Ambivalent Loyalties and Imperial Citizenship on the Russo-Ottoman Border between 1878 and 1914: An Analysis of the Ottoman Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Taking as its subject the Russo-Ottoman borderland during the period between the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and the start of the First World War (1914), and making extensive use of Ottoman archival documents covering this period, this thesis focuses on the ways in which the Ottoman state attempted to establish two types of boundary in order to ensure sovereignty over its territory. Firstly, there was a new geo-political border, the line dividing the Russian and Ottoman Empires at the juncture of north-eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus, created by the Treaty of Berlin. Secondly, there was what can be called a citizenship boundary, shaped by various laws and regulations defining the Ottoman citizenry. The main issues examined in respect of the first boundary are various types of human movement across this border and their control by the Ottoman state. Primary concerns regarding the second boundary revolve around the inclusion in and exclusion from the Ottoman citizenship of ethno-religious groups as a result of the Ottoman state’s enforcement of the border.

Our approach to studying how the citizenship boundary was established is two-fold, reflecting both local and state perspectives. The local perspective shows the actions of the inhabitants and travellers passing through this border region as shaped by their own day-to-day needs, livelihood patterns and pre-existing socio-economic relations; these resisted limitation by the logic of the sovereign state. The state perspective reflects the Ottoman view of Russia as the main threat to its border territories; this view led the Ottoman central authorities to perceive the entanglements and overlapping positions of its subjects in and with Russia as the cause of their ambiguous loyalties to the Ottoman state.

In focusing on the specific policies and practices that the Ottoman state applied in order to deal with this ambiguity, two groups of people, Muslims and Armenians, are singled out. Notwithstanding the all-embracing state laws and discourse of legal equality, Ottoman border policy in respect of its Muslim subjects is shown to have differed greatly from that designed for its Armenian subjects. Therefore, the thesis offers a nuanced framework with which to understand Ottoman citizenship in the Russo-Ottoman border context, by revealing the normative and practical measures the Ottoman state employed to classify its Muslim and Armenian populations, thereby differentiating their status as subjects.

This thesis – the first English-language work on the Russo-Ottoman border region during the late nineteenth century and pre-WWI period – offers a range of original insights into this borderland in particular and related issues more generally. It unfolds the details of everyday life and represents the local people as active agents – active, moreover, in relation both to the changing nature and effectiveness of the state’s assertion of territorial authority and also to the differences between the two empires’ policies and practices. Overall, the thesis focuses on the end-of-empire border politics and the issue of Ottoman citizenship not only from the perspective of macro-level political developments and central state power but also in terms of the peripheral specificities of administration and the movements and subjecthood choices of villagers. Thus, this thesis presents a new type of multi-faceted account of borderland development in which ethno-religious considerations came to inform a somewhat messy production of sovereignty in the context of the modernizing transition between empire and nation-state.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Green line: 1856 border.

Blue line: Treaty of San Stefano (3rd March, 1878, proposed).

Red line: Treaty of Berlin (13th July, 1878, settled).

Hertslett (1891).
INTRODUCTION

This thesis looks at the Russo-Ottoman border region in the period following the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 and prior to the start of World War I. The period after this is not within the scope of my research, since it was shaped by the dynamics of World War I, and specifically by the Ottoman-Russian War that broke out at the end of October 1914, and the Russian occupation of the Eastern Anatolia in 1915. Since the line of the Russo-Ottoman border as researched here was removed during this war, the changing border dynamics needs to be addressed in a separate research. The main concern of this thesis is with Ottoman efforts to establish sovereignty on its side of the repositioned border, focusing on issues of state and citizenship. How was the Ottoman citizenry defined here? Through which policies and practices was the sovereign territory (re)constructed during this period? How were people, communities and their lands included and excluded and how did this impact on the daily lives and citizenship status of those in the borderland region?

In Ottoman-Turkish historiography, there has been a focus on the idea of Ottomanism or Ottoman citizenship as a supra national-religious identity, especially as this was expressed in the legal and institutional transformation of the Ottoman state. In this work, however, two groups of people, Muslims and Armenians, are specifically singled out and distinguished for an examination of central regulations, regional developments and local border practices in order to better understand the dynamics through time behind a particular delimitation of Ottoman citizenry. Central, here, is the issue of

1 In general terms, Ottomanism can be defined as ‘a dynastic patriotism to which all religious and ethnic communities could owe allegiance without sacrificing their own narrower aims and aspirations.’ Feroz Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 34.
ambiguity in respect to the different loyalties and belongings of Muslims and of Armenians in the eyes of Ottoman officials. From the state perspective, this ambiguity was sited in an historically and inherently uncertain borderland area made further problematic by the practical complexities of the sudden, rather arbitrary border repositioning; it was emphasized by the massive population movements across Russian and Ottoman territory as a result of that change imposed by the Treaty of Berlin; and it was made a matter of some urgency by the development of the ‘Armenian issue’, or the ‘Armenian Question’, in the context of the difficult and uncertain relationship between the two empires.

The idea of Ottomanism is conventionally regarded as an attempt at a radical break from traditional Ottoman state practice that emerged in the context of the nineteenth century centralizing reform movements. Instead of pre-modern forms of politics, in which society was stratified by religious identification, Ottomanism promoted a universalist pluralism, a modern form of political understanding based on citizenship and legal equality following the pattern of change in Europe after the French Revolution.² The development of this idea is pinned to the Gülhane Rescript of 1839, which launched the Tanzimat Reforms; the new status of Muslims and non-Muslims as citizens, undistinguished by the state, was expressed in the 1856 Reform Edict, through its declaration of the legal equality of all people of the Ottoman Empire; and this was confirmed with the First Constitution (Kanun-i Esasi, 1876), in which equal rights and obligations were articulated. According to this narrative, the subsequent period of the Hamidian regime (1876-1909) involved a growing emphasis on Islamism reversing theprevious development although the Tanzimat approach of an authoritarian and

centralizing Ottomanism was not actually ignored in practice; and then the last, ephemeral, period of hope for Ottomanism came with the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, under the slogan ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice’ although this final flourishing of Ottomanism did not last long, and it was completely abandoned with war in the Balkans (1912-13).\(^3\)

This narrative recounts the basic turning points of the chronological transformation of state-subject relations in the Ottoman Empire in respect of the idea of Ottomanism and Ottoman citizenship. It is, however, limited as an analysis of Ottoman citizenship, insofar as it takes an institutionalist approach, focusing exclusively on high politics at the expense of state discourses and practices at a local and everyday level. It thus fails to broach issues around the inclusion/exclusion or membership/non-membership of Ottoman subjects as negotiated and contested through the actual operation of officialdom ‘on the ground’ and the everyday encounters of ordinary people with the state. Indeed, if we remain content with the analysis of laws, constitutions and official documents, with a perspective based on macro-level political dynamics and developments, we become trapped in the all-embracing language of state and its formally composed texts that only allows recognition of distinction and discrimination when this reaches the point of political violence, such as, in the case of Armenians, massacre.

This thesis thus aims at providing a more nuanced account of Ottoman citizenship, through the analysis of cross-border movements of Muslims and Armenians in north-eastern Anatolia and the varying levels of permeability of the border there. Rather than limiting its analysis of Ottoman citizenship to those moments when the Ottoman

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state granted or withheld rights to and from various ethno-religious groups (both through internal processes and under foreign pressure), the present work will focus on the evolution of the administrative practice of state citizenship and the actions of Ottoman subjects. It will focus on 'how distinct groups articulated themselves' in the context of the Ottoman citizenship regime and how the boundaries of Ottoman citizenship drawn by the Ottoman state were managed and contested by distinct groups and individuals. In this regard, the Russo-Ottoman border provides us with a tangible ground, a geographically specified siting for discussion of the practice of Ottoman citizenship not only from the perspective of the Ottoman state but also from the point of view of Ottoman subjects who lived near the border and/or travelled across it.

This introductory chapter continues with a historical overview of the Russian expansion into the Caucasus, aiming to give an idea about the shifting frontiers and borderlands between the Russian and Ottoman Empire until 1878. Then, it looks at the Treaty of Berlin, for two reasons. Firstly, as mentioned, the Treaty redrew the border and thus made the territorial change to the borderland region where the Russian Caucasus meets Eastern Anatolia that precipitated mass migrations and then counter migrations; secondly, it became a turning point in the history of Ottoman Armenians, especially for those who inhabited this region. In the next section, we focus on the Ottoman state, especially from the perspective of developments related to the reform process required at Berlin for the Armenians. This consideration is divided into three subsections, looking first at the Hamidian regime and Islamism (Ottoman state identity and construction), then at the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) at the end of

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the period studied and finally at the specific issue of Armenian reform. Thereafter, we present the theoretical framework. Contextualized as a reading of the relevant literature, this introduces, among others, the idea of ambiguity created by the very stipulation of a borderline designed to clarify status; the idea of ‘strangeness’ as an object of distrust and prompting legislation in respect of the imperial borderlands; and the conceptualization of ‘citizenship boundary’ to deal with the strangers, taking into account its effects on the cross-border movement of local people and the special case of the Armenians in contradistinction to Muslims. Concluding this Introduction, an outline of the four main chapters is given.

Russia’s Southern Expansion in the Caucasus until 1878

The Russian Empire had already had more than three hundred years of experience in ruling its ever expanding and transforming south-eastern border before the (re)formation of the Russo-Ottoman border in 1878. Prior to that, the Caucasus had mainly been an area of contention between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid dynasty of Persia. It was in the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries that the foundation of Fort Terk on the north-eastern corner of the North Caucasus and the establishment of the Cossack settlements along the Terek and Kuban rivers initiated the Muscovite state’s incremental expansion into the Caucasus. Then, during the reign of Peter the Great (1689-1725), Russians motivated by the long-cherished goal of controlling the all-water route from the Baltic to the Caspian inevitably encountered the Ottomans on the Black Sea coast as well as the Safavids on

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5 For the entangled relations between these two empires before the 19th century, see Fariba Zarinebaf, ‘Rebels and Renegades on Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Porous Frontiers and Hybrid Identities’, in Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (eds.), *Iran Facing Others. Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 79-97.

the Caspian. Although later forced to retreat behind their borders established during Peter the Great’s reign, Russians had nevertheless gained a taste for expansion from this adventure in the south and started to play an increasing role in upping the imperial rivalries in the region. Under Catherine the Great (1762-96), they followed a prudent and cautious policy aimed at gradually extending Russia’s scope of authority throughout the Caucasus. And by the end of the late eighteenth century, the North Caucasus was turned into a Russian imperial borderland as a result of the ‘deliberate and consistent’ colonial policies of the Russian government.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire not only strengthened its position at the northern part of the Caucasus mountain range but also annexed the Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in the south, deposing the ancient Bagratid dynasty. It further consolidated its power against its Ottoman and Safavid Islamic rivals in the struggle over the Caucasian region with the treaties of Bucharest (1812), Gulistan (1813), Turkmanchai (1828) and Adrianople (1829). The Russian state smoothly integrated the Georgians into the empire. While it eliminated the threat of ‘a common Islamic front’ in the south, however, consolidation of its rule was not so

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7 Thus did the three empires clash (there were several other points of contact and areas of contention, of course; here, we focus only on the Caucasus). 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), p. 378.


9 For the period between the first and second Russo-Iranian wars (1813-26) and the later change of perception of Iranians on the military superiority of Russians in the region see Maziar Behrooz, ‘From confidence to apprehension: Early Iranian interaction with Russia’, in Stephen Cronin (ed.), Iranian-Russian Encounters. Empires and Revolutions since 1800 (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 49-68, and Rudi Matthee, ‘Facing a Rude and Barbarous Neighbour: Iranian Perceptions of Russia and the Russians from the Safavids to the Qajars’, in Iran Facing Others, pp. 99-123.

