[Global Histories]

A student journal

SAID HALIM PASHA AS GRAND VIZIER. CARL PIETZNER. 1915.
COURTESY OF: ÖSTERREICHISCHE NATIONALBIBLIOTHEK.

A Late Ottoman Expression of Modernity: Prince Said Halim Pasha's Enterprise of Muslim Political Agency

BURAK MUHAMMET NURI GÜCIN

Burak Muhammet Nuri Gücin is a Master's student in Transcultural Studies at Universität Heidelberg. He has completed his Bachelor's degree in Sociology at Galatasaray Üniversitesi, Istanbul. His main research interests are Turkish nationalism, the evolution of sociological thought in Turkey, and intellectual history. More particularly, he is working on the circulation of ideas and notions of European thought and enlightenment in their relations to Turkish nationalism and modern Islamist thought.

The intellectual and statesman Said Halim Pasha left his marks on the establishment of constitutional monarchy in Ottoman Empire. Yet, he was not content with this new political regime, but in pursuit of a political order more capable of resolving the problems of society that he perceived as arising from Western influences. The consolidation of Islam formed the normative basis of his thinking. Said Halim wrote theoretical texts discussing the scientific and social duties that he gathered from his religious beliefs and his sociological analysis. Importantly, Halim did not stress religious doctrines and precedence in his views. Instead, his political visions prioritized Muslim society as a religious-political community over classical subjects of Islamic religious studies like the caliphate and the study of Islamic jurisprudence. Said Halim's envisioned polity would incorporate Western influences but limit them to the material level. Those influences should only help to reestablish the qualities of an Islamic rule that had been temporarily lost in the age of Imperialism. Despite his analysis of fundamental differences between civilizations, Said Halim's thinking opened up new transitivities and permeabilities; he appropriated political notions of representation and accountability and transferred them to an Islamic context of political authority without resorting to the usual Islamic references. Within the scope of this paper, Said Halim's intellectual geography and its dynamics are discussed by following his political career's turning points, as well as exploring the intellectual subjects and socio-political phenomena that shaped his deliberations.

Introduction

An essayist and high-ranking bureaucrat, Prince Said Halim Pasha wrote theoretical treatises about his views on constitutional monarchy, bigotry, crises in Islam, as well as the social, political, and intellectual problems that he saw in the Ottoman Empire between 1909 and 1922. This period witnessed the establishment of a parliamentary regime, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish national movement in Anatolia leading to the establishment of a new nation-state. His works were translated into Turkish from French, as

Said Halim was not proficient at writing in Turkish. At a time when the Turkish government was accused of pursuing a secularist policy of ethnically nationalist Turkification, Said Halim suggested Islam as the basis of a suitable political structure.

As an intellectual and statesman who left his marks on the establishment of constitutional monarchy, Said Halim was not content with the new structure. Halim suggested a political regime that would be more capable of resolving the problems for society that he saw as arising from Westernization in a mimetic style. The consolidation of Islam as the basis of political norms underlay his visions. Yet, Said Halim did not directly address his times' political debates in his writings, but rather penned theoretical texts detached from historical example that proved his monotheism but also spoke of his perceptions of scientific and social duties. Said Halim derived these duties from his sociological analysis but without substantial inquisition of religious doctrines and precedence. His political visions prioritized Muslim society as a religious-political community rather than focusing on conventional subjects of Islamic studies like the caliphate and jurisprudence. In this paper, Said Halim's intellectual geography and its dynamics are discussed by following his political career's turning points as well as the intellectual subjects and socio-political phenomena that he contemplated.

A Brief Overview of Said Halim's Life

Said Halim was born in Cairo on January 28th, 1865. He was the grandson of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the founder of modern Egypt. Upon his father's expulsion from the line of succession to the *khedivate*, the Egyptian viceroyalty, his family left for Istanbul. The family settled in the seaside residence of Yeniköy where Said Halim and his brother Abbas Halim were taught Arabic, Persian, Turkish, French, and English. In 1880, the two brothers were sent to Geneva in Switzerland for their higher education. Upon their return to Istanbul in 1885, Abdul Hamid II elevated the Halim brothers within Ottoman bureaucracy[1] in compliance with their high status and nobility to ensure their loyalty and to keep them in distance of the opposition.[2]

By 1888, Said Halim was a member of the State Council[3] and the *beylerbeyi* of Rumelia, the Governor-General of the European provinces.[4] Although a high-

---

[1] Ahmet Şeyhun, "Said Halim Pasha (1865–1921)," in *Islamist Thinkers in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*, ed. Ahmet Şeyhun (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 148.

[2] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman and An Islamist Thinker (1865–1921)* (Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 2002), 75.

[3] The Şûrâ-yı Devlet, the State Council, was the highest judicial institution in the Ottoman Empire, operating between 1868 and 1922. Its foundation in 1868 had separated the judicial and legislative powers in the Ottoman Empire. It was tasked with resolving administrative disputes and drafting legislation, yet only of limited relevance in reality

[4] *Beylerbey*, literally meaning *the Lord of Lords*, was a high military commander. The Ottomans used this designation until the mid-19th century. In the initial periods of the empire, a *Bey-*

level bureaucrat, Said Halim was not content with the political atmosphere under Abdul Hamid's autocratic rule. He became neglectful of his bureaucratic duties and rather studied Islamic history and institutions but also closely followed contemporary events in other Muslim countries. These intellectual ventures were reported as undesirable by Abdul Hamid's informants in the so-called *jurnal* spy network and Said Halim was forced to leave Istanbul for Paris in 1905. Upon his arrival, he became an official member of *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), a secret society established in 1889 by opponents of Abdul Hamid's autocracy, the *istibdat*,[5] and supporters of constitutional rule. The CUP was organized as an underground organization in the Balkans, with headquarters in Salonica, while it had other centers in European capitals, such as Paris and London, in which most of the political exiles resided. In the West, members of the CUP were usually called 'Young Turks,' whereas its members were known as *Unionists* within the Ottoman Empire.

