privilege for centuries. As I discussed in Chapter Five, Constantinople had granted the same privilege to the Sunni Afghans in the Hamadan Treaty of 1727. The Ottoman representatives themselves underlined the religious aspect of the Ottoman permission for an Iranian *emiru'l hac*. They stated that it was a great gift from the sultan to Nadir to give that permission, which no Safavid shah had been able to get for centuries.[1365]

B.2.1. Negotiations on the Ja'farism Proposal

After agreeing on three articles, the time came to negotiate the Ja'fari question officially, as of the first session of the fifth conference on September 13th. However, as I mentioned above, the delegations started to talk about the Ja'fari proposal as of the second meeting on August 31st. Furthermore, even if official negotiations on Ja'farism technically ended with the last conference on September 24th, the parties continued to discuss the proposal until October 15th. On October 17th, the ambassador received a royal letter from Mahmud I and the Iranian mission left Constantinople on November 24th, 1736.[1366] Below, I will first deal with the way the Persian delegation presented the Ja'farism offer. Then, I will investigate why the Porte approved Ja'farism as a Sunni legal school implicitly, but not explicitly.

B.2.1.1. The Presentation of the Persian Offer about Ja'farism

During the discussion about the Ja'farism offer, the Persian representatives highlighted only the "internal" aspect of the offer, as if no external dimension existed. On September 2nd, Abd al-Baqi Khan maintained that Nadir Shah had demanded certain things from the Ottoman sultan in response to his achievement of turning Iran from Shiism into Sunnism. The ambassador claimed that the completion of Nadir's kingship in Persia depended on the acceptance of his demands by the Ottoman sultan. Abd al-Baqi Khan explained why it was so. When Nadir stipulated that Sunnism would be the official religion of Persia during his kingship, the Iranian

[1365] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 95.
[1366] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 97, 100.

ulema agreed to become Sunni in doctrine, on the condition that they could continue to follow the legal school of Imam Ja'far, as it was accepted by the Sunnis, too. Nadir accepted the demand of the Persian *ulema* on this ground.[1367] The ambassador demanded the sultan's official and explicit approval of what the Persian *ulema* claimed about the acceptance of the Ja'fari legal school by the Sunnis. The Iranian delegates also brought the Persian *ulema*'s oath in Mughan promising their allegiance to Sunnism through the Ja'farism branch. This oath was read aloud in the meeting.[1368]

The Ottoman side refused to explicitly recognize Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni *madhhab* during the negotiations. Upon hearing that firm stance in the sixth conference on September 17th, Abd al-Baqi Khan demanded the sending of two Ottoman *ulema* at the rank of Mirza Abu'l Qasım and Mulla Ali Akbar to Iran to discuss the issue further.[1369] The Ottoman negotiators approached this demand positively, but did not readily accept, resulting in further insistence by the Persians in the following meetings. The Ottoman delegation asked why this was so important to the Iranians, in the meeting held in the house of the *şeyhülislam* on October 15th. In response, Mirza Abu'l Qasım came up with another explanation for the Persian demand for the two *ulema*. He expressed that it was actually Nadir's desire to host two Ottoman *ulema* in Persia. He maintained that Nadir Shah had accepted the kingship of Iran considering that the caliph on earth (*halîfe-i rûy-i zemîn*) and shadow of God (*zillullah*), referring to Mahmud I, would support him. Mirza Abu'l Qasım continued that Nadir's state was a new sultanate (*cedîd saltanat*) and it needed recognition by God's caliph. The sending of two Ottoman *ulema*, he

[1367] In the second session of the fifth conference on September 14th, Abd al-Baqi Khan explained that process a little bit further. Nadir had asked the Persian *ulema* whether there was anything against religious law in his five offers. The Persian *ulema* had replied that all of the offers were compatible with *sharia*. See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 71.

In Islamic theology, there are two different categories of sect. One is about doctrine/belief; the other is in the field of law. Sunnism and Shiism are two different sects both in doctrine and law. Four legal schools in Sunnism adhere to either Ash'arism or Maturidism as doctrinal schools. Sunnis accept both of these doctrinal schools as legitimate.

[1368] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 51–53.

[1369] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 74.

asserted, would demonstrate the sultan's support for Nadir's rulership. Mulla Ali Akbar also added that "Consider us at the status of *muallafah al-qulub* (those whose hearts are to be reconciled with Islam)."[1370]

Next day, the Iranian delegation opened up the reason for their demand further. They said that the Sunnis of Iran had been happy with Nadir's conversion of Iran into Sunnism. However, the Shiites agreed to become Sunni only due to fear from the sword, and thus they were still following the path of *rafz* (rejection of the first three caliphs) and *ilhad* (apostasy) in their hearts. The representatives maintained that "the order of our shah was incomplete in political and religious terms," due to these reasons.[1371] They specified the task to be fulfilled by the two Ottoman *ulema* as follows: One of the Ottoman *ulema* was to deliver a Friday *khutba* and to mention the names of the four rightly guided caliphs in the *minbar*. Then, first, he would mention the name of the caliph of God, i.e., the Ottoman sultan, and second, the name of Nadir Shah. After that, the Ottoman *alim* would perform the Friday prayer as imam for all, including Nadir himself. They added that Nadir told them that he considered himself to share the princely rank of a (Crimean) khan.[1372] The Persian representatives concluded that "We even call our imperial majesty [the Ottoman sultan] caliph on Earth. We fear from God to call him sovereign or king."[1373]

Three weeks before, during the seventh conference, Abd al-Baqi Khan had a similar humble attitude toward the Ottoman negotiators:

[1370] "*Muallafah al qulub*" is a Qur'anic term, denoting those whose hearts are to be eased toward Islam. They can be new converts to Islam, or people whose enmity Muslims aim to lessened by Muslims. Those who were considered *muallafah al qulub* are shown extra tolerance by Muslims and even encouraged with monetary grants. For more information on "*muallafah al qulub*," see Cengiz Kallek, "Müellefe-i Kulûb," in *TDVİA*, 2006.

[1371] "Şâhımızın mülken ve mezheben nizâmı henüz nâ-tamamdır." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 92.

[1372] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 91–93. I checked many secondary and primary sources with Persian, European, and Ottoman accounts to determine whether the Ottoman *ulema* carried out that specific Friday prayer and *khutba* task in Persia. I did not see any reference indicating they did.

[1373] "Hattâ, şevketlü efendimiz hazretlerine biz halîfe-i rûy-ı zemîn deriz. Melik ü sultan demeğe Allah'dan korkarız." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 93.

> It is our shah's and our own request and supplication from the *padishah*, the asylum of Islam, that he considers the Iranian state, too, as part of his own Sublime State and our shah as a sincere and faithful [subject] at the level of his excellency, the Tatar [Crimean] khan.[1374]

The Persian ambassador also stated that Nadir Shah's ultimate goal was to remove enmity between Muslims and to establish concord with the Sublime Ottoman State, which held the great caliphate (*hilâfet-i kebîr*).[1375]

In sum, there were two main points in the Persian request for Ja'farism's acceptance. First, the Persians presented the Ja'fari proposal as a purely internal matter having to do with Ottoman support for Nadir's incomplete legitimacy within Iran. Second, it was seemingly a humble request from the Ottoman sultan who was above Nadir Shah both politically (khan being lower than sultan) and religiously (the great caliph). However, this was not the entire picture. There were several indicators of serious Persian challenge toward the Ottoman state during the first official diplomatic contacts in 1736.

First of all, Nadir's fights against the Ottomans in the preceding six years suggest that he was not overly friendly toward the Ottomans, as he had captured and besieged several Ottoman cities beyond the established Ottoman-Iranian border. Considering his alliance offers to the Russians suggesting they march directly on Constantinople during that period, he was also not overly humble before the Ottoman sultan.[1376] Moreover, Nadir's mentioning of his right of inheritance to the Persian throne in his letters to the Porte demonstrated again his not-so-humble stance. Furthermore, especially in the first meetings, the Persian delegation asked for the Ottoman recognition of Ja'farism as a "response" (*mukabele*) to Nadir's "great" (*azîm*)

[1374] "Ba'de'l yevm, şevketlü kerâmetlü Padişâh-ı İslâm-penâh efendimiz hazretlerinden Şâhımızın ve bizim recâ vü niyâzımız budur ki, İran Devleti'ni dahi kendi devlet-i aliyyelerinden bir şu'be bilip ve Şâhımızı dahi Tatar Hân hazretleri menzilesinde bir muhlis u sadâkat-kârları add buyurup…" See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 78.
[1375] "Bizim Şâhımızın ibtidâ-yı zuhûrundan beri nasb-ı ayn ve maksad-ı aksâsı ehl-i İslâm beyninde sûrî vü ma'nevi bâ'is-i tenâfüs ü tebâguz olan hâlâtı ber-taraf edip menkabet-i hilâfet-i kebîri ve hizmet-i Haremeyn-i Şerîfeyn-i uzmâ ile mevsûf olan Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye ile tarh-ı vifâk u ittihad ve belki her hâlde murâdı, Devlet-i Aliyye'ye i'tizad u istinad idi." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 78.
[1376] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 82, 107.

and "glorious" (*celîl*) service to religion, more than as a favor from the Ottoman sultan. Nevertheless, perhaps the most important detail showing the toughness of the Persian demand was the ambassador's refusal to give a *temessük* (written binding document) on the peace agreement. Since the fifth conference, the Ottoman side had pressured Abd al-Baqi Khan to give a *temessük* on the agreement based on the agreed-upon three articles. The ambassador firmly refused to do so for seventeen days between September 10th and 27th. He would only give a *tasdikname*, a non-binding acceptance. In the end, the Ottomans gave up and the Ottoman sultan signed the peace without a reciprocal *temessük* being given by the Persians. This was a singular instance of a diplomatic contact for peace for which there seemed to be no obstacle after six years of intermittent fighting. The Persians' not signing of the agreement gave the Ottomans significant trouble with regard to the Russo-Ottoman War, which had officially started five months ago. The Ottoman negotiators pressed to make the Persians sign the treaty by arguing that friends and enemies alike would say that the Ottomans and the Persians were not able to achieve peace even after long negotiations.[1377]

The Persian mission showed a similar uncompromising intransigence regarding the sending of two Ottoman *ulema* to Iran. During the discussion in the house of the *şeyhülislam* on October 15th, Abd al-Baqi Khan stipulated that if he was not given a royal paper documenting the authorization of the sending of *ulema* to Iran, he would not participate in the ambassadorial ceremony in the *divan* in the presence of the sultan two days later, the farewell ceremony in which he was to receive royal epistles from Mahmud I to Nadir Shah. Râgıb Efendi narrates that the ambassador's threat shocked everyone, as his nonattendance would cause a great rumor in the public. Due to the urgency of the situation, the *şeyhülislam*, Pîrîzâde Mehmed Sâhib, and Abdullah Efendi, *fetva emini*, discussed the Persian demand between themselves. They

[1377] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 72, 74.

considered the risks of sending two Ottoman *ulema* to be less than its advantages.[1378] The *reisülküttab*, the secretary of state, and Abdullah Efendi went to Hacı Beşir Ağa to let him know about their opinion sometime after 3 midnight. Hacı Beşir Ağa informed Mahmud I about the Persian request. Mahmud I wrote an authorization for the sending of one vizier, as great ambassador, and two *ulema* to Iran in the early morning of October 16th. On that day, the delegations met again and Abd al-Baqi Khan received the royal authorization with happiness and said that he would attend the ambassadorial ceremony in the *Divan*. The Ottoman representatives let Beşir Ağa know about the ambassador's new decision.[1379]

The reciprocity part is also quite significant for understanding the Persian insistence on the sending of one vizier, equal in rank to Abd al-Baqi Khan, and two *ulema*, equal in rank to Mirza Abu'l Qasım and Mulla Ali Akbar. In the sixth conference, on September 17th, Abd al-Baqi Khan demanded the sending of an Ottoman mission equal in rank to the Persian mission to Constantinople.[1380] It was not to be a hierarchical relation like between a sultan (Mahmud I) and his khan (Nadir), as the Persian delegation pretended. Moreover, Mirza Abu'l Qasım, the *sadr-ı memalik* of Iran, even claimed the superiority of the Persian *sadr-ı memalik* and *mullabashi* over the Ottoman *şeyhülislam* in rank, and the superiority of the Persian *ulema* over the Ottoman *ulema*, in debates on October 14th. He argued that the *sadr-ı memalik* was above everyone else except for the shah and his absolute representative (*vekil-i mutlak*) in Iran. *sadr*s were the offspring of the Prophet, in charge of all pious foundations. That is why, he added, shahs would always marry their daughters to *sadr*s rather than other notables. Abu'l Qasım also described the Ottoman *ilmiye* system and hierarchy. He claimed that Ali Qushji (d. 1474) had

[1378] I discuss their considerations below.

[1379] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 91–97. Râgıb Efendi does not mention what role that Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha played during these developments. This event shows again how powerful Hacı Beşir Ağa was in the Ottoman court in the 1730s.

[1380] "Bir şıkkı dahi ber vech-i muharrer nâme-i hümâyûn ve ahidnâme-i hümâyûn tahrîr ve refakatimizle bize mu'adil bir mu'teber elçi ve mollalarımıza mu'adil iki nefer-i fâzıl u mu'teber efendiler ta'yin ve ma'an tesyîr olunmakdır." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 74.

established the Ottoman madrasa system and its several levels of schools like the *ibtidâ hâric*, *ikinci hâric*, *dâhil*s, etc. He underlined that the system in Persia did not include a hierarchical madrasa system. To be a *mulla*, i.e., *alim*, in Iran, one needed to master all the common sciences. Thus, Abu'l Qasım implied that even ordinary Ottoman *ulema* were not at the level of Persian *ulema*, since one could be an *alim* at a low-rank madrasa in the Ottoman system, whereas the Persian system required one to master all the sciences. Then he continued by arguing that the *mulla* occupying the post of *mullabashi* was the head of that kind of knowledgeable *mulla* class. In addition, the *mullabashi* was also the imam of the Shah.[1381] Thus, Abu'l Qasım's description of the status of *mullabashi* rendered that position superior to the *şeyhülislam* both in terms of his primacy among the knowledgeable Persian *ulema*, as opposed to the several ranks of Ottoman *ulema*, and in terms of his position as imam to the ruler. This comparison also clearly meant that there was no equivalent to the Persian *sadr-ı memalik* in the Ottoman hierarchy, let alone a position to compare with the *Sadr*. Indeed, the correspondence between the religious heads of the Ottoman and Persian states occurred between the Ottoman *şeyhülislam* and the Persian *mullabashi*, not *sadr-ı memalik*.[1382] Abu'l Qasım's claim that Ali Qushji had established the Ottoman madrasa system also suggests a Persian disdain for the Ottomans. Ali Qushji had been raised in the court of Ulugh Bey (d. 1449), the grandson of Timur, in Samarqand. He migrated to Ottoman lands and became a high-ranking scholar in the 1470s during the reign of Mehmed II.[1383] So, Abu'l Qasım's reference to Ali Qushji implied the eastern, and specifically Timurid superiority over the Rûmîs in scholarship and education.

The negotiations witnessed more direct confrontation between the Persian and the Ottoman delegations. Upon Abd al-Baqi Khan's insistence on the sending of two Ottoman

[1381] In the Ottoman court, sultans had a special imam for prayer, who was not the *şeyhülislam*.
[1382] This was the case for the correspondence in the 1736-47 period.
[1383] For a recent and extensive study on Ali Qushji, see Hasan Umut, "Theoretical Astronomy in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire: ʿAlī al-Qūshjī's Al-Risāla al-Fatḥiyya" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2019).

ulema, the Ottoman *reisülküttab* and *beylikçi* told him that the sublime state would permit the *ulema* to go. Then, they asked if, supposing permission was not granted, the Persians would need to create an alliance with another state.[1384] Abd al-Baqi Khan replied that "Yes, an alliance would be created with the Mughal padishah!"[1385] The ambassador of Iran, a state that had newly joined the "Sunni club," had started to use its newly acquired religious identity against the Ottomans immediately. The turning of Persia to Sunnism made the Porte more vulnerable in the face of possible alliances between the Sunni powers in Iran, Central Asia, and India.[1386] The challenging attitude of the ambassador showed again how critical it was for the Ottoman Empire to keep Iran a Shiite state. As one of the main arguments of this thesis goes, the Shiite identity of Iran safeguarded the Ottoman sultan against possible challenges from his co-confessional rivals.