10 Austin Jersild argues that Georgians integrated into the imperial system without much resistance due to their Christian identity. While this caused the transformation of the Georgian self-image vis-à-vis the Muslim mountaineers, it also helped members of Georgian educated society (sazogadoeba) to seek their own place and mission within the empire. Austin Jersild, Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917 (Montreal& Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).
easy in the north, which was mostly populated by highly militarized Muslims. The Russian state had managed to suppress the Murid revolt by 1860, but similar, albeit unorganized uprisings persisted until the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877.\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless, by the late 1870s, Russia had established its supremacy in the region and succeeded in maintaining a considerable amount of influence not only on the peoples of the Caucasus but beyond, to Eastern Anatolia.\textsuperscript{12}

One of the main ethnic groups to be directly affected by the fluctuating Ottoman, Iranian and Russian frontiers in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia from the mid-sixteenth century were the Armenians. Indeed, ‘historic Armenia’ was one of the primary sites of this imperial competition. As a result of the Ottoman-Persian Treaty of Zuhab (1639), this territory became divided into Eastern and Western Armenia.\textsuperscript{13} Eastern Armenia, including the khanates of Erevan and Nakhichevan, was later ceded to Russia by the Russian-Persian Treaty of Turkmanchai (1828), which concluded a brief (two-year) Russo-Persian War. Russian rule in Eastern Armenia was finally confirmed by the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) concluding the one-year Russo-Ottoman War, and the region began to be regarded as Russian Armenia, and labelled thus.

When Eastern Armenia came under Russian control, the majority of the population there was Muslim.\textsuperscript{14} The Russian march into the region and the Caucasus in general,

\textsuperscript{11} For a brief explanation of the conquest of Transcaucasia and a detailed work on the militarized Muslim frontier society of North Caucasus, see Moshe Gammer, \textit{Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan} (Portland: Frank Cass, 1994).

\textsuperscript{12} Rieber, 2014: 371-394.

\textsuperscript{13} Despite the (‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’) labels, there was no fixed boundary line dividing them, and they were generally named rather according to the imperial state holding that part of Armenia (so Persian dominion determining the ‘Eastern’ name and Ottoman the ‘Western’). Rouben Paul Adalian, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Armenia} (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), pp. 335-7.

\textsuperscript{14} Until the mid-fourteenth century, despite the devastation of previous wars, the majority of the population of Eastern Armenia remained Armenian, so Christian. However, according to the survey carried out by the Russian government between 1829 and 1832, Muslims had come to form 80 percent or more of the population. In the Russian province of Armenia, the Armenians only formed half of the total population in 1832. George A. Bournoutian, “The Ethnic Composition and the Socio-Economic
however, led to major population movements of Armenians and Muslims. An estimated 57,000 Armenians left Persia and Anatolia for Eastern Armenia following the Russian annexation, while some 35,000 Muslims counter-migrated (i.e. moved in the reverse direction). By the end of the Crimean War (1854-56) and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, which increased Muslim immigration to the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian population had attained a majority position in Eastern Armenia. In Ottoman (Western) Armenia, meanwhile, the opposite process occurred. Based on ‘rough estimates’, Justin McCarthy hazards that some 50,000 Armenian migrants left for the Russian territory after the Crimean War, followed by a further 25,000 after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78.

A corresponding emigration of Muslims occurred in Russia, where a huge mass of Muslim people from the Crimea and the Caucasus left for the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the Crimean War. Tens of thousands of Muslims moved into the Ottoman Empire from Russia before and during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, and then hundreds of thousands moved afterwards. For the purpose of this thesis, the exact

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Bournoutian states that in spite of the population change in Eastern Armenia in favour of Armenians after these wars, the Muslim population in Erivan remained in the majority up to the twentieth century. Bournoutian, 1983: 80. See also Richard G. Hovannisian, ‘Russian Armenia. A Century of Tsarist Rule’, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge, Bd. 19, H. 1 (March 1971), pp. 31-48.


The total number of emigrants from Russian Empire to Ottoman Empire during this period is highly conjectural. For Fisher, there were 500,000 (or at least 700,000) and possibly as many as 900,000 between 1855 and 1866; for Erkan, 500,000 between 1878 and 1908; for McCarthy, 600,000 between 1856 and 1864 and 200,000 after 1864 (from the Caucasus); for Holquist, two million between 1859 and
numbers and figures of migrations are not overly important; the real interest lies in the fact that whilst Russia was enlarging its borders in Transcaucasia at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, large-scale and violent demographic changes played havoc with human lives and left an indelible trace on the socio-economic and ethnic structure of the Russo-Ottoman borderland and general consciousness of both the people living there and the authorities concerned with oversight and control of the region.  

**The Treaty of Berlin (13th July, 1878)**

The Treaty of Berlin officially ended the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and delimited a new border between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. Other than the valley of Alashkerd and the town of Bayezid, Russia kept all its territorial gains in the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire agreed earlier in the year in the Treaty of San Stefano (3rd March, 1878). As a result, Kars, Ardahan and Batum were ceded to Russia. In addition to this redrawing of the Russo-Ottoman border, the Treaty of Berlin had two outcomes of importance to the present work. First, there was the incongruity between the


20 For a good overview on the experiences of various ethno-religious groups that (have) entered a process of involuntary displacement and relocation in the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries, Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

officially redrawn borders on the map and the demographic reality on the ground. Given the ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity of Eastern Anatolia, like the Ottoman Balkans, the other pincer of Russian advance ratified at Berlin, it was by no means possible to satisfy the demands of all groups during the Congress because ‘drawing maps according to majorities would have left sizable minorities in each region.’

But really, neither demographic realities nor the wishes of the inhabitants of these regions were among the concerns of the delegates who wrote the articles of the Treaty of Berlin anyway. Unlike the Treaty of San Stefano, the Treaty of Berlin only implicitly acknowledged religious freedom and the civic rights of minorities in any of the new states (specifically of Article XLIV). And neither was there very much political precedent for these notions in European diplomacy, and nor did the signatory (and other, small) states have any inclination to enforce the implementation of these freedoms and rights. Without any great knowledge of any particular part of the areas where the Russian and Ottoman Empires met to inform their cartography, the delegates fixed on

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21 Justin McCarthy, ‘Ignoring the People. The Effects of the Congress of Berlin’, in M. Hakan Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (eds.), *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), p. 432. This was indeed the modernist problem of nation-state, whose homogeneous identity in theory cannot be simply superimposed on as though contiguous with the shared, typically patchwork reality of lived space. On the problematic idea that the borders of state and nation should coincide, see e.g. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). In the region considered here, it was not usual to find different ethno-religious combinations – of, so-called, Muslim Turks and Kurds (Sunni or Alevi), Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Christians (but sometimes Catholic or Protestant) along with others (Laz, Circassian, Abkhazian, Syriac/Assyrian etc.) – living in close proximity, in neighbouring villages and even quarters of villages (see the comments on shatter zones, below).

politically strategic lines designing countries and setting imperial limits that also happened to trigger profound and deep changes in people’s lives. It was not merely the borders that would change, since the minorities of inchoate states and the new ethno-religious others of the Empires were *de facto* forced to leave their homelands. That is, they were put into a situation where they saw no viable alternative but to become refugees or emigrants, fugitives from their own homes and lands.

The other important outcome of the Treaty of Berlin for this thesis was the emergence of the national idea as a contemporary concept informing international diplomacy which would, indeed, ultimately be crucial as rationale in the dismemberment of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. As Michael A. Reynolds contends, the national idea *per se* was not a political reality at the time of the Berlin Congress but rather served as a political instrument in the competition among the European powers.\(^{23}\) That the Armenian Question of the Ottoman Empire was for the first time officially addressed in the international arena, however, did have a lot to do with the emergence and instrumentalization of the national idea through the Treaty.

Reynolds suggests that in terms of Armenians, the historical impact of the Treaty of Berlin did not actually result from the recognition of their predicament in Eastern Anatolia but from ‘the way in which it [the Treaty] singled out Armenians based on ethnicity and granted to outside powers the prerogative to intervene on their behalf.’\(^{24}\) Article LXI, which addressed the Armenian issue, not only prioritized ethnicity as a crucial criterion in claims for territorial sovereignty but also brought Armenians face-to-face with the question of how they could peacefully co-exist with the other


\(^{24}\) Reynolds, 2011: 15.
ethnicities in Eastern Anatolia, which were overwhelmingly Muslim. In the next section, we argue that the internationalization of the Armenian issue, the way the European powers and the Ottoman state dealt with this issue in the subsequent years and the very process itself even shaped the fundamental relationship between the Ottoman state and Armenians, rendering the latter increasingly suspect in the eyes of the former.

**The Treaty of Berlin and the Armenians**

In the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin, Armenians emerged on the international scene as an entity recognised by the Powers as a distinct ethnic group, with Article XVI of the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano becoming ‘the first international compact which mentions Armenia’. According to this provision, Russia was defined as the guardian of ‘improvement and reforms demanded by local requirements’ to be undertaken by the Porte in ‘Armenia’ (or ‘the provinces inhabited by Armenians’). The European representatives at the Congress of Berlin were uncomfortable with this since it implied that Russian troops would not relinquish their military occupation of the Armenian territories in Eastern Anatolia until the introduction of the promised (but unspecified) measures. In short, Europe did not want to give Russia military control over the strategically important territories of Eastern Anatolia.

In fact, what really mattered to the European powers was the use to which the Armenian complaints could be put in the sphere of international diplomacy rather than

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26 Article XVI stipulated that ‘[As] the evacuation by the Russian troops of the territory which they occupy in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications detrimental to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the Sublime Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians.’ Hertslet, 1891: 2686.
the grounds for the complaints themselves. Indeed, as Count Shuvalov, one of the plenipotentiaries for Russia at the Congress, admitted to the Armenian delegates, ‘This congress has no time to busy itself with your [the Armenian] question’. The ‘question’ would only to be addressed sporadically during the sessions, and then in relation to power balancing. On 8th July, 1878, the revised article on Armenians was agreed upon. Article LXI of the Treaty of Berlin removed all reference to Russia (and Armenia as a territory), leaving oversight of the Porte’s reforms in the Armenian inhabited provinces to ‘the Powers’, who were to be kept informed of and ‘superintend’ the process. Russia was thereby included but not prioritized or militarily empowered, yet Ottoman territorial sovereignty over its newly defined north-eastern border region was still undermined by the Powers, who were – somehow – to supervise the Muslim protection of its Christians.