Said Halim's residence in Paris did not last long and later he settled in Cairo where he was the biggest shareholder of the *Société Belgo-Eygptiénne de Ezbekié*[6] in the *de-facto* British protectorate and became an important financial supporter of the CUP. After the Young Turk Revolution succeeded in compelling Abdul Hamid II to reinitialize constitutional rule on July 24th, 1908,[7] Said Halim went back to Istanbul like many former exiles. He was elected mayor of Yeniköy for the political party of the CUP. In the following year Abdul Hamid II was ousted due to his suspected ties to a countercoup organized by a conservative military faction in April 1909, the March 31st Incident. Said Halim held several offices until 1911 when he was appointed to head the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His initial and crucial task in this office was to lead the peace negotiations to end the Italo-Turkish War over the Italian war of conquest in Libya. Peace talks with Italy failed and the conflict escalated into the Balkan Wars instead. The force of the attack by Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia compelled the Ottoman government to cede all of Libya and the Dodecanese to Italy. The Ottoman government's inclination to accept a peace treaty with harsh conditions including the secession of the former capital Adrianople led to a coup d'état of the CUP.

The bulk of the Unionists were relatively younger officials, intellectuals, and military officers, most of whom did not stem from privileged backgrounds. Yet, the organization preferred senior Pashas for high-ranking cabinet posts in order to

---

lerbey was charged with the governance of a province like a viceroy. As the empire became more centralized in the 15th and 16th centuries, the title had become an honorary court rank.

[5] The reign of Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909): Abdul Hamid II was the 34th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and the last Sultan/Caliph to practice effective control over the declining Ottoman Empire. Among Ottoman intellectuals, whose majority was close to the Young Turk Movement, his reign was referred to as *istibdat*, meaning a tyranny or autocracy.

[6] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 79–80.

[7] The first constitutional rule was terminated in 1878 by Abdul Hamid II due to the decisive defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Russian Empire in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, also leading to the dissolution of the parliament.

preserve the conventional image of good governance in the eyes of public opinion. The so-called *Grand Cabinet* led by Kamil Pasha was, for example, composed of three former grand viziers and therefore an example of this kind of government. Said Halim was among the organizers of the afore-mentioned coup d'état, and could remain on his government post.[8] Still, not him, but Djemal Pasha, Enver Pasha, and Talat Pasha were usually credited as the *de facto* rulers of the Ottoman Empire following the assassination of post-coup grand vizier Mahmud Shevket Pasha in June. While admitting the grip of the *Three Pashas* on the CUP and the state, it would be misleading to argue that the policies and mentalities of and within the CUP were monolithic. In fact, the CUP had sustained a broad platform: As the first political party, the CUP had brought together a wide range of Ottoman intellectuals and officials with different socio-political contentions and conservative, reformist, or radical ideals. The clash of different ideologies within the CUP was not surprising given the fact that its members were mainly bound together by the wish to avoid the dissolution of the empire and modernize its political organization as well as its technological means and to increase its wealth. In this intricate political state, the CUP leaders relied on competing ideological orientations opportunistically, namely Islamism, Turkism, and especially Ottomanism—the latter suggesting the inclusion of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects—according to the political circumstances of the time.[9]

Said Halim was appointed to the grand vizierate by the initiative of the CUP. Before his nomination to the office, he had played a key role as the head of diplomacy in recapturing Adrianople by entering peace talks with Greece and cleverly aggravating tensions between Bulgaria and its other Balkan allies in order to exploit them for the Ottoman Empire. As grand vizier, Said Halim was again the head of an important diplomatic campaign in the Armenian question when an international congress convened in Istanbul tho impose reforms on the Ottoman Empire.

Shortly before the First World War, on August 2nd, 1914, a German-Ottoman alliance treaty was signed in secrecy by Said Halim and German ambassador Hans von Wangenheim. Said Halim's position on this belligerent alliance was clear, he favored neutrality,[10] or at least sought to avoid an immediate entry into the war.[11] Historians usually agree that he was excluded by his cabinet members on the matter of entering the war when two German battleships made a surprise attack on

---

[8] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 124.
[9] Cited in: Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 105. See: Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 33–35; Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat Terakki*, (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1987) 110–13.
[10] Ahmet Şeyhun, "Said Halim (1865–1921)," 150.
[11] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 163.

Odessa under the Ottoman banner.[12] Halim was reportedly only in favor of signing a military alliance with Germany in order to dissuade Russian aggression.[13] Upon his entry into war, Said Halim was considering to resign, for Enver Pasha's grip on power was intensifying and undermining his office since the alliance made with Germany.[14] Yet as the signee of the alliance treaty and the grand vizier, he upheld Ottoman belligerence in various occasions.[15] During his time as the head of government, the Armenian populations were forcefully deported from the eastern border with the Russian Empire to southern regions of the empire, escalating into large scale massacres and genocide. As the grand vizier, Said Halim had endorsed the deportation bill proposed by Talat Bey in the assembly on May 26, 1915, still he categorically denied broader responsibility in post-war interrogations.[16]

Said Halim's premiership ended due to Sharif Hussein's uprising in June 1916: the Arab Revolt has been considered as fatal to Said Halim's career as his conciliatory prestige did not seem to have any balancing effect anymore, notably in conditions of ever-intensifying warfare. With the secession of large provinces with predominantly Arab speaking Muslim populations, the revolt did not only cast doubts on Islamism's political viability for the future of the empire, but also paved the way for Said Halim's resignation in February 1917.[17] After the armistice signed in October 1918, he was arrested by British authorities occupying Istanbul in March 1919 to be prosecuted for the war crimes committed against Ottoman Armenians. Said Halim was exiled to Malta with a large group of Ottoman officials, but later released before the investigation concluded due to lacking proof of criminal acts and the pressure of the new national assembly in Ankara against occupation. A great part of the exiles returned to Turkey, while Said Halim stayed abroad. It seems most likely that Halim was a persona non grata for the British forces fearing the political effects of his return. Said Halim eventually settled in Rome where he was shot dead by an Armenian militant on December 5, 1921.

His Works and Ideas: Criticizing Ottoman Modernization

Said Halim Pasha's works were written originally in French and published in Istanbul and various European capitals between 1910 and 1921.[18] His first known work, published in Paris, is titled *Le fanatisme musulman*, and was only available in Istanbul from 1917 under the title *Ta'assup,* "Fanaticism." "Said Halim Pasha

---

[12] Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 106.

[13] M. Hanefi Bostan, *Bir İslamcı Düşünür*, 51.

[14] Mustafa Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, 106.

[15] Ibid., 196.