Furthermore, for all their seemingly unassuming and docile attitude, the Persian representatives did not refrain from threatening the Ottomans even with war, albeit indirectly. During the negotiations on September 6th, about the exchange of prisoners of war, the Ottoman side resisted the Persian demands for the freeing of the Persian slaves from the Safavid era. Upon this resistance, the Persian *mulla*s told a story. During the time of Mu'tasım Billah (d. 842), the eighth Abbasid caliph, a Roman living in Ankara had a Muslim slave, whom he maltreated. At every torment, the slave shouted "O Mu'tasım!" to the caliph to save him. The Roman owner ridiculed the slave every time the slave asked for help in this way. Mu'tasım heard this story and set forth to Ankara with 70,000 troops, capturing the city. The caliph replied

[1384] "Devlet-i Aliyye bi-mennihî te'âlâ bu işlere müsâ'ade buyurur. Ancak su'âl olunur ki, farazâ müsâ'ade buyurulmasa zâhiren bi âhar devlet ile ittifâka muhtâclardır." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 90.
[1385] "Belî, Hind Padişahı ile tevâfuk olunur." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 91.
[1386] As I discuss throughout the dissertation, relations between major Sunni powers were defined by competition more than alliance. However, this did not rule out the possibility of establishing alliances between co-sectarianists. The last part of Chapter One deals with the dynamics of cross- and intra-confessional alliances specifically. Moreover, even when the Porte pursued a policy of protecting the Safavids against Sunni powers, it tried to cover this pro-Shiite stance, as I discussed, especially, in Chapters Three and Four. Thus, a rapprochement between Iran and India on the basis of religion, at least on paper, could have created problems for the Ottoman sultan on his eastern frontiers.

to the slave "Here I am!" (*labbayk*). The message of the story was clear to everyone in the meeting. It meant that if the Ottomans did not free the Persian slaves, then Nadir would come and take them by force. The Ottoman representatives criticized the Persian side severely, calling this attitude improper and insolent. They added that they also knew how to tell similar stories, but due to their good manners as hosts, they did not.[1387]

However, on the next meeting with all participants six days later, the Ottoman delegation responded rigorously. Their response suggests that they had discussed the way to reply to the Persians among themselves. The Ottoman representatives first stated that the Ottoman state was the caliphate of God righteously, and Iran's position was known by all. After that, they started to compare the Ottoman and Persian states. The Ottoman delegation praised the Ottoman Empire based on three qualifications. First, the Ottomans were honored by the praise of the Prophet, who eulogized the conquerors of Constantinople in a famous *hadith*. Second, İbn Arabi, or the *Şeyh-i ekber* as the Ottoman representatives called him, had heralded the birth of the Ottoman state before its foundation and pointed out that this state would carry the standard of the Prophet until the demise of time.[1388] Third, the sublime state had never invaded others' lands and Ottoman *padishah*s had become Rulers of the Two Seas and Two Lands (*sultanu'l berreyn, hakanu'l bahreyn*) by performing *jihad* against the infidels. Then, the Ottoman delegation narrated the fights of earlier Ottomans, mentioning the raids of Gazi Süleyman Pasha, the son of Orhan Gazi; the Kosovo battles of Murad I; and the Battle of Mohac of Mehmed II. They concluded that the Ottoman state was further distinguished by having been founded on *takva* (pious fear of God) and was strongly established based on a history 450 years long. The Ottoman representatives added that the Ottomans had gained the caliphate of God through these achievements. Then they characterized the Iranian states as such:

[1387] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 61–64.
[1388] They refer to İbn Arabi's book *Al-Shajarat al Numaniyya fi al Davlat al-Osmaniyya*, allegedly written sixty years before the birth of the Ottoman state.

> Iranian states did not emerge as a result of that kind of *jihad*. Being an example of the proverb 'authority belongs to whomever triumphs,' and like the unfaithful woman of world, Iran passed from one hand to another like a towel by having several people as groom time and again. Now it settled on the side of Nadir Shah.[1389]

These words may constitute the bitterest insult from the Ottomans to the Persians in history. Above all, the Ottoman response showed that the Porte found the demands of the Persians challenging and outrageous. As I discussed in Chapter One, the Ottoman sultan preferred to demonstrate his superiority over other monarchs through symbolic manifestations, rather than clear expressions. He would explicitly clarify his primacy in precarious situations. The Ottoman delegation's comparison that delineated an obvious hierarchy between the Ottoman and the Persian states shows the level of Ottoman disturbance and anger. The major insults also suggest that the Ottoman delegation wanted to respond to the story of Mu'tasım Billah at least in kind.

The Ottoman representatives emphasized the caliphate of the sultan as the main signifier of the hierarchy between the Ottoman state and the Persians. That coveted title, more than anything else, gave the Ottoman sultan supremacy over other Muslim monarchs. Another reason for the Ottoman stress on their caliphate seems to have been the perceived challenge from the new Sunni Persian state over this exclusive title. After all, the Ottoman dynasty had acquired the title by right (*bi'l istihkak*), rather than by inheritance. Thus, any other dynasty could earn that title by superseding the Ottomans.

To summarize, Nadir's proposal was not a naive attempt at eliminating strife among Muslims, devoid of political aspirations. Both Nadir's attitude toward the Ottomans until 1736 and the threats of the Persian delegation in Constantinople demonstrate how challenging the new Persian Sunni state was for the sultan. Likewise, the Persians' focus on the internal aspect of the proposal and their positioning of themselves as inferior to the Ottomans were maneuvers

[1389] "İran devletleri bu gûne cihâd ile zuhûr etmeyip, "al-mulku li man galaba" mazmûnu üzere, zenn-i bî-vefâyı dünyâ misillü ikide birde birer kimesneyi dâmad ederek dest-mâl gibi elden ele geçerek şimdiki hâlde Nâdir Şâh cenâbında karar eyledi." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 67–68.

to persuade the Porte to accept their demand, and not actual humility. Moreover, the Porte experienced the swift transformation of Nadir's overly humble attitude into a forceful stance in the late 1720s. As I discussed in Chapter Six, in a letter to Damad İbrahim Pasha in 1728, Nadir resembled Ottoman troops in Persia to the prophet Süleyman's army, and the Persians to ants that were unintentionally crushed by the army. As soon as the Safavids overthrew the Afghans, the same Nadir expelled the "Süleyman's army" from most of the occupied provinces in 1730.

B.2.1.2. Implicit Recognition by the Porte

Why did the Porte accept Ja'farism, albeit implicitly? A basic answer to that question is that implicit recognition pertained to the internal aspect of the proposal. By the same token, the Porte did not convey explicit recognition of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school, since it was related to the external side of the offer. The Porte's rejection to establish a *rukn* for the Ja'faris again resulted from that external aspect of the question. The Ottoman government helped Nadir Shah to strengthen his legitimacy within Persia, but rejected any help that would have increased his power in the Ottoman lands, beyond Persia.

The Ottoman *ulema* and statesmen discussed how to reply to the insistent demand of the Persians to send Ottoman *ulema* to Iran, who were to declare the Ottoman caliph's recognition of Nadir as a fellow Sunni. They concluded that the demand of the Persians seemed to be related to strengthening Nadir's unsettled authority in Iran. They informed Beşir Ağa about their positive attitude on this matter based on this consideration.[1390] The sending of Ottoman *ulema* meant Ottoman recognition of Nadir's state as a Sunni state. But what Sunni legal school did this new state follow? The Ottomans were completely silent about this issue. Obviously, the new state adhered to Ja'farism. Thus, the Ottoman acceptance of Persia as a Sunni state without mentioning its legal school meant the implicit Ottoman recognition of Ja'farism as a Sunni school. The peace agreement (*ahidnâme-i hümayûn*) stated that in doctrine, the people of Persia

[1390] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 93–94.

had joined the Sunni sect as before (*usûl-i akâ'idde ke'l-evvel ehl-i sünnet ve cemâ'at mezhebine duhûl edip*).[1391] Here again, the Ottomans mentioned the new doctrinal school of the Persians, but left the legal school they would follow unspecified.

I mentioned above how the Ottoman prohibition on enslaving the Persians meant the Ottoman recognition of the Persians as Muslims from then on. Moreover, the Porte allowed the Persians to have their own *emiru'l hac* on pilgrimage to Mecca. Thus, the Porte fulfilled the requirements of accepting Iran as a Sunni state in legal and administrative practice. Besides, the Ottomans showed their acceptance of Nadir's state as a Sunni state through the letters of the sultan, the grand vizier, and the *şeyhülislam* unequivocally. All of these congratulated Nadir for removing heresy (*imâte-i âsâr-ı bid'at-i reddiye*) and erecting the columns of the Prophet's *sunnah* (*ikâmet-i menâr-ı sünnet-i seniyye*)[1392] in Iran. The Ottomans accepted Iranian subjects as Sunni Muslims on the basis of the principle that "people are on the path of their ruler" (*al-Nāsu alā dīni mulūkihim*).[1393] Another expression of the new Ottoman acceptance of the Persians as Muslims was that the Ottomans and the Persians were to add more praises to one another's titles in correspondence, due to the correction of the sect (*tehzîb-i mezheb*) of the Iranians.[1394]

Thus, the Ottomans accepted the legitimacy of the Ja'fari legal school according to Sunnism. Unlike modern historians, who claim unanimously that the Ottomans refused to recognize Ja'farism, Şemdanizade Süleyman Efendi (d. 1779) wrote in his chronicle that the government consented to the Ja'fari school by reasoning that "it is their [Persian] school; it does not affect us."[1395] Hurmuzaki also showed that the Austrians used the Ottoman acceptance of

[1391] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 361.
[1392] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 363.
[1393] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 359. The parallel between this principle and the European principle of *Cuius regio eius religio* is noteworthy.
[1394] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 361.
[1395] "mezheb-i Câferi'nin hâmis olmasında, mahzur beyân olunup, ol dahi kendü mezhebleridir, bize zararı yok

Persia as a Sunni state as a pretext for the Austrian entrance into the Russo-Ottoman war on the side of Russia. He wrote that there was no direct reason for the Austrians to fight against the Ottomans in 1736. They needed an excuse to start the war on the Ottomans as a defense, rather than assault,[1396] which manifested as a claim that the religious unity established between the Ottomans and the Persians through amalgamating the followers of Omar and Ali had been intended to challenge the Christian states. Thus, the Austrians would fight against the Ottomans to defend themselves against the threatening unification of Muslims.[1397] As I will examine below, Nadir's official chroniclers also pointed out this implicit recognition by the Ottomans. Moreover, the Persian version of the Najaf Document in 1743 referred to the Porte's tacit acknowledgment of Ja'farism in 1736.

Together with Ja'farism, the Porte also recognized Nadir Shah's claim of descending from the Turkoman genealogy and deserving the Persian throne by heredity. Mahmud I wrote in his letter to Nadir that the latter deserved to be the shah of Persia by both heredity and acquisition (*irsen ve iktisâben*).[1398] The Ottoman sultan not only disqualified the possibility of Nadir being a "usurper," but also that of his being a newcomer to the throne of Iran. Instead, Mahmud I's recognition of Nadir as the last member of a dynasty was strong support for Nadir's internal legitimacy. Combined with the implicit acceptance of Ja'farism, the Porte gave the two required pillars of legitimacy to Nadir's newly-established rule: religious and hereditary legitimacy.

It is probable that the Porte could have refused to recognize Ja'farism even implicitly as a Sunni school. The start of the Russian war seems to have been an important reason for the Porte's eagerness to conclude a peace agreement on the eastern front. Şemdanizade referred to

deyü rıza verilip, böylece musalaha itmam olundukta" See Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:62.

[1396] This was again related to the "political" side, in which states sought to diplomatically present their actions as always righteous.

[1397] Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, 1886, 5:62.

[1398] "zât-ı inâyet-âyât-ı şehriyârîlerinin irsen ve iktisâben me'hûlü olan İran Şahlığı" See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 359.

that war as one of the reasons for the Porte's acceptance of the "unbearable proposal" (*mâ-lâ-yutâk teklîf*) of Ja'farism.[1399] Indeed, three members of the Ottoman delegation, namely İsmail Efendi, Mustafa Efendi, and Râgıb Efendi, were summoned by the Porte from the Russian front to conduct the negotiations in August 1736.[1400]

B.2.1.3. Why not Explicit Recognition?

The Porte did not come up with legal arguments claiming the illegality of the Ja'fari legal school. It also did not present political or social excuses, unlike it did for the *rukn* offer. The government basically remained silent about the acceptance of the Ja'fari legal school. Still, it refused to include the word "Ja'farism" in the peace treaty. Regarding the proposal of establishing a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba, the Ottoman government presented certain social, political, and indirect legal excuses for its rejection. I argue that both the explicit recognition of Ja'fari school and the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba were related to the international implications of the proposal. It was this external part that the Porte rejected.

A Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba would have declared Nadir's outstanding achievement of removing "heresy" from Iran and establishing Sunnism in Persia five times a day forever to Muslims from all around the world. Moreover, it would symbolize the great caliph's acceptance of Persia as a Muslim state at the center of Muslim world, where thousands of pilgrims visited each year. Besides, as I discussed in Chapters One and Five, Muslim rulers expressed their political challenges to the ruler possessing the Hejaz through the Ka'ba. If the Ottomans accepted, Nadir's offer would have created a visible change in the Ka'ba for the first time in centuries, which would have contributed to Nadir's international religio-political legitimacy, posing a challenge to that of the sultan. Furthermore, it was highly likely that the Sunnis in the Hejaz and other parts of the Ottoman realm would have opposed such a radical change. In the

[1399] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Müri't-Tevârih*, 1:63.
[1400] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 47–48.

end, this was an overnight change of sectarian identity after more than two hundred years under the force of the sword of a severe ruler, who adhered to Shiism until his coronation.[1401] Considering also that *taqiyya* (hypocrisy) was a "major juridical and theoretical principle" in Shiism,[1402] the truthfulness and reliability of this change was a big question mark. By explicitly accepting Ja'farism as a legitimate legal school, the great caliph would have taken a major risk that could have harmed not only his own legitimacy, but also that of his dynasty. In the discussion below, I explore the excuses of the Porte that referred directly or indirectly to the aforementioned concerns in rejecting Nadir's offers. One of the main indicators showing that the Ottomans conceived of Nadir's proposals as a religio-political challenge to the sultan was that Mahmud I emphasized his universal caliphate exceptionally, even exceeding Ahmed III's highlighting of his caliphate vis-à-vis Ashraf Shah.

In the meeting on September 3rd, only the ambassador represented the Persian side. İsmail Efendi, the *reisülküttab*, stated that both sides should refrain from offering proposals that could harm the other side. Abd al-Baqi Khan replied that there was no harmful demand among the proposals of the Shah. He added that "it seems that you have hesitations about the congregational prayer at a designated location in the Ka'ba."[1403] The Ottoman representatives responded in the positive and stated that the proposal had caused hesitation on the Ottoman side. They pointed out that when the Fatîmids and the Karmatis, which were Shiite dynasties,

[1401] The *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* in 1742 to authorize war against the Persians higlighted this point. Based on reports from Iran, it argued that the Persians were still continuing their unacceptable practices and beliefs. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 148-768. I discuss the *fetva* below, as well.

[1402] Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge: Following an Islamic Legal Term through the Worlds of Islamic Scholars, Ethnographers, Polemicists and Military Men," *The Muslim World* 104, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2014): 91. For a detailed study on *taqiyya* in Shiism, see Etan Kohlberg, "Taqiyya in Shī'ī Theology and Religion," in *Secrecy and Concealment*, ed. Hans Kippenberg and Guy Stroumsa (Brill, 1995), 345–80. Indeed, Abdullah Suwaydi, the Ottoman jurist and representative in the Council of Najaf, concluded his memoirs by remarking that the Persian *ulema* were engaged in complete *taqiyya* and did not follow the true path of Ja'far al-Sadiq. See 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Suwaydī, *Kitāb Al-Hujjaj al-Qaṭ'īyya Li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmīyya* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥalabīyya, 1905), 29.

[1403] "Meğer Beytü'l Harâm'da akd-i cemâ'at ile ikâmet-i salât için mahall ü mekân ta'yîni husûsunda tereddüdünüz olmuş ola." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 56.

had ruled over the Hejaz, they had not even been capable of performing according to their own sects in Ka'ba. The Ottoman delegation continued that even today, the first sect praying in congregation was not the Hanafis, the sect of the Ottomans, but the Shafis, as before. They continued that even if Constantinople gave permission for this offer, it would be impossible to implement it in the Ka'ba. The people of Mecca and Medina would oppose such a decision, and major disorder (*fitna*) would arise. The goal of making peace was the confirmation of mutual love and concord. The Ottoman delegation concluded that they did not expect the Persian shah to be over-persistent on a matter that was "harmful to the order of the Sublime Sultanate."[1404] Upon this answer, the Persian ambassador asked whether there was also a problem in praying in the Ka'ba individually according to the Ja'fari school. The Ottoman representatives replied that there was no problem with praying individually at all. The Ottoman acceptance of individual and rejection of congregational prayer again shows the Ottoman sensitivity in not granting official and visible recognition to Nadir's religio-political revolution beyond Persia and at the center of the Muslim world.

In the second session of the fourth conference on September 12th, when discussing the *rukn* question, the Ottoman delegation stated that "the word 'Ja'farism' must be dropped. The article should be phrased in a different way."[1405] Despite the insistence of the Persians, the Ottoman side did not change its attitude: "If your intention is peace, it would happen this way. If your intention is *something else*, we do not know!"[1406] The following day, the Ottoman delegation offered the acceptable expression to be used in place of "Ja'farism": "the people of Iran should not be interfered with [in the Ka'ba]."[1407] The Persian side did not accept this phrase

[1404] "Musâlahadan murâd, tey'îd-i mebânî-i hubb u vidâd iken, nizâm-ı Saltanat-ı Aliyye'yi muhill teklîfde Şah hazretleri dahi ilhâh u ibrâm buyurmamak gereklerdir." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 56–57.
[1405] "Bu lafızdan geçilsin. Bir güne ta'bîr ile o mâdde dahi itmâm olunsun." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 68.
[1406] "Garazınız ıslâh ise böyle olur, âhar ise bilmeziz." See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 68. Emphasis added.
[1407] "Mekke-i Mükerreme'de Ca'feri mezhebi üzere namaza vesâir nüsüke dâir hususlar çünki halkın me'lûf olmadığı ma'nadır. O mâdde hemen 'ehl-i İran'a bir türlü ta'arruz olunmaya' diye mücmelen zikr olunmak tarafına evlâ vü evfak…" See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 69.

and wanted to add at least the following one: "[the people of Iran's] prayer according to the Ja'fari school, either individually or in congregation, should not be interfered with [in the Ka'ba]."[1408] The addendum to the Ottoman peace draft reflected the Ottoman concerns on this matter, not the demands of the Persians.[1409]

The Porte unequivocally rejected the external aspects of the Ja'fari proposal. And it was this external and visible aspect that the Persians insistently demanded from the Ottomans. The Ottoman questioning of the intention of the Persians captures the line delineating the internal and external aspect of the Ja'fari proposal. As I covered above, the Persians always underlined the internal aspect of their proposal, without touching on the external side. The representatives of the Porte pressed the Persians from that side. If the goal of the Persians pertained only to the internal side, then implicit Ottoman recognition of Ja'farism should have sufficed. On October 16th, the Ottoman delegation enumerated the sultan's grants to the Persians, to appease the discontent of the ambassador. They said that the noble caliph had granted unique privileges to Nadir Shah. First, the freeing of Iranian prisoners would cost 500,000 *toman*, and the sultan accepted this for the good cause of religion (*maslahat-ı dîniyye*). Second, the sultan permitted a Persian *emiru'l hac* and a permanent resident at Constantinople; none of the Safavid shahs had gained these privileges (*imtiyâz*). Third, the sultan gave permission for the sending of two Ottoman *ulema* to Iran to strengthen Nadir Shah's legitimacy in Persia.[1410] What the Ottoman representatives enumerated were explicit indicators of the implicit Ottoman recognition of the

[1408] "münferiden ve cemâ'at ile Ca'feri Mezhebi üzere namâzlarına ta'arruz olunmaya" See Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, 70.

