

THE SCRAMBLE FOR IRAN: OTTOMAN MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC  
ENGAGEMENTS DURING THE AFGHAN OCCUPATION OF IRAN, 1722-1729

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The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During the  
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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mehmet Yılmaz Akbulut, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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## ABSTRACT

### The Scramble for Iran: Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Engagements During The Afghan Occupation of Iran, 1722-1729

This thesis is a study of the Ottoman military and diplomatic involvements in Iran during the critical years that followed the collapse of the Safavid dynasty. It aims to contribute to the ongoing reappraisal of Ottoman military and diplomatic performance in the post-Karlowitz (1699) era. Contrary to the image of an Empire that followed largely passive and defensive policies, this study will reveal that the Ottoman Empire was remarkably proactive in this period. It will be argued that the Ottomans under the leadership of Damat İbrahim Pasha (d. 1730) designed their Iranian policies during the 1720s with a distinct awareness of European international politics as well as of local Iranian politics and with the aim not just to protect but also to improve the position of the Empire in a changing global order. Diplomacy constituted an important dimension of the Ottomans' engagements in Iran, culminating in the 1724 Partition Treaty with Russia, which arranged for the division of the Safavid territory between the Ottoman and Russian empires. War-making constituted the other facet of Ottoman engagements in Iran, and was motivated by complex military, strategic, administrative and economic calculations. Last but not least, their engagement in Iran brought the Ottomans in contact, and for a time, in conflict with another power, the Afghan invaders of Isfahan. In the religio-legal disputes with the Afghan ulama, the Ottoman side evoked a universalist understanding of the caliphate in anticipation of trends that historians have conventionally dated to the late nineteenth century.

## ÖZET

### İran'ı Paylaşmak: Afgan İşgali Sırasında (1722-1729) Osmanlıların İran'a Yönelik Askeri ve Diplomatik Politikaları

Bu çalışmada, XVIII. yüzyıl başında Safevi Hanedanı'nın dağılmasını takip eden süreçte, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İran'daki askeri ve diplomatik faaliyetleri ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda 1699 Karlofça Antlaşması'nı takip eden yıllarda, Osmanlı askeri ve diplomatik performansını yeniden değerlendiren literatüre katkıda bulunmak amaçlanmıştır. Yerleşik kanaatlerin aksine, Osmanlı Devleti'nin diplomatik ve askeri olarak bu devirde oldukça aktif olduğu gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Sadrazam Damat İbrahim Paşa (ö. 1730) idaresindeki Osmanlı dış siyasetinin, Avrupa uluslararası siyasi dengelerinin ve İran'daki yerel siyasi yapıların farkında olarak hareket ettiği ve kapsamlı askeri ve diplomatik girişimlerini, sadece savunma amaçlı değil, aksine değişen dünya siyasi düzeninde kendine yeni ve avantajlı bir yer almaya yönelik tasarlandığı savunulur. Safevi hanedanı sonrasında İran topraklarının Rusya ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasında bölüşülmesini düzenleyen 1724 Mukasemet Antlaşması bağlamında, Osmanlı dış siyasetinin diplomatik araçları nasıl kullandığı resmedilmiştir. Osmanlıların, İran toprakları üzerinde yürüttükleri askeri hareketler stratejik, idari ve iktisadi veçhelerden incelenerek bu dönemdeki Osmanlı dış siyasetinin başka bir boyutu gösterilmiştir. Son olarak, Safevi İmparatorluğu'nu yıkarak İsfahan'a yerleşen Afgan kuvvetleri ile Osmanlıların diplomatik ve askeri ilişkileri ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Osmanlı ve Afgan uleması arasındaki yazışmalar derinlemesine tetkik edilmiş ve genellikle ondokuzuncu yüzyılın sonunda ortaya çıktığı düşünülen siyasi manada evrensel bir

hilafet iddiasının bu dönemde Osmanlılar tarafından ortaya konulmuş olduđu gösterilmiřtir.

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## NOTES ON DATES AND TRANSLITERATION

While the sources for this period are relatively well dated, there are a few inconsistencies, which is not surprising. For example, the Ottoman sources generally date the fall of Isfahan to the end of October and the beginning of November. The English sources give either the 21st or 22nd of October. Russian sources are always confusing because they use the Julian solar calendar instead of the Gregorian one. I will give the dates mostly to the month unless it is important to be more precise. For the conversion of the *hijri* dates in the Ottoman sources, I use the online manual created by Murat Aytaç (<http://193.255.138.2/takvim.asp>). Where my sources are not clear about the dates, I will adopt a broad time definition, e.g. mid-summer; late 1723.

Ottoman Turkish proper names and terms are rendered in modern Turkish. The following letters of the Turkish alphabet have these equivalents in English: c = j; ç = like 'ch' in *chalk*; ğ = lengthens the preceding and following vowel; ı = similar to 'u' in *millennium*; j = as in the French *journal*; ş = 'sh'; İ = same as i in English. For transcription of the Arabic and Persian words in Turkish, the circumflexes: â, î and û are used.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BOA State Archives of the Prime Ministry (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*)

DİA *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*

EI2 *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Second Edition)

EIr *Encyclopaedia of Iranica*

E.E. *Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi Catalogue*

N.H. *Name-i Hümayun Defteri*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1722, Isfahan, the capital of the Safavid Empire, was burning down and its population starving to death under a ruthless siege by the Afghan invaders led by Mahmud Khan. The dynasty that had been the Ottomans' arch-rival for the last two hundred years was about to vanish from the political scene. Before winter came, Shah Husayn, the last shah of the Safavid Empire, accepted unconditional surrender and abdicated the throne in favor of Mahmud Khan. For the Ottoman Empire, this tragic end meant a new opportunity, and the beginning of a new diplomatic and military adventure in the East. From the fall of Isfahan to the Afghan forces in 1722 until the recapture of Isfahan by Tahmasb-Kulu Khan (later Nadir Shah) and Tahmasb II, the last true heir of Shah Husayn, in 1729, the Ottomans extended their rule over substantial territories in Caucasia and Fwestern Iran through a combination of military and diplomatic means.

Ottoman expansion in Iran during the 1720s represented a striking instance of Ottoman military success in the eighteenth century. Still, historians have not made much of this military success on the grounds that it was short lived. They have made even less of the Ottoman diplomatic accomplishments on this front. It has been maintained that the long vizierate of Damat İbrahim Pasha (1718-1730) could produce "organized pleasure" but not organized diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> This dismissive view of the whole Iranian episode derives from a superficial reading of the Ottoman eighteenth century. Two historical moments in the eighteenth century have cast a

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<sup>1</sup> A. N. Kurat and J. S. Bromley, "The Retreat of the Turks, 1683-1730," in *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, 1976, 178–219. This article is representative in its depiction of the early eighteenth century Ottoman Empire in the literature. The period of İbrahim Pasha is depicted as isolationist against Europe and suspension of military and economic decline through the prevalence of cultural developments and pleasure-seeker statesmen.

shadow on the whole century, and prevented Ottomanists from analyzing its complexities in a more dispassionate manner. The first of these moments is the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz, when for the first time, the Ottomans had to accept the mediation of third parties and formally acknowledge defeat.<sup>2</sup> The second moment is the 1768-74 Russian War and the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca that concluded it. The first of these moments marked the beginning of Ottoman military and territorial retreat before the emerging European powers, while the second sealed the reputation of Russia as the Ottomans' most formidable enemy, and paved the way for the gradual demolition of the Ottoman Empire. The period in between these two epochal thresholds was analyzed, with a crude determinism, as lost decades. Especially the tragic territorial losses to Russia in the last quarter of the eighteenth century compelled the Ottoman historians to search for the roots of Russian power and Ottoman weakness in earlier developments.

This stance of modern historiography has also been fueled by an uncritical reliance on the Ottoman chroniclers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Echoing a number of influential eighteenth and nineteenth-century historians, modern historians have evaluated the military and political record of İbrahim Pasha in a largely negative light. According to this view, İbrahim Pasha and his clique had kept the empire out of military engagements with Europe and Russia and in between amassed excessive wealth for themselves. In the meantime, the Ottoman army had supposedly decayed and the pleasure-oriented atmosphere of the "Tulip Age" had reduced the ability of the Empire to defend itself against the modernizing European

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<sup>2</sup> The classic monograph about the treaty is Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1963). And see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699-1703," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, no. 3 (1969): 467-75. And Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Attitudes toward Peace Making: The Karlowitz Case," *Der Islam* 51, no. 1 (1974): 131-37.

powers. This negative take on the early eighteenth-century Ottoman polity, however, has been problematized in a number of recent studies.<sup>3</sup> In particular, Selim Karahasanoğlu's evaluation of the existing literature and his revisionist look at the developments in this period was inspirational for this thesis. Karahasanoğlu has refuted the thesis about the "decadence of the ruling elite" and drawn attention to the political conflicts and rivalries among the ruling elite of the time. According to Karahasanoğlu, these rivalries also colored the historiography of the time. In particular, an "anti-İbrahim literature" emerged in the era of Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754), casting the past rule of İbrahim Pasha and Ahmed III as corrupted in order to legitimate and glorify the new rule.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the opening of a front in the East also had to be criticized to legitimate the evacuation of all the territories that had been taken during the time of İbrahim Pasha and the signing of a peace treaty with Nadir Shah in 1736.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the startling advance of Russia in Caucasia reinvigorated the anti-İbrahim literature from the aspect of the Eastern Frontier. İbrahim Pasha's diplomatic negotiations with Russia were thought to have facilitated the Russian advance in Caucasia. Two Ottoman historians played a noteworthy role in this regard. The first one was Şemdânîzâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, whose *Mür'i-t-tevarih* can be considered the founding text for the prevailing understanding of the history of the Eastern Frontier in this period. Şemdânîzâde Süleyman Efendi was a middle-ranking member of the learned establishment, who

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<sup>3</sup> For the work that popularized the notion of the Tulip Age, see Ahmed Refik Altınay, *Lâle Devri, 1130-1143*, 4th Edition (İstanbul: İbrahim Hilmi, Kitabhâne-i Askerî, 1915); for the critique of the twentieth-century history writing about this period, see Can Erimtan, *Ottomans Looking West? The Origins of the Tulip Age and Its Development in Modern Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2008); Selim Karahasanoğlu, "Osmanlı Tarihyazımında 'Lâle Devri' Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 1, no. 7 (2008), 129.

<sup>4</sup> Selim Karahasanoğlu, "A Tulip Age Legend: Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in the Ottoman Empire (1718-1730)" (PhD Dissertation, Binghamton University, 2009), 174-181.



was born in Istanbul and who worked as deputy *kadı* (*kadı nâibi*) for many years.<sup>5</sup> He was personally on the Russian frontier during the war of 1768-74 for various official services and wrote his history most probably after his return from the frontier. This war and the tragic defeat against the Russians had an undeniable impact on his retrospective comments about the grand vizierate of İbrahim Pasha.<sup>6</sup> In 1774, he was invited to peace talks with Russians but he categorically refused to engage in diplomacy with them.<sup>7</sup> His warlike political stance was also reflected in his writings about the İbrahim Pasha period.

Şemdanîzâde criticized the foreign policy of İbrahim Pasha quite harshly and even went so far as to characterize the latter as a traitor. He criticized İbrahim Pasha's failure to protect the Sunnis of the Caucasus against the Shiite Iranians and Russians.<sup>8</sup> He was especially critical of İbrahim Pasha's policies towards Russia and regarded them as the main reason behind the emergence of Russia as a powerful rival for the Ottomans in Caucasia. Even though Şemdanîzâde's primary source for this period was the official chronicler Çelebizâde Âsım, on many points he made additional criticisms of his own. One such instance was his commentary upon the Partition Treaty of 1724:

Two aspects of this [episode] are instructive: the first concerns the trickery of the Muscovite infidels. Previously they had insisted on the preservation of peace, and now they demanded to organize conferences

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<sup>5</sup> M. Münir Aktepe and Fındıklılı Şemdanîzâde Süleyman Efendi, *Mür'i't-Tevarih*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fak. Basımevi, 1976). The text is not fully published by Aktepe. The first part of the book, stretching from Adam until 1730 was not published. Mustafa Öksüz, "Şemdanîzâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi'nin Mür'i't-tevârih adlı eserinin (180B-345A) Tahlil ve Tenkidi Metni" (MA Thesis, Mimar Sinan GS University, 2009) [Hereafter: Öksüz, "Mür'i't-tevarih"] Öksüz published a half of this unpublished text. It covers from Suleiman I (d. 1566) until the 1730 Rebellion. The first half of the book is still in manuscript form.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed biography, see Şemdanîzâde Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mür'i't-Tevarih* Volume: II-B, transliterated by Münir Aktepe, Istanbul 1980, especially, 75-85.

<sup>7</sup> DİA Editors, "Şemdanîzâde Süleyman Efendi", *DİA*, Online, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Öksüz, "Mür'i't-tevarih," 367-59 (34b-35a-35b).

in order to baffle us. Each deed of these Muscovites is a refined form of cheating. In appearance, what he offered seems plausible, but in essence it was fraudulent. These Muscovites are ill mannered like wildmen. (*yaban ademi gibi terbiyesiz kavim*) It is a great shame for our state that instead of listening to the recommendations of the ulama, and people who are wise and knowledgeable about history our state fell into the trap of the Muscovites. The other [aspect that is instructive] is that the state of Shah Husayn, which used to be a nemesis that could on occasion match the power of the Ottoman state, was humiliated by a Turcoman tribe which had once been its reaya. Dürri Efendi [the last Ottoman envoy in the Safavid court] had informed us that in the Safavid Empire there were no clever and cautious statesmen. The Shah was attached to inferior people. [...] Then [in 1721], Dürri Efendi had argued that the Safavid State would come to ruin in two or three years. However, the Safavid Empire vanished completely in the following year.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, the celebrated nineteenth-century historian Cevdet Pasha contributed to the anti-İbrahim Paşa literature about the developments on the Eastern Frontier. Cevdet Pasha took a line similar to Şemdânîzâde and enumerated the mistakes of İbrahim Pasha. According to Cevdet, the first mistake of İbrahim Pasha had been the signing of the Peace of Passarowitz with Austria and Venice in 1718: İbrahim Pasha had justified this peace treaty with the argument that he would use the peace to develop and improve the Ottoman army. But he had subsequently failed to make any investment in the army.<sup>10</sup> The second mistake of İbrahim Pasha was to

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<sup>9</sup> Öksüz, “Mür’i’t-tevarih”, (334a)- 355-356. Bu makâlden hisse-yâb oluncak iki mâdde var. Biri Moskov keferesinin hilesi ya’nî geçen sene te’bîd-i sulh diyerek matlûbuna vâsıl olduğu ve bu sene mükâleme diyerek iğfâle sa’y itmesi. Moskov’un her iki dakik hiledir. Zâhirde cûzi görünüyor, tahtında dürâdûr nice zarar çıkar. Bu Moskov yaban âdemi gibi terbiyesiz kavim olup Devlet-i Aliyye’de ulemâ ve hukemâ ve müntesib-i tevârîh zâtlar var iken Moskov’un hilesinin menşe ve muhte[te]mine sarf-ı zihin olunmamağla Moskov hîlesini icrâ ve merâmını tahsîl itmek devletimize kati ayıbdır. Ve biri Şâh Hüseyin Devleti ki Âl-i Osmân Devlet’e gâh bî-gâh mukâbil olur hasm iken re’âyâsından bir Türkmen kabîlesi yeddinde muzmahil olmak. Elçi Dürri Efendi’nin Acem ukalâsından getürdüğü haber ki Şâh Hüseyin Devleti’nin sadedinde olanlara "akıllu ve müdebbir kalmadı. Şâh sû-i karînlere mübtelâ oldu. Gerçi diyârimızda ukalâ var iken pespâyede olmağla aranup bulunup ilerü çekilmedi. Eğer ukalaya rağbet olunmayup böyle hodbinlik ile kalınur ise bu devlet munkariz olurlar" dirler idi. Anın için Dürri Efendi gelüp "şâh devleti gâlibâ iki üç seneye dek kesr u noksân bulur" demiş idi. Lâkin bir senede tamâmen muzmahil olduğudur.”

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1309), 62.

have missed the opportunity to fight Russia and instead made peace with her (in 1721 and 1724). It was these mistakes that lay at the roots of the later catastrophic defeats in the hands of the Russians.<sup>11</sup>

The political appraisals about the period and the person of İbrahim Pasha entered a different phase in the twentieth-century. The intensive criticisms of the “bad policies” were replaced by criticism of the hedonism of court culture, excessive prodigality and military pacifism. The wars on the Eastern Frontier were reduced to a minor topic and were considered negligible on the assumption that they, like all the Ottoman campaigns of the period, had been useless and destined to fail<sup>12</sup>

Despite this general neglect, there are at least two studies that have attempted to evaluate this period in a broader framework. These are the integrative studies by Martin Sicker and Ernst Tucker. In the last volume of a survey trilogy published in 2001, titled *The Islamic World in Decline*, Sicker covers the history of the Ottoman Empire from the Ottoman-Safavid Wars of the late sixteenth century until the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. He devotes three chapters to the first three decades of the eighteenth century and covers the history of the Ottoman Empire’s Eastern front by using a few secondary sources. According to the author, Russia’s operation in Caucasia starting from 1718 “[O]stensibly... was commercial; [Peter I] wanted to divert the lucrative silk trade between Persia and Europe from the traditional routes that passed through Syria and Anatolia to a route that passed through Russia.”<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the Ottomans had no concrete

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>12</sup> For the work that the publication of Altınay, *Lâle Devri*, 1915. See Selim Karahasanoğlu, “Osmanlı Tarihyazımında ‘Lâle Devri’ Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme,” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 1, no. 7 (2008), 129.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Sicker, *The Islamic World in Decline: From the Treaty of Karlowitz to the Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 45.

motivation or strategic consideration in this war, but simply to fight against the Iranians with erratic attacks.<sup>14</sup> Sicker's approach to the whole episode is impaired by his uncritical reliance on the dated decline paradigm, as well as by his essentialist assumption that Islam was the sole determiner in the foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup> Sicker is a representative piece for the modern conventional historiography.

Ernst Tucker evaluates this topic in the context of political and diplomatic developments in post-Safavid Iran. Tucker analyzes the Ottoman military and diplomatic engagements of the 1720s in the *longue durée* of Ottoman-Safavid relations.<sup>16</sup> As he depicts it, the long "tolerance" period that had started in 1639 had ended with the Ottoman "religiously guised" aggressive politics. The Ottoman Empire declared war on the Safavids in 1724, "trotting out the time-honored *casus belli* against the Safavids by having fatwas".<sup>17</sup> For Tucker, in the eighteenth century, the religious sentiment was no more a motivation but a rhetorical tool. Tucker is also right in arguing that in 1724, the Ottoman Empire was planning to have a stable but weak Safavid administration.

The Afghan occupation of Safavid Iran has never found an extensive treatment or consideration in Iranian historiography let alone in Ottoman studies. In

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 53: One statement in this line: "whatever the Ottoman ambitions in Persia may have been, they were soon to find that dealing with the decaying regime of the Safavids was one thing, but that it was quite another matter to smash the Afghans".

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., viii.

For a comparative and critical evaluation of the decline paradigm, see Virginia H. Aksan, "Review: Finding the Way Back to the Ottoman Empire," *The International History Review* 25, no. 1 (2003): 96–107.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Tucker, "From Rhetoric of War to Realities of Peace: The Evolution of Ottoman-Iranian Diplomacy through the Safavid Era," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, Willem Floor, Edmund Herzig, vol. 2 (I.B. Tauris, 2012), 81.

<sup>17</sup> Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2006), 24.

general, the period stands in the shadow of the period of rule by Nadir Shah, which has been much better studied.<sup>18</sup> Still Laurence Lockhart's *The Fall of Safavi Dynasty* must be mentioned as an indispensable reference work for the period.<sup>19</sup> Lockhart uses a wide variety of sources and presents a vivid picture of the developments from the first Afghan incursions in 1710s until the arrival of Nadir Shah. Lockhart's book has become an indispensable source for this thesis.

Among the Ottomanists, Münir Aktepe has done some pioneering work on the impact of the Afghan occupation on Ottoman politics. His *Patrona İsyanı* [The Patrona Rebellion] is a classic depiction of politics in the Ottoman imperial center at the dawn of the Patrona Halil rebellion. Even though Aktepe does not focus on the Iranian wars in this work, he discusses the political ramifications of these wars for the outbreak of the rebellion.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction to the *Revan Fetihnâmesi*, a report given to Sultan Ahmed III after the conquest of Revan (modern-day Yerevan), which was an important turning point in the Iranian wars, Aktepe also gives a brief summary of the political developments in the Eastern Frontier, which is seldom in the literature.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The seminal monograph for the history of the Nadir Shah period from a wider political, military and diplomatic perspective: Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (Luzac, 1938). After that work there has been many other works in various languages. A recent book, narrates the history of Nadir Shah is Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London; New York; New York: I.B. Tauris ; Distributed by Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Axworthy presents a rich bibliography about the studies conducted after the publication of Lockhart's book in 1938. See also the studies of Tucker cited in footnote 18 and 19.

<sup>19</sup> Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavî Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Oxford, 1958). (Hereafter: Lockhart, *The Fall*)

<sup>20</sup> M. Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1958).

<sup>21</sup> M. Münir Aktepe, *1720-1724 Osmanlı-İran Münâsebetleri ve Silâhşör Kemânî Mustafa Ağa'nın Revan Fetih-Nâmesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1970).

Finally, a number of studies have examined Ottoman-Iranian relations after the demise of the Safavids. However, once again most of these have concentrated on the reign of Nadir Shah, and not so much on the period of the Afghan occupation. İlker Külbilge's dissertation is a comprehensive survey based on archival records.<sup>22</sup> Serdar Genç's book is another precious work. Genç concentrates on military organization and logistics using archival data, but does not evaluate the wars in a broader historical context.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.1 Approach of this study

This thesis aims to reevaluate the Ottoman involvement in Iran from the fall of Isfahan to the Afghan forces in 1722 until the recapture of the city by Tahmasb-Kulu Khan (later Nadir Shah) in 1729. In a broader sense, it is also an attempt to strip away some of the preconceptions about the political isolation and pacifism of the

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<sup>22</sup> İlker Külbilge, "18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı-İran Siyasi İlişkileri (1703-1747)" (PhD Dissertation, Ege University, 2010). This thesis focuses on the 1722-30 period relatively less in detail. However, this section is useful to see the existing secondary and primary sources about the topic. Külbilge's work is a very much developed version of a series of works about this period since 1970s.

With less sources but a good framework for the Ottoman perspective for the Eastern Frontier 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), See especially Chapter II: "From Dürri Efendi to Râşid Efendi", 41-64. Olson is basically a repetition of Aktepe, *Patrona İsyani*.

Ali Djafar-Pour, "Nadir Şah Devrinde Osmanlı İnan Münasebetleri" (PhD Dissertation, Istanbul University, 1977). This dissertation is outdated from many aspects, however still as a beginning of the researches about this topic, this text is to be noted. The section about the Afghan rule in Isfahan is in less detail compared to the later periods.

There are two more pieces focusing on the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Nadir Shah: Abdurrahman Ateş, "Avşarlı Nadir Şah ve Döneminde Osmanlı-İran Mücadeleleri" (PhD Dissertation, Süleyman Demirel University, 2001). And Elvin Valiyev, "XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Güney Kafkasya: Osmanlı, Safevi ve Rusya Kışkacında" (MA Thesis, Selçuk University, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Serdar Genç, *Lâle Devrinde Savaş : İnan Seferlerinde Organizasyon ve Lojistik* (İstanbul: Kitap, 2013).

Ottoman Empire during the grand vizierate of İbrahim Pasha or the so-called “Tulip Age”. Few events testify to the proactive nature of Ottoman military and diplomatic policies in the early eighteenth century better than the Ottoman involvement in Iran during the 1720s. İbrahim Pasha’s bid to grab a chunk of Iran in the aftermath of the collapse of Safavid authority in the region was a kind of Ottoman *Drang nach Osten* with various motivations and considerations specifically developed under the conditions of the early eighteenth century.

This thesis aims to advance scholarly knowledge about this episode by reconstructing the details of the Ottoman diplomatic and military moves in Iran without falling into the trap of anachronism. Leaving aside the declinist paradigms about the Ottoman early eighteenth century, I will pay attention to how the Ottomans adjusted themselves to the changing global dynamics and how they transformed their internal structures according to the needs of the time.<sup>24</sup> In other words, I will examine Ottoman diplomacy and foreign policy in the context of broader developments in global history rather than study them solely with reference to internal dynamics.

To make sense of the Ottoman engagements in Iran during the 1720s it is essential to consider a number of key developments in Eurasia from c. 1680s to 1730s.<sup>25</sup> [See Appendix Map 1] One such key development was the transformation of frontier zones into relatively well-delineated borders. This was the time just before “great power diplomacy” would begin to dominate Eurasian politics. Starting

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<sup>24</sup> For a brief depiction of the Empire in the first half of the eighteenth century according to the recent evaluations see Suraiya Faroqhi, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4-8.

<sup>25</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson, 2007), 23-36: Aksan gives a vivid picture of geopolitical realities around the Ottoman frontiers, circa 1700. Though, in her depiction Aksan does not take the Eastern Frontier in her analysis.

roughly from the fifteenth century, there had been in Eurasia an ever-intensifying struggle over borderlands. Alfred Rieber argues that the emergence of “multicultural conquest states” primarily, Muscovy-Russia, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sweden, the Habsburg, Ottoman, Safavid and Qing empires had carried a long struggle over the frontier zones of Eurasia. Rieber counts seven “complex frontiers” over which these empires had struggled: the Baltic littoral, the Western Balkans, the Danubian Frontier, the Pontic steppe, the Caucasian isthmus, Trans Caspia, and Inner Asia.<sup>26</sup> These frontier zones are labelled “complex” because all of them were home to culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse societies. What made these regions “frontiers” is the fact that they were in between larger imperial entities. Since the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire had been a powerful player in four complex frontier regions: the Western Balkans, the Danubian Frontier, the Pontic Steppe and the Caucasian Isthmus. What differentiated the first half of the eighteenth century from the previous two hundred years in this regard was the intertwining of these frontiers with each other. Because of the growing interconnectedness of the world during the eighteenth century, a conflict in the Pontic Steppe between the Crimean Khanate and Russia also affected the developments in the Baltic Littoral, just as a conflict in the Danubian Frontier also had repercussions in the Caucasian Isthmus. Moreover, the emergence of Russia as an important player at the end of the seventeenth century increased the stress over these Eurasian frontier zones, to the disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire in particular.

The Ottoman and Habsburg Empires had confronted and clashed with one other in the Western Balkans and on the Danubian frontier from the 1670s till the 1710s. At the same time, the Polish Commonwealth and Russia had also become

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands, From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 293.



involved in the conflict over the Pontic Steppe. Moreover, with the Great Northern War (1700-1721) between Sweden and Russia, the conflicts had also expanded to the Baltic littoral. By 1720, the northern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire had become an arena of contestation between multiple empires, whereas the Caucasian Isthmus was the only frontier zone that had been at peace since the mid-seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the very moment of the collapse of the Safavid Empire in 1722 destabilized this frontier as well. The Russian operations in northern Caucasia, starting in 1718, indicated a serious crisis in the last peaceful frontier zone of the Ottoman Eurasia. What was worse for the Ottomans was the Russian victory in the Baltic littoral over Sweden. The defeat and demise of Sweden had opened the way to the gradual destruction of the Polish Commonwealth.<sup>27</sup> All these developments would also have been on the minds of Ottoman statesmen when they developed new policies on their Eastern Frontier during the 1720s. [See Map 1]

Inspired by Alfred Rieber's arguments about the larger global framework, this thesis will examine the Ottoman diplomacy as well as military operations in Western Iran and Caucasia during the 1720s as part of the broader Eurasian struggle for borderlands. Attention will be paid in this regard to the Ottoman relations with both other imperial powers such as Russia and with the smaller local entities in the frontier zones, especially in Caucasia. It should be stressed, however, that this thesis does not consider the multi-faceted conflicts in the 1720s Iran from Russian, Afghan, Iranian, Georgian, Armenian or other perspectives.<sup>28</sup> It is, in this sense, very much

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<sup>27</sup> Rieber, *The Struggle*, 378-9; 290-292; 612.

<sup>28</sup> Rudolph Matthee, *Persia in Crisis Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012) is a recent evaluation for the last decades of the Safavid Empire, concern on the structural problems and crisis in the widened geography of the Empire.

an Ottoman-centric study, albeit one that situates the Ottomans in a broader global context.

## 1.2 Sources

In the thesis, I have used many published and unpublished primary sources, which will be introduced in detail throughout the text. Ottoman manuscript sources and archival material about the ongoing wars and diplomacy have been the main sources of this thesis. I have used the Ottoman chronicles of the period not only to document the events in question, but also to reconstruct the panoply of opinions amongst the Ottoman officials regarding these events. In particular, Çelebizâde Âsım's *Zeyli Târih-i Râşid*,<sup>29</sup> has been an indispensable source for this thesis, as it reflects the views of a scholar who was a close associate of İbrahim Pasha, the main architect of the Ottomans' Iranian policies in this period. Some of the other important histories used include Gürcüzâde's history about the wars in Tibilisi<sup>30</sup>, Mustafa Ağa's report

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<sup>29</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım Efendi, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013). Çelebizâde Âsım was a member of the ulama, who would later become Sheikhulislam for one year (1759-60). He was also a close associate of İbrahim Pasha, and praises him and his deeds greatly in his chronicle. Çelebizâde Âsım's chronicle is one of the most underused sources of the period for diplomatic history. Most likely, this neglect was due in part to his difficult prose style. However, beyond the barrier of language, an important reason for disuse of this source, I think, was the disdainful attitude toward İbrahim Pasha among the later Ottoman historians. A historian of the Republican Era, Ali Canip [Yöntem] also dismissed Çelebizâde Âsım's chronicle as a "superficial prose eulogy of İbrahim Pasha". (*Nevşehirli İbrahim Paşanın mensur ve sathi bir methiyesinden ibarettir*, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, vol. 3 (İstanbul: Klasik, 2013), xiv. Such dismissive views aside, Âsım's text is an invaluable source for the foreign policies of İbrahim Pasha, the Afghan War in the East, and diplomatic relations with Russia. Abdülkadir Özcan, "Çelebizâde Âsım Efendi" *DİA Online*, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi. 2435. For details see chapter 4.1.1.

A contemporary poet Nâdir wrote a short history of the conquest of Kermanshah and Hamadan under control of Ahmed Pasha. Veysel Göger, "Nâdir'in Vekâyi' Pür-Sanâyi'-i Bedâyi' Adlı Eseri (İnceleme ve Metin)" (MA Thesis, Marmara University, 2009).

about the conquest of Yerevan<sup>31</sup> and Tiflisli Yosefo's historical report about the last months of Shah Husayn in Isfahan.<sup>32</sup>

Ottoman archival documents have been used to fill some gaps in historical narratives. In the various catalogues of the State Archives of the Prime Ministry (see Bibliography) there are many records of correspondence between the pashas on the battlefield and the central administration. This correspondence is useful for analyzing the pattern of administration and strategy in this period.<sup>33</sup> The *Name-i Hümayun Defteri* nr. 7 is another important archival source for this thesis, because this register contains diplomatic correspondence and treaties with Russia, France, Safavid and Afghan rulers of Isfahan.<sup>34</sup> Another archival source is *Tevcihât Defteri*, a detailed archival record indicating the appointments and dismissals to official positions from 1718 to 1730. This source has been particularly useful for delineating Ottoman military and administrative policies during the Iranian wars.<sup>35</sup>

In the section about the Ottoman-Afghan diplomatic relations, I rely extensively on a *münşeat* collection which contains the correspondence between the Ottoman Empire and the Afghan administration in Isfahan from 1726 to 1729.<sup>36</sup> The analysis of the correspondence between the Afghan administration and the Ottoman Empire is one of the main contributions of this thesis. Last but not least, the fatwas of

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<sup>31</sup> See above.

<sup>32</sup> About Dragoman Yosefo and the manuscripts see Chapter 4.1.

<sup>33</sup> The *Divan* registers (*Mühimme Defteri* nr. 130-132) is another source to see the communication between the battlefield and Istanbul. For a detailed use of this source for this period see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 4/1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988).

<sup>34</sup> BOA., *Name-i Hümayun Defteri*: Bâb-ı Âsafi Divân-ı Hümayûn, Name-i Hümayûn Kalemi, Nr. 7. [Hereafter: *NH.7*]

<sup>35</sup> *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)*, Fahameddin Başar (Ankara: TTK, 1997). (Hereafter: Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*)

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 5.1 for the bibliographic information about this collection.

the contemporary Sheikhulislam Abdullah Efendi (d. 1744) are another important primary source of this thesis.<sup>37</sup> These fatwas about the declaration of war against the Safavids and later against the Afghan administration are useful for seeing the Ottoman religio-political stance.

Beside these Ottoman sources, contemporary European diplomatic and history accounts are sources of this thesis. The published memoirs of the French ambassador Marquis de Bonnac<sup>38</sup>, the diplomatic dispatches of the Venetian Balio Emo<sup>39</sup> offer precious information about the military and diplomatic engagements related to Iran.<sup>40</sup> There are two more essential European contemporary sources about this period. The head Catholic Missionary in Isfahan, Father Krusiński, wrote a detailed travel account depicting the Afghan occupation of Isfahan.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, the

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<sup>37</sup> Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetava* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Louis d'Usson Schefer Charles Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique sur l'ambassade de France à Constantinople* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894).

<sup>39</sup> Mary Lucille Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734 as Revealed in Despatches of the Venetian Baili* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

<sup>40</sup> Beside these two important diplomatic sources, the despatches of the British envoy in Istanbul, Abraham Stanyan and the Russian envoy Nepluyev would be useful for the purposes of this thesis. Stanyan Papers are in The National Archives, U.K. records SP 97/24/25. In this study, I did not directly use these sources but only benefited from Lockhart, *The Fall's* references.

For a detailed bibliography about Nepluyev see Selim Karahasanoğlu, "İstanbul'un Lâle Devri Mi? Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı" (Tarih İçinde İstanbul Uluslararası Sempozyumu, İstanbul, 2010), 445, fn. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Tadeusz Jan Du Cerceau Krusiński, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*. [Done into English, from the Original, Lately Publish'd with the Royal Licence at Paris (New York: Arno Press, 1973). (Hereafter: Krusiński, *The History*) Krusiński's account is precious because he gives firsthand information about the events preceding the fall of Isfahan. His portrayal of the resurrection starting from 1707 in Kandahar has become almost only primary source for many details of the story. Krusiński's *The History* was translated in many European languages. The original text was in Latin and one of the first translations, maybe the first one was into Turkish made by İbrahim Müteferrika. Müteferrika's translation was considerably shortened the text, excluding especially the sections related to Ottoman Empire. There is a long section narrating the geography of Iran, especially the eastern regions and long depictions of the Afghan tribes in Kandahar and Herat. In the Istanbul libraries there are numerous copies of the first publication in 1729. The book was reprinted in 1860. The importance of this translation is that, it is the only Ottoman literate source about the identity of the Afghan invaders of Iran. There are many pieces of information can be found disorderly in the archival documents but Müteferrika's translation was certainly a unique self-contained source for the Ottomans.

contemporary French historian Clairac's work has been a helpful source about this period.<sup>42</sup> Both authors narrate their story from Iranian sources, usually from eye-witnesses. Another important source is the account of the English merchant, Jonas Hanway. Though writing after the events covered in this thesis, Hanway traveled in Iran and in the Caspian region in the 1740s and wrote a detailed report about post-Safavid Iran.<sup>43</sup> The sections concerning the Afghan occupation are largely based on Krusiński and Clairac but are still useful sources of crucial information and commentary.

### 1.3 Clarification about some terms

Even though the period under research is brief, the scope of this thesis is noticeably wide. Topics discussed range from European military and diplomatic history to the history of the Ottoman administration and warfare. Given this broad scope, it might be helpful to clarify some expressions that are frequently used in this thesis.

One of these terms is “the Ottoman central administration/Ottoman government”. The term refers basically to the *Bab-ı Âsâfi* (Vizierial Porte).<sup>44</sup> The delineation of this office was a milestone for the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Until the mid-seventeenth century, the top decision-making mechanism of

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<sup>42</sup> Louis-André de La Mamie Clairac, *Histoire De Perse, Depuis Le Commencement de ce Siècle* (Paris: C.-A. Jombert, Librairie du Roi pour l'Artillerie & le Génie, 1750) (Hereafter: Clairac, *Histoire*)

<sup>43</sup> Jonas Hanway, *The Revolutions of Persia, An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea with the Author's Journal of Travels from England through Russia into Persia: And Back through Russia, Germany and Holland: To Which Are Added, the Revolutions of Persia During the Present Century, with the Particular History of the Great Usurper Nadir Kouli: Illustrated with Maps and Copper-Plates* (London: Printed for T. Osborne 1762) (Hereafter: Hanway, *Revolutions*)

<sup>44</sup> Mehmet İpşirli, “Bâb-ı Ali”, *DİA*, Online, 2015. In the European sources, the term “Sublime Port/The Port” refers to “Bab-ı Ali/Asafi” however, reader must be cautious because in numerous occasions it is hard to discern whether it is “Bâb-ı Ali” or another governmental mechanism, such as Topkapı Palace. For many examples of this confusions see Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734 as Revealed in Despatches of the Venetian Baili*.

the Ottoman Empire, other than the informal channels around the sultan, had been the Imperial Council (*Divân-ı Hümayun*), which used to meet in the second courtyard of the Imperial Palace. Starting sometime in the grand vizierate of Derviş Mehmed Pasha (d. 1655), the governmental meetings began to be held in the personal mansions of the grand vizier. From then on, the importance of the *Divân* at the Topkapı Palace began to diminish, and gradually the role of meetings held in the mansions of the grand viziers dominated the political mechanism in the Ottoman center.<sup>45</sup> This gradual transformation in the governmental system of the Empire reached a decisive stage with Çorlulu Ali Pasha (d. 1711) when he transformed the post of *Silahdârlık* into an inter-secretariat between the Sultan and the Grand Vizier. This promotion of the post of *Silahdârlık* empowered the role of the Grand Vizier in the top bureaucracy before the Sultan and the Palace bureaucracy.<sup>46</sup> The Grand Vizierate of Damat İbrahim Pasha provides a clear example of the empowered Grand Vizierate and the government under his systematic control. The chronicle of Çelebizâde Âsım is a useful source from which to trace this change in governmental power. Almost all the critical decisions were taken in *Bâb-ı Âsâfi* under the chairmanship of Damat İbrahim Pasha. The most important decision-making body under *Bâb-ı Âsâfi* was the *Meşveret Meclisi*, the consultative assembly. This assembly was not the only mechanism, however, as will be seen in the chapters of this thesis, for critical decisions, such as concluding the Partition Treaty in 1724 or declaring war on Ashraf Khan in 1726, the assembly's decisions were definitive.

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<sup>45</sup> Muzaffer Doğan, “Sadaret Kethüdâlığı (1730-1836)” (PhD Disserttation, Marmara University, 1995), 1-14.

<sup>46</sup> M. Münir Aktepe, “Çorlulu Ali Paşa”, *DİA*, Online, 2015.

According to Çelebizâde Âsım, this assembly was composed of high bureaucrats and soldiers as well as the high ranking ulama of Istanbul.<sup>47</sup>

The term Safavid as used in this thesis refers either to the Safavid dynasty or to people who were loyal to its last representatives, be it the deposed Shah Husayn or his son Tahmasb II. The term should not be understood to necessarily denote a confessional, i.e., Shiite, identity. Indeed groups loyal to the Safavids could also comprise Armenians, Georgians, and Turcoman tribes and on some occasions even Sunni tribes. As for the ‘Safavid territories’ I shall be using the term mainly to designate the territories that had been recognized as belonging to the Safavids by the 1639 Kasr-ı Şirin (Zuhâb) treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids.

Last but not least, it is necessary to familiarize the reader with the people who are identified in this thesis as Afghans. With this term I do not necessarily mean all the people who lived in what is now the modern state of Afghanistan. Rather, the Afghans discussed in this thesis consisted primarily of some tribes and tribal confederations which had originally been based around Herat and Kandahar. This region had been a frontier zone between the Mughal and Safavid Empires since the late sixteenth century. There were mainly two great tribes in this region: Abdâlîs (Abdâlîs, after mid-eighteenth century known as *Durrānî*) and Ghilzâis (*Ghalzay/Gilzî*). Both of these tribes were Persian speaking and Sunni Muslim. The Abdâlîs had been driven to Herat during the reign of Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) and had had a relatively smooth relationship with the Safavids. Only a small part of this tribe was involved in the insurrection against the Safavids starting from 1707. Ghilzâis, however, had long been a chronic source of political opposition to Safavid rule in the

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<sup>47</sup> For a late eighteenth-century analysis of the Ottoman decision making bodies in Istanbul see Christoph Neumann, “Decision Making Without Decision Makers: Ottoman Foreign Policy Circa 1780,” in *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Caesar Farah (The Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1993), 29–37.

region.<sup>48</sup> The Ghilzâi insurrection, which would culminate in the fall of Isfahan in 1722, was mainly led by the Ghilzâi Afghans of Kandahar. The famous family of Hōtak of Kandahar was considerably rich by controlling the profitable trade between Mughal India and Safavid Iran. Using this wealth, Mir Ways was able to manage a long-term insurrection against the Safavid governors.<sup>49</sup> Mir Wais (d. 1715) ignited a long and bloody resistance against the Safavid administration. The last Safavid shah, Shah Husayn, appointed the Georgian prince, the king of Kartli George XI (renamed, Gurgīn Khan after conversion to Shiite Islam), to suppress this resurrection. But this failed to stop and even further fueled the Ghilzâi revolt.<sup>50</sup>

#### 1.4 Structure of the thesis

In this thesis I generally follow the chronological order of events starting from 1718 until 1730, but I also divide this twelve-year period into four thematic chapters.

The second chapter covers the years from 1718 until 1724. The main aim of this chapter is to locate the Ottoman Empire on the map of European international politics in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. I argue that the idea of “balance of power” that was central to European international politics in the wake of the

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<sup>48</sup> M. Jamil Hanifi, “Ġilzī”, *EIr*, Online, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia, Modern Times (1500-1924)*, vol. 4, 4 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), Online at: <http://www.persian.packhum.org>: See for detailed chronology of the Hotak dynasty and the general term of the 1707-1722 insurrection. (Part 1, Chapter 4: An Outline of the History of Persia during the last two centuries (a.d. 1722-1922).

During the Afghan- Ghilzâi insurrection there was a great interest in Europe about these tribes. The most important contemporary source is the memoirs of Father Krusiński, the Catholic missionary in Isfahan, during and well before the insurrection. See Krusiński, *The History*.

<sup>50</sup> Frye, R.N.. "Ghalzay." *EI2*. Brill Online, 2015. And Lockhart, L.. "Abdâlî." *EI2*. Brill Online, 2015.

Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (Luzac, 1938), 3, 4, 16, 29, 31-4, 52-4. For further relations of Abdâlîs with Nadir Shah see 113-4,120, 201.



Treaty of Utrecht 1713 is also important for understanding the Ottoman foreign policies of the time. This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, I locate the Ottoman Empire in the broader context of European diplomacy in the second decade of the eighteenth century and discuss the place of the Ottoman Empire in the European balance of power system. Secondly, I focus on the Ottoman-Russian diplomatic relations from 1718 to 1721 and explain the Eternal Peace Treaty (*Ebedî Sulh*) in 1721 with Russia. The last section details the race between the Ottomans and Russians to grab as much of the Safavid territories as possible, starting with the fall of Isfahan to the Afghan leader Mahmud Khan in October 1722 and continuing until the middle of the year 1724.

In the third chapter, I focus on the Russo-Ottoman diplomatic negotiations in Istanbul for the partition of the demised Safavid Empire. This chapter tries to demonstrate that the Ottoman administration under the rule of Damat İbrahim Pasha was actively using tools of diplomacy. For about six months, there was a series of conferences held in Istanbul to share the booty of the Safavid Empire peacefully. The process of negotiations and the concluded treaty in June 1724 are explained in detail. The primary purpose of the Ottoman side was to connect the Caucasian Isthmus with the Pontic Steppe in order to gain advantage vis-à-vis Russian expansionism. By accepting the Russian presence in Caucasia, the Ottoman administration was able to achieve this aim.