[16] Ahmet Şeyhun, "Said Halim (1865–1921)," 151.

[17] Guida Michelangelo, "II. Meşrutiyet dönemindeki İslamcılık düşüncesi ve buna bir örnek teşkil etmesi açısından Said Halim Paşa (Said Halim Pasha and Islamist Thought in the Second Constitutional Era)," *Civilacademy Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2008): 109–117.

[18] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 11.

switched the terms of the discussion to the relationship between Islam and big-otry," contests Guida Michelangelo,[19] as he condemned Imperialist Europe for its fanaticism. Said Halim, focusing on the encounters of Muslims and Europeans, traced back European imperialism's self-proclaimed "civilizing mission" to the history of the Crusades bringing destruction in the name of Christianity. Halim identified a continuing hatred, that brought ever more destruction, with advance-ments of military technologies. Lastly, Said Halim suggested that Muslim society was decadent and identified the main cause of this decadence in the lack of a resis-tant political organization which supposedly invited the invasion and subjugation by imperial powers taking advantage of that weakness.

La Crise Politique's actual date of publication in Paris has not been clarified; however, it is known that this work was divided into two articles for its publica-tion in Istanbul. The first part *Mukallidliklerimiz*, "Our Imitations," was produced in 1910, while constitutional rule was established in Turkey for a second time. Said Halim alerted his readers to the fact that the mere imitation of the social and political institutions of the West would not only be difficult but, furthermore, not agree with Ottoman circumstances. The second article, *Meşrutiyet*, "Constitution-alism," was published in 1911 as a pamphlet of 31 pages. This work presents a critical evaluation of the Turkish Constitution first promulgated in 1876, which was suspended by Sultan Abdul Hamid II between 1877 and 1908, and discusses political events associated with the Hamidian period.

Said Halim viewed Western society as the coming-together of different social and political classes. The continuing struggles between these classes within the Western civilization stood in contrast to the Islamic counterpart, according to Halim, which relied on Muslim solidarity and lacked the rigid social boundaries that could hurt the harmony of society. In this sense, the second promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution seemed futile to Halim:

> We had aspired that the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 would have the power to change the political and economic circumstances of our society. These would have made us forget our internal struggles and would have united and merged all of us as an Ottoman family only contemplating the Ottoman homeland's fame and great-ness.[20]

Said Halim evaluated that the rule of the CUP did not present any improvement to the political situation in the country. Rather, it seemed to introduce a new set of conflicts to the Ottoman Empire, namely between the different political groups in parliament. For Said Halim, the blind acceptance and import of seemingly in-

---

[19] Michelangelo Guida, "The Life and Political Ideas of Grand Vezir Said Halim Pasha," İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi, iss. 18 (2007): 110.

[20] Said Halim Paşa, *Buhranlarımız (Our Crises and Collective Works)*, ed. M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ (Tercüman Gazetesi, 1973), 51.

compatible constitutional charters from France led to new devils as they were supposedly not compatible with the existing laws or sustainable with the Ottoman society.

Said Halim published *Buhrân-i İctimaîmiz*, "Our Social Crisis," in 1916 accusing members of the Ottoman society of not being true to their own history. Said Halim criticized Ottoman intellectuals' Western style festivities and Francophilia despite sharing these traits. Halim saw their role of providing a model to Ottoman society as unfulfilled and lamented lacking respect in society for intellectuals. To Said Halim, Islam was a religion tasking the faithful with social duties and their fulfilment in agreement with a believer's conscience seemed essential to make cultural progress possible like Muslims had apparently shown to the world in the centuries before.

On this basis of social duties rooted in Islam, Halim saw equality as the principle to be accomplished under the condition of the fulfillment of these duties. Liberty was equally perceived by Halim as entitled according to the fulfilment of social and moral duties. Although he operated in the language of 'liberty' and 'equality' of the Western canon, Said Halim showed principal doubts to demand these rights.[21] He was not a supporter of the abolition of elitist or 'superior' classes. Rather, Halim regarded social inequality as a reality to be accepted, but still engaged with the perspectives of different social classes or disenfranchised groups. Speaking of the example of women's rights, he expressed his skepticism about the authenticity of the women's demands and instead suggested that their true motives lay in the desire for fashionable possessions and taking part in a new and attracting social life. In contrast, Said Halim talked about the women's rights struggle in Europe in a rather serious manner that he did not reserve for his society; he observed an authentic demand of European women to have a political voice.[22] He did not perceive himself to be in the position to criticize or question the possible gains or perils in consequence of this demand. Yet his thinking prioritizing authenticity versus mimicry preferred this transformation to take place in an evolutionary manner. In contrast, the women's rights issue in the Ottoman Empire was perceived by Halim as an artificial subject that could not be an aspect of Ottoman social evolution.

His *Essai sur les causes de la decadence des peuples musulmanes*, "An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Muslim Societies," appears to have been published in Paris in 1918 and furthers Said Halim's ideas on the present and future of Islamic societies. In this pamphlet, in addition to his emphasis on the laws governing society, Said Halim presents his analysis of the question of progress and decadence with regards to the role of religion:

---

[21] Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar Türkiye'de Siyasî İdeolojiler (Movements: Political Ideologies in Turkey)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 437.
[22] Paşa, *Buhranlarımız,* 135–149.

However, the problem of underdevelopment has nothing to do with religion itself but needs to be viewed as a sociological phenomenon. This paradigm is valid for the Muslim world as well as for the West. Religions are molded by the diverse customs and cultural characteristics of their lands. Just as historical and social developments in Christendom engendered Catholicism and later Protestantism, similar developments gave birth to the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam. Furthermore, within the same religious denomination one can detect different characteristics: different schools adapted themselves to various local realities and developed distinct characteristics.[23]

In April 1919, the following pamphlet *İslamlaşmak* "To Islamize," was serialized into four issues in Turkish in Mehmed Akif's weekly Islamist journal *Sebilürreşat*.[24] Besides, Said Halim was now fully credited as the author of his work. In his previous works, initially published in French, 'Mehmed' had been his pen name. This work also is the most recognized among Islamist circles in Turkey. Said Halim defined the process of Islamization as the full application of "the principles of Islam pertaining to belief, morality, living, and politics after they have been interpreted in a suitable manner in accordance with the needs of contemporary history and geography."[25]

Said Halim's last work, *Islam'da Teşkîlât-ı Siyâsiyye*, "The Political Organization in Islam," was originally published in French in 1921 and republished a year later and only weeks after the demise of Said Halim in the journal *Orient et Occident* under the title "*Notes pour servir à la réforme de la société musulmane.*"[26] Contents of this essay form the most well-known and widely circulated ideas around Said Halim, not the least as it was also translated into English in 1927,[27] and it gives a concise overview of Said Halim Pasha's ideas. Within the scope of this paper, this last essay is the departure point to evaluate Said Halim's crucial enterprise to preserve Islam at the very basis of the political order and the modernizing state as the new nation-state emerged.