[1409] "bu vesîle-i cemîle ile cümle muvahhidîni dil-şâd eylemelerinden nâşî ahâlî-i merkûmînden fîmâ-ba'd Beytu'llâhi'l-harâm ve Medine-i Müftehire-i hayru'l-enâm ve memâlik-i mahrûsemizden sâir bilâd-ı İslâma vürûd ve vüfûd eden hüccâc ve züvvâr ve kâdimîn ve tüccâr ve bi'l-cümle âmed-şod eden sığâr u kibâr mecmû'una 'inneme'l-mü'minûne ihvetun' nazm-ı ülfet-resmi üzere mu'âmele-i bi'l-mücâmele olunarak sâir müslimîn ve muvahhidîn misillü, merkûmlar dahi her hâlde mer'iyyü'l-etrâf ve mu'azzezü'l-eknâf kılınıp, mukaddemâ İranîlere olan vaz' bunların haklarında külliyen terk ve ziyy ve kıyâfetleri cihetinden mûmâ-ileyhime vechen mine'l-vücûh dahl ü ta'arruz olunmadan hazer ve mücânebet oluna" See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları,* 361.

[1410] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 95–96.

legality of the Ja‘fari legal school. From the perspective of Constantinople, these indicators were more than enough to meet the internal Persian demands, if they did not have any other aim.

The letters of the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam* to Nadir Shah, not that of Mahmud I, explained the reasons for the Ottoman rejections. Again, these letters only listed several reasons for the Ottoman rejection of the *rukn* offer, and remained silent on the legality of the Ja‘fari school. This fact again shows that the Porte had implicitly accepted Ja‘farism, unlike the clear rejection of a *rukn* in the Ka‘ba. The *şeyhülislam*’s letter captures that implicit recognition quite delicately. He first listed the following three proposals of Nadir that the Ottomans explicitly accepted: a permanent Persian consul at Constantinople, the freeing of Persian prisoners, and the appointment of a Persian *emiru’l hac*. Then, he wrote that Nadir had asked for two further demands: acceptance of Imam Ja‘far’s legal school as the fifth Sunni school and the establishment of a prayer location for the Ja‘faris in the Ka‘ba. Surprisingly, the *şeyhülislam* started to provide his indirect legal excuses for not accepting a Ja‘fari *rukn* in the Ka‘ba and continued the letter without coming back to the Ja‘fari question. He completely omitted the demand for the acceptance of Ja‘farism as the fifth school. The *şeyhülislam*’s mentioning of the Ja‘fari proposal among Nadir’s demands, but leaving it unanswered in the letter, shows a conscious neglect. It gave Nadir the message that the Ottomans had no problem with the Ja‘fari legal school, as long as he did not ask for the explicit recognition of it. The *şeyhülislam*’s response was another indicator that out of Nadir’s five proposals, the Porte had explicitly accepted three of them (prisoners, *emiru’l hac*, and consuls), implicitly accepted one of them (the legality of Ja‘fari legal school), and explicitly rejected one of them (the Ja‘fari *rukn* in the Ka‘ba). An important aspect of all the Ottoman letters was that none of them, except for the *şeyhülislam*’s, mentioned to the word “Ja‘farism.” They always referred to Nadir’s Ja‘farism demand with several indirect phrases like “the other article,” “the article that should be folded,”

etc. This shows the firmness of the Porte on not granting explicit recognition to Ja'farism, unlike its implicit recognition.

As for the political (*mülkî*) and legal (*şer'i*) excuses, there was actually not much difference between them. The Ottoman legal excuse depended on the social and political excuses and did not provide any solid legal argument on its own regarding the illegitimacy of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba according to Sunni jurisprudence.[1411] The grand vizier's letter provided the political reasons, and the *şeyhülislam*'s letter provided the legal one. Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha wrote first that in earlier times Muslim states had all been from the Sunni sect, and four Sunni school established themselves in all Muslim lands, including the Hejaz. Until the beginning of the tenth century after the Hijra –a reference to the birth of the Safavids– the people of Iran had also followed these sects. In time, legal schools other than the famous four (Shafi, Maliki, Hanbali, and Hanafi) were forgotten. That is why the people of India and Sind, the Uzbek lands, North Africa, and especially the Hejaz had fanatical views against unfamiliar sects.[1412]

The congregational prayer locations had been established according to the four legal schools. People prayed not according to their country, but according to the legal sect they followed, across countries. To introduce another prayer location for a new sect in the Ka'ba by force (*taht-ı zâbıtaya ircaları*) would be a dangerous attempt (*emr-i hatîr*) due to people's fanaticism. If the Ottomans included the Ja'fari *rukn* article in the treaty, it would have caused

[1411] This is a critical point, since there was a categorical difference between the legal responses of the Ottomans in 1736 and in the post-1738 period, after getting Nadir's own response. Nadir refused to sign the peace treaty sent by the sultan on the basis of the refusals of the Porte to explicitly recognize Ja'farism and to permit a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Kaaba. Nadir's denial convinced the Ottoman government that he was challenging the sultan's authority in the Ottoman domains. From then on, the Porte started to reject the legitimacy of the Ja'fari legal school according to *sharia* directly and explicitly. While the *şeyhülislam*'s indirect legal excuses against Ja'fari *rukn* in the Kaaba indicated an implicit Ottoman acceptance of the legality of the Ja'fari school in 1736, direct legal arguments against the legitimacy of Ja'fari legal school itself showed an explicit Ottoman rejection of Ja'farism altogether in the post-1738 period.

[1412] "bilâd-ı Hind ü Sind ve ü Özbekiyye ve deşt ü emâkin-i mağrib-zemîn ve husûsan aktâr-ı Hicâziyye ahâlîsi mezheb-i gayr-i me'lûfde kemâl-i ta'assub üzere oldukları…" See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 353.

rumors among people due to their unfamiliarity with this new sect. Mehmed Pasha continued that there was no reason to create disorder in the Hejaz, as Nadir's achievement in Persia and the sultan's support of it would have been heard by every Muslim, lowly or distinguished, in the Ka'ba, which was the "gathering place of ethnicities in the world" (*mecma'-ı ecnâs-ı âlem olan Beyt-i Mükerrem*).

These remarks are important, as they showed that the Porte considered the political aspect of the offer seriously. First, for the first time in history, people largely from the same country would have prayed in congregation exclusively with each other. Second, the Porte was aware of the propaganda aspect of establishing a *rukn* in the Ka'ba. Then, the Grand Vizier argued that neither earlier Ottoman sultans, nor rulers of other Sunni dynasties possessing the Hejaz included the matter of sect in international treaties. He added that the government had checked the court archives and did not find any references to sect in earlier treaties. The Grand Vizier underlined that not rulers but *ulema* should deal with religious matters. He concluded that there were also some other secret political drawbacks (*mehâzîr-i hafiyye-i mülkiye*), which the ambassador and Persian *mulla*s could tell the Shah.[1413]

The *şeyhülislam*'s legal excuse for not allowing a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba was as follows. Since Muslims had prayed according to four Sunni schools for centuries in the Ka'ba, it had become a sign (*şi'âr*) of Sunnism. No one had ever before attempted to change this practice. Without a doubt, to make a change in this established practice would cause disorder (*fesad ve ihtilâl*), which was prohibited by *sharia*. So, the *şeyhülislam* did not come up with a direct legal reason proving the illegitimacy of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba. Indeed, he could not do that, since the Ottomans implicitly accepted the legitimacy of the Ja'fari legal school. The delicate

[1413] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 355–52.

Ottoman stance between implicit acceptance of Ja'farism and explicit rejection of the *rukn* in the Ka'ba caused them to use indirect legal justifications in rejecting the *rukn* offer.

Besides these letters, there were written instructions given by Mahmud I to the embassy mission. There, the sultan instructed that should Nadir Shah ask further questions about the *rukn* issue, the ambassador needed to raise the following points: the Ottoman dynasty had acquired the title of "caliph of God" by incorporating the Two Holy Sanctuaries (*Haremeyn-i Şerifeyn*) into the Ottoman domains. However, they refrain from calling themselves "ruler" (*hâkim*) of the Haremeyn, and instead called themselves "servant" (*hâdim*) of the Haremeyn. These Holy Sanctuaries were like two stable poles and had several special privileges. It was an established custom of the Ottoman dynasty to leave everything in these Sanctuaries as it was and to not interfere.[1414] Mahmud I's emphasis on his unique privilege of "serving" the Haremeyn and not allowing others to touch this highly special place are in line with the protective reactions of other rulers possessing the Hejaz, as I discussed in Chapter One. The remarks of the sultan and the grand vizier clarified that the Ottomans were not going to share their prerogative in the Hejaz with Nadir Shah, the first ruler of a newly-born Sunni dynasty bordering the eastern frontier of the empire.

The Porte did not leave the emphasis on the caliphate of the sultan only to the ambassador's verbal responses based on these written instructions. Above, I discussed how the Ottoman delegation elaborated on the supreme caliphate of the Ottoman sultan over other Muslim monarchs after the Persian representatives made threats against the Ottomans. The letters from Constantinople to Nadir show that the Porte took this issue quite seriously, arguably in a way unprecedented since Selim I. The Porte had received a second Sunni challenge from Persia in the space of ten years, after 221 years of Shiite rule in Iran. As the written instruction

[1414] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik,* 148–49.

above show, Nadir's direct demand regarding the Ka'ba, the main base of the sultan's claim for universal caliphate, was enough to ring alarm bells in Constantinople. Nadir's seemingly humble attitude in accepting Mahmud I as the supreme caliph did not convince the sultan about his sincerity. The Porte took the highest discursive precautions against Nadir by underlining the main soft power tool used by the Porte in foreign policy toward Muslim states: the great caliphate of the sultan.

In his long introduction to royal peace (*ahidnâme-i hümayûn*), Mahmud I qualified the Ottoman dynasty as possessing "the great caliphate" (*hilâfet-i kübra*), and himself as "caliph on Earth" (*halîfeten fi'l arz*) and as deserving to be called "the commander of the faithful" (*emiru'l Mü'minîn*) after the four rightly-guided caliphs by right and by heredity (*irsen ve istihkâken*).[1415] He claimed, thus, that the Ottoman sultan was the *ulu'l emr*, the Qur'anic phrase referring to "those in authority," whom the Muslims should obey.[1416] He continued that, due to these qualities of the Ottoman dynasty, Muslim rulers in the East, West, South, and North knew that helping the Sublime State (*Devlet-i Seniyye*) and even joining and becoming attached (*iltihâk ve intisâb*) to it was the guarantee of the stability of their states (*bâ'is-i sebât-ı devlet*) and of salvation in the hereafter (*sebeb-i necât-ı âhiret*). After these remarks, Mahmud I claimed that God had made him *imam* of all people (*li al-nāsi imāman*).[1417] In the remaining part, the sultan called himself "caliph" four times. Similarly, other letters from Constantinople included exceptional references to the caliphate of the Ottoman sultan.[1418]

[1415] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları,* 364–63.

[1416] For a recent work on *ulu'l amr,* see Mun'im Sirry, "Who Are Those in Authority? Early Muslim Exegesis of the Qur'anic Ulū'l-Amr," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (2021): 483.

[1417] "'innî câ'iluke li'n-nâsi imâmâ' işâretine mazhariyyet ile 'fa'hküm beyne'n-nâsi bi'l-adl' emr-i şerîfinin tenfîzine tahsis kılınan cânib-i hümâyûn-ı ma'delet-makrûn ve taraf-ı akdes-i mevhibet-nümûnumuza…" See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 363.

[1418] Mahmud I's letter to Nadir via Abd al-Baqi Khan referred the caliph title of the sultan seven times. See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları,* 360–58. The *şeyhülislam*'s letter also called Mahmud I caliph five times. He qualified the Ottoman sultan as "the great caliph" (*halîfe-i uzmâ*), "the Sultan of Islam" (*sultanu'l İslâm*), and "the caliph of God on Earth" (*halîfetullahi fi'l 'âlem* and *halîfeten fi'l arz*). See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları,* 350.

Arguably, Mahmud I's assertions about his universal caliphate status represented the apex of the history of the Ottoman caliphate since Selim I. To the best of my knowledge, he was the first Ottoman sultan to declare himself *emîru'l Mu'minîn*. Ahmed III's claim about his universal caliphate and superiority over Ashraf had not included either *emîru'l Mu'minîn* or *ulu'l emr*. Moreover, by underlining the duty of other Muslim rulers from all corners of the world toward the Ottoman sultan, Mahmud I warned Nadir Shah not to challenge the sultan, but to obey him. As I discussed above, Nadir did not directly challenge the caliph title of the Ottoman sultan; on the contrary, he positioned himself always below the Ottoman caliph in rank. His sending of the epistle to the Ottoman grand vizier was just another official indicator of this "humble" attitude. Considered from this perspective, the unusual Ottoman stress on the universal caliphate of Mahmud I presents an unusual picture. However, it shows that, despite his humility in words, the Porte considered Nadir's demands regarding the Ka'ba too challenging to the sultan's caliph title, given that Mahmud I's insistence on his caliphate exceeded that of Ahmed III, whose title of caliphate had been explicitly challenged in legal terms by Ashraf and the Afghan *ulema*.

All in all, in 1736, the Porte implicitly accepted Ja'farism as a Sunni school to strengthen Nadir's legitimacy within Persia. However, the Ottoman government firmly rejected any external aspect of the Ja'farism offer, and aimed to not let Nadir's impact exceed the boundaries of Persia. It was possible that the Porte could have explicitly accepted the legitimacy of the Ja'fari school, while still rejecting a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba. However, any explicit recognition would have strengthened the Persian argument in their insistence on establishing the *rukn* in the Ka'ba, as Ja'farism would have become a legitimate Sunni school alongside the other four. Indeed, the Iranians used the implicit Ottoman acceptance against the Porte at the Council of Najaf. Thus, presumably, the Porte could have granted explicit recognition to Ja'farism only if

it felt completely secure about the non-existence of Nadir's external aims.[1419] The Ottoman government was not, in fact, secure in this regard, since neither Nadir's recent challenges nor the fact that the Persian delegation did not sign the peace treaty upon Nadir's firm instructions provided any security to the Porte.

C. Escalation, 1737-42: Correspondence between Mahmud I and Nadir

In the escalation period, several reciprocal embassies were exchanged between Constantinople and wherever Nadir was. Since there were many envoys coming and going between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, a clarification is needed.[1420] First, Nadir sent Muhammad Rahim Khan and Nazar Ali Khan to the Ottoman court in the end of 1737. The mission was sent before the arrival of the Ottoman and Persian missions from Constantinople to Nadir and added another stipulation for the Perso-Ottoman peace: the approval of the peace by the Russians. The embassy of Muhammad Rahim Khan and Nazar Ali Khan arrived in Constantinople on June 24th, 1738. They left the capital on December 15th, 1738.[1421]

Second, the Ottoman mission to Iran with the Ottoman peace draft and replies to the Ja'farism proposal left Constantinople on December 4th, 1736 and reached Nadir in Kandahar on May 9th, 1738,[1422] only two weeks after his capture of Kandahar.[1423] The mission was composed of Mustafa Pasha, who was a *bey* and newly elevated to the rank of pasha; Abdullah Efendi, the current *fetva emini*; and Halil Efendi, the previous *fetva emini*.[1424] The new Persian mission, represented by Ali Mardan Khan, and the Ottoman mission left Kandahar for Constantinople with Nadir's response letter on May 21st, 1738.[1425] Two Ottoman *ulema* arrived

[1419] Again, this was only one side of the question. The reliability of the overnight sectarian change was also a critical matter, making the explicit acceptance of Ja'farism quite difficult.
[1420] Here, I depend mostly on M. Nureddin Özel's MA Thesis, in which he documented in detail the voyages of diplomatic missions between 1736 and 1747.
[1421] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 118.
[1422] Özel, 117. The Persian mission reached Kandahar alongside the Ottomans.
[1423] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 119. Nadir Shah captured the city on March 23rd, 1738.
[1424] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik*, 98–100.
[1425] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 119.

in the Ottoman capital in August 1739.[1426] Ali Mardan Khan died in Sivas in the beginning of 1739 on his way to Constantinople,[1427] but the Porte still received Nadir's letter. In his responses, Nadir insisted on the explicit acceptance of Ja'farism, and the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba.