Article LXI was problematic in terms of Realpolitik for two reasons. Firstly, it referred to a remote region that was hard to control and govern (it was peripheral both to the two empires most concerned, as well as to European interests more generally); secondly, the entity charged with guaranteeing the reforms, the Powers, was not united and credible. These factors diminished the responsibility to the European powers that the Porte felt with regard to the implementation of the reforms. Yet, it was clear that, the governance of its east Anatolian lands was no longer just a domestic issue for the Porte after the Treaty of Berlin, since, despite its ambiguity, Article LXI did grant a legal status to Armenians that was to be enjoyed on the international arena. Therefore, it

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28 In full: ‘The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application.’ Hertslet, 1891: 2796.
was not the internal dynamics of the Ottoman state alone that determined the type of measures taken with regard to the Armenian issue; these changes were also determined by the struggles taking place among the European powers with stakes in the region.\textsuperscript{30}

\textit{The Hamidian Regime, Islamism and Reform Process}

The Hamidian regime took over the major goals of the \textit{Tanzimat} period, such as centralization and reform, but it subordinated them to the unity and survival of the Muslim populations of the Empire. After considerable land and population losses, especially in the Balkan Peninsula, the Ottoman state began to see the Anatolian territory as key in ‘the drive for Muslim unity’.\textsuperscript{31} However, this was no easy task. The regime had to restore its authority in Eastern Anatolia, where Muslims (including Muslim immigrants from the lost territories), as well as significant numbers of Armenians and other non-Muslim peoples, lived together whilst expressing a range of hopes and aspirations with regard to possible modes of sovereignty. It was apparent that the restoration of state power in Eastern Anatolia would not be possible without the co-opting of the local Islamic ‘notables’ who had been alienated from the operation of the imperial rule during the \textit{Tanzimat}, above all, the Kurds – politically their tribal leaders – who felt isolated and disparaged in the aftermath of the Treaty of Berlin.\textsuperscript{32}

Armenians aspired to have an ‘autonomous Armenia’ in Eastern Anatolia, the very place that the Hamidian regime planned to consolidate state authority, and by relying

\textsuperscript{32} Duguid, 1973: 139-140; Kieser, 2005: 174.
on discourses referring to Islamic unity. It was this that lay behind the state’s decision to co-opt the Kurdish tribes, which they were hard to govern or control, being regarded as ‘one of these hostile elements’ in Eastern Anatolia. The state’s commitment to this policy was embodied in the creation of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments, ‘an irregular militia composed of select Kurdish tribes’, by Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1890. Transforming Kurdish tribes ‘from a local power that was a challenge to state authority into an arm of state authority itself’ gave the state leverage to deal with ‘the other threats’ in the region, particularly from Russia, which continued to enhance its influence in the region, especially on Armenians. The Ottoman state was unable to ensure the complete loyalty of the Hamidiye regiments, and it was unable to diminish the power of Kurdish tribal leaders through them; nonetheless, in creating these regiments, it effectively instituted local agents of the Ottoman state ideology in Eastern Anatolia.

A concomitant policy of the settlement of nomadic Kurdish tribes as part of the modern Ottoman state construction of space as sovereign territory coincided with the usurpation of land belonging to Armenian peasants in Eastern Anatolia. This became the main principle of the regime’s centralization policy, especially after the Russo-Ottoman War, although the usurpation of lands belonging to Armenians had occasionally taken place before the war too, when it was the main cause of their complaints. The reports of a special commission appointed by the Armenian National

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33 According to M. Hakan Yavuz, the transformation of the Ottoman perception of Armenians into ‘a security concern’ can be found in Armenians’ occasional collaboration with Russia in Eastern Anatolia during the war, their active involvement in the Congress of Berlin under the leadership of Patriarch Nerses Varjabedian and their articulation of what they came to call ‘autonomous Armenia’. M. Hakan Yavuz, ‘The Transformation of ‘Empire’ through Wars and Reforms. Integration vs Oppression’, in War and Diplomacy, p. 41.

34 The regime identified, or at least perceived several threats (internal and external) in Eastern Anatolia that required urgent attention. The substantial external threat was Russia, which enhanced its influence in the region, especially on Armenians. Janet Klein, Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 3.
Assembly in Istanbul provided details about ‘oppressive acts’ against Armenians in the eastern provinces (approximately from mid-April, 1872, to the end of August, 1876). However, contends Stephan H. Astourian, the process of dispossessing Armenians began in the late 1850s and 1860s (with the partial resettlement of Muslim refugees from the Caucasus to lands around Armenian areas), and it continued throughout the period, to World War I.35

In general, various inter-ethnic tensions caused by the conflict over land and land-based resources intensified as a result of the resettlement policies of the Ottoman government.36 Apart from these problems, Armenians faced other challenges and discriminatory restrictions, such as abuses in the tax system, non-admission of Christian testimony before the Islamic courts of law, arbitrary rule of government officials and incidents of not only brigand but also civilian brutality. As Astourian states, it was the inability of the Ottoman state to solve these problems that caused the internationalization of the Armenian question in 1878.37

The British Embassy in Istanbul had a crucial role in shaping the early stage of discussions regarding reform in the Ottoman Empire. Ambassador Henry Layard had already presented a reform proposal to the Porte at the end of 1879, touching upon problems in Eastern Anatolia ranging from tax collection to the administrative and

36 Thus, ‘it was not only Armenians but also other native groups had problems with Balkan and Caucasian immigrants’. Ohannes Kılıçdağı, Socio-political Reflections and Expectations of the Ottoman Armenians after the 1908 Revolution: Between Hope and Despair, PhD Dissertation (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, 2014), p. 168. (for Armenians’ ideas about immigrants, see pp. 153-155).
37 Astourian, 2011: 56, 60; Sarkissian, 1938: 37. The Ottoman state’s incapacity to sort out provincial Armenian problems does not mean that Ottoman Armenians did not negotiate the Tanzimat reforms in their own interest. In order to understand how they ‘perceived, responded to, and adapted the Tanzimat reforms’, see Masayuki Ueno, “‘For the Fatherland and the state’: Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat Reforms’, Int. J. Middle East Stud. 45 (2013), 93–109.
legal systems. Then, the Porte decided to appoint two commissions for the southern and northern Armenian districts, but only to pay lip service to European demands and actually motivated more by its intention to re-establish control in the region. Within a decade of the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, Ottoman central officials were tending to parry inquiries into the question of reform in Eastern Anatolia, usually by emphasizing financial constraints. Meanwhile, no substantial proposal for reform was put forward by the European powers.

In spite of the continuation of Armenians’ complaints and occasional reactions, a relative stillness permeated the Eastern provinces. But it was like the calm before the storm, and the silence was broken when a series of disturbances caused ferocious battles between Kurdish tribes and Armenians in August 1894 in Sasun (then the province of Bitlis). Multiple reasons can be cited to explain the background of the massacres of Armenians in Sasun, such as Armenians’ disinclination to pay double taxation, their collaboration with revolutionary activists, the power balance between Armenians and Kurdish tribes and the arbitrary rule of the governor of Bitlis, Hasan Tahsin Pasha. After the Sasun incidents in 1894, the Armenians began to be perceived as a real threat by the central authorities, which caused a further rift between Armenians and the Ottoman state.

39 Medlicott noted that ‘the commissioners themselves appeared on the whole reasonably vigorous and well-intentioned, but fatal apathy or more positive hostility of the Porte prevented any considerable progress’. Medlicott, 1938: 324-325.
Unable to resist the European powers any longer, the Sultan appointed a commission of enquiry in mid-December consisting of the British, French and Russian consular officials to examine the events in Sasun. In May, 1895, while the commission was in Sasun, the ambassadors of these countries presented the Sultan with a memorandum and a new project of reforms for the Eastern provinces of Asia Minor. The first point emphasized in the memorandum concerned the modification of the administrative borders of six provinces (Erzurum, Van, Mamuret-ül-Aziz, Diyarbakir, Sivas and Bitlis) according to ethnicity-based criteria. The unification of some of these provinces was stipulated, while the drawing of new administrative borders was to be tailored ‘to divide the population into ethnographical groups of as homogenous a character as possible in the different administrative divisions of each province.’

Apart from the creation of ethnically homogenous administrative divisions, one of the main concerns of the Armenian reform project was to increase the participation of non-Muslims at various levels of local and provincial administrations. The plan was to allow non-Muslims to be represented in the administrative, judicial and police services, generally in proportion to their estimated population size in each provincial unit. The Sultan refused these proposals on the basis that they violated his sovereign rights.

However, a revised version of the reform project and memorandum was accepted by

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the Ottoman government in mid-October, 1895.\textsuperscript{44} Somewhat remarkably, this revised project showed that the Ottoman authorities did act with deliberation regarding Armenian participation in matters of state, allowing representation in the provincial administrative mechanism if not at higher levels or in security matters.\textsuperscript{45}

The Committee of Inspection for Reforms, under the presidency of Ahmet Şakir Pasha, departed for Anatolia on 24\textsuperscript{th} August, 1895 in order to make on-the-spot investigations and follow the implementation of the agreed reform project. The work of this committee can be taken as an Ottoman state attempt to increase its infrastructural power in Anatolia, one that was to a limited extent realized.\textsuperscript{46} It is beyond doubt that the financial limitations of the Ottoman government did hinder the implementations of these reforms and also that the involvement of the Sultan demonstrated the extent of the state’s interest in the Armenian reform project. But it was an entirely duplicitous commitment, for while the Sultan seemed to be tackling the issue of reform, bestowing justice and serving the interests of Armenians, he was actually following a completely different policy, including the employment of murderous violence to pacify Armenians all around the Empire.\textsuperscript{47} This was most evident in the Sultan’s implicit threat that if the reforms went too far and were introduced too quickly, they might provoke Muslims and cause further bloody conflicts: the Sultan, notes Elke Hartmann, ‘had made it all too clear to the European delegates that if they imposed far-reaching

\textsuperscript{44} Karaca, 2001: 29.
\textsuperscript{45} Dündar, 2012: 50-51; Salt, 1990: 318 and 321. According to Mesrob K. Krikorian, who focuses on the participation of the Armenian community in Ottoman public life in Eastern Anatolia (also including Cilicia) and Ottoman Syria between 1860 and 1908, political factors were decisive in determining the Armenians’ role in Ottoman governmental affairs. According to him, ‘in municipalities and in finance departments the Armenians were included, comparatively speaking, in considerable numbers and continuously; whereas in administrative and judicial councils they were kept to a minority, and as to the police force Armenians appear to have been barred from participation.’ Mesrob K. Krikorian, \textit{Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908} (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 109.
Armenian reforms he would not be able to contain the rage of his Muslim compatriots’. ⁴⁸

The May Reforms of 1895 were the last chance to implement the Armenian reforms in Eastern Anatolia as jointly accepted by the European powers and the Ottoman state during the Hamidian regime. Despite the continuation of the Committee’s work for five years, the agenda of the Ottoman Empire shifted abruptly with the Greek rebellion against the Ottomans in Crete in 1896 and then outbreak of war between Greece and the Ottomans in April, 1897. From that time until the end of the Balkan Wars (1912-13), the Armenian issue did not emerge in international affairs as an urgent concern even despite the extensive publicity in the West given to the 1894-96 massacres. Thus, the Ottoman Armenians would have to wait until the end of 1913 for the reform plan to be raised again, when Russia brought up the issue. ⁴⁹ However, this time they had to confer with the leaders of the CUP, which emerged on the political scene after its revolutionary success in July 1908 and consolidated its power after the Unionist coup of January 1913.

The Committee of Union and Progress and Reform Process

The founders of the CUP were all Muslims but only with a small minority of Ottoman Turks. Dubbed ‘children of the borderlands’ by Erik Jan Zürcher, since they originated from the imperial peripheries, they came together in 1889 to organize strategies to

⁴⁹ For a detailed analysis of the historical background of this event see Onur Onol, The Evolution of Tsarist Policy on the Armenian Question in the South Caucasus (1903-1914), PhD Dissertation, (Birkbeck, University of London, 2014), pp. 194-250.
remove the Hamidian regime. Their almost two-decade long cooperation paved the way for the Young Turk revolution of July, 1908 and the inauguration of constitutional government. In order to understand the CUP’s involvement in the Armenian reform process, one needs to look at the crucial historical moments that raised among Armenians the idea and hope of solving their problems within the structure of Ottoman parliamentary politics.