The fourth chapter examines the Ottoman expansion into Caucasia and Western Iran in the wake of the Partition Treaty 1724. In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss how the Ottoman armies attempted to sustain control on these territories. Here, I will outline an Ottoman military grand-strategy on the Iranian territories. Subsequently, in the second part of this chapter, I will analyze the

motivations and methods of the Ottoman Empire in her aggressive expansion on the Safavid territories. Comparing the late sixteenth-century Ottoman-Safavid Wars, the main purpose of this second part is to show that the Ottomans wanted to be permanent in these territories and in order to achieve this end, they attempted to erect a semi-decentralized administrative model. This section supports the idea that in the early eighteenth century, a decentralized mode of government did not mean the disintegration of the Empire, and that it could have been even utilized for purposes of expansion. This administrative model is explained, taking into consideration the economic motivations of the Ottoman Empire.

The last chapter is devoted to the diplomatic and military exchanges with the Afghan rulers of Isfahan. After the Partition Treaty with the Russians, the Ottoman Empire was relatively free to expand toward the Safavid territories. However, a new problem emerged when the Sunni Afghan occupiers of Safavid Iran demanded the Western Iranian territories under the control of the Ottoman Empire for themselves and when Ashraf Khan, the second Afghan ruler of Isfahan, claimed to be a legitimate Sunni caliph for the Muslims on his territories. The first part of this chapter will deal with correspondence between the Afghan ulama and the Ottoman ulama in detail, while the second part will examine the Anjudan Battle of 1726, which was the first and only military confrontation between the Afghans and the Ottomans.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I will analyze how the Ottoman project to expand in Iran collapsed. The 1726 Austro-Russian alliance treaty will be identified as a crucial development that also affected the dynamics in Iran. However, a much more catastrophic development for the Ottomans was the “meteoric revival of Persian power” under the initiative of Tahmasb-Kulu Khan [later Nadir Shah Afshār] who

defeated the Afghans and forced the Ottoman armies to evacuate Hamadan, Kermanshah and even Tabriz. The sudden collapse of the seven-year campaign in Iran created a unique opportunity for the political opponents of İbrahim Pasha. This failure played an important role in fueling the Patrona Halil Rebellion and in bringing about İbrahim Pasha's murder in the hands of rebels in 1730.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE EIGHTEENTH –CENTURY

#### BALANCE OF POLITICS (1718-1724)

##### 2.1 Introduction

The first decades of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of a new period of Ottoman foreign policy, with the rise of the Russian Tsardom as a powerful international player. The debilitating wars that the Ottomans had had to fight against the Grand Alliances of 1683-1699 in their European territories had shown the limitations of Ottoman military power and compelled the Ottoman Empire to revise her “grand strategy” according to the realpolitik requirements of the day. Not only the diplomatic and military strategies, the political world-view also had to be rethought. In conventional historiography, the 1718 Passarowitz Treaty, which marked the end of the prolonged Austrian Wars, is commonly represented as inaugurating the so-called “peaceful Tulip Age” when the Ottoman Empire enjoyed a prolonged period of military inactivity. Yet the Ottoman policies of this period did not stem just from an acknowledgement of Ottoman weakness; they were also fully informed by changing trends in eighteenth-century international politics.

War and diplomacy in the early modern world had begun to be shaped by the concept of “balance of power”.<sup>51</sup> One of the classical accounts of the international

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<sup>51</sup> European historiography is unanimous in stating that the concept of “balance of power” shaped the European interstate relations in the post-Renaissance period but most especially in the eighteenth century. A classic study about eighteenth century European history describes this situation: “Most observers agreed that the international relations in Europe were dominated by the balance of power. It was still possible to think to some extent in terms of localized ‘inferior balances’- between Russia and her neighbours in the Baltic; between French and Habsburg influence in Germany or Italy- but more and more these were tending to become merged in a general European balance which covered the

relations theory defines the “balance of power” of the eighteenth century in the following words: “[...] the balance of power was a kind of thread running through the maze of alliances and counter-alliances, the frequent shifts in alignments, and the devious maneuvers which marked the foreign policies of the great powers of that century.”<sup>52</sup> Diplomatic alignments were being sporadically established, and on occasion suspended because of local military confrontations.<sup>53</sup> The “balance of power” is a theory that basically dictates the distribution of military capabilities so that no single state is powerful enough to dominate all others. European diplomatic historians<sup>54</sup> have dated this diplomatic understanding back to Renaissance Italy, where the Italian small states tried to secure themselves against the external powerful empires.<sup>55</sup> Actually, the definition of this theory is ambiguous and laden with

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entire continent. [...] The argument that a balance of power in Europe had begun to emerge at the end of the seventeenth century” Matthew Smith Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713-1783*. Oxford University Press, 1968, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Norman Dunbar Palmer, and Howard Cecil Perkins *International relations: the World Community in Transition*. Vol. 25. Houghton Mifflin, 1954, 318.

Andrew Thompson, “Diplomacy and the Great Powers,” in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter H. Wilson (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 371–86.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Kissinger argues that modern diplomacy emerged from two interdependent concepts: Balance of power and *raison d’etre*. He puts it thus: “The balance of power replaced the nostalgia for universal monarchy with the consolation that each state, in pursuing its *own selfish interests*, would somehow contribute to the *safety and progress* of all the others.” It is hard to find all these elements in the politics of the Ottoman Empire in that specific period. However, this frame of analysis seems preliminarily workable in evaluation of the foreign policy practiced by İbrahim Pasha and his government. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*. (Simon and Schuster, 2012), 58. (My italics).

<sup>54</sup> This argument has been made initially by Garret Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Houghton Mifflin, 1955). Recent historiography is on the same line, Daniela Frigo (ed.), *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Goffman in a recent article criticized the negligence of the vital role of the Ottoman Empire in the formation of the balance of power politics in the Italian peninsula during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His attempt to envision the Ottomans as a side of this ‘balance’ is one of the inspirations of this thesis. See Daniel Goffman, “Negotiating with the Renaissance State: The Ottoman Empire and the New Policy,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

contradictions. A recent author presents ten different definitions for “balance of power” coined from 1741 until 1977.<sup>56</sup> In this chapter, the “balance of power” theory will be evaluated within the context of the early eighteenth century. The balance principle and practice in history can be read limpidly in the framework of eighteenth-century European history. The first half of the eighteenth century in particular witnessed a maze of alliances and counter-alliances where the great powers were attempting to sustain their security with less war but more diplomacy. A classic of modern diplomatic history defines the balance of power politics in the eighteenth century in these words: “[...] Never before or since has a single idea [balance of power] been so clearly the organizing principle in terms of which international relations in general were seen.”<sup>57</sup>

This chapter examines the complex play of diplomacy and war between the Ottomans, the Russians and a host of other local and international players in the region from 1722 to 1724 through this analytical lens. It aims particularly to make sense of the Ottoman policies in Iran in the context of the changing configuration of power, not just in that particular territory but also globally. The international scramble for Iran that ensued after the Afghan insurgency and the collapse of Safavid rule is a vivid illustration of how the Ottoman Empire was integrated to the European balance of power system.<sup>58</sup> It might be appropriate therefore to begin by looking at

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<sup>56</sup> Michael J. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (Routledge, 1996), 2-4.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Smith Anderson, *The rise of modern diplomacy, 1450-1919* (London: Longman, 1993), 163.

<sup>58</sup> In the historiography there are few attempts to locate the Ottoman Empire in the European balance of power system in the eighteenth century. The first piece is Yasemin Saner Gönen, “The Integration of the Ottoman Empire into the European State System during the Reign of Sultan Selim III” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1991). Gönen locates the Ottoman foreign politics in Europe in the wake of the French revolution. Gönen argues that it was first time that the Ottoman Empire found itself in the middle of a great European conflict. The argument of the thesis is that, the Ottoman Empire preferred to be neutral in the first Coalition War and this was taking part in the European balance of power as the other states took.

the larger scene of European politics that impacted Ottoman attitudes towards their main rival in their Eastern Frontier, Russia.

## 2.2 The broader context: Diplomacy in early eighteenth-century Europe

The Wars of Spanish Succession (1688-1713) epitomized this diplomatic concept, where Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, Savoy, Saxony, the Dutch Republic and the Austrian Emperor formed a counter-balance to bellicose France. Europe had turned into a vast chess board, where claims of a single universal sovereignty fell into disuse. Eighteenth-century Europe was characterized by ‘moderation’ in the pursuit of foreign policy intentions. The notion of limited warfare became one of the characteristic features of the century. Moderation in foreign politics and limited warfare formed the eighteenth-century European political setting. In the words of a theoretician of the European “balance of power” system, “[wars in the eighteenth century] tended to be fought for concrete gains or for prestige, which was an important consideration in this era, not for ideologies or national survival. This was important because where war was not total, peace was easier to make”.<sup>59</sup>

In the wake of the Wars of Spanish Succession, the political atmosphere of Western Europe was settling down. The treaties concluded after the long wars demonstrated that France’s dominance over Europe was declining. Among the

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Fatih Yeşil, *Bir Osmanlı Gözüyle Avrupa Siyasetinde Güç Oyunu- Avrupa'ya Mensûb Olan Mizân-ı Umûr-ı Hâriciyye Beyânındadır*, Osmanlı Tarih Kaynakları 14 (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2012). Yeşil takes the integration of the Ottomans European balance of power back to 1770s. For Yeşil, after Karlowitz, the Ottomans were postulating for *status quo ante bellum*. See p. xiii.

For a general evaluation about the Ottoman diplomatic culture in the early modern era see: Kemal Beydilli, “Dış Politika ve Siyasi Ahlâk.” *İlmî Araştırmalar*, no. 7 (1999): 47–56.

<sup>59</sup> Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, 98-100.

belligerent entities there was a ‘balance of power’ which formed the European order.<sup>60</sup> The Russian Tsar was deranging this newly sustained balance with her threatening advancements against the once powerful Sweden. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was another victim of the overwhelming defeat of Sweden. A possible Russian intervention with the Commonwealth would ruin the balance in northeastern Europe.

The royal marriage of Maria Josepha, the daughter of Joseph I of Austria, with the son and the legitimate heir of Augustus II of Saxony and the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, cracked the present status quo in northeastern Europe. This ambitious move by Austria constituted a risk for the Ottoman Empire. A possible alliance between the Commonwealth and Habsburg Austria would adversely affect both the Crimea and the northern Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, a weak and neutral Poland meant a safe border zone for the Ottoman Empire.<sup>61</sup> Since 1700, the Ottoman Empire had endeavored to stop the Russian influence on the Commonwealth, but now the danger came from an unexpected side.<sup>62</sup>

The persistent questions posed by İbrahim Pasha to the Polish envoy Christophe de Solima Popiel in 1719 indicate the Ottoman interest in these developments. The Grand Vizier could not obtain a clear answer to his question of

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<sup>60</sup> John B. Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers, 1685-1715* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 59- 92.

<sup>61</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century): An Annotated Edition of ‘Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000). 162-165.

<sup>62</sup> For the depiction of multiplayer diplomacy among Sweden, Russia, the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire see Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1951).

For a documentary source about this diplomacy see Adnan Baycar, “Ahmed Cavid Bey’in Müntehabatı (Tahlil ve Tenkitli Metin)” (PhD Dissertation, Istanbul University, 1999), 39-57



whether the model of electoral kingship would be replaced by hereditary succession in the Commonwealth.<sup>63</sup>

Such a change in the administration of the Commonwealth would establish two critical ties between the Commonwealth and the rest of Europe. First and foremost, the Habsburgs would find a valuable ally in the north, and the Ottoman threat to Central Europe would be decisively dispelled. Besides, if the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would have the hereditary kingship of a Saxon family, this would lead to a great anti-Ottoman alliance, extending from northern Germany up to the borders of the Russian and Ottoman empires. Moreover, this pact was open to the possible contribution of the Hanoverian English King George I. George I was afraid of the Tsar because of his German territories, and the King's choice for the Polish throne would be naturally anti-Russian and pro-German.<sup>64</sup> In the Polish issue, the alliances formed during the Wars of Spanish Succession were still standing: on one side were Habsburg Austria, Great Britain, Saxony, Hanover, the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of Portugal, and on the other was France, almost alone. However, because of "balance of power" considerations, Russia had turned into a powerful ally for France. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire, though not previously involved in the Wars of Succession, had also gotten involved because of the Polish Succession conflict.

A possible change in the enthronement model of the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth by the above-mentioned royal marriage would mean the political isolation of Peter I from Europe. His aggressiveness towards Sweden and his

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<sup>63</sup> Baron Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, ed. Mümin Çevik; Vecdi Bürün; 10 vols., vol. 7 (İstanbul: Milliyet, 2010), 2045. (Hereafter: Hammer)

<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Black, *Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of George I, 1714–1727* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 162-4.

decisive victory over this country had created anxiety in Europe. After great victories in Northern Europe, this isolation presented an opportunity for Peter I. He could finally turn his attention to Crimea and the Caspian Sea, which had not been possible for the previous twenty years. Beside this advantage, however, isolation in Europe would jeopardize the Polish 'frontier' for Russia. Although the Habsburg Empire and France were the main belligerent entities in southern Europe, the exponential growth of Russian peril in the north opened up new possibilities for interstate alliances. In 1716, secret French-Anglo negotiations in Holland attempted to counterbalance the growing power of Russia. The 1716 negotiations had failed but in 1717, the Triple Alliance (between France, Great Britain and the Dutch Republic) could force Russia to retreat from Mecklenburg. This Triple Alliance of 1717<sup>65</sup> was fragile but still powerful enough to undermine the Russian strategy in northern Europe.<sup>66</sup>

Russia had almost achieved the three main strategic goals stated in the seventeenth century by Afanasij Ordin-Nascokin: to reach the Baltic coast, (which was materialized by the Treaty of Nystad), to incorporate the Belarussian and Ukrainian provinces, and to reach the Black Sea.<sup>67</sup> The loss of Poland and expulsion from the far western territories, however, would ruin all the achievements of the previous three decades. In order to hold on to its recent acquisitions, Russia had to find an ally against the European rivals. Under these circumstances, a clash with the Ottoman Empire would hurt Russian plans of expansion around the Black Sea,

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<sup>65</sup> Triple Alliance turned into Quadruple Alliance in 1718 which successfully suppressed the violation of the treaty of Utrecht (1713) by Philip V of Spain and secured the balance in Mediterranean. For basic information see "Quadruple Alliance" in Encyclopedia Britannica Online, acc. September, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> J. O. Lindsay, "International Relations," in *The New Cambridge Modern History* ed. J. O. Lindsay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), esp. 199-208. (Also see the Conclusion of this thesis)

<sup>67</sup> Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 162.

because the Ottomans were free in their western front in the context of the Ottoman-Austria peace treaty of Passarowitz 1718. This latter treaty could be considered as an extension or supplement of the Quadruple Alliance. The Passarowitz Treaty was ratified only ten days before the Quadruple Alliance.

### 2.3 Ottoman-Russian relations and the case for peace

The Ottoman Empire was inescapably a player in the eighteenth-century European interstate rivalries. For the Ottomans there was a balance of power to be sustained in the north, west and south. The fall of Isfahan in October 1722 not only created a power vacuum in the extended Iranian geography, but it also resulted in a diplomatic crisis between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Tsardom. The Caspian Sea and the Caucasus region became objects of conflict. Both sides, the Tsardom and the Ottoman Empire, were well aware that any military confrontation would engender a prolonged and exhausting war. This mutual awareness of the perils of total war was the very thing that created the practice of diplomacy presented in this chapter. The recent developments also forced the Ottoman Empire to redesign its foreign policy. The Swedish ally of the Ottomans was totally ruined and pacified; the Polish throne was gradually passing under the control of Austria. Worst of all, there was another crisis in the East. Most probably when Dürri Efendi, the last Ottoman envoy to the Safavid court, reported the desperate condition of Shah Husayn and the Safavid State, İbrahim Pasha felt the urgent need to come up with a new strategy.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım Efendi, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli* ed. A. Özcan, Uğur Y., vol. 3 (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013), 1256. (Hereafter: *Çelebizâde Âsım*) Çelebizâde Âsım notes that, Dürri Efendi arrived in Istanbul on 5 December 1721. Though this date is much later from the beginning of the first conferences for the “eternal peace treaty” with Russia, we can consider that before the arrival of Dürri Efendi, the Ottoman government was aware about the problems in the Safavid Empire, so that Dürri

In the summer of 1719, Alexis Ivanovich Dashkov arrived at the Ottoman capital. He had become a favorite of the Tsar because of his precious intelligence work regarding the marriage of the son of Augustus II of Saxony and Maria Josepha.<sup>69</sup> The Russian armies were still involved in a harsh war against Sweden. In the Ottoman Empire there were some who were in favor of waging war against Russia. The official chronicler Râşid was critical of this pro-war faction. He cited a Persian apothegm in order to explain the position of İbrahim Pasha: “Think of the solution before the problem”.<sup>70</sup> İbrahim Pasha at the time did not categorically reject a war on Russia but was not sure the Ottomans had the military power to defeat the Russians, most particularly when their powerful ally Charles XII of Sweden had died the previous autumn. The pro-Swedish policy had to be reconsidered and a new policy introduced. The result of the war with Sweden was the main thing the Ottoman decision-makers of the time waited for. Therefore, Dashkov found the first opportunity to talk with İbrahim Pasha a few months after he arrived. The Ottoman government was well aware that the Russian envoy was sent because of the Treaty of Passarowitz with Austria and Venice in 1718. This peace treaty, which had been signed after harsh and long wars, had prompted the Russians to consider the possibility of a long-term truce between the two rival empires, the Habsburgs and the

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Efendi was employed in order to get some information about the political conditions in the Safavid Iran. See İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 4/1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988). (Hereafter: Uzunçarşılı)

<sup>69</sup> Eudoxius Freiherr Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente Zur Geschichte Der Rumänen* 4. 4 (Bucuresci: Socecü & Teclu, 1885), 193. (Hereafter: Hurmuzaki)

<sup>70</sup> Mehmed Raşit Efendi, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 3 vols. vol. 1-2 (İstanbul: Klasik, 2013), 1164: „Moskov keferesinin İsveçlü ile mâbeynlerinde nâire-i ceng ü cidâl iştiâl üzre olup Devlet-i aliyyenin Nemçe keferesiyle olan muhârebesi musalahâya mübeddel olmak hasebiyle Devlet-i aliyyenin meşâgil-i harb ü kütâldan hâli olduğundan şâyed tesvil-i a'da ile Moskov memleketi üzre sefer ü hareket kasdında olanlar deyü bîm ve teşvîş ile “îlac-ı vâkıa piş ez vukû bâyed kerd.” masdûku üzre [...]” (Hereafter: *Râşid* V.1/2)

Ottomans, in the Balkans. The marriage of the son of the Polish king and the daughter of Joseph I was stressful enough for the Russian Tsar. In addition to this marriage, the peace treaty among the Austrians and the Ottomans of 1718 threatened to hamper the westward expansion of the Russians. The Ottomans were responsive to the situation. Râşid attributes the arrival of Dashkov to the fear of a violation of the 1714 peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>71</sup> The Russian demand was to sign the 1714 treaty anew, after introducing only one tiny change to the text: changing the words ‘temporary peace’ (*sulh-i muvakkat*) with the words ‘eternal peace’ (*sulh-i müebbed*<sup>72</sup>). The fragility of the treaties had become an annoyance for the Russians. Rather than the brittle instrument of armistice, the Russians demanded a long-term strategic security alliance.

Negotiations with Dashkov were held by Reisülküttab Mehmed Efendi. As the negotiations with Dashkov were continuing, the English and Austrian representatives in Istanbul were trying to hinder the Russian peace treaty. Dashkov was well aware of the Austrian backstage maneuvers and he put this fact into words repeatedly during the negotiations.<sup>73</sup> The English commercial envoy, Abraham Stanyan, was able to find an occasion to speak directly to İbrahim Pasha. The purpose of Stanyan was to turn the Grand Vizier from any possible treaty with Russia. Stanyan said that Russia was totally alone in Europe because of her destabilizing policies in Poland and Sweden. The English envoy told İbrahim Pasha that the matter of the royal wedding was a viciously invented lie of Russia.

Moreover, in order to exert a bit more pressure on İbrahim Pasha, Stanyan argued

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1172: “*Nemçe nifâkiyla ihtilâl-i musalahâları havfından gelen Moskov elçisi[...]*”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 1173, 74. Râşid uses in this record an interesting term: “*musâlaha ilâ-maşâllahû teâlâ*”: peace, as long as God wishes.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1172.

that the Tsar would claim authority over the Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>74</sup> Stanyan's endeavors were unsuccessful. The only thing that the Ottomans expected for was the result of the war with Sweden. If Russia could solve its problem in the north, then Istanbul would feel the Russian threat more clearly. The current negotiations with Dashkov were therefore a diplomatic diversion. The Porte would decide according to the news coming from Sweden.

The awaited news arrived in Istanbul in September 1721. The Great Northern War was ended by the signing of the Treaty of Nystad. The Ottoman government was expecting the news from the north, in the naïve hope that the peace treaty would not mean a permanent ceasefire. Nevertheless, the news was not what the Ottomans had hoped for. The long and bloody adventures of Sweden were over. Peter I was well aware that Istanbul was waiting with bated breath for the conclusion of a treaty. On 21 September 1721, a Russian envoy brought a letter from Moscow to the Ottoman capital. The envoy had a short letter written by Peter I, addressing Sultan Ahmed III. The letter was a herald of the Russian victory, the Nystad Treaty signed with Sweden. Peter I addressed the Ottoman Sultan as 'the sovereign and the protector of Jerusalem', which was an open gesture of friendship. Towards the end of the letter, Peter I expressed his best wishes and stated that he would 'protect the friendship and alliance between the two empires *eternally*.'<sup>75</sup> The Tsar informed the Porte that Sweden was no longer a viable ally for the Ottoman Empire after the Treaty of Nystad. Two weeks later, Sultan Ahmed III signed the treaty.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hammer, 2023.

<sup>75</sup>Mustafa Kesbi Efendi (Ahmed Öğreten), *İbretnümâ-yı Devlet: Tahlil ve Tenkitli Metin* (Ankara: TTK, 2002), 376. [B.109b]

<sup>76</sup> For the dating and for the each paragraph see, *Muahedât Mecmuası*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (İstanbul: Hakikat Matbaası, 1880), 229-237.

The text of the treaty was almost the same as the peace treaty concluded after the Pruth War in 1711, except for the first paragraph. The titulature used for the Ottoman Sultan in this first paragraph indicated that Stanyan's remarks about the Orthodox populations had had an effect on the Ottomans. The Sultan was described as the 'sultan of the flocks, of whatever nation these flocks may be'.<sup>77</sup> After this cautious beginning, it was made clear that this was the beginning of an alliance: the two empires would not help each other's enemies. The second paragraph, which would never be put into practice, was the only problematic one for the Russians. It dictated that the Russian soldiers would retreat from the Polish territories and would not intervene in the affairs of Poland as long as there was no military assault or security problems on the border. The 'security problem' in this connection hinted at a possible European intervention. The Ottomans attempted to secure the independent situation of Poland in order to secure her northern border efficiently.<sup>78</sup>

'Eternal peace' was a strategy developed jointly by the Russians and the Ottomans according to the realpolitik of the day. The Russians needed such a treaty in order to stop the Crimean troubles in the south and open the ways of international commerce from India by accessing the shores of the Caspian Sea.<sup>79</sup> The decisive victory over Sweden freed the hand of the Tsar in the West, though at the expense of losing all his allies in Europe. If there was a grand strategy of Russia in the 1720s, the southern part of this strategy was in conflict with the Ottoman strategy.<sup>80</sup> After

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., "her ne milletten olursa reâya-ı devlet-i aliyyem".

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 229-237.

<sup>79</sup> See Reinhard Wittram, *Peters Des Grossen Interesse an Asien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1957).

<sup>80</sup> John P. LeDonne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650-1831* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24-29.

the conclusion of the Treaty of Nystad, Russia was free to expand southwards, but she was not free to confront the Ottomans because of the limitations of her power. This anguishing dilemma was the main motivation behind the Russian politics of ‘peace’ from 1718 until 1730.

From the viewpoint of the Ottoman Empire the peace treaty of 1721 marked a fundamental change in strategy compared to the late seventeenth century. The Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 was the beacon of this change. The Austrian wars were intercepted almost unexpectedly with the appointment of İbrahim Pasha to the grand vizierate. Conventional historiography has almost unanimously associated peace with the ‘pleasure-seeking’ person of İbrahim Pasha, whose period of office has been dubbed the ‘Tulip Period’. We do not find any evaluation of the grand vizierate of İbrahim Pasha in terms of the broader changes in political understanding and imperial strategy. And yet beyond the pleasure-seeking İbrahim Pasha, there had to be a policy-making İbrahim Pasha with some kind of a strategy.

İbrahim Paşa’s foreign policies can be understood by considering the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Upon the conclusion of the Treaty of Karlowitz, there was fierce criticism in Istanbul. During and after the drafting of the treaty, ‘peace with the infidel’ had been defended with a specific example from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Treaty of Hudaibiya. In 628, the Prophet had concluded a treaty with the Meccan unbelievers in order to secure the well-being of the Muslim community. The 1699 the Treaty was legitimized against the pro-war factions by this argument.<sup>81</sup> The experiences of the following two decades (the Pruth War, 1711 and the Austrian Wars, 1714-16) had helped the strategic thinking of the

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<sup>81</sup> Rifa‘at Ali Abou-El-Haj, “Ottoman Attitudes toward Peace Making: The Karlowitz Case,” *Der Islam* 51 (1974), 135.



Ottomans. They wanted, as usual, to benefit from inter-European conflicts and avoid fighting on multiple fronts: they were now conscious about the idea of the “balance of power” and they were actively using it. Fighting with great European coalitions was devastating for the Empire and it was impossible to win a victory.

The eighteenth-century “balance of power” was embedded in the current world-views of Europe. It is a separate matter of discussion as to what extent the Ottoman decision-makers shared European current world-views and political thought. The patterns of practice, however, are easier to detect. According to the European conceptualization, “the balance of power itself was seen in terms of natural rights and moral good, so it was easy to justify going to war if doing so could be described as a deference of the balance”.<sup>82</sup> In this regard, it is legitimate to search for a conceptual equivalent of ‘balance of power’ in the contemporary Ottoman thought. İbrahim Müteferrika<sup>83</sup> was one of the most prominent protégés of İbrahim Pasha. After the deposition of İbrahim Pasha, Müteferrika could hold on to the court for some time more. In 1732 he presented a book to Mahmud I entitled *Usûl-ı Hikem Fi Nizâmi'l- Ümem* (The Method of Philosophy in the Order of Nations). This work may be a starting point to dig for the Ottoman equivalent of the concept of ‘balance of power’. The second part of the title *Nizâmi'l- Ümem* can be translated as ‘order of the nations’. Throughout the book, the reader feels the excessive emphasis on the notion of ‘order’. I think in some specific contexts the word ‘*nizâm*’ can be read as ‘balance’. For instance, in the introduction of the book we read: ‘the legitimate

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<sup>82</sup> Sheehan, *The Balance of Power*, 102.

<sup>83</sup> For a basic but useful biography of İbrahim Müteferrika see Niyazi Berkes “İbrâhîm Müteferrika” *EI2*. Brill Online, 2014. For a much detailed evaluation of this figure see Orlin Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da ilk Osmanlı Matbaa Serüveni, 1726-1746: Yeniden Değerlendirme* (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2006).

military power of the state could and must be used efficiently to sustain the *balance* among the ‘nations’ and secure the prosperity of the Sultan and his flocks’.<sup>84</sup>

During the 1720s the balance of power created by the Habsburg-led Great Alliance against France began to be felt concretely in Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire needed to find a place in this balance. What shaped the foreign policy of İbrahim Pasha was first and foremost an awareness of this new international order. The prolonged tranquility on the eastern front since 1639 had been a great advantage for the Ottoman Empire in her military movements on the western front. This peaceful period was ending because of the recent crisis in Iran. This meant that the politics of balance would involve another major problem in the east. Under these circumstances, an ‘eternal’ friend in the north would be better than an eternal enemy. The ‘eternal peace with Russia’ was therefore a strategic tool for İbrahim Pasha to maintain a balance of power in the west, north and east of the empire: this was a reluctant friendship designed according to the necessities of balance politics. In short, the military operations of the Ottoman Empire in Caucasia and in Western Iran, and the subsequent partition of former Safavid territories with Russia should be included in this greater picture of the ‘balance of power’.

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<sup>84</sup> Although this book was presented to the Sultan in 1732, two years after the death of İbrahim Pasha during the 1730 Rebellion, Müteferrika must have shared his ideas before the publication of the book because he was very close to İbrahim Pasha and had presented numerous works to him. Throughout the book Müteferrika presents the novel developments in the military science in Europe. He also writes almost obsessively about ‘order’. The classical Ottoman concept of “*nizâm-ı âlem*” had an obvious impact on Müteferrika’s notion of ‘order’. For the text: İbrahim Müteferrika, *Usûlül’l-hikem fi Nizâmi’l-ümem*, transcrp. Adil Şen, TDV Yayınları, 1995. Vefa Erginbaş, “Forerunner of the Ottoman Enlightenment: İbrahim Müteferrika and his intellectual Landscape” Sabancı University MA Thesis, 2005.

## 2.4 Playing at war, or *Drôle de guerre*<sup>85</sup>

The dreaded bad news from Iran arrived in Istanbul in the autumn of 1722. On 21 October 1722, the last Safavid Shah, Shah Husayn, had appeared in front of his palace in Isfahan in mourning clothes and had declared his abdication from the throne.<sup>86</sup> The revolt of the Afghan tribes in Isfahan had been successful; Safavid Iran was in deep political crisis. The Ottomans' old enemy in the east, the Shiite Safavid Shah, was taken down by a Sunni power. Moreover, the Russian Tsar Peter I had mobilized an army of 30,000 men to Astrakhan. This army was composed of those veterans who had served in the war with Sweden. This powerful army, joined by a group of Cossacks and Khalmucks, had reached the outskirts of Dagestan in August 1722.<sup>87</sup>

A few months before the fall of the city, in May 1722, a consultative assembly (*meşveret meclisi*) had convened in Istanbul to discuss the movements against the Afghan invasion. The decision of this council was to intervene in the Safavid territories 'in order to protect the people from the Afghan assaults.' Moreover, it was stated that since western Iran had formerly been under Ottoman rule, the Ottomans could claim any part of these territories that they could expand as their inherited (*mevrûs*) lands.<sup>88</sup> The assembly decided that the provincial armies of

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<sup>85</sup> The period of military inactivity at the beginning of the Second World War, from September 1939 until April 1940 between Germany and allied powers. In English the term 'Phoney War' or 'Twilight War' is used. The German term for that period is *Sitzkrieg*.

<sup>86</sup> Hammer, 2038.

<sup>87</sup> Hanway, *Revolutions*, 155.

<sup>88</sup> In many letters sent to the governors the concept "*memâlik-i mevrûse*" can be found. For example see BOA AE, III. Ahmed, 17214. For more examples: Külbilge, "18. Yüzyıl", 134.

In Çelebizâde Âsım, same concept is abundantly found for example see for example, *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1371.

Erzurum, Van and Baghdad should advance immediately and secure the borders. However, in June the governor of Baghdad, Hasan Pasha, and the governor of Erzurum, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, asked the Porte to wait until the movements of the Afghan leader Mahmud Khan became clearer.<sup>89</sup>

Simultaneously, a few months before the fall of Isfahan, Russian troops were already on the western shores of the Caspian. On the Ottoman side, there was certain panic. On 11 August 1722, a great quantity of ammunition reached Baghdad from Istanbul. According to the rumors in Hamadan, this ammunition and the urgent restoration endeavors of the ruined portions of the Baghdad fort were not against the Afghans, but against the Russians, who were marching to Gilan.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, the Ottomans stopped grain exports to the Safavid Empire. The Russian troops entered Gilan, a south Caspian city, in the beginning of November. The Russian armies had by-passed the Shirvan region and used primarily sea routes to reach Gilan. The Russians and the Ottomans were now well aware that the wick of the war was ignited. Nevertheless, both sides were loath to break the ‘non-aggression’ pact of 1721. A Russian army had also intervened in the Northern Caucasus region in late 1721, the region of the Sunni Lezghi tribes, on the pretext that these people had killed about one hundred Russian merchants.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> For the correspondence between Istanbul and the governors in the region see, Külbilge, “18. Yüzyıl”, 125-128. And Uzunçarşılı, 362-4.

<sup>90</sup> Petros di Sargis Minasian Caro Owen Gilanents’, *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz: Concerning the Afghan Invasion of Persia in 1722, the Siege of Isfahan, and the Repercussions in Northern Persia, Russia, and Turkey* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1959), (Hereafter: Gilanents’, *The Chronicle*).

<sup>91</sup> Clemens Sidorko, “'Kampf Den Ketzerischen Qızılbas!' Die Revolte Des Haggi Da’ud (1718-1728),” in *Caucasus between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555-1914*, eds. Michael Ursinus; Raoul Motika (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2000), 138: This allegation was the only patent reason the Russians presented for this operation and this assertion about the mass killings of Russian merchants is found only in the Russian sources.

Lezghis, who lived in northwestern Iran, confronted the Russian armies, even though they had rebelled against Safavid rule.<sup>92</sup> There were many different small Sunni groups, especially in the vast region extending from the north fringes of the Caucasian Mountains to the northern shores of the Caspian Sea.<sup>93</sup> This geography predominantly populated by Sunnis was an important corridor for the Russians to reach the havens of Baku and Derbent.<sup>94</sup> The various Sunni populations of this region had a history of rebellions. In 1711 there was a rebellion in Shamakhi, the capital of the Shirvan province of the Safavid Empire. The year after, two hundred Russian merchants were killed in Shamakhi and upon this the Tsar ordered a military expedition in the region. In 1716 the Ottomans accepted Surhay Mustafa Khan, the leader of a group in northern Shirvan as a vassal (protectorate, *hanlık*) on the condition that his army would help the Ottomans in the case of a war in Crimea.<sup>95</sup> In 1718 a coalition of Caucasian Sunnis organized a general rebellion, but Wahtang VI, the Georgian governor of the province Kakheti, repressed this rebellion with extreme force. Nevertheless, Shah Husayn did not support this powerful repulse of Wahtang and ordered a stop to the operations. This order of the Shah led to the disloyalty of Wahtang VI and only increased the fervor of the Sunnis of Dagestan. These constant rebellions intensified every year and in August 1721, 15,000 Dagestan Sunnis launched a raid against the Safavids in Shamakhi. In one month, Shamakhi fell to

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<sup>92</sup> This term Lezghi was the generalizing term for the all Dagestan Sunnis in the vocabulary of the Safavid Persian.

<sup>93</sup> For a detailed list of the eighteenth century different ethnic and religious groups see Mustafa Aydın, *Üç Büyük Gücün Çatışma Alanı: Kafkaslar* (İstanbul: Gökkuşbu, 2005).

<sup>94</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 179.

<sup>95</sup> Sadık Müfit Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı'nda Kafkasya 1454-1829: Tarih, Toplum, Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2012). (Hereafter: Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı*) 169-170. For more detailed information about this see, Külbilge, "18. Yüzyıl", 107.

this coalition of various Sunni tribes. One of the leaders of this sensational assault was Hacı Davud Bey, a madrasa-educated scholar from Shirvan. About one year before the fall of Isfahan to the Afghans, the northern flank of the Safavid Empire had fallen. In the spring of 1722 the coalition of Dagestani Sunni tribes sacked Ardabil, a place of tremendous symbolic import as the hometown of the Safavid order and the center of a vast royal shrine complex.<sup>96</sup>

In October 1722 Hacı Davud Bey's envoy arrived in Istanbul. The leader of the envoy was the chief religious authority of Hacı Davud Bey, Mevlana Mehmed Hami and eight other high-ranking *ulama*. The request of this exclusive group was clear: They were under serious threat of a Russian invasion and they needed Ottoman help. Hacı Davud Bey had requested Ottoman help in 1721 with the argument that the Safavid administration had murdered five prominent Sunni *mullahs* for praying according to the Sunni rite. Then the Grand Vizier had delayed any movement by arguing that such protection for Shirvan would damage the peace treaty between Shah Husayn and the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, proclaiming a protectorate in Caucasia during the massive Russian military and naval dispatch would be a disastrous mistake on the part of the Ottomans. In 1721, the Russian envoy asked the Ottoman administration whether Shirvan was an Ottoman protectorate<sup>97</sup>. The Ottomans did not answer this pressing question and they were willing to prevaricate

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<sup>96</sup> Sidorko, "Kampf". 137-140.

<sup>97</sup> Shirvan was declared an Ottoman 'Khanate'. This term Khanate may be confusing with the status of Crimean Khanate. Therefore I prefer to use the term 'protectorate' in order to emphasize the military-politic position of Shirvan. The contemporary Ottoman archives have this term actually. For example, in the ratified text of the Partition Treaty (see below) the Shirvanids are mentioned as: Tava'if-i Lezgiyandan Şirvan Eyâletinde vakı' Lezgi ta'ifesi millet-i İslamdan olmak takribi ile *Devlet-i Aliyye 'ye bi't-tav' ve'r-rıza ita'at ve ilticâ ve Devlet-i Aliyye himâyetlerin kabul*. BOA, NH.7, p. 96. The original Italian text of the same treaty goes: "Quella natione dei Lesghi, che si trova nella Provincia di Sirvan, a risguardo d'esser gente musulmana, da se stessa havendo corsa sotto la protetione e obediienza della Fulgida Porta [...] Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 268.

in order to avoid any military escalation.<sup>98</sup> The conditions changed dramatically in October 1722. The Safavid administration was now almost out of the picture and Hacı Davud Bey proved his power by sacking Shamakhi [Seki] and Ardabil. Over this second request, in 1722 the SheikhuIslam Abdullah Efendi and Kapudan Mustafa Pasha called a consultative assembly.<sup>99</sup> Only high-ranking ulama of Istanbul were invited. The council discussed the request of the Shirvanids and listened to the considerations of İbrahim Pasha. The decision of the council was clear: ‘It is befitting the honor of the state to always take care of the weak among the Sunnis.’<sup>100</sup>

Shirvan was declared to be a Khanate ‘just like the Crimean Khanate’, an official Ottoman protectorate. The governor of Erzurum, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, was assigned to the military support of Shirvan against the Safavid governors, and especially against any Russian assault. Moreover, İbrahim Pasha sent Derviş Mehmed as military commander to facilitate collaboration between the military forces of the governors of Erzurum and Shirvan.<sup>101</sup> An enormous army under the command of Sarı Mustafa Pasha was also sent via Trabzon to Erzurum in order to set out for Shamakhi.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı*, 175.

<sup>99</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, the official court chronicler, narrates the details of these consultative assemblies throughout this period. One may question whether these assemblies were organized solely for the high ranking Istanbul ulama. My impression from the text is that these assemblies were organized in order to include the ulama into the decision-making processes of the high-bureaucracy. The reason behind this attempt was most probably to contain the dissident views.

<sup>100</sup> “Şayân-ı şân-ı devlet dâima zuafâ-ı ehl-i sünnete emânettir” Çelebizâde Âsım, 1310-1312.

<sup>101</sup> The official document for the recognition of Hacı Davud Khan is to be found in: BOA., *NH.7*, 65-66.

<sup>102</sup> For the statistics of the Ottoman military buildup see Temel Öztürk, *Osmanlıların Kuzey ve Doğu Seferlerinde Savaş ve Trabzon* (Trabzon: Serander, 2011). 340-360. Only in few months approximately 200.000 Janissaries were propelled to Erzurum and Kars over Trabzon.

It was probably difficult to refuse Dagestani Sunnis protection in the face of the Russian military movements in the Caspian region and the fall of the Safavid dynasty. The official protection of Shirvan as Khanate amounted to undeclared war against Russia. The two armies were not clashing, but maneuvering over the territories of a third state. Both empires vindicated their military movements with the convocations of the local communities. Before the advancement of the Russian troops towards the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, a pamphlet in Persian, Turkish, Russian and Armenian was distributed in the region. In this pamphlet, the Tsar assured the public that his duty over the Safavid territories was to suppress the rebellions and to ensure the security of all the different religious communities. He was invited by the local 'Christians' and by the victims of the Afghan invasion for this emergency aid.<sup>103</sup>

A great war was at the gate. To deal with this volatile situation, İbrahim Pasha resorted to diplomacy. On the day on which the official memoranda about the Shirvan protectorate was signed, İbrahim Pasha assigned a trusted man, Nişli Mehmed Agha, to bring the vows of peace to Moscow.

On 12 October, İbrahim Pasha called Nişli Mehmed Agha and explained to him the important points of this mission. Only two days later, Nişli, his son and Osman Agha set off on a tough journey. Nişli, in his first meeting with the Tsar, explained the reason for turning the territories of Shirvan into a protectorate. The main argument was that these people were co-religionists of the Ottomans and the

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<sup>103</sup> Armen Aivazian, "The Secret Meeting of Armenians on Lim Island in 1722: Concerning the Possible Involvement of Western Armenians in an All-Armenian Liberation Movement," *Iran & the Caucasus* 5 (2001).

For more general information about the Russian-Armenian relations from the sixteenth-century until the modern times see George A. Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People: (from Ancient Times to the Present)* (Costa Mesa, California. Mazda Publishers, 2002).



Empire could not, therefore, reject their request. The Tsar assured the envoy that the Russians would not pass to the south of the Caucasus Mountains. Both sides repeatedly stressed the 'eternal peace' between the two empires.<sup>104</sup> After the vows were taken in this mission, for a while both sides felt free to expand into Iranian territories. The Ottoman side now knew that the Russians would not pass south of the Caucasus Mountains, and the Russians knew that the Ottomans would not try to reach the Caspian shores. Ironically, after this point, the main Ottoman strategic aim became to reach the Caspian shores, and the main Russian strategic aim became to push down south of the Caucasus Mountains. *A drôle de guerre* had started.

For İbrahim Pasha, finding one more ally in the east would be an excellent move. He thought that as staunch Sunnis, the Afghan invaders of Isfahan would accept an Ottoman protectorate as the Shirvanids had. This victorious friend in the east would be a guarantor against Russian advancements, together with the Sunnis of Dagestan.

Upon these considerations, Osman Agha was sent from Baghdad to Isfahan in order to establish communication with the Afghans. As Nişli Mehmed Agha was presenting the letter of İbrahim Pasha to the Tsar, Osman Agha arrived in Isfahan along with his one hundred and twenty men in January 1723. The Venetian ambassador in Istanbul was able to get some intelligence about the intention of İbrahim Pasha. Accordingly, the Grand Vizier would try to make Mahmud a friend, if not a subject, of the empire. By means of this friendship, the captive Shah Husayn would be released (possibly to be deported to the Ottoman Empire) and his son Tahmasb II would be delegitimated.<sup>105</sup> At the beginning, the Afghans welcomed the

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<sup>104</sup> Faik Reşit Unat, "Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Moskova Sefaretnamesi," *Tarih Vesikaları* 10, 11, 12 (1954-55), 365-367.

<sup>105</sup> Shay, *The Ottoman Empire from 1720 to 1734 as Revealed in Despatches of the Venetian Baili*, 98.

Ottoman envoy and they allocated to him a nice residence. First the chief *ulama* of Mahmud Khan got in contact with Osman Agha and demanded a letter from the Ottoman government. Osman Agha insisted on delivering the letter to Mahmud Khan in person. Ten days later, his request was accepted and at the Afghan court there was a splendid ceremony, where almost all the men of Mahmud Khan were dressed in luxurious gold-embroidered clothes. In the great ceremony hall, only Mahmud Khan and Osman Agha were allowed to sit down. However, this glorious reception soon turned sour: Mahmud Khan read the letter and decided to put the envoy in prison and starve him to death. Osman Agha was quite fortunate, because the chief *ulama* of Mahmud Khan were more prone to conform to the diplomatic rules of the time. Upon the recommendations of his chief, *ulama* Mahmud Khan agreed to send Osman Agha back to his country. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate the letter delivered by Osman Agha.<sup>106</sup> However, it is not hard to grasp that its contents were provocative for Mahmud Khan, who claimed to be sovereign over the territories he had invaded. Perhaps the letter advised him not to kill off the members of the Safavid imperial family, but rather to find a way to coexist with (or come to an agreement with) the Safavid administration in order to stop the Russian threat in the north and to put an end to the political crisis in Iran.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Gilanents', *The Chronicle of Petros*, 31-32.