Considering Said Halim's biography against the background of his times, he was an Ottoman thinker who refrained from acknowledging ethnic and geographical limitations within the Empire. His thinking was preoccupied with a blurred and not precisely defined notion of Islam that did not clarify if it included only the Ottomans or all Muslims. In an era of rising nationalisms, in which the CUP viewed Islamism as a set of means to look for moral support, Said Halim's voice

---

[23] Translation quoted from: Şeyhun, "Said Halim (1865–1921)," 154–155. For the original, see: Paşa, *Buhranlarımız*, 174–76.

[24] Syed Tanvir Wasti, "Said Halim Pasha: Philosopher Prince," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 95.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ahmet Şeyhun, "Said Halim Pasha," 11.

[27] Prince Said Halim Pasha, "The Reform of Muslim Society," *Islamic Studies* 47, no. 3 (2008): 379–404.

was heard.[28] The diversification of political ideologies accompanying the decline of the Empire did not necessarily mean the erasure of Islam from nationalist thought. In this period, in which ideologies intertwined, Said Halim's emphatic voice promoted the defense of Islam as the very center of political organization.

Said Halim and Islamism as the Basis for Progress

The advocacy of tradition, namely the emphasis on core Islamic values for social and political administration was not just a mere ensemble of values for Said Halim. Instead, a Muslim ideal type based on his perception of Muslim sensibility was suggested by him. In his thinking about political order, Said Halim was preoccupied with inventing a tradition, yet without acknowledging his attempt himself. Within his modernist-revivalist framework,[29] Halim did not problematize modernity in contrast to a juxtaposed tradition, but he was rather problematizing the manner of modernization.

Generally, Said Halim presented a 'desired' political system in accordance with his view of Islamic knowledge. Still, it appears as a contradiction that he lacked any clear references to existing theological literature and chose to ignore both the religious affairs and contemporary political events of his time. On that matter, it can be plausibly argued that Said Halim's thoughts were focused beyond the observable temporality of current events.[30] In effect, the mystified ends promoted by Said Halim appear clearly to the reader—in contrast to the means that should make it possible to arrive at these ends.

A second contradiction can be seen in Said Halim's use of French, his educational language to write his essays. Although he is reported to have known Arabic, English, Persian, and Turkish as well, this choice can be explained by the possible motive to address contemporary intellectuals and use an international platform to express his take on Islam.

Different from his political adventures, no major ruptures can be identified in Halim's ideological thinking. Said Halim consistently advocated the revival of Islamic principles in both political order and social life by making his views on differentials between Islam and the West known. These principles are, however, not further explored or developed but rather presumed. In his view, the modernization process starting with the first promulgation of constitutional monarchy in 1876 was doomed to fail because of the unknown regulations it brought along and its leaders' indifference to the Ottoman nation's conditions and needs. On this critical basis, Said Halim argued for a reversal to adhering to Islam's fundamental

---

[28] Liu Zhongmin, Shu Meng, "Nationalist Thoughts and Islam in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2017): 14–26.

[29] Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 10.

[30] Asım Öz, "Fark Düşünürü ve İslâmcılık Üzerine Dolaylı Açılımlar," *TYB AKADEMİ Dil Edebiyat ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1, no. 3 (2011): 152.

values and limiting the imports from Europe to material goods. To elaborate this contention of socio-cultural meaningful difference between societies, Said Halim often regarded *hommes* as subject to congenital dispositions which he named *lois naturelles sociales* in accordance with *lois naturelles*. Within this closed-circuit consideration of the social, men would achieve *bonheur*, *égalité*, *liberté*, and *solidarité* by following these natural social laws. Despite employing enlightenment concepts, the author skips over the meaning of his use of them and his European inspirations.

Said Halim mostly reported as a faithful Muslim emerging from the Islamism movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and placing great importance on the revelation of the will of God through his prophet. According to Said Halim, human happiness depended on the condition of the sovereignty of that Sharia because it gave "*le principe de la vraie égalité, de la vraie liberté et avec lui, le principe de la vraie solidarité humaine.*"[31] As mentioned above, Said Halim understood natural and social laws to be governing society; he positioned Islam and the *société musulmane* at the highest level of his social ideal by reinterpreting the contentions of Muslim theologians and the religious claim itself that Islam was the ultimate religion revealing the will of God and therefore representing the stage of moral perfection. Despite his 'occidentalist' inferences about the West through stereotypes, Said Halim did not specify what defined the West to him. Instead he used the West as a negative macro-category, a counter-explicative to elaborate his view what the Islamic meant. This category of the West was employed as an explanatory ensemble of foreign and disruptive elements to make sense of what he presented as the *société musulmane* and to answer the question what he perceived as Islamic or not.

Said Halim applied sociologism within Turkish thought next to his Islamist thought,[32] as he insisted on certain social laws governing society, but also lacked reference to other disciplines of the humanities. *Islamisme* as a self-referential concept rendered the best projections of an ideal social order possible in his argumentation. In line with his sociologism, he was not primarily interested in systemically explaining or in representing social laws of the West in contrast to the search of 'Eastern' intellectuals for their own national culture. His societal ideal rather targeted the *société musulmane* and the political order that Muslims should establish. His criticism of the West was restrained to the disruptions brought to Muslim society, starting from the Crusades and having intensified with modernity. For the purpose of actualizing the ideal social order revealed by the prophet, he put the revival of Islamic principles into the center of his reformist view. However, his take on reform was different from the meaning of renovation. Despite the conceptual novelties and inspirations that he drew from European political thought,

---

[31] Said Halim, "Réforme," 19.
[32] Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 416.