According to Garabet K. Mumdjian, it was Sultan Abdülhamid’s decided unwillingness to execute the proposed reforms that prompted the formation of the Armenian revolutionary movements in the Ottoman Empire, and it was during this time (1895-97) that the first meaningful Armenian-CUP contacts were made. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), which took the leading role in the Armenian community after one of the oldest Armenian political parties, the Hunchakian Party, split in 1896 conspired with the CUP against Abdülhamid’s rule, notwithstanding their clear ideological differences. As in the fleeting case of the first Ottoman constitutional period (23rd December, 1876 to 14th February, 1878), the Armenians were again among the staunch supporters of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, having thrown themselves into the revolution that precipitated it. The restitution of lands to rightful owners and execution of reforms were essential demands on the new regime made by the ARF, which ascertained that the realization of these was essential to meet ‘the promise of [their] equal status as Ottoman citizens’. As Dikran M. Kaligian notes, ‘given

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the rhetoric of the constitutional movement and the critical role unequal status played in the dispossessions, this was not an illogical conclusion’.\(^{52}\)

The so-called ‘Young Turk’ revolution was not a very liberal reform movement, however. The CUP leaders regarded themselves as ‘saviours of the empire’ whose primary aim was not a ‘destruction and creative reconstruction’, but rather ‘conversation and survival’.\(^{53}\) ARF members, despite the wide-range of different voices among them, soon realized, therefore, that their expectations of the new regime were not consistent with the CUP’s conservative approach and pro-Turkish nationalistic tendencies, which led the CUP to adopt ‘a vague and shifting interpretation of Ottomanism’ while dealing with diverse population groups.\(^{54}\) At its Sixth World Congress, which met in Istanbul in the summer of 1911, the ARF was already proclaiming that, despite promising initiatives at the very beginning and improvements in a few trivial issues, the CUP could neither realize the main expectations of Armenians nor achieve reconciliation between various sections of the Ottoman community.\(^{55}\) And by the outbreak of the First Balkan War in October 1912, the ARF had declared the end of its cooperation with the CUP. Thwarted in their hopes of gaining support from this direction, Armenians decided to begin to look for other ways

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\(^{54}\) Hanıoğlu, 2008: 78. For the disagreement between the Eastern and Western bureau of the ARF, see Kaligian, 2011: 131-132, 136-137, 139, 148.

\(^{55}\) Kaligian, 2011: 85-86. What mainly disgruntled the Armenians were the Adana massacres of 1909, the unwillingness of the CUP to challenge the power of large land-owners, the lack of progress in the land reform, the re-organization of Hamidiye Regiments between 1908 and 1910 under a different name (‘Tribal Regiments’), the ephemeral nature of the security improvements in Eastern Anatolia, the resettlement of Muslim immigrants and granting to them of titles to lands in Armenian villages, and the strategies the CUP pursued during the election. Kaligian, 2011: 48, 60, 68-73, 108, 130. Roderic H. Davison, *The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914* (New York: The Armenian National Council of America, 1948) pp. 2-3.
to secure the reforms they desired, as well as ‘autonomy’ as an end goal, and they bided their time until the peace negotiations ending the Balkan Wars.

At this point, in 1913, Russia for the first time took the initiative concerning the implementation of reforms in the six provinces. The realpolitik calculations of Russia led it to support the idea of Armenian autonomy, and the dragoman (interpreter) of the Russian Embassy in Istanbul, André Mandelstam, put forward a reform scheme.\(^{56}\)

For the Ottomans, the alarming thing about Mandelstam’s reform plan was that he proposed the union of the six provinces into one, to be placed under the control of a governor-general preferably nominated by the European powers from among Ottoman Christians or Europeans. Another proposal that worried the Ottoman state was the demand for equal representation of Muslims and non-Muslims in the provincial councils and the state bureaucracy in these provinces.\(^{57}\)

The CUP responded by resisting the proposed reform, arguing that any attempt which could be considered as an interference in the Ottoman internal affairs, especially for the reason of passing reforms on non-Muslims’ behalf, was unacceptable.\(^{58}\) In this regard, they did not lose any time in drawing up their own reform project, which differed sharply from Mandelstam’s proposal, not only by transferring the responsibility of control of the region to the Porte but also by offering the creation of

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\(^{56}\) Davison, 1948: 4-9, 16. As Onol argues, the ‘concern for the Armenian reform process remained consistent with the prudent Russian foreign policy-making about the Ottoman Empire between 1912 and 1914’. Onol, 2014: 258.


\(^{58}\) Hanioğlu, 2011: 84.
two general-inspectorates. On 8th February, 1914, an Ottoman-Russian agreement was reached on the final version of the scheme.59 Two inspectorates were to be created (one consisting of the provinces of Van, Bitlis, Harput and Diyarbakır, the other of Trabzon, Erzurum, and Sivas), on the stipulation that ‘the powers should recommend verbally to the Porte two inspectors general, who should have a rather extensive control’.60 The Porte selected Major N. Hoff of the Norwegian Army and M. Westenenk, a Dutch colonial administrator, as inspectors general, but they had to quit their positions and jobs just three months after their arrival in Istanbul due to the outbreak of the First World War, in August, 1914.61 At this point, it can be concluded that the highly problematic and for the Ottomans onerous undertaking of the Armenian reform project had largely arrived back at the same place it had begun, 36 years previously.62

The Relevance of the Armenian Reform Issue

As argued above, the debate surrounding the Armenian reform issue lasting for more than three decades inevitably rendered the sovereign rights of the Ottoman state problematic. Hans-Lukas Kieser has recently emphasized that ‘CUP members had signalled to Armenian representatives that by broaching the issue of reform internationally, they had crossed a red line with regard to a common future’ and that the ‘sovereignty of the state was a taboo issue even if the state was manifestly dysfunctional with regard to the challenges of security, law, and order it faced in its...

60 Davison, 1948: 16-17, 24.
62 Indeed, the Ottomans accepted the February 8th agreement as almost a return to the original provision of San Stefano (in Article XVI), which, for the Russians, was finally executed by it. Türkmen, 2006: 56, 58.
eastern provinces’. It was not only CUP members who harshly criticized politically-oriented Armenians seeking international support, since the internationalization of the Armenian reform issue was also regarded as a threat to the sovereignty of the Ottoman state by the Hamidian regime. While the Ottoman state perceived those particular Armenians as a cause of this threat, the resolute attitude of Armenians more generally in demanding the reforms and their reaction to the Ottoman state’s reluctance to carry them out in Eastern Anatolia actually rendered the Armenians as a people a real security threat.

The reform process turned into a dilemma for the Ottoman state. It desperately needed to introduce a number of reforms in order to restore its power and regain its legitimacy, lost in the eyes of its multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations in the course of the Russo-Ottoman War. But this reform process only raised further questions around Ottoman legitimacy and the allegiance of its populations. In this sense, these reforms evolved and strengthened ‘a sense of political difference’ among Christian minorities who aspired to carve out their own territory, thus paving the way for the emergence of separatist nationalism. In addition, the Armenians’ insistence on reforms had a particularly detrimental effect on their relationship with the Muslims of Eastern Anatolia. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that, Armenian efforts to seek redress and alternative political structures during the Hamidian period stemmed from a new form of political legitimacy adopted by the Ottoman state to hold the Empire together, one based on Islam and the unity of the Muslim population.

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64 Yavuz, 2011: 30-31.
65 Although, as Kılıçdağ argues, the relationship between Armenians and Muslims differed depending on the local dynamics, he again indicates the land problem as one of the persistent causes of inter-communal tension. Kılıçdağ, 2014: 132, 139-140. For a detail reading on inter-communal relations, see pp. 127-184.
As M. Hakan Yavuz suggests, ‘a parallel search for legitimacy was occurring both at the centre around Islam and at the periphery among Armenians on the basis of “self-determination”’.

In this regard, it is not surprising that one of the moot points intensely discussed between the European powers and the Ottoman state before reaching conclusion with the May Reforms of 1895 and the February 8th agreement was that of whether the Armenians would have equal or proportional representation in the provincial administrative bodies of the six provinces. In both cases (1895 and February 8th), the Porte took a firm stance against equal Armenian representation. According to Fuat Dündar, the concept of being equal subjects of the Ottoman Empire had already been transformed into the logic of proportionate representation before the discussions took place in 1895. For him, such a demographic mind-set of the Ottoman state turned out to be one of the components of ethnic and religious problems in the Empire. Even though the present work does not address the demographic side of the Armenian reform issue, it is concerned with its repercussions and outcomes. As consideration of the Russo-Ottoman border practices of Muslims and Armenians will show, the strategic mind-set of the Ottoman central authorities, or their demographic concerns, worked well in relation to their border and citizenship policies.

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67 For instance, according to the February 8th agreement, the inspectors general had to conduct a census in order to establish the size of the populations of various ethnic, religious and language groups for the purpose of issuing their rations; until the completion of enumeration, the Armenians would be equally represented in the provincial councils of Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, and in the other provinces, they would be represented according to their estimated proportion in the population. Dündar, 2012: 69-74; Türkmen, 2006: 53-55.
In focusing on cross-border movement in this respect, this thesis directs attention to one of the least addressed aspects of the Armenian expectations from the reform process, the removal of restrictions of Armenians’ right to free movement. This issue was added to the list of reform priorities after the massacres of Sasun, in 1894, when thousands of Armenians became refugees in neighbourhood regions and distant locations as a result of the ‘full-fledged deportation policy’ of the Ottoman authorities. The May Reforms included the right of return for all Armenians who had been exiled without trial, or who had left the country due to poverty or fear caused by these tragic events. When a group of some twenty Dashnak militants seized the European-owned Ottoman Bank in the heart of the Galata district of Istanbul on 26th August, 1896 in order to draw the attention of the world to the massacres and push forward the pending Armenian reforms, they also stressed as one of their demands that Armenians who had fled the country should be allowed to return. The Armenian demands remained valid until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, after which it was expected that the Armenians would be able to return to their lands. This thesis attempts to address these demands in the sense of investigating how the Ottoman state used its policies to shape the limits of citizenship during the Hamidian and CUP regimes.

70 Salt, 1990: 316.
71 Christopher, 1980: 166. For a comprehensive evaluation of the seizure of the Ottoman Bank, see Edhem Eldem, ‘26 Ağustos 1896 ‘Banka Vakası’ ve 1896 ‘Ermeni Olayları’’, Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Sayı 5, Bahar 2007, 113-146. Eldem argues that the reactions of the Ottoman state to Armenian protests were determined by its perception of Armenian demands and protests as an existential threat to the Ottoman state. Eldem, 2007: 140.
Theoretical Framework

The framework provided in *Modernity and Ambivalence* by Zygmunt Baumann, with its distinction between friends, enemies, and strangers, is fundamental to this research. For Baumann, ‘the typically modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence: an effort to define precisely and to suppress or eliminate everything that could not or would not be precisely defined.’ Yet, this is a futile effort, he argues, since the problem of ambivalence is only created by the effort to define and classify in the first place. The trio of friends, enemies and strangers are subject-positions produced by this futile effort operating at the level of modern states. Strangers are those who undermine the border that the modern state creates between friends, citizens, and enemies, non-citizens and outsiders: ‘The stranger is one ... member of the family of undecidables.’

For Baumann, a stranger both retains his freedom and refuses to go away, causing an incongruous synthesis ‘between involvement and indifference, partisanship and neutrality, detachment and participation.’ He further claims that ‘the commitment the stranger declares, the loyalty he promises, the dedication he demonstrates cannot be trusted: they come complete with a safety valve of easy escape which most natives often envy but seldom possess.’

This framework is useful for the present research objectives since both the (re)formation of the border in question and the larger Ottoman context of the nineteenth century within which this occurred were informed by concerns of a modernizing empire aiming to establish public order, enjoy effective control over

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73 Baumann, 1993: 15.
74 Baumann, 1993: 55.
75 Baumann, 1993: 61.
territory and people and strengthen bureaucracy and the state apparatus. In other words, the establishment of the (new) border and the way that the issues related to this were addressed were largely determined by the dynamics of an intensifying effort to define and establish friends and enemies of the Empire. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed an intense effort by the Ottoman state for registration and identification of the Ottoman people, notably the Ottoman Law of Nationality and the Law on Passports. These, no less than the geography of treaty borderlines, mapped the territory and provided the lived context for people and communities who found themselves living on its edge, crossing over and sometime transgressing.