<sup>107</sup> Joseph Apisalaymian, the Catholic-Armenian interpreter of the French consulate at Isfahan was acquainted with Osman Agha previously. As Osman Agha was waiting for the meeting with Mahmud Khan, these two envoys could find an occasion to talk about the ongoing event. It is quite striking that the only question asked by Osman Agha, according to Gilanents, the Armenian agent then in Hamadan, was about the port customs revenue and the revenues from Bahrain pearls. Again, according to Gilanents, Apisalaymian deliberately gave a lower figure than the actual revenue in order to discourage the Ottomans from intervening in Iran. Despite this reduced figure, the comment of Osman Agha was shocking for Apisalaymian. He said: "I shall ask the Sultan for 16,000 troops to come to Isfahan and to proceed from here to occupy the country up to Qandahar. The Afghans are not men (of any importance). This is a punishment that God has sent to Persia". Most probably, Osman Agha was not that straightforward in front of Mahmud Khan, but still it is tempting to think that the Ottomans were not respectful to the Afghans, at least for the time being. For Ibrahim Pasha, this was

İbrahim Pasha turned to plan B; a much simpler yet more expensive one: to advance as far as possible into the Caucasus region, with the forces of not only his vassals but also the Ottoman provincial armies, and with the support of the core elite central armies.

Plan B had been ready for a long time. On 14 November 1722, as the Ottoman envoy was on his way to Moscow to convey the Ottomans' peaceful greetings to the Tsar, İbrahim Pasha sent his first order to prepare for an expedition to the governor of Erzurum, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. The requested ammunition was sent to Erzurum with this letter. The Grand Vizier noted that all the councils that had met in Istanbul had advised to take Tiflis (modern day Tbilisi), as the Russians were still away and as the Safavid army was under the control of Tahmasb, the desperate son of the last Shah Husayn. İbrahim Pasha wrote to the governor, 'do not consider any other remarks other than to move to Tbilisi'.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the order of İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Erzurum did not move his army until March 1723. The delay was actually quite normal, because in the harsh winter conditions of northwestern Anatolia and southern Caucasus, any military advancement would have been extremely dangerous as well as costly. In the beginning of spring, the governor was well aware that the pressure from Istanbul would increase, but he was still reluctant to move. To explain his behavior, he sent a letter to İbrahim Pasha on 11 March 1723. In it, Silahdar İbrahim gave two main reasons for his failure to move towards Tbilisi : He stressed first that the movements of Tahmasb in western Iran were still not clear, and it was hard to guess how the

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an opportunity to pretend to help the Afghans who were under stress of internal conflicts and demoralized with the harsh defeat in Qazvin against the Safavid governors. This plan collapsed immensely with the failure of Osman Agha's mission. Mahmud Khan was still in euphoria of victory to sit on the Iranian Shah's throne.

<sup>108</sup> BOA. AE, III. Ahmed 17743.

Georgians would act in case of Tahmasb's assault. Secondly, Wahtang, the Georgian ruler, was a 'deceitful' man and he tried to win some time until the position of the Russians became clearer. Silahdar İbrahim reported that he had sent his envoy Ismail Bey from Erzurum to Wahtang in order to discuss the terms of surrender and the proper order (*hüsn-i nizâm*) of the city. If Wahtang did not agree on an acceptable procedure of surrender once again, Silahdar İbrahim would attack Wahtang before the end of spring. Silahdar İbrahim was right in his considerations. In August 1722, Tahmasb promoted Wahtang to the governorship of Azerbaijan (*vali-i Azerbeycân*), in addition to the governorship of Georgia (*vali-i Gürcistân*). Moreover, Wahtang sent a letter to Tsar Peter soon after this promotion saying that he was waiting for Russian aid.<sup>109</sup> Wahtang had been in contact with the Tsar since at least November 1721, and he had given him precious information about the routes to reach beyond the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the Armenians of Karabakh Province had assembled an army and were waiting for the Russian advancements.<sup>111</sup> It is plausible to think that Silahdar İbrahim Pasha was aware of all these connections and that he was reluctant to fight with the Russians for Tbilisi.

In the summer of 1722, fresh Russian troops had reached the haven of Astrakhan. Besides the veterans of the Swedish war, there were 20,000 Cossacks, 22,000 Qalmucks and 30,000 Tatars, together with two hundred and seventy-four vessels.<sup>112</sup> This massive army was undeniably a source of fear for the governor, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha. The plan of the Russian army, which was commanded

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<sup>109</sup> Bilge, *Osmanlı Çağı*, 180.

<sup>110</sup> David Marshall Lang, "Georgia and the Fall of the Şafavî Dynasty" (London: 1952), 536.

<sup>111</sup> Armen Aivazian, "The Secret Meeting of Armenians on Lim Island in 1722", 85.

<sup>112</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 179.

directly by the Tsar himself, was to first reach Derbent and then to advance as far as possible towards the south. The army reached its goal in August. However, İbrahim Pasha sent a message to the Tsar, threatening him with war. The Tsar was reluctant to get into a fray with the Ottoman army in a region surrounded by Sunni tribes. Therefore, instead of driving the army towards the west, into the eastern edge of the Caucasus Mountains, he tried to move towards the southeast on a narrow littoral corridor. These moves were the cause of Wahtang's confidence against the Ottoman demands. The summer passed with the advancements of the Russian army until Malakent, a shore town to the south of Derbent. Towards the end of September 1723, bad news arrived for the Tsar. An army of 10,000, composed mainly of local Sunnis had assaulted Derbent. There were many Russian casualties. The Russian army began to retreat upon the order of the Tsar.<sup>113</sup> The Russian maneuver had failed. Georgians under the leadership of Wahtang could not be supported. The casualties of the Russian army exceeded 30,000.<sup>114</sup>

In Qazvin Tahmasb II had followed the developments very well. The Tsar needed an anti-Ottoman ally in the region other than the tiny Georgian power. The Afghan administration of Isfahan was far from making any diplomatic negotiations; they did not even know who the Russians were.<sup>115</sup> Tahmasb was in a very desperate condition and eager to strike a deal with the Russians. Ismail Beg, the envoy of Tahmasb, went to Petersburg in the beginning of September 1723. He told the Russians about the past events in his country. He blamed the Georgians for all the

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 181-189.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>115</sup> Gilanents', *The Chronicle of Petros*, 42. Mahmud Khan's vizier had tried to get some information from the French consulate's interpreter, Joseph about the Russians. His questions reveals his ignorance about the Russians.

catastrophes in his country, presumably in an effort to persuade the Russians to switch their alliance from the Georgians to the Safavid heirs.<sup>116</sup> The first thing he learned there was that Shah Husayn was still alive. This fact made him so upset that he shed tears in front of the Tsar. The treaty signed in September 1723 had five terrible clauses for Tahmasb II, who was trying to sustain his sovereignty. The Tsar promised to help to evict the Afghan invaders from Iran. In return, Derbent, Baku, Gilan, Mazandaran and Astarabad would be placed under Russian control. There would be ‘constant friendship’ between Russia and the Safavid dynasty of Iran. The two countries would defend each other, but heaven knows why, the Safavids would pay a fair price for Russian logistical supplies.<sup>117</sup> The articles of the treaty amounted to capitulation more than collaboration. Tahmasb did not accept the terms of this agreement; instead, he charged Ismail Bey with treason.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, Tsar Peter would continue to pretend that the treaty was valid.

As the Russians were pressing to the shore towns of the Caspian in the summer of 1723, the governor of Erzurum gave up on diplomacy. In the beginning of summer 1723, three months after the last command of İbrahim Pasha, Tbilisi fell; but not to the Ottomans. Muhammad-Kulu Khan, with his Georgian name Constantine II, the Safavid governor of the mid-Georgian province Kartli, entered the city with his army. Tahmasb II had not bestowed the title “the governor of Georgia” (*vali-i gürcistân*) only to Wahtang VI. Muhammad-Kulu Khan was appointed to bring Tbilisi under control by Tahmasb II. For a time he had remained loyal to Tahmasb;

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<sup>116</sup> What he explained to the Tsar can be found in a brief summary in Clairac, *Histoire de Perse*, V. 1, 22.

<sup>117</sup> Hanway, *Revolutions*, V.III, 181. Cf. Lockhart, *The Fall*, 247.

For full text: George A. Bournoutian, ed., *Armenians and Russia, 1626-1796*, nr. 119, pp. 115-6.

<sup>118</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 248.

however, later he took advantage of the latter's weakness and began to behave independently. Muhammad-Kulu Khan organized an army composed of Kartli Georgians, local Safavids and Lezghi Sunnis. In May 1723 Muhammad-Kulu Khan sacked the city with 6,000 Lezghi soldiers. Wahtang fled first to Gori, a small city to the northwest of Tbilisi and then to Russia with his family and he was never able to return to his country.<sup>119</sup> Undeniably, this move created a tremor in Istanbul. The army of Erzurum, under the command of Silahdar İbrahim Pasha and Mustafa Pasha (the general-in-chief of the central armies), first moved and reached a small village of Kars. As the army was camping in a bivouac, the brother of Wahtang, Yese Khan, and the son of Wahtang, Şahnavaz, arrived at the camp and informed the Ottomans about the developments in Tbilisi. Derviş Mehmed Agha went urgently to Tbilisi and he offered vassalage to Muhammad-Kulu Khan. The conflict between the two ex-Safavid governors had opened the way to Tbilisi for the Ottomans. About 12,000 Ottoman troops entered the city without any confrontation. The vast majority of the army could then move toward the next goal, Erivan.<sup>120</sup> After this easy Ottoman victory, the Russian diplomatic mission in Istanbul requested a meeting from the government through the intermediation of the French ambassador. On 6 August, in the residence of İbrahim Pasha by the Bosphorus, a consultative assembly met in order to discuss the request of the Russian envoy. The seizure of Tbilisi had boosted Ottoman self-confidence. The assembly decided that whatever the Russia envoy would say, the ultimate goal of the government was now to reach Baku and to block

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<sup>119</sup> Hrand D. Andreasyan, *Osmanlı - İran - Rus İlişkilerine Ait İki Kaynak*, (Tercüme eden ve yayına hazırlayan Hrand D. Andreasyan) (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1974). 54-54. This anonymous Armenian text is translated into Turkish by Andreasyan. The second text, which is anonymous is the only source which gives consistent information about the war between Wahtang and Muhammad-Kulu Khan.

<sup>120</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1324-1325.

Russia's way to the southern Caucasus.<sup>121</sup> The demands made by the Russian envoy, Nepluyev, were evaded by arguing that unless the Russians retreated from the northern foothills of the Caucasian mountains, there would be no negotiations.

Tbilisi was a critical foothold for Ottoman military purposes in the southern Caucasian geography. Until Baku, there were two main strongholds to be conquered: Tabriz and Erivan.<sup>122</sup> Controlling these two Safavid cities would contain the Russian advancements and the Russians could not object because the Ottomans would claim that they were trying to restore order within the territories of Safavid Iran, just like the Russians themselves. Whoever reached Baku first would win this competitive race. For the time being, the Ottomans had the upper hand in this race, and were not that interested in diplomacy.

After the fall of Tbilisi, the Ottoman decision-makers felt obliged to balance the need for international order and an internal sense of legitimacy. One important thing had to be achieved now: the legitimization of a war against the Safavid Empire. The main rival was not the Safavid Empire but Russia; nevertheless, the war on the field had to be against the Safavid Empire. This dilemma could be vindicated by the authority of the *ulama*. While hundreds of thousands of Ottoman central and provincial troops were beleaguering the western Safavid cities, peace treaties were signed on the Balkan and Crimean fronts. The Ottoman Empire was now following an aggressive and expansionist policy toward Iran by taking advantage of the weak condition of the Safavid Empire. This aggressive policy against Iran was aimed at the strategic containment of Russia at the same time. Legitimization of the war against

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 1328-29.

<sup>122</sup> These Caucasian cities were actually the first aim of the Russian operations starting from 1721. Peter I had sent many envoys to Wahtang to assure him that the Russian armies will arrive soon to Tiflis. These documents, the correspondence between Wahtang and Peter in English translation: Bournoutian, ed., *Armenians and Russia*, nr. 96,98, pp. 95, 96.



the Safavids appeared to be necessary for the *ulama* because it was seemingly a preventive move against the Russian peril.

The collection of fatwas of SheikhuIslam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi is a precious source for apprehending the heavy use of religious rhetoric to legitimate this war on Iran. The collection contains thirty-nine fatwas directly related to the wars in Western Iran and Caucasia from 1723 until 1725. A considerable number of these fatwas concern the enslavement of the local populations during the Iranian wars and the booty rights of the Ottoman soldiers. One fatwa is about whether the Ottoman soldiers killed in this war were religious martyrs. The sheikhuIslam answered in the affirmative. Critically, the fatwas referred to Iranians in heavily confessionalized terms such as ‘Shiite Iranians, whose lands are the abode of war and whose people deserve war’.<sup>123</sup> The previous friendship sustained with Shah Husayn was forgotten in a moment, and the Safavid rulers were instead mentioned generically as ‘children of Shah Ismail’.<sup>124</sup> The Shiite Iranians were decreed apostates (*mürted*) because they cursed the first three ‘rightly guided’ caliphs.<sup>125</sup> It was deemed permissible to kill *râfizi* men unless they repented, and to enslave *râfizi* women and children unless they accepted the Sunni Islam.<sup>126</sup> As harsh as these fatwas were, it is hard to say whether they were fully applied. There was no mass enslavement in Iranian cities. However, the Ottoman sources report that there were days of long pillages and on some occasions mass killings (*katl-i ‘amm*), especially in Yerevan and Tabriz.<sup>127</sup> After the

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<sup>123</sup> “*Diyarları dar-ı harb ve ahalisi ehl-i harb hükmünde olan refavızı acem*”

<sup>124</sup> Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetava*, Nr. 1007, 189.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr.1004, 189.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr.1004, 1008-9-12, 190-1.

<sup>127</sup> M. Münir Aktepe, *1720-1724 Osmanlı-İran Münâsebetleri ve Silahşör Kemâni Mustafa Ağa'nın Revan Fetih-Namesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1970).

fall of the targeted cities, the Ottoman administration ordered the pillage stopped as soon as possible and tried to restore law and order.<sup>128</sup>

These fatwas of Abdullah Efendi are reminiscent of the sixteenth-century fatwas against the Safavids/*kızılbaşes* in Anatolia and in western Iran. Nonetheless, the motivations, the nature and the applicability of these early eighteenth-century fatwas are fundamentally different from their sixteenth-century precursors. In the eighteenth century, there was no longer any concern about Safavid-*Kızılbaş* religious propaganda or expansionism. Nor was there a major internal confrontation in the Empire because of Shiite-Sunni differences. The government was no longer issuing numerous orders for the persecution of 'heretics' in different regions of Anatolia or in the eastern Arab provinces.<sup>129</sup>

At this point the war against the Safavids was no longer an ideological goal as it arguably had been in the sixteenth century. Rather, the rhetoric and the policies advocated in the Sheikhulislam's fatwas were a throwback to an earlier time in order to support the political and strategic cause of the state more efficiently. İbrahim Pasha was ordering the conquest of the Safavid cities, Tabriz, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Hamadan and even Isfahan.<sup>130</sup> Behind a religious facade this war was mostly about expansion. The Ottoman armies were attempting to conquer as many cities as possible on the former Safavid territories and to establish their administrative and economic system over them. In only nine years, the Ottoman administration prepared

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<sup>128</sup> One clear example is the letter of İbrahim Pasha to Abdullah Pasha just after the control of Yerevan: BOA, İE DH. 2619.

<sup>129</sup> The practice of the sixteenth-century *kızılbaş* persecutions see, Colin Imber, "The Persecution of the Ottoman Shiites According to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565- 1585," *Der Islam* 56, no. 2 (1979).

<sup>130</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1390. The provincial armies of Baghdad were ordered to reach until Isfahan, though they could advance until Hamadan.

13 cadastral record books for the cities of the former Safavid Empire.<sup>131</sup> This may be a clue that the Ottomans were conducting an expansionist policy in this war.

Together with the legitimization by the fatwas of the SheikhuIslam, the poets under the patronage of İbrahim Pasha were praising the Sultan and especially İbrahim Pasha as the great conqueror of Iran.<sup>132</sup>

The responses given by a senior scholar vividly illustrate how unconventional these policies were and how they seriously disturbed some Ottomans. Kemal Efendi, the former chief *qadı* of Janissaries, protested against the declared war on Iran. He argued openly that to kill Iranians (*Acem*) was not proper jihad but plain homicide. For Kemal Efendi, the enslavement of the Iranian women was illegal and to marry already-married Iranian women was adultery. For him, and probably for many of his contemporaries, the Shiite (*râfîzi*) Safavids were not ‘proper Muslims’ but they were still Muslims: ‘the Iranians turn towards Mecca as they perform their daily prayers (*ehl-i kible tekfir olunmaz*); that means they are a part of the Muslim community.’ The decision of Abdullah Efendi about this opponent was clear: Kemal Efendi had to ‘renew his faith’ (*tecdid-i iman*) because his statement was religiously erroneous, and if he kept talking in this way, he had to be executed.<sup>133</sup> Kemal Efendi did not change

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<sup>131</sup>Osman Özgüdenli, "Osmanlı İrani (I); Batı İrani Ve Azerbaycan Tarihi Hakkında Osmanlı Tahrir Kayıtları; Coğrafi Ve İdari Taksimat," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 22, no. 34 (2003). 96.

<sup>132</sup> The celebrated poet Nedim depicted İbrahim Pasha as a conqueror of Iran. Neither the eulogies of Nedim nor other eulogies written to commemorate İbrahim Pasha’s victories of the victories on the Iranian front have the kind of religious rhetoric that can be found in the fatwas of the SheikhuIslam. See *Nedim Divanı*, ed. Muhsin Macit, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2012). There is a contemporary miscellaneous of the eulogies presented to İbrahim Pasha composing a myriad of poets of the time, see Metin Hakverdioğlu, “Edebiyatımızda Lâle Devri ve Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha’ya Sunulan Kasideler, İnceleme-Metin” Published PhD Dissertation, Konya Selçuk University, 2007 (İstanbul: Sage Yayınları, 2012). Moreover there is a useful selection of chronograms written for the conquests in Iran presents the mentality of these wars. See Aylin Tektaş, “Chronogramme über die Eroberungen Ahmeds III (reg. 1703- 1730) im Iran” MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2002.

<sup>133</sup> Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetava*, Nr. 1036, 196.

his mind after this harsh judgment. During a consultative assembly, held upon the arrival of a letter from the Russian Tsar, Kemal Efendi again protested about the fatwas given about the Iranian wars. The official chronicler, Çelebizâde Âsım, writes that Kemal Efendi was exiled to Lemnos because of his imprudence and ignorance.<sup>134</sup>

All the governors of the region — Erzurum, Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Van, and Baghdad — and the Mosul Pashas were allowed to advance as far as possible into Iran. The mission was to conquer the western Iranian and southern Caucasian territories before the ‘alien’ (*bi-gane*) Afghans attacked, and before the Russians arrived, and the mission was justified with the argument that these territories had previously been conquered by the Ottomans.<sup>135</sup>

In the beginning of October 1723, Tahmasb II sent two envoys to the Ottomans. The ‘friendship’ treaty of the previous month with Russia had forced Tahmasb to look for other possibilities. The Ottomans, however, were not in a diplomatic mode. The first envoy was put in prison in Van. The second one, sent a few days later, was sent back in days without any official discussion.<sup>136</sup>

Now it was time for war. Before starting any negotiations with the Russians there were plenty of places to conquer. Time was extremely restricted, the armies could move for at most two more months before winter arrived. Çelebizâde Âsım gave a succinct definition of the Ottoman political-military strategy of the time: The

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<sup>134</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1360-1361.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1331. For a selection of fatwas of Abdullah Efendi, see Ibid., 1332-1333.

<sup>136</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1336-1337. Çelebizâde Âsım seems nervous about the second envoy of Tahmasb, Murtaza Kulu Bey. In the fragment he narrates the issue, with the departure of the envoy, Âsım writes: “Go to the deep hell.” The policy of İbrahim Pasha against this envoy is vividly depicted in: Shay, *The Ottoman Empire as Revealed in Despatches of the Venetian Baili*, 108.

Ottoman armies would push all danger away; to eradicate a danger is harder than to push it back.”<sup>137</sup>

The first news of victory arrived from the southeastern frontier. The governor of Baghdad, Hasan Pasha, entered Kermanshah with his army. Hasan Pasha moved from Baghdad and in about two months he covered approximately 400 kilometers and besieged the city. Towards the end of October 1723, Kermanshah had become an Ottoman *sancak*. Before the winter, Hasan Pasha was able to settle in various small towns of southern and eastern Kermanshah, almost without any confrontation.<sup>138</sup> In February 1724, Hasan Pasha died in Kermanshah, and his son Ahmed Pasha was declared his successor. The other son of Hasan Pasha, the present governor of Shahrizor, was appointed to the governorship of Basra. The two sons of Hasan Pasha were able to successfully sustain their father’s military power. In September 1724 the Ottoman armies entered Hamadan.<sup>139</sup>

On the northeastern frontier, things were not that smooth. In October 1724 the new governor after Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, Arifi Ahmed Pasha, took Yerevan, which was a crucial point on the road to Baku. Tabriz was not as important as Yerevan as a strategic point on the road to Baku; however, its capture was psychologically important for the Ottoman public. Unlike Kermanshah and Hamadan, Tabriz was a well-known city to the Ottomans. Conquering Tabriz would mean conquering the former Safavid capital. Köprülüzâde Abdullah Pasha was charged with taking the city. The first attack was made in May 1724. Until the last

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<sup>137</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1337.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 1340; Uzunçarşılı, 178-80.

<sup>139</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1358-1359; Uzunçarşılı, 179.

attack in July 1725, the Ottoman army suffered catastrophic casualties.<sup>140</sup> Despite the fact that negotiations with the Russians had already started and the strategic goal to reach to Baku had failed, İbrahim Pasha insisted on the conquest of the city. In his letter to the general-in-chief, İbrahim Pasha reminded him of how the conquest of Kandiye had taken a whole three years.<sup>141</sup>

In the winter of 1724, the Ottoman army did certainly advance; nevertheless, Baku remained an unattainable goal. The armies were stuck at Yerevan and Tabriz, though in the southern flank of the front, advancement was rapid and easy. Previously, the Russian armies had attacked Baku but they were driven back by the local coalitions. The Ottomans had tried the same thing and they were stuck at critical checkpoints.

## 2.5 Conclusion

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this chapter. First of all, the Ottoman Empire was an active player in the European balance of power in the early eighteenth century. The Ottomans lacked resident diplomatic missions that were able to provide a stream of information, but the European envoys in Istanbul were being effectively used to build up a foreign policy. The Ottoman Empire was not directly interested in the inter-dynasties conflicts in Europe, but still was well aware of developments to sustain security in her borders in Europe.

The second conclusion of this chapter is that, with this consciousness about the current European balance of power, the Ottoman central administration avoided a direct conflict with Russia. A military confrontation with Russia at that moment

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<sup>140</sup> For a much detailed account about the Ottoman maneuvers in this period on the Safavid territories see Lockhart, *The Fall*, 251-273.

<sup>141</sup> Uzunçarşılı, 170-180.

would have been supported directly by Great Britain<sup>142</sup> and Austria would have been silent because of the advantageous 1718 peace treaty. However, the Empire's reflex was more clever: to take Iran into account and to split the Safavid territories with Russia. That seemed like a better plan. Just after the fall of Isfahan, the Ottoman central administration ordered a move on strategic footholds, just as the Russians had done a year before the fall of Isfahan. This was a brief period of scramble for Iran. As the two powers came close to each other in Caucasia, it was also time for diplomacy.

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<sup>142</sup> Black, *Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of George I, 1714–1727*, 203-4.

## CHAPTER 3

### AYAS PASHA CONFERENCES AND THE PARTITION TREATY (1724)

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Ottoman-Russian negotiation started first in the summer of 1723 with the Russian proposal. Until the conclusion of the partition treaty (*Mukaseme-name* in Ottoman Turkish) on 24 July<sup>143</sup> 1724, there were nine long conferences held in Istanbul between the Russian ambassador (*kapı kethudası*) Ivan Ivanovich Nepluyev<sup>144</sup> and the Ottoman committee with the mediation of the French ambassador Marquis de Bonnac.<sup>145</sup> The plenipotentiaries of the Ottoman side were Defter-i Hakâni Emîni Hacı Mustafa and Reisülküttab Mehmed Efendi<sup>146</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım dates the first conclusion of treaty as 9 July. All other sources, Hurmuzaki, Venetian ambassadorial reports and de Bonnac dates in 24 July. The official ratification of the treaty is however in December 1724- January 1725.

<sup>144</sup> See Fatih Ünal, *XVIII. Asır Türk-Rus Münasebetlerinde Neplüeyev* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2014). Ünal presents diplomatic biography of Nepluyev over Russian sources. In a chapter, Ünal covers the activities of Nepluyev in the period from 1722 to 1729.

<sup>145</sup> In this chapter, I follow the negotiations through three main sources. Çelebizâde Âsım devotes a substantial section to the negotiations in his official chronicle. The nineteenth-century Rumanian historian Eudoziū Hurmuzaki presents the details of the conferences relying mostly on the contemporary Austrian and Venetian sources. Last but not least, the memoirs of the French ambassador at Istanbul, de Bonnac is a very precious source material. Beside these primary sources, I use Lockhart's *The Afghan Occupation of Persia*. Although Uzunçarşılı covers the Iranian Wars from 1722 until 1746 in some detail, the partition treaty is mentioned briefly.

In the secondary literature there is only one study about the Partition treaty which relies on the French ambassadorial reports: Mohammad Ali Hekmat, *Essai sur L'histoire des Relations Politiques Irano-Ottomanes de 1722 à 1747* (Paris: Les Presses modernes, 1937).

<sup>146</sup> The 1724 Partition Treaty represents a notable example of Ottoman diplomatic structure and practice in the eighteenth century. The diplomatic management of the Ottoman state during these conferences is systematic and easy to follow over the archival records. The reisülküttab, first appeared as an active foreign affairs office during the Karlowitz negotiations. (See Rifâ'at Ali Abou-el-Haj, "The Reisülküttab and Ottoman diplomacy at Karlowitz" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University), 1963. The 1724 Treaty and the preceding conferences may be researched in future with a special focus on the diplomatic mechanism. These two figures Reisülküttab Mehmed Efendi and Defter-i Hakani Emîni were the head of a complex bureaucratic mechanism. For detailed information about this "bureaucratized diplomacy" see Recep Ahıskalı, "Reisülküttab", in *DİA*, Online, 2015.



The conferences were held in the mansion of Hacı Mustafa in the Ayas Pasha District (the modern district of Kabataş, on the Bosphorus). The original idea of holding this conference belonged to Tsar Peter himself. He first contacted the French ambassador in Moscow, Jacques de Campredon. De Compredon reached out to Marquis de Bonnac, the French ambassador in Istanbul, and told him to speak with İbrahim Pasha in order to organize a conference between the two states.<sup>147</sup> Even though İbrahim Pasha delayed his answer for three months, in the end he conceded to the request.

The most willing party at the negotiation table was the French. The French king, Louis XV, had issued orders to keep the Ottoman Empire and Austria at war. If Austria were to be free from the Ottoman peril, this would be a great problem for France and ruin its fragile peace with Austria. Hence, it suited French interest to maintain peace between the Russian and Ottoman empires. In other words, the Ayas Pasha conferences were an attempt to create another ‘Grand Alliance’ between France, Russia and the Ottoman Empire and to encircle the Habsburg-led ‘Grand Alliance’.

During the long process of negotiations, the Austrian and British missions in Istanbul tried to stop the negotiations. Abraham Stanyan in his meeting with İbrahim Pasha tried to explain the dangers of any kind of agreement with the Russians. According to Stanyan, a treaty with the Russians would ruin the Ottoman share in Iranian trade.<sup>148</sup> He even proposed financial aid for a possible war with Russia.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 224.

<sup>148</sup> Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 265.

<sup>149</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 229.

In mid-1723, the Russian advancements in Caucasia were tardy and casualties were getting higher because of the strong resistance by Lezghis and Shirvanids, who were openly supported by the Ottomans. As mentioned above, in late 1722, the Tsar had retreated after a serious raid and defeat in the southern region of Derbent. However, the Russian maneuvers did not stop. One day, after the first conference in Istanbul, on 26 July Baku fell to the Russians. In late 1723, the Ottomans had not been able to reach their goal to reach Baku; therefore they were loath to sit at the negotiation table. The Russians had reached Baku, but this was not their primary goal. The Ottomans were convinced that this war should be discussed diplomatically with the Russians at one point. What the Ottomans planned to do was to come to the negotiations as powerful as possible by taking the critical bridgeheads in the region. On the other hand, the Russians could not safely reach the southern shores of the Caspian Sea because of the Ottoman-supported resistance in many places. In October 1723 the first siege of Ganja by the army of Erzurum was canceled.<sup>150</sup> This withdrawal marked a time of diplomacy for the Ottomans.

In spring 1723, the Ottoman administration of Tbilisi was able to settle with the pro-Russian Armenian powers in southeastern Tbilisi. These local Armenian forces consisted of about 50,000 men and they were joined by the army of Wahtang VI. Wahtang's flight and the fall of Tbilisi to Muhammad-Kulu Khan had pulled this Armenian army off the Russian troops. The closest Russian military base was more than 500 kilometers from Tbilisi.<sup>151</sup> This situation meant that the Russian advance was seriously under threat of attacks by local Dagestani Sunnis from the north, by the

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<sup>150</sup> Külbilge, "18. Yüzyıl", 148.

<sup>151</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1369, and Aivazian, "The Secret Meeting of Armenians on Lim Island in 1722".

Ottomans from the east and by Tahmasb's armies from the south. France, Russia and the Ottoman Empire were all at the negotiation table, *nolens volens*.

### 3.2 Conferences

The Ayas Pasha Conferences can be examined in two parts. During the first part of the conferences, held from June 1723 until January 1724, the Ottoman side was waiting for a better advance of the armies of Erzurum, Van and Baghdad. Therefore, these first six conferences were a game of foot dragging for the Ottoman side. In the beginning of the spring, it had become clear that the beleaguering of Yerevan was not going to be easy: the limits of Ottoman expansion had become quite clear. Thus, the second part of the conferences started, in which all three sides were highly motivated to sign a peace treaty.

The first part of the negotiations began with a mutual *pacta sunt servanda*. The Russian offer was openly to protect the status quo. The status quo would mean the restoration of the borders to their 1721 status, when Nişli Mehmed Agha visited Moscow. The second request of Nepluyev was about the control of the Lezghi tribes. He demanded that the Ottomans stop providing financial and military support to these tribes. Restoring the borders of 1721 would mean putting an end to the official recognition of the Shirvanids as vassals of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman committee did not give an official answer to these requests. Four days later, the sides met for a second conference. Tension was higher during the second conference because of the exaggerated requests of the Russian side. The Ottoman committee argued that all these requests and all the movements in the littoral of the Caspian Sea were threatening the eternal peace between the two states. The Ottoman committee

during the second conference exacerbated the negotiations tactically. In the autumn of 1723 the Ottoman armies had reached the South Caucasian lowlands and they were aiming to reach Ganja, the last stronghold before Baku. The tiny checkpoints Khoy and Chorsh were controlled. The Ottoman committee was skilled at digressing from the main subject and provoking the Russian committee. Mehmed Efendi demanded that Russia evacuate not only Gilan, Derbent, Baku and some other newly conquered places but also Astrakhan, which was historically an Islamic territory. Nepluyev was nervous about this statement, and his tirade against the proposal of the Ottoman commissioners lasted for nearly a half hour. Nepluyev advised the Ottomans to look at the maps and to see how the small Muscovite principality had turned into the mighty Tsardom. He recommended that the commissioners ‘look at the present, not the past’. Upon this reply, Hacı Mustafa Efendi laughed sarcastically and proposed another method: The Russian merchants are free to use the Caspian Sea but the Tsardom does not have the right to possess it. This proposal ruined the negotiations, and if de Bonnac had not intervened, the parties would have engaged in a quarrelsome polemic. The meetings continued until the end of August of the same year. In the third conference, with the appeal of de Bonnac, the Ottoman committee stopped raising the issue of Astrakhan, but the result did not change. The only contracted issue was to keep the truce between the armies of the two sides.<sup>152</sup> On 20 December 1723 the sides conducted a fourth meeting. After three contentious conferences, the sides finally began to find common ground from which to negotiate. Nepluyev changed his mind about the restoration of the borders of 1721. The new proposal was to make a treaty according to *uti possidetis*: among the territories the Russians *possessed* was the Caspian Sea. The Ottoman committee decided to stop the

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<sup>152</sup> Hurmuzaki, V.4, 321-331. Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 201-212.

meeting at this point in order to inform the Sultan about the offer of the Russians.<sup>153</sup>

Three days later, on 23 December, the conference met again. The Ottoman side rejected the Russian proposal; they asked ‘what do the Russians search for in the Caspian Sea?’ The level of tension was perceivable from the conversations among the participating sides during the fifth meeting. The two sides were sure that any disagreement at the table would not cause a war in the cold of winter. Neither the Ottoman armies nor the Russians were able to make a military move until at least March. The weather conditions enabled the sides to speak about their forces. Beside this show of force, however, in the fifth meeting the two sides for the first time stipulated that the truce would be preserved on the Iranian territories as well, unless it was broken in Crimea or in some other place.<sup>154</sup> After this statement, the conference passed to a second stage. The Ottomans and the Russians were not willing to throw their armies into fray. On the other hand, both sides were enthusiastic about advancing on the wretched Safavid domains. Between war and peace, there had to be a third way, and this third way entailed partitioning the former Safavid territories.

The official chronicler, Çelebizâde Âsım, began to note the conferences,<sup>155</sup> starting from this above-mentioned conceptual turn. He did not comment on the first six conferences. In January three meetings were organized, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup>. In these three meetings there were three main topics of discussion: a) the status of Tahmasb II, the son of the last Shah, b) the possible borders after a partition and c) the protection of Dagestan Sunnis by the Ottomans. From January until the conclusion of the treaty in June, İbrahim Pasha became personally involved in the

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<sup>153</sup> Hurmuzaki, V.4, 333-338.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 338-334.

<sup>155</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım defines these meeting as *mükâleme* which can be translated as “conference”, See *A Turkish-English Lexicon*, 1987, 1452.

conferences and he called consultative assemblies at each step. On the one hand, he was attempting to maintain an equilibrium between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand he was trying to suppress the pro-war voices especially among the high *ulama*.<sup>156</sup>

The first Russian proposal was that the Russo-Ottoman border be drawn along the Kur River. The territories lying to the east of the river would belong to the Russians and the territories to the east and south-east would be under Ottoman control. Shamakhi would be under the control of the Ottomans, but the Ottomans would not bolster the Sunnis beyond the agreed-upon border. The cities of Baku, Derbent and Terki (Turk) on the coastline of the eastern Caspian Sea had been granted by Tahmasb to Russia: therefore, these territories would not be included in any negotiation. The Ottoman committee objected to this proposal on one critical point: Tahmasb could not be considered the legitimate ruler of Iran, since his father Shah Husayn was still alive. The counter-proposal of the Ottomans was that the Russians would get out of Baku, and they would not accept Tahmasb as a legitimate ruler.<sup>157</sup> In the next meeting, towards the end of January, Nepluyev repeated the same conditions he had made in the previous meeting. The Reisülküttab was annoyed, and put a rhetorical question to the French ambassador de Bonnac: ‘Do you think this obstinate and tyrannizing attitude of the Tsar is right? Does this attitude not ruin the vows of eternal peace?’ The Reisülküttab could not get the answer he wanted. Instead, de Bonnac offered Ottoman committee an opportunity to talk alone for a while. When Nepluyev left, de Bonnac argued that these requests of the Tsar were acceptable. Even though the possession of Baku and Derbent would bring the

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<sup>156</sup> Hurmuzaki, V.4, 333-34.

<sup>157</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1370-1.

Russians closer to the Ottoman borders, Russia and the Ottoman Empire had been friends for a long time; furthermore, their friendship was guaranteed by France. After this short talk with de Bonnac, the Ottoman committee interrupted the meeting in order to inform the Grand Vizier about the latest developments.

At this point, both sides had secured what they basically demanded. Claiming rights over Derbent and Baku was not realistic for the Ottomans because they now realized that it lay beyond their means to capture Yerevan and Tabriz, let alone advance to the northern foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. Three great Safavid provinces, Shirvan, Georgia (Kakheti), and Armenia (Chukurba'ad) were secured to the Ottomans. For the Russians the situation was much more embarrassing. The proposed treaty did not provide the Russian army with any hinterland in the Caucasus. The local Daghestanis would encircle the northern and eastern flanks of the Russian bases, while the Shirvanids and the Ottomans would contain the Russian bases in the southern flank. Under these circumstances the only entity to be trusted in the region was the Ottoman Empire.

The critical threshold for a treaty with the Russians was now achieved. İbrahim Pasha knew well that to conclude a treaty with the foreigners was the easy part of diplomacy. It was harder to persuade the domestic factions who opposed the treaty. In this case, many of the high-ranking *ulama* of Istanbul opposed the signing of a friendship treaty with Russia and the partitioning of Iran with the Russians.<sup>158</sup> The fact that in Shirvan and in Dagestan Sunnis were rebelling against infidel Russians was further drawing the *ulama* into the issue. While Shamakhi would remain on the Ottoman side, and the northern fringes of the Shirvan province would remain on the Russian side, a vast majority of Sunnis inhabited the latter region.

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<sup>158</sup> Hurmuzaki, V.4, 338, 341-2, 360.

Under the terms offered by the Russians, Hacı Davud Han would be sandwiched between non-Sunni populations in the south and Russians in the north. If İbrahim Pasha authorized such a treaty without the support of the *ulama*, it would be politically wrong and dangerous for himself. After two conferences in January, İbrahim Pasha was quite sure that the Russians would not break the peace because Russians were insistently searching for a peaceful solution. This left him free to scare the *ulama* about a war that would be fought on multiple fronts. İbrahim Pasha played this game professionally. After the last conference, the Russian ambassador gave a briefing about the Russian demands to a group of high *ulama* of Istanbul.<sup>159</sup> This briefing summit was organized by the former *qadi* of Aleppo, Ahmed Efendi. Nepluyev explained the Russians' terms for a treaty one more time to the high-ranking *ulama*. The reaction of the *ulama* was not surprising. The Ottoman State should not fear Tahmasb and there was no need for such a treaty as the armies were advancing towards Yerevan.<sup>160</sup>

Five days later, on 15 January, İbrahim Pasha and SheikhuIslam Abdullah Efendi organized a summit in *Bab-ı Asafî*, his personal mansion and the *de facto* headquarters of the Ottoman government. The invitees were leading figures among the *ulama*. In the beginning he disclosed his purpose in holding this summit: he wanted to make a decision after hearing the different ideas in this summit.<sup>161</sup> İbrahim Pasha presented the situation one more time: there were two options. In one scenario, the Ottoman Empire would break the peace against Russia and in order to protect its 'inherited territories' would declare total war on Russia. The second option was to

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<sup>159</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1371-2.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 1372. Hurmuzaki, V.4, 360-361.

<sup>161</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1373: "murâdımız her kişi hatırına gelen veçhi lisâna ve derûnuna sünûh iden fikri miyâna getirip bi'l-ittifâk istihsân olunan vech üzere hareket etmektir".



agree to retreat from Shirvan, Georgia and Armenia. After stating the options in such starkly opposing terms, İbrahim Pasha left the assembly for more than an hour, arguing that his presence would hinder the decision-makers to think ‘freely’. When he came back, the *ulama* present had decided. Although the *ulama* were for total war on Russia, at the same time they wanted to preserve the current situation on the Iranian battlefield. Then there had to be a third option: Settling with the Russians about the partition of the Safavid territories and preserving the peace with Russia. The official chronicler Çelebizâde Âsım notes that the *ulama* agreed upon this third possibility (*ihtimâl-i sâlis*) by citing an Arabic proverb: keeping the midway is the most propitious decision.<sup>162</sup> One day later, the decisions were presented to Sultan Ahmed III. The Sultan welcomed the terms of the future treaty. He congratulated his Grand Vizier and approved the decision of the *ulama*: The Empire was waging a great war; not on Russia, but on the almost extinguished Safavid Empire.<sup>163</sup>

After this point, the treaty had become only a matter of bargaining, drawing the borders on the map, and deciding whose army would be allowed to advance where. In the three months before May, the terms of the partition treaty were finalized. Until the conclusion of the treaty, İbrahim Pasha was involved personally in three conferences, one of which was held in his own residence. In the beginning of the conferences, the Ottoman side was talking almost only about the possession of Derbent and Baku. That was basically because of the wait-and-see attitude with regard to the continuing Ottoman wars in the east. By the winter, it had become clear that Ottoman advancement was stuck at a certain point. Moreover, the Ottoman *ulama*'s desire to protect the Iranian Sunnis was contained by the threat of total war

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<sup>162</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1373.(*hayr-ul umûr evâsıtuhâ*)

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 1374.

against Russia. Instead of a total war against Russia, a ‘limited war’ against a weakened Tahmasb and indirect war against the Afghan invaders was preferred.

After January there were two main matters to discuss at the Ayas Pasha conferences. One was the legitimacy of Tahmasb II. The Ottomans were adamantly denying that Tahmasb was the legitimate heir of Shah Husayn. The second important topic of discussion was the Afghan rulers. The 15<sup>th</sup> January assembly with *ulama* did not yield a certain decision about them, but the memoirs of de Bonnac indicates that the Ottomans were rejecting any anti-Afghan agreement with the Russians. The question of Tahmasb and the Afghans exacerbated the atmosphere of the conferences held in February and March. İbrahim Pasha offered a solution for this disagreement, which is cited by de Bonnac:

Chah Hussein étoit notre [the Ottoman Empire] ami et le vôtre [the Russian Tsardom]. Nous le pouvions, à ce titre, regarder comme notre père. Il a laissé trois enfants: cet Empire, le Czar et Tamas Chah. Il s’agit de partager son héritage entre eux: que l’ambassadeur de France, notre ami commun, fasse l’office de Kassam.<sup>164</sup>

With this statement, İbrahim Pasha confirmed the legitimacy of Tahmasb but he wanted the assurance of France that Tahmasb would not usurp the territories that had fallen to the Ottomans’ share. Russia would be the second guarantor. In other words, unless Tahmasb came into conflict with the Ottomans, there would be no problem. The Ottomans, however, would not help Russia or Tahmasb in their war against the Afghans. But if the Afghan invaders opposed the Ottoman advancements, then Russia and the Ottoman Empire would fight against the Afghans together. In any case, both sides would not step into each other’s territories.

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<sup>164</sup> Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 237.

Orhonlu, Cengiz. "Kassâm." *EI2*. Brill Online, 2014: “The title given in Ottoman law to the trustee who divided an estate between the heirs of a deceased person.”

The sides were aware of and content with the fact that the consociation of these three great powers on the issue of Iran was the harbinger of a great alliance in Europe against the already-founded Great Alliance. Çelebizâde Âsım cites İbrahim Pasha as saying the following just after the conclusion of the Partition treaty: “when these three states [Russia, France and the Ottoman Empire] ally with each other, the fear and horror of all Christian countries increase extraordinarily”.<sup>165</sup> This statement of İbrahim Pasha may help us understand his foreign policy preferences. He was praising a treaty made with ‘Christians’ as a treaty against other ‘Christians’. This attitude of İbrahim Pasha cannot be understood without taking into consideration the political developments in Europe in the previous two decades. Crisis-ridden Iran presented the Ottomans with an occasion in which to integrate itself to the European balance of power system in the early eighteenth century.

### 3.3 Partition

A brief look at the paragraphs of the Partition Treaty is essential. We have numerous copies of the treaty in various languages. The ratified text was in Italian<sup>166</sup>.

Çelebizâde Âsım cited the whole text of the treaty in his chronicle<sup>167</sup>. In the Ottoman

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<sup>165</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1378. : “bu üç devlet ittifak üzere olduklarında cümle mülük-i nasarada havf ü haşyet azher mine ’ş-şemsdir.”

<sup>166</sup> The full text of the Italian original text of the treaty can be found in: Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 267-273. A summarized English translation of the treaty: see J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; a Documentary Record* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1956), 42-45.