Said Halim insisted on the return to an Islamic political order. Paradoxically, Said Halim was quite silent about the actual contents of Islamic principles and the fundamentals of his desired political order. His writing did not reference any religious source, the only concrete connection being a *hadith*[33] about the usefulness of schooling oneself in science.[34] As the author of the most detailed research about Said Halim, [35] Ahmet Şeyhun, points out how Halim did not mention and was not connected to a school of jurisprudence in Islam, a sect, an imam, a caliph, or a canonist: "Instead, he spoke in the terms of a head of state and his electors."[36] Apart from Said Halim's own constitutional thinking, as his specifications of the duties of Muslims, he was silent about the contents of Islam, *Islamisme* in his words, with the notable exception of the hypothetical notions of equality, liberty, and solidarity. He rather lacked the historical context and periodization that might have served him to explain how Islamic principles were institutionalized, reproduced, or interrupted. His evident criticisms were instead limited to the Hamidian regime's arbitral rule and the Young Turk Revolution's Westernist tendencies. Said Halim's distance to the West came together with his persistent discussion of what Muslim society should do and avoid in accordance with his ideas of natural laws governing society. At this juncture, Said Halim solicitously attempted to position Sharia as not discordant to these laws but rather as manifestation of them:

> Sharia is indeed of divine essence, and besides it is without any supernatural character unlike it is so often presented (…) In fact, the Sharia is a divine code, composed of perfectly natural laws.[37]

This divine truth requiring respect and submission derived from its perpetual feasibility for societies, naturally leading to social happiness, according to Said Halim. Thus, Halim's *Islamisme* signified an ideal state of mind of Muslims in their individual and social lives.

To make his point of Islam's preponderance more lucid, it would be possible to refer to the Hobbesian term of the 'state of nature' which would include all pre-Islamic past, as well as the Western civilization in Said Halim's categorization. This undesirable state of deficiency, tyranny, inequality, and injustice could only be overcome by submitting to the law of Sharia. The submission to the sole authority of God and his divine code, instead of the monarch or parliament suggested by Hobbes, would provide the termination of the natural state and the perfection of the social body. Not mentioning Hobbes, Said Halim criticized the basis

---

[33] The Arabic word, حديث, deriving from the root of the word *news,* is used to signify Muhammad's sayings and deeds.
[34] Said Halim, "Réforme," 23.
[35] Şeyhun, Ahmet, "An Ottoman Statesman and An Islamist Thinker (1865–1921)" (PhD diss., McGill University Montreal, 2002), 316.
[36] Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman,* 252
[37] Halim, "Réforme," 21.

of national sovereignty and the Western perception of authority for being a sheer conceptualizing of force relations.[38]

All in all, the advocacy of Islam as the central reference point for social welfare and good governance would eventually make it compulsory to preserve and sustain the best and perfect body composed of dutiful Muslims according to Said Halim. Distancing all that was pre-Islamic and non-Islamic this body should be brought together in compliance with the social duties of Muslims. Guaranteeing this body would of course be a question of the political system and its organization that Said Halim concluded as the relation of the head of state and his electors.

On Differential Aspects and the Muslim Body Politic

In the contextual finality of well-being, the teleological end of happiness and social solidarity designated by submitting to Sharia, Said Halim highlighted a capital incompatibility through a priority designated by modernity; *souveraineté nationale* which introduced "*le principe de la souveraineté de la volonté nationale, omnipotente et irresponsable.*"[39] Given the fact that nationalism movements were detrimental to the integrity and future of empires, Said Halim's hesitation as an imperial official who had risen to the political leadership seems quite expectable. Moreover, deeper reservations against westernizing reforms and—of course—nationalism resided in Said Halim's thinking on social gains provided by Islam.

Said Halim seems to have had an attitude which Hasan Aksakal calls "occidentalist anger"[40] in his treatise on the manifestations of counter-enlightenment among Ottoman intellectuals. It means the rigid refusal to implement reforms and the consolidation of this refusal by attributing decadence to the Western civilization. Aksakal deals with the cultural contexts in which Ottoman intellectuals emerged and explains that this background was detrimental towards political and social reforms inspired by European examples. Its conservative and negativist tendencies were complemented by an unwillingness to be self-critical.[41] This coincides with the indifference of Ottoman intellectuals to the possible ideological roots of the growing Western imperial power imposed on the rest of the world. Aksakal considers the charming patriot poet Namık Kemal as one of the first figures in the Ottoman Empire highlighting Islamism in popular imagination. Kemal was in complete accordance with the Islamic epistemology, while his vision of

---

[38] Halim, "Réforme," 24–27.
[39] Ibid., 24.
[40] Hasan Aksakal, "Karşı-Aydınlanma ve Osmanlı Düşüncesi: Nâmık Kemal Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme," in *Türk Muhafazakârlığı: Terennüm, Tereddüt, Tahakküm* (Istanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2017), 91.
[41] Aksakal, "Karşı Aydınlanma," 77–78.

constitutional regimes and political representation found its source in Rousseau's theories, an "Islamized theory of Rousseau" according to Hasan Aksakal.[42]

Said Halim's theoretical inspirations from both Islamic and European sources were not clarified by himself and it is not possible to trace them fully through his implicit references, yet there are certain similarities with his contemporary Islamists Cemaleddin Efganî, Muhammed Abduh, and Rashid Rida. Their principal inspiration stemmed from Ibn Taymiyyah, a scholar of the late 13th century. His central reasoning was that the prophet's message and its meaning had been misunderstood by Muslims. Following that claim, Said Halim and other Islamist thinkers resorted to the idea that the perceived decadence of Muslim society was primarily due to the Muslims' failure to remain aware of the influences of pre-Islamic cultures on Islamic societies. The continuation of this influence supposedly led to the loss of the prosperity and welfare that Islam might have provided. It therefore had to be the aim to purify Islam of any corruptive elements and emphasize the central role of the Sharia. This distaste for the pre-Islamic was present in Said Halim's thinking; moreover, this argument was linked to the comparison to the corruptive elements brought from the West. Halim turned against the logic promoting the belief that the West, its principles, examples, and 'soul' should be imitated.