In fact, the intentions of the Ottoman state and the reality on the ground were in conflict all along the putative barrier of state sovereignty. The illegal cross-border movement of people between the Russian Caucasus and the Ottoman lands was a longstanding practice. People would cross the border illegally for a range of livelihood-related reasons: for seasonal jobs, to cultivate their fields left on the other side and to develop and maintain business contacts, or else for smuggling – similarly furtive, albeit not concerned with income, was the movement of those taking refuge or escaping from the gendarmerie. Beyond and further to the cross-border movement of the people deemed illegal, whether purposefully so or otherwise, there was also a deep ambivalence concerning citizenship status on the part of the border populations. Many people living in the border area on the Anatolian side also adopted Russian citizenship without renouncing their Ottoman citizenship in order to enjoy the rights enabled by dual-citizenship, which was in fact tolerated neither by the Ottoman nor Russian states. In other words, there was an important sense in which those Ottoman subjects who inhabited the border region were actually unknowable to the state.
In Baumann’s terms, the formation of the Russo-Ottoman border through the Treaty of Berlin had two outcomes in the context of the modernizing Ottoman Empire. As a particular instance of the general modern state practice of classifying ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’, inside and outside, native and alien, the very attempt to enforce the Russo-Ottoman border resulted in the emergence of some cases whose protagonists’ loyalties or belongings were ambiguous, and hence ‘strange’ for the Ottoman state. This perceived strangeness paved the way for another attempt by the central authority, the task of clarifying the status of ‘strangers’, that is, the identification of their true allegiance and loyalty. To make sense of these two outcomes of the enforcement of Russo-Ottoman border brought into being by the Treaty of Berlin, the emergence of strangeness as a problem to be overcome and the material attempts to overcome this problem, this thesis makes use of conceptual insights explored in the literature on imperial borderland and imperial citizenship.

**The Analysis of Strangeness and the Conceptual Insights of the Imperial Borderland Literature**

The Ottoman state’s attempt at classifying friends and enemies through its enforcement of the Russian border in Eastern Anatolia was not unique. Borderlands are ‘places of interaction’ which, by nature, do not lend themselves to clear-cut classifications. Referring to ‘a vast swath of territory running from the Baltic to the Black Sea, Lithuania to Anatolia’ as Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, the editors of *Shatterzone of Empires*, argue thus:

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76 Just as the Kurdish tribes needed to be settled for the modern ordering, organised according to the logic of urban and rural, so too did forms of border difference and uncertainty need to be pinned down. Yonca Köksal, ‘Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2006, Vol. 42, No. 3, 469-491.
Borderlands are places of interaction. They are regions intersected by frontiers that separate states, where crossing from one side to the other means switching the sovereign political authority under which one lives. But borderlands are frontiers in another sense as well. They are spaces-in-between, where identities are often malleable and control of the territory and the population is subject to dispute. Most often, borderlands are geographically and culturally distant from the seat of power, and states expend great energy trying to subsume and integrate them. Borderlands are therefore also constructs of the political imaginary and products of ideological fantasies.  

As emphasized above and mentioned in several articles in *Shatterzone of Empires*, the Russo-Ottoman borderland fits the characteristics of this definition. What complicated the case of the Russo-Ottoman borderland, as in the other cases addressed in *Shatterzone of Empires*, was the fact that this borderland was also, indeed, a sort of ‘shatterzone’, characterized by the encounter of more than two ethno-linguistic groups. In his most recently published book, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*, Alfred J. Rieber offers a sophisticated approach to the studies of Eurasian borderlands, according to which, the shatterzone character of the border region was part of a large geocultural phenomenon pertaining to Eurasia. To Rieber, ‘Eurasia as a contested geocultural space’, including the Russo-Ottoman border area in Eastern Anatolia, was shaped by the emergence of complex frontiers beginning in the sixteenth century as a result of the territorial expansion of some major centres of political power at the expense of others and the large-scale population movements of culturally and ethno-linguistically dissimilar peoples to the early twentieth century. Large-scale population movements created ‘in metaphoric terms, a demographic kaleidoscopic of unparalleled variety and complexity rather than mosaic’ and rendered

77 Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, ‘Introduction: Coexistence and Violence in the Germany, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands’ in *Shatterzone of Empires*, p. 1.
78 See the contributions by Eric D. Weitz, Elke Hartmann, Taner Akçam, David Gaunt and Peter Holquist in *Shatterzone of Empires*. 
39
certain areas shatterzones. Given the longstanding multi-ethnic diversity of the Russo-Ottoman borderland, which precipitated national conflict as well as the territorial disputes and violence that became increasingly visible during the years leading up to the First World War, there were evident limits to any state’s attempts to classify ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’.

While making sense of ‘strangeness’ in the context of the Russo-Ottoman border with reference to the notion of a ‘shatterzone’, this thesis aims to avoid offering essentialist explanations. Therefore, the warnings of Peter Holquist and Michael A. Reynolds concerning the limited role of ethnicity and multi-ethnic character in giving shape to the realities of a region are methodologically important here. Ethnicity per se does not have to be an important political factor or a cause of violence; rather, it is when ethnicity is politically mobilised, often by external actors in pursuit of their own agendas, that it becomes a relevant factor. Like Rieber, Peter Holquist sets out with the idea of the Russo-Ottoman borderland turned into ‘one of the shatterzones where empires crashed together like tectonic plates’, but he then goes on to emphasize imperial practices in Eastern Anatolia that cannot be captured with reference to the

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Rieber, 2014: 8-9. The term ‘borderlands’ like ‘frontier’, according to Rieber, ‘signifies the fluidity of geographical concepts in Eurasian imperial space’; he uses this term in order to depict ‘territories on the periphery of the multicultural states that were carved out of the shifting frontiers and incorporated into the imperial system as separate administrative units, sometimes with autonomous institutions, reflecting their distinctive political and cultural features.’ Such incorporation into a multicultural state did not end a borderland’s struggle over its political and cultural identity, but instead provoked a struggle not only internally between the subjugated peoples and centres of imperial powers but also externally among competing imperial states. A broad range of reactions from accommodation to resistance occurred as a result of these struggles; Rieber regards these terms, ‘accommodation’ and ‘resistance’, not as ‘fixed or essentialist’ but as ‘flexible and not easily disentangled’. Rieber, 2014: 59, 64. For similar arguments see his previous articles: Alfred J. Rieber, ‘Persistent factors in Russian foreign policy: an interpretive essay’, in Hugh Ragsdale (ed.), Imperial Russian Foreign Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Alfred J. Rieber, ‘The Comparative Ecology of Complex Frontiers’, in Alfred J. Rieber and Alexei Miller (eds.), Imperial Rule (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004).
multi-ethnicity. Distancing himself from essentialist uses of the concept of ‘shatterzone’ as expounded by the Anglophone scholars to refer to the British (or American) conflict zone with Russia, Holquist is concerned that the concept thus utilized ‘tends to reify historical conditions as near-permanent, quasi-geological features’ (c.f. the tectonic plates) and thus produces ‘one-dimensional explanations’, such as ‘the clash of civilizations’. Analysing a particular case of Russian violence against civilians and refugees in Eastern Anatolia, by way of example, Holquist claims that the violence was not rooted in any kind of ethnic prejudice, still less in an assertion of clashing worldviews. Instead, it was the Russian military needs in this particular location that set the target and form of the violence employed.

Reynolds’ *Shattering Empires*, a pioneering work on Russo-Ottoman entanglement history, also underlines the limits of ethnicity-based explanations. He argues that the contiguity of the Ottoman and Russian Empires’ territories in Transcaucasia made their borders pliable and insecure. Many different ethnic and religious groups, with a wide range of figures and motives, could move back and forth across borders and live in both empires. These heterogeneous subjects were not prevented by the relationship between their host empires from cross-border contacts and interests. They had multiple identities, loyalties and aspirations, which cannot be understood through binary models of a conflict between centre and periphery. Moreover, both empires

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80 Peter Holquist, ‘Forms of Violence during the Russian Occupation of Ottoman Territory and in Northern Persia (Urmia and Astrabad), October 1914- December 1917’ in *Shatterzone of Empires*, p. 334.
81 Holquist, 2013: 335.
82 Holquist, 2013: 337-345.
83 Following the arguments of Hirschhausen, Leonhard and Reynolds, we can thus claim that conducting an in-depth analysis of interactions and transfers between the Ottoman and Russian Empires should enable us to overcome the classical dichotomy between centre and periphery. Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Jörn Leonhard, ‘Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century’, in Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Jörn Leonhard (eds.), *Comparing Empires*
were capable of reflecting their influences and powers beyond their borders and managed to intervene in the internal affairs of the other. The inevitable outcome of all this was a fierce interstate competition in unstable borderlands. The perspective offered by Reynolds, therefore, involves an analysis of the multifaceted dynamics at play in the contact zone of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus particularly in terms of the interaction of ‘the dynamics of global interstate competition... with local and regional agendas.

This thesis employs Reynolds’ perspective and its contribution to direct Russo-Ottoman entanglements on the border. We concentrate on and contribute to these discussions about the Russo-Ottoman interactions, which have been the subject of scholarly research for more than a decade now. The intricate political, economic, social and cultural structures of empires are often studied through static approaches in comparative empire research, which cannot help us understand a porous borderland conducive to various interactions at intersection points. Rather, spheres of imperial intersections, where imitation, conflict and transformation took place, were the sitings of dynamic entangled relations. This dynamism arose not only from the fact that the transfer of knowledge, people, or concepts across imperial borders enabled the


authorities to control and manage conflicts, but that these transfers also facilitated empires’ identifications of themselves in the political arena vis-à-vis their competitors. By recounting interesting stories of the Russo-Ottoman border presenting fragments from its vivid daily life, this thesis seeks to understand these entangled relations, the interface between the demands of state(s) and the motivations of the people of the borderlands as these developed over time in relation and response to one another. It is this in-depth focus on everyday life on the Russo-Ottoman border that differentiates the present research from that of Reynolds and others.

Dealing with ‘Strangeness’ and the Issue of Imperial Citizenship

In order to address the issue of how the Ottoman state dealt with the strangeness that stemmed from its very act of Russo-Ottoman border enforcement, the thesis makes use of the methodological approach adopted in Eric Lohr’s book Russian Citizenship and especially his interrelated concepts of the ‘citizenship boundary’ and ‘separate deals’. Lohr constructs a definition of ‘citizenship boundary’ through which he formulates his understanding of citizenship in terms of ‘the interface between citizenries and the reach of their countries’ claims of sovereignty’. In other words, the citizenship boundary is ‘the line between members and non-members’, ‘the rules and practices that define the boundary’ and ‘the various ways [in which] citizenship status was acquired, lost, ascribed, or removed’. In order to show how this ‘citizenship

89 Eric Lohr, Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 1-4. Like the way in which Lohr copes with the tension between ‘subjecthood’ and ‘citizenship’, we use these terms interchangeably, reducing them to indicate membership in a state or country. As Yanni Kotsonis remarks, subjecthood means ‘being subjected to the power of an autocrat and being excluded from the state’s formal institutions of power and rule, while citizenship really does imply membership in a country or a state and a sharing in sovereignty in one way or another’. This terminological distinction cannot be neatly applied in our context, however,
boundary’ was established, Lohr focuses his attention on various relevant pieces of legislation. He maintains that the legal status of a person who crossed the Russian border was determined by a series of *ad hoc* arrangements, by ‘separate deals’ (as he calls them) through which different citizenship boundaries were constructed for different groups and individuals.