Third, Nadir Shah sent another envoy, Hacı Khan, to replace the deceased Ali Mardan Khan. Hacı Khan set out from Attock, a city in today's Punjab province of Pakistan, on October 23rd, 1739 and arrived in the Ottoman capital on March 7th, 1741.[1428] Nadir sent Hacı Khan as the conqueror of India, with an elephant as a "gift of India" for Mahmud I.[1429] The corresponding Ottoman mission was composed of Münif Mustafa Efendi and Nazif Mustafa Efendi, who were from the finance bureaucracy. They departed from Constantinople in June 1741 and arrived in Karakaytak near Darband, where Nadir was at the time, on January 13th, 1742.[1430] The Porte rejected Ja'farism again, this time explicitly based on legal justifications. There was another letter sent from the grand vizier to the *i'timād al-dawla* sometime between March 29th, 1740 and March 18th, 1741 (1 Muharrem – 30 Zilhicce 1153).[1431] The grand vizier complained about the occupation of a fortress in Van province by the governor of Tabriz.

The frequency of the correspondence increased in 1742, the final year before the war. Nadir sent Münif and Nazif Efendis back from Dagestan with two epistles. Nadir threatened the Ottomans with war and the taking of certain Ottoman territories that he had inherited from Timur, if the Porte did not accept his Ja'farism proposals. The envoys departed on January 24th,

[1426] The Ottoman and Persian missions arrived in İznikmid. The sultan ordered Abdullah Efendi and Halil Efendi to proceed to Constantinople, and Mustafa Pasha and the Persian mission to continue to wait in İznikmid on July 27th, 1739 (20 Rebiulahir 1152). See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 530. Thus, the two *ulema* should have arrived in Constantinople in August 1739. The rest of the mission arrived in the capital in December 1739, at the latest. See Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 119.
[1427] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 145, 1510 Evail-i Zilkade 1151 (February 10th-19th, 1739).
[1428] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 110, 120.
[1429] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 334.
[1430] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 110, 121.
[1431] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-359, pp. 591-92; *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 338–37.

1742 and arrived in Constantinople on April 10th, 1742.[1432] Besides his letters to the Porte, after the departure of the Ottoman envoys, Nadir issued a *firman* to every corner of Persia that underlined the new Sunni identity of the state and also announced to everyone that the Ottoman sultan had rejected Ja'farism proposal.[1433] Moreover, around mid-1742, Nadir sent another letter to Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, while the former was still in Dagestan.[1434] The letter clarified that there were two options before the Porte: either the acceptance of Nadir's Ja'farism proposal or war. Mahmud I only replied to Nadir's letter that came via Ahmed Pasha. The sultan penned the reply on September 25th, 1742 and in it again rejected Nadir's proposals.[1435] The letter reached Nadir, who was still in Dagestan, in early 1743.[1436] This royal epistle closed the intense correspondence period between the two courts that had started in 1736. The next two years witnessed a severe war between the Ottomans and the Persians.

Below I will examine the correspondence between the Persians and the Ottomans from 1737 to 1742 in chronological order. The Persian insistence on the Ja'farism proposal and the Ottoman resistance against it will be the main topic of discussion.

C.1. The Embassy of Muhammad Rahim Khan and Nazar Ali Khan to Constantinople

Nadir's letter of 1737 to Mahmud I introduced a new condition for the peace to be signed between the Persians and the Ottomans.[1437] He informed the sultan, whom Nadir again called "the star in the sky of the sultanate and the caliphate" (*necmen li-feleki's-saltanati ve'l-hilâfeti*), that due to the Treaty of Ganja (1735), Russia should be involved in the peace process between Persia and the Ottoman state.[1438] He added that, nevertheless, it was also a necessity for him to

[1432] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 122.
[1433] Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 232–34; Muhammad Kazim Marvi, *'Alam Ara-i Nâdîrî*, 3:980–82.
[1434] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 766–67.
[1435] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 326–25, (25 Receb 1155).
[1436] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 210.
[1437] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-317, pp. 501-02; *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 343–42.
[1438] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Treaty of Ganja stipulated that neither Persia nor Russia was to make peace with the Ottoman Empire without the consent of each other.

regard the enemy of the sublime state as his own enemy, and its friend of as his own friend, due to his religious and confessional unity with the *padishah*, the protector of Islam (*pâdişâh-ı İslâm-penâh*). He did not omit calling the Ottoman state the supreme state/sultanate (*devlet-i kübrâ*, *devlet-i uzmâ*, and *saltanat-ı uzmâ*). Nadir offered that Persia could become a mediator between the Ottomans and the Russians to end the ongoing war. He informed the sultan that he had sent two other envoys to the Russian court with the same aim of mediation. He asked that the Persian ambassadors to Russia and to the Porte meet at a point on the Russo-Ottoman border together with representatives from Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In this gathering, the Russians and the Ottomans were to make peace with each other. In a nutshell, he let the Porte know that in order for the Ottomans to be able to make peace with Persia, the Ottoman government should first end its fight with Russia. Additionally, the Porte should seek Russian approval for the peace between Constantinople and Isfahan.

This letter confirmed a characteristic of Nadir's foreign policy that he had shown during the official peace negotiations in Constantinople in 1736: being humble in words, but tough in action. Above all, the article in the Treaty of Ganja had already been in effect since March 1735, and Nadir had not brought it into the earlier peace negotiation. Moreover, the ending of the war between the Russians and the Ottomans was only a matter of time as of March 1736, the month Nadir sent his letters and the Persian mission to Constantinople. Indeed, Lothair Joseph Konigsegg, who replaced Eugen de Savoy in the presidency of Hofkriegsrat, penned a letter to the Grand Vizier on December 16th, 1736.[1439] The letter accused the Porte of attacking the Russians unjustly and causing war with the Russians. One of the supports for Konigsegg's

[1439] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-274, 432-36. Name Defteri only included the Ottoman translation of the letter.

argument was that Nadir had also informed the Russian state that the Ottomans intended to begin a major military assault.[1440]

Furthermore, Russia officially informed Nadir that the war on the Ottomans had started and even offered an allied attack against the Ottomans sometime in the spring of 1736.[1441] Still, even if there was no war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Nadir would have informed the Porte about the article, as the Russian approval was a *sine quo non* for peace between the Ottomans and the Persians.[1442] Nadir's insistence on the Ja'farism proposal was already an obstacle to the ratification of the peace. Now, he added two further conditions: the ending of the fight between the Ottomans and the Russians, and the approval of Russia of the peace between the Ottomans and the Persians. These were indicators that Nadir was not so inclined toward "unity" and "peace" with the great caliph as he pretended in his letters. Significantly, Nadir only sent a letter to Mahmud I, not to the grand vizier, in 1737. Nadir maintained this diplomatic stance, indicating equality in rank between the Ottoman and Persian states, until his death in 1747, even after the Treaty of Kerden in 1746. Thus, his first letter to the grand vizier in 1736 as the shah of Iran was also the last letter from the shah to the grand vizier during his short-lived dynasty.

Nadir's letter caused anger in the Porte. Mahmud I replied to Nadir's one-page letter with a two-and-a-half page epistle.[1443] Mahmud I reciprocated Nadir's emphasis on the newly-established religious unity between the Ottomans and the Persians throughout the letter. However, the Ottoman sultan gave clear messages to Nadir about the Porte's position with regard to Russia, and reprimanded Nadir's reluctance to conclude peace with the Ottomans in

[1440] "Devlet-i Aliyye'nin bilcümle kuvvet ve miknetiyle Moskov üzerine hareket eylemek niyetinde olduğunu, Acem Şahı, Moskov Devleti'ne haber verdikde,…" See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-274, p. 434.
[1441] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 107.
[1442] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Porte acquired a Latin version of the Treaty of Ganja from Pylyp Orlik (d. 1742), *hetman* of Ukraine. However, that copy did not include the condition on the necessity of a Russian presence in any peace between the Ottomans and the Persians. See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 285.
[1443] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 342–40.

indirect but strong words. Regarding Russia, Mahmud I stated that the Russians had caused the war for two reasons: first, they had become haughty toward the Ottomans; second, they had violated the terms of the Eternal Peace. Mahmud I's mentioning of the Russian haughtiness was presumably an indirect message to Nadir, who was adding obstacles to the conclusion of peace with the Porte. The Ottoman sultan analyzed Russian aggression by discussing the case with reference to international law and diplomacy (*kavâid ve rusûm-i düvel*) in an abstract way. He claimed that if it were possible to protect the honor of state and get what one deserved through a peace agreement without shedding blood, and if one turned away from peace without any reason and only for territorial expansion and selfish aspirations, it was apparent that one would be considered reprehensible by all.[1444] This remark fitted Nadir's position as well as that of Tsarina Anna Ivanovna. It was Nadir who had refused to conclude the peace agreements and who continued his conquests without pause, challenging the Ottomans.

Regarding peace with the Russians, Mahmud I wrote that the conflict over their borders was still ongoing, so it was impossible to make peace in these conditions and it would thus be a futile attempt to send the Persian envoys to the Russian border. Moreover, the sultan added, the Russians were not inclined toward peace, as they did not send any news to the Porte regarding the other two Persian envoys sent to Russia. To ask for peace from Russia by sending the Iranian envoys would be a shame to the magnificence of Islam, beyond the glory of the Ottoman and Persian states.[1445] It was through this same religio-political discursive weapon that the Ottoman sultan pressed Nadir.

[1444] "bu hilâlde sefk-i dimâ ve ızrâr-ı berâyâ olunmaksızın musâlaha vechile tekmîl-i ırz-ı devlet ve tahsîl-i hak ve tatyîb-i hasârete dest-res mümkin iken, bilâ-mûcib tevsî'-i memleket ve dâiye-i nefsâniyyet zımnında cânib-i musâlahadan mücânebet eylediği hâlde, âlemiyân indinde medhûl ve menfûr olacağı âşikârdır." See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 341.

[1445] "tavsiye-i şâhîleri üzere sefîrân-ı mûmâ-ileyhimânın sûret-i tenezzülde bed'en re's-i hudûda irsâlleri unvân-ı azamet-nişân-ı devleteyne değil şân u şevket İslâma dahi mûris-i âr u şenâr olacağı zâhir-i bî-irtiyâbdır." See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 340.

All in all, Nadir's second embassy after becoming shah demonstrated that peace between the Ottomans and the Persians would become an impossible matter in the near future. For the Porte, the second stipulation besides Ja'farism would have been convincing enough about Nadir's external aims targeting the Ottoman domains and the authority of the House of Osman.

C.2. The Embassies of Ali Mardan Khan and Hacı Khan to Constantinople

The embassy of Mustafa Pasha and Ali Mardan Khan from Kandahar to Constantinople brought two letters from Nadir to Mahmud I.[1446] There was again no letter from the shah to the grand vizier. Moreover, Mahmud I's *ahidnâme-i hümayûn* became void, as Nadir did not agree to make peace with the sultan on these conditions.

Before moving on to Nadir's letters, I will first show that the Persians understood the Porte's implicit recognition of Ja'farism as a legitimate Sunni school. Muhammad Astarabadi, Nadir's official chronicler, highlighted that the Ottoman sultan's letter did not show explicit acceptance of the Ja'fari school. Astarabadi did not write that the Porte refused to accept Ja'farism. On the other hand, he does explain the clear Ottoman rejection of the *rukn* offer.[1447] As I will discuss in the section on the Council of Najaf below, the Persian version of the Najaf Document underlined that the Ottomans had accepted Ja'farism in the first instance, but had rejected the *rukn* in the Ka'ba from the beginning.

Nadir's letters had two main claims: First, explicit recognition of Ja'farism and the *rukn* in the Ka'ba were indispensable for the peace. Second, the Ottoman sultan was the great caliph, thus he had complete authority to grant both of these *religious* demands. Nadir wrote the often-quoted Qur'anic verse at the head of the letter: "It is He who has made you caliphs (vicegerents) in the earth."[1448] He qualified the Ottoman state as possessing "supreme sultanate" (*saltanat-ı*

[1446] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-340 and 341, pp. 550-52; *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 399–98.
[1447] "Dar nâma-i pâdishah-i vâlâ-câh-ı Rûm dar bâb-ı sar-mazhabi Hazrat-i Imâm Ja'far iz'ân-ı sarîh na-karda." See Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 189.
[1448] Qur'an: 35/39.

uzmâ) and "great caliphate" (*hilâfet-i kübrâ*), and the sultan as "protector of Islam" (*pâdişâh-ı İslâm-penâh*). Regarding the Ja'farism question, he expressed that if it had pertained to either politics or economy, he would have solved it by himself without inconveniencing the shadow of God, i.e., Mahmud I. However, he added, this matter was within the power of the sultan, given the religious/legal nature of the question.[1449]

Nadir basically turned the "great caliphate" of the sultan against him as an effective religio-political weapon. He aimed to undermine the caliphate of the sultan by challenging it not directly, but indirectly, unlike the Afghans. Moreover, Nadir's qualification of his offer as religious as opposed to political or economic indicated at least two things. First, similar to the presentation of the Ja'farism offer as an internal matter in 1736, Nadir maintained the same discourse that he had no political aim that could possibly threaten the Ottomans. Second, his audacious assertion that he would have solved the problem by himself, if it had been about politics or economics, was a dangerous showing off of his political and economic might, threatening the Ottoman sultan. In a word, Nadir's insistence on the declaration of the recognition of Ja'farism and establishment of the *rukn* in the Ka'ba verified for the Porte that Nadir's real aim went beyond the internal reasons he had presented so far.

The Porte waited for the arrival of Hacı Khan, the envoy replacing Ali Mardan Khan, to respond to Nadir's letters. However, before the arrival of Hacı Khan, the grand vizier sent a letter to the *i'timād al-dawla* of Iran, probably in 1740.[1450] He narrated a complicated frontier problem in Van province, at the end of which the governor of Tabriz captured two fortresses called Sumay and Huvedur. The grand vizier related that even after the Ottoman demands of

[1449] "Eğer bu husûslar mühimmât-ı mülkî ve mâlî olaydı, elbette devleteynin âlem-i ittihâdında ol pâdişâh-ı zıllu'llaha zahmet ve teklîf sadedine gelmeyip, yegânegî muktezâsınca kendimiz faysal verirdik. Lâkin makâsıd-ı mezkûre biraz umurdur ki ol pâdişâh-ı Sikender-şânın hayyiz-i fermân ve kudretindedir. Çün iki matlab ki rükn-i a'zam-ı bünyan-ı muslahadır ve nâ-tamam kalmışdır." See BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-340, p. 551; *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 339. The royal registries include only the Ottoman translation of Nadir's letter.
[1450] BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d 7-197, pp. 591-92; *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 338–37.

the governor, the latter refused to leave the fortresses unless he received orders from Nadir to do so. The grand vizier added that even if this was not a major issue, the spread of this news among other people on the frontier could create a serious problem. He asked the *i'timād al-dawla* to do what was necessary according to mutual love and alliance. What this conflict and the grand vizierial letter shows is that the relations between the Ottomans and the Persians were not as smooth and brotherly as the exchanged royal letters had been pronouncing since 1736. Besides the fact that Nadir refused to conclude peace with the Ottomans, there were even actual military threats from the Persians on the Ottoman frontier. Considering that Nadir conquered India in early 1739, these challenges on the eastern borders would have caused fear in Constantinople.

Hacı Khan, who arrived in Constantinople in March 1741, brought a letter from the shah to the sultan, and another from the *i'timād al-dawla* to the grand vizier.[1451] Nadir had written the letter after he conquered India in 1739. Now, he styled himself as "king of kings" (*şâh-ı şâhân*) and "sultan over the sultans of the earth" (*sultân bar salâtin-i jahân*), as struck on the new coins in India. The *khutba* in Delhi on Eid al-Adha on March 21st, 1739 was also read in his name.[1452] Nadir's letter to Mahmud I mostly covered his victory over the Mughal Muhammad Shah. Nadir noted that the Persians had killed over 40,000 Mughal soldiers. He highlighted that with this victory, the "well-protected domains of Persia" (*memâlik-i mahrûse-i İran*) now extend to the end of India and the Indian Ocean (*Bahr-i Muhit*). He also did not omit referring to his own alleged Turkoman genealogy when mentioning that of the Mughals. He briefly mentioned the Ja'farism offer, clearly repeating his demand of the sultan. In this letter, Nadir did not change his respectful language toward Mahmud I, whom the Persian shah

[1451] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 336–34. Again, Nadir did not send a letter to the Grand Vizier.
[1452] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 145.

again called the possessor of the great caliphate (*evc-i hilâfet, hilâfeti'l kübrâ, a'zam-ı hilâfet ve saltanat-ı cihan-dârî*) several times.