Halim argued that Islam already provided the moral, social, and political norms in harmony with human nature and that Islam should therefore regulate lives and destinies until the end of the world.[43] This assertion of a perfectionist precocity sought to invalidate the need to Westernize in a mimetic way, and pursue nationalistic ideals. Only the scientific field was accepted by Halim as a realm of continued orientation towards the West. Imports of knowledge from the natural sciences were deemed necessary while inspirations from cultural and moral theories were precluded.[44] Halim had already sought to invalidate intellectual dependencies or links in social thinking, but also tried to undermine the opinion that Islamic societies should reap benefits from the West: He suggested that the Muslim societies only claimed back what had originated with them. Here, he pointed to another precocity of Islamic scientific culture sustained by Islam's promotion of observation and reasoning with the aim of confirming and justifying truths revealed by the prophet.[45] Said Halim, following his point, did not conceptualize a continuity based on the history of science; he rather pointed to the differences and conflicts deriving from different theories of knowledge. For example, he denied the virtue of rationalism in Islam and for Islamic cultures of science as Islam already encom-

---

[42] Aksakal, "Karşı Aydınlanma," 82–86.
[43] Halim, *Buhranlarımız*, 196.
[44] Recep Şentürk, "Intellectual Dependency: Late Ottoman Intellectuals between *fiqh* and Social Science," *Die Welt des Islams—Islam and Societal Norms: Approaches to Modern Muslim Intellectual History* 47, no. 3/4 (2007): 313–316.
[45] Pacha, "Réforme," 22.

passed it as well as scientific experimentalism, in Halim's view.[46] Before discussing the political order and its gravity as the locus of reforms, Said Halim therefore presented a narrow window of exchange with the West while conceptualizing a charming Islamic social body which only needed to regain certain achievements and which was capable of spreading its preponderances to the world.

For Said Halim, the essential dilemma from which Muslim societies suffered, were the futile attempts to modernize due to false conceptions regarding their problems. Halim degraded the modernization experience of the Ottoman Empire since the early 19th century. He condemned all of this process as futile and a mere act of translation from the French without concern for social circumstances and the prevailing values within society. His integral criticism sought to prioritize principles that created the basis of science, equality, liberty, and social happiness expostulating the political order for overlooking or ignoring the transformations that had occurred in the social structure and educational system in the Ottoman Empire. For example, the social basis of the Turkish National Movement and its cadres stemmed from the modernizing changes in the educational system implemented by Abdul Hamid II, having been considerably influenced by doctrines of national sovereignty that became influential in the Second Constitutional Era (from 1908 to 1920).[47] Yet, despite being a member and general secretary of the CUP since 1912, Said Halim was categorically against national sovereignty; his definition of an Islamic political system was in contrast with this principle. This was due to the fact that the CUP and its political party were realizing a political consensus around national sovereignty as Turkey's first widely open political formation and party in which Islamists, Turkish nationalists, and Westernists managed to form an alliance to preserve the Empire and actualize their notion of the will of the people.

Still, Said Halim's presence and the high positions that he had occupied seem inconsistent with his political criticisms displayed in his writings. Yet, his political presence was met with genuine sympathy since his sentence to exile in Paris by Abdul Hamid II.[48] In fact, his views serving as the "methodical defense of Islam as the basis of state"[49] should not be considered as a marginal, non-mainstream ideology within the CUP due to the emergence of the Turkish nation state in years to come. When Turkish nationalism was newly intensifying as the most promising political current in the fading Empire following the loss of territories in the Balkans during the years of 1912 and 1913, the residuum of the empire still included

---

[46] Pacha, "Réforme," 22–24.
[47] Ahmet Kuyaş, "II. Meşrutiyet, Türk Devrimi Tarihi ve Bugünkü Türkiye (Second Constitutional Era, History of the Turkish Revolution and Today's Turkey)," *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi*, iss.45 (2008): 61.
[48] Şeyhun, "Said Halim (1865–1921)," 148.
[49] Hasan Kayalı, "Islam in the Thought and Politics of Two Late Ottoman Intellectuals: Mehmed Akif and Said Halim," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001): 309. Quoted in: Guida Michelangelo, "Grand Vezir Said Halim Pasha," 104.

modern day Iraq, Syria and the Hejaz. Historian Behlül Özkan reminds us that the CUP had to act very thriftily to ensure the loyalty of the Arab subjects in the empire; Said Halim's appointment to grand vizierate demonstrates this accounting that Islamism was a preferred choice within the Ottoman political system and for the CUP.[50] Said Halim was assessed to ameliorate the relationship of Arab intellectuals with the Empire and to undermine Arab separatism in the near future.[51]

Furthermore, Said Halim's evident advocacy for the election of the head of state by adult suffrage[52] and his position in favor of a constitutional regime made him a plausible and relevant personality who could reasonably ascend within the CUP, apart from his noble rank and social background. As a member of the high elite who had studied at university in Switzerland, Said Halim had an attractive, modern tone in writing and expressing his thoughts. Even though he had many opponents to his stance and Islamist ideas, he had the ability to enter and conduct a dialogue with his opponents. Although it is not possible to observe him engaged in dialectical polemics in his writings, it would be important to note that Said Halim employed 'secular discourse' with only limited religious contents and references.[53] Guida Michelangelo remarks that this secular discourse was rather common among Islamists since their majority was not composed of religious scholars and canonists but raised in the modern educational institutions of the Empire, representing a new type of Ottoman intellectuals.[54]

Said Halim, for example, had a traditional stance and traditional concepts in mind as he disdained revolutionary ideas and attempts. Still his ideas were not completely traditionalist as he offered new contents and did not simply reproduce classical statements. In this context, the reception and interpretation of the constitutional and parliamentary regime was of paramount importance to Islamists, including religious scholars, who did not necessarily find these new principles incompatible with the Islamic sense of authority. The course of the emergence of the Pan-Islamist movement starting from the 1870s also demonstrates in retrospect that its early representatives were mainly modernists and not resisting the idea of reform as reactionaries. Cemil Aydin, historian of Middle Eastern and Modern Asian history, notes that these representatives were in fact committed to modernizing reforms inspired by European examples in order to secure their Empire's status as an equal member of the new international system.[55] Also, Aydin makes the differentiation that the Muslim intellectuals only started to conceptualize a

---

[50] Behlül Özkan, "From Imperial to National Vatan," in *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan*, ed. Behlül Özkan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 72.

[51] Özkan, "From Imperial to National Vatan," 73.