‘Separate deals’ were closely connected with the Russian imperial policy, which, in compliance with the imperial technologies of rule, varied as a result of interminable adjustments to governance within each locality as well as with the entire Russian legal system, which did not have a uniform character due to the mode of governance through legally separate entities. In fact, the reforms made in the second half of the nineteenth century signalled a shift from the ‘separate deals’ paradigm. During the 1860s, the Russian state enacted a series of liberal laws to redress the status of both foreign and Russian subjects living in the empire. The reforms of subjecthood and naturalization instituted during this decade aimed to open up the county to foreigners, who would contribute to the industrialization and modernization process of the Russian state. One of the pioneering laws of this decade, passed in 1864, stipulated the abolition of the legal distinction between temporary and permanent subjecthood and

*with the gradual emergence of the latter from the former as an uneven process during the period covered meaning that these overlapped to the point of indistinguishability. Yanni Kotsonis, ‘Citizenship in Russia and the Soviet Union’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 15, Number 3, Summer 2014 (New Series), 665-669, p. 667.*

90 Lohr, 2012: 20-21. Burbank & Hagen note that ‘[a] technology of ruling Russia was the simultaneous use of different registers for ruling different regions and different people.’ Jane Burbank and Mark von Hagen, ‘Coming into the Territory: Uncertainty and Empire’, in Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatolyi Remnev (eds.), *Russian Empire Space, People, Power, 1700-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p.17. They further argue that this ‘profoundly different human landscape’ marked its impact upon governance of power, which revealed itself as a difference in political vision and economic structure, and that it was this difference that separated Russia from other non-bourgeois empires and Western colonial powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rather than the often cited binary of maritime and contiguous empires. Burbank &Hagen, 2007: 25. Also see, Burbank and Cooper, 2010: 8; Jane Burbank, ‘An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7 (3) (Summer 2006), 397-431, p. 403; Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Richmond, Surrey: Routledge Curzon, 2001), pp. 12, 58-59.
the elimination of the intermediary status between naturalized and natural-born subjects.

As a result of the 1864 law, naturalization in Russia began to mean an act of gaining state membership rather than joining a local social estate (soslovie). This was a development seen by Vladimir M. Gessen – ‘a prominent liberal legal theorist who undertook the only comprehensive study of citizenship ever attempted in imperial Russia’ – as a ‘conceptual transition in state membership from “collective” to “individual”’; in general terms, the law was an attempt to create ‘a single, generic, unified citizenship’. In subsequent laws and regulations also, it is possible to see the products of this effort. The declaration of universal military conscription in 1874, for example, may be viewed as a shift from ‘the old separate deals paradigm to citizenship’. Yet, as Lohr clearly shows, despite the fact that the laws of the great reform era were a challenge to the separate deals approach, the administrative practice of Russian citizenship did not divest itself of this due to the great diversity of the Empire’s subject populations, which were only further differentiated by border regions. The new laws defined a single naturalization procedure and set all-embracing standards in citizenship policies, but they could not prevent the persistence of exceptions among certain groups of populations and foreigners.

The separate deals paradigm was not unique to the Russian state, and, as shown in this work, it also operated as the de facto guiding paradigm of the Ottoman attempts at dealing with strangeness in the Russo-Ottoman border region. In fact, the persistence of the separate deals approach in the Ottoman Empire was quite contrary to the

general trend that culminated with the Ottoman Law of Nationality (OLN) enacted in 1869. During the 1850-60s, one of the concerns of the Ottoman state authorities, similar to the Russian case, had been to mark the limits of Ottoman citizenship by formulating who would be included and excluded. This was a contentious issue due to the changed (and still not completely settled) boundaries, the constant in-and-out migration and the emergence of ambivalence concerning the subjecthood status of certain Ottoman subjects. Further to the factors mentioned, and as well as in the increasingly heavy flow of Muslim refugees into the Empire from the Balkans and the Caucasus, this ambivalence was rooted in the abuse by non-Muslim Ottoman subjects of extraterritorial privileges unilaterally granted by the Ottoman state to foreign merchants (essentially, the non-Muslim Ottomans used the privileges to avoid legal duties).

Initially, the Ottoman state aimed to eliminate the ‘protected’ status of Ottoman subjects whose numbers grew rapidly as a result of the Ottoman ‘concessions’ enabling foreign powers to protect their own subjects in the Empire. Foreign interventions in the internal affairs of the Ottoman state specifically on the pretext of protecting religious minorities increased the number of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects who obtained this ‘protected’ status, and foreign consulates, especially Russian, became the agents through which it was obtained. The resulting juxtaposition of foreigners, ‘protected’ Ottoman subjects and regular Ottoman subjects was the cause of constant tension, and the Ottoman state was obliged to clarify the boundaries between foreigners and Ottoman subjects by eliminating any intermediate types – but the ambiguous status of Muslim refugees remained a hugely problematic issue.94 All

these factors led the Ottoman state to legislate for the whole issue through the OLN, through which they expected to eradicate ‘strangeness’, in terms of its Muslim as well as non-Muslim subjects.

Again, similar to the goal of equivalent process in Russia, the primary aim of the OLN was to create a more unified conception of citizenship, through which the citizenship status of each person residing in the Ottoman Empire would be regarded as equivalent, regardless of religious or ethnic identification. However, a careful reading of the articles of the OLN demonstrates that the Ottoman government and the Sultan were granted extensive discretionary powers concerning the final judgement on citizenship status of an Ottoman subject – such that, in fact, it would not be an overstatement to claim that the ‘separate deals’ paradigm was silently incorporated into the OLN. For instance, the fifth article of the OLN asserted that the changing of one’s Ottoman nationality would not be valid without authorization from the Ottoman government or an imperial rescript (irade-i seniyye). And according to the sixth article, if an Ottoman subject were to change her/his nationality without government authorization, or enter the military service of a foreign country, the Ottoman government was authorized to denaturalize this subject.95 Changing nationality, naturalization and denaturalization processes were thus made dependent more on the specific preferences of the Ottoman state on a case-by-case basis than on a set of predictable, objective criteria.

95 İlhan Unat, Türk Vatandaşlık Hukuku (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1966), p. 9. Obtaining sanction of the Porte to take on a foreign nationality constituted a break from the old tradition of naturalization; in the old practice, if Ottoman subjects could prove that they obtained foreign naturalization ‘legally’ in compliance with the law of the country that naturalized them, the Porte would recognize them as foreigners. Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), FO 881/4085, Memorandum respecting the Naturalization of Ottoman Subjects as Hellenic Subjects, Mr. Elliot, No. 201. April 29, 1869. pp. 12-13.
The argument presented by Lohr closely corresponds to the conclusions drawn in Karen M. Kern’s *Imperial Citizen* in respect of the ‘separate deals’ at the Ottoman eastern frontier provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra (Ottoman Iraq), where Sunni-Shi’i conflict was intense and both Ottoman and Iranian authorities exerted influence and control over the Iranian people. Kern’s research demonstrates how Ottoman constructions of nationality and citizenship emerged as part of the centralizing policies of the *Tanzimat* reforms and became instruments for controlling these provinces. She mainly focuses on the actual enactment of and responses and reactions to the Law Protecting the Prohibition of Marriage between Iranians and Ottoman Citizens (7th October, 1874), which directly contradicted Article 7 of the OLN.\(^6\)

The 1874 law was enacted due to demographic changes anticipated as a result of marriages between Iranian men and Ottoman women to the detriment of the Ottomans and the concomitant geopolitical effects on the frontier provinces of Ottoman Iraq. The important need, as perceived, was to create a loyal population in this frontier region, and that was the reason for the exceptional particularity of this law. In order to actualize it, the Ottoman central authorities adopted a strategic and pragmatic approach to control the fluidity of identities resulting from such marriages. The essential feature, one may say, was the state attempt to manage the situation as best it could, given its overall aims and the circumstantial complexities.

\(^6\) While this article intimated that an Ottoman woman would obtain the citizenship of her foreign husband, the 1874 law on prohibition, contrarily claimed that ‘if a woman who is an Ottoman citizen marries someone who is an Iranian citizen against the prohibition, both the woman and her children will be considered Ottoman citizens and liable for conscription, military tax, and all other financial obligations.’ Karen M. Kern, *Imperial Citizen. Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq* (Syracuse and New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), pp. 89-92.
Alongside Kern’s study, Sabri Ateş’s works on the creation of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland need also to be mentioned here. These subtly reflect the tensions arising from the centralizing attempts of the Ottoman state in delimiting its Iranian border and distinguishing its own subjects from the other’s. Here, it was not only the central state, aiming at establishing its territorial sovereignty in the borderland, or the regional or international actors that were involved in the process of delimitation of this border: the local people of this borderland also pursued their own territorial strategies and rationalities, making use of new opportunities offered by the delimitation process on a functional basis. Thus, the present work is positioned in close to proximity Ateş’s from a theoretical as well as subject perspective. Apart from these works (by Kern and Ateş), there has been no extensive analysis of Ottoman citizenship from the perspective of the Ottoman borderlands. In this regard, this thesis will fill key gaps in the literature by providing an original case study in scholarship on imperial citizenship.

Chapter Overview

The thesis drawing on (mostly unexplored) Ottoman but also British archival documents related to the Ottoman border policies on the Russo-Ottoman borderland between 1878 and 1914 is organised into four chapters. Starting from the Treaty of Berlin as having created a sovereignty crisis for the Ottoman state in terms of its territorial control in Eastern Anatolia, Chapter One seeks to illustrate the limits of Ottoman territorial sovereignty in the Russo-Ottoman borderland. To do this, we look at two crucial examples of border practices that challenged the Ottoman state’s

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98 For full details, see the primary sources listing in the Bibliography.
understanding of its own geopolitical imagery. Firstly, we look at the processes of delimitation and demarcation of the Russo-Ottoman borderland and the way local people and Russian and Ottoman officials were involved in these processes. Secondly, we focus on the supposed role of maps in demarcating the Russo-Ottoman border and the Ottomans’ precarious position in respect of Russia while resolving the problems arising from unclear sections of the border. These illustrations provide an empirical backdrop demonstrating the Ottoman state’s weakness in establishing its sovereignty within its territory and over its people.

Building upon this, Chapters Two, Three and Four explore more fully the strategies and policies the Ottoman state aimed to follow in order to establish its territorial sovereignty in the borderland. One of the state’s motives to this end was to constitute the limits of Ottoman citizenry by distinguishing its subjects from others and to ensure the loyalty of its own subjects there. Since we argue that, despite its normative claim, the Ottoman authorities could not always apply the OLN in resolving the ambiguous citizenship status of certain people, in these chapters we seek to examine the border policy of the Ottoman state and uncover its different strategies and non-standard ways of rendering people either Ottoman subjects or foreigners.

Chapter Two has two main parts. In the first part, we provide a historical overview of the monitoring strategies of the Russian and Ottoman Empires on the Russo-Ottoman borderland from the formation of the border to the eve of the First World War. It is argued that the Ottoman state’s inability to enforce border controls, despite its best efforts, created unease among the Ottoman central authorities that led them to employ specific distinctions and strategies to deal with the ambiguity arising from uncontrollable movements and people’s trans-border connections and to maximize its
border security. Focusing on the cross-border mobility and connections of Muslims in the second part of the chapter, we show through analysis of particular cases that the response of the Ottoman state to Muslim mobility across the border was largely one of tolerance and that it avoided taking harsh measures and adopting a strict stance towards Muslim border violations.