<sup>167</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1379-1384. The copy given by Âsım is dated before the ratification. But there are no differences when compared with the subsequent ratified texts. The only important nuance of Âsım’s copy is that, there are extravagant and long titulatures for İbrahim Pasha and Tsar Peter I.

archives, as far as I could see, there are three different copies of the treaty.<sup>168</sup> A full German translation was published in 1818,<sup>169</sup> and a modern English abbreviated translation was published in 1956. Moreover, a French version of the treaty was published in 1733<sup>170</sup>. Beside these copies of the treaty, we have two different contemporary Ottoman maps showing the Russian borders drawn by the partition treaty of 1724. The first map is handmade and there is one copy of it. This map can be dated to 1725.<sup>171</sup> The other map is the first colored printed map made by the Ottomans in approximately 1729, and there are numerous copies of this map in Istanbul.<sup>172</sup>

In the Ottoman copies of the treaty the titulatures of the Russian Tsar, the French king and their diplomatic representatives in Istanbul are indicative of the friendly relations that the treaty established between these three states. The Ottoman text of the treaty names Tsar Peter I as ‘the Tsar of Moscow, who is a friend of the

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<sup>168</sup> The first copy is in the *NH.7*, 78-82. The other original copy can be found in the *Düveli Ecnebiye Defteri* Nr. 83, pp. 70-76. And there is one more copy, probably the rough copy of the text: BOA C. Hr. 187/9328.

See also Külbilge, “18. Yüzyıl”, 155-168.

<sup>169</sup> Julius von Klaproth, "Russisch-Persisch-Türkischer Grenzvertrag Im Jahre 1727" *Fundgruben des Orients* 6 (1818).

For an abbreviated English translation of the Russian text see Bournoutian, ed., *Armenians and Russia, 1626-1796*, 120-22, nr. 127.

<sup>170</sup> Jean Rousset de Missy, *Recueil historique d'actes, negotiations, memoires et traitez depuis la paix d'utrecht jusq'a present* (La Haye, 1733), vol. 7, 457-62.

<sup>171</sup> Faik Reşit Unat, “Ahmet III. Devrine Yapılmış bir Ön Asya Haritası ” *Tarih Vesikaları*, V.1, 1941. For an excellent commentary on this map analysing the political and economic background in a larger perspective see Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire Rival Paths to the Modern State*, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004).

<sup>172</sup> Ulla Ehrensvar, Two maps printed by İbrahim Müteferrika in 1724/25 and 1729/30. In *Svenska Forknings institute Istanbul* 15/1990, 58-59.

Ottoman State through the eternal peace, the exalted, the respectful, the most dignified Tsar.<sup>173</sup>

The preamble of the text is also intriguing: it summarizes the recent events in Iran. The reader may have the feeling that this is not a part of an international treaty but rather a historical record of a statesman to explain why the following articles were written and accepted. In other words, the preamble of the treaty was trying to demonstrate ‘the historical necessity’ of the following six articles: “A certain man, Mir Mahmud, had burst onto the scene and seized Isfahan. Shah Husayn and his family were imprisoned. Thereon, the Ottoman armies moved onto the nearby places to its borders and conquered all the lands of Georgia. At the same time, as friend of the Ottoman State, Russians advanced over the Caspian littoral and took the cities of Baku and Derbent because there was serious disorder in Iran. Russia will help Tahmasb, the son of Shah Husayn, to expel the Afghan occupiers. In return, Russia will rule the southern Caspian Iranian cities.”<sup>174</sup>

The six articles of the treaty described the Ottoman-Russo-Iranian border in detail. The Russians conceded that Shirvan would be an Ottoman vassalage. The Ottomans accepted Russian protection of Tahmasb, but both sides agreed that if Tahmasb did not surrender the provinces of the Ottoman share, then the Russians would not support Tahmasb in this war against the Ottomans. The Russians would help Tahmasb, but only in fighting against the Afghans. On the other hand, if the

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<sup>173</sup> This titulature can be found in copies of the two official Ottoman state records, in the *NH.7* and (*Devlet-i Aliyye'nin sulh-i mü'ebbed ile dostu olup Moskov çarı olan haşmetlü çar-ı ba-vakar*). The titulature of the Tsar presented by Çelebizâde Âsım, the official chronicler is quite pompous and ostentatious: “*iftihârü'l-ümerâi'l-izâmi'l-İsevîyye muhtârü'l-küberâi'l-fihâmi'l-Mesîhiyye muslih-i mesâlih-i cemâhîru't-tâifeti'n-nasrâniyye sâhib-i ezyâlü'l-haşmeti ve'l-vakâr sâhibü delâili'n-necdi ve'l-i tibâr Moskov vilâyetlerinin Çar'ı ve cümle Rus'un ve âna tâbi nice vilâyetlerin fermân-fermâ ve hükümdârı olup Devlet-i Aliyye'min sulh-ı müebbed ile dostu olan Moskov Çarı Petro Aleksiviç*”

<sup>174</sup> BOA, *NH.7*, 96.

Afghans attacked either of the two empires, they would help each other. The Ottomans had guaranteed in the fifth article that, if the provinces named in the first three articles as belonging to the Ottomans were handed over without any obstacle by Tahmasb, the Ottoman Empire would recognize Tahmasb as the legitimate ruler of Iran and support his cause against the Afghan usurpers occupying Isfahan. If Tahmasb could enthrone himself, secure his territories and enter Isfahan, the Ottoman Empire, the Tsardom and the Safavid Empire would be in concert and in alliance. If Tahmasb did not confirm the Russian and Ottoman occupation on the former territories of the Safavid Empire, then the treaty required that another man be found who has the right to inherit the Iranian throne (*Acem 'de müstahakk-ı verâset olan*) and support his cause.

In one year, endeavors were made to start drawing the borders in accordance with the 1724 treaty. The Ottoman Empire assigned this task to Derviş Mehmed Agha, who was the coordinator of the Caucasian armies of the Empire. The Tsar employed two high military officers, Brigadier Alexander Rumanzov and the artillery major of Prussian origin, Johann Gärber.<sup>175</sup> In the appendix, there is a map of the Ottoman-Russo-Persian border drawn with the 1724 Treaty [See Map, 2]. Besides the articles of the treaty I made use of two contemporary Ottoman maps and the report of the Russian commissioner Gärber.

The application of the Partition Treaty proved to be more difficult than drawing the borders on the table. Although the commission started work in the

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<sup>175</sup> The detailed report of Gärber was published in 1760 in G.F. Müller *Sammlung russischer Geschichte*, V. 4/1, 1-156. A conscious summary of his report can be found in the appendix of von Klaproth, "Russisch-Persisch-Türkischer Grenzvertrag Im Jahre 1727" (1818).

following year, the actual work in the field was only begun in 1727.<sup>176</sup> In June 1725, the Ottoman central administration delivered a note to Derviş Mehmed ordering him to be careful when drawing the border on the ground. The order instructed him to drag his feet and stall the process as much as possible.<sup>177</sup> From 1727 on, Russian activity in the region was pacified because of internal problems in Russia. The Ottoman administration took advantage of this situation and ordered to accelerate the process of border drawing. Moreover, in 1727, Ardabil was taken under Ottoman control, a move which was contrary to the Partition Treaty.<sup>178</sup> In August 1727 the Ottoman central administration, for the first time in three years, demanded the completion of the border drawing process as soon as possible.<sup>179</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

The treaty was ratified in the last months of 1724, with no changes introduced to the first text. However, after a few months things changed dramatically. First, in February 1725 Tsar Peter died. This unexpected death destabilized the Tsardom for a while. Second, Ashraf Khan, the nephew of Mahmud Khan, dethroned his uncle with a military coup. The Ottomans began to worry that Ashraf Khan could become a source of trouble for them both on the battleground and on an ideological level.

One more important development after the Partition Treaty was the estrangement of Hacı Davud Khan from the Ottomans. In 1727, when the commission started to mark

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<sup>176</sup> See for the orders sent to Derviş Mehmed Agha: Zeynep Kurt, “13 Numaralı ve 1727-1730 Tarihli Mühimme Zeyli Defteri (Değerlendirme- Transkripsiyon- Dizin)” (MA Thesis, Fırat University, 2005), 106-7.

<sup>177</sup> BOA., İE.HR 11/1037.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>179</sup> Kurt, “13 Numaralı ve 1727-1730 Tarihli Mühimme Zeyli Defteri”, 221-2.

the lands in eastern Shirvan, Hacı Davud Khan's army tried to prevent the movements of the commission by constant assaults. Thereupon he was arrested by the Ottomans and sent into exile in Rhodes.<sup>180</sup> The Ottoman central administration was vexed with Hacı Davud because the advantageous diplomatic victory was fragile. Therefore, just after the deposition of Hacı Davud, an order was sent to the governor of Tbilisi to handle the Russians carefully in order to maintain the peace.<sup>181</sup> The sustained balance on the eastern borders of the Empire had proven ephemeral. The Partition Treaty of 1724 had secured the balance of power and was the mark of a great alliance against the Habsburg-led Grand Alliance until 1736. Nonetheless, on the eastern border of the Ottoman Empire, that treaty marked the beginning of a period of instability that would continue for another twenty years.

The Partition Treaty of 1724 was a diplomatic victory for the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman expansion on the Iranian territories was secured, and uneasiness about opening a new front against Russia in the Caucasus region was eliminated. What is more important, for the first time since the sixteenth century, three important frontier zones — the Danubian Frontier, Pontic Steppe and Caucasian Isthmus — were connected overland. This was a major strategic acquisition for the Ottoman Empire.

Perhaps because the Partition Treaty of 1724 proved ephemeral, it has been studied much less than other Russo-Ottoman treaties. Generally speaking, modern studies, especially those in Turkish, have tended to discuss the treaty along the conventional line of interpretation established by the Ottoman historians of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This conventional interpretation of the 1724

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<sup>180</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1392.

<sup>181</sup> BOA., C.Dh 165/8215.



Treaty was marked by the late eighteenth-century catastrophic defeats and territorial losses in Crimea, Balkans and Russian advancements in Caucasia and considered the expansionism of Russia as a repercussion of the 1724 treaty. The Ottoman government of the time was gullible, while İbrahim Pasha was nepotistic who not only cared about mundane pleasures but also was shrewd enough to convince the Sultan of his view.

This chapter was an attempt to put away this anachronistic interpretation and to make this treaty readable by evaluating it in its immediate context. İbrahim Pasha carried out a foreign policy and diplomatic enterprise that was almost unprecedented in Ottoman history. The policies of İbrahim Pasha were proactive, not passive.

## CHAPTER 4

### OTTOMAN EXPANSION IN THE CAUCASUS AND WESTERN IRAN (1724-1726)

#### 4.1 Introduction

The 1724 Partition Treaty with Russia opened a new phase for the Ottoman Empire on the Eastern Frontier. The amicable treaty with Russia was a priceless assurance for the Empire's expansion in the east, as the Russians averted their eyes from involvement in western Iran and southern Caucasia. The Safavid armies were in disarray and the Afghan advances were delayed by the political instability and financial crisis in the Afghan administration. The Ottoman armies were apparently the most advantageous and stable power on the battlefield. Under these unique conditions, the Ottoman Empire got ready to grab the territories that had already been depicted as being in her possession on the map drawn according to the Partition Treaty [see Appendix, Map 2].

This chapter will first survey the Ottoman policies of military and economic expansion in Western Iran and the Caucasus from 1723 until 1726. This survey will show that the Ottoman Empire tried to bring the various groups in this region under her hegemony. On the level of local politics, the Ottomans attempted to balance the various local powers and establish a sustainable administration in the newly gained places. The 'local' powers included not only the indigenous populations, but also the governors appointed by the Ottoman central administration.

The central administration under the control of Damat İbrahim Pasha assigned, withdrew or replaced governors constantly and pragmatically. This

dynamic administration model will be explained in the context of the operations in the critical bridgeheads on the battlefield, namely Tbilisi, Yerevan, Tabriz and Hamadan.

In the second part of this chapter, I will question the established view that the wars in Caucasia and Western Iran were ‘in vain and politically and economically pointless’<sup>182</sup>, and I will argue that quite to the contrary of conventional historiography the Ottoman central administration had a “grand strategy,” which was to expand and to establish a permanent presence in this region in line with its imperial vision.

## 4.2 Expansion

As the Ottoman envoy Osman Agha visited Isfahan and was fired by the Afghan leader Mahmud Khan in the spring of 1723, the Afghan administration was in a very

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<sup>182</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 4/1, 174. The often cited Ottoman historian Uzunçarşılı argues that from the beginning on these wars were ‘the cruel and cowardly attempt of the Ottoman government’ (*Osmanlı hükümetinin zebunküşlüğü*) and does not try to find any politic-economic-strategic motivation behind these wars.

It is a sad coincidence that this word in a bit different type (*zebûn-basânlık*) is used by Dürri Efendi during his ambassadorship to Iran. He travels to Iran in 1722, and a statesman asks him fearfully whether there would be an Ottoman attack. Dürri answers: such an attack would not fit the fame of the Ottomans that would be a cowardly attempt! Ayhan Ürkündağ, "Ahmed Dürri Efendi'nin İran Sefaretnamesi" (MA Thesis, Afyon Kocatepe University, 2006), 3a.

I could not find exactly from where Uzunçarşılı borrows this term but I believe that this term was in use contemporarily as a critic of İbrahim Pasha.

Modern Turkish historiography after Uzunçarşılı tried to explain the Ottoman operations in the region from a much different perspective. The main idea, which is dominant in the historiography is the ‘provocation of European states’ and the pressing moves of Peter I. The Russian operation were undeniably pressing for the Ottoman Empire especially after 1722. However, the thesis about the European provocation is naïve and reductionist. For very recent summary of this thesis see Elvin Valiyev, “XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Güney Kafkasya: Osmanlı, Safevi ve Rusya Kışkırtıcılığı” (Selçuk University, 2014).esp. 56-67. For the main source of this thesis in the literature see Mustafazâde Tevfik Teyyuboğlu, “XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Kafkaslarda Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri,” in *Osmanlı*, ed. Kemal Çiçek and Cem Oğuz, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 561–72. Teyyuboğlu’s this argument is weak, as Lockhart put in 1958 over the British archival sources, England was attempting ignite a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. See Lockhart, *The Fall*, 538 & Chapter XVIII in general.

depressed and disadvantageous position. Mahmud Khan could not establish his rule in the first year following the fall of Isfahan despite his ruthless policies. He had collected a tremendous amount of tribute from the European and local merchants, sacked the cities and given his armies leave to murder the civilians in order to establish control over the cities of Iran.<sup>183</sup>

The Ottomans, following the news from Isfahan, were probably aware that the victorious Afghans would not easily acknowledge Ottoman suzerainty over the former Safavid territories. The Armenian dragoman of the French ambassador to Isfahan fled from Iran and arrived to Istanbul in the beginning of 1724. Dragoman Yosefo was a precious source to get firsthand information about the Afghan administration in Isfahan. Yosefo was interrogated by an unidentified Ottoman official. The report of this interrogation was recorded and later this text was reproduced in four slightly different recensions.<sup>184</sup>

The text was a short history of the Afghan invaders starting from the first uprising in Kandahar organized by Mir Üveys. The manuscript gives minute details about the Afghan advancements between the years 1719 and 1722. In the last few pages of the manuscript, Yosefo reports about the smack down of the Afghan armies in Qazvin: As soon as Mahmud Khan had heard that Tahmasb, the last active son of

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<sup>183</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 190-211.

<sup>184</sup> This manuscript has at least four different versions, of which two are in Istanbul libraries: Topkapı Palace Library, TMSK, Revan 1487. This manuscript is transliterated into Latin, see Gülcan Sarioğlu, “Yosefo Tiflisi’nin ‘Vâki’at-ı Mir Veys ve Şâh Hüseyin’ Adlı Eserinin Tahlil ve Transkribi” (MA Thesis, Mustafa Kemal University, 2008) The second manuscript is in Fatih Millet Library, A.E,56. This copy has some slight differences. In the beginning of the text there is a very short introduction explains why recording recent history is important. Moreover, this copy presents an exact date about the entrance of Afghans in Isfahan 15 *Muharrem*, 1135 (A.H.) (26 October 1722). See 1b.

The third copy is the U.K. Glasgow University. There is a brief summary about the manuscript and uses in the European literature see T. H. Weir, “The Revolution in Persia at the Beginning of the 18th Century (From a Turkish MS in the University of Glasgow),” in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Professor Edward G. Browne*, ed. T. Nicholson R. Arnold, 1922, 481–91. The fourth known manuscript is in Germany, Marburg Staatsbibliothek Ms.ort.oct.3127.

Shah Husayn had fled to Qazvin, he had ordered to his armies to assault Qazvin despite the harsh winter conditions. As an army of 4,000<sup>185</sup> arrived to Qazvin, Tahmasb had fled to Tabriz over Zanzan. Amanullah Khan was the commander of the Afghan army, and upon the flight of Tahmasb he divided his army into two and sent part of it toward Tehran. The fall of Qazvin was a pyrrhic victory, because on the tenth day of the fall of the city, there was a great uprising by the city residents. As a result, Amanullah Khan was forced to evacuate the rest of his army under very unfavorable conditions, and by one count lost about 1,600 soldiers.<sup>186</sup>

Yosefo's fresh intelligence was quite precious for the Ottoman policy makers. It revealed two grave problems that faced the Afghans: first they were oblivious to the peculiarities of the geography, as indicated by their decision to move a large army to Qazvin in the middle of winter. Secondly, they had serious internal problems: Mahmud Khan's cousin had ignited the fire of insurrection in the aftermath of the failure in Qazvin, after fleeing from Qazbin to Kandahar with his core army.

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<sup>185</sup> The Persian historian Mohammad Muhsin says this army was composed 3,000 Afghan soldiers and 1,000 Qızılbaşes. See Lockhart, *The Fall of Safavid Dynasty*, 194. The Dutch commercial representative in Isfahan reports that 6,000 Afghan soldiers left Isfahan with hope to collect booty, they returned in a ruined condition. The representative does not give a specific number about casualties. Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 179-180.

<sup>186</sup> Yerevan, 1487, 31a-32b. This event can be found in many contemporary sources narrated in minute detail. After the smack down of the Afghan army, the cousin of Ashraf Khan does not return to Isfahan but goes back to Kandahar in order to ignite a plot against his uncle Mahmud Khan. Many contemporary sources therefore narrates this event as a turning point for the Afghan administration, for the rise of Ashraf Khan. See Hanway, *Revolutions*.

Petros di Sargis Minasian Caro Owen Gilanents', *The Chronicle of Petros Di Sarkis Gilanentz : Concerning the Afghan Invasion of Persia in 1722, the Siege of Isfahan, and the Repercussions in Northern Persia, Russia, and Turkey* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1959), 24-29: Petros Gilanentz gives a detailed description how the Afghans oppressed the people of the city by ruthless seizures and rapes. Various sources are not agreed upon this figures, for example Father Krusiński reports that the casualties were about 4,000. Krusiński, *The History*, 261. Yosefo's information seems more accurate.

The failure of the Afghans in Qazvin was a very pleasing development for the Ottomans geo-strategically. The Ottoman frontier was basically divided into two main flanks: northern and southern. The northern flank [see Appendix, Map 2] was demarcated by Gori and Tbilisi in the far north, and by Urumiye, Tabriz and Meragheh in the far south. Ardabil, Ganja, Nakhchivan and Yerevan were the critical footholds of the northern flank. The southern flank of the Ottoman frontier was designed from the geographical perspective of Baghdad [see Appendix, Map 3]. Mosul was the main logistical center for this frontier together with Baghdad. Khorramabad was the main foothold and Hamadan was the apex of this triangular area in western Iran. The importance of Qazvin for the Ottoman strategy of expansion can be understood by examining its location with respect to the Ottoman frontier system. Qazvin is about 120 kilometers from the southern Caspian shore. However, the Elburz Mountains were formidable obstacles before any transportation from the Caspian littoral. This would mean that the Russian navy and armies could never involve in a combat with the Afghans despite the dictation of the Partition Treaty. In any case, the Russians were reluctant and unable to enter into combat that far south because of the hardships in logistics. Aside from the geographical and logistical obstacles, the Ottomans would not really wish the Russians to attack the Afghans on Iranian territory. Such a scenario would weaken the Ottoman administration domestically and raise questions about the legitimacy of the war. The failure of the Afghans rescued the Ottoman administration from these tough considerations.

Secondly and more importantly, Qazvin was in a key position in the Ottoman geostrategic plan on the Iranian territories. The two main flanks of the Ottoman expansion were converging just before Qazvin. A secured Afghan rule in Qazvin

would undermine the Ottoman advancements on the Eastern Frontier, where the two flanks of the armies would join and protect each other logistically and strategically. The failure of the Afghans in Qazvin, therefore, can be thought as a watershed for the Ottoman advancements on the eastern front. This was certainly an easy victory for the Ottomans. As early as 1723 the Afghan administration was planning to control Hamadan, the apex of the Ottoman southern flank in order to hinder any Ottoman threat. During this operation, the Afghans were more cautious. Nasrallah Khan attempted to reach Hamadan but maneuvered towards the south and took Shiraz. In August 1723, Nasrallah Khan died in Shiraz and the operation was suspended.<sup>187</sup>

In early 1724 Tahmasb was in a desperate situation and the Afghan armies were demoralized because of the humiliating defeat in Qazvin and Shiraz. This was a perfect time for the Ottomans to expand. Now I observe the individual footholds of expansion and try to depict the fundamentals of a systematic expansionist model.

#### 4.2.1 Tbilisi

Tbilisi was the strategic hub of the Ottoman northern flank in the Eastern Frontier. From the very first moment of the political crisis in Iran, the order from Istanbul to the governor of Erzurum, Silahdar İbrahim Pasha, was to secure Tbilisi. (See Chapter 2) Tbilisi was important for two reasons. First, it was the northernmost point that was close to the Russian military operational zone. The Ottoman plan to reach Baku could be realized only by securing Tbilisi and its vicinity. Securing Tbilisi would be the most necessary thing to resist any possible Russian attack. The second reason behind Tbilisi's strategic importance was its unique position as opposed to other

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<sup>187</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Persia*, 181-184. In Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, Nasrallah Khan mentioned as 'Zelan'. In my Ottoman sources, I could not find this name.

important cities in the northern flank. The operations to Yerevan, Ganja and even Tabriz would need logistical support from the north and northwest in addition to Erzurum and Van. As in the Ottoman-Safavid wars of the 1570s, Tbilisi was the first bridgehead for the Ottoman strategy.<sup>188</sup>

Silahdar İbrahim Pasha entered the city in spring 1723 without any confrontation thanks to the civil war between two local Georgian powers, Wahtang VI, the governor of Kartli and Muhammad-Kulu Khan (Constantine II), the governor of Kakheti. Tahmasb had ordered Muhammad-Kulu Khan to attack Wahtang, after the latter's refusal to aid the Persian troops against the Afghans. Muhammad-Kulu was not successful in a small confrontation on the banks of Khram River. This defeat, however, presented him with new opportunities: he made an alliance with the Lezghis and entered Tbilisi before the Ottomans and gifted the city to the Ottomans.<sup>189</sup> In the wake of this easy victory, however, a full consolidation in the city and its vicinity was a daunting task for the Ottoman administration. Silahdar İbrahim Pasha was deposed from the post of commander-in-chief as he was on his way back to Çıldır.<sup>190</sup> The new commander of Tbilisi was the Anatolian governor Sarı Mustafa Pasha. Mustafa Pasha entered the city with his 12,000 troops. In first few months in Tbilisi, the Ottomans did not attempt to establish central control; rather, they preferred to cooperate with the local powers as much as possible. Muhammad-Kulu Khan was certainly a potential ally; however, he did not accept the power of Shahnava Khan, the son of Wahtang VI. Shahnava Khan converted to Sunni Islam and took the name İbrahim. What is more, the brother of Wahtang, Yese

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<sup>188</sup> Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı- İran Siyasi Münasebetleri (1578-1612)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü, 1993), 97-102.

<sup>189</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 11.

<sup>190</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1335.



Khan converted to Islam and took the name Abdullah.<sup>191</sup> The Ottoman administration gave him Somhit, southeastern Georgia, as *ocaklık*, a special sort of *timar*<sup>192</sup> usually bestowed to the local owners of a conquered territory.<sup>193</sup> The central administration gave Tbilisi and its sub-provinces as *ocaklık* to Shahnavaż Khan on 5 September 1723.<sup>194</sup> This meant that as long as Shahnavaż (İbrahim) and Yese Khan (Abdullah Bey) were loyal to the Ottomans, they would have the right to dispose of the land, redistribute it and collect the taxes.<sup>195</sup> The family of Wahtang was a well-established dynastic family in Tbilisi and in northern Georgia. The Ottomans attempted to utilize this local power in their favor. In this regard, the question arises why the Ottomans did not support Muhammad-Kulu Khan despite the fact that he had literally gifted the city to them.

An answer to this question is offered by the chronicle entitled *Vekâ-i nefis ender Tiflis der uhde-i asâf-i sâni Hazret-i El-Hâc Recep Paşa* (The events in Tbilisi under the charge of Haji Recep Pasha, Second Vizier).<sup>196</sup> Muhammed-Kulu Khan

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 1369.

<sup>192</sup> “A term denoting nonhereditary prebends to sustain a cavalry army and a military-administrative hierarchy in the core provinces of the Ottoman Empire.” İnalçık, *Timar*, EI2, Online 2015.

<sup>193</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 158.

For the term *ocaklık* see Nejat Göyünç, “Yurtluk-ocaklık deyimleri hakkında”, in *Prof Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu’na Armağan*, İstanbul 1991, 269-77.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>195</sup> The general pattern of land tenure in the newly gained territories will be explained in the second part of this chapter.

<sup>196</sup> Süleymaniye Library, E.E. 2435. This short manuscript, written in high prose, is a brief historical account about the Ottoman military engagements in Georgia from the appointment of Recep Pasha until the capture of Ganja in late 1724. It is a very precious source about the Ottoman military consolidation in Tiflis and its vicinity from 1724 to 1725. The author of this manuscript is thought to be a certain ‘Gürcüzâde’ (Son of the Georgian) about whom I have not been able to uncover any information. The manuscript cited here is the only copy of the chronicle I have been able to identify. There is a Georgian translation of this text, published in Georgia. See Gürcüzâde, trans. Tsisana Abuladze, Metsniereba Publishing, Tbilisi, 1975. Abuladze’s translation is made from a manuscript copy in Georgia and this copy has the name “Gürcüzâde” on it.

could enter Tbilisi by preparing a plot together with the Georgian Katoghikos, the supreme patriarch Domenti Levanisidze Bastonishvili (d. 1741).<sup>197</sup> This plot did not make a positive impression on the Ottomans, because it revealed a possible coalition between the political dynasty of Muhammad-Kulu Khan and the Georgian Patriarch. In the manuscript, Gürcüzâde simply argues that Muhammad-Kulu Khan was a dubious traitor; therefore, the Ottoman administration preferred to cooperate with Shahnavaz Khan.<sup>198</sup>

This local game of politics could only work for a few months. Shahnavaz (İbrahim Khan) fled to northern Georgia and started an insurrection against the Ottomans with the help of the Georgians around Gori. This unexpected move in the middle of the military operations in Yerevan and in the southern flank of the Eastern Frontier forced the Ottoman administration to establish direct control over Tbilisi. Arnavud Recep Pasha was appointed as the governor and commander-in-chief of Tbilisi in late January 1724.<sup>199</sup> Recep Pasha would become one of the powerful figures in the Ottoman frontier during the following two years.

In 1710 Recep Pasha had been appointed as the governor of Van, which was his first governorship. In 1717, in the middle of the wars with Austria he was sent to Vidin as commander-in-chief and after the conclusion of the Passarowitz Treaty, in 1719 he was rewarded with the governorship of Damascus with the rank of vizier for a brief period. In the same year he was transferred to Aleppo as the governor of the province. The Ottoman administration apparently considered Recep Pasha to be an effective and trustworthy governor and commander. In the first place, he was

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<sup>197</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 15.

<sup>198</sup> E.E. 2435, 1b-2a.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 4a-4b. & Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 151.

appointed to Tbilisi as *mutasarrıf*.<sup>200</sup> He would collect the taxes in the region and would have the monopoly to administer the usage of the land for an undefined span of time.<sup>201</sup> Recep Pasha was perhaps not fully autonomous, he was obliged to fulfill especially the military duties, ordered directly from the center; however, he was allowed to sustain his own domestic rule in the region. In the first few months of his assignment, Recep Pasha was quite successful. Together with İshak Pasha, the governor-*mutasarrıf* of Çıldır, Recep Pasha helped to the troublesome siege of Yerevan. In June 1724 he was declared the governor of Trabzon.<sup>202</sup> This last post proved the strong position of Recep Pasha, because Trabzon was the main logistical center for all the operations in Caucasia from its beginning until the late 1740s.<sup>203</sup>

Together with Recep Pasha, the central government appointed a treasurer (*defterdar*), Lami' Halil Agha, and a military commander to collect the taxes on a regular basis.<sup>204</sup> In the first months of the rule of Recep Pasha, taxes were collected in kind, especially as cereals and grain, to feed the huge armies operating in the Caucasus more effectively. A new taxing authority, not surprisingly, brought along many problems. In the eastern parts of Tbilisi, on the way to Ganja, there was a small

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<sup>200</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1367.

<sup>201</sup> This term *mutasarrıf* emerged in the beginning of the seventeenth century by the changing of the Ottoman provincial structure. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, *mutasarrıf* gained a new meaning. The *Eyâlet* (provinces) or *liva* (sub-provinces) are being recorded as *malikane-mukataa*, and the soldier-bureaucrats were being appointed by the central government to collect taxes as long as they supply cash revenues to the central government. What is more important, the *mutasarrıf* the eighteenth century was keeping his own army. In the period in question, we observe the features of this system in practice. For detailed information see Orhan Kılıç, *Osmanlı Devletinin İdari Taksimatı*, Elazığ, 1997, 23-24. & Ali Fuat Örenç, "Mutasarrıf", *DİA*, Online, 2015.

See also for the emergence of *mutasarrıf* as governor of provinces: Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870 : An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson, 2007), 73.

<sup>202</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1367. & Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 127.

<sup>203</sup> Temel Öztürk, *Osmanlıların Kuzey ve Doğu Seferlerinde Savaş ve Trabzon* (Trabzon: Serander, 2011).

<sup>204</sup> E.E. 2435, 6b/9a. & Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 275-276.

town called Tiryalit (Deryalit) that became the center of a new uprising against the Ottomans. The Lezghi Kaplan tribe, Safavid loyalists, Turcoman and Shiis, and Georgians began to move collectively against Ottoman rule. The Ottoman tax collector, İbrahim Agha, who had been appointed to Tiryalit was murdered by two men of Wahtang VI, who fled to the northern side of the Caucasian mountains. This event ignited further Ottoman operations deep in to Caucasia.<sup>205</sup>

Indirect control over Tbilisi had not worked out as expected. The first goal of the new strategy was to control Gori, the center of northern Georgian province Kartli. This operation aimed to eliminate the Georgian resistance on the northern fringes of Tbilisi. The second aim of Recep Pasha was to secure the eastern/southeastern end of the province as far as Ganja; however, for the time being, this task had secondary importance. Because the northern part of Ganja, the provincial center of Shirvan, the city of Shamakhi was then under the control of Hacı Davud Khan.

Gori was more problematic for the Ottoman strategy. The Kazak (Gazakh) tribe, one of the largest tribes that cooperated with the Ottomans in the region, had sent a petition to Recep Pasha complaining about the constant attacks of Safavid soldiers in Ganja and the Shamseddinlu tribe of Saki. The long lowlands of southeastern Tbilisi until Ganja had become a center of anti-Ottoman resistance, and this region was feeding militarily and logistically the resistance of Yerevan. It was reported to the Ottomans that Muhammad-Kulu Khan who had gone back to his former name, Constantine, was conscripting Georgian soldiers and organizing a local coalition. This coalition included not only the Safavid/Kızılbaş soldiers but also Sunni Lezghi tribesmen. This anti-Ottoman coalition was centered in Akçakal (today's Akstafa), the only natural pass through the mountains from the lowlands of

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<sup>205</sup> E.E. 2435, 12b.

Kakheti to Yerevan. Ten thousand soldiers had allegedly gathered in this region under the control of Constantine.<sup>206</sup> Gori, on the other hand, was forming the military power of this coalition, and it was only 70 kilometers away from Tbilisi. Under the commandship of Recep Pasha, a powerful army was prepared immediately. The governor of Çıldır, İshak Pasha, was the commander on the field. The great proportion of Armenians in the region declared their support for the Ottomans, and this allowed the Ottoman army to prepare extensively for the assault. On the banks of the Adn [Atan] River (a small branch of Kur River just south of Gori), there was a clash between the two armies.<sup>207</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım notes that the casualties of the coalition reached 3,000.<sup>208</sup> There was a series of bloody incidents in lands that lay to the south of Gori in October 1724, when the Ottoman administration was satisfied with the Partition Treaty with Russia.<sup>209</sup>

After achieving a certain degree of control in Gori, Recep Pasha focused on Akçakal, the main concentration point of various branches of the anti-Ottoman coalition. The central administration in Istanbul ordered 200 heavily armed cavaliers from Sivas. These forces did not show the expected success, however.<sup>210</sup> Just a few kilometers southwest of Akçakal, there was a small city, Gazakh, populated then by the Sunni Kazak tribe: they became the first prey of the coalition of Muhammad-

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<sup>206</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1398.

<sup>207</sup> For a detailed description of the war, see, E.E. 2435, 28b-31a.

For the military formation of this coalition see Armen Aivazian, *The Armenian Rebellion of the 1720s* (

Yerevan: Center for Policy Analysis American University of Armenia, 1997), 12.

<sup>208</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1398.

<sup>209</sup> E.E. 2435, 17a, 17b, 18a-18b. & Çelebizâde Âsım, 1399.

<sup>210</sup> E.E. 2435, 21b-22a.

Kulu Khan. The city was located at the provincial border between Ganja and Tbilisi.<sup>211</sup> In the following months, when the Ottoman army controlled Yerevan and its vicinity, before marching on Ganja, the central government declared the tribal chief of Gazakh, Mihr Ali, as an Ottoman ‘bey’.<sup>212</sup>

In late 1724 the southeastern side of Tbilisi was strategically more important for the Ottomans because of the prolonged siege and confrontations in Yerevan. Interestingly, however, Recep Pasha had focused primarily on Gori for a very long time. After the consolidation in Gori, there had been some more Lezghi incursions, but these were not as serious as the actions of the coalition of Constantine.<sup>213</sup> The primacy of Gori for Recep Pasha can be explained by the governmental model in the region. Tbilisi and Gori were given to Recep Pasha as *ocaklık*; he was collecting taxes from these provinces in return for his commandership and his personal army. Therefore, it is plausible that he gave primacy to security, especially in the northern fringes, where more profitable lowlands were available. He also had something to win or lose personally. For example, after the fall of Yerevan and the consolidation in Georgia, Recep Pasha was rewarded with the governorship of Trabzon, which would bring certain material and nominal benefits.

#### 4.2.1 Yerevan

Yerevan was another important foothold for the Ottoman expansion. It was geographically less important than Tbilisi; however, the struggle for it was much bigger

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 20a.

<sup>212</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1425.

<sup>213</sup> E.E. 2435, 32b-39b.

and bloodier. Yerevan, compared to Tbilisi, was closer to the pre-1722 Ottoman military centers, Çıldır and Beyazıd. However, the city was encircled with mountains in the north, east and partially in the south. Whereas Tbilisi was a necessary corridor to encircle the Ottoman share in the Caucasus according to the Partition Treaty, Yerevan was an isolated post in the western part of the Ottoman share. As the endeavors to consolidate power in Tbilisi and in greater Georgia were ongoing, Yerevan had gained a fresh meaning for the Ottoman grand strategy.

News began to arrive that the Afghan armies were heading towards Yerevan, the central city of Safavid Caucasus. It was heard in Hamadan that the Afghan administration had sent 200 Afghan soldiers to Yerevan to check on the condition of the Safavid army.<sup>214</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım stresses the strategic importance of Yerevan for the operation on Safavid territories in the section where he narrates the conquest of Yerevan. According to Âsım, Damat İbrahim Pasha, after reading histories and geographical books,<sup>215</sup> concluded that the Ottoman campaigns against Iran in the seventeenth century had not succeeded because the Ottoman armies had not paid enough attention to securing Yerevan.<sup>216</sup> After this military-historical evaluation of İbrahim Pasha, the supplementary troops from Egypt were sent to the siege of

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<sup>214</sup> Gilanents', *The Chronicle of Petros*, 18, 9.

<sup>215</sup> Indeed, the personal library of Damat İbrahim Pasha listed after his death, has 59 history books and 7 geography books. Some of these books are directly related with the Iranian and Central Asian cities and histories. See Karahasanoğlu, "A Tulip Age Legend", 75.

<sup>216</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım , 1406: [...]Sadr-ı âlî-kadr-ı Felâtûn-fitrat hazretlerinin kesret-i mütâla'a-i kütüb-i coğrafya ve tevârih sebebiyle âsâr-ı mülûk-i etrâf ve etvâr-ı ekâlîm ve memâlik-i etrâf nakş-ı sahîfe-i zamîr-i ilhâm-pezirleri olup husûsâ bin on iki târihinde Şâh Abbas sipâh-ı Kızılbaş-ı hannâs-ı iltibâs ile teshîr-i Erevan'a âzim [...]vükelâ-yı devletin ihmâl ve gafletlerinden nâşî imdâd ü i'ânetden kâmil yedi ay mahsûr oldukdan sonra me'yûs olmağın, bi'z-zarûre kal'ayı emân ile teslîm itdiği [...]

Yerevan instead of Tabriz, in the mid-summer of 1724 because Yerevan was simply ‘more important’.<sup>217</sup>

The commander-in-chief of Yerevan was Vizier Arifi (Sarı) Ahmed Pasha<sup>218</sup>. Ahmed Pasha had started his career in the high bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire as governor of Konya in 1717. He was ordered to bring his army to Edirne just before the Passarowitz Treaty, as the Ottoman army was preparing for war with Austria.<sup>219</sup> After two years, he was promoted to the rank of vizier and appointed as the governor of Diyarbekir on the condition that he would reserve an army for the operations in Iran.<sup>220</sup> As the situation worsened in Iran, and as the Afghan threat became more immanent, he was ordered to march towards Yerevan with his personal army and with many other reinforcements from other governors in Anatolia and in the Arab provinces. A large army was ordered to be collected under his command. Abraham of Erewan claims this army was composed of 75,000 men.<sup>221</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım gives a very close figure of the army in detail: the provincial special armies of the governor of Diyarbekir, of the governor of Anatolia, the governor of Kars, the governor of Sivas, the governor of Maraş, and the governor of Bursa (Hüdavendigâr). Moreover, the *timar* holders of Kars, all the armies of the *beys* of Kars, and the armies of the governors of Çorum and Beyazıt were participating in this expedition. Besides the special units of the provincial governors, there were

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<sup>217</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1406: “ri’âyet-i kâ’ide-i takdîm-i ehemmi ile”.

<sup>218</sup> In the English translation of Abraham of Erewan, *History of Wars*, there is a confusion about the commander-in-chief. Köprülü Abdullah Pasha is the commander-in-chief for the second army in Van and he is the governor of Van. Compare: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 4/1, 178. Hrand D. Andreasyan, *Osmanlı - İran - Rus İlişkilerine Ait İki Kaynak. Tercüme Eden ve Yayına Hazırlayan Hrand D. Andreasyan* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1974), 56.

<sup>219</sup> Râşid, 936, “Vusûl-i vâlî-i Diyarbekir ve mîr-i mîrân-ı Adana be-Edirne”

<sup>220</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 69.

<sup>221</sup> Abraham of Erewan, *History of Wars*, 18.



27,000 provincial Janissaries and 2,500 artillerymen and bombardiers.<sup>222</sup> Arifi Ahmed Pasha was the governor of Diyarbekir and in-between, in 1724 he was appointed as the commander of Tbilisi, as Recep Pasha was promoted to the governorship of Tbilisi.

In late spring, the core of this army, under the personal command of Ahmed Pasha, moved from Tbilisi to cover the environs of the city. Recep Pasha had in the meantime started to fight with the Georgians who rebelled in Gori. In late March, the Safavid governor of Yerevan Mihr Ali Khan took off from the city with 12,000 troops; however, the short confrontation on the banks of Arpa Çay was costly for the Safavid army.<sup>223</sup> Before the start of the long siege of the city, the second large part of the Ottoman army, under the control of Osman Pasha, the governor of Anatolia joined the core army.<sup>224</sup>

The siege of Yerevan had become costly for the Ottomans. It ended in August 1724, after many powerful reinforcements from the surrounding Ottoman *sanjaks* and even from Kütahya and Egypt.<sup>225</sup> As the harsh battles went on, Tahmasb was in Tabriz with his last 6,000 men. He had called the Armenian Patriarch of Ejmiatsin, Katholikos Astuausatur, to Tabriz before the beginning of the Ottoman siege. In the last month of the siege, Tahmasb left Tabriz with his troops and went toward the east. As he left Tabriz, he ordered the Katholikos to return to Yerevan and discuss the terms of surrender.<sup>226</sup> Arifi Ahmed Pasha assured the residents that there would

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<sup>222</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1401.

<sup>223</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 18-22.

<sup>224</sup> Aktepe, *Revan Fetih-Nâmesi*, 47.

<sup>225</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, part, III.

<sup>226</sup> Abraham of Erevan argues that the terms were discussed only between the Armenians and the Ottomans, because the Ottomans were not accepting to talk with Safavids. See *Ibid.*, 32. However, the

be no plunder by the Ottoman soldiers in the city, and that the Ottoman army would allow for about 200 Safavid soldier under the control of Mihr Ali Khan to leave the city in order to join the army of Tahmasb.<sup>227</sup>

After the fall of Yerevan, the Ottoman army prepared for further operations around Yerevan, toward the east. These operations were relatively small. In a few months the Ottoman army was able to take Nahchivan and Ordubad, which were important footholds in the southern Caucasus. However, there were serious internal problems in the Yerevan administration. In spring 1725, the Janissaries revolted against Ahmed Pasha and wounded him seriously. They were angry that Ahmed Pasha had not allowed the plunder of the city and had not given them the money he had promised.<sup>228</sup> The Ottoman administration reacted to this revolt by replacing the high commandership. Arnavud Recep Pasha was appointed to Yerevan,<sup>229</sup> and Ahmed Pasha was appointed to the governorship of Trabzon in June 1725.<sup>230</sup> Trabzon was a logistical hub for the operations in the northern flank; therefore, this did not mean that the center deployed Ahmed Pasha totally. Rather, it addressed internal problems by reshuffling the powerful pashas serving in various positions in the frontier. The governorship of Trabzon was given to Ahmed Pasha but he was not allowed to go to Trabzon. He would have the tax revenue of this province, but he had to reside in Nachchivan or in Ordubad, which were further footholds of Yerevan.<sup>231</sup>

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Aktepe, *Revan Fetih-Nâmesi*, 67, we see that the terms were discussed directly with the Safavid commanders and governor in Yerevan.

<sup>227</sup> Aktepe, *Revan Fetih-Nâmesi*, 66-67. & Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 30-35.

<sup>228</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1426.

<sup>229</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 164.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>231</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 127.

A few months after the military control of the Ottomans, the local administration started to prepare detailed cadastral records for the newly gained province. The records were to be prepared under the control of the central administration, by the central treasury (*Defterhâne*).<sup>232</sup> The two record books were completed two years later, in the middle of 1727, according to the archival records. The provinces and sub-provinces in Western Iran were distributed among the pashas in charge as *yurtluk*, *ocaklık* and as *arpalık* in some cases. The secondary governorships of the pashas in charge were based on *mukata'a* revenues from customs and the taxation of agricultural products. This distribution of income among the powerful pashas created a struggle over the provinces. For example, the commander of Tabriz, Abdullah Pasha, also claimed possession of Nackhchivan, Ordubad and Yazd-Abad, the sub-provinces of Yerevan. The central administration became involved in this dispute and ensured that these places were parts of the Yerevan province and should be in the cadastral records of Yerevan, not of Tabriz.<sup>233</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Tabriz

The southernmost point of the Ottoman northern flank was Tabriz. The operation in Tabriz was not focused on the siege of a single city, as had been the case in Tbilisi and Yerevan. Köprülüzâde Abdullah Pasha was ordered to control a wider geography, stretching from the southern part of Lake Urumiye until Ardabil in the

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<sup>232</sup> Raif İvecan, "Osmanlı Hakimiyyetine Revan (1724-1746)" (PhD Dissertation, Marmara University, 2007). 45, f.n, 172-173.