C.3. Ottoman Response with the Mission of Münif and Nazif Efendis

The Porte replied to all the Persian letters carried by the missions of Ali Mardan Khan (1739) and Hacı Khan (1741). In total, six letters were sent to the Persian court with the mission of Münif and Nazif Efendis in June 1741: two from Mahmud I to Nadir, two from the grand vizier to the *i'timād al-dawla*, and two from the *şeyhülislam* to the *i'timād al-dawla*.[1453]

Mahmud I responded to Nadir's boasting about his victory in India by describing the victory of the "standard of the Prophet," i.e., the Ottomans, over the "infidels," without naming the Russians and the Austrians. The letter presumably underlined that the Ottomans had not fought against another Muslim state, e.g., the Mughals. The second letter from the sultan dealt with the Ja'farism question. In the *hamdele* part (the praising of God) of the epistle, one of the Qur'anic verses quoted was: "To Allah belong the East and the West."[1454] It seemed a response to Nadir's detailed description of the new borders of his state. The *salvele* part (salutation upon the Prophet) quotes a *hadith* that Damad İbrahim Pasha had also used against Ashraf in 1725: "I was a prophet, when Adam was still between water and clay," again suggesting the incomparable hierarchical difference between the Ottoman dynasty and Nadir's newly-established rule. Regarding Nadir's five proposals, Mahmud I stated that the Ottoman state accepted three of them, since they did not include any legal, political, or economic (*şer'an ve mülken ve hâlen ve mâlen hücnet ü mahzûr*) problems.[1455]

He continued that the Ottoman state had been strictly bound by the *sharia* from its birth to the present day. Thus, he added, they asked the *ulema* about these proposals, and the *ulema*

[1453] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 334–28.
[1454] Qur'an 2:142.
[1455] This seems to be another reply to Nadir's ascertain that if Ja'farism had pertained to politics or economics, he would have solved it without asking the sultan. Mahmud I meant that any proposal from the Persians related in any way to the Ottomans, even if free from legal problems, could be rejected by the Ottoman state.

had unanimously agreed that religious law did not allow the acceptance of the Ja'fari legal school's legitimacy. Mahmud I's pointing to the *ulema* as the highest legal authority was a direct response to Nadir's claim that to accept his Ja'farism proposals was within the authority of the great caliph. The Ottoman sultan basically suggested that legal matters were beyond his legitimate authority, as only the *ulema* had jurisdiction over the legal area. With this move, he warded off Nadir's turning of his caliphate against him. Mahmud I's remarks also demonstrated a categorical change in the Ottoman approach to the legitimacy of the Ja'fari legal school. In 1736, the Porte had accepted Ja'farism, though implicitly. In 1741, however, the Ottoman state explicitly rejected it on legal grounds. Critically, the Porte's precaution in implicitly accepting Ja'farism at the beginning of negotiations enabled the Ottomans to transition to explicit rejection relatively easily.

Mahmud I touched upon the political aspect of the proposal, as well. The sultan referred to verbal expressions used by the Persian ambassadors, who claimed that there were two reasons for Nadir's insistence on the proposals: first, they would be privileges for Nadir alone among rulers; second, they would relieve Nadir of the burden and shame associated with Iran's previous sect.[1456] These reasons capture again how a seemingly religious proposal was simultaneously political. They show also the incorrectness of Nadir's claim in his letter sent with Ali Mardan Khan that the two proposals pertained only to religion and not to politics or economics. They were religio-political proposals from the outset. After underlining the political aspect of the proposal, Mahmud I added that the granting of the ability to appoint a Persian *emiru'l hac* would suffice to meet to both of these needs, i.e., gaining privilege and relief from shame. The sultan reasoned that neither a Muslim ruler today nor earlier Safavid shahs had

[1456] "bu keyfiyyet cenâb-ı devlet-me'âblarının beyne'l-mülûk bâ'is-i imtiyâz ü iftihârı ve ber-taraf-sâz-ı külfet-i hacâlet ü şerm-sârîleri olmak dâiyesine mübtenî idiği…" See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 331. They would be the verbal statements of the ambassadors, as Nadir's epistles did not explicitly state these reasons as such.

attained that privilege of appointing an *emiru'l hac*. Mahmud I again clarified that it was not the Porte but religious law itself that did not allow the acceptance of Nadir's Ja'farism proposals. That is why, he concluded, these proposals should be forgotten completely.

Another important indicator of the firm Ottoman rejection of the Ja'farism offer seems to have been the sending of two envoys who were from the finance bureaucracy, and not experts in religious law. Moreover, the letters of the sultan and the grand vizier, although not that of the *şeyhülislam*, did not name Ja'farism explicitly. They always referred to it indirectly, as had been the continuing discursive attitude of the Porte since 1736, showing the Ottoman decisiveness on this matter.

One of the two letters of the *şeyhülislam* presented the legal justification for rejecting the Ja'fari legal school as a legitimate Sunni school[1457] in one major argument: respectable books of the Hanafi school recognized only four legal schools belonging to the Sunni doctrine. These books were full of references to the other three schools, i.e., Shafi, Hanbali, and Maliki, and distinguished the Hanafi legal views from the other schools on every legal matter. Apparently, there was no reference in these books to the legal views of the Ja'fari school. Approving a legal school as legitimate depended on the views of the imams of the legal school recorded explicitly in respectable legal books. Thus, in the absence of views of Hanafi imams on Ja'farism, the Hanafi *ulema* of today had no authority to accept that legal school as a legitimate Sunni school.

The way the *şeyhülislam* justified the Ottoman rejection aimed to close the door completely. When the "great caliph" pointed to the Ottoman *ulema* as the authority on Ja'farism proposal, the Ottoman *ulema* pointed to the great imams of the *madhhab*, who had passed away centuries before and who had not granted their approval to the Ja'fari legal school within Sunnism. It meant a deadlock for Nadir's highly-desired "religious" proposal. Regarding the

[1457] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 328.

Ja‘fari *rukn* in the Ka‘ba, the Ottomans changed their reasoning there, as well. Unlike the indirect reason of “*fesad*” given in 1736, the *şeyhülislâm* now boldly stated that Ja‘farism was not a valid legal school according to Sunnism, and that there could not be a *rukn* in the Ka‘ba for an illegitimate school.

All in all, Nadir’s insistence on the explicit recognition of Ja‘farism and establishment of *rukn* in the Ka‘ba convinced the Porte that Nadir’s proposal posed a political challenge to the Ottomans. Constantinople thus abandoned its former position of implicitly recognizing Ja‘farism and rejecting the *rukn* in the Ka‘ba with vague political and indirect legal excuses. Now, it rejected both of them with explicit and direct legal justifications in such a way that no room remained for Ja‘farism to be accepted. It was neither Mahmud I, nor the current Hanafi *ulema*, but the deceased great imams of Hanafism who could rule on this matter.

Another critical point regarding the correspondence between the Persians and the Ottomans was that in 1741 the Porte presented itself as if its earlier rejection was the same as what it now conveyed. From this point on, the Ottomans behaved as though they did not recognize Ja‘farism even implicitly. Implicit recognition in the former instance had allowed the Ottomans to shift position relatively easily. However, as I will show below, in the Council of Najaf, the Persians underlined the Ottoman acceptance of Ja‘farism in the first instance. Modern scholarship has accepted the official Ottoman narrative, in which they presented themselves as a sultanate that had rejected Jafarism offers from the beginning on legal grounds, as the actual case.

C.4. Correspondence in 1742

In the face of the categorical Ottoman rejection, Nadir Shah also categorically changed his insistence. Out of the two letters from Nadir in 1742, the Ottoman Registrar of Royal Letters only includes one.[1458] In this letter, Nadir asked the sultan to send two respectable *ulema* to

[1458] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 328–27.

Persia. These *ulema* and the Persian *ulema* would gather in the presence of Nadir. Nadir suggested that, with his own interference, all disputed matters would be solved, and peace would be established.[1459] In contrast to the Ottomans, Nadir's official chroniclers included only the second letter in their works. In this second letter, Nadir demanded territories from the Ottoman domains, which he claimed he had inherited from Timur, unless the Porte accepted Ja'farism.[1460] He named Iraq-i Arab, Diyarbakr, and parts of Azerbaijan –Van and the surrounding territories in Kurdistan–[1461] as the inherited lands currently under Ottoman occupation. Nadir threatened the Ottomans with war by asserting that to solve the question completely, he would come to the Ottoman domains. He concluded his letter with a sarcastic threat: "I am hoping that, if Allah wills, the matter may be arranged there on my arrival."[1462] Thus, Nadir pushed his demand further in all directions both by demanding two Ottoman *ulema* and threatening the Ottomans with war.[1463] Münif and Nazif Efendis brought these two letters to Constantinople. The letter Nadir Shah sent through Ahmed Pasha to the Porte repeated the same demand and threat: either the Porte would accept the Ja'farism proposals, or Nadir would march on the Ottomans.[1464] Ironically, Nadir Shah still continued to recognize Mahmud I as the great caliph in both of the letters sent with Münif and Nazif Efendis.[1465]

[1459] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 328–27.

[1460] Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 231; Muhammad Kazim Marvi, *'Alam Ara-i Nâdîrî*, 3:979.

[1461] "Âzerbaycân hudûdları ki, ya'nî Van ve ol havâlîde olan Kürdistan'dır." See *İzzî Tarihi*, 130.

[1462] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 224. Translation belongs to Lockhart.

[1463] The omitting of Nadir's first letter by Astarabadi and Marvi, Nadir's chroniclers, is telling. The Persians only highlighted Nadir's more assertive letter. Subhi, the Ottoman chronicler, characterized the second letter as a paper containing "meaningless demands" (*metâlibât-ı bî-mâ'nâ*), revealing Nadir's "wicked inner intention" (*niyyet-i fâside-i derûn*), which was the abolition of friendship with the Ottoman state and to cause disorder and mischief. So, besides the ongoing religio-political conflict over Ja'farism, the preferences of the official chroniclers are a good example of official historiography from the pre-modern era. "…nâme-i merkūmeye mevzû'an kāime sûretinde irsâl eylediği kâğıdlarında dahi, istid'â-yı merkūmeye ba'zı metâlibât-ı bî-mâ'nâ ilâvesiyle niyyet-i fâside-i derûnu mutlakā Devlet-i Aliyye-i dâimü'l-karâr ile kat'-ı rişte-i musâfât u muvâlât ve âsâre-i gubâr-ı fitne vü fesâd olduğunu iş'âr ü imâ idüp,…" Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 746.

[1464] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 767.

[1465] He probably had the same attitude in his letter sent through Ahmed Pasha. But Subhi only summarized the letter and did not give the originial text. To the best of my knowledge, the Ottoman archives also did not register the letter.

This clear inconsistency between discourse and action shows the importance of taking context into account when analyzing diplomatic discourse. In this specific context, Nadir used the language of "inferior" not to show his obedience to the "superior," but to undermine the power of the superior more effectively. That discourse would render the sultan's position wrongful, as Mahmud I, the great caliph, had "wrongfully" rejected the purely "religious" offer of a Muslim ruler, who paid utmost respect to the caliph, and who aimed to do nothing but reconcile Muslim people divided for centuries. Nadir's discourse could address several audiences, such as Ottoman subjects on the eastern frontier, people from lower and higher classes in Constantinople, people of the Hejaz, Persian subjects, and so on. In any case, Nadir utilized his inferior rank as an effective discursive tool to challenge the authority of the Ottoman sultan in his religio-political propaganda, addressing a wide range of audiences within and beyond Persia. In a déjà vu-like instance, the Sunni identity of the dynasty ruling over Iran again created trouble for the Porte in terms of religio-political propaganda, just as the Afghans had in the 1720s.

Nadir's turning of a religious offer into a political conflict with hereditary claims to lands showed clearly how international politics were embedded in his "religious" offer. If the Ja'farism offer was only about Nadir's internal legitimacy and reconciliation between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, then the implicit Ottoman recognition of Ja'farism, freeing of Persian prisoners taken during the Safavid era, prohibition of enslavement of the Persians, and appointment of an Iranian e*miru'l hac* would have been mostly sufficient to attain both of these goals. However, these achievements were not enough to challenge the authority of the Ottoman sultan in the broader Middle East region. As Olson aptly observed, Nadir's goals with his "religious" proposals were "to establish his independence as a Muslim ruler and also *to lay*

down a challenge to Istanbul's sovereignty."[1466] What created conflict between Nadir Shah and the Ottomans was not his first goal, but his second.

There is one more layer within this complicated question: the integrity of religion and politics in pre-modern times made any religious offer from a ruler an inherently political one at the same time. It would be fair to assume that Nadir would have concluded peace with the Porte if the Ottoman government had accepted all his offers, including explicit recognition of Ja'farism and the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba. As a matter of fact, he only presented a claim to Ottoman territory five years after the initial presentation of his five offers to the Porte and after the Constantinople's categorical rejection. Nadir's turning of a religious offer into a territorial demand can give us, as modern observers, an idea of the expected concrete political value of visible prestige in the Ka'ba. It suggests that explicit recognition of Ja'farism and establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba were as valuable as acquiring large territories from the eastern Ottoman provinces for a regional ruler who aspired to become a second Timur.

Nadir's *firman* within Persia in early 1742 was another propaganda tool for attaining his religio-political target.[1467] In the *firman*, he singled out Shah İsmail as the only figure who had divided Islamic sects and initiated conflicts. He narrated the history of sects in Islam as if there had been no conflict between Muslim sects in the long period between the first caliph and Shah Ismail. This was of course not the case, as there had been severe sectarian conflicts and disagreements before 1501, as well. Specifically, regarding Sunni-Shii strife, the Sunnis considered Shii doctrine a deviation (*dalâla*) from the straight path. Nadir wanted to make his Ja'farism solution as acceptable as possible within his narration of a "harmonious" history of Islamic sects. This narration, eventually, indicated that the Ottoman sultan was on the

[1466] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 117–18. Emphasis added.
[1467] Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri*, 232–34; Muhammad Kazim Marvi, *'Alam Ara-i Nâdîrî*, 3:980–82.

unrighteous side, and had not acted in accordance with his great caliph title. The only problem was Shah İsmail's innovations, and Nadir had removed them all. How could the caliph of Muslims reject an offer that would return harmony to the Muslim world?

The Porte received a summary of Nadir's response in March 1742 from the report of Münif and Nazif Efendis, a month before their arrival in Constantinople.[1468] Regardless of Ja'farism, Nadir's inheritance claim to Ottoman lands carried the crisis to a higher level. Nadir had already kept Baghdad under siege for seven months in 1733. Now, he again pursued the same goal with a claim of "rightful ownership" to Ottoman lands. The Porte sent war orders to several pashas as early as March 1742.[1469] A consultative assembly meeting on April 23rd, 1742 again resulted in further war preparations on the eastern frontier. The government appointed Ali Pasha, the governor of Anatolia, as commander-in-chief of the army against Nadir.[1470]

The *Şeyhülislam* Seyyid Mustafa Efendi issued a *fetva* declaring the legality of fighting against Nadir probably a week later.[1471] The long question part explained the matter from the perspective of the Porte, with new justifications: The sultan of Islam and the Muslims, i.e., Mahmud I, followed (*taklid*) the Hanafi school.[1472] The Porte had informed Nadir several times that the proposed school, i.e., Ja'farism, was a Shiite legal school; and that no authoritative earlier Sunni *ulema* or *fiqh* book had accepted Ja'farism as a legitimate legal school. And to accept a legal school as legitimate was only within the jurisdiction of the earlier *ulema*. However, Nadir had threatened to "invade" (*istila*) certain Ottoman lands, which had previously

[1468] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 737–38; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 307.
[1469] Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 307.
[1470] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 746–47.
[1471] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 148-768; Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 746–47. Ernest Tucker and İlker Külbilge date the *fetva* to 24 Safar 1155 (April 30th, 1742). I was not able to specify the date. However, considering the narration in Subhi, this date seems plausible. Still, the date of the *fetva* could also have been April 23rd, 1742. See Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 79; Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 308.
[1472] He refers to the inability of the later *ulema* to engage in independent legal reasoning (*ictihad*).

been invaded by Timur Han, if the sultan did not accept the Ja'farism offer.[1473] It was known from several Sunni and Shiite law books, the *fetva* continued, that Ja'farism was a legal school within Twelver Shiism. This sect was in contradiction with Sunnism both in doctrine and law. It showed animosity toward the Companions of the Prophet. Moreover, the news from righteous Muslims who observed the Persians showed that the Persians still followed this sect.

Then, came the question: Is it lawful for the sultan of the Muslims and for all Muslims to fight against the Persians, who insist on the acceptance of a Shiite school, spread corruption,[1474] gather soldiers to shed Muslim blood, and intend to attack the Abode of Islam by openly exercising the signs of the heretics (*revafiz*) and Shiism in the Abode of Islam?[1475] The *şeyhülislam* answered: "Yes, it is." The *fetva* was also signed by five other higher scholar-bureaucrats.[1476]

Among other things, the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* shows two things: First, in line with the post-1738 policies of the Porte, the *şeyhülislam* considered Ja'farism to be a school within Shiism, which rendered its Sunnitization legally impossible. Second, for the first time since 1736, the Ottoman side showed that it would recognize the Persians as heretics, as before. With references to "heresy" and the "Abode of Islam," the Porte returned to its age-old religio-political discourse against the Iranians. This was Ottoman government's counter-threat to Nadir's threats.

[1473] By using the word "*istila*," the *şeyhülislam* claimed that the Ottomans were the rightful owners of those lands. Moreover, he called Timur not "Shah" but "Han," to degrade Timur's and Nadir's status.

[1474] For a recent article on the legal concept of spreading corruption, see Yavuz Aykan, "A Legal Concept in Motion: The 'Spreader of Corruption' (Sā'ī Bi'l-Fesād) from Qarakhanid to Ottoman Jurisprudence," *Islamic Law and Society* 26, no. 3 (2018): 252–71.

[1475] "Böyle mezheb-i Şii hakdır deyu tasdik ve kabul ve mezheb-i hamis ettirdim deyu inad ve ısrar ve sa'y bil fesad ile dima-i Müslimini istihlal ve emval ve iyallerini ğaret kasdıyla asker çekip, asar-ı Revafız ve Şiiyyeyi diyar-ı ehl-i Sünnet ve Cemaatde alenen icra ve Daru'l İslam'a hücum eyleseler, şer ve fesadlarını def' için Sultanu'l Müslimin zıllullahi teala fi'l arzeyn hazretleri ile amme-i müslimine mezburlar ile kıtal meşru mudur?"

[1476] Other signatories: Esseyyid Mahmud; Nakibu'l Eşraf; Mehmed Zeynel Abidin, the *kadiasker* of Rumeli; Mehmed Emin, a former *kadiasker* of Rumeli; Mehmed Esad, a former *kadiasker* of Rumeli; and Mirzazade Nili Ahmed, a former *kadiasker* of Rumeli.