Looking at specific locations situated very close to the Russo-Ottoman border in Chapter Three, we continue to focus on Muslims and their cross-border movements, but this time paying close attention to dual citizenship. We examine how the Ottoman local and central authorities handled the question of Muslims’ dual citizenship, which became a thorn in the side of the Ottoman state, especially from the first decade of the twentieth century, when Russia’s tightening border controls compelled many Muslims to obtain Russian citizenship. The chapter shows that the tolerant stance of the Ottoman state towards Muslim cross-border mobility and connections also characterized the procedures that the Ottoman authorities followed in determining the citizenship status of those Muslims living on the Russo-Ottoman border. Rather than applying the articles of the OLN strictly and thus automatically denaturalizing those holding dual citizenship, the Ottoman authorities adopted an interpretative, individualized approach, attempting to ascertain who were loyal to the state and who not.

The findings of Chapters Two and Three show that for Muslims the border was generally quite porous. However, it is the non-permeability of the Russo-Ottoman border for Armenians that is addressed in detail in Chapter Four. Firstly, we discuss how the issue of the return of Ottoman Armenian refugees or emigrants from the Russian Caucasus became a bone of contention between the Russian and Ottoman
Empires during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Secondly, we follow the main aspects of the strict Ottoman border policy towards Armenians, which crystallized toward the end of the nineteenth century. In the last part of this chapter, we will show that the Ottoman border policy towards Armenians during the revolutionary era was by no means expressed as a rupture from the policies of the Hamidian regime, despite a minor relaxation after 1908.

Starting with the change of the Ottoman state’s notion of its territoriality and sovereignty, and the emergence of ambiguous citizenship status in the Russo-Ottoman border region after the Berlin division, in the Conclusion we will establish their effects on the Ottoman state and borderland people, draw our arguments together from this discussion, and make proposals for future research.
CHAPTER I. State Sovereignty and the Formation of the Russo-Ottoman Border

Territoriality is created, as Charles S. Maier notes, ‘because multiple powers contest a finite global space’. Defined by Robert David Sack as ‘a powerful geographic strategy to control people and things by controlling area’, territoriality is ‘a primary geographical expression of social power’ and ‘the means by which state and society interrelate’. Taking a temporal, or longitudinal perspective, Sack argues that the ‘changing functions [of territoriality] help us to understand the historical relationships between society, space, and time’. It was from the middle of the seventeenth century that the claim for exclusive power over a territory in the form of sovereign statehood developed as an international principle. Thereafter, the process of territorializing state sovereignty, accompanied by a gradual intensification of internal state capacity, characterized the transition ‘from premodern to modern forms of borders and hegemony’ as well as ‘from a relative understanding of space as multidimensional, fluid, and made up of collection of places to an absolute understanding of space as unidimensional, stable, and uniform’. The delimitation and demarcation of the state borders constructing the territorial sovereignty of

empires was no less a fundamental part of this transition, including where these were shared and thus co-defining, as in the Russian and Ottoman case.

This chapter looks at the extent to which the Russo-Ottoman border became the outer territorial limits of state sovereignty for the respective imperial states. Mainly due to infrastructural reasons (e.g. the capacity to regulate and control the cross-border movements of people), intermittent efforts to settle this border from its early formation and the attempts to turn it into a mutual line of territorial sovereignty were never fully realized before World War I, when it was breached by both Ottoman and Russian forces. However, a spatial history can help us to fill the gaps here between the intentions of state officials and realities on the ground. We can examine the limits of imperial sovereignties on the imperial borderlands by addressing the relationships between people and space ‘with a strong emphasis on the subjective cognition of the historical actors and groups in question’. In order to apply this formulation to the Russo-Ottoman border, we need to elaborate on two distinct types of people that differed in their relationships to the new border: local people and imperial officials.

In this chapter, we will focus on the different practices of delimitation and demarcation of the border, which can serve to highlight the various actions and concerns of local inhabitants and imperial officials. In this regard, it is useful to remember Stephen B. Jones’s description of the four stages of boundary-making, namely allocation (of territory), delimitation (formally, in a treaty or similar), demarcation (on the ground, physical marking) and administration. Even though


105 Jones notes that ‘chronologically, these stages may overlap, may succeed each other promptly, or may be separated by gaps of many years.’ Stephen B. Jones, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for
delimitation involves a verbal description using geographical and topographical points, the actual demarcation on the ground is usually required because, as Jones states, ‘words that seem simple and straightforward may prove stumbling-blocks when surveyors endeavour to demarcate the line’. In addition, the process of demarcation aims not only at resolving the location of boundary marks according to the written text, but also at adapting that to local conditions. In this regard, Jones placed special emphasis on the role of boundary commissions, arguing that the establishment of a borderline would remain unresolved unless and until it was based on comprehensive local information about the human and physical geography in question.

The work of the commissioners, however, tended to employ the same distant, top-down approach of the process outlined by Jones. A special issue of the Journal of Historical Geography focusing on the role of ‘politics and scale in boundary-making’ (by examining the actual works of boundary commissions from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries) indicates that in the initial stages of boundary development, local information was, in fact, usually completely excluded from the decision-making process. Instead, this involved the commissions’ ‘poorly-informed plans based on generalised information and pre-conceived notions’, which were sent to the field. In addition, all contributors agree that there was no linear path for commissions to follow.

International Peace 1945), pp. 5 and 57. According to John W. Donaldson and Alison J. Williams, Jones was not the first person who used these terms in the context of border-making, but it was he who placed them within a systematic framework; they claim that A. Henry McMahon, the renowned British imperial boundary-maker, was the first to differentiate ‘delimitation’ and ‘demarcation’. John W. Donaldson & Alison J. Williams, ‘Delimitation and Demarcation: Analysing the Legacy of Stephen B. Jones’s Boundary-Making’, Geopolitics, 13:4 (2008), 676-700, p. 687; see A. Henry McMahon, ‘International Boundaries’, Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, Vol.84, No. 4330 (November 15th, 1935), 2-16, pp. 4-5.

106 Jones, 1945: 5; McMahon, 1935: 5.
for boundary development, and the politics directing the work of these commissions points to ‘the extent to which boundary-making processes were shaped by a variety of forces ... not captured by formulaic models of boundary development’. The actors and relationships involved in each boundary-making process should be taken into account in order to properly appreciate the complete process in which the borderlines were ultimately formed.

Ignorance of local conditions on the part of people in charge of border formation can help to explain some of the problematic history of the Russo-Ottoman border. Beyond that, however, as this chapter shows, there was not always clear agreement about the division of territory among the sovereign states or ordinary people during the initial years and decades following the delimitation of the border. Instead, complex cases often occurred in which it was not immediately apparent to officials how sovereignty should be established, particularly when the newly-defined border cut through the traditional movement zones of ordinary people in their daily lives although, at the same time, the local people were not totally uninvolved in the demarcation process. It is in this context that the present chapter tries to articulate a distinct understanding of boundary development with respect to state sovereignty by focusing on the delimitation and demarcation of the Russo-Ottoman border.

The shape of the border assumed by the Ottoman state is considered here not only vis-à-vis the Russian government, but also in relation to strategies people developed for their survival on the border. This approach is based on the argument that Ottoman

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110 Ibid. See also other articles in Journal of Historical Geography, Volume 34, Issue 3, Pages 393-552 (July 2008).


112 Russian foreign minister Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Gorchakov, one of the Russian delegates at the Congress of Berlin, for example, could not even point to the approximate locations of Kars and Batum on a map. Medlicott, 1938: 107.
territorial sovereignty did not precisely correspond to the line of the border, for a variety of reasons, which will emerge through this chapter. The first section of the chapter outlines two episodes of border conflict inherent in the boundary-making process at two different times but in places very close to one another. By portraying the modes of negotiation between authorities and local people, this section will demonstrate the limits of the Ottoman state’s capability in solving the contentious border issues whilst at the same time addressing local people as agents in the process, capable of directing the flow of daily events on the basis of their own understanding of the border. The second section switches the focus from negotiations on the ground at the local level to the foundations and meanings of imperial sovereignties discussed on the official and imperial level. This section aims to track the limits of Ottoman sovereignty along the border through the use of maps.

**Delimiting and Demarcating the Russo-Ottoman border**

Article LVIII of the Treaty of Berlin (13 July 1878) drew a rough new boundary line between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. In the early stages of the border formation, the treaty agreed at San Stefano (3 March 1878) had drawn a general outline of this border and assigned the duty of settling the definitive limits of the territory annexed to Russia to a commission composed of Russian and Ottoman delegates. Article XIX of the Treaty of San Stefano stipulated that ‘this commission in its labours will take into account the topography of localities, as well as considerations of good administration and other conditions calculated to ensure the tranquillity of the country.’\(^{113}\) In fact, two commissions were convened, composed of British as well as Russian and Ottoman delegates, first in Istanbul on 17\(^{th}\) May, 1880, and then, on 11\(^{th}\) May, 1880, and then, on 11\(^{th}\) May, 1880.

August, 1880, in Karakilise in the Alashkerd Valley, which the Treaty of Berlin retroceded to the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁴

The purpose of these commissions was to establish precisely the limits of the territory annexed to Russia. In the first meeting, the delegates signed a protocol to ‘fix definitely the point to the west of Karaurgan, meridian 59° 56’ 40″’, which had been left undetermined in the Treaty of Berlin.¹¹⁵ The new Russo-Ottoman border from Karaurgan to the old boundary in the east near Mount Tendurek was delimited by a second commission.¹¹⁶ The work of the boundary commissions notwithstanding, however, a definite, clear-cut border that could satisfy both the authorities of the imperial states and ordinary people around this borderland never emerged.

The meetings in Erzurum and Oltu in 1889

One of the main obstacles that impeded the formation of a clear-cut border was the fact that it ran through the lands of many villages. Although the Russo-Ottoman border commission agreed that the unity of people’s lands on the border was to be maintained, it seems that it was hard to realize.¹¹⁷ A glance at the discussions of a meeting of Russian and Ottoman local officials that took place in Erzurum on 13th

¹¹⁴ Because the territory restored to the Ottoman Empire by Article LX of the Treaty of Berlin was traversed by an important caravan route, Britain and Russia signed an agreement in Berlin on 12th July (1878) to confirm that ‘the more detailed tracing of the line of the Alashkerd shall be carried out on the spot, in conformity with the Treaty of Berlin, by a military commission, composed of a Russian officer, an Ottoman officer, and an English officer.’ Holland, 1885: 305. As Christopher J. Walker claims, in order to protect its export trade, Britain did not want to see the crucial trade route, starting at Trabzon, passing along the Alashkerd valley, and ending in Tabriz, pass under the control of Russia. Christopher J. Walker, ‘Kars in the Russo-Turkish Wars of the Nineteenth Century’, in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), Armenian Kars and Ani (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2011), pp. 210-11, 220.


¹¹⁶ For details of the new Russo-Ottoman border from Karaurgan to the old Russian boundary in the Ottoman document, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, hereafter BOA), HR. TO 477-4. For discussions held before the meeting in Karakilise, see HR. TO 524-50, 27 June 1880 and HR. TO 498-92, 23 June 1881.