<sup>233</sup> İvecan, "Osmanlı Hakimiyyetine Revan, 45. (The order is taken from *Mühimme Defteri*, 133, pp.145.) For a detailed list of Ottoman administrative partition of the Province according to the above-mentioned cadastral records, see İvecan, "Osmanlı Hakimiyyetine Revan, 49-64. For detailed study about the demography of Revan according to the Ottoman records see Raif İvecan, "Revan Livası Yerleşim ve Nüfus Yapısı (1724-1730)," *Tarih Dergisi* 2, no. 50 (2009): 121-48.

northeast. Tabriz was roughly the center of the targeted area, and was considered to be strategically not that important by Damat İbrahim Pasha as mentioned above. In Tbilisi and Yerevan, the Ottomans had to calculate their moves more carefully, because it was a tough environment where Georgians, Armenians, Lezghis and Safavids were possible threats to the Ottoman existence. In and around Tabriz, the only real enemy of the Ottomans was the Safavid soldiers. As of late 1725, Khoy, Tabriz, Maragha, Urumiye, Marand and Ardabil were under Ottoman control; however, war in northern Tbilisi, Gori, southwestern Shirvan, Gence and the eastern parts of Yerevan continued at least until 1727.

Köprülüzâde Abdullah Pasha was the second son of Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Pasha (d. 1691), the famous grand vizier of the late seventeenth century. Abdullah Pasha was quite an interesting figure, because he had a long past in the high Ottoman bureaucracy. He was the son-in-law of Feyzullah Efendi, who was murdered in the Edirne Incident in 1703. Abdullah Pasha had then been the *Kaymakam* of Istanbul, the highest-ranking government representative in Istanbul because almost all the high bureaucracy had been in Edirne during the revolt. Abdullah Pasha had managed to flee and rescue himself from possible execution. In 1705, Abdullah Pasha appeared again and began his long career in governorship. In 1723, just at the fall of the Safavids, he was appointed as governor to Van. In the following year, he was appointed as the commander-in-chief (*serasker*) for the conquest of Tabriz. After taking this duty, he demanded that his son Abdurrahman Pasha be appointed as the governor of Van in his place.<sup>234</sup> The central administration accepted this request because Abdullah Pasha had a powerful army. Before his appointment to Van, he had

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<sup>234</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 129-130.

been governor in Sakız (1705), Sivas (1707), Trabzon (1709), Mosul, Aydın (1715) and Jerusalem (1717). After 1716, he was commander in Morea and İnebahtı (Lepanto). As İbrahim Pasha became Grand Vizier in 1718, Abdullah Pasha took Rakka as *malikâne*, a life-tenancy tax farm. The brilliant career of Abdullah Pasha was a good reason for the central government to allow him to control Tabriz and give the governorship of Van to his son. Tabriz was a prestigious and ‘rich’ place to govern for a prestigious pasha.<sup>235</sup> Nevertheless, we might assume that the only reason for the appointment of Abdullah Pasha to commandership in Tabriz was not his brilliant career in the army and the administration. It was related to the domestic policies of Damat İbrahim Pasha as well. Abdullah Pasha was connected to two powerful families in Istanbul as a ‘Köprülü’ and the son-in-law of Feyzullah Efendi. İbrahim Pasha was attempting to control the web of powerful pasha households in Istanbul to sustain his own power.<sup>236</sup> Appointing Abdullah Pasha and his son Abdurrahman Pasha as high authorities in the Eastern Frontier served two purposes. Firstly, the participation of men from such prestigious families enhanced the support for the policies in Iran. Secondly, Abdullah Pasha and his household entered into a symbiotic relationship with the central government, in which the center realized its expansionist projects while the Pasha household improved its economic and political fortunes.

The central government ordered various pashas to collect their armies and join the army of the commander-in-chief, Köprülüâde Abdullah Pasha. The ordered

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<sup>235</sup> Sultan Murat Topçu, “Köprülüâde Abdullah Paşa’nın 15 Cemadiel-Evvel 1133- 14 Mart 1721 Tarihli Vakfiyesine Göre İmar Faaliyetleri ve Bani Kişiliği,” *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4, no. 17 (2011).

<sup>236</sup> Tülay Artan, “18. Yüzyıl Başlarında Yönetici Elitin Saltanatın Meşruiyet Arayışına Katılımı,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 83 (1999): 292. For a general evaluation of the Ottoman household structure see Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1974, 438–47.

pashas obeyed these orders because they were motivated to gain more provinces as ‘revenue’. The *mutasarrif* of Ankara, Yusuf Pasha, was ordered to conquer and protect Chors, a small town on the road to Tabriz, about 10 kilometers north of Khoy, but which has disappeared in modern times. Yusuf Pasha arrived in Chors with his army. The *mutasarrif* of İçil, Seyyid Sunullah Pasha was ordered to control Khoy. The military governor of Rakka, Osman Pasha, the *mutasarrif* of Kayseri, Mirza Ali Pasha, and the *mutasarrif* of Arabgir, Ahmed Pasha, were ordered to join the main army of Abdullah Pasha. In addition to all these provincial armies, the central government sent 1,500 Janissaries from Istanbul and 100 artillerymen under the command of Abdullah Pasha.<sup>237</sup> All these armies met in Tasuc in mid-August and defeated the Safavid army under the command of the Safavid governor of Tasuc.

The Ottoman army moved to the next important step on the way to Tabriz, Merend, by securing the linking roads in collaboration with the local Kurdish tribes.<sup>238</sup> Throughout the winter of 1724-25, the army under the command of Abdullah Pasha fought a tough war, securing constant provisions and ammunitions from various governorships in the Empire. For example, in September, the governor of Aleppo, Kürd İbrahim Pasha sent a batch of military help, but the Safavid army raided this caravan on the road.<sup>239</sup> The resistance in Tabriz was intense compared to the resistance in Yerevan. The geography is mountainous and it was exhausting to gather the army for a siege. There were many small towns like Zenoz, Merend and Khoy, and securing the connection between them proved difficult for Abdullah Pasha. The failure in the first attempt was not welcomed in Istanbul and maybe as a

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<sup>237</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1413.

<sup>238</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1413-4. & 1431.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 1414-5.

punishment, the province Khoy was given to the governor of Aleppo, Kürd İbrahim Pasha, as *arpalık*.<sup>240</sup> This meant a serious loss of income for Abdullah Pasha, but he was not discharged and ordered once more to conquer Tabriz. In the second attempt, which started in the spring of 1725, Kürd İbrahim Pasha joined the army with his 8,000 troops.<sup>241</sup> In the first attempt to conquer Tabriz, Abdullah Pasha had realized the importance of the aid of local tribes.

Sustaining the security of the mountainous terrains was a particularly unsuitable task for heavily armed soldiers. By the order of the central government, the tribal chief of Mahmudi, (part of today's Malatya), sent 600 infantrymen, and the Kurdish tribal leader of Bitlis came with his 400 infantrymen. In addition to these, the tribes of Somay, Nevahi-i Kürdistan, Bargiri (Siirt), Albak and Enzel sent troops. Moreover, the *bey* of Bayezid, Mahmud Pasha, the *bey* of Ziyaüddin, Hamdi Bey, and the *bey* of Malazgirt, İbrahim Bey, joined the army.<sup>242</sup> In addition to these critical supplements, the central government ordered more pashas to join this war: Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, the new governor of Aleppo, Silahdar Mehmed Pasha, the new governor of Anatolia, with their special armies, and the provincial armies of Aydın and Saruhan (Manisa) joined the army under the command of Abdullah Pasha.<sup>243</sup> All these armies came together in Tasuc in July 1725. Tasuc was located in the northern littoral of Lake Urumiye, and it was about 100 kilometers far from Tabriz. Tabriz did not have a well-established fortress like Yerevan. Therefore, the Ottoman forces put up not so much a siege but a semi-guerilla war on a relatively narrow plane. The

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<sup>240</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 167. Şeyhi Mehmed Efendi, *Eş-Şekaiku'n-Nu'maniyye ve Zeyilleri: Vekayii'l-Fudala* I, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan vol. 3, 3 vols. (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1989), 715-7.

<sup>241</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1439.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 1440.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

battles were harsh and arduous for the belligerents and the importance of military logistics stood out. The Ottoman army attempted each time to secure the roads to Tabriz and then took the city under harsh bombardment. The Safavid army was able to resist only for three weeks against the Ottoman army, which was supplemented logistically from a huge hinterland. According to Abraham of Erewan, the Safavid defender of Tabriz, Ala Kulu Khan, lost his 10,000 soldiers, one of the last powerful armies of Safavid Persia. After the fall of the city, there was serious plunder, which ruined Tabriz to a great extent.<sup>244</sup> On 22 August, the news of the conquest arrived to Istanbul.<sup>245</sup>

In late 1725, Russia was not that happy with the advances of his Ottoman 'ally' and with the latter's establishment of political and economic control over a very wide region in Caucasus. The Russian representative in Istanbul demanded official permission to go to Georgia and Armenia. The Ottoman administration rejected this request, pointing to the harsh weather conditions and the terms of the Partition Treaty.<sup>246</sup> The Ottoman administration was not the best government to obey the terms of a treaty. Just after the fall of Tabriz in September 1725, the Safavid governor of Ardabil sent an envoy to Abdullah Pasha to surrender to the Ottomans. Ardabil was seemingly at the fringes of the Ottoman share, according to the Partition Treaty. Abdullah Pasha asked İbrahim Pasha what to do about the request of the Safavids of Ardabil. In Istanbul there was a discussion between the Russian representative Romanzoff and Damat İbrahim Pasha on this issue. Damat İbrahim Pasha assured the Russian representative that no Ottoman soldier would step into

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<sup>244</sup> Abraham of Erewan, *History of Wars*, 36.

<sup>245</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1142-50. Abraham of Erewan mentions 6 November, which is most probably a mistake in date conversion. Abraham of Erewan, *History of Wars*, 36.

<sup>246</sup> Hanway, *Revolutions*, 234.



Ardabil.<sup>247</sup> İbrahim Pasha kept his promise; a few days later two Ottoman civilians and one armed guardian entered Ardabil to take control of the city without any Ottoman soldiers. However, as these three men arrived in the city, they realized that it was not only the Ottomans who had violated diplomatic accords. The Safavid troops that had evacuated Tabriz and Yerevan had settled in Ardabil, and before they sent an envoy to Abdullah Pasha, these troops had moved about ten hours away from the city. The plan was to take the Ottoman soldiers into the city and then ambush them with an unexpected raid. Anyway, Abdullah Pasha managed to get this important intelligence and ordered his chief steward (*kethüda*) Mehmed Agha to control the army of Azamet Giray Sultan, the cavalry from the Crimean Khanate. The Safavid ploy was ruined. The Crimean soldiers easily expelled the Safavid troops. On 7 January 1726, Mehmed Agha was appointed the *beylerbeyi* of Ardabil.<sup>248</sup> In 1730 the central administration sent an order to Derviş Mehmed Agha, the Ottoman commissioner in charge of drawing the border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, dictating that Ardabil should be included in the Ottoman share and that the border should be redrawn in this region.<sup>249</sup>

The immediate gain of Abdullah Pasha and his commanders was the *mukataa* property of the gardens and orchards around Tabriz. The central government granted a garden of about 1 square kilometer (300 *dönüm*/1000 *batman*) to Abdullah Pasha and about 0.3 square kilometers (110 *dönüm*/900 *batman*) to his son Abdurrahman

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 234-235.

<sup>248</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 156.

<sup>249</sup> Zeynep Kurt, “13 Numaralı ve 1727-1730 Tarihli Mühimme Zeyli Defteri (Değerlendirme-Transkripsiyon- Dizin)” (MA Thesis, Fırat University, 2005), 220-1, nr. 244.

Pasha.<sup>250</sup> Only a small section of the share of Abdurrahman Pasha had an annual revenue of 5,000 *kuruş*, which meant that the revenues from these gardens alone would provide a substantial income for the Ottoman pashas.<sup>251</sup> The main revenue of Tabriz, as was the case in Tbilisi and Yerevan, were the *mukataas* and the *jizya* tax (the poll tax imposed on the heads of non-Muslim households). These revenues were not only the possession of the pashas; the pashas were responsible for paying for the soldiers and scribes sent from Istanbul. In 1726 there were 3,028 soldiers and bureaucrats sent from Istanbul in order to establish dominion over the city and her vicinity.<sup>252</sup>

In August 1726 the central government discharged Abdullah Pasha and sent him back to Rakka.<sup>253</sup> The reason for this discharge was the illness of Abdullah Pasha.<sup>254</sup> This explanation seems to be true, because we know that in the first year of the Ottoman occupation, a serious epidemic broke out in Tabriz, which caused many casualties in the Ottoman army.<sup>255</sup>

After fall of Tabriz, the southern part of the Ottoman northern flank easily reached the Russo-Persian-Ottoman border that had been determined in 1724. As long as the Russian threat was under control, the Ottomans were sure that their expansion would be permanent. In 1726, Tahmasb was no longer a threat at all.

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<sup>250</sup> Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725-1730" (PhD Dissertation, Chicago University, 1991), 107, see the table derived from the Ottoman register (*Maliyeden Müdevver Defter*, nr, 590, 56-58.)

<sup>251</sup> Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule", 107-8.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>253</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 152.

<sup>254</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 4/1, 187.

<sup>255</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, Parts, VI and VII (35-9).

The only possible problem was the Afghan administration in Isfahan, which was in deep economic and political crisis. At this conjuncture, fighting against the Ottomans could win the Afghans prestige in the eyes of the Safavids. Moreover, controlling Transcaucasia would open a new trade route, which would help the Afghans in their deep financial crisis. These strategic considerations were made by several contemporaries: Abraham of Erevan notes that the Afghan armies moved toward the west as they were informed that the army of Abdullah Pasha left the city because of an epidemic.<sup>256</sup> The new Afghan ruler was enthroned in the spring of 1725 and he was searching desperately for financial resources for his army. In late 1724, in Isfahan there was a rumor that the army of Abdullah Pasha would walk to Qazvin with 60,000 soldiers, and that would cause a joint resistance of Russians, Georgians, Armenians and Tahmasb against the Ottoman armies.<sup>257</sup> This rumor appeared not to be true. On June 28, Ashraf Khan started a general massacre in Isfahan for the sake of collecting money. He needed more resources to defeat the Ottomans in their southern flank and invited the Russians, Georgians and Tahmasb to assault the weakened Ottomans.<sup>258</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Hamadan

What differentiated the southern flank of the Eastern Frontier from the northern flank was the fact that the territories in this geography had never been part of the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, these territories were not the ‘inherited’ (*mevrus*) territories as

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 37-8.

<sup>257</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 190.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 245-6.

was the Ottoman claim for Caucasia. With the definition of Çelebizâde Âsım, Hamadan was “a well-protected city which was the heart of the deceitful Shiites”.<sup>259</sup>

The governor of Baghdad, Eyyubi Hasan Pasha, was a successful bureaucrat and professional soldier who had proven himself during the long Austrian wars. He was subsequently appointed as the governor of Baghdad in 1704 and held this position for the next two decades without any interruption. None of the grand viziers during the reign of Ahmed III could dare discharge him. He had secured his position by suppressing the rebellious tribes of Iraq, amassed considerable wealth and maintained a powerful household.<sup>260</sup> The fall of the Safavid dynasty had become an urgent issue for Hasan Pasha from the beginning. 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, well before the conclusion of the Partition Treaty, exactly one year after the fall of Isfahan, the provincial army of Baghdad had settled in Kermanshah without any serious military confrontation.<sup>261</sup> The central government had sent only ammunition in September 1723.<sup>262</sup> Moreover, the central administration had ordered the governors of Mosul, Diyarbakir and Mardin to send a store of provisions.<sup>263</sup>

After the capture of Kermanshah, Hasan Pasha came there and began waiting for the spring to go to Hamadan. Nevertheless, he did not live long enough to see this

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<sup>259</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1391: “*kuvvet-i kalb-i revâfız-ı pür-hiyel olan hısn-ı hasin-i Hamedan*”.

<sup>260</sup> Feridun Emecen, “Eyyubi Hasan Pasha”, *DİA*, Online, 2015.

<sup>261</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 4/2, 180.

<sup>262</sup> Gilanents, *The Chronicle of Petros*, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1391: Describes the army of Hasan Pasha in detail. For the route of the army and the figures of the army is given in relative detail by Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, 39-40: The army was composed of a core professional soldiers, rest of it was tribal, mostly Kurdish soldiers. In Zuhab, Hasan Pasha gained 15,000 young man from another Kurdish tribe, the army was now 58,400 men. Route: From Zohab to Taq-Gerdun- Tak Kisra/Kasr-ı Şirin- Kerend-Karind-Kermanshah-Harunava/Harunabad/Shahabad.

expedition; in February 1724 he died unexpectedly in Kermanshah. Ahmed Pasha, son of Hasan Pasha, was appointed immediately to his father's office and was ordered to continue the expedition. Ahmed Pasha had previously been the governor of Basra; he came with his army from Basra to Baghdad and from Baghdad to Kermanshah, about 1,000 kilometers, in three months.<sup>264</sup> Ahmed Pasha was in a hurry for two pressing conditions: first, the central government had appointed Kara Mustafa Pasha, the governor of Trabzon, to commandership in Kermanshah. Ahmed Pasha would wait in Basra until the governor of Shahrizor Abdurrahman Pasha arrived on Basra to replace him. Ahmed Pasha was not willing to give his place to Kara Mustafa Pasha in Kermanshah, even if temporarily. Kermanshah was an acquisition of *his* father.<sup>265</sup> The second pressing condition was the intelligence on the Afghan armies: Mir Mahmud had ordered his armies to occupy Hamadan immediately.<sup>266</sup>

The Afghans moved before Ahmed Pasha left Kermanshah. Nasrallah K r Sultan moved from Isfahan with his 1,200 men and reached Hamadan easily. However, the Safavid commanders of Hamadan were able to repulse them easily. The Afghan army did not advance further, but steered northwards, toward a small city called Derreh-Gazin (Dergazin/Dargaz), which was populated by Sunnis.<sup>267</sup> They took 5,000 men and women from this city and brought them to Isfahan to

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<sup>264</sup>  elebiz de  sım, 1392.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 1392.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 1392-3: "Isfahan'a m stevl  olan Mir  veysođlu Mahmud H n'ın Hemedan'ı tesh r sevda'sıyla leřker-i ta'y n ideceđi z hir ve ol tarařdan esb b-ı zabt u teshire mukaddem tasadd  olunduktan sonra hareketin h cneti n m y n   b hir olmak hasebiyle [...]"

<sup>267</sup> Gilanents', *The Chronicle of Petros*, 35.

settle.<sup>268</sup> Later this town came under Ottoman control on 22 June 1725; however, the Afghans had grasped the most precious thing for the Ottomans: The city was depopulated and the local Sunnis were transferred to Isfahan.

It was not easy for the Ottoman army to advance. In the middle of the road between Kermanshah and Hamadan, in the small town of Kengaver, the Ottoman army had to spend eleven days.<sup>269</sup> Lack of local support was slowing down the Ottoman advance. Moreover, heavy weaponry could not be transferred to Kengaver because of the rough terrain.<sup>270</sup> The Safavid resistance used the advantage of geography as in Tabriz; however, the army of Ahmed Pasha was much more powerful than the army of Abdullah Pasha.<sup>271</sup>

In September 1724, Ahmed Pasha entered Hamadan. The Safavid army fled northwards to Qum. As the Ottomans entered the city, the Afghan leader Mahmud Khan was in Yazd with his best soldiers to loot and sack the city in order to collect money for a foreseen confrontation with the Ottomans. This expedition in Yazd was a fiasco for Mahmud Khan; he lost 500 troops for nothing. When the Safavid armies fled north and northeast, the Afghan administration was not commemorating its victory. They became more stressed because a much dangerous enemy was at the gate now. This stress led to the removal of Mahmud Khan from his throne. In April 1725 Ashraf Khan ascended the throne in Isfahan after murdering his uncle Mahmud

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<sup>268</sup> See Ibid., 35 & Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 189. & Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, part, VII. & *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1400.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 1394-5.

<sup>270</sup> Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, part, VIII.

<sup>271</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1396-97. & Abraham of Erevan, *History of Wars*, part, VIII: Abraham of Erevan asserts that the Ottoman army had increased till 300,000 by many supplements in 1727. This figure is seemingly an exaggeration, but if we compare this number with what Abraham of Erevan said about the army of Abdullah Pasha, we can understand the difference.

Khan. Ashraf Khan's first business was to return the treasures of Dutch merchants.<sup>272</sup>

He realized that he would need more friends against the new and powerful enemy.

#### 4.3 Motivations and methods

The existing historiography does not have a proper answer to the question 'why did the Ottomans want to expand to Iran?' In contrast, Gürcüzâde makes important points about the reason for and scope of the wars, which have been overlooked by modern historians. Afghans, "like a violent and powerful raptorial" had destroyed the Safavid Shah, and the Iranian territories were "like a garden without a gardener". These gardens had once been the property of the Ottoman sultans, but the latter had lost them. Now, it was time to revive the policies of their ancestors.<sup>273</sup> Since the garden of Iran was in anarchy, the Ottomans considered it their duty as the gardener to intervene. Why the Ottomans wanted to be the new gardener of this troubled garden and how they tried to control these new territories will be the topic of this part.

##### 4.3.1 Motives and causes

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<sup>272</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia*, 189-191.

<sup>273</sup> E.E. 2435, 1b: "Ükab-ı zerrîn-mehâlib-i lâne-i Efgâni cenâb-ı Mir Mahmud, Şâh-ı İran'ın efsar-i kalem-rev [ü] memâlik-i olan Isfahan'ı pençe-i kahrı ile rubûd ve şah-ı rû-siyah-ı bi-intibâhun vücûd-ı dalalet-endürını ceride-i imkândan nâ-bûd edip mahdûd-ı İran bir gülşen-i bi-bağbân gibi niğeh-bânsız kaldıkda Tiflis ve Tebriz ve Revân ve sâir bazı kı'la ki mukaddemâ sultan-ı selâtinü'l-ümem - halledallahu mülkehu- hazretlerinin ecdâd-ı 'izâm-ı zeviyü'l-ihtirâmları kabza-ı teshire getirip sonra müsamaha ve müsahaleleri sebebiyle yine memâlik-i Acam'e inzimâm olunmuş idi [.] Gayret-i ecdâd-ı kirâmlarını ihyâ ve kıla-ı mezbûrı memâlik-i mahrusa-i İslâma ilhâk[a] irâde buyurup [...]"

Since the sixteenth century, religious sentiments had been an important, albeit not the only, motivation for the Ottoman wars against Safavid Iran.<sup>274</sup> In the period examined, religion continued to be an important factor at the rhetorical level; however, it is questionable to what extent confessional loyalties actually determined the Ottoman policies on the ground.

In the Ottoman sources of the early eighteenth century, the Safavids continued to be typecast as heretics and *revâfiz*, a derogatory term for Shiites.<sup>275</sup> They were also often represented as the real enemy for the Ottomans. The *fermân* sent to Ârifi Ahmed Pasha ordering him to take Yerevan in May 1724 is a good example of this rhetoric. The *fermân* was addressed to Ârifi Ahmed Pasha and put a strong emphasis on jihad against the irreligious Shiites.<sup>276</sup> However, the Ottomans condemned not only the Shiites; they also turned religious and moral rhetoric against the Sunni Lezghi tribes and Afghans, condemning the latter for being destructive and ‘irreligious’ when it suited them.<sup>277</sup> In some cases, the Ottomans justified the support

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<sup>274</sup> Rudolph Matthee, “The Ottoman-Safavid War”, 7-15.

<sup>275</sup> In the Ottoman sources, there is a strong emphasis on the ‘heresy’ of the Safavids. In Çelebizâde Âsım there are many different expression for defining this heresy. The most frequent expression seems as *kızılbaş-ı evbaş*, means ‘lowly qızılbaşes’. This term was usually uttered for the Safavid soldiers. For the general mention of the Safavid soldiers townsmen Çelebizâde Âsım had a very rich vocabulary, I picked up some often used examples: “*revâfiz-ı bed-tebârek*”, “*revâfiz-ı bed-nihâd*”, “*Revâfiz-ı Acem*”, “*revâfiz-ı bî-dîn-i bed-kâr*”, “*revâfiz-ı pür-hiyel*”.

<sup>276</sup> Aktepe, *Revan Fetihnâmesi*, 40: [...] *eimme-i ulema-i dîn-i mübînin kütüb-i muteberdereden Bezzâziye ve Tatar-haniyye ve hulâsa-i fetevâ ve Şerh-il hidâye ve fetevâ-yü’z zahriyye ve sâir kütüb-i mutebereden küfr ve irtidâdlarına hükm olunup üzerlerine ahkâm-ı mürteddîn icrâ ve diyârları dârül-harb ve İslâm’a gelmeyen ricâli katl ve nisâ ve sıbyanları istirkâk olunur deyü fetavâ-i şerife verilen revâfiz-ı kızılbaşın kahr ve tedmîrleri ile i’alâ-yı kelime-i dîn-i mübîn [...]*.

This *ferman* is added in the beginning of the *Fetihname* of Silahşör Kemani Mustafa Agha, who was reporter between the Yerevan frontier and Istanbul. It is noteworthy that in this *ferman* there is not a single mention about the non-Muslims in Yerevan.

<sup>277</sup> In the first article of the Partition Treaty, 1724, it was written: “The Lazgis of the province of Shirvan having as Muslims asked for protection of the Sublime Porte...” Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, 42. In the Ottoman text the adjective for Lezghis: “*Lezgi tâifesi millet-i İslâm’dan olmak takribi ile*”, Çelebizâde Âsım, 1380. In later stages of the war, especially when the Ottomans could arrange conventions with local Georgian dynasties in Shirvan, Lezghis began to fight



they lent to some of the local players in the region by virtue of the fact that those players were Sunni. For instance, Çelebizâde Âsım justified the help provided to the Kazak tribe during the wars in Georgia in just this manner.<sup>278</sup> However, the Ottomans were able overlook the Sunni affiliation of the local players, if the latter clashed with them. For instance, in his account of the operations of Recep Pasha in Georgia, Gürcüzâde referred to the Sunni Lezghi tribes who were cooperating with the Georgian and Safavid resistance as “Lezghi tribes of unknown sect” (*mezhebi nâ-mâlum hârici Lezgi cemaâtləri*).<sup>279</sup>

All these examples would indicate that religion was an important dimension of the Ottoman engagements in Iran on the level of rhetoric but not in practice. Especially, when we consider the fact that the Ottomans preserved the peace with Shah Husayn until his fall, the ambassadorship of Dürri Efendi and his political assurances to the Safavids, we have to conclude that religious sentiments were not a predominant motive in these wars.<sup>280</sup>

The eighteenth century was not the first time that the Ottomans had attempted to expand into Iran. It might be instructive to compare the early eighteenth-century Ottoman involvement in Iran with the Ottoman-Safavid wars of 1578-90.<sup>281</sup> As in the early eighteenth century, in 1578, the Ottoman armies had moved against Iran

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against the Ottomans. The rhetoric about the Lezghis changed in Çelebizâde Âsım rapidly. Now they were simply called as *Lezgi eşkiyası* Lezghian bandits. See for example: Çelebizâde Âsım, 1564.

<sup>278</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1425: “Kazak aşiretinden Mir Ali mudim ve kâr-güzâr ve bir merd-i diyânet-şi’âr olup, dergâh-ı hilâfet-dest-gâh-ı pâdişahiye ita’ât ü inkıyâd itdiğine ...”

<sup>279</sup> E.E. 2435, 22b.

<sup>280</sup> Ayhan Ürkündağ, “Ahmed Dürri Efendi’nin İran Sefaretnamesi” (MA Thesis, Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, 2006), MS, 12-14.

<sup>281</sup> Rudolph Mathee, “The Ottoman-Safavid War of 986-998/1578-90: Motives and Causes,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 20, no. 1&2 (2014), 19. Compare with C. Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus*, New York University Studies in Near Eastern Civilization, No 5 (New York,: New York University Press, 1972), 45.

when opportunity presented itself in the form of the death of Ismail II. There is little evidence, however, that the Ottoman engagements in Iran at the time had had quite the same scale as that in the 1720s. The archival records indicate that the purpose of the Ottoman army in the late sixteenth century had been mainly to control some bridgeheads, if it was militarily possible, and to sack the towns that lay outside their control. By contrast, the Ottomans in the early eighteenth century had not only a more ambitious plan, they also had more complex geopolitical calculations. An important difference between the two episodes was in fact the rise of Russia as a global power. As we have discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three, Ottoman operations in Iran in the 1720s were intended at least in part to check the advance of Russia in their eastern frontiers.

At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that the Ottoman war efforts in Iran during the 1720s represented a very substantial investment of the state's fiscal resources. A recent study on the military history of the wars between years 1722 and 1725 illustrates vividly the extent to which the İbrahim Pasha government cared about these wars and was willing to spend for it. For the finance of the wars, the central administration prepared four account registers (*masraf defteri*). The official total expenses of the war for the high times of the wars were as follows: for Tabriz 675,000<sup>282</sup> *kuruş*<sup>283</sup>, for Yerevan 520,000 *kr.*, and for Tbilisi 460,000 *kr.* This means that for the northern flank of the frontier, the total expenditure was 980,000 *kr.* For the operations in the southern flank, in the same period, before the start of the operation to conquer Hamadan, the expenditure was 1 million *kr.* These figures seem

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<sup>282</sup> The numbers I cited are not exact, the remainder of the figures are elided.

<sup>283</sup> In 1720s, one *kuruş* was equal to 120 *akçes*. Şevket Pamuk, "Kuruş" *DİA*, Online, 2015. After 1688 one *kise/kese* was meant 50,000 *akçe*. Ahmet Tabakoğlu, "XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Bütçeleri", *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 41, no. 1-4 (1985), 392.

to support the grand-strategic division between the two flanks of the army in numbers. After 1725, the expenses for the operation on Ganja and the second operation on Tabriz are not recorded, but Genç assumes this figure would have cost 1 million *kr.* in addition.<sup>284</sup> For each operation, the source of the expenditure differs but has roughly the same pattern. For Kermanshah, 64% of the expenditure was paid from the central treasury (*Hazine-i âmire*). The rest was financed by the local revenues of Baghdad, Mardin and Basra. For Tabriz, 63% of the expenditure was made from the central treasury and for Yerevan the contribution of the central treasury was 49% of the total expenditure. For the case of Tbilisi we have a different picture: 78% of the expenditure was provided by the local jizye taxes.<sup>285</sup> These figures show that in total the central government transferred almost half of its burden to the provincial administrators and the treasuries of the appointed pashas.<sup>286</sup> They also show that the central government was investing a considerable amount of money in these wars.

All this of course raises questions about the economical dimension of the wars. It is commonly assumed that the Russians went into Iran in the hope of capturing new territories and a share of the lucrative silk trade in that country.<sup>287</sup> In contrast, the material basis of the Ottoman involvement in Iran has not been adequately addressed. While it exceeds the limits of this study to make the case for a commercially minded Ottoman Empire, it is certainly possible to argue that the

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<sup>284</sup> Genç, *Lâle Devrinde Savaş*, 189-191.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-211.

<sup>286</sup> For detailed information about the taxes collected in time of war but not usually recorded in the *masraf defteri* see Uğur Kurtaran, "Osmanlı Seferlerinde Organizasyon ve Lojistik," *Turkish Studies* 7, no. 4 (2012): 2269–86.

<sup>287</sup> Reinhard Wittram, *Peters Des Grossen Interesse an Asien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1957). Wittram's depiction of the commercial quests of Peter I is seminal. See also: Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great the Struggle for Power, 1671-1725* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 434-42.

Ottomans also went into Iran with the intention to harvest an economic gain from this territory.

First of all, some clues to this effect can be found in the report presented to the Ottomans by Yosefo, the dragoman of the French ambassador in Isfahan. Yosefo begins his report by discussing the Safavid-Portuguese relations at the dawn of the Afghan invasion of Isfahan. The Imam of Muscat had rebelled and gained control of the trade customs in Bander Abbas in 1720. Shah Husayn had requested financial and military help from the Portuguese to regain control of this revenue source but had not received a favorable response. When the Portuguese navy commander demanded money in return for their help, Shah Husayn chose to pay ‘280 *kises* of akçe’ instead to the Imam of Muscat but could not control the custom anyway because two years later he lost his throne.<sup>288</sup> It must surely be significant that Yosefo addressed these commercial dimensions in a report commissioned by the Ottomans. What is more, he expressed the amount of money involved in terms of Ottoman currency. All this would strongly suggest that the Ottoman readers of the report were interested in knowing about the fiscal resources of Iran, including those in the Persian Gulf. It is also noteworthy that the ‘280 *kise* akçes’ mentioned by Yosefo was a huge amount. A rough calculation shows that it was about 117,000 *kr*. It is reasonable to think that the prospect of tapping into such a significant fiscal base must have also motivated the Ottoman war efforts in the region.

The attraction of Iran from an economic perspective becomes clear also if we compare the Ottoman war efforts there with the Ottoman wars on the western front during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>289</sup> Only seven years before

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<sup>288</sup> Revan, 1487: 6a-6b.

<sup>289</sup> For a detailed evaluation and transformation of the Ottoman military finance from sixteenth to eighteenth century see Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700*, UCL Press, 1999.

the Iranian Wars, during the grand-vizierate of (Şehid) Ali Pasha (d. 1716), the Ottoman army had spent more than 9.3 million *kr.* in only one and half years in Morea.<sup>290</sup> Moreover, more than 90% of the expenditure was paid from the treasury. In return, the Ottomans had achieved at best an indecisive victory restoring to their control only one of their former territories. By contrast, the central treasury had spent at most about 2 million *kr.* for the war efforts in Iran and in return had gained control of a substantial territory with a significant fiscal base. As put by Gürcüzâde, it indeed made sense for the Ottoman government to want to be the new gardener of the ‘Iranian garden’.<sup>291</sup>

With the advance of military operations, the Ottoman central administration began to concentrate more on the expected tax resources on the Iranian territories. In only nine years, the Ottoman administration prepared thirteen land registers (*tahrir defteri*) for the cities of the former Safavid Empire.<sup>292</sup> In most places, the main

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There can be found many figures about the Iranian Wars from 1578 to 1612. However, comparing these figures with the eighteenth century figures is unexpressive and ahistorical.

<sup>290</sup> Mehmet Yaşar Ertaş, *Sultanın Ordusu: Mora Fethi Örneği 1714-1716* Yeditepe, 2007. 274.

<sup>291</sup> All these figures can be understood better through a comparison with the budget figures of the same age. It is noteworthy that the existing data about the Ottoman budgets are not representing the whole state economy, but a certain part of the revenues and expenditures. For the limitations of the Ottoman budgets and a very detailed publication of the figures see *Osmanlı Maliyesi Kurumlar ve Bütçeler*, Mehmet Genç, Erol Özvar, eds. vol. 2, 2 vols. (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 7-18.

Although many revenues and expenditures were not being recorded in the records of the central treasury (*Hazine-i Amire*), the figures are still representative to understand the amounts spend and earned in the Eastern Front. From the first half of the eighteenth century, we have budget records for six different years. The mean of figures for the revenues recorded in the budgets are nearly 11 million *kr.* yearly. Tabakoğlu, “XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Bütçeleri”, 398. The years are: 1700-1: 1,157,457,903 *akçe*, year, 1701-2: 1,179,973,780 *a*, year, 1702-3: 1,213,176,608 *a*, year 1704-5: 1,254,856,289 *a*, year 1710-1: 1,295,082,370.5 *a*, year 1748-9: 1,648, 953,780 *a*.

<sup>292</sup> In the Ottoman archives there are 12 land registers: *Tahrir Defteri*, nr., 902, (Ardabil), nr., 895, 901, (Province of Maku of Yerevan) nr., 904-908 (Tabriz), nr., 911 (Khoy, Karadağ, Kapam), nr., 909 (Maraghe, Bulak, Sovuk), nr., 910 (Urumiye, Salmas, Halhal) nr., 1066, (Erdelan) nr., 912 (Kermanshah, Loristan), nr., 907-906 (Hamadan). In addition to these, there is one more register in the catalogue of *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler*, (MAD, nr.590), see for detailed information and the index of the registers: Osman Özgüdenli, “Osmanlı İrani (I); Batı İran ve Azerbaycan Tarihi Hakkında Osmanlı Tahrir Kayıtları; Coğrafi ve İdari Taksimat,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 22, no. 34 (2003), 85-86/86-94: In these registers

method of Ottoman taxation was tax-farming (*mukata'a*)<sup>293</sup>. The tax-farmers were primarily the Ottoman pashas who participated in the wars with their personal armies and/or contributed to the wars at a high level. For the case of Tabriz, the majority of the province was partitioned into *mukata'as*. After a while, after 1726, the central government also began to give the right of tax-farming to the local tribes, along with the Ottoman pashas.<sup>294</sup> Not only were the lands tax-farmed but the revenues on small manufactures, and especially the internal customs, were farmed.<sup>295</sup> Keeping in mind that before the Iranian Wars, the state finances were expanding through the tax-farming system. The scramble in Iran then becomes more understandable from an economic perspective. In 1722, at the beginning of the control of İbrahim Pasha and well before the Iranian Wars, the yearly revenue of the total sale had become 1.45 million *kr*.<sup>296</sup>

In the last year of the Safavid administration, the land taxes of Tabriz amounted to approximately 72,000 *kr*. In the first year of Ottoman control, the revenue dropped to 53,000 *kr*. After the completion of registers and restoration the damages of the war, in 1727 the revenue was 66,000 and in 1728 it reached 135,000

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there are more than 10,000 settlements with their population numbers, classified according to religion, and the taxable assets in detail.

For example in July 1728, the central administration sent an order to the governor of Hamadan to register the cadastral and demographic census for all the peri-urban areas around Hamadan: BOA., AE, III. Ahmed 67/6781.

<sup>293</sup> Mehmet Genç, "Mukata'a" *DİA*, Online, 2015.

<sup>294</sup> Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Tabriz under Ottoman Rule", 138-146.

In 1715, Şehid Ali Pasha had stopped the enlargement of tax-farming over the empire because of abuses he argued. The office time of İbrahim Pasha marked the restart of this system and an extreme increase in the tax-farming around the empire starting from 1717.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 127: for example in 1728 the custom of silk and tobacco in Tabriz was given to high ranking Janissary, Ahmed Agha for yearly 45,000. In the same year the tax-farming of paint and leather manufacture was given to a local *ayan*.

<sup>296</sup> Linda Darling, "Public Finances: The Role of the Ottoman Centre," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Suraiya Faroqhi ed., vol. 3, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127.

*kr.* yearly.<sup>297</sup> Similarly, in 1724, the revenue from tax-farming in Yerevan was 55,000 *kr.* and it jumped to 197,000 *kr.* in the next year.<sup>298</sup> Besides the tax-farming revenues in the Iranian territories, the revenues from the poll tax (*jizya*) were remarkable: for instance, in 1724, only from Tbilisi 17,000 *kr.* was collected, whereas in the same year 32,000 *kr.* was collected from Ankara, Sivas and Kayseri combined.<sup>299</sup>

Tax revenues were not the only ‘profit’ to be gained from the Iranian wars. The central government had a more long-term profit calculation from this war enterprise: trade. It is well known that silk production was an important source of wealth in Iran and had been important in international trade for a long time. The precious Iranian silk whet the appetite not only of the Europeans and Russians. After the conclusion of the Partition Treaty in 1724, Stanyan was reporting to London and questioning why the French were so eager to see this treaty agreed upon, as it would give the great share of the silk trade to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and leave France out.<sup>300</sup>

Before the last rebellion of the Afghans and the fall of Shah Husayn in 1720, İbrahim Pasha had ordered the foundation of a high quality silk production workshop in Istanbul. In the official order for the foundation of this workshop, explicit mention was made of the goal to compete with the high quality silk products of the Venetians. The money invested in the workshop was given directly from the central treasury and it was a substantial sum, 30,000 *kr.* for 40 production units. Each unit would generate

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<sup>297</sup> Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Tabriz under Ottoman Rule”, 116.

<sup>298</sup> Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2002), 219.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>300</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 236 & Bonnac, *Mémoire Historique*, 201.

300-500 *kr.* profit yearly. This means that the investment would be amortized in 2-3 years. The project was successful; in 1723 the chief treasurer wrote a directive to the governors and high-ranking soldiers of the Empire ordering the use of Ottoman silk production for everybody instead of European products.<sup>301</sup>

According to Mehmet Genç, the foundation of this silk production workshop was indicative of a ‘mercantile understanding’ on the part of the Ottomans. When we add the wars on the Eastern Frontier, the picture gets clearer. Tabriz, Ganja and Yerevan were historical centers of raw silk.<sup>302</sup> Historically, the Iranian silk was imported from Shirvan, Mazandaran and Gilan.<sup>303</sup> Russians merchants were attempting to redirect the flow of raw silk to the Caspian Sea, whereas the Portuguese, French and Dutch wanted to use the southern trade routes. For the Ottoman Empire, the classical routes, via Erzurum to Trabzon, and from there to Istanbul, or from Erzurum to Amasya and from there to Bursa was preferable.<sup>304</sup> In the eighteenth century, the Ottoman state attempted to create a new trade route via Izmir, in order to direct the raw silk to Ottoman customs. This conscious policy apparently worked, at least in the first 40 years of the eighteenth century.<sup>305</sup> The Ottoman state was endeavoring to steer the route of raw silk to Istanbul and Izmir, both for production and trade from Izmir. The wars on the Eastern Frontier negatively affected the silk trade, but in Erzurum the custom revenues from the silk trade were still yielding important sums. In the heyday of the wars, in 1724, the

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<sup>301</sup> Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 245-247.

<sup>302</sup> M. Bazin and C. Bromberger “Abrīšam” *EIr*, Online, 2015.

<sup>303</sup> Halil İnalçık, “Harir”, *EI2*, Online, 2015.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Necmi Ülker, “XVII. ve XVIII Yüzyıllar İpek Ticaretinde İzmir’in Rolü ve Önemi,” in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu’na Armağan* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fak. Basımevi, 1991).



yearly income had dropped to 10,000 *kr*. But the next year the revenue was 23,000 *kr*.<sup>306</sup>

All in all, considering the substantial investment the Ottomans had made in a large scale silk production workshop and the attempts to steer the silk trade to the Ottoman territories and collect customs from local and foreign merchants, it does not seem accidental at all that the Ottoman armies were conquering the cities and towns where the raw material of silk came from. Trade was also an important consideration behind the Ottoman war efforts in Iran.

#### 4.3.2 Administering Iran

After discussing the Ottoman motivations behind their expansion into Iran, we can now address the administrative system that they tried to introduce to the newly conquered territories. This administrative system was also informed by the broader trends in Ottoman provincial administration in this period. An important characteristic of the period was the distribution of power among a wider range of actors in the Empire and the rise of new provincial elites with significant local *and* imperial connections.<sup>307</sup> The new relationship between the center and the provinces was facilitated by the economic expansion during this period and tended to be profitable for both sides, because the provincial elites were farming the revenues of

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<sup>306</sup> Neşe Erim, “1720-1790 Arasında Osmanlı İnan Ticareti” (V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal İktisat Tarihi Kongresi, Ankara: Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, 1989), 572.

<sup>307</sup> Karl Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus 1708-1758* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). (See Introduction and the first Chapter) & Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). & Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul 1540-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

the state, and in return, the state was facilitating the management of army mobilization and cash flow.<sup>308</sup>

The state also appointed high-level bureaucrat-soldiers to administer far-flung provinces in Iran. Nevertheless, there are some noteworthy nuances about these campaigns. During the wars after the Partition Treaty of 1724, the governors of the newly conquered places were being appointed as governor-general (*beylerbeyi, vali*) of newly conquered provinces (*eyâlet*). These governors were bureaucrats or commanders appointed from Istanbul, not members of local notable families.<sup>309</sup> Many pashas involved in these wars had a ‘base’ province under their control, usually in Anatolia, Syria or Iraq. These pashas had a considerable amount of revenue from these provinces; as long as they channeled part of their revenues and fulfilled their military responsibilities to the satisfaction of the central administration, new places would be added (*zamime*) to their domains. They were utilizing their household troops (*kapı halkı*) in all these expeditions.<sup>310</sup> The central administration was constantly ordering the pashas to bring the household armies to the front.<sup>311</sup> These troops did not constitute an additional fiscal burden on the central administration, but were rather supported by the revenues of at least two vast provinces.

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<sup>308</sup> Dina Rizk Khoury, “The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Suraiya Faroqhi ed., vol. 3, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135, 136-7, 140.