Mahmud I sent his reply to Nadir on September 25th, 1742. If the *fetva* represented the "stick," the sultan's letter can be seen as the "carrot." Without mentioning the letters brought by Münif and Nazif Efendis, the sultan started his epistle by stating that he had received Nadir's letter sent through Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Basra and Baghdad.[1477] Mahmud I again underlined how four legal school were established in Sunnism. He stated that Nadir had demanded two further *ulema* to discuss the Ja'farism proposal with sincere religious intentions. However, he added, as long as Nadir's aim was to establish affection and union between Muslims and to remove disunity, this fortunate aim would be achieved. Clearly, the sultan was again questioning Nadir's "religious" intentions. Then, Mahmud I revised the history of Islam as narrated by Nadir. The Ottoman sultan wrote that in early Islamic history, there had only been disagreement on legal matters (*furû'*); however, these turned into doctrinal disagreements (*usûl*). This remark meant that even if problems in legal matters regarding Ja'farism could be solved, it would not guarantee the solution of doctrinal problems per se.

Mahmud I added that those time were times of "independent legal reasoning" (*ictihad*) and the "saved party," i.e., the Sunnis, had chosen unity (*ittihâd*) in doctrine, and four legal schools in legal jurisdiction. The sultan basically repeated what the *şeyhülislam* had written in his last epistle: not the *ulema* of today, but earlier imams of the *madhhab* had exclusive right to accept or deny the legitimacy of a certain school. Both the *şeyhülislam* and the sultan referred implicitly to the famous post-tenth-century Sunni legal principle that the gate of independent legal reasoning was closed. To show that rulers were bound by the earlier *ulema*, Mahmud I followed the next sentence with a carefully selected phrase: "rulers who were in the hands of those sects" (*ol mezheblerin yedinde bulunan mülûk ve selâtîn*). Then, he remarked that sending two *ulema* would be pointless and would only increase the conflict, as there was no legal way for Ja'farism to be accepted. He concluded that for the good order of both states, Nadir should

[1477] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 326–25.

give up his insistence on Ja'farism. This letter closed the long period of diplomatic correspondence and negotiation that had started in 1736.

Nadir's late informing of the Porte about the necessity of Russian approval for the Perso-Ottoman peace and his dissatisfaction with the implicit recognition of Ja'farism by the Porte clarified the Persian political challenge to the Ottomans in 1738, if not earlier. However, both parties continued to maintain the political competition below the surface of a legal offer through legal language. Despite being an explanation of the dynamics of the Ottoman-Mamluk rivalry, the last paragraph of the conclusion of Cihan Muslu's dissertation also expresses well the way the competition between Mahmud I and Nadir was carried out: "Both powers formulated this new and complex sense of competition with the *shared language of diplomacy* and on the *common ideological ground of Islam*."[1478]

D. Peak, 1743-45: War and Nonstop Peace Negotiations

Mahmud I's last letter rendered the war only a matter of time. To be able to understand the dynamics of the war, the respective goals of the Ottomans and the Persians need to be clarified. Presumably, Nadir had two aims: first, to conquer his "inherited" lands; second, to make the Porte accept his Ja'farism demand. Unlike Nadir's seemingly limited aims, the Ottoman government had one major aim: to overthrow Nadir's Sunni rule in Iran and reestablish the Shiite Safavid state by installing Safi Mirza, the impostor prince. I argue that the Porte considered the real cause of its problems to be the Sunni identity of the new Persian state. Thus, the Porte had exactly the same plan both in the Ottoman-Afghan war in 1726 –replacing Ashraf with Tahmasb– and in the Perso-Ottoman War of 1743-1745 –replacing Nadir with Safi Mirza.

Unlike in other wars, Nadir's peace demands had started from the beginning of the war and continued until the end of it, almost incessantly for two years. During this period, in accordance with his failures on the Iraq front, Nadir gave up his *rukn* demand in December

[1478] Muslu, "Ottoman-Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions," 220. Emphasis added.

1743. After his failure in the siege of Kars, in September 1744 he sent another peace offer to the Porte, with the same conditions he had articulated in December 1743. The Porte rejected all of Nadir's peace offers consistently. In mid-August 1745, the Ottomans took the offensive against the Persians for the first time since the beginning of the war. I argue that both Nadir's continuous peace demands, and the firm rejection of the Ottoman government resulted from the difference of goals between Constantinople and Isfahan. Nadir's was a partial attempt to weaken the Ottoman Empire in territorial and religio-political senses. It was appropriate for him to gradually take back his challenges after his failures in the battlefield. However, no peace was acceptable for the Porte, as it targeted Nadir's very presence on the Persian throne.

Below, I will investigate the simultaneous development of war- and peace-making between 1743 and 1745. I will examine the Council of Najaf within this framework. Then, I will explore the Porte's Safi Mirza move along the same lines. Lastly, I will look at the Treaty of Kerden of 1746, comparing it with the earlier Ottoman peace draft, which Mahmud I signed in 1736 and Nadir rejected in 1738. I will show that after ten years of intense diplomatic competition and military engagement, the Persians accepted the Ottoman peace draft of 1736. However, this time the Porte did not give Nadir the privilege of appointing a Persian *emiru'l hac* for pilgrims.

D.1. 1743-45 Wars: Two Fronts, Two Different Reasons

The war of 1743-45 was fought on two fronts: Iraq and Kars. Nadir was on the offensive side on the Iraq front and the first to make an assault on the Kars front. After he failed in both attempts, the war did not end, as the Ottomans then took the offensive. The failure of the offensive sides in all three confrontations meant neither side could attain their goals. As in the Treaty of Hamadan of 1727, Mahmud I and Nadir Shah met at a middle point regarding their opposing goals.

D.1.1. The Iraq Front

Nadir Shah entered the Ottoman domains on the Iraq front in the end of May 1743.[1479] Around this time, he sent Mustafa Khan to Ahmed Pasha as an envoy. Nadir's message was that the Persian side had never wanted war. If the Porte had sent two *ulema* to discuss Ja'farism, the Iranians would have abandoned whatever in the Ja'fari legal school contravened the *sharia*; the Ottomans would therefore be responsible for the war in the hereafter.[1480] Nadir's message was quite similar to the one expressed in his letter to Mahmud I sent with the embassy of Münif and Nazif Efendis in 1742. Mehmed Ağa, the *kethüda* of Ahmed Pasha, who had met with Nadir several times during this process, carried Nadir's offer to Constantinople in person.

The government rejected Nadir's last offer in a consultative assembly meeting held on June 24th, 1743.[1481] This time, the *şeyhülislam* answered another question that had been added to the *fetva* of April 1742: Is it a religious obligation upon Ottoman soldiers and upon every Muslim to fight against the Persian soldiers who started to fight against the Muslims and assaulted the lands of Islam, when the *padishah* of Islam appoints a commander-in-chief and sends troops to protect the borders of Islam from enemy assault? The answer was again "Yes, it is."[1482] Mahmud I also rejected Nadir's offers categorically.[1483]

Compared to 1742, the emphasis on the identification of the Ottoman side as the side of Islam was emphasized more strongly. The *fetva* texts referred to the Ottomans using such phrases as "*padishah* of Islam" (*padişah-ı İslam*), "sultan of the Muslims" (*sultan-ı Müslimîn*), "the borders of Islam" (*suğûr-ı İslam*), "frontiers of Islam" (*serhadd-i İslam*), "people of Islam" (*ehl-i İslam*), "lands of Islam" (*bilâd-ı İslamiyye*), and so on. The language of Subhi, the official

[1479] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 815.
[1480] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 785.
[1481] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 771–73.
[1482] This *fetva* included the entire text of the earlier *fetva* word for word. It only added this last question, which depended on the current developments at the border. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 150-175; TSMA.e. 1572/17. The copy in the Topkapi Archives is also registered with the following numbers in the Ottoman Archives: 452/6. The latter was the current registration number.
[1483] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 818.

chronicler, reflects the same discourse. In his narration of the Perso-Ottoman conflict, he referred to the Ottoman side as the "frontiers of Islam" (*serhadat-i İslamiyye*) and "borders of the domains of Islam" (*hudûd-ı memâlik-i İslamiyye*), etc.[1484] On the other hand, Subhi characterized the Persian soldiers as the "people of heresy and apostasy" (*erbâb-ı rafz u ilhad*), and their occupation of Kirkuk as the "invasion of the Kizilbash" (*istilâ-i Kızılbaş*).[1485]

An important reason for this stress seems to have been the inclination of the Kurdish lords and people toward Nadir, as he occupied the frontier zones. The report of Mehmed Ağa, the *kethüda* of Ahmed Pasha, informed the Porte that except for Hâlid Pasha, the ruler of Bebe, all the other Kurds had accepted Nadir's suzerainty.[1486] The situation would have reminded the Ottoman government of the Ottoman-Afghan War of 1726. Indeed, the Porte sent a prominent scholar, Şehzade Abdullah, to the eastern frontier to disseminate the *fetva* to the Kurds in Diyarbakr, Şehrizor, Mosul, and Baghdad.[1487] A similar attempt was made targeting again the Kurds in the Kars region, the other frontier of the war.[1488]

D.1.1.2. The Council of Najaf

In the meantime, Nadir continued his military assaults. However, he was unsuccessful in capturing Mosul and Basra, and concluded peace with Ahmed Pasha at the beginning of December 1743. Nadir gave the occupied cities back to the Ottomans, and renounced the Ja'fari *rukn* demand.[1489] Still, he was adamant on the explicit recognition of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school. Nadir introduced the Council of Najaf initiative in this context. It was intended to further pressure the Porte to accept Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni school.

[1484] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 772, 774.
[1485] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 813.
[1486] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 817.
[1487] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 150-149, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1156 (June 23rd - July 2nd, 1743).
[1488] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 150-150, Evail-i Cemaziyelevvel 1156 (June 23rd - July 2nd, 1743).
[1489] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul*, 185–86 and 199.

Nadir demanded Ahmed Pasha send a Sunni scholar to lead the council. Ahmed Pasha sent Abdullah Suwaydi (d. 1761), a prominent Shafi *alim*. Nadir gathered four different *ulema* groups in the council: Shiite *ulema* of Iran and Iraq, and Sunni *ulema* of Afghanistan and Transoxiana. Nadir's demand, or, more accurately, "order," to Abdullah Suwaydi was clear: "I have appointed you my personal representative in order to ensure that all the beliefs and practices which constitute unbelief are abandoned and to bear witness to all that the three groups agree upon."[1490] As these instructions suggest, the Council of Najaf was not a proper council in which two sides engaged in a scholarly debate on Shiism, Ja'farism, and Sunnism in doctrinal and legal matters. Similar to Suwaydi, the Shiite *ulema* were ordered by Nadir to accept whatever condition the Sunni *ulema* proposed for their acceptance as a Sunni school. In the ensuing "scholarly debates," the Shiite *ulema* accepted all the doctrinal and legal requirements set forth by the Sunni *ulema* with no discussion, question, or even conversation. The Najaf Document, signed by all four groups of *ulema*, announced that the former Shiites were no longer heretics but brothers in religion.[1491] As Algar states succinctly, the Council of Najaf was "merely an attempt at state manipulation of religion."[1492]

The Iranian version of the Najaf Document drew attention to a critical point to paint the Porte into the corner. The preamble narrated the events and Perso-Ottoman negotiations from

[1490] Translation belongs to Muhammad Ballan. He translated Abdullah Suwaydi's own account of the Council of Najaf. See Mohamad Ballan, "The Definitive Proofs for the Reconciliation of the Islamic Sects, Appendix to "The Politics of Islamic Ecumenism in the Afsharid Empire: A Re-Examination of 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Suwaydī's (d. 1761) Account of the Council of Najaf (1743)" (Early Modern Workshop, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2014), 13. For the original text, see al-Suwaydī, *Kitāb Al-Hujjaj al-Qaṭ'īyya Li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmīyya*, 11.

[1491] Abdullah Suwaydi wrote a relatively comprehensive account of the Council of Najaf from the beginning to the end. See al-Suwaydī, *Kitāb Al-Hujjaj al-Qaṭ'īyya Li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmīyya*. For an Ottoman translation of it, see Gevrekzâde Hâfız Hasan Efendi, *Vekayinâme-i Nadir Şah Der Mezâhib-i Şiiyye Caferiyye Radıyallahu Anh*, no. 6333 (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Esad Efendi Collection, 1792).

Ernest Tucker and Mohamad Ballan also share the view that the Council of Najaf was not a conclusive meeting between the Sunni and Shiite *ulema*. Tucker discusses how the "agreement" was unreliable for various reasons. See Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, 76–93. For the same point, see also Ballan, "The Definitive Proofs," 4–5, footnote 19.

[1492] Algar, "Religious Forces in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran," 709.

1736 onwards. In this narration, the Document stated that the Ottoman government accepted four of Nadir's five offers in 1736, including the legitimacy of Ja'farism: "Ottoman statesmen […] accepted the Ja'fari sect."[1493] The goal of this emphasis was clear: undermining the Ottoman excuse that allegedly depended on insurmountable legal constraints. The Iranian side wanted to show that the Ottoman rejection was not based on religion, but politics. The Ottoman side had the same aim of showing the "political" motives of the Ja'farism offer under its religious guise. The dual competition again shows how important to exert one's soft power over the other was in rivalry between Muslim rulers.

For all Nadir's seemingly humble attitude before the Ottoman sultan, his propaganda targeted the House of Osman directly. In his conversations with Abdullah Suwaydi following the Council, Nadir Shah stated that:

> O 'Abd Allāh Efendī, do not think that the *Shāhanshāh* takes pride in [deeds] such as this. Verily, this is a deed which God Almighty has facilitated and guided me towards, so that the abolishment of the cursing of the Companions would be realized by my hand. Indeed, despite the fact that the Ottomans, since the sultanate of Selim I [r. 1512–1520] to our own day, had mobilized vast armies and troops, expended immeasurable wealth, and destroyed countless lives in order to halt the practice of the cursing [of the *shaykhayn*], they were unsuccessful. Yet, praise be to God, I have been able to remove it with such ease![1494]

These remarks were always in the air, but had not come to the surface until that time. Ashraf's letter to Ahmed III had the same implication, that the Afghans had accomplished a major service to religion that no Ottoman sultan had been able to accomplish. After these words, Nadir underlined that he was the king of Iran, Turkistan, India, and the Afghans.

Besides the Document, Nadir attached utmost importance to the performative side of the consensus of all the *ulema* in the Council. To make the agreement between the Sunnis and

[1493] "Umanâ-i Davlat-i Abad-Payvand-i Osmaniyya ... mazhab-i Ja'fari râ tasdîk karda." See Astarabadi, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha-i Nadiri,* 244; Muhammad Kazim Marvi, *'Alam Ara-i Nâdîrî,* 3:986.
[1494] Ballan, "The Definitive Proofs," 30.

Shiis known, he organized a Friday prayer in the Kufa Mosque. Nadir invited Suwaydi to the prayer and told him that he had ordered that the names of the first four caliphs to be pronounced in the *khutba*. After them, the Ottoman sultan's name, whom he called "elder brother," was to be mentioned. Lastly, "the younger brother's" name was to be pronounced in the *khutba*. Nadir added that the titles of the sultan should be longer than his, since "He [the Ottoman sultan] is the elder and the more eminent. For he is a king and the son of a king, whereas I came into this world without either a father or a grandfather who had been royalty."[1495] This conversation shows again how diligently Nadir pursued his policy of challenging the sultan from below. In the end, it was the "younger brother" with no noble background, who achieved the removal of *sabb* in Iran, whereas the noble Ottoman dynasty had failed to accomplish it for centuries. On Friday, Nasrullah Ali Karbalai delivered the *khutba* exactly as Nadir had told Suwaydi the day before. Karbalai qualified Mahmud I with more grandiose titles than Nadir, particularly the title of caliph. Nadir gave Suwaydi a copy of both the Najaf Document and the text of the Friday *khutba*, to be handed to Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad.[1496]

The Council of Najaf was Nadir's last religio-political move against the Ottoman sultan. If the sultan still refused to accept Ja'farism even after the consensus of Sunni and Shiite *ulema* from Transoxiana to Iraq, then it would become clear that Mahmud I was not fulfilling his responsibility as the great caliph. As the continuing of the fight demonstrated, the Porte neither accepted the agreement between Nadir Shah and Ahmed Pasha, nor the document signed in Najaf.

D.1.2. The Kars Front

During the decision-making process in the summer of 1743, the Ottoman government decided to replace Nadir with the impostor Safi Mirza to root out the problem of Nadir's Sunni challenge

[1495] Ballan, 31.
[1496] al-Suwaydī, *Kitāb Al-Hujjaj al-Qaṭ'īyya Li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmīyya*, 26–29.

completely. Safi Mirza had been in the hands of the Ottomans since the end of 1729.[1497] The government brought Safi Mirza from Rhodes Island to Constantinople in the summer of 1743. From there, Safi Mirza proceeded to the Kars front, where he arrived at the end of the year, to fight against Nadir and revive the Safavid state.[1498] So, when Nadir decided to leave the Iraq front, Safi Mirza was about to arrive in Kars. Indeed, an important reason for Nadir's departure from Iraq and heading toward Kars was the arrival of Safi Mirza.[1499]

A significant difference between the Ottoman backing of Prince Tahmasb in the 1720s and support of Safi Mirza in the 1740s was that while the Porte had hidden the first one from the public, it did not do so for the latter attempt. There could be several reasons for this difference. Probably, the Ottoman public was now more sympathetic toward Safavid rule, after paying high prices in the last two decades. Or the fact that Nadir's Sunnism was not as clear as that of the Afghans could make the government act more comfortably in supporting the Shiites against so-called Sunni Nadir. Or the open support of the Porte for Safi Mirza might have resulted from the fact that Safi Mirza was already in the hands of the Ottomans, unlike Tahmasb.