[52] Said Halim, "Les Institutions," 33.

[53] Guida, "Grand Vezir Said Halim Pasha," 102.

[54] Ibid., 103.

[55] Cemil Aydın, "Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West," *Journal of Modern European History* 4, no. 2, (2006): 204–205.

new concept of Islamic civilization when this project of equal international status through reforms collapsed due to the growing imperialism of European countries:

> Before the 1870s, Muslim reformists had assumed that the Muslim world shared the same cultural legacy as modern Europe (namely, Hellenism and monotheism), and thus believed that they had strong innate capacities for progress and civilization along European lines.[56]

Modernist projections were therefore challenged by the emergence of reactionary and more conservative schools of thought prioritizing the preservation and later expansion of Muslim political sovereignty against Western aggression. Yet, it is reasonable to position Said Halim in the modernist line of thought despite his choice of not acknowledging the nature of his ideals and arguably conservative tendencies.

With regards to Said Halim's criticism of the failures of the Western political system and its adaptation in the Ottoman Empire, in his skepticism towards the principle of popular sovereignty, he expostulates the assertion of national representation and the democratization of society perceiving them as turbulent and detrimental to the social body.[57] In his view, the particularistic pursuit of specific interests by political groups led to a lacking realization of the interests of the society as a whole. A system that attributed too much political power to these interest groups was therefore doomed to cause new social crises.

Said Halim reflected that Islam advocated egalitarianism, solidarity, and social justice, whereas Western political principles merely advocated the defense of personal and group interests.[58] The politico-religious body was idealized by Said Halim as a state of unity beyond social classes in which all members of society shared the same aspirations and ideas. He took a perfected social solidarity for granted in Muslim society, in which conflicts between different social classes would be prevented. According to his design, the political structure should consist of an assembly and head of state but not include a second chamber of parliament. As a member of the Ottoman senate, modelled after European higher houses of parliament, before his exile to Malta, Said Halim was critical about this second chamber's contribution to the political order as it often seemed to mostly serve as an interest forum of nobles. Thus, it did not seem to serve a valid purpose in the regime that he imagined as the assembly would already be composed of honest and competent members.[59] His vision for the assembly included a reduced role for political parties, probably inspired by his own CUP's turbulent parliamentary activity and violent struggle with its opponents. This elected assembly's main func-

---

[56] Aydın, "Beyond Civilization," 209.
[57] Pacha, "Réforme," 39–43.
[58] Şeyhun, "Said Halim Pasha," 254–55.
[59] Pacha, "Réforme," 50–51.

tion would be to monitor and supervise the head of state elected by adult suffrage. The assembly's supervision of the head of the state, supported by its legislative power, would be guided by its evaluation of society's interest in conformity with the good application of the imperatives of Sharia.

It is worth noting that Said Halim did not articulate a well-defined and functionally positioned room for the *ulema*, the religious scholars and officials, within his desired regime. He did not have a favorable view of these religious dignitaries' activities that seemed overly scholastic to him and were not sufficiently contributing to society's needs in his opinion. Yet, it is not possible to know whether Said Halim sought to entirely exclude them from the political structure. While he was making these deliberations, the Ottoman cabinet abolished the office of the *Shayh al-Islam*, the Chief Religious Official. All judicial power had already been transferred from Sharia courts to the Ministry of Justice, the General Directorate for Religious Foundations moved to a new ministry, and lastly, the religious schools were to be supervised by the Ministry of Education.[60] Even though Said Halim had not been a supporter of this secularization during his premiership, it complied with new political realities and was not seen as a radical change anymore.

With regards to these new political times, it would be crucial to remember the conflicts between members of the Great National Assembly[61] in Ankara that conducted the military campaigns under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, who would found the modern Turkish nation-state in later years. That assembly was probably the socio-politically most polyphonic parliament in modern Turkish history, it was divided between supporters of Mustafa Kemal, suspected to have radical and modernist visions for a nation-state, and a more conservative faction. With the end of the war in September 1922 with the Turkish victory over a Greek invasion, discussions about the adequate political regime arose due to the fact that a new constitution seemed difficult to develop and the capital Istanbul with the Sultan and Caliph was under British domination. Following the abolition of the Sultanate through the simple amendment of an existing law in November 1922, the former Sultan Mehmed VI left the country and his heir apparent, Abdülmecid, was elected by the assembly in Ankara as the new Caliph. The question who should be the head of state remained initially unresolved, while Mustafa Kemal was the chairman of the assembly bringing his overwhelming wartime prestige and legitimacy to the role. Until the proclamation of the republic on October 29th, 1923 and the abolition of the Caliphate on March 3rd, 1924, grievances about Mustafa Kemal's

---

[60] Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 1998), 415–16.

[61] The Great National Assembly of Turkey was founded in Ankara on April 23, 1920 in the midst of the National Movement. The parliament is the unicameral Turkish legislature. Mustafa Kemal, his colleagues, and other members gathered outside parliament to establish a new state out of the Empire.

leadership and policies led to a push to establish the Caliph as the neutral head of state.[62]

Said Halim's demise before the new nation-state fully emerged means that any evaluation of his stance towards these developments has to rely on scattered and preliminary documentation. Accounts of witnesses during his exile in Malta suggest, however, that he was genuinely hopeful for the national struggle led by Mustafa Kemal.[63] His last work, examined in this paper, started with the celebration of the "awakenings" in the Muslim world that would free itself from the foreign yoke.[64]

One would not be mistaken to assume that Said Halim would have prioritized Turkey in his design of a Muslim political order.[65] Another key feature of his political visions is that it does not discuss conventional concepts of Islamic government like the caliphate and the *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence, elaborated by other Islamists and classical thinkers. The political regime defined by Said Halim rather was a new sort of government that should be conceptualized as a Muslim republic composed of new administrative and bureaucratic elements. His standards for a Muslim political order with legitimacy differed considerably from the mainstream institutions and legal entities preferred by Islamist circles in that time when republicanism was not yet a universally settled type of government.

Said Halim's failure to avert the Empire's participation in the First World War marked not only the start of the disintegration of the last multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Muslim empire, but also the failure of Said Halim's brand of Pan-Islamism, an ideology that he defended against the growing current of nationalism in the Muslim countries.[66] Said Halim did not live long enough to see the end of the institutional sources and symbols of Islamism with the abolition of the caliphate.