<sup>309</sup> The eighteenth century history of the Ottoman Empire is preferred to be denoted as ‘Age of Ayans’ by many historians, starting from Bruce Masters, “Age of Ayans,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The great pasha households in the provinces according to this perspective is derived from the appointed pashas from the center. The word *ayan* is not a very well defined term, in some occasions this refers to the pashas and their larger families in the second and third generations, in some occasions the term refers to the local great families. Around the empire, there are numerous examples of the both kind of *ayan* in the eighteenth century.

<sup>310</sup> Mehmet İpşirli, “Kapı Halkı” *DİA*, Online, 2015.

<sup>311</sup> Genç, *Lâle Devrinde Savaş*, 155.

In this context, we can argue that the Ottoman central administration was trying to implement a decentralized mode of government that was developed specifically to facilitate Ottoman expansion in this geography. The pashas in charge of conquest were being rewarded with the revenues of the provinces; however, these revenues were not guaranteed. There were many occasions where the central government dismissed and replaced a powerful pasha with another one. For example, in 1725 Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha (Hekimbaşı Nuh Efendizâde Ali Pasha) was dismissed from the commandership of Tabriz and sent to Shahrizor, a backwater compared to Tabriz. The reason for this change was that Ali Pasha and his officers were over-taxing the population.<sup>312</sup>

Starting from the late seventeenth century, the provincial governors began to gain new meanings in practice. Their responsibilities were increasing in line with the rewards and power they received from the central authority.<sup>313</sup> During the Iranian Wars, the control of the pashas, their appointments and dismissals were based upon this mentality: they were powerful and rich but responsible to the center.<sup>314</sup> The system worked relatively well during these first years of the wars. Çelebizâde Âsım vividly describes how the central administration controlled the pashas on the battlefield. With an order in October 1727, the governor of Adana, İbrahim Pasha, who had fought in Tabriz, was appointed as governor of Karaman. The governor of Karaman, Silahdar Mehmed Pasha, was appointed governor of Sivas, providing that he would protect Nahavand with his troops. The *mutasarrıf* of Karahisar-ı Şarki

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<sup>312</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1598.

<sup>313</sup> For a classic depiction of this development see Karl Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus 1708-1758* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), especially the first chapter of the book.

<sup>314</sup> For a recent evaluation of the eighteenth century provincial administration of the Ottoman Empire see Mert Can Erdoğan, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Kriz ve Dönüşüm: XVIII. Yüzyıl'ın İlk Yarısında Şam Bağdat ve Musul Eyâletleri," vol. 1 (Uluslararası Ortadoğu Sempozyumu, Kırıkkale, 2014).

(today a part of modern Giresun), Ömer Pasha, was appointed governor of Adana and the *mutasarrıf* of Sivas, Hamîszâde Bekir Pasha, was appointed to Karahisar-ı Şarki and to Kırşehir at the same time, on the condition that they would join the Hamadan army of Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad.<sup>315</sup>

Bruce Masters proposes a model for the Ottoman provincial administration in the eighteenth century. According to this model, there are three concentric zones radiating out from Istanbul. In the core, there was direct rule, in the second zone, there were central governors, and in the last zone, the administrators were rarely from the center. Rather they were being appointed from among the local tribes, especially in the Arab world.<sup>316</sup> The administrative model of Iran can be seen in such a model. In the model I propose, the Ottoman central administration had focused on controlling directly some critical centers in the east. These were primarily Erzurum, Van, Diyarbakir, Mosul and Baghdad. These five centers would constitute a virtual center for the central administration of Istanbul. Radiating from these five centers, an expansion in Iran was targeted. The hardest part of this project was to sustain the loyalty of the pashas in charge. In order to sustain the project, these pashas were appointed as tax-farmer governors to Trabzon, Çankırı, Raqqah, and Aleppo, i.e. many centers in the first radius according to the Masters' model. What is more, loyalty and victory were always rewarded generously. As Çelebizâde Âsım narrates

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<sup>315</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1563: “Mâh-ı mezbûrun evâsıtında Karaman eyâleti Adana Vâlîsi İbrahim Paşa'ya ve Sivas eyâleti sâbıkâ Karaman vâlîsi olup Hemedan muhâfızı olan Vezîr Silahdâr Mehmed Paşa'ya Nihâvend taraflarının muhâfazası şartıyla bâ-hatt-ı hümayûn tevcîh ü ihsân ve Adana eyâleti ile bâ-hatt-ı hümayûn Sultâniye ve Zencan ve Ebher ve Bürucird taraflarının muhâfazası şartıyla sâbıkâ Karahisar-ı şarkî Mutasarrıfı Ömer Paşa ve Karahisar-ı Şarkî ve Kırşehri sancaklarıyla sâbıkâ Sivas Mutasarrıfı Hamîszâde Bekir Paşa Hemedan Seraskerinin hizmetinde bulunmak şartıyla refi'ü'l unvân kılındı.”

<sup>316</sup> Bruce Masters, “Semi-Autonomous Forces in the Arab Provinces,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 186.

the preparations for a war, he expresses clearly that giving additional tax-farming provinces to the combatant pashas was an essential part of the preparation.<sup>317</sup>

The central administration was dependent on these powerful pashas for administration, taxation and security. The relationship between center and the governor of the province was a well-balanced one: the local governor had responsibilities and rewards. The central administration was seeking a reliable, credible, and competent authority in the remote areas of Iran. Thus, in order to create a sustainable system, the central administration allowed the transfer of the duty from pashas to their direct heirs. For example, as the governor of Tbilisi, Recep Pasha died in late 1726 and his son Ahmed Pasha was appointed in his father's place.<sup>318</sup> The replacement of Eyyubi Hasan Pasha by his son Ahmed Pasha is another example.

The central administration of Istanbul was assigning not only newly acquired provinces as 'salary' for the pashas. The *mutasarrıf* of Adana Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha was promoted as the governor of Aleppo in November 1724, for example, in return for accepting commandership on the Eastern front (*Şark Seferi*).<sup>319</sup> In later stages, in 1725 and 1727, after the discharge of Abdullah Pasha, he was promoted to governorship of Tabriz. Another example is the *mutasarrıf* of Niğde, who was promoted to the rank of vizier and Anatolian *beylerbeyi* and was later appointed as *mutasarrıf* of Adana in return for his commandership at the Eastern Frontier.<sup>320</sup>

These examples and many more in the archival records indicate that the central

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<sup>317</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1564: "...kudreti müte'ayyin ü melhûz olan vüzerâ ve beylerbeyilerin ba'zısına müntefe'un-bihâ eyâletler tevcîh ve kimisi mutasarrıf oldukları mansıblara münâsib sancaklar ilhâkıyla terfîh olunduktan sonra..."

<sup>318</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 164. İvecan, "Osmanlı Hâkimiyetine Revan", 64 and Çelebizâde Âsım, 1518.

<sup>319</sup> Şeyhi Mehmed Efendi, *Eş-Şekaiku'n-Nu'maniyye ve Zeyilleri : Vekayü'l-Fudala*, 715.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

administration was actively controlling the administration of the frontier and pashas in charge by bestowing on them the provincial incomes of various regions.

It should be underlined that the Ottomans sought ways to make their presence in Iran as permanent as possible. The distance from Istanbul and the mountainous terrain provided serious obstacles to sustaining direct rule on the Eastern Frontier. However, the effective control of the commanders and governors through assignment of profitable governorships was a suitable scheme. In this context, making comparisons to the sixteenth-century Ottoman operations in Caucasia and in Western Iran is illuminating. Whereas in the sixteenth-century wars the primary goal for the Ottoman was creating great buffer zones, in the eighteenth century, the borders were much stricter and the military moves for expansion were more systematic in nature. For example, in 1578 the Ottoman central administration did not control the Kurdish tribal forces either directly or indirectly, even if many of them were on the side of the Ottomans. On the other hand, in the eighteenth century, there were many tribes operating directly with the Ottomans, but still with many inconveniences. From a strategic perspective, the late sixteenth-century wars with Iran were not aimed to expand permanently but to expand the buffer zones and contain the Safavid Empire further east. The military and administrative capabilities of the sixteenth century enabled this kind of strategic goal. In the eighteenth century, a systematic and permanent expansion was desired.

The memory of the long and ineffective wars in Caucasia during the reign of Murad IV until 1639 was well known. Murad IV had conquered Yerevan after long and harsh battles, but as the Sultan and his army were on the way back, the city was

lost again.<sup>321</sup> The tremendous amounts of investment for the central army had vanished in a few weeks. After this period, the Ottoman administration had experienced a profound administrative transformation through the age of Köprülü and the long Austrian wars at the end of the seventeenth century. Eighteenth-century attempts to create a new administrative model in the provinces and attempts to use it for expansionism was the result of a long crisis period of the seventeenth century.

In the light of these considerations, we can summarize the administrative apparatus of the Ottoman Empire in the Eastern Frontier of the eighteenth century in these words: The Ottoman central administration had learned to use two administrative tools: employing the local armies of powerful governors and rendering the taxable assets as payment in return for these local/localized armies. By means of these tools, the Ottoman state was able to pursue long-term profitable expansionist policies.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter depicted the expansionist movements of the Ottoman Empire in the Eastern Front in the wake of the Partition Treaty in 1724. The main argument was that the Ottoman Empire had practiced a military expansionism on the Safavid territories in the context of a ‘grand strategy’ rather sporadic. The expansion was organized in that manner, to establish the necessary footholds and to put in place a sustainable order as soon as possible. The changing administrative nature of the eighteenth century was present in the methodology and the mentality of the wars.

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<sup>321</sup> For a recent study concentrating on the military operations and diplomatic relations with the Safavid Iran in the seventeenth century see Özer Küpeli, *Osmanlı Safevi Münasebetleri* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2014).

The pasha households and the governors of many eastern provinces were successfully directed to the campaigns. After the depiction of the material bases of this expansionist politics of the Ottoman Empire, this chapter attempted to analyze first the motivations then the methodology and scope of the expansionist policies of the Empire. As argued in the second and third chapters of this thesis, the Ottoman policies under the control of İbrahim Pasha were proactive and worked in a systematic way. The aggressive military expansionism presented in this chapter can be considered to be in line with the early eighteenth-century Ottoman imperial being — maybe commented as an attempt to be a ‘great power’ in the more globalized world. The next and final chapter of this thesis will focus on another aspect of this imperial being: the uses of the caliphate as an imperial tool against a very new kind of enemy, the Sunni Afghans.



## CHAPTER 5

### OTTOMAN-AFGHAN RELATIONS (1726-1729)

#### 5.1 Introduction

Ottoman diplomatic and military activity was at its peak in early 1726. Russia had lost her active power on the battlefield, Tahmasb had fled further east with his forces and the fresh Afghan administration under Ashraf Khan had lost its momentum because of the shortage in soldier supply from Kandahar.<sup>322</sup> The complex structure of the Ottoman local administration had been applied successfully in the last three years in Caucasia and western Iran. Control was sustained in Tbilisi, Yerevan, Tabriz, and Kermanshah; and the Ottoman armies were heading towards Ganja and Ardabil, beyond the borders established by the 1724 Partition Treaty. The three-year aggressive and expansionist policies seemed to work. The story, however, did not end here. As it turned out, this was just a period of quiet before the storm broke out due to developments on the Afghan side.

This chapter covers Ottoman-Afghan relations from the first attempt of Ashraf Khan to declare himself as a sovereign Sunni caliph in Iran until the establishment of the Hamadan Peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Afghan administration of Isfahan in 1727. Afghan and Ottoman armies clashed one time in 1726 and after that clash the political conditions in Iran began to change drastically. Because Ashraf Khan was losing his power, the Ottomans became predisposed to make an alliance with the Afghans. In the first part of the chapter, I will explain the

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<sup>322</sup> Because the rule in Kandahar was at the hand of the brother of Mahmud Khan: Krusiński, *The History*, 184.

ideological confrontation between the Ottomans and Afghans. The next two parts shall cover the Anjudan Battle in October 1726 and the Hamadan Peace in 1727.

On 26 April 1725, Ashraf Khan had replaced his uncle at the age of 26 or 27. To emphasize his ambition to rule in all Iran, the young ruler struck coins in honor of his enthronement in the name of the Iranian cities of Tabriz, Shamakhi, Mashad and Resht, although these cities were not under the control of the Afghan administration in Isfahan.<sup>323</sup> Nevertheless, ambition was not enough to maintain power. The human pool of the Afghans had been shrinking day by day since the defeat at Qazvin in 1723. After this defeat, there were only about 15,000 Afghan soldiers remaining in Isfahan.<sup>324</sup> As his relations with Kandahar were not good, Ashraf sought another source for his army, which was supposed to confront the massive armies of the Russian, Safavids and the Ottomans. To this end, he attempted to conciliate the Iranian population under his control. First of all, Ashraf Khan confiscated the possessions of the senior administrators of Mahmud Khan. Only the confiscated property of Amanullah Khan, the second man after Mahmud Khan, was 300,000 tomans.<sup>325</sup> Amanullah Khan had become a detested figure for Iranians because of his bloody expeditions and heavy taxation.

The second attempt of Ashraf Khan to consolidate his rule over the Iranian population and to increase his human capital was to strengthen his relationship with the remnants of the Safavid dynasty. The humiliation of the Safavids by Mahmud Khan had had a negative impact in Isfahan and destroyed any possible positive

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<sup>323</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 274.

<sup>324</sup> P. Molesworth Sykes, *A History of Persia* v.2 (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1930), 323-324.

<sup>325</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 236. Ashraf Khan almost totally changes his administrative board. The list of names is given by the Dutch commercial representative in Isfahan.

expectation about the Afghan rulers. A short while after the death or murder of Mahmud Khan, he had ordered to kill 39 members of the Safavid family in one night.<sup>326</sup> This tragic event had further tarnished the already bad reputation of the Afghans among the Shiite population of Isfahan. The permanency of Afghan rule was under threat. To rectify the situation, Ashraf Khan contacted Shah Husayn, who was then a prisoner in Isfahan. In the first contact, Ashraf Khan offered to return his throne; Shah Husayn was smart enough to reject this offer. Upon this, Ashraf Khan was content to marry one of the daughters of Shah Husayn.<sup>327</sup> Shah Husayn was pacified, and Ashraf hoped to gain some legitimacy through this royal marriage.

In December 1725, Ashraf Khan had gained enough self-confidence to attempt eliminating his only possible rival for the Iranian throne: Tahmasb. Ashraf's plan was to entrap Tahmasb before he gained any power. Two years prior, when he was still in Kandahar, Ashraf had contacted Tahmasb and proposed to help him recover the Safavid throne.<sup>328</sup> This plan had not worked because of the miserable state that Tahmasb was in. After the death of Mahmud Khan, Ashraf immediately sent an envoy to Tahmasb to meet around Tehran. Tahmasb was alerted to Ashraf's ruse and managed to escape at the last moment. Two months later, in December

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<sup>326</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Ali Hazin, a contemporary traveler and poet narrates this story in autobiography in brief: "After two years' possession of sovereign power, which accident had placed in his hands, the worthless Mahmud gave orders for the death of the Safavi princes, who were his prisoners; and nine-and-thirty innocent *seyyids*, some of whom were adults and, others of whom were still children, were barbarously slaughtered. It was wonderful that on the same night a change took over him, and he became deranged. He began to gnaw his own hands and ate his own excrements. See Francis Cunningham Belfour and Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, trans., *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin*, vol. 1 (London: For the Oriental translation fund, 1830), 139.

<sup>327</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 277.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

1725, there was a battle between Tahmasb and Ashraf, where Tahmasb's army was defeated and forced to flee to Mazandaran under Russian control.<sup>329</sup>

Tahmasb was powerless and far from Isfahan, but he still had the support of Russia on paper. Moreover, the Afghans knew that their rule was not popular in and around Qazvin, Qum and Tehran. The anti-Afghan rebellion in Qazvin in late 1723 had proven this. The temporary disappearance of Tahmasb for a while would be tricky for Ashraf Khan, especially since he could not boost his military and administrative power.

It is possible that by 1726 Ashraf had learned about the terms of the 1724 Partition Treaty and was aware that the Ottoman Empire was not a likely ally for the Afghans. Since the conclusion of this treaty there had been no clashes between the Ottomans and Afghans. However, with the fall of Hamadan to Ahmed Pasha in 1725, the situation changed dramatically. The Ottoman armies were now close to the cities under Afghan control. Under these pressing conditions, the best choice for Ashraf Khan was to improve his power and control in Iran.

## 5.2 Ottoman-Afghan diplomacy

Diplomacy between the Afghan administration of Isfahan and the Ottoman Empire started with a controversy of considerable ideological import. The Afghan ruler of Isfahan demanded to be recognized as the sovereign as well as the Sunni caliph/imam<sup>330</sup> in the 'lands of Iran' (*Memâlik-i İran*) just as the Ottoman Sultan was the caliph/imam in his domains. We learn of the ensuing debates from a *münşeât*

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 278-81.

<sup>330</sup> Imam, caliph and amir al-mu'minin are fully synonymous, see Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Edinburgh, 2004), 17-18.

compilation, which brings together the correspondence exchanged between the Afghans and the Ottomans between 1726 and 1729.<sup>331</sup> This *münşeât* compilation, of which at least five manuscript copies exist, differs from the usual brand of Ottoman epistolary compilations in that it is devoted exclusively to correspondence that took place with the Afghans in the course of three years instead of comprising letters of diverse personages brought together for their stylistic qualities.<sup>332</sup> Moreover, in four of the five manuscript copies of this compilation, Turkish translations are provided for all the Arabic and Persian letters. On the basis of all these clues it seems safe to conclude that we are dealing with a compilation that was put together for the use of Ottoman statesmen upon the orders of a high-ranking statesman, possibly the grand vizier. Only the T.Y. 2711 manuscript is dated and it is 1736.

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<sup>331</sup> I have identified the following copies of the epistolary collection: 1) Istanbul University Rare Books Library, T.Y. 2711; 2) Istanbul University Rare Books Library, T.Y. 9582, 3) Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi, 3353 (Hereafter E.E 3353); 4) Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Revan 1941 and 5) İ.B.B. Atatürk Library, Muallim Cevdet, 038. Of these five manuscripts Yerevan 1941 was produced probably for the Sultan or Vizier to judge by the high quality of its book binding, paper and calligraphy and by its location in the Topkapı Palace collection. Münir Aktepe used this manuscript in his article “Vak’a-Nüvis Râşid Mehmed Efendi’nin Eşref Şah Nezdindeki Elçiliği ve Buna Tekaddüm Eden Siyasî Muhabereleler,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 13 (1955): 155–78. In this study, I rely mainly on E.E. 3353, titled *Devlet-i Aliye ile Eşref Han Beynin Tevarid Eden Namerler* (The correspondence between the Sublime Porte and Ashraf Khan). This manuscript is identical with Revan 1941 in its contents, but is easier to read. T.Y. 2711 in the İstanbul University Rare Books Library includes in addition to the Ottoman-Afghan correspondence two treatises dealing with the Karlowitz, and Passarowitz treaties, 1718. T.Y. 9582 in the same library is substantially shorter and does not contain the Turkish translation of the Persian and Arabic letters. Finally, M.C. 038 has the title *Muhaberat-ı Resmîye* (Official correspondence) and is also similar to Revan 1941 in its formal qualities.

In addition to these five manuscripts, some of the letters have also been individually recorded elsewhere. For example, the first Arabic letter sent to the Afghan ulama can be found in Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya, 0059-5; and or the text of the concluded peace in late 1727 can be found in BOA, *NH.7*, 71-98. One copy in the Istanbul University (Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi) Rare Collection has only the Turkish letters.

<sup>332</sup> See especially: Bekir Kütükoğlu, “Münşeât Mecmualarının Osmanlı Diplomatiği Bakımından Ehemmiyeti,” in *Vekayi’nüvis, Makaleler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü, 1994), 217-224. For a general description of the genre see Mustafa Uzun, “Münşeât”, *DİA*, Online, 2015.

### 5.2.1 The Afghan envoy

A few months after the enthronement of Ashraf, the Afghan envoy arrived Istanbul on 20 January 1726. The French and Russian envoys in Istanbul were informed about this Afghan diplomatic mission, because according to the Partition Treaty in force, the Ottomans were not supposed to support the Afghans or recognize them officially as a government. İbrahim Pasha, however, wanted to get in contact with the Afghan envoy because he wanted to benefit from the positive military and political conjuncture. He was hoping that the Afghan ruler would pledge allegiance to the Ottoman sultan because of the miserable condition in which the Afghans found themselves in Iran.<sup>333</sup> Such an allegiance would mean indirect control of Isfahan by the Ottomans.<sup>334</sup> On 9 February, the Afghan envoy was welcomed by İbrahim Pasha.<sup>335</sup> But according to the English representative Stanyan, the Afghan envoy disappointed the Ottomans.<sup>336</sup>

Hacı Abdulaziz was the head of the Afghan envoy. We do not know much about this figure. In the reports of the Dutch commercial representative in Isfahan his name is given as “Hadje Hadjes”. This name was probably a misrepresentation of ‘Hacı-ı Hacıyan’, which was the title given to the head of the yearly Afghan pilgrimage caravans to Mecca. The letter written by Ashraf Khan’s vizier, Zela Khan, introduced the envoys to İbrahim Pasha. In the letter, Abdulaziz is referred to

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<sup>333</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 284.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>335</sup> Hanway, *Revolutions*, 236.

<sup>336</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 284.

as one a scholars of Mecca, Haji Abdulaziz.<sup>337</sup> Ashraf Khan must have chosen this man as an envoy to Istanbul in order to highlight his Sunni credentials. Possibly he also thought that Abdulaziz's stature as a member of the ulama would spare him from being the target of Ottoman wrath on account of the content of the letters. A scholar from Mecca would also have had to be important to connect with the Ottoman ulama of Istanbul, who may have opposed confrontation with a Sunni power. The second envoy was a figure of the Afghan ulama, Molla [Abdur-] Rahim, who would increase the prestige of the Afghan mission in Istanbul.<sup>338</sup> The third important figure in the mission was one of the Armenian merchants of Julfa, Emmanuel from the Shariman family.<sup>339</sup>

For the Ottoman government, accepting this mission was dangerous for two reasons. First of all, official contact with the Afghans would harm the relations with Russia and France. Secondly and more importantly, a diplomatic confrontation with the Afghans, positive or negative, would hamper Ottoman advancements in Iran. Because of these factors, the Afghan caravan that reached Üsküdar on 20 January 1726 was able to pass the Bosphorus on 9 February.

The journey from Isfahan to Istanbul lasted five months. Their first stop was Hamadan, where they met with Sarı Mustafa Pasha. Mustafa Pasha directed the caravan to Ahmed Pasha in Khorramabad. There, the envoy demanded from Ahmed Pasha the repetition of the treaty 'between Shah Abbas and the Ottoman Empire'.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> E.E. 3353, 65a, 65b.

<sup>338</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 4/1, 183.

<sup>339</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 244.

<sup>340</sup> This was probably the border according to 1639 Qasr-ı Şirin (Zuhab) Treaty: See Remzi Kılıç, *XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İnan Siyası Antlaşmaları*, Istanbul 2001, s. 175-195

Ahmed Pasha did not give any official response and directed them to Istanbul.<sup>341</sup>

After hearing the news from Ahmed Pasha, the motivation to meet with the mission for the Ottomans was weakened. The English ambassador in Istanbul, Stanyan, reports that the government assigned a small gondola for the mission from Üsküdar to the Sublime Porte, after making them wait for two weeks.<sup>342</sup>

Abdulaziz's mission revived the nightmares of the Ottoman government. He had brought three letters. One letter was from Ashraf Khan to Sultan Ahmet III; the second was from the Afghan vizier, *itimaduddevle*, Zela Khan, to İbrahim Pasha. These two letters were written in Persian. The third letter was written in Arabic and it was addressed to the Ottoman ulama in Istanbul. What is common to all these letters was the challenge to the Ottoman suzerainty on the Iranian territories. In the *münşeat* compilation I consulted, the Turkish translations of the first two letters were abbreviated by eliminating the long titles following the name of the Afghan ruler of Isfahan.<sup>343</sup> Possibly, the Ottomans had eliminated these titles because they considered it unacceptable for the Afghans to lay claim to those Iranian cities and regions that were currently under the rule of the Ottomans. In his letter Ashraf Khan related in detail the pedigrees of his family, their prolonged confrontation with the Safavids and the tyranny of the Safavids against the Sunnis of Iran.<sup>344</sup> Even though this letter was addressed to Ahmet III, from the short explanation in the beginning of

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<sup>341</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 244.

<sup>342</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 283.

<sup>343</sup> E.E. 3353, 62B: “*tûl u derâz-ı tâbirat ve tafsilât hâvidir lâkin mâhii budur*”

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.* , 52B-58A *cf.* M.C. 038, 46A-52B.



the Turkish translation we understand that it was delivered to the Grand Vizier Damat İbrahim Pasha.<sup>345</sup>

The letter of Ashraf Khan to Ahmed III has three main points. First he emphasizes the Sunni credentials of the Afghan rulers of Isfahan.<sup>346</sup> Proudly, he narrates how they ended the oppressive rule of the Safavids and criticizes the Sunni rulers of the past the Ottomans for having neglected to eliminate the heretical Safavids and for having preferred peace over conflict.<sup>347</sup> He argues that the time has come for eliminating this Safavid ‘trouble’ by the hand of the Afghan warriors.<sup>348</sup> Secondly, he claims that the Afghans were assisted by God to eradicate the tyranny of the Safavids. The next and last point in the letter is about the last powerful son of Shah Husayn, Tahmasb. Ashraf Khan indirectly criticizes the Ottoman operations in the Caucasus. He points out that Tahmasb was the last Safavid ‘usurper’ and after the conquest of Isfahan by the Afghans he found a way to Caucasia and Western Iran. There, in Georgia, Loristan, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan Shirvan and Ganja, Tahmasb was able to collect many soldiers and flee to Tehran.<sup>349</sup> All the places named in this connection had been under Ottoman control for at least two years. In other words, Ashraf Khan accuses the Ottomans of indirectly supporting Tahmasb against the Afghans. After that, Ashraf explains in detail how he will defeat Tahmasb in the near future, having assigned his best men to kill him as soon as possible. Ashraf Khan was

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<sup>345</sup> E.E. 3353, 52B.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 62A: “*işâât-ı ahkâm-ı sünnet*”.

<sup>347</sup> E.E. 3353, 63A. “*nifâkı vifâka tercih*”.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., “...eğerçi bundan evvel mürevvicân-ı din bu ğasıbların elinden hukûk-ı saltanatı istirdâd husûsunda ihmâl eylediler Lâkin ‘el-‘umûru mürhinetun bi-evkatuhâ’ muktezâsınca vaktına mevkûf imiş...”

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.,: “*Gürcistân ve Lûristân ve Kürdistân ve Arabistân ve bütün vilâyet-i Azerbaycân ve Şirvân ve Gence ve Karabağ ülkelerinden asâkir-i vâfire ile belde-i Tahran'a gelub*”

not unfair about his claim that the Ottomans were supporting Tahmasb. A few months before the arrival of the Afghan envoy to Istanbul, Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, who had replaced Abdullah Pasha in Tabriz, had made a great expedition against pro-Afghan Shah Quli Khan, the former Safavid governor of Maragha. Shah Quli Khan went over to the side of Ashraf Khan and ruined the power of Tahmasb in the narrow region between Qazvin and Zanzan in 1724. However, the Ottoman armies under Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha had ruined Shah Quli Khan's power.<sup>350</sup>

At the end of the letter Ashraf comes to the most important point. He says that Ahmed Pasha has seized Hamadan and its vicinity. He says in a degrading tone, "if this Ahmed Pasha is acting under Ottoman command, then his move is *probably* to help the Afghans to eradicate Safavid rule in these regions". However, according to Ashraf Khan, "Afghans do not need such a help from the Ottomans, because they could conquer Isfahan without any favor from the Ottomans, relying on their own power and the grace of God. If the Ottoman government is not controlling Ahmed Pasha, in this case, Afghans could easily destroy Ahmed Pasha and control Hamadan."<sup>351</sup>

Even though Ashraf Khan does not make an explicit case for the legitimacy of Afghan power in his letter, the implicit assumption therein would seem to be that Afghan rule in Iran was legitimate because the Afghans had won a decisive victory against the heretical Safavids, and could claim the latter's territories as their possession. The lands acquired by the Ottomans in the last three years, by contrast, were usurpation, and illegitimate. What Ashraf demanded plainly was to restore the Ottoman-Safavid border to its pre-1722 state.

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<sup>350</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 287.

<sup>351</sup> E.E. 3353, 63A. "Eğer Paşa-yı müşârü'n-ileyhin gelmesi iki hem-mezhebin mübâyenet ve mûhâlefetleri irâdesile ise ki fi'l-hakika meşîyyet-i vehhâb-ı bi-minnet ile muarızâdır"

The second letter was written by Zela Khan<sup>352</sup>, the *itimadüddeve* of Ashraf Khan. Zela Khan was the second man after Ashraf in the Afghan administration. He had been very close to Ashraf since the flight from Qazvin to Kandahar in 1723 and during the coup against Mahmud Khan.<sup>353</sup> After a relatively long introduction in which Zela Khan praises Ashraf Khan and professes loyalty to him, he stresses two points. First, the Afghans are legitimate rulers of Iran, having conquered the places that are now in their hands in the name of God. Second, they are very powerful and can win many more victories, because God is on their side. Zela Khan's letter has a most embellished and elaborate language both in the Persian original and in the Turkish translation. The letters are strewn with references to the ancient rulers of Iran, Ardeshir, Darius and Alexander, as well as to biblical prophets like Solomon. The letter has many references from the Quran, too.<sup>354</sup> Zela Khan's letter can be thought as a 'diplomatic protocol' where instead of concrete issues, the glory of the ruler and the legitimization of his power are in the foreground.

These two letters from Ashraf Khan and Zela Khan were answered by İbrahim Pasha in a single letter. The original was written in Turkish and the *Münşeat Mecmuası* does not include its Persian translation. The letter is brief, and the claims of Ashraf Khan or Zela Khan are not appraised in detail. The tone of the letter is cold and definite. The only point made is that the claims of Ashraf Khan and Zela Khan

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<sup>352</sup> In some sources, this name is spelled as *Zula*, in other as *Zela*. According to the transliteration of Ottoman Turkish, I prefer *Zela*. (لا ز). However in some other Ottoman sources the name is spelled as لا ز. See *Uzunçarşılı*, vol. 4/1, 183, fn.4.

<sup>353</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 196, 236-7, 240.

<sup>354</sup> Quran, 48:1: "Lo! We have given thee (O Muhammad) a signal victory." Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (Islamic Call Society, 1973), <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/pick>.

See also: E.E. 3353, 64a, 64b, 65a.

about the eradication of the heretic Safavids outside of Iran are not ‘reasonable and plausible’ and are therefore unacceptable. İbrahim Pasha also refers to the letter of the Ottoman ulama. He says that after consulting with the statesmen and ulama, a decision was reached and a letter was written to be conveyed by Abdulaziz.<sup>355</sup> He adds that the governor of Baghdad was also ordered to act in accordance with the decision as soon as possible. In this manner, the letter of İbrahim provides an introduction to the detailed letter of the Ottoman ulama, but alludes, in a roundabout manner, to the Ottoman decision to wage war against the Afghans.<sup>356</sup>

### 5.2.2 Correspondence of Ulama

The correspondence between the Afghan and Ottoman ulama constitutes a fascinating chapter in the history of Ottoman diplomatic history. The Ottoman Empire was attempting to control a vast territory and keep abreast of the shifts in power in the even greater geography around it. In this context, the letter of the Afghan ulama was an unexpected ideological challenge to Ottoman authority.

The letters exchanged between the Ottoman and Afghan ulama are shorter than the letters exchanged between Ashraf Khan Zela Khan and İbrahim Pasha.<sup>357</sup> It is noteworthy that the Arabic version of the Afghan ulama’s letter has a long list of signatures at the end. Nineteen high ulama Afghans had signed on the letter. Some of

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<sup>355</sup> E.E. 3353, 3b: “*Molla Abdürrahim ile mashûbûs-selâme dârûs-saltanatîl-kübrâ ve beytil-hilâfetul-uzmaya vâsıl ve berdâşte-i arz ve tebliği olan mekâtib-i [...] makul olmadığından [...] akd-i meclis-i meşveret ve istiftay-ı hükm-i şeriat olundukda kütüb-i mutebere-i şeriye zübür-i mutevere-i mer’iyeden nusûs-ı sahihâ ve nükûl-ı sarihâ ile iftâ alâ vechil-icma [...] fetvâ-ı şerifeyi imzâ buyurmuşlardır.*”

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 2a-3b.

<sup>357</sup> Arabic version, E.E. 3353, 60b-62b, M.C. 55b-57b.

these names may have been known to the Ottoman ulama through various channels, especially the yearly pilgrimage in Mecca. In the Turkish translation of the same text, this section of signatures is not recopied. In the *münşeât* copies I was able to reach, there are no signatures of the Ottoman ulama sent to Isfahan. Still Şemdanizâde notes that 117 high clerics from the Istanbul ulama signed the answer sent to Isfahan.<sup>358</sup>

The answer of the Ottoman ulama is almost twice as long as the Afghan letter. The heading on the Arabic letter informs us that the author of the letter was Selim Efendi. Selim Efendi was an important member of the governing elite of Istanbul. During the grand vizierate of İbrahim Pasha, he was appointed to numerous high offices within the *ilmiye* such as qadi of Galata and Üsküdar and in the end, head of *fetvâ emâneti*.<sup>359</sup>

### 5.2.2.1 The Letter of Afghan Ulama

The Afghan ulama's letter begins with a protest and reproach to Ottoman policies. Iran in the hand of Safavids was a place where the Sunnis had been suppressed and

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<sup>358</sup> Öksüz, "Mür'î't-Tevârîh" 366: "[...] dokuz kadı'asker ve yetmiş bir mevâlî ve on selâtîn şeyhî ve altmışbeş müderris ve iki Anadolu ve iki Rumili kadıları imzâ ve imâd ve Rum Hattât Veli Efendi'nin tahrîr itdiği nâme elçiye virilüp[...]".

<sup>359</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım gives detailed information about him and praises his knowledge and personality. Selim Efendi was famous especially for his proficiency in classical Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence and Ottoman poetry. He had translated one of the founding texts for the genre 'mirror of princes,' the epistle of Tâhir Dhū l-Yamīnain (d. 821) to his son 'Abdallâh, together with the commentary of Damadzâde Ahmed Efendi. C. E. Bosworth, "An Early Arabic Mirror for Princes: Tâhir Dhū L-Yamīnain's Epistle to His Son 'Abdallâh (206/821)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 1970, 25–41. This translation would be very popular among late eighteenth century Ottoman intellectuals and would also be incorporated by the first Ottoman translator of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*, Pirizâde in to his work. Özgür Kavak, "Meşhur Bir Mektubun İzinde: Vezir Tahir B. Hüseyin'in Oğlu Abdullah'a Nasihatleri," *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2, no. 41, pp. 71-73. Selim Efendi was from an artisan family and he himself had worked as an artisan. However, he had studied in the madrasas of Istanbul and begun his career as personal secretary (*mektubcu*) of Feyzullah Efendi (d.1703), from which position he was dismissed during the Edirne Incident in 1703.

murdered, people had been converted to Shiism (*rafaza*) by force, the rightly guided caliphs were cursed publicly, and books of Sunni *ulama* were burned and prohibited.<sup>360</sup> Additionally, the letter narrates briefly how Mahmud Khan defeated the Safavids after 200 years, and without help from any other party. This was also an indirect criticism of Ottoman policy in 1722.<sup>361</sup>

The Afghan *ulama* come to the fundamental purpose of the letter after these remarks. It is stated that after these glorious victories Mahmud Shah died and was replaced by Ashraf Khan. The Sunni *ulama* of Iran, sheikhs, qadis and prominent figures of society agreed upon the leadership of Ashraf, because he fulfilled the conditions of the imamate (*şurût-ul imâmet*)<sup>362</sup> He was fair; he had taken the territories with his own sword; and most importantly, the *ulama* acknowledged him as their true *imâm*. At this point, reference is made to Muhammad b. Ashraf Shams al-Dîn al-Samarkandî (d. 1303)'s *Sharh al-Sahâ'if*.<sup>363</sup> In the letter it is noted only that according to this reputable book “appointing two different *imâms* is licit if the lands are far apart”.<sup>364</sup> The letter exemplifies the application of this judgment for the current issue: since early Islamic times, it was agreed upon that Transoxiana

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<sup>360</sup> E.E 3353, 65b-66a.

<sup>361</sup> E.E. 3353, 66a: The letter emphasizes there was nobody else than God helping them to defeat Safavids: “*nihayet Allah-ı teâla melik-i Afgân'a tevfiik ve inâyet ve illhâm etmekle merhûm Şah Mahmud ... İsfahan'a gelip ... revâfiz yetmiş bin mikdarı bahâdır askeri ile karşı çıkup muharebe olundukda avn-i hak ile revâfiz münhezim...*”

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 61a, 66a.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 66a. About al-Samarkandî: L.B Miller, "al-Samarqandî, Şhams al-Dîn." *EI2*. Brill Online, 2015. Al-Samarqandî was famous with his theology, mathematic, logic, geometry and astronomy. *al-Şahâ'if* was a book written as *kalam* book, containing exegesis of Quran and explanations of various hadiths. See İsmail Yürük, “Şemsüddin Es-Semerqandi ve Belirgin Kelami Görüşleri,” *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (2001): 93–105.

<sup>364</sup> E.E. 3353, 66b: “*muzâm-ı kitâb-ı fihhiyye ve kelâmda bilâd-ı bai'dede taddüd-i imâm câiz olduğu Şerh-ül Sehâ'if'da bilâd ba'id olundukda iki imâm nasb olunmak tecviz olduğu masturdur.*”

(*Maverahünnehr*), Khorasan and India were far from the center of Islamic governments. In this respect, Afghan ulama refer to the concept of seven climes (*heft iqlim*), a geographical compartmentalization of the known world which Muslim geographers had adopted from classical Greek and Persian sources and which had become more Islamized in the tenth century.<sup>365</sup> The Afghan ulama assert that “Isfahan is in the third and Istanbul is in the sixth *iqlim*”, and it is therefore obvious that one *imâm* in one city cannot help and support the other one because of the great distance.<sup>366</sup>

The second point of the Afghan ulama was their demands from the cities that the Ottomans controlled in Western Iran and Caucasus. They argued that, according to Islamic law, whoever conquers a territory from infidels has the right to possess that territory. According to Islamic law, the acquisitions in jihad belong to the warriors and should be shared among them. If one Muslim ruler takes some territories from another Muslim ruler, then this is illegitimate unless the former can take the center of the latter as well.<sup>367</sup> This means that if the Ottomans could not conquer all of Iran,

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<sup>365</sup> A. Miquel, "İklîm." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015. S. Maqbul Ahmad ; F. Taeschner, "Djughrâfiyâ." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015.

For example, according to Ibn Rusta, the third *iqlim* was stretching from Northern China until Kandahar, Shiraz and even Baghdad and until the western coast of Africa. Ibn al-Faḳîh conceptualizes the third *iqlim* as comprising western China and Turkistan, Isfahan and Baghdad, Damascus and Egypt. According to these geographers, Constantinople was in the sixth *iqlim* of the world; the sixth *iqlim* was stretching from western Anatolia till Europe. The tenth-century geographers renounced putting *Iranshahr* in the middle of the world and instead they chose the center as Mecca. See Murat Aġarı, “İslam Coğrafyacılarında Yedi İklim Anlayışı,” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2, no. 47 (2006), 202-3 & 205.

For the development of the medieval geographical understanding about seven climes (*iqlim- kishvar*) see Feray Coşkun, “A Medieval Islamic Cosmography in an Ottoman Context: A Study of Mahmud El-Hatib’s Translation of the *Kharidat Al-’Aja’ib*” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007), 27-29.

<sup>366</sup> E.E. 3353: 66b: “*selef-i sâlifin bunun üzerine mutâbık olub zirâ bizim beldemiz Isfahan ... iklim-i sâlisde ve Konstantiniyye iklim-i sâdisden olmağla gayet ile ba’id vâki’ olub ahad imâmın hükmü ahâra vâsıl olmaz...*”

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 66b.

including Isfahan, they should withdraw immediately from the parts of it that they already controlled. The Afghan ulama were aware that this argument was not powerful. Most probably, they tried to imply that the Ottomans could not reach Isfahan and Kandahar. According to the Afghan ulama, what the Ottomans did was to dismantle the Iranian territories and create trouble.

Nonetheless, the Afghan ulama added a more concrete explanation to their demand from the Ottomans about withdrawal from Iran. They 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.”<sup>368</sup> In an obvious reference to this hadith, the Afghan ulama called the area around Isfahan *harîm* as Prophet Muhammad had done for Medina.<sup>369</sup> The Afghans had this right because they had conquered all these lands without any help.

#### 5.2.2.2 Letter of Selim Efendi

Selim Efendi begins his letter by discrediting the reproach of the Afghans. He explains why the Ottomans could not remove the Safavids from Iran and instead made truces with them. The first explanation is that the Ottoman Empire has enemies on two fronts, and in the past, these enemies often attacked at the same time. The

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<sup>368</sup> Nasiruddin al-Khattab, trans., *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, 7 vols. (Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007), 511.

<sup>369</sup> E.E. 3353, 66a.



Safavids and the Christians enemies “were the same nation” and they attacked simultaneously to harm the Ottomans.<sup>370</sup> This is what induced the Ottomans to seek peace on many occasions, and they were justified in this course of action by the Quranic verse, “And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it”.<sup>371</sup> Selim Efendi argues that this verse is a heavenly granted concession to stop the war for a certain time in order to recharge the power. The specific word used by Selim Efendi in this connection is *muvâda’â*, which literally means ‘to take leave’ but which can be translated into English as ‘truce’ or ‘reconciliation’. He attributes the juridical idea behind the term to the famous Hanafi scholar Muhammad al-Sarakhsî (d.1090).<sup>372</sup> He adds that the right time for the Ottomans finally arrived during the reign of Sultan Ahmed III and the Ottoman armies did not hesitate to attack the Safavids, as demonstrated by the Ottoman operations in the Caucasus.<sup>373</sup>

As for the issue of the caliphate, Selim Efendi gives a twofold answer to the Afghans. He first explains the ‘impossibility’ of the multiplicity of imams (*taaddüd-i imâm*) and then as a second point he discusses the geographical theory proposed in the Afghan letter. In objecting to the existence of multiple *imâms* at the same time Selim quotes the *hadith*: “If allegiance has been sworn to two caliphs, then kill the

<sup>370</sup> E.E. 3353, 67b: “*‘el-küffâru milletu vâhidetun’ mazmununca birbirleriyle ittihâd’*”.

<sup>371</sup> Quran, 8:61: Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (Islamic Call Society, 1973).

<sup>372</sup> Al- Sarakhsî wrote a detailed commentary for the al-Shaybânî (d. 805) *Kitâb al-Siyar al-kabîr* which has become a handbook for the laws of war, international law and public law. The book is mentioned in the letter as *Sharh al-kabîr*. The citation is very brief and not full quotation of a section. Arabic text goes: “ولا بأس في هذه الحالة بموادة المرتدين الذين غلبوا على دارهم ؛ لأنه لا قوة للمسلمين على قتالهم ، فكانت ”موادة خيرا لهم” Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abî Sahl Abū Bakr, al- Sarakhsî, *Sharḥ Al-Siyar Al-Kabîr*, vol. 5, 5 vols. (Shirket ul-Sharkiyye, 1971), 1686.

<sup>373</sup> E.E: 3353, 68a.

second one”.<sup>374</sup> After quoting the hadith with its full chain of authoritative *isnâds*, Selim Efendi argues that if the Muslim community acknowledges two caliphs, only whoever was accepted as caliph first is legitimate, while the latecomer’s claim must be rejected as invalid.<sup>375</sup> Selim Efendi supports his comment with another hadith with the same transmission chain: “Whoever comes to you, when you are united behind one man, seeking to divide you, kill him.”<sup>376</sup> After quoting one more hadith with the same meaning, Selim Efendi turns to the classical *fiqh* literature. His first reference is the Hanafi legist and theologian Abu’l-barakât‘ al-Nasafî (d. 1310)’s *Al-Itimâd fi’l-i’tikâd*<sup>377</sup>. Therein, Nasafî argues, after citing the above-mentioned hadith that acknowledging two caliphs at the same time is deemed acceptable only by heretics such as the Shia (*revâfiz*) and Qarmatians<sup>378</sup>. He also bases his argument on the unacceptability of two caliphs on the fact that only Abu Bakr was elected as caliph after the Prophet, despite the existence of companions who were also highly

<sup>374</sup> al-Khattab, trans., *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, 186-7.