Whatever the reasons, the Ottoman government sent Safi Mirza in pomp to the frontier. To make the event known, Mahmud I ordered Subhi Mehmed Efendi, the official chronicler, to write a detailed account of Safi Mirza's arrival in Constantinople and his departure to Erzurum.[1500] According to this *risale*, during Safi Mirza's month-and-a-half stay in

[1497] For more information, see Chapter Six.

[1498] Ottoman chronicler Subhi narrated the dispatch of Safi Mirza to the front in a detailed way. See Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 789–812. See also Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)," 323–27.

[1499] Sırrı Efendi, *Risâletü't-Târîh-i Nâdir Şâh (Makâle-i Vâkı'a-ı Muhâsara-i Kars)*, ed. Mehmet Yaşar Ertaş (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2012), 12–13. The original composition of the *risale* dates somewehere between 1744 and 1747. See Sırrı Efendi, XVI. See also İbn Hacerzâde Osman Sâf, "İran Hükümdarı Türkmen Afşarlı Nâdir Şah'ın 1744 Kars Muhasarası ve Bunu Anlatan Emekli Kars Kadısı Osman Sâf'ın Risalesi," in *Birinci Askeri Tarihi Semineri, Bildiriler II*, ed. M. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu (Ankara, 1983), 25. Osman Sâf penned his *risale* in twelve days after Nadir Shah lifted the seige of Kars on October 22nd, 1744 (15 Ramazan 1157). See İbn Hacerzâde Osman Sâf, 19.

[1500] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, 789–90.

Constantinople, the Porte treated him with highest protocol. Both the sultan and the grand vizier gave him expensive and precious robes of honor. The grand vizier organized a big and splendid feast in his palace in honor of the "Prince." Mahmud I also accepted Safi Mirza into his own presence in Topkapı Palace. Safi Mirza's visit to the sultan was a great event for Constantinople, as all the officials and bureaucrats were ready for the visit. Subhi Mehmed Efendi wrote that twelve thousand Bostancıs were lined up for Safi Mirza's passage on the way to the palace. He was also given large sums of money by the palace. During his stay, Safi Mirza resided in a flamboyantly-furnished war tent in Bostancı area.[1501]

An important mission of Safi Mirza was to send a letter to the khans in Persia to attract them to his side. Mehmed Râgıb Efendi, the *reisülküttab*, composed the letter.[1502] The letter narrated how the Safavid dynasty and Persia had perished under first the Afghans, then Nadir. Safi Mirza compared Nadir's persecutions to Yazid's cruelty to Husayn, the son of Ali, the fourth caliph, a well-known theme to every Shiite Muslim. Then he declared that he was leaving the Ottoman lands to sit on the Iranian throne as the only Safavid heir to put an end to the "oppressor," i.e., Nadir Shah. He underlined that the Ottomans were supporting him with every possible means to defeat Nadir. Safi Mirza stated that all notable and lay people in Persia had benefitted from the Safavid dynasty in the past. He asked the Persians to support him against the usurper without fear.[1503]

The inconsistency between the religio-political discourse of the Porte and the actual policy on the ground is obviously similar to that of the 1720s. On the one hand, the Porte propagandized against the assaults of Nadir Shah by calling the Persians Kizilbash and heretics. On the other hand, the same Porte supported Safi Mirza, the "last member" of the Kizilbash

[1501] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 789–807.
[1502] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 808.
[1503] Subhî Mehmed Efendi, 808–13.

dynasty, openly and strongly. The effectiveness of this strategy is another matter, but the very flexibility of religio-political discourse in this case is striking. The Ottoman government employed an inconsistent dual discourse simultaneously to reach its goal in the war against Nadir.

Nadir started to besiege the fortress of Kars at the end of July 1744.[1504] In September, he demanded Kesriyeli Ahmed Efendi, the *defterdar* in the army, be sent as an Ottoman envoy to discuss the terms of peace. Nadir told Kesriyeli Ahmed Efendi that he was ready to conclude peace with the Porte on the condition that he had set with Ahmed Pasha the previous December,[1505] meaning that the shah was still insistent on Ja'farism proposal. As a matter of fact, Nadir repeated his demand for *ulema* to be sent from the Porte to Iran to discuss with the Persian *ulema*. The shah promised to have armistice for fifty days, until Kesriyeli could bring the decision of the Porte.[1506] Kesriyeli Ahmed Efendi proceeded to Constantinople and sent a report on his way to the capital. The government was angry with Nadir's move and Kesriyeli's coming to Constantinople, ordering Kesriyeli Ahmed Efendi to turn back to Erzurum and stay there until a second order arrived. Mahmud I rejected the peace offer, which he called not a sincere offer but a trick of the "intriguer" shah.[1507] Indeed, Nadir violated his armistice promise of fifty days and continued to attack the Kars fortress until October 9th, 1744.[1508] Then, Nadir returned to Dagestan, and from there proceeded to Erevan.[1509]

In the beginning of August 1745, the Ottoman army under the command of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha crossed the border toward Erevan. The aim of the army was to defeat Nadir and replacing him with Safi Mirza. However, Nadir defeated the commander-in-chief, who died in

[1504] İbn Hacerzâde Osman Sâf, "Kars Kadısı Osman Sâf'ın Risalesi," 27.
[1505] Sırrı Efendi, *Makâle-i Vâkı'a-ı Muhâsara-i Kars*, 20–21.
[1506] Sırrı Efendi, 20–21.
[1507] *İzzî Tarihi*, 46.
[1508] İbn Hacerzâde Osman Sâf, "Kars Kadısı Osman Sâf'ın Risalesi," 35–38.
[1509] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 248–49.

the battlefield in Muradtepe (Baghavard) on August 7th, 1745.[1510] The killing of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha in the war against Nadir meant the death of a third Ottoman commander-in-chief in battle against Nadir, after Topal Osman Pasha (1733) and Köprülüzade Abdullah Pasha (1736). The failure of the Ottoman offensive in 1745 meant that neither side had been successful in their offensives against the other side in the two-year period of the war. After this devastating and inconclusive period for both sides, Nadir and Mahmud I eventually agreed to make peace.

E. Withdrawal, 1746: The Treaty of Kerden

Peace was achieved with the reciprocal withdrawal of demands and aims. Nadir renounced his Ja'farism offers and territorial demands. The Porte recalled Safi Mirza to Constantinople. The Ottomans accepted Persia as a Sunni state, thus tacitly recognizing Ja'farism as a Sunni school, just as they had in 1736. Nadir Shah continued to accept Mahmud I as the great caliph. In the end, the ensuing peace negotiated at Kerden was similar to the Ottoman peace draft of 1736.

Nadir Shah sent Fath Ali Khan to Constantinople to talk terms. Fath Ali Khan arrived in the capital on January 11th, 1746.[1511] He brought with him four letters from the Persian court: two from Nadir to Mahmud I,[1512] one from *i'timād al-dawla* Shahrukh Mirza to Grand Vizier Seyyid Hasan Pasha,[1513] and one from Mullabashi Ali Akbar to *Şeyhülislam* Pirîzâde Mehmed Sâhib Efendi.[1514] Again, there was no letter from Nadir Shah to the grand vizier. In his first letter, Nadir stated that the Porte had unreasonably rejected his Ja'farism proposals that aimed only toward peace among Muslims. After the incident of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha, it had become clear that the Ottomans would not accept the proposal at any cost. He concluded that to prevent the shedding of further blood among Muslims, he was withdrawing his Ja'farism offer completely. In the second letter, Nadir asked the sultan to give him either Iraq or part of

[1510] Lockhart, 249; *İzzî Tarihi*, 116–20.
[1511] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 123.
[1512] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 325–24 and 323–22.
[1513] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 324, 322.
[1514] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 323.

Azerbaijan –Van and the surrounding Kurdistan territories–, his allegedly inherited lands, as a sign of good intention and in return for Nadir's renunciation of both of his religious offers. However, he added that the Ottoman sultan was free to choose either to give or not, and the sultan's decision would not change Nadir's own decision to sign a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire. The Persian letters underlined that the abandonment of the Ja'fari proposal did not mean that they had abandoned Sunnism. Mullabashi Ali Akbar clearly stated that the people of Iran were still following Sunnism in doctrine. All the Persian letters also qualified the sultan as the universal caliph, as had been the case before the war.

Nadir Shah's unusual land demand demonstrated at least two points: First, Nadir had not completely renounced his imperial goal of expanding toward the Ottoman lands. Second, his territorial demand in exchange for his renunciation of his religious insistence shows how religion and politics were so closely integrated with one another that they could have been easily exchanged with each other. Both sides had known the convertibility of these proposals from the beginning. For a decade, they had negotiated a religio-political conflict in religious language.

In response, Mahmud I expressed his happiness with Nadir's renunciation of the religious offers, which the Porte had not accepted due to "legal excuses." He underlined that the privilege of being the great caliph compared to other rulers depended on strict observance of the orders of God and on strictly enforcing the *sharia*.[1515] That is why, he added, the Porte had rejected Nadir's proposals based on the *sharia*, the obedience of which was an obligation for the sultan. The next sentence was a direct allusion to Nadir's attack on Ottoman lands under religious pretexts: "Otherwise, to allow bloodshed and harm to people contrary to *sharia* and customary law only for territorial expansion and worldly ambitions is clearly against our pious

[1515] "mazhar-ı hilâfet-i kübrâ ve masdar-ı zılliyet-i uzmâ olan selâtîn-i adl-âyin ve havâkîn-i nasafet-temkîn hazerâtının, ber-muktezâ-yı hikmet-i Îzid-i bî-niyâzîni nev'inden müterakkî ve mümtâz olmaları, ancak ta'zîm-i li-emrillâh ve şefkat-i alâ halki'llah ma'nâlarının îfâ ve icrâsı, ve be-tahsîs, şerîat-i hâkka-i vâzıhanın nehc-i istikâmet-i lâyiha üzere infâz u imzâsı maslahatına mebnî olduğu, ma'lûm-ı erbâb-ı nühâ olan mukaddime-i lâmi'atü'l-bahâdır." See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 320–19.

sultanate."[1516] The Ottoman sultan accused Nadir of pursuing a non-religious political goal, similar to his earlier accusations on the same grounds in 1738 during the embassy of Muhammad Rahim Khan. Lastly, the Ottoman sultan rejected Nadir's land demands, arguing that the consultative assembly had suggested unanimously that neither *sharia* nor customary law permit that kind of transfer of land.[1517] Tellingly, one of the titles with which the *şeyhülislam* qualified Mahmud I in his letter to the *mullabashi* was "ruler of domains of Islam by heredity and by right" (*mâlikü'l-memâliki'l-İslâmiyye bi'l irs ve'l-istihkâk*).[1518]

The Porte sent Nazif Mustafa Efendi to Iran with Mahmud I's, the grand vizier's, and the *şeyhülislam*'s responses. He set out from Constantinople on March 16th, 1746 and arrived in Kerden, a place between Tehran and Qazvin, on August 24th, 1746.[1519] The Ottoman ambassador and Persian representatives reached an agreement on September 4th, 1746,[1520] according to which the border remained the same as that negotiated in the Peace of Zuhab in 1639. Both sides agreed to host permanent ambassadors in their respective capitals, and to free and exchange prisoners. Moreover, the supplement part verified that Iranian pilgrims were to be treated just like any other Muslim pilgrims, as they had abandoned unseemly practices from the Safavid times and had begun to follow Sunni belief in doctrine. Just as had been the case in 1736, the Porte implicitly accepted Ja'farism, by not mentioning the legal school of the Persians but recognizing the Iranians as Sunni in doctrine. However, there was a critical change in the article on the Iranian *emiru'l hac*. Whereas the Porte had agreed to appoint a Persian *emiru'l hac* for the Iranian pilgrims in 1736, the Ottoman government did not allow a Persian *emiru'l*

[1516] "Yohsa mücerred tevsî'-i dâire-i memleket ve bâ-teba'iyyet-i hevâcis-i nefsaniyyet misüllü keyfiyyet için, mugâyir-i şer'-i şerîf ve muhâlif-i kânûn-ı münîf sefk-i dimâ ve ızrâr-ı ibâd ve fukarâya cevâz ve ruhsat verilmek münâfi'-i zamîr-i diyânet-semîr-i mülûkânemiz idiği zâhir ve bâhirdir." See *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 319.
[1517] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 318.
[1518] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 315.
[1519] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 124.
[1520] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 254–55.

hac in 1746.[1521] After ten years of intense conflict, the Ottomans decided not to give this privilege to Nadir Shah, whose religio-political challenge to the sultan had been apparent and forceful throughout that time. Meanwhile, only after receiving the news of Nadir's signing of the peace did the Porte recall Safi Mirza to Constantinople in October 1746.[1522]

After the agreement, the Persian court sent three letters to Constantinople, one from Nadir Shah to Mahmud I,[1523] one from *i'timād al-dawla* Shahrukh Mirza to Grand Vizier Tiryaki Hacı Mehmed Pasha,[1524] and one from Mullabashi Ali Akbar to *Şeyhülislam* Hayatizade Mehmed Emin Efendi.[1525] There was no letter from Nadir Shah to the grand vizier even after the Treaty of Kerden, suggesting that even though he had accepted a lower status before the sultan at least in discourse, Nadir Shah considered himself equal to the sultan diplomatically, and not at the lower status of the Safavid shahs. In his letter to Mahmud I, Nadir conveyed his respects to his "big brother" (*birâder-i buzurg*), who was the caliph protecting Islam (*halîfe-i İslâm-penâh*). Nadir's calling the sultan "big brother" was significant and both Mahmud I and the grand vizier underlined this statement in their response epistles to Nadir.[1526] Importantly, the grand vizier penned a letter to Nadir, even though the shah had not addressed the grand vizier since 1736. The grand vizierial letter to the shah after a decade suggests that the Porte wanted to highlight its diplomatic superiority over the Persian state as soon as peace was concluded.

So, even if the war ended and the peace agreement was signed, neither side was completely content with the current agreement. The major obstacle to a stable peace between the Ottomans and the Persians was arguably Nadir Shah's imperial goals targeting the Ottoman lands, some of which he continued to claim inheritance. He also renounced the Ja'farism

[1521] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 310–305.
[1522] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d 152-1159, Evahir-i Ramazan 1159 (October 7th-16th, 1746).
[1523] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 314–12.
[1524] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 312.
[1525] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 311–10.
[1526] *I.Mahmud-Nadir Şah Mektuplaşmaları*, 302–297.

proposal only circumstantially, rejecting the validity of the Ottoman legal excuses. As the Persian side highlighted in the Najaf Document, both sides knew well that the Porte had first accepted and then rejected the legitimacy of the Ja'fari legal school. On the other hand, as long as Safi Mirza was in the hands of the Porte, a solid peace was not guaranteed between the Ottomans and the Persians.

Kesriyeli Ahmed Efendi carried the Ottoman letters to Persia, along with the peace signed by Mahmud I, leaving Constantinople on January 28th, 1747.[1527] The embassy also carried precious royal gifts for the shah of Persia.[1528] However, the mission had to turn back from Hamadan to Baghdad in July 1747, when they received the news of Nadir's assassination on June 20th, 1747.[1529] The reciprocal Persian mission headed by Mustafa Khan Shamlu also did not proceed to Constantinople from Baghdad.[1530] Nadir's death ended an era in Persia. The next half century would witness constant civil wars and a lack of central authority in the once-great gunpowder empire of the early modern era. The period between 1722 and 1747 taught the old, bitter lesson of the Peace of Amasya (1555) to the Porte again: do not cross the eastern borders toward Iran. The Porte followed this policy in the following centuries and refrained from intervening in Persian affairs.

[1527] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 126; *İzzî Tarihi*, 260–64.
[1528] *İzzî Tarihi*, 322–31 and 335–36.
[1529] Özel, "Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736-1747," 181–82.. For a detailed account of the assassination of Nadir, see Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 257–65.
[1530] *İzzî Tarihi*, 462.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has offered a reevaluation of two established views in Ottoman historiography: first, the assumption that the Ottoman sultans did not use the title of caliph politically between the first half of the sixteenth and the latter half of the nineteenth centuries, and second, the claim that the Sunni-Shiite division was an inherent source of conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavids in the early modern era. I made two counter arguments: First, the title of great caliph continued to be an essential component of the Ottoman sultan's soft power in the post-sixteenth century era. Second, the Porte pursued a policy of protecting the Shiite Safavids against Sunni threats from the 1640s onwards at the latest. Specifically, regarding the period between 1722 and 1747, this thesis showed how Constantinople fought against Sunni regimes in Iran to reestablish the Shiite Safavid state. Thus, this thesis connects the universal caliphate to Sunni-Shiite political relations, suggesting that the universal Sunni caliph preferred a Shiite political power as a neighboring Muslim polity over a Sunni one and demonstrating that even the seemingly most universal understanding of Sunni unity actually depended on the existence of a Shiite entity.

The main motive behind the Ottoman pro-Shiite and anti-Sunni international policy was to protect the authority of the House of Osman against the challenge of alternative Sunni dynasties. The isolation of the Ottoman lands through religio-political walls, alongside the geographical barriers of the Saharan Desert and the Indian Ocean, was of crucial importance for the maintenance of the Ottoman dynasty's authority over its vast domains. "Infidel" Christian rulers in the West and in the North, and "heretic" Safavids in the East encircled the vast Ottoman domains. This encirclement created an *isolated* safe haven for the Ottoman dynasty to enjoy a *monopolistic* authority in the absence of legitimate alternatives. The new Sunni dynasties in Iran in the post-1722 period knocked down the protective wall that had been provided by the Shiite Safavids, broke the isolation of the Ottoman domains, and ended the

monopoly of the House of Osman as the only legitimate dynasty in a vast geography extending from the Western Mediterranean to the Iranian borders and from the Crimea to Yemen.