Today, Said Halim is considered as an original thinker with very limited effect and it took almost 40 years after his death for his works to be reproduced in Turkey.[67] He is rather unknown in comparison to other Islamists sharing similar orientations like Namık Kemal and Mehmet Akif who wrote, like Halim, for the same journal, *Sebilürreşat*. Additionally, the new political climate in the Turkish Republic narrowed the possible range of proposing Islamic characteristics for the

---

[62] Kuyaş, Ahmet, "Le Califat Illusoire qui Cache La République: La Fin de la Monarchie Constitutionnelle en Turquie," in *De Samarcande à Istanbul: Étapes Orientales*," ed. Véronique Schiltz (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2015), 363–384.
[63] Bostan, *Bir İslamcı Düşünür,* 96.
[64] Pacha, "Réforme," 22.
[65] There are also other opinions stating that Said Halim was more inclined in his last days to affiliate himself with the Egyptian nationalist movement led by Saad Zaglul—and that he was even thought to be a candidate to the throne of Eygpt by the movement. See: Hanefi Bostan, *Bir İslamcı Düşünür*, 94.
[66] Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: An Ottoman Statesman*, 268.
[67] Guida, "Grand Vezir Said Halim Pasha," 104. Quoted from: Dogan Ertugrul, "Ismail Kara: Türkiye'de Yalnız Islamcılık Düsüncesinin Tam Bir Antolojisi Var," *Nehir* 8 (1994): 65.

new state. At this juncture, Said Halim's regenerative or arguably modernist vision of a new political-religious body had little appeal and his impact remains to fall behind of statements of Turkish political and social thought.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: New Possibilities and Shortcomings

Islamism can be considered as a political claim and thus the assertion of the need to self-defense in the conditions of the modern world. In this reflexive sense, it can be regarded as a new breed of *kalam*, the Islamic hermeneutics and science of language, seeking to defend Islam in the modern world.[68]

A traditionalist advocates a past which would not possibly have a future, while a modernist attempts to build a future overcoming its past. It is possible to summarize Said Halim's traditionalism as the persistent faith in God's law and the magnificent social body designed by it. Said Halim recurrently highlighted the differences between the West and the Islamic and he systematically rejected the new institutions' impact within Ottoman history. Yet, his political thinking aimed to put an *élan-vital*[69] into practice which would ultimately solve the administrative and political shortcomings generated by the false practices of Westernization identified by him. In Said Halim's thinking, the notion of cultural modernity was totally identified with the Western political, social, and cultural identity without leaving any room to think about the localization of new cultural practices. The Muslims' agency to develop new strategies seemed instead merely reserved to the political order.

The concept of semi-modernity[70] describes this mindset as the employment of the material gains of modernity in the pursuit of an Islamic political order.[71] In Said Halim's writing, this semi-modernity could be observed within two motives: The first would be the described need for (re)Islamization to have a creative dynamic force emerge, while the second would be the assumption that the aims were technical while the customary culture was to be preserved. Said Halim's political body was paradoxically a new agency and enterprise of political culture that was already Islamic without its history to be interrupted. Said Halim, despite his analysis of fundamental differences between civilizations based on closed cycle

---

[68] Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 415.

[69] Wasti, "Said Halim Pasha," 99.

[70] The concept of semi-modernity, coined by political scientist Bassam Tibi in 1995, is used to define the Islamic fundamentalists' take on modernity in the 1990s. According to Tibi, Islam (of all religions) is exceptional in Muslim fundamentalists' thinking for its favorable attitude towards science and technology. This view does not assess religious beliefs as contrary to human reason in contradiction to European Enlightenment. Tibi further notes that Islam is also the desired framework for politics and society as the very source of all science for those fundamentalists. This is not a rejection of modernity as a whole, but the employment of the achievements of modernity in order to establish an Islamic political order.

[71] Bassam Tibi, "Islamic Dream of Semi-modernity," *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1995): 79–87.

essentialisms, opened up new areas of transcendencies and permeabilities; he appropriated formations of the political body, representations, as well as accountabilities, into Islamic conceptions of authority and politics without resorting to the reference to any caliph, person, or precedence from Islamic history.

Said Halim presented a political dynamism endemic to the Muslim society. The subject of dogmatic adherence to prevailing cultural values within the society still presents the challenge of asking critical questions about epistemological differences and breaks in Turkish political culture and the intellectual world. In the example of Said Halim's body politic, it is possible to observe a modernist discourse already observed with Hobbes' *Leviathan*[72] of the 17th century; this work shows similiarities helping to interpret Said Halim. This should not be taken as a modernist criticism of a society's evolution, but rather as a commentary on the Turkish intellectual world which was not able to accommodate alterations; In his famous work on cultural schizophrenia in traditional societies, Daryush Shayegan defined this failure to accommodate the self by virtue of the fact that these new ideas were merely taken as imported. This is because the conscience seemed indifferent to the genealogy of new ideas while, in return, their own world of cultural references was subjected to be reified by themselves.[73]

In this respect of indifference, the notion of counter-Enlightenment associated with the late Ottoman intellectual world again offers a useful theoretical instrument in the case of Said Halim. Aksakal defines this reductionist argument as the unwillingness to be self-critical, clearly represented in Said Halim's construction of a predetermined Islamic society and political regime. Said Halim's constant explanations of the reasons why and how Islamic society could build a better political and social body in comparison to Western counterparts was rooted in his assumptions that true happiness, welfare, solidarity, democracy, and scientific culture always resided within Islam. Said Halim's inferences were never meant to initiate a deeper insight about Enlightenment. His idealizing and blurred view of Islamic society was suited as long as it could be associated with social acquisitions of Said Halim's modernist concepts. Instead of grounding his positions historically, Said Halim proposed a glorified conception that was politically assertive, yet detrimental to its epistemic consistency. An epistemological rupture is prevalent through the lens of this problematization which offers workable theoretical means to comprehend and analyze the neologies and shortcomings in Said Halim's work.

---

[72] It is worth remembering that a translation of Hobbes' famous work into Turkish was only realized in 1993.

[73] Daryush Shayegan, *Yaralı Bilinç: Geleneksel Toplumlarda Kültürel Şizofreni (Le Regard Mutilé)*, trans. Haldun Bayrı (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991), 68.