E.E. 3353, 68a: “إِذَا بُويعَ لِخَلِيفَتَيْنِ فَاقْتُلُوا الْآخَرَ مِنْهُمَا”

This hadith was known for the Ottomans from a tragic experience in the near past. In *Tarih-i Naima*, it is argued that, after dethronement of İbrahim I, he was murdered with the authority of this hadith. Naima gives an unknown version of the hadith, but close to the original meaning. For detailed discussion about this usage of the hadith and see Abubekir Yücel, “İki Halifenin Bir Arada Bulunmaması Anlayışı ve Osmanlı Hükümdarı Sultan İbrahim’in Siyaseten Katli,” *Journal of Islamic Research* 12, no. 1 (1999): 40–57.

<sup>375</sup> E.E. 3353, 68a: “yani ehl-i İslâm iki kimesneye bi’ât edip halife nasb ederlerse, evvel bi’ât olunan kimesnenin hilâfeti sahîh olup sonra bi’ât olunan kimesnenin hilâfeti batıldır.”

<sup>376</sup> al-Khattab, trans., *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, vol. 5, 187: E.E. 3353, 68b:

“مَنْ أَتَاكُمْ وَأَمْرُكُمْ جَمِيعًا عَلَى رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَشُقَّ عَصَاكُمْ ، وَيُفَرِّقَ جَمَاعَتَكُمْ فَأَقْتُلُوهُ”

<sup>377</sup> A.J. Heffening, "al-Nasafî." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015

<sup>378</sup> A branch of Shiism who founded a state in eastern Arabia in 899. See W Madelung, "Qarmatî." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015.

esteemed.<sup>379</sup> Another authoritative commentary on these hadiths cited by Selim Efendi is Abu 'l-mu'în al- Nasafî (d.1114). The argument of Abu 'l-Mu'în al-Nasafî is that if it had been permissible to have two caliphs at the same time, then it should also have been permissible to acknowledge ten or one hundred at the same time, which Nasafî obviously considered impermissible. Nasafî adds, however, that there is only one occasion to allow such a situation legally. If there is a great sea (ocean) between the realms of the two caliphs, then it is acceptable.<sup>380</sup> Selim Efendi then reiterates that if someone claims to be the second caliph, he is a rebel *baghî*<sup>381</sup> and must be punished by death.<sup>382</sup>

Selim Efendi also questions the textual basis for the argument that it is legitimate to have two caliphs at the same time if they are separated by a great distance. He points out that the Afghan ulama merely reference but do not fully quote the said sentence from Samarkandî's *Sharh al-Sahâ'if*. He then quotes the said sentence in full. The meaning of the sentence is that if the distance between two *imâms* is so great that one of them *cannot reach the other to help* in an emergency situation.<sup>383</sup> The inability to help each other is the emphasis in the explanation of Selim Efendi, but not the legal authorization to appoint two caliphs at the same time.

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<sup>379</sup> E.E. 3353, 68b.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.; “*meğer her birinin eyâletleri beyninde bahr-i azim hâciz olmağla her biri âhara meded ve mezâhirine kâdir olmaya bu takdirce be'is yokdur.*”

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.; “*bir kimesneye akd-i imâmet olunduktan sonra bir kimesneye dahi bi'at olunsa sâni bağı olup hal'i vâcib olur.*”

<sup>382</sup> *bâghî* is a term of *fiqh* which is usually used for the rebellious and mutinous people or communities. See Ali Şafak, “Bağy”, *DİA Online*, 2015.

<sup>383</sup> E.E. 3353, 69b: “*mektûb-ı mezbûrda bilâd-ı mün'idede cevâz-ı taddûd-i imâm husûsunda Şerh-i Sehâif'dan nakl olunan kelâm noksân üzere nakl olunmuş, Şerh-i Sahâif'in ibâresinde bu veçhe üzeredir: ثم يجوز امامان اذا اتبعد البلاد بحيث لا يصل المدون من ادهم pes imdi ittîbâ'-ı bilâd Şerh-i Sehâif ibâresinde ahad imâmın mudûnu ahara vâsıl olmamak hasebiyle mukayyedir...*”

Hence, the great distance is not sufficient reason to appoint a second caliph. Selim Efendi does not stop at that point and presents more quotations from the Maliki imam of Tunisia, Abū ‘Abdallah Muhammad al- Mâzarî (d. 1141), who argued that it is permissible to appoint two imams at the same time only under one condition, when the territories are far from each other.<sup>384</sup>

Here, Selim Efendi turns to the issue of ‘seven climes’, proposed in the letter of the Afghan ulama. According to Selim Efendi, a simple reasoning invalidates this argument. During the reign of the second rightly guided caliph, ‘Umar b. al- Khattâb, (d. 644), the Islamic State extended from Mecca and Medina to Hamadan and Nahavand. According to the geographical scheme of the Afghan ulama, Mecca was in the first *iqlim* whereas Hamadan is in the third one. Moreover, there were many people who could claim the caliphate in remote areas, but nobody had recommended appointing a second caliph. Furthermore, as a last point of this section, Selim Efendi quickly makes a geographical description of the Ottoman Empire. He says that the Ottoman Sultan now has cities in Fars and Azerbaijan; in this regard it is unreasonable to assert that the centers of the caliphs are remote from each other and the Ottoman Sultan cannot support Isfahan under his protection.<sup>385</sup>

Selim Efendi also refers to Muhyî al-dîn al-Nawawî’s *Sharh Muslim*.<sup>386</sup> In this work, Nawawi comments with reference to the above-mentioned hadith “If allegiance has been sworn to two caliphs, then kill the second one” that appointing

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 70a.

<sup>385</sup> E.E. 3353, 70b: “Sultan ez-zamân ... Ahmed Hazretlerinin hutta-ı eyâletinde olan büldân ile hutta-ı Isfahan beyninde bu mertebe ba’id olmadığı ber-akil bir kimesne Sultan-ı zamanın mudunları bilâd-ı Fars ve Azerbaycan’a vasil olub der ayende bilâd-ı Isfahan’a vasil olmak kabil değildir diye nakz etmek tasavvur olunur mu?”

<sup>386</sup> W. Heffening, "al-Nawawî." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015 & Yaşar Kandemir, “Nevevî” *DİA*, Online, 2015.

two caliphs is not permissible. However, if two caliphs emerge because of great distances, this situation should be provisional. After knowing each other, the two caliphs should determine which one of them is more ancient (*kadîm, mukaddem*).<sup>387</sup> Selim Efendi is quite sure who is ancient and who is *modern* and does not explain further. Selim Efendi implies that if the Afghans are in *ignorance* about the presence of the Ottoman Sultan, then they should recognize the Ottomans and give up their claim.

About the last point of the Afghan ulama, declaring Isfahan as *harîm*, Selim Efendi says that he could not find any reference in the known books of Islamic law and that the given references in the letter make no sense.<sup>388</sup> Selim Efendi then accuses the Afghan ulama of engaging in independent reasoning (*ijtihâd*) and points out that the time of *ijtihâd* has come to an end, and the duty of the Sunni ulama is now only to read and understand the classical sources of the past.<sup>389</sup> Hence, the argument of the Afghan ulama cannot be accepted.

Selim Efendi's last comments are: do not follow your aberrant lord; judge the situation with your own reasoning.<sup>390</sup> This aberrant lord is now declared a *bagî* and should be executed immediately with his supporters.

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<sup>387</sup> E.E., 3353, 70a.: “*vâcib olan budur ki ‘akdler tafahhus olunub her kangısı mukaddem ise imâmetde takrîr ve sonra vâki’ olan... hal’ ... etmek üzere emrolunur.*”

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 70b: Selim Efendi first repeats what he understood from the point of the Afghan ulama, then replies. The reason for that is most probably the equivocal expression of the Afghan letter: “*mektûb-ı mezbûrda [“] bir melik bir mülkden bir mülke intikâl ettikde melik-i evvelin taht-ı tasarrufunda olub iklim-i vâhiddin olan belde ol iklim’in darüssaltanası olan beldeye tabi’dır [.] Melik-i sâni darüssaltanatu zabt ettikde ol bilâdı dahi zabt etmek iktizâ eder [“] deyü zikr olunmuş bu kelama esker-i şer’i-i şerîfde bir müsned...*”

<sup>389</sup> E.E. 3353, 71a.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

### 5.2.3 Ottoman caliphate

To evaluate and to contextualize the correspondence between the Afghan and Ottoman ulama, a brief look at the changing understandings of caliphate in the post-medieval period is necessary. The year 1258 is generally accepted as a turning point for the history of this institution, because the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongol invaders and the reinstated Abbasid caliphs of Cairo never wielded the same level of prestige as previously.

In fact, the very title of “caliph” underwent a certain degree of depreciation with numerous regional rulers using it merely to highlight their power.<sup>391</sup> A new change was introduced to this picture in the sixteenth century when more powerful empires such as the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals replaced smaller polities in a vast stretch of the Islamic world. It was in this context that ideas about the caliphate were also revitalized. Historians, however, are not necessarily of one mind about how the early modern Ottomans understood the caliphate. Some, like Hüseyin Yılmaz, have argued that “the caliphate as universal leadership of the Muslim community, as attested in classical juristic theory, did not even remotely resonate in the political literature of this period [i.e. the sixteenth century].” According to Yılmaz, the sixteenth-century Ottoman understanding of the caliphate was more indebted to Sufi ideas about the ideal ruler as vicegerent of God.<sup>392</sup> Others, like Giancarlo Casale, have argued on the other hand, that even in the sixteenth century

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<sup>391</sup> On the history of the caliphate, see Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 244, Sir Thomas W. Arnold, *The Caliphate* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), 99-106. For a brief summary of the history of “Caliphate” until the eighteenth century and basic bibliographic information see Haim Gerber, “An Early Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Ottoman Caliphate,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013), 119–22.

<sup>392</sup> Hüseyin Yılmaz, “The Sultan and the Sultanate: Envisioning Rulership in the Age of Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520-1566)” (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2005), 177, 182.

the Ottomans occasionally evoked their claim to the “universal caliphate” to build a “soft empire” in far-flung places.<sup>393</sup>

Of course, the Ottomans were not the only powers in the early modern era to use the title of “caliph” in this loose sense. Starting from the early seventeenth century, after Akbar (r. 1556-1605) until Shah ‘Ālam II (d. 1760), Mughal Emperors also used the title of caliph to glorify their power.<sup>394</sup> As Rahman Farooqi explains, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Mughal rulers considered themselves to be the equal of, if not superior to the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>395</sup> This, however, changed after the Mughal Empire shrank and its rulers became some of the many petty rulers of India in the early eighteenth century. According to Farooqi in a letter to Ahmed III, the Mughal ruler Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748) referred to the Ottoman Sultan as “adorer of the throne of Khilafat”.<sup>396</sup>

Competing claims to the caliphate also became an issue in diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the Sharif dynasties of Morocco, Sa’dis from the sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century and Alawis from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. In the sixteenth century, Sa’dis refused to acknowledge Ottoman claims to the caliphate. As the Sa’di rulers traced their family origins to the Prophet Muhammad, they thought that they had a much better claim to the caliphate,

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<sup>393</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7; 147-51.

<sup>394</sup> D. Sourdel, “Khalīfa” *EI2*, Brill Online, 2015.

<sup>395</sup> Naimur Rahman Farooqi, “Mughal-Ottoman Relations : A Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, 1556-1748” (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986), 318-33.

<sup>396</sup> Farooqi, “Mughal-Ottoman Relations”, 334-5. About this naming of the Ottoman sultan by the Mughal Shah, we might be careful. Although, it is possible that the weakened Mughal Empire acknowledge the power of the Ottoman Sultan, it is still possible that the source of this information may misleading. Farooqi’s source is the *Name-i Humayun Defteri*, which was a collection of the foreign political correspondences of the Ottoman Sultan. That means, these records are not the original copies, but reproductions. Therefore we might not take this source at face value.

as it had been theorized by Muslim jurists. Because Morocco was far from the Ottoman center, the Ottoman-Sa'di conflicts about the matter were never that intense.<sup>397</sup> In the next Sharif dynasty, Alawis claimed also to be caliphs, but starting from the 1700s there was a *modus vivendi* between the Ottomans and Alawis whereby the two powers cooperated against common enemies.<sup>398</sup>

Even though historians have generally considered the above-mentioned cases as examples of a non-judicial understanding of the caliphate in the early modern period, Feridun Emecen has recently argued that as early as the seventeenth century the Ottomans had also begun to draw on juridical ideas in their claim to the caliphate. The first piece of evidence that Emecen considers comes from the memoirs of Claes Ralamb, the Swedish envoy in Istanbul in 1657-8. According to Ralamb, the Ottoman sheikhulislam had rejected an alliance with the Mughal Empire to attack the Safavid Empire because he thought that the collapse of the Safavid Empire would entail serious problems of sharing caliphal authority. The Ottoman sheikhulislam were reportedly worried that if the Safavids disappeared, Uzbeks and Mughals could claim caliphal authority over Mecca.<sup>399</sup> It is impossible to verify at the moment to what extent the rumors reported by Ralamb had a factual basis, but the discussions that followed the Ottoman involvement in Iran in the early eighteenth century do

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<sup>397</sup> 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* 82 (1995): 103–12.

<sup>398</sup> Abderrahmane El Moudden, "Sharifs and Padishahs: Moroccan-Ottoman Relations from the 16th through the 18th Centuries. Contribution to the Study of Diplomatic Culture", (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1992), 214-23.

<sup>399</sup> Feridun Emecen, "Hilâfetin Devri Meselesi, Şaban-ı Şifâi ve Şehrizâde Mehmed Said'in Görüşleri Üzerine Yorumlar," in *Osmanlı'nın İzinde Prof. Dr. Mehmet İpşirli Armağanı*, eds. Feridun Emecen, İshak Keskin, and Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu (İstanbul: Timaş, 2013), 562.

Also for an historical overview about the Ottoman caliphate see Tufan Buzpınar, "Osmanlı Hilafeti Meselesi: Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2004): 113–31. Buzpınar divides the Ottoman caliphate into two periods, one from 1540s til 1774 and the second from 1774 till the dethronement of Abdul Hamid II in 1909.



indeed show that the Ottomans were, if not already in the seventeenth century, then certainly in the early eighteenth, making use of certain juridical theories about the caliphate. In fact, the correspondence between the Afghan ulama and Selim Efendi and the fatwas issued after these letters can be seen as landmarks of a new stage in the Ottoman understanding of the caliphate as well as arguably in the long history of the caliphate in the post-Abbasid period. It is remarkable that Selim Efendi employed juridical theories to support the Ottoman claims to the caliphate and emphasized the uniqueness of the Ottoman Sultan as a caliph. According to him, the Ottoman sultan had the right to claim to be caliph not just in his own territories but in all parts of the world where he could deliver help to the Muslims under attack from the infidels.

By contrast, it would seem that the Afghans limited their claim to the caliphate to the lands that they actually controlled, or in the case of the Ottoman-held parts of Western Iran, aspired to control. In this sense, their use of the title of caliph in a delimited territory was a continuation of post-medieval trends. On the other hand, the Afghan claim to the caliphate differed from the Mughal and Moroccan examples in two critical regards. First of all, Ashraf Khan and the Afghan ulama were not just demanding a nominal caliphate, but they also claimed some territories that had been recently seized by the Ottomans, whereas neither the Mughals nor the Moroccan Sharifs had claimed any territories under Ottoman suzerainty. Secondly, whereas the Moroccan Sharifs and Mughal Shahs denied Ottoman caliphal authority on the basis of their family lineages, the Afghan rulers of Isfahan based their claim to the caliphate on their victory over the Shiites. In this sense, the confessional crystallization of the early modern period can be said to have strongly colored the Ottoman-Afghan dispute to the caliphate.

The situation on the ground was definitely pointing to a military confrontation between Afghans and Ottomans. The Ottomans were not willing to give up any of the territories they had gained during the previous three years. As for the Afghan administration in Isfahan, they badly wanted to take Western Iran now that Tahmasb was weak with his soldiers conscripted from Caucasia and Western Iran and the connection between Kandahar and Isfahan was almost broken. At the same time, however, they saw that they would be hard put to legitimate an open confrontation with the Ottomans, when they were trying to eradicate the Safavids from Iran. Hence the Afghan ulama searched for a way out of this impasse by articulating a sharia-based argument about how Ashraf Khan was the sole legitimate ruler of Iran. Both sides, the Ottomans and the Afghans, had so much to lose that the possibilities of diplomacy disappeared; now a great war was at the gate.

### 5.3 War with Ashraf Khan

#### 5.3.1 Preparations for war

As the Afghan envoys left Istanbul, footsteps of the impending war were heard in Istanbul. Ashraf Khan's demands upon the Ottoman-held territories in Iran and his claim for an independent caliphate in Isfahan were unacceptable, considering the expansionist policies of the last few years. The 'glory' aspect of the foreign policies examined in the previous chapter was precluding any further diplomatic bargain with Ashraf Khan. Preparations were now underway for a massive operation against the Afghans.

Despite this pressing situation, the government was uneasy about declaring war against a Sunni power. According to Şemdanizâde, the army in Istanbul was not deployed for this war because it was known that the army was not willing to fight a war against Afghans.<sup>400</sup> However, the realpolitik — the very necessity to preserve the territorial acquisitions of the last three years — entailed a war. As usual, before many Ottoman wars, Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha officially asked the SheikhuIslam two questions. The first question was simple: “Is it licit to acknowledge two men as caliph at the same time?” The answer of SheikhuIslam Abdullah Efendi was negative. He argued that this would be contrary to the consensus of the companions of the Prophet.<sup>401</sup> Here the reference is to the first four caliphs after the death of the Prophet. As mentioned above in regard to the letter of Selim Efendi, all companions of the Prophet were able and capable of being caliph at the same time, but they refused this and became successors to each other. Interestingly, the answer of Abdullah Efendi does not finish at this point. He adds that to actually acknowledge two different caliphs in one age would be possible under one specific condition: if there is a great distance between the two Islamic countries, having two caliphs is permissible. The definition of this ‘great distance’ is clarified by the term “between the territories of the caliphs it should be that much distance like the Indian Ocean that they could not help and protect each other”<sup>402</sup>.

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<sup>400</sup> Öksüz, “Mür’i’-t-Tevârîh”, 377.

<sup>401</sup> Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü’l Fetava*, 209, nr. 1109: Question: “*Asr-ı vâhidde iki kimesneye bi’at edip imâm nasbetmek câiz olur mu?*”

These fatwas can be found in the miscellaneous as well, just after the first letter of İbrahim Pasha, See E.E. 3353, 4a-6a. Moreover, Çelebizâde Âsım copies these fatwas in his chronic: *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1482.

<sup>402</sup> Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü’l Fetava*, 209, nr. 1109 “*her birinin memleket ve Eyâletleri beyninde bahr-i Hind gibi haciz-i azîm ola ki her biri ahârın memleketinde tedbîr ve himâyeye kâdir olmayalar*”

The question of the second fatwa is longer than the answer given by Abdullah Efendi. We might speculate that the question was put by the Grand Vizier or by the Sultan himself. The question defined the situation in considerable detail: if *Zeyd* (one of the standard names used in fatwas, which in this case clearly stood for Ashraf Khan) claims the territories conquered by the Ottomans and he pretends to be *imâm-caliph* and sultanate; and if some Muslims accept his claims, what is the legal decision about this man?<sup>403</sup> Abdullah Efendi was unambiguous in his answer. Zayd/Ashraf Khan was to be declared a ‘rebel’ (*bagî*) and should be executed as soon as possible. However, there was still an open door for Ashraf Khan, if he would give up these claims, he might be absolved from execution. But if not, the decision is certain based upon the hadith transmitted by Abu Sa’id al-Hudari, cited in the letter of Selim Efendi. Abdullah Efendi adds a Quranic verse to his fatwa: “And if two parties of believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them. And if one party of them doeth wrong to the other, fight ye that which doeth wrong till it return unto the ordinance of Allah”<sup>404</sup>

After these two strong fatwas, in the spring the preparations for war sped up. In the meantime, Ashraf Khan sent a second envoy to Istanbul, which is noted neither in Çelebizâde Âsım nor in the *Münşeat Mecmuası*. A third fatwa about Ashraf Khan given by Abdullah Efendi signals the presence of a second envoy before the war. Maybe this envoy was not sent to Istanbul, but to Hamadan for Ahmed Pasha. The question part of the fatwa, which is longer than the answer part,

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 209, nr. 1110: “*seyf ile fetheddiği memâlikine muttasıl belde-i Isfahan ve kurbunda olan bazı bilâda i’tale-i dest-i tasallut eden Zeyd dava-i imâmet ve saltanat edip müslimden bazı kimesneler dahi bi’at edip imâm nasbetmeleiriyle ...*”, *Belde-i Isfahan kürsi-i memleket-i revâfız olup halen benim zabtımda olmakla halife-i müşarün ileyhin ... revâfız-i Acem’dan feth ve teshîr eylediği bilâd ve eyâleti bana teslim edin deyu ilhah sadedinde olsa Zeyd’in hükm-i şerisi ne veçhiledir*”

<sup>404</sup> Quran, 49:9: Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (Islamic Call Society, 1973), [www.sacred-texts.com/isl/pick](http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/pick).

reveals the point of the second envoy of Ashraf Khan. After the delivery of the Arabic letter of Selim Efendi, the Afghan ulama sent a letter in which they had emphasized one point. Ashraf Khan had claimed that he is from the family of the Prophet and had a better right to be caliph, based on the authority of the hadith that states the “caliphate is from the Quraysh”. Abdullah Efendi answered that ‘in many famous books’ it is obvious that this privilege of the Quraysh was valid only for the first thirty years after the Prophet. Moreover, Abdullah Efendi adds that it is not certain that Ashraf Khan is from the family of Quraysh. The second point in the letter is related with this claim.<sup>405</sup> The decision about this *bagi* had not changed: it was obligatory for all Muslims to kill this usurper and his subjects. It is noteworthy that the letter of Selim Efendi had become a direct source for the fatwas of Abdullah Efendi.<sup>406</sup>

Ahmed Pasha had already started to prepare for implementing what this fatwa called for. Çelebizâde Âsım explains the preparations of Ahmed Pasha and the provisions of the central government for the war in minute detail. A few months ago, in September 1725, Ganja and Lori (modern day Stepanavan) had come under the control of the Ottomans.<sup>407</sup> This was the mark for the closure of the northern flank of the northern frontier. In October 1725, Ahmed Pasha had entered Khorramabad, the

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<sup>405</sup> “*el-imâmetu min Kureys*”: Abdullah Efendi, *Behcetü'l Fetava*, 210, nr. 1111.

<sup>406</sup> Gerber, “An Early Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Ottoman Caliphate,” 119–27. This recent article dwells upon these fatwas. Gerber argues that these fatwas were issued “to justify the seizure of territories from another Sunni power, they needed legal-Islamic argument, and the one they actually used was that of the universal Ottoman Caliphate”, 122.

Gerber does not refer to the letter written by Selim Efendi and argues that the fatwas were indicating some unknown *fiqh* sources. However, the letter of Selim Efendi was the main source of these fatwas, citing some paragraphs.

<sup>407</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1449.

capital of Loristan, with his army, almost without any confrontation.<sup>408</sup> With this movement, now from Ardabil to Basra, a line almost 1,000 km long had come under Ottoman control.

However, behind this long frontier there were serious local troubles. Especially, consolidation around Tabriz had become difficult. The army of Abdullah Pasha was exhausted by the endless confrontations, especially with the Shahseven tribe.<sup>409</sup> The tribal resistance in and around Tabriz did not stop until 1729, until when Tahmasb got power and advanced to Qazvin.<sup>410</sup> The central government directed some novel financial sources to support the military enterprises.<sup>411</sup>

In March 1726, as a first step for the preparations for a war with Ashraf Khan, the three major generals of the frontier were given new assignments. Hacı Mustafa Pasha was assigned as the commander of Shirvan and Ganja, Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha was the commander of Tabriz and Ahmed Pasha was the commander of Hamadan.<sup>412</sup> In June 1726, Ruznamçeci Mustafa Efendi was sent to Tabriz to talk with the representatives of Tahmasb. Since an Afghan war had come into sight, it was deemed a good choice to appease rather than try to eliminate another enemy. The duty of Mustafa Efendi was to declare to Tahmasb that the Ottoman Empire would recognize his claim to the Safavid throne on the condition that he not demand the territories taken by the Ottomans in the last three years. For the time being, for Tahmasb, this

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 1455-6.

<sup>409</sup> Richard L. Tapper, “Şahseven”, *DİA*, Online, 2015. (See Chapter, III)

<sup>410</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1607-9.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 1457.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 1474.

was certainly a victory, at least symbolically.<sup>413</sup> In the summer of 1726, the governor of Tabriz, Abdullah Pasha had to leave his position because of a certain disease. In his place Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha was appointed as the commander-in chief (*serasker*) of Tabriz.<sup>414</sup> As the preparations for the war were ongoing, with the order of the central government, Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha got in touch with the Russian Field Marshal Vasily Vladimirovich Dolgorukov, the commander of all the Russian armies in the Caucasus. The purpose was to get Russian help against the Afghans.<sup>415</sup> These contacts with Tahmasb and Russians were not effective, but they still indicate to us the proactive nature of Ottoman diplomacy.

The summer of 1726 passed without any confrontation. The weather conditions in the desert were tough for both the Ottoman and the Afghan armies. Autumn was the best season for the armies to move. Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Baghdad was declared commander-in-chief for Isfahan (*Isfahan Seraskeri*).

Ahmed Pasha deployed his army in Kermanshah because this city was an optimal place for the transportation of provisions of every kind. The commanders of the northern flank, Tabriz and Tbilisi, would support the army with soldier supplies.<sup>416</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım counts almost each part of the army in exact numbers. Almost half of the army was composed of Kurdish tribal armies. The rest of the army was collected from Anatolia. Tabriz, Diyarbakir, Edirne, Mosul, Akşehir, Manisa and Mardin were the cities that sent reinforced soldiers under the control of Ahmed Pasha. Three thousand cavalymen were sent from Aydın alone. Besides all these

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 1501.

<sup>414</sup> Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı*, 68.

<sup>415</sup> Münir Aktepe, "Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha", *DİA Online*, 2015.

<sup>416</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1525.

provincial supplies, the central administration had sent the best and the most precious part of the army: heavy and light artillery. There were only 30 battalions of *Şahi*, the master artillery of the Ottoman army.<sup>417</sup>

The provisioning of the army was another issue solved by the central government. The governors of Aydın, Teke, Karaman Hamid, Manisa, Karesi and Kütahya were ordered to deliver certain amounts of provisions to certain points in Kermanshah and Hamadan mainly through Mosul. Last but not least, the central treasury granted 1,100 *kise akçe*, which would mean almost a half million *kuruş*.<sup>418</sup>

On the other side of the front, Ashraf Khan was preparing as well. His strategy was to spend as little as possible and to disturb as much as possible. Tarem, Abhur (Abher) and Sultaniyah were three cities on the road from Zanjan to Qazvin. The Afghans could never control Qazvin, but they could repulse the forces of Tahmasb around Qazvin. After the fall of Ardabil, Abdullah Pasha sent officers to take charge of these cities without any confrontation. After the intervention of the Afghan army in these cities, the Ottomans had to pass beyond the line of Zanjan, which would create a diplomatic problem between Russia and the Sublime Porte. The Afghans withdrew from the road between Zanjan and Qazvin and passed the deserts of the region. The Ottoman army was exceeding 50,000 with heavy artillery. The Afghan army, on the other hand, was composed of 15-20,000 soldiers without any artillery supplement.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1525.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, 1526. (For calculation see Chapter 4)

<sup>419</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1526. The Dutch representative in Isfahan gives exaggerated numbers about these figures. Accordingly, the Ottoman army was 200,000 men and the Afghan army was 40,000. Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 247. Lockhart, *The Fall*, 288: According to Lockhart, the Ottoman army was about 70,000 and 80,000. His source about this figure is Hammer; interestingly Hammer takes his figure from *Çelebizâde Âsim*. Most probably Hammer distorted the figures by mistake.



The stress of a coming war exacerbated the troubles in Isfahan. From June to September, there were many massacres and pillages in Isfahan organized by the Afghan soldiers.<sup>420</sup> Ashraf Khan feared the outbreak of an upheaval against his rule while he was at war with the Ottomans. His ruthless policies were aimed to avert such a threat. Even, before he left the city with his army, he first ordered all the non-Muslim population to join the war with the Ottomans but then abandoned this idea.<sup>421</sup>

Taking some cities in the military range of the Ottomans was not the only pre-war strategy of Ashraf Khan. He was waging a psychological war as well. Many sources argue that before the war, Ashraf Khan sent the head of Shah Husayn to Ahmed Pasha in a box on 9 September. A recent study<sup>422</sup> has argued that the story about sending the head of Shah Husayn to Ahmed Pasha was a fabrication transmitted from text to text. Ashraf Khan sent *a* head in the box; the owner of the head was not Shah Husayn but that of Abdulbâki Khan.<sup>423</sup> Abdulbâki Khan was the Safavid governor of Kermanshah, and he had surrendered the city in October 1723 to the late Hasan Pasha, the governor of Baghdad.<sup>424</sup> Abdulbâki Khan was promoted to the rank of Pasha of Nahavand in October 1725.<sup>425</sup> It is unknown where and how

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<sup>420</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 246.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>422</sup> For a detailed comparison see Külbilge, "18. Yüzyıl", 188. The existing second literature, Lockhart, *The Fall*, 289; Ali Djafar-Pour, "Nadir Şah Devrinde Osmanlı İnan Münasebetleri", 59; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1309), 41: argues that Ashraf Khan just before the war sent the head of Shah Husayn to Ahmed Pasha. L. Lockhart, "Husayn." *EI2* Brill Online, 2015: does not claim that the head of Shah Husayn was sent to Ahmed Pasha, but Ashraf Khan had killed Shah upon the letters of Ahmed Pasha.

<sup>423</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 246.

<sup>424</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1340.

<sup>425</sup> *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihâtı (1717-1730)*, 1997, 167. *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1416.

Abdulbâki was taken captive. Just before the war, Ashraf Khan executed him and sent his head to the Ottoman headquarters in Kermanshah to demoralize Ahmed Pasha.

### 5.3.2 War

After the arrival of the news about Tarem, Abhur and Sultaniyah, Ahmed Pasha moved from Kermanshah to Hamadan with his army. The army was divided into two flanks. The second part was in Nahavand under the command of Kürd İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Shahrizor. The two parts of the army joined each other in Sultanabad (modern-day Arak), and began to march on Isfahan.

The main Afghan army came from the north, where the army had settled after the operations in between Zanzan and Qazvin. Another part of the army marched from Isfahan to the north through Khomein. Before the Ottoman army congregated in Sultanabad, the northern part of the Afghan army entered the Anjudan Plain. This was a narrow plain, which was 4 kilometers long and 2 kilometers wide and which was bordered by mountains on the eastern and western sides. In the northeastern part of the plain there was a U-shaped plain circled by lower mountains. In the southern curve of this U-shaped plain there were some narrow mountain passes which could be passed on foot. The Afghan army had congregated in front of these mountain passes. For the Afghan army, who had neither heavy weapons nor a great number of cavalrymen, it would be easy to withdraw into the mountain passes, while it would be difficult for the Ottoman army to follow them. Beyond the passes, there was the road to Isfahan, from which would be easy for Afghans to flee to their head camp in

Isfahan. The Ottoman army did not pay much attention to these features of the topography and drove the Afghan army deep into this valley-plain.

On 8 November 1726<sup>426</sup> both sides were settled in their position and ready for a great battle. About 70,000 men in a field that was no wider than 10 kilometers square would have meant an extreme density of men. However, it is unknown whether the whole of the Ottoman army was on the battlefield or whether they were transferring from headquarters to the battlefield in pieces.<sup>427</sup> From the first moment, the gigantic Ottoman artillery had become meaningless, where thousands of Ottoman cavalymen were trying to sortie among the lines of the Afghan frontlines. Ahmed Pasha strived to settle the Ottoman infantry on the left and on the right of the plain, from the northern perspective. The tactic was quite successful, as the sortie of the cavalymen broke the Afghan ranks, and many Afghan soldiers began to flee towards the narrow passes in the southern end of the plaine. At this point, the Ottoman heavy artillery succeeded in driving the Afghan soldiers to retreat.<sup>428</sup>

The battle paused with the nightfall until the next morning. On the next day, the Ottoman army lost its superior position in a few hours. The left flank of the infantry battalions, composed of the Kurdish tribal soldiers, unexpectedly began to retreat. The Afghans circled the rest of the army easily from the eastern side, while the Ottoman soldiers began to flee without picking up the precious cannons or ammunition.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Floor, *The Afghan Occupation*, 247. *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1526: does not give the exact day, but a day between 5 to 14 November. Lockhart, *The Fall*, 290: Citing from Hammer, he gives 20 October.

<sup>427</sup> Krusiński, *The History*, 190-5.

<sup>428</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1526-7.

<sup>429</sup> Father Krusiński argues that the Afghan army could follow the Ottoman army till Hamadan. This seems impossible when we think about the size of the Afghan army. Krusiński, *The History*, 192. Moreover, from the Ottoman archival sources, we know that Ahmed Pasha went back to Kermanshah

What was the reason behind the unexpected collapse of the Ottoman army despite its initial superiority? I could detect three differing answers to this question. One is presented by Çelebizâde Âsım.

According to Çelebizâde Âsım, the seventeen Kurdish tribal leaders appointed to the northern flanks of the Ottoman army contacted Ashraf Khan on the first night. In this meeting, Ashraf Khan had said to them that if they did not fight against him, he would grant them Hamadan and other great cities. He had also claimed that if the Ottomans were to take Isfahan, they would not give these Kurdish tribes any new possessions.<sup>430</sup> Henceforth, in the morning, as sun rose the Ottoman northern flank in the battlefield had begun to evacuate the plain. The provincial soldiers deployed in the southern flank of the battlefield deserted the plain in panic, not considering the heavy artillery behind the infantry lines. In short, according to Çelebizâde Âsım, the fault was to appoint the Kurdish tribes in the northern flank of the army. Şemdanizâde, writing some 40 years later, also attributed the defeat to the betrayal of the Kurdish tribal leaders on the battlefield and Ahmed Pasha's tactical fault, appointing a flank to a single unit.<sup>431</sup>

The second explanation for the defeat in Anjudan is made by European writers. The basic idea was that the Afghan ulama had propagated the idea on the battlefield that they were fellow Sunnis and that this war was meaningless; hence, the

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and left the governor of Diyarbakır, Mehmed Pasha in Hamadan with a great part of the army. See Külbilge, "18. Yüzyıl", 189.

Another short mention of the battle can be found in J. P. Ferrier, *History of The Afghans* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1858), 57: The name of the battle is given as Kiemereh, probably a name of another village in the north of Anjudan.

<sup>430</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1527: "Osmâniyân Isfahan'a mâlik oldukları hâlde, sizler İç-il'de kalup sâir re'âyâ makâmında olacağınız zâhir, lâkin bana tarafdârlık itmekle mansûr olduğum sûretde Hâne Mehmed Paşa'ya ber-vech-i ocaklık eyâlet-i Hemedan ve sâirlerinize birer güzîde hânlık veririm"

<sup>431</sup> Öksüz, "Mür'i't-Tevârîh", 373.

Ottoman soldiers had deserted the battlefield. The French contemporary historian Clairac, relying on letters received from the representative French soldiers in Caucasia and in the Ottoman Empire, argues that in the evening four members of the Afghan ulama had come to the Turkish camp and ‘by reason of their saintly appearance and calling’ easily reached Ahmed Pasha and his confidants. These four venerable ulama joined the Turkish soldiers for prayer and in the meantime they talked with many, saying that they did not understand how Turks could ally with a Christian power, i.e. Russia, and fight against Sunni Afghans.<sup>432</sup> Hanway, mostly depending on Clairac, tells a similar story. What differs in his narrative is the part about the first day of the war. Accordingly, Ahmed Pasha on the first day did not use the whole army on the battlefield. Four thousand Janissaries and two thousand cavalymen assaulted Ashraf Khan’s army, but they were not successful. This caused a motivation problem for the rest of the army and enabled the four Afghan ulama ‘*cheiks the most venerable for their age and knowledge*’ to somehow reach Ahmed Pasha and cause the desertion of the army.<sup>433</sup> Krusiński provides another version of this story. Ashraf Khan was somehow able to call out to the Ottoman soldiers, and “almost ask’d them pardon for killing them” because they were “not only of the same Religion, but also of the same Sect of the Sunnis”.<sup>434</sup> It is noteworthy that neither Krusiński, nor Hanway nor Clairac speaks about the collapse of the Ottoman left flank because of the desertion of the Kurdish tribal leaders. Similarly, in Çelebizâde

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<sup>432</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 290; Clairac, *Histoire*, 333-5. Clairac argues also that, before the battle Ashraf tried to bribe the Kurdish tribal chiefs by promising some territories, pp. 331. This story was narrated by Sykes, *A History of Persia* vol. 2, 330.

<sup>433</sup> Hanway, *Revolutions*, 245-6.

<sup>434</sup> Krusiński, *The History*, 192-3.

Âsim or in Şemdanizâde there is no word about the Afghan propaganda on the battlefield.

The explanation of the Ottoman defeat was also discussed by İbrahim Pasha in his letter to Ahmed Pasha, just after the news about the defeat arrived to Istanbul.<sup>435</sup> According to İbrahim Pasha, the defeat was neither because of Kurdish betrayal nor because of the Sunni propaganda of the Afghan ulama on the battlefield. There were three major problems of the Ottoman army, almost purely military problems, which could be solved with some precautions. First of all, before describing these three problems and their solutions, İbrahim Pasha emphasizes that it is a daunting task to command a war from a distance of 2,500 kilometers (90 *konak*); therefore, the interlocutor, Ahmed Pasha, should pay attention to and obey the orders meticulously.

The first suggestion of İbrahim Pasha is about the security and logistics of the army for the transportation from the encampment to the battlefield for the next possible war with Afghans. In the Anjudan Battle, it was a problem, and the army could not reach the battlefield simultaneously, as a part of the army was settling on the trench, and part of the army was still away from the field. Moreover, the logistic personnel had to be protected by a certain battalion, because they were very prone to incursion on the road from Hamadan to Anjudan. Another battalion had to be reserved to secure the back and forward as the army was walking to the battlefield. This battalion was supposed to keep the convoys in line so that the army could arrive at the battlefield in one piece without any casualties. The logistics of the army presented one more problem according to İbrahim Pasha. The artillery battalions,

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<sup>435</sup> This letter is copied in *Çelebizâde Âsim*, 1570. A portion of the letter is copied in Şemdanizâde, but the selection of this historian is very limited and distorts the meaning of the letter in a great extent. Öksüz, "Mür'î't-Tevârih" 2009, 373-4.

before getting into a clash with the enemy, had to position themselves behind the infantry troops and the artillery battalions and by no means would they mix among the infantry. This was quite important because if the enemy attacked the army during transportation, then the artillery would be useless because they would not fire their cannons among the friendly-fire zone. Last but not least, besides the battalion that drives the army from one point to another, the commander should assign many spies around the battlefield in order to collect news about the movements of the enemy and their logistics.<sup>436</sup>

İbrahim Pasha's second point concerns basic battle tactics. İbrahim Pasha criticizes the tactical decision of Ahmed Pasha in the Anjudan Battle. The trenches should be as deep as possible and the artillery should settle behind the trenches. The Ottoman trenches should be solid and the pull the enemy towards itself. When the enemy gets into the range of the cannons, then a heavy fire with the infantry should start. The cavalry should intervene in the battle only to pull the enemy toward the Ottoman trenches or to destroy the order of the enemy trenches. One last point about the fighting tactics on the battlefield is to circle the enemy from behind. Probably, considering the Anjudan Plain as an example, İbrahim Pasha argued that in the next battle Ahmed Pasha should assign a battalion of about four thousand cavalry from best Crimean and Kurdish horsemen. These would not enter in the battlefield but circle it in order to assault from behind the Afghan lines of infantry surprisingly.<sup>437</sup> It was heard that the Afghan soldiers were dressed in strange and awe-inspiring costumes and scared the Ottoman soldiers. İbrahim Pasha suggests that in order to prevent collective panic in the army, at the beginning of the fight, the infantry should

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<sup>436</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1571.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 1572-3.

not open fire but take shelter in the trenches. The artillery should carry out heavy bombarding to break the strangely attired Afghans.<sup>438</sup>

İbrahim Pasha's last remark is the most interesting part of his letter. In brief, İbrahim Pasha counsels Ahmed Pasha how to motivate the Ottoman soldiers on the battlefield. First of all, Ahmed Pasha should be present on the battlefield and be in contact with the soldiers. İbrahim Pasha then writes what Ahmed Pasha should say to his soldiers to motivate them. The proposed speech consists of three main points. First, this is a legitimate war according to the fatwas made by the ulama. Second, the Afghans are a small tribe between the Safavid and Moghuls and have never had a state, while the Ottomans are an old power with a glorious history of 'five hundred years'. Finally, astonishing booties await the Ottoman soldiers when they defeat the Afghans and capture Isfahan.<sup>439</sup>

The reason for defeat was something between the three different perspectives presented above, either betrayal of some parts of the army, or demotivation of the soldiers because of the religious propaganda of the Afghans, or tactical errors of Ahmed Pasha had paved the way to this defeat. Nevertheless, there was still some time to prove the prophecy right.

### 5.3.3 Peace with Ashraf Shah

İbrahim Pasha was determined to wage a war of revenge and suppress Ashraf Khan. For that reason, in June 1727 he gave Karayılınzâde Mehmed Pasha a promotion to

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 1574.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 1574-5.



Hamadan to control the war and help Ahmed Pasha.<sup>440</sup> This time the Ottoman investment in the war was much greater. The central government was quite sure that Ashraf Khan would not dare to wage a second massive assault. The figures noted by Çelebizâde Âsım exceed almost one million *kuruş*, which was the highest figure of the past five years' wars.<sup>441</sup>

On the other side of the frontier, Ashraf Khan was not in his best day to fight with the Ottoman army. A portion of the Afghan army left Isfahan to go to war with Tahmasb, and the other portion was struggling with famine in Isfahan. In 1727, the adventure of the Afghans in Isfahan was entering its last phase. Ashraf Khan was no longer concerned with expanding to Hamadan, but rather with keeping Isfahan.

A certain Hacı İsmail came to Hamadan to hold a meeting with Ahmed Pasha. He openly proposed peace and asked for peace talks to be held as soon as possible. Ahmed Pasha accepted this easy victory. The next Afghan envoy was Molla Nusret, one of the Afghan high ulama. His signature was on the letter sent last year with the signatures of 19 Afghan ulama. Ahmed Pasha informed Istanbul about this surprise proposal of the Afghans, and according to Çelebizâde Âsım, İbrahim Pasha, after holding discussions and consultative assemblies, decided that this peace would not harm the 'dignity of the caliphate' and is acceptable.<sup>442</sup> The peace talks

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 1546.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 1565. Çelebizâde counts the new forces from Egypt, Bosnia and many other places of the Empire and their routes to Hamadan. It is noteworthy, this time there were 54 battalion of artillery. This figure is hard to believe when we think that last year the army should leave hundreds of cannons on the battlefield.