My study of the Ottoman universal caliphate after the sixteenth century shows that while the Ottoman sultan continued to claim his primacy among other Muslim monarchs, this universal claim functioned in a regional context; what made it work regionally was its theoretical global character. The claim to be the great caliph disqualified domestic and international Sunni rivals of the House of Osman as religio-politically legitimate claimants who rebelled against the Imam of Muslims.

The continuous competition between Ottoman and Moroccan and Ottoman and Mughal rulers to be accepted as the universal caliph demonstrates how vital this title was for the Ottoman sultan. Geographical distance alone prevented these competitions from turning into war. I argue that the fervent protection of the sultan's title of great caliph against the Afghans and Nadir Shah was not an exceptional attitude. What was exceptional in the second quarter of the eighteenth century was the proximity of the challenge to the Ottoman sultan. For the first time since the House of Osman acquired the title of the great caliph, Sunni dynasties established their rule across the long eastern border of the empire. The closeness of the threat caused the Porte to highlight its possession of universal caliphate and to increase its opposition to rival Sunni dynasties. Otherwise, the Ottoman over-emphasis on the title of caliph between 1722 and 1747 was only a continuation of the sultan's safeguarding of his claim to be the supreme Muslim ruler against other Sunni rulers.

Similarly, the Ottoman preference of the Shiite Safavids over Sunni dynasties was not a rupture from earlier Ottoman policies. From the perspective of the Porte, the weakest spot in the protective religio-political wall of the Ottoman domains was the Shiite Safavids in Iran, whom the Sunni Mughals or the Uzbeks could overthrow. Being aware of this fact, the Porte considered protecting the existence of the Shiite Safavids against Sunni threats as a raison d'état

of the Ottoman state from at least the seventeenth century onward. So, just as the eighteenth-century Ottoman emphasis on holding the universal caliphate was a continuation of earlier policies, so was the Ottoman support to the Shiite Safavids against the Sunni dynasties.

However, the Ottoman preference for the Shiite Safavids over Sunni dynasties did not render Ottoman-Safavid relations completely peaceful. What I argue is that the competition between Sunni rulers made the Sunni-Shiite neighborhood less conflictual than the Sunni-Sunni neighborhood. Moreover, because the Ottomans preferred a Shiite neighbor due to their religio-political illegitimacy in the eyes of the Ottoman Sunni population, what made the neighborhood peaceful was the categorical otherness of the Persian Shiites in the eyes of the Porte. This observation is crucial for understanding the limits of early modern Sunni-Shiite peace.

The Porte's policy of supporting the Safavids against Sunni dynasties in the twenty-five-year period under examination demonstrates how established the pro-Shiite Iranian strategy of the Porte was. The governing body in Constantinople changed almost completely in 1730. Besides the actors, the center of government also changed. Instead of Damad İbrahim Pasha, the powerful grand vizier between 1718 and 1730, the chief Black eunuch, Hacı Beşir Ağa dominated the government in the post-1730 period. Between 1730 and 1747, the post of the grand vizierate changed hands fourteen times. However, the Porte's Iran strategy did not change: overthrowing the Sunni dynasties and reestablishing the Shiite Safavids.

As I have examined, the Ottomans were not able to overthrow the Sunni dynasties either in the 1720s or in the 1740s. However, the Porte did not concede its priorities on the exaltedness of the sultan in the ensuing treaties of Hamadan (1727) and Kerden (1747). In 1727, the Afghans stepped back from their earlier claims of equality with the sultan and recognized the Ottoman *padishah* as the great caliph. In 1747, Nadir Shah renounced his insistent demands for explicit recognition of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school and the establishment of a prayer location for Ja'faris in the Ka'ba. This time, the Ottoman government did not even grant the

right to appoint a Persian *emiru'l hac* to Nadir Shah, cancelling its permission in 1736. As I examined in Chapter Eight, Constantinople considered all these articles to be expressions of Nadir's external challenge to the authority of the Ottoman sultan. So, shouldering major economic and political losses and considerable casualties, the Porte defended its prior strategic goal of preserving the House of Osman's supreme religio-political authority vis-à-vis other Muslim rulers.

The twenty-five-year conflict between the Sunni rulers of the Ottoman Empire and Persia demonstrate a critical point: most of the questions causing crises were of a symbolic nature. The Afghan rulers demanded acceptance as equal caliphs. Nadir Shah demanded *explicit* acceptance of Ja'farism as the fifth Sunni legal school, and the designation of the Shafi *rukn* in the Ka'ba for the Ja'faris, who were to pray there in congregation after Shafis prayed. I argue that since these conflicts were inseparably "religio-political," abstract symbols were an unavoidable part of power struggles. As a result, what mattered during the long negotiations and conflicts were mostly images, declarations, and visibilities. For example, the Porte accepted Ja'farism both in 1736 and in 1747 but refused to make this public. Since implicit acceptance did not help Nadir Shah to challenge the Ottoman sultan, the Persians insisted on the explicit acceptance of Ja'farism, and the designation of a *rukn* in the Ka'ba, another visible element.

These symbols made political rivalries visible, and all rivals negotiated their demands through a religio-political language shared within pre-modern Muslim diplomatic culture. However, the role of symbols did not end there. They were the very objects for which wars were fought. In the pre-modern Muslim world, to be accepted as an equal imam to the Ottoman sultan, or to add a prayer place in the Ka'ba for the Ja'faris, who would mostly come from Persia, were major political achievements in themselves. An Ottoman concession of such demands would have provided substantial legitimacy for the rulers in Persia. Nadir Shah's demand for territories in return for giving up his insistence on Ja'farism's acceptance by the

sultan in 1746 is arguably the epitome of the inseparability of religion and politics in early modernity. A religious claim was easily transformed into a political one. So, these abstract symbols cannot be explained away by reducing their role to mere rhetoric in the service of purely political interests. The world of symbols was not only the platform where the political fights became visible, but also the field for which these wars were fought.

This is exactly why soft power was so important in pre-modern politics. Retrospectively, the maintenance of the authority of the House of Osman over a vast geography, on which more than twenty nation-states are located today, was an outstanding political achievement for many centuries. So far, modern scholarship has predominantly studied the efficacy of Ottoman "hard power" in bringing about this achievement. My dissertation demonstrates that the coupling of hard power with soft power was essential in the success of the Ottoman polity. Constantinople struggled to formulate and maintain a religio-political discourse to strengthen the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty in the eyes of domestic and foreign audiences throughout the early modern era. The backbone of Ottoman soft power against Sunni contenders was the sultan's title of great caliph. The Ottoman sultan also used his universal caliph title to mobilize Muslim populations outside Ottoman borders to help defend the "Islamic state" under the commander of the "great caliph." Moreover, this sublime title justified Ottoman territorial expansion into other Muslim domains, such as Morocco and Iran, thus against both Shiite and Sunni rulers. I do not claim that Ottoman soft power worked smoothly in practice. My point is to highlight the importance of Ottoman soft power and to disclose the way it worked.

It is no coincidence that this period witnessed ceaseless discursive confrontations through various channels, such as *fetva*s, royal letters, short epistles, scholarly works, literature, symbolic constructions and renovations, public diplomacy, dissemination of false news, gathering of scholarly councils, embassy missions, the sending of *ulema* to convince people, the praying of *ulema* in congregation in the enemy camp before the start of war, and so on. The

goal of all these gestures was to prove to domestic and international audiences that a certain party was on the right side and the other was on the unjust side. We do not know much about public opinion's impact on politics in the pre-modern Muslim world. Thus, we lack a comprehensive bottom-up approach, due mainly to the lack of sources representing the voice of the people. The ultimate emphasis of rulers on moral superiority and their employment of intense propaganda mechanisms show that obtaining popular support for themselves and undermining the popular support of their rivals was critical for political success.

The importance of soft power leads us to reevaluate the existing assumptions regarding the nature of religion and politics in the early modern context. This dissertation argues that religion and politics were each essential parts of the other in the pre-modern world, thus questions pertaining to either need to be examined as religio-political matters, as in the famous formula of *din u devlet*. When we are dealing with religion in the premodern context, we are not only handling the spiritual feelings of people that could be manipulated by rhetorical maneuvers, but also communal, legal, and political complexes. Thus, the "religious" views of people on a certain government constituted the main pillar of popular legitimacy of the ruler. It was generally quite difficult for people to change the current government with their own power and only with religious reasons. However, when combined with other socio-economic and political crises, the political opposition could and did turn popular resentment into actual rebellions and overthrew the ruler.

The openness of religio-legal knowledge and discourse to everyone having expertise in the Islamic sciences was an important limitation for the ruler. The governing apparatus could not entirely monopolize religio-legal knowledge and views, even though it tried to do so. The fact that the opposition could use religio-legal arguments as legitimately as the ruler made it impossible for the governing apparatus to use religion freely and arbitrarily. The modern

positivistic perspective neglects the fact that just as religion was used as a tool to legitimize political authority, it could also delegitimize that same authority.

At this point, the restrictive capacity of religion as an active force becomes most apparent. As I examined in the case of the Patrona Halil Rebellion, during times of political crisis, the power of the *ulema,* who were the representatives of religio-legal knowledge, increased at the expense of that of rulers. İspirizade Ahmed Efendi, the preacher of the Ayasofya mosque; Zülali Hasan Efendi, a former judge of Constantinople and Mecca; and even an unknown figure like Deli İbrahim Efendi, a teacher at a mid-level (*hariç*) madrasa, played a significant role in Ahmed III's fall from the throne. In the final instance, İspirizade Ahmed Efendi, who had one-on-one interaction with people gathering each Friday in the principal imperial mosque, declared to Ahmed III that his reign was over.

Taking the restrictive power of religion into account calls for revisiting the common assumptions about cross-religious alliances, as well. Unlike modern assumptions, the rulers did not easily ally with the "infidel" for their political interests. It is true that the states built cross-religious political alliances based on political exigencies. However, my dissertation shows that "allying with the infidel" was neither the ideally desired case for the rulers, nor it was easy and risk-free. Since allying with the religio-political opponent compromised the very legitimacy upon which political power depended, the opposition used this "treachery" against those who were in power. In cases of cross-religious alliances, the governing apparatus thus developed justifications based on the established religio-political discourse in order to reduce the corrosive effects of the alliance on the credibility of the government. The secret Ottoman support for Prince Tahmasb against the Afghan rulers Mahmud and Ashraf was an extreme example of a governmental manipulation of religion to get rid of accusations of "alliance with the infidel."

The Porte literally pursued an anti-Sunni war under the guise of anti-"heresy" between 1723 and 1726. It did not even dare to open the proverbial box of an alliance with the infidel

and of justifying that alliance. Similarly, the fifth article of the Treaty of Partition in 1724 regulated the conditions of the Ottoman support for Tahmasb against Mir Mahmud. It stipulated many conditions for this support, unlike the open and direct Russian support of the Safavid Prince. The Russians accepted the Ottoman excuse of not fighting against the Sunni Afghans openly by acknowledging the hazards of fighting against religious brothers to enthrone the "heretic Kizilbash" Prince in alliance with the "infidel Russians."

In the Ottoman-Afghan war of 1726, the government again hid the goal of replacing Ashraf with Tahmasb from the public. The Porte justified the war on the Sunni Afghans on the basis of their rebellion against the imam of the Muslims. However, the ruling apparatus did not feel secure about the appeasement of public resentment. That is why, countering the Afghan *fetva* signed by nineteen Afghan *ulema*, 159 Ottoman high scholar-bureaucrats signed the *fetva* of the *şeyhülislam* in a rare historical moment. The exceptional number of scholars was crucial to rally public opinion to the side of the government. The Porte's propaganda after the war was also striking: the same government, which had reached an agreement with the "Kizilbash" Tahmasb to enthrone him in Persia before the war of 1726, initiated the propaganda that Ashraf became "Kizilbash" after the Ottoman defeat.

All these endeavors suggest at least two things. First, the rulers circumvented or attempted to circumvent religio-political barriers through a wide range of mechanisms and tools, as modern scholarship extensively discusses. Second, the governing apparatus was not completely free in its "use" of religion, which restricted the power of the ruling elite at times effectively. The government's attempt to overcome religious barriers through manipulation bespeaks the restricted nature of the power of the ruling elite. The rulers were not powerful enough to boldly declare their "out-of-line" actions contradicting their sources of legitimacy. All the actors knew well that the opposition could easily turn these contradictions against the current government.

Thus, the relation between politics and religion in the pre-modern era was not a one-way relation of domination, but a two-way interaction between two interwoven realms.

Another contribution of my dissertation is that it has affirmed the vitality of possessing Mecca and Medina for the sultan's title of the great caliph. The possibility of the extension of the Afghan impact to the Hejaz alarmed the Porte in the 1720s. The Porte initiated comprehensive works that had both symbolic and functional aspects regarding infrastructure, superstructure, and security in the Hejaz starting from 1724 that were incomparable to their morks in earlier periods. Ebubekir Pasha's collection of letters belonging to the years between 1725 and 1727 shows how hard the Ottomans worked to safeguard and prove the "well-deserved" Ottoman authority over the Hejaz. As for the Ottoman-Nadir confrontation, the only offer the Porte explicitly rejected in 1736 was the establishment of a Ja'fari *rukn* in the Ka'ba. Nadir's insistence on the *rukn* demand became the main litmus test of his external challenge and also the substantial reason for the ensuing war. With the embassy of Mustafa Pasha in 1738, Mahmud I clearly informed Nadir Shah that the House of Osman had obtained the title of "caliph of God" by incorporating the Two Holy Sanctuaries into the Ottoman domains. The Ottoman sultan warned that his dynasty had not allowed any ruler to interfere with the affairs of the Hejaz and would not share its prerogative of "serving" the Two Holy Sanctuaries with any other ruler.

My dissertation also sheds light on the general Ottoman strategy toward Iran in the pre-1722 period. I argued that the Porte aimed to preserve a weak but stable central Safavid authority in Persia. The Safavids needed to be weak, as they threatened Iraq and regions populated by the Kurds in the frontier if they got too powerful. However, the Safavid authority also needed to be stable for two reasons: First, they posed a protective barrier for the monopoly of the Ottoman sultan, due to their religio-political ineligibility to become an alternative to the Ottoman dynasty in the eyes of Ottoman Sunnis. Second, the cooperation between

Constantinople and Isfahan was crucial to taking the recalcitrant Kurdish and Bedouin populations under control. Ottoman governments had maintained this delicate balance more or less successfully at least since 1639. The Ottomans even renounced the goal of overthrowing the Safavids and incorporating Persia into the Ottoman domains as early as 1555 with the Treaty of Amasya.

The Ottoman weariness regarding Persia continued in the first half of the 1720s. Chapters Two, Three, and Four demonstrated how cautious the Porte was in its Iranian policy during that time. As a matter of fact, Ottoman troops entered the Persian lands around a year later than the Russians. However, in 1725, both the government and Ahmed Pasha, the commander-in-chief, considered the possibility of capturing Isfahan and incorporating Iran into Ottoman domains. This radical change happened mainly due to the following reasons: the Russian weakness, especially after the death of Peter I; the incapability of the Afghans to expand much further then Isfahan; and the nonconformity of Tahmasb with the Ottoman demands. The weakness of the Russians and the nonconformity of Tahmasb also increased the economic and religio-political costs of replacing the Sunni Afghan ruler with the Shiite Tahmasb considerably. With these motivations, the Ottoman armies crossed out of their agreed-upon share according to the Treaty of the Partition of Iran.

This violation resulted in a major change in the Russian policies toward Iran. Now, the strategic goal of the Russians became an alliance with the Persians against the Ottomans and the expulsion of the Ottomans from Persia completely, even at the expense of losing all the Russian-occupied lands in Iran. This policy succeeded within a decade and the Ottomans returned all the Persian territories conquered between 1723 and 1725 to Nadir Shah in 1735. Overall, both the Ottoman and the Russian successes in acquiring Persian territories were thanks to their alliance with each other until 1725. Their disagreement, on the other hand, resulted in the loss of all the captured lands to the Persians. Critically, a crucial break in the already-weak

Russo-Ottoman alliance was the Ottoman abandonment of centuries-old (since 1555) policy of not aiming to conquer Isfahan.

All in all, my study on the Ottoman-Iranian relations reveals a long-term Ottoman strategy toward Iran that started at least in the 1640s and guided Ottoman actions in the turmoil of 1722-1747. The Kurds and the Bedouin Arabs of the frontier, and the Mughals and the Uzbeks to the east of the Safavids were major factors the Ottomans considered in formulating their policies toward Persia. Even though the Afghans and the Afsharid Nadir were unexpected players in the game, the Ottoman government regarded them within the same category as the Mughals and the Uzbeks. The new rulers of Persia were of the Sunni sect, and the Porte viewed them more as dangerous alternatives to the Ottoman sultan than as religious brothers. Thus, the Muslim identity of all these actors in the East, unlike the ones in the West, required the Porte to take the religio-political aspect of the question seriously. While the Ottoman government utilized every available military means against the Afghans and Nadir, gathering troops even from the western frontier, it did not refrain from using soft power in the shape of intensive propaganda. In the early modern era, the great caliph title of the sultan constituted the central element in Ottoman soft power used against Sunni monarchs. The sultan both vigorously defended his exalted caliph title against the Afghan shahs and Nadir Shah and used the title as the strongest religio-political weapon in his fight against the new Sunni dynasties in Persia in the eighteenth century.

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