¹¹⁷ BOA, HR.TO 478-40. The first official report, 13 August 1889; a principle mentioned in the ninth official report of the Russo-Ottoman border commission.
August, 1889 offers a revealing insight into such issues and the attempts made to resolve them almost a decade after the delimitation.\textsuperscript{118}

The Ottoman agent, Agah Paşa, a major general of the General Staff, set forth two main reasons for convening the meeting. The first concerned some villagers who suffered a great deal since their lands were separated from each other by the border, which required an urgent solution.\textsuperscript{119} Agah Paşa proposed that if the participants of the meeting could settle the case, the decision should apply to all divided land, regardless of its location on the border. In his view, it would not be fair if the projected permission only applied to the lands under discussion in this meeting (in Oltu, now Russia). However, the Russian representative at the meeting, General Zezman, responded that he had been given instructions merely about Oltu, and would have to request further instructions concerning other places.\textsuperscript{120}

The second issue related to a water reservoir in Oltu and exemptions given to the people of Kaleboğazı with lands there. Russian needs for use of the spring in Kaleboğazı that fed this reservoir disappeared when Russian officials discovered a new spring in Oltu, and they consequently abandoned the Kaleboğazı spring in the Ottoman territory. The (Russian) governor of Kars then requested that exemptions granted to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] Ibid.
\item[119] Agah Paşa emphasized that almost five years previously, the Russian Consul in Erzurum had proposed that people whose lands were divided by the borderline be exempted from the official customs duty for their agricultural products transported across the border and for their livestock moved into pasture in Russia, but nothing seems to have been done to rectify the situation. Ibid. The first official report.
\item[120] Zezman added that before taking the initiative on such issues, he would like to hear the proposals offered by the Ottoman delegates for making the lives of people on the border easier. Agah Paşa enumerated four: first, these people should be given proper passports \textit{in gratis} that would be valid in both countries; second, they should be exempted from customs duties on their agricultural products brought to their home; third, their livestock should be exempted from customs duties, regardless of whether it was moved into Russia to be sold or used on the land; fourth, these people should not be forced to take one of the longest roads to reach their lands on the other side of the border. Ibid. The recorded statements of General Zezman generally indicate accordance with Agah Paşa’s proposals. The second official report, 7 September 1889.
\end{footnotes}
the people of Kaleboğazi from utilizing their lands in Oltu be removed in return. Agah Paşa objected to this, but he confirmed the rights of the people in Oltu to utilize and protect the spring and water-ditches constructed for the purpose of transporting water to adjacent lands. Agah Paşa thus persisted in attempting to protect the exemptions given to the people of Kaleboğazi for their lands in Oltu, but General Zezman refused to relinquish his proposal. Upon the request of General Zezman, it was ultimately decided that a second meeting would be convened in Oltu in order to investigate this situation on the spot.

General Zezman summoned the people of Kaleboğazi to the second meeting. They declared that they were continuing to use their lands in Oltu without any problems and were not paying any taxes to the Russian government. Their presence at the meeting also enabled them to state that they did not have any claim in Russia except for their own lands. General Zezman, along with the villagers from Kaleboğazi and other border villages in Russia, went to their claimed lands for measurement. According to the outcome of the measurement, the people of Kaleboğazi had a total of only one dessiatina (c. 1.1 hectares) of land within Russia. As a result, it was resolved that while the people of Kaleboğazi would continue to use their lands in Russia without paying any (Russian) taxes, the people of Oltu would be the absolute proprietors of the water reservoir there.

The discussions at the meetings in Erzurum and Oltu show the types of contentious issues that were raised by the human and physical geography of the border in this region. As can be gleaned from these discussions, the situation with respect to each tract of land that was crossed by the border from the Ottoman side had to be evaluated separately and required specific negotiations involving the local people and
Russian officials. While Agah Paşa was insistent on the adoption of all-encompassing measures to solve the problematic land issues and facilitate the lives of people throughout the border region, General Zezman was circumspect with regard to Russia’s interests, cognizant of the difficulties facing Russia in administrating the border with such regulations. Zezman claimed that he could only apply all-inclusive measures after receiving the consent of the Russian government and competent authorities ad referendum.\textsuperscript{121} However, in the Kaleboğazı case, after the negotiations with the people there, he accepted that they would be using their lands in Russia despite the removal of Russian dependence on their water-supply. Thus, the Russian side, with an official from the Russian border commission, was able to develop an appropriate strategy on a case-by-case basis by negotiating with the local people involved.

The issues concerning Kaleboğazı continued to be discussed in similar ways for fifteen years. In the following discussions, we learn that people in Kaleboğazı with agricultural lands in Russia cultivated them with water provided from the Ottoman side (originating just across from their Russian lands). Later, the need for water from the Ottoman side was removed after the Russian authorities supplied it from another place within the Russian territory. This only left the Ottoman villagers in another awkward situation. Their use of these lands began to pose a problem for the Russian officials due to their contested status, since villagers from both sides of the border claimed rights to them. As a result of the correspondence between the directorate of Oltu and the governorate of Kars, and on account of the considerate attitude of the former in taking into account the extent of villagers’ needs for these lands, Russian

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
opposition to local people from Kaleboğazi cultivating these lands was dropped but
only temporarily. As described below, disputes between Russian and Ottoman villagers
related to these lands evidently continued.122

A border village: The Case of Nariman

The border village of Nariman serves well as a tangible example of land disputes on the
border and stories surrounding them. The Russo-Ottoman commission assigned to the
demarcation of the border had come across some local people who demanded to
remain within the border of Russia, in order not to lose the fields in their possession.
The inhabitants of the village of Nariman requested that the commission take their
case into consideration and shift the border further south when placing the border
marks.123 Interestingly, after the border was demarcated as they requested, these
people actually ‘returned’ to Ottoman territory, to be settled in nearby Yeniköy, a
village within the district of Namrevan (Namran), fifteen minutes’ walk from the
border. The Russian government settled Greeks (Rum) in Nariman in place of these
people. Because Greeks were not familiar with the region, and considering the fact
that the lands of the people from Yeniköy in Nariman were coterminous with Yeniköy
and very limited and sandy compared to their other lands in Namrevan, the Greeks
accepted these lands as belonging to the villagers from Yeniköy.124 What is significant

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122 BOA, BEO 3219-241377, From the Governor of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 3 November
1907 (Document 14); From the Ministry of the Interior to the Grand Vizierate, 30 November 1907
(Document 16). See also the letter sent by the 2nd border superintendent on 17 November 1905.
Document 2.
123 Ibid. According to the narratives of elderly people from Namrevan, until the border marks were
finally positioned by the border commission, a border line was imagined from the north side of Alabalik,
running through the stream of Tuzla and reaching the hills situated on the north side. The border patrols
were lined up through this imagined border and attempted to prevent the people from Namrevan from
crossing into their lands in Çayırdüzü, which was now in Russia. It was in order not to lose their fields in
Çayırdüzü that the Namrevan villagers wanted to be legally located in Russia. From the Superintendent
of the 3rd Border District and Lieutenant Commander of the General Staff to the Border Command, 15
May 1907 (Document 12).
124 Ibid.
here is that the putative line of demarcation perceived by the settlers between Russian and Ottoman lands differed from the line demarcated by the boundary commission.\textsuperscript{125}

Having relocated their homes to the Ottoman side but continuing to use their Russian-side fields, for twenty-five years, the Ottoman villagers in Yeniköy, cultivated their fields and gave their taxes and tithes to the Ottoman treasury. Over the course of the years, a border district official commented, the population of Namrevan increased and its need for land within Russia became particularly obvious.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, as we learn from other Ottoman documentation, many people from Namrevan were obliged to go to Russia and work there as labourers, after which they returned with the small amounts of money that they had been able to save from their earnings. What is striking about these people is that since they were quite impoverished, they had to move back and forth as fugitives to avoid paying the regular passport fees.\textsuperscript{127}

Patently, the Ottoman and Russian border patrols did not thoroughly control the movement of people over this border. For local farming needs, friendly small talk and mutual compliments between border patrols ensured that the villagers from Yeniköy would be able to use their lands in the coming year.\textsuperscript{128} In the early 1900s, however, Russian border officials resisted the villagers’ cross-border agricultural activities stating that henceforth they would not allow these unless otherwise stated by the relevant

\textsuperscript{125} A similar example on the modification of borders drawn by the Treaty of Berlin in some areas of Montenegro, as a result of ‘the geographic imagination of local population’, can be seen in Isa Blumi, \textit{Foundations of Modernity. Human Agency and the Imperial State} (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), Chapter Two, especially pp. 56-59.

\textsuperscript{126} BOA, BEO 3219-241377. Document 12.

\textsuperscript{127} Recalling the passport regulation for the people of \textit{Vakıf nahiyesi} in the district of Keskim, who crisscrossed this border as well as earned their living as labourers in Batum, which obliged them to pay a ten-piaster passport fee (valid for six months), the governor of Erzurum had proposed that the same fee be imposed at Namrevan to staunch the flow of labourers who avoided paying the regular passport fees. BOA, DH, MKT 651-25. From the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Grand Vizierate, 11 February 1903; From the Governor of Erzurum to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 17 January 1904. (Letter dated 24\textsuperscript{th} November, 1902.)

\textsuperscript{128} BOA, BEO 3219-241377. Document 12.
For instance, a postal officer in (Russian) Nariman stated that even though the Yeni köy villagers had the right to cultivate these lands, they were obliged to obtain an official document authorizing this. Until they received this official permission, they were not allowed to cross the border, and if they did cross it, they and their livestock would be seized and sent to Oltu.\textsuperscript{130}

Initially, unaware or unclear about or just reluctant to deal with the new regulations, the villagers crossed the border to sow their fields as ever. They encountered opposition around the middle of the 1900s when three Russian soldiers stopped them from working on their fields. The villagers’ livestock and agricultural products were seized, and they were all ordered to be sent back to the Ottoman side.\textsuperscript{131} Bewildered, the villagers went to the postal officer to explain their situation. They told him that they had inherited these lands from their ancestors and cultivated them since their childhood, and that, because of their poverty, and considering their inadequate lands for agriculture in the Ottoman territory, they had resorted to cultivating these infertile, stony and sandy lands, adding, moreover, that previously they had favoured Russian over Ottoman opinions with respect to land usage in Russia.\textsuperscript{132}

A group of villagers met local authorities to confer with them on this matter. They were told that their lands remained within Russia, but were also promised that they would not be deprived of them, to which they objected by claiming that their lands were not situated within the Russian border.\textsuperscript{133} Their claim further complicated the already difficult task of the border demarcation, as the Ottoman authorities noted in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{129} Ibid., documents 14 and 16; see also document 11.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid., document 12.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., document 4.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid. According to a report dated 7\textsuperscript{th} April, 1905, the villagers received permission from the postal officer, Mikhail Nikolayevich, for that year’s land usage, but it was not easy for them to sustain cultivation under these conditions. Document 12.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Ibid., document 12.
\end{itemize}
By the following year, events had reached the point where the cordon official, Lieutenant Cemal Efendi, had no choice but to mediate between the sides. He was able to obtain permission for cultivation, but which was valid only for the current year. While Cemal Efendi was conferring with the Russian border officials in order to come to terms with them on the matter, a group of local people came to complain to the Russian authorities about Cemal Efendi. They accused him of not informing them about the new regulations in Russia at the appropriate time and causing them to lose income from their fields. According to their claims, the reason behind the sudden Russian opposition toward their agricultural activities was Cemal Efendi himself, who had his eye on a piece of land and other items he wanted to appropriate for his own personal benefit; because he got nothing, he provoked the Russian border officials against these villagers.

The lands close to the district of Namrevan aroused controversy on both sides of the Russo-Ottoman border, and the local authorities in Namrevan set up a committee with a clerk charged with overseeing the registration of title deeds and suchlike and investigating contentious issues. The outcome of their investigations indicated that the Greek people now living in the village of Nariman had relocated the border markers, reducing the size of the Ottoman lands. If the border markers were replaced, the Ottomans would regain the contentious land, and, moreover, close to another thirty-
five fields. Nevertheless, there was a need to re-examine this specific border region according to the original maps, so as to be able to precisely determine the borderline. The Ottoman officials thought that the maps generated as a result of the surveys of the joint border officials along with the records and other documents accompanying them could provide information about this borderline. However, they failed to find relevant maps.

Considering the movement of villagers circulating between the villages of Yeniköy and Nariman enables us to better see the border from the point of view of these villagers. It is apparent that on