<sup>442</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım, 1568: “*sipehsâlâr-ı müşârun-ileyh tarafından ma'rûz-ı Âsitâne-i sa'âdet kılındıkda, Sadr-ı âlî-kadr-ı Aristo-menzilet hazretleri bu husûsu müdebbirân-ı erkân-ı devlet-i ebed-müddet ile müzâkere vü meşveret buyurup, hulâsa-i ârâ-yı erbâb-ı şûrâ Eşref Hân'ın bağı 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 lâyük ve nâmûs-ı hilâfet-i bâhireye muvâfık vech üzre sulhe gerden-dâde-i teslim ü rızâ olduğu hâlde ve Müslimânlığa binâen âsâyiş-i sipâh ü re'âyâ ve ârâmiş-i halâyık u berâyâya vesîle olmağla.*”

began on 23 September 1727, when the Ottoman army in Kermanshah came to Hamadan. The representative of the Afghan side was Molla Nusret, while the Ottomans were represented by ‘Ubeydullah Efendi<sup>443</sup>, the former qadi of Aleppo and the new qadi of Hamadan. In later stages of the peace talks, the governor of Anatolia and the commander-in-chief of Ganja, Mustafa Pasha intervened in the talks.<sup>444</sup> The Arabic letter of Molla Nusret was sent to Istanbul and recorded in the *Name-i Hümayun Defteri* together with its Turkish translation.<sup>445</sup>

The Peace Treaty was concluded in Hamadan on 4 October 1727.<sup>446</sup> The original text was in Persian and was composed of twelve articles. The Hamadan Treaty can be considered an Ottoman victory, but the Afghans did not lose much. Only three years earlier the Ottomans had not recognized their legitimacy, and had supported the Russian forces and Tahmasb against them. Moreover, in 1723, when Osman Agha came to Isfahan, the Ottomans had demanded control all of Iran. Now things had changed. The second article of the Hamadan Treaty dictated that the correspondence protocol between Afghans and the Ottomans would be reorganized as in the times of the Safavid Empire.<sup>447</sup> Ashraf Khan, in the Ottoman usage, had transformed into Ashraf Shah. That would mean that the Sultan would correspond directly with Iranian Shah, Ashraf *Shah*. The Ottoman Empire would allow and

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 1552.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 1568.

<sup>445</sup> BOA., *NH.7*, Nr. 91, 142-4.

<sup>446</sup> Çelebizâde Âsım does not give a certain date for the conclusion of the treaty. However, the text and the conclusion date can be found in *NH.7*, BOA. Nr. 93, 149-152. Moreover for the full printed Ottoman text: *Muahedat Mecmuası*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Hakikat Matbaası, 1878), 312-315.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 313-4.

protect all pilgrimage caravans from Iran controlled by the Afghan administration of Isfahan.

One important article in the Treaty concerned the merchants of both sides. According to the sixth article of the Treaty, each side would appoint an officer in each other's capital to control the legal affairs of their merchants. This article meant that an Ottoman official, probably a *qadi*, would reside in Isfahan. Similarly, an Afghan officer would reside in Istanbul for the same purpose.

The seventh, tenth and eleventh articles of the Treaty signaled the Ottoman victory. According to the seventh article, the Afghan administration would not be involved in a war with local tribes in Basra, which was blocking the Ottoman movement to eastern Basra. If the Ottomans won a victory against this rebellious tribe and controlled the regions between Baghdad and Basra and especially the eastern extension, the northern and eastern coasts of the Persian Gulf would pass to their control. In this case, the Afghans seem to have given up on a presence in the southern parts of Iran and shared these territories with the Ottomans.

The tenth article concerned Ottoman acquisitions in Iran. Afghan armies were supposed to withdraw from all the places they had taken in the dawn of the Anjudan Battle. Zanjan, Sultaniye and Abhar would remain under the control of Tahmasb according to the 1724 Partition Treaty. With the Treaty of Hamadan, the Ottoman Empire officially took these three important cities under her control. The article dictated the gathering of a commission to draw the borders on the terrains. This border was never drawn, but if it had been, it would have meant that the Ottoman border would lie about 200 km from Isfahan and only 40 km from Qazvin.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., "...iki cânibden tayin olunan mahdûdlar kat'-ı hudûd ve sınır ile tarif ve alâmet-i fasla vaz' ile tebyîn ve temyîz edildiklerinden sonra tarafeynden tahrîr olunan hudûd namelerinin şurûtuna mugayir bir taraftan taraf-ı âhırın zabt ve tasarrufunda olan arâziden bir karış yere dahil-i taarruz olunmaya."

The winter of 1728 was welcomed in Istanbul with many celebrations and festivities. The spring would be the best spring ever; Ottoman armies had expanded as far as possible, almost reaching Isfahan and Ashraf Khan had become Ashraf Shah, but his power had been seriously checked by his being forced to recognize the Ottoman rulership over western Iran and to accept the Ottoman Sultan as the sole caliph. Russian acquisitions in the south Caspian western littoral were seemingly useless because of the over-expansion of the Ottomans and the blocking of Qazvin in a great extent to reach to Caspian. There were many reasons to celebrate.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

From 1726 to 1728, the political situation of the Afghan rulers of Iran had forced Ottoman diplomacy to develop a juridical base for Ottoman expansionism in Iran. Namely, the Ottomans had resorted to *shar'i* arguments to make a universal claim to rule over Iran, and this claim was enforced through vast military enterprises. The events narrated in this chapter show vividly that the Ottoman military and governmental capabilities were enough to wage war more than 2,500 km away from the center. The defeat in Anjudan was seemingly an occasional case that derived from the ideological demotivation of the army and the superiority of the Afghan army in the chosen geography of the war. Ashraf Khan was well aware that the Ottomans would easily ameliorate their conditions and score a victory in their second attempt. Therefore, he proposed peace without any confrontation. In 1726 in the letter of Selim Efendi, the Ottoman Empire showed a defensive reaction about her *caliphal* authority and imperial hegemony in the wider Islamic geography. Willingly or unwillingly, the Ottoman administration accepted the peace, but this became a

pyrrhic victory. By establishing peace with the Afghans, any opportunity to come to a solemn agreement with Tahmasb was eliminated forever. Moreover, the Partition Treaty of 1724 was nullified. The Ottoman Empire had won the battles on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, but at the same time it had prepared all the conditions to lose the war.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Epilogue: The collapse of Ottoman foreign policy

In the first night of October 1730, Damat İbrahim Pasha was strangled and his body was splintered savagely by bands of rebels. Only five days before, on 25 September, he had been planning a new campaign on Iran to fight against Tahmasb II. The execution of İbrahim Pasha marked, among other things, the end of the Ottoman expansionist policies in Iran. As a conclusion of this thesis, I will discuss how and why the Ottoman policy of territorial expansion in Iran collapsed. Two developments were pivotal behind the Ottoman failure: 1) the unexpected and powerful re-emergence of Tahmasb II and Nadir Shah (in Iran) and 2) a change in the balance of power in Europe after 1726. With these two developments, the political, military and economic exhaustion of the Ottoman Empire after long – albeit victorious – wars should be noted as an important factor in the sudden collapse of the frontier.

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Hamadan in 1727, the foreign policies pursued by Damat İbrahim Pasha had reached their pinnacle: the Ottoman armies had settled in Hamadan and from Ardabil down to the Persian Gulf a border had been established with the Afghan administration. Ashraf Khan had accepted Ottoman caliphal authority unconditionally. The last claimant of the Safavid house, Tahmasb II, was not considered to be a threat to the Ottomans because the Afghans constituted a buffer zone between the Ottomans and the then weak forces of Tahmasb II. The Russian naval forces in Gilan, Derbent and Baku were also feeble and had no

capacity to make effective operations beyond the Transcaucasian Mountains.

Moreover, the 1721 and 1724 treaties with Russia were theoretically still in effect.

In 1728, after the ratification of the Hamadan Treaty, the Ottoman Empire sent a high-ranking envoy to Isfahan carrying letters from Ahmed III to Ashraf and from İbrahim Pasha to Amanullah Khan. The Ottoman envoy Râşid Efendi, the official chronicler before Çelebizâde Âsım, was promoted to the rank of pasha and sent to Isfahan.<sup>449</sup> Both letters and the answers to these letters were more than instances of diplomatic bargaining, but rather amounted to a *bona fide* agreement between the two powers. The Ottoman Sultan accepted Ashraf Khan's claim to the title of "Shah" and Ashraf Khan recognized the Ottoman Sultan's exclusive claim to the title of imam/caliph in the Iranian territories (*Memâlik-i İnan*). However, the essential issue at stake for both parties was the partition of western Iran. In their letters, the Ottomans did not guarantee to protect the Afghans from Tahmasb or from Russia. Yet what the Ottoman side openly demanded was the security of the long border between the Ottoman Empire and the Afghan administration.<sup>450</sup>

Shortly after the return of Râşid Paşa from Isfahan, on 2 July 1729 the last Afghan envoy, the governor of Shiraz, Namdar Muhammad Khan, arrived in Istanbul<sup>451</sup>. Unlike Abdulaziz Khan, the first Afghan envoy in 1726, Namdar Khan was received with ostentatious ceremonies. Six great Ottoman galleons accompanied

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<sup>449</sup> Cavid Baysun, "Müverrih Râşid Efendi'nin İnan Elçiliğine Dâir," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 9, (1954).

There is reason to think that the Porte chose Râşid Efendi (Pasha) on account of his being a member of the ulama. The reason for this preference must have been partly due to the ulama's command of the main languages of communication between the Ottomans and the Afghans, namely Persian and Arabic. But as in the case of 'Ubeydullah Efendi sent to Hamadan to negotiate the peace treaty in 1727 or Abdulaziz's diplomatic mission to Istanbul in 1726, it was probably also considered more appropriate for ulama to act as envoys between two Muslim entities.

<sup>450</sup> Aktepe, "Vak'a-Nüvis Râşid Mehmed Efendi'nin Eşref Şah Nezdindeki Elçiliği", 170-178. These letters are in M.C.038, 90b-132a. And *NH.7*, 144-149.

<sup>451</sup> For a record in the Ottoman archive indicating the grants given to Namdar Khan: BOA, C.Hr., 27/1321.

the envoy from Üsküdar to Beşiktaş. The convoy marched from Beşiktaş to Galata through the main ceremonial artery and sailed from Galata to Eyüp, again on Ottoman galleons. This journey took six hours. All the façades on the route of the Afghan envoy were painted anew upon the order of İbrahim Pasha. This excessive diplomatic parade was ruined by a small-scale disaster: on the day of the Afghan envoy's arrival a great fire broke out in the vicinity where the latter landed in Eyüp. Therefore, the planned meeting of İbrahim Paşa with Namdar Khan had to be postponed for twenty-eight days.<sup>452</sup> Otherwise this diplomatic mission was quite a show of force for the Afghan rulers of Safavid Iran according to the reports of the Ottoman chroniclers, Şemdanizâde and Çelebizâde Âsım.<sup>453</sup>

Yet the Afghan rulers of Isfahan were in great trouble. In the east, Tahmasb and Nadir had begun to collect fresh troops. This was still not a direct threat to the Ottoman holdings in western Iran because the Afghan-held parts of Iran constituted a buffer zone between the Ottoman Empire and the emerging Tahmasb. While Tahmasb had concentrated on the re-conquest of Isfahan, the Ottoman territorial possessions were relatively secure. Ashraf Khan had acknowledged Ottoman authority in 1727 mostly because of his search for an ally against Tahmasb II. Nevertheless, the Hamadan Peace of 1727 did not make the Ottoman Empire an ally for Ashraf Khan, but rather took the Afghan power against his westward expansion under Ottoman control. Ashraf Khan knew well that the Ottomans would not help him against Tahmasb, but he watched their struggle with pleasure. Desperately, the Afghan administration searched some other exit from Nadir's threat. In this regard,

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<sup>452</sup> Öksüz, "Mür'i't-tevarih", 379.

<sup>453</sup> *Çelebizâde Âsım*, 1624-1629: It is noteworthy that, the section about Namdar Khan is the last heading in the chronicle of Çelebizâde.



Russia, another disadvantaged ally of the Ottoman Empire, seemed for the Afghan administration as a possible opportunity to protect itself.

Since 1728, Russia had been searching for a way to reach out to the Iranian hinterland in order to make effective use of the Caspian Sea and to benefit from its control.<sup>454</sup> The aggressive expansion of the Ottoman Empire and dynastic problems at home had crippled Russia in Caucasia. Moreover, the Russian forces were not capable of controlling the semi-Ottoman-supported resistance in Caucasus. In late 1727, before the Hamadan Peace between Afghans and the Ottoman Empire, there had been a small-scale Russo-Afghan confrontation in the southwestern corner of the Caspian Sea (between Rud-i Sâr and Timijân). As a result, the Afghan army had been pushed back beyond Qazvin. Because the Hamadan Peace had not been signed then, the Ottomans had done virtually nothing.<sup>455</sup> This attack by a tiny Russian power in the southern Caspian littoral, however, had been inconclusive. A truce was signed between the Russians and the Afghans. In February 1729, this truce was turned into a peace treaty between Russia and the Afghan administration of Isfahan. The Treaty of Rasht, which was signed between the Afghan commander Muhammad Saidal Khan and Russian commander-in-chief General Levashov, concentrated on two essential points: drawing a border between the Russian and Afghan territories and assuring the commercial privileges of the Russian merchants in those parts of Iran that were under Afghan rule. The third article of the treaty dictated “the borders between the two states shall be as follows: the region from Derbent to the Kura River and from there to the confluence of the Aras River reaching the border agreed with the Sublime

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<sup>454</sup> For a vivid presentation of how the Russian operations by Peter I in Caucasus and in Iran were failed see Alexandre Bennigsen, “Peter the Great, the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 8, no. 2 (1974): 311–18.

<sup>455</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall*, 296.

Porte. All the land in those regions reaching the Caspian Sea shall be part of the Russian Empire [...]»<sup>456</sup> With this treaty, Russia did not violate the 1724 Partition Treaty with the Ottoman Empire except for withdrawing her guarantee to protect Safavid sovereignty. For the time being, the borders were redrawn in the Caucasus and Western Iran as follows: Russia was pushed to the narrow coastline and the Afghans were locked in the mid-Iranian deserts and plateaus, while the Ottoman Empire held by far the most advantageous position. The eternal peace between Russia and the Ottoman Empire had proven beneficial for the Ottomans, but not for the Russians.

At the other end of the political scene, Nadir, the war chief of Tahmasb II, was observing the developments carefully. In 1729 three powers, the Ottoman Empire, the Afghan administration and Russia were virtually allied in their scramble for Iran. However, the 1724 Partition Treaty, the 1727 Hamadan Peace Treaty and the 1729 Treaty of Rasht had turned practically inconclusive and useless because of excessive Ottoman claims. The treaties secured the extensive Ottoman acquisitions and kept the status quo for the benefit of the Ottoman Empire. They also contained the Afghan administration and Russia in narrow regions: the Caspian littoral for Russia, and Isfahan for the Afghans. This containment weakened the operational zone of the Afghans and Russians greatly. It was just the time for Nadir to assault the Afghans, the weakest player in the game. In this conjuncture, neither the Ottomans nor the Russians would stop such an assault.

Nadir had been waiting for this conjuncture since at least 1725. After the disastrous wars of Tahmasb in Qazvin and his defeat by Ashraf Khan in late 1725, Tahmasb II fled further east to Khorasan. Nadir, although low ranking, had been a

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<sup>456</sup> Bournoutian, ed., *Armenians and Russia*, 144, nr.160.

tribal chief in Khorasan since 1720. When Tahmasb searched for tribal alliances in the region, Nadir was the best choice for him because of his distinguished cavalry. The leader of the Afshar tribe, Nadir, became the strongest tribal chief in a very short time in the administration of Tahmasb II by gradually eliminating all other power holders. In a very short time, Nadir succeeded in suppressing the authority of Tahmasb and established control over a powerful pro-Safavid coalition. In 1726, Nadir captured Mashhad, a strategic bridgehead in Eastern Iran. Although Tahmasb II was not willing to grant power to Nadir, he was in need of an organized army under a powerful commander like Nadir to recapture Isfahan. Nadir's strategy was clever: first he endeavored to unite the tribes in Eastern Iran. Then he concentrated his power on the Abdali Afghans of Herat, who were supporting the Ghilzai Afghans in Isfahan. Nadir reached his goal in two years. Victory over the Abdali Afghans brought prestige for Nadir and supplied him with many slave soldiers to fight against Ashraf Khan. Hence, Tahmasb had to recognize the growing power of Nadir. Starting from mid-1728 on, Tahmasb delegated his authority almost totally to Nadir.

When Nadir achieved control of Khorasan, all the logistical channels were closed to the Afghan rulers of Isfahan. What was worse for Ashraf Khan, the main logistical problems between Kandahar and Isfahan were aggravated by the emergence of Nadir as a powerful enemy in the east. Nadir's strategy worked: the Afghan administration was squeezed by the Ottomans and Russians. The eastern front, comprising Herat and Mashhad, was secured. To terminate the Afghan rule in Isfahan there remained only one last move: In October 1729, in the battle of Damghan (Battle of Mihmandoost), the army of Nadir smashed the Afghan army. The retreat of the Afghans before the outstanding troops of Nadir was extremely

swift.<sup>457</sup> Before the year ended, Ashraf Khan was murdered by his own men after a catastrophic evacuation from Isfahan.

For the Ottomans, the unexpected emergence of Nadir Shah as a new force in Iran presented a problem. At the same time, the advantageous position of the Ottomans in the Caucasus was also in danger because Russia was not willing to remain squeezed into the narrow western Caspian littoral any more. From 1726 on, Russia endeavored to prevent the furthering of Ottoman operations in Caucasia. Hence, in August 1726, only two months before the Anjudan Battle, the European balance of power turned detrimental to the Ottoman Empire with a Russo-Austrian defensive alliance. This was the moment when the interests of Austria and Russia came together. This strategic move of Russia marked the moment of failure for Ottoman diplomacy in the long run.

Thanks to the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, the Habsburg Empire had expanded her territories in East-Central Europe. Nevertheless, the Habsburgs could not protect this victorious position for very long. In the wake of the Spanish invasion of Sardinia and Sicily in the same year, the Habsburg Empire had needed the help of France and Great Britain to protect her presence in Mediterranean against the Spanish forces.<sup>458</sup> The ambitious King of Spain Philip V and his wife Elizabeth Farnese tried to exploit this opportunity to dominate the Mediterranean. Against this Spanish expansionism, the European powers were to preserve the balance of power.<sup>459</sup> A quadruple alliance between Great Britain, France, the Habsburg Empire and the Dutch Republic responded to this aggressive move and confronted the

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<sup>457</sup> For a detailed narrative of this process see Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 75-98.

<sup>458</sup> T. C. W Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648-1815* (New York: Viking, 2007), 562-90.

<sup>459</sup> Matthew Anderson, *18th Century Europe 1713-1789*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 24.

Spanish in the Mediterranean. Interestingly, nevertheless, following the allied victory against Spain, the Habsburgs changed their camp unexpectedly and made an alliance with Spain.<sup>460</sup> The Habsburg Empire became further isolated with the 1724 Partition Treaty, which marked a strong collaboration among France, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. To break this enclosure by France, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, Habsburg Empire had to make new diplomatic moves. The disadvantaged position of Russia in Caucasia and in western Iran was a precious opportunity for the Habsburg Empire. Nepluyev, the Russian envoy in Istanbul, wrote in late 1726: “here, at the Sultan’s court, we have no other friends but the Austrians, whereas the French have changed their policy to the point that they have become foes.”<sup>461</sup> The Russians were well aware that “eternal peace” with Ottomans was no longer sustainable. Russia was encircled in Caucasia by the ever-expanding Ottoman acquisitions. Moreover, from Caucasia over Crimea to the Danube, there had come into existence an uninterrupted Ottoman frontier against Russia. Thus, a crucial article of the treaty signed between Russia and Austria in Vienna on 6 August 1726 was the third article whereby Austria guaranteed to attack the Ottoman Empire in the case of an Ottoman seizure of Russian possessions in Iran.<sup>462</sup> This treaty was the beginning of the Russo-Austrian alliance that would last throughout the rest of the eighteenth century. The Russian fears about an Ottoman advance were not a delusion. In the autumn of 1729, Nepluyev reported that the Ottoman armies were planning to attack the Caspian

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<sup>460</sup> Lindsay, “International Relations” 201.

<sup>461</sup> Iskra Schwarcz, “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*, ed. Plamen Mitev (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010), 45.

Schwarcz’s article is the only piece in the literature which sees the connection between Russo-Austria alliance and the Ottoman Eastern Frontier.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. And see Lavender Cassels, *The Struggle for the Ottoman Empire 1717-1740* (London: Murray, 1966).

littoral. What stopped the Ottoman assault was the defeat of the Afghan armies before Nadir [Shah] in the Battle of Damghan.<sup>463</sup>

The 1726 Russo-Austrian treaty had turned into a source of stress in Istanbul. As the war in the Eastern Frontier was going on, an allied attack in the western frontier would be destructive for the Ottoman Empire. The “European balance of power” was shaped this time against Ottoman aggression, to suppress the Ottoman attempt to dominate a vast region, extending from the southern shores of the Caspian Sea to the Danube.

Neither the changing balance of power in Europe, nor the fresh troops of Nadir Shah were the direct reason for the collapse of the Ottomans’ Eastern Frontier. The scramble for Iran ended in Istanbul with the bloody 1730 Rebellion. The 1730 Rebellion has been the subject of many monographs, as historians starting from the 1730s onwards have searched for the causes and motives of this rebellion.<sup>464</sup> The 1730 Rebellion was a moment of crisis that terminated the twelve-year so-called “Tulip Age” of the Empire. The Ottoman Empire had won a great victory; nevertheless, just at the moment of exhaustion, a new mobilization had become necessary against Nadir Shah and at the same time a Russo-Austrian alliance started to threaten the Crimean and Danubian frontiers.

In early 1730, upon the threatening claims of Deli Mehmed Khan, the envoy of Tahmasb II, the Ottoman central army had settled in Üsküdar and was preparing for a massive campaign on Nadir Shah. However, the army was not able to move from Üsküdar in the following months. Just before the outbreak of the rebellion, on

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<sup>463</sup> Armen Aivazian, *The Armenian Rebellion of the 1720s* (Yerevan: Center for Policy Analysis American University of Armenia, 1997), 40.

<sup>464</sup> In the historiography, there is a strong emphasis on the economic motivations behind the rebellion see Robert W. Olson, “The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics?,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 3 (1974): 329–44. And also see Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*.

28 September, news about the fall of Tabriz and Hamadan arrived in Istanbul. Just at this moment, Ahmed III declared that he would not join this campaign because there could also be an assault on the western frontier. This fear of being squeezed between two fronts and the stories about the fall of Tabriz and Hamadan created a tense situation. The Sultan's rejection to join the Eastern campaign was taken to be a beacon for the failure of foreign policies. It is still a matter of discussion whether the Sultan refused to join the campaign because of strategic reasons, or whether he was persuaded by the opponents of İbrahim Pasha not to go to war. What is certain, however, is that the Ottoman expansionist policy in Iran fell victim to its own success.<sup>465</sup>

Shortly after the rebellion, there were some attempts to develop a new foreign policy. In the few weeks following the dethroning of Ahmed III, when the rebels took the government into their own hands, in a consultative assembly, Patrona Halil,

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<sup>465</sup> There are two main Ottoman treaties concerning the 1730 Rebellion both written during the reign of Mahmud I (r. 1730-54). Abdî Efendi, *1730 Patrona İhtilâli Hakkında Bir Eser: Abdî Tarihi*, ed. Faik Reşit Unat, 3rd ed. (Ankara: TTK, 2014). And Destâri-Salih Efendi, *Destâri Salih Tarihi*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara: TTK, 1962). The both historians depicts the very moment of Sultan's rejection to go to war with İbrahim Pasha and present this moment as the beginning of the 1730 Rebellion.

In the European accounts about the rebellion, the same thing can be found see Charles Perry, *A View of the Levant Particularly of Constantinople, Syria, Egypt and Greece in Which Their Antiquities, Government, Politics, Maxims, Manners, and Customs (which Many Other Circumstances and Contingencies) Are Attempted to Be Described and Treated on* (London: T. Woodward & C. Davis, 1743), for a detailed depiction of this process see pp 55-64.

Gafcon De Crouzanac, *Histoire De La Dernière Revolution Arrivee Dans L'Empire Ottoman, Le 28. Septembre de L'année 1730, Avec Quelques Observations Sur L'état Des Affaires de La Ville & Empire de Maroc* (Paris: Andre' Cailleau, 1740). De Crouzenac focuses on the opponents of İbrahim Pasha who persuaded Ahmed III not to go to war. De Crouzenac's quotation from an anonymous Janissary is noteworthy: "God justly punishes us because of our horrible war crimes that we commit against our brothers who only demanded their rights. The Prophet [Muhammad] is angry with us; they [God and Prophet] gave us this defeat as a warning to turn our weapons against Christians in order to carry out the *La Loi chez les Infideles*, instead of seeking to destroy a country [dynasty] which reigned for a long time."

Moreover, Aktepe also asserts that beside many economic and social motivations behind the rebellion, the political opponents of Damat İbrahim Pasha played an important role. They convinced the Sultan to reject to join the campaign just upon the news of defeat in Tabriz and Hamadan. Aktepe, *Patrona İsyani*.

the head of the rebel bands, argued that there should be an attack on the Russians and on Nadir Shah at the same time because the Russians were supporting Nadir and Tahmasb.<sup>466</sup> However, Halil was executed a few days after his speech, and after that, the Ottoman central government did not attempt such an unwise adventure on two fronts, and even tried to protect the peace with the Russians until 1735. The foreign policy advice of Patrona Halil noted in a contemporary source is a clue to the nature of the foreign policy stance of the rebels. It is possible to think that, in addition to the war with the Afghans and the inconclusive confrontations with Safavids, peace with Russia was not welcomed by the popular opposition in the capital. Realpolitik considerations and the imperial expansionism of the Ottoman Empire was not popularly approved. Damat İbrahim Pasha had been in charge of the Ottomans' Iranian policy in every phase. He had won almost all the battles but lost the war.

## 6.2 Conclusion

Ottoman war-making and diplomacy during the Afghan occupation of Safavid Iran had not been the subject of a detailed historical analysis until the present thesis. The existing literature had either concentrated on the logistical matters or narrated the course of the wars in terms of single operations. This thesis has been an attempt to fill this gap.

This study undertook a close study of the Ottoman diplomatic and military efforts in a specific geography in a relatively brief period, but did so from a

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<sup>466</sup> Karahasanoğlu, *The Rebellion of 1730*, 36: "Patrona addressed the entire assemblage with these words, 'The Empire is being destroyed. The Sublime Porte has become vacant. Entire cities and fortresses have been handed over to the hands of our enemies and we must retake them. The Muscovites have seized our countrymen who escaped from the hands of Persians and have put them to death. We used to think of them as our friends, but they are now our declared enemies. We must move against them for they have joined with Persians. The blood of our countrymen cries for vengeance.'"



considerably wide perspective. The primary purpose was to better assess the place of the Ottoman Empire in the context of the globalizing world of this age. Each chapter was a quest to sketch a pattern for the different stages of the Ottoman involvement in Iran rather than as sporadic assaults and a cheap ploy to make easy conquests.

The Ottoman engagements in the Eastern Frontier from 1722 to 1729 indicate that the Ottomans were still pursuing proactive and even expansionist policies in this period, but in a way that took into consideration the changing conditions of the time. A major change in this regard was the enhanced importance of diplomacy. It is worth stressing that in his privileging of diplomacy İbrahim Pasha was not an exceptional figure in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, but rather represented a more general trend of that century. Ottoman bureaucrats who had grown up in the politically and militarily chaotic atmosphere of the late seventeenth century had developed a quest for order instead of everlasting wars. Their conceptualization of “Empire” allowed setting alliances and agreements beyond the confessional boundaries. In this respect, the Passarowitz Treaty in 1718 and the Eternal Peace Treaty with Russia in 1721 were explicit indicators of this policy of İbrahim Pasha.

What is much less recognized is the fact that in the post-Karlowitz era, the Ottoman Empire used the tools of diplomacy not only to preserve her territories but also to expand into contested frontier zones of Eurasia. This oversight is particularly acute in the case of the scholarship on the grand vizierate of İbrahim Pasha. Perhaps the person who popularized this image of a militarily passive Empire more than any one else was the historian Ahmed Refik. In his *Lâle Devri*, which coined the notion of the “Tulip Age,” Refik argued that in the period of İbrahim Pasha, “the smell of

gunpowder and blood had disappeared from Istanbul”.<sup>467</sup> This thesis has been an attempt to show that this was far from the case.

The story narrated in this thesis has also shown the limits of such an ambitious project for the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans showed a great deal of flexibility and adaptability in enlisting the help of provincial governors and their households to expand into and to consolidate their power in Iran. Nevertheless, this system failed with a crisis: the wars blazed again with the rise of new external powers and the reshuffling of the imperial politics of Europe just at the moment when the Ottomans were celebrating their victories. This crisis triggered a political crisis for the Ottoman central government. The 1730 Rebellion marked the end of a period. Nevertheless, in the long run, the Ottoman eastern policies did not diverge to a great extent from the times of İbrahim Pasha. The Ottoman army fought with Nadir Shah sixteen more years.

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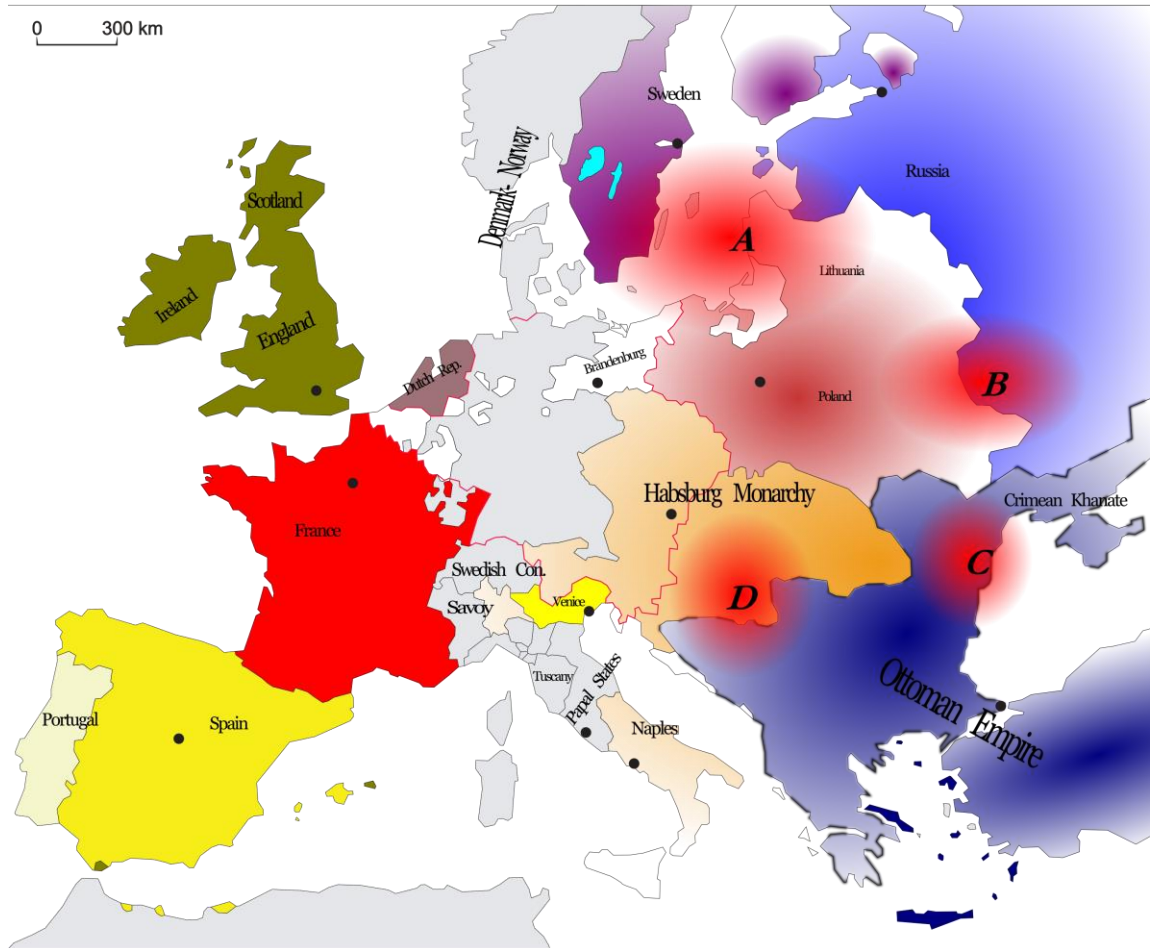
<sup>467</sup> Altınay, *Lâle Devri*, 1915, 69: “Fi-l’hakika, dokuz seneyi mütecâviz bir zaman zarfında İstanbul’da artık barut kokusu, kan lekesi görülmemeğe başlamış, fikirlerde bir nezâhet, edebiyât ve san’atta bir terakkî, kıyafette bir tebeddül, aynı zamanda fazla bir isrâf ve sefâhat de peydâ olmuşdu.”

APPENDIX

MAPS

Map 1: Europe and European Frontiers circa 1730<sup>468</sup>

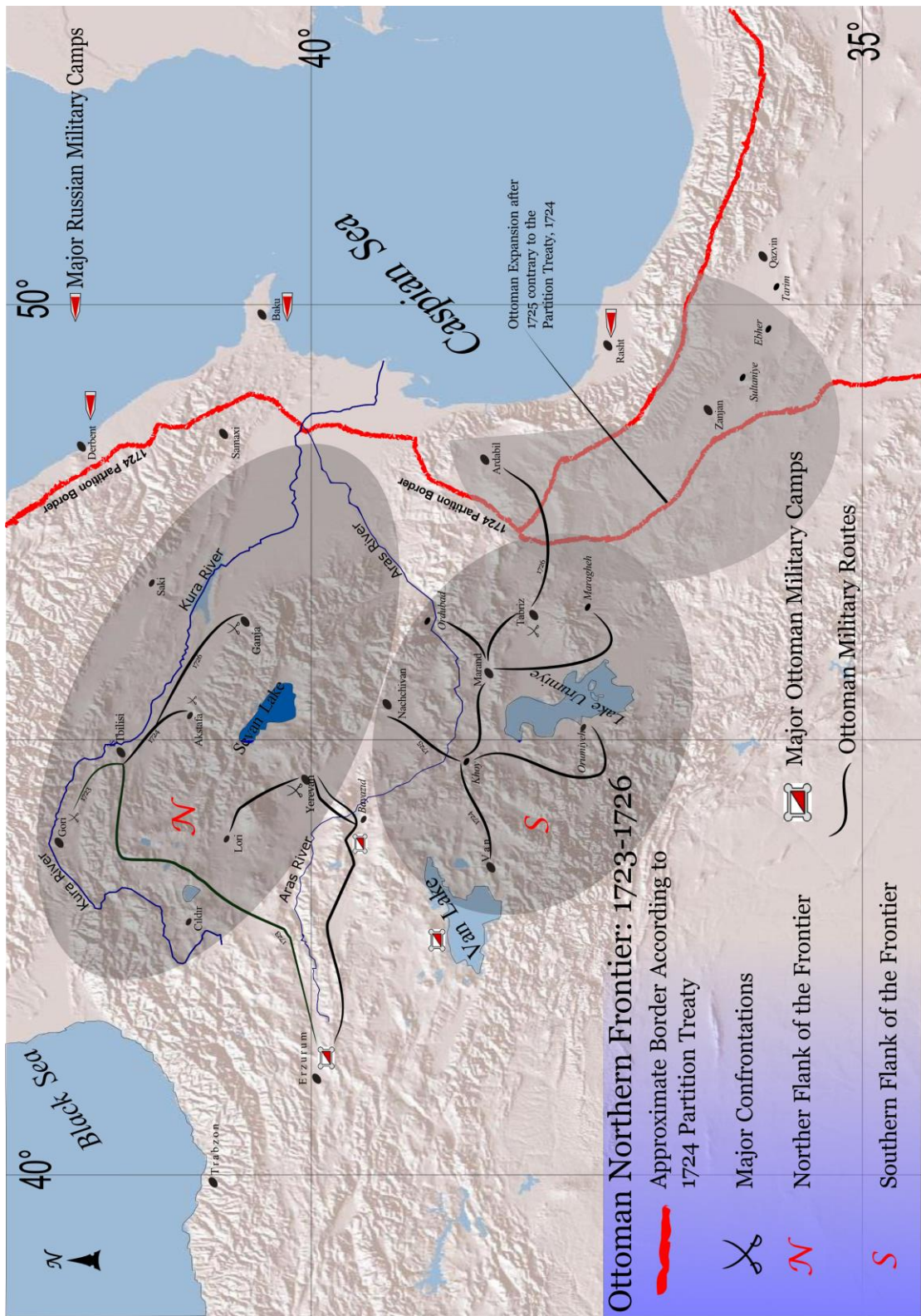
Europe, c. 1730 and  
European Frontiers



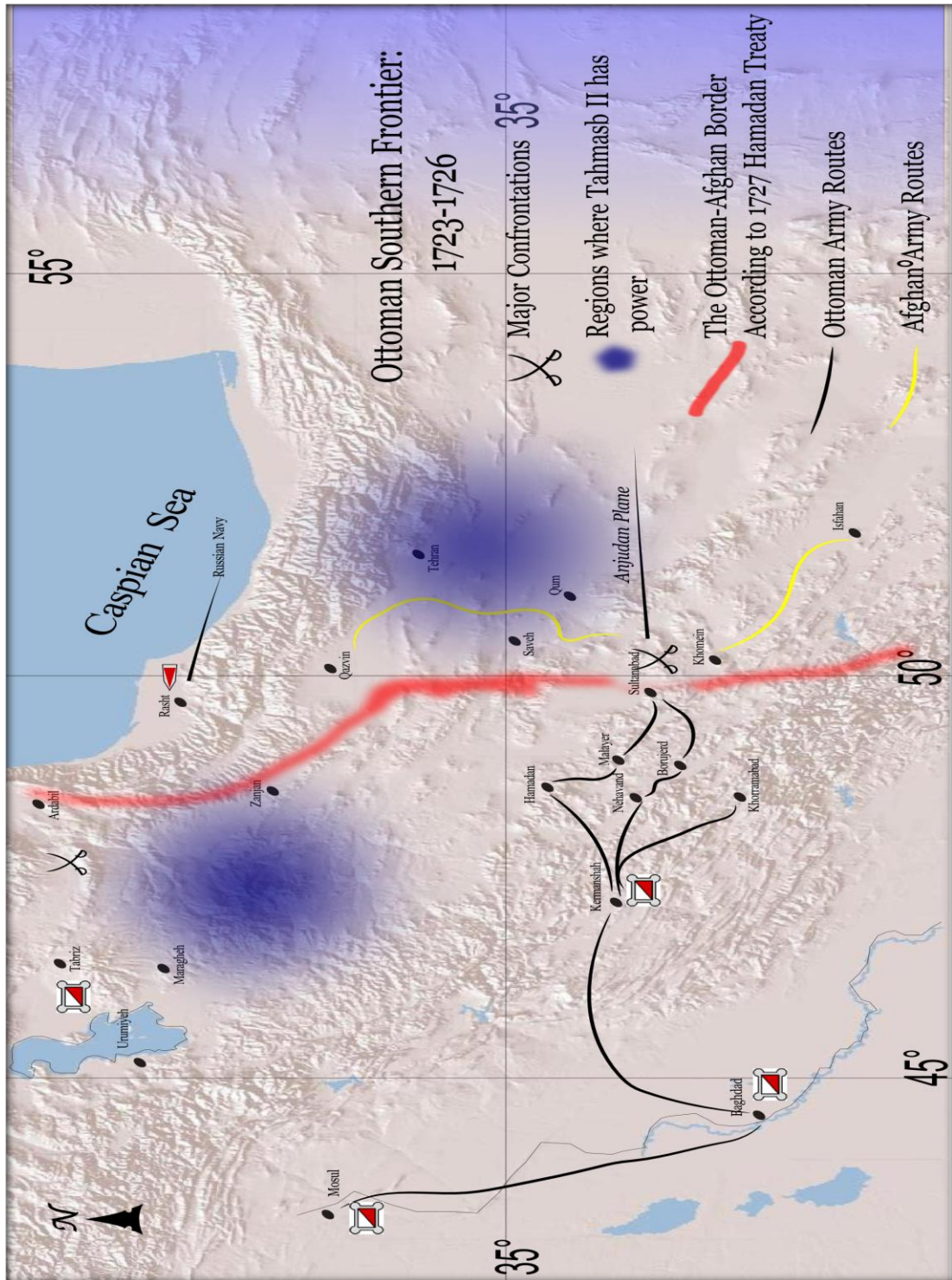
- A:** *Baltic Littoral, Major Confrontation between Russia and Sweden, 1700-1721*
- B:** *Pontic Steppe, Poland-Russia; Ottoman E.- Crimean Khnate, 1672-1700*
- C:** *Danubian Frontier, Habsburg E., Russia- Ottoman E.- 1700-1711*
- D:** *Western Balkans, Habsburg E.- Venice, Ottoman E., 1672-1718*

<sup>468</sup> These four maps are made by myself using the sources indicated in the text.

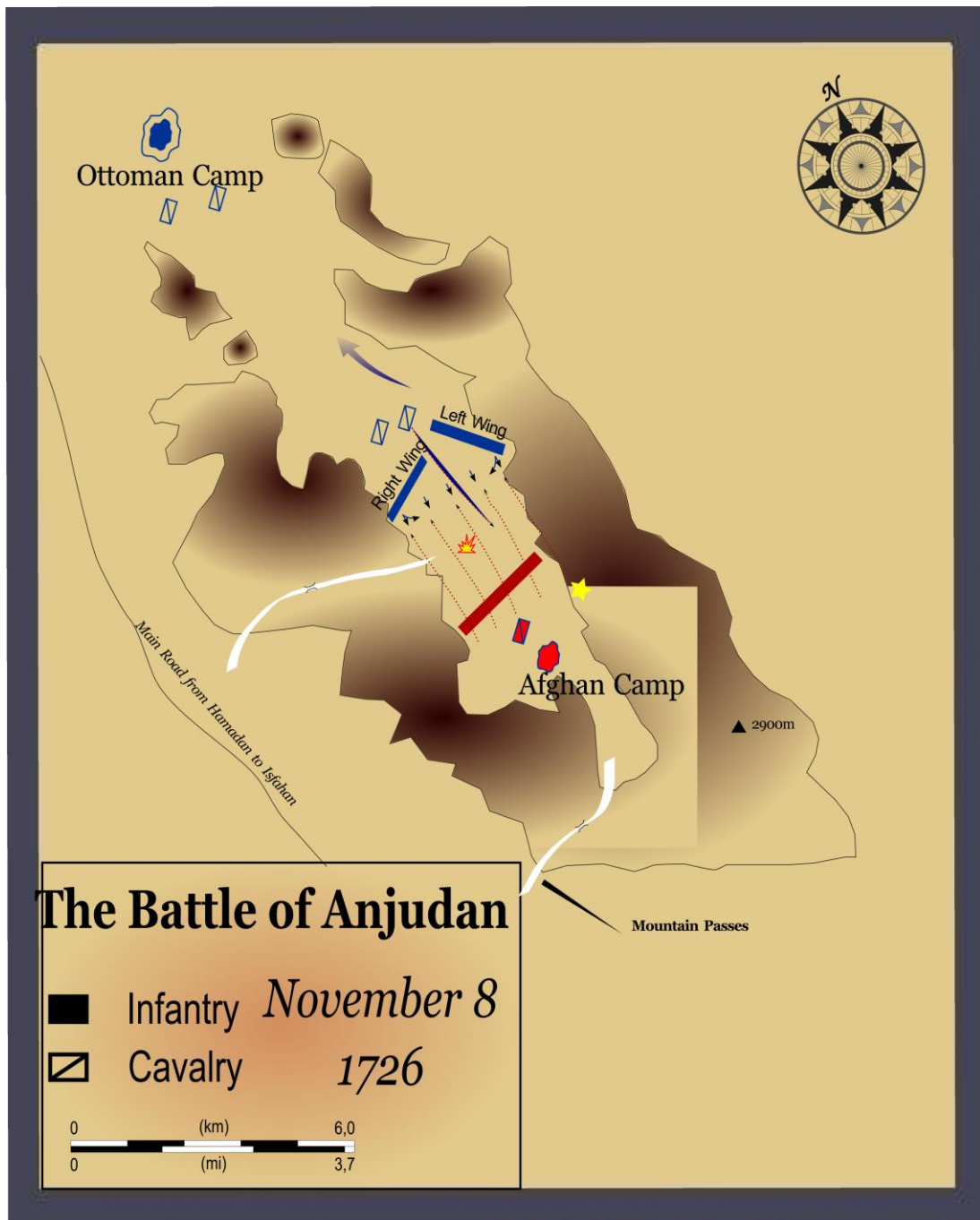
Map 2: Ottoman Northern Frontier in the Iranian Wars and the Russo-Ottoman Border according to the 1724 Partition Treaty



Map 3: Ottoman Southern Frontier in the Iranian Wars and the Afghan-Ottoman Border according to the 1727 Hamadan Peace Treaty



Map 4: Anjudan Battle, 1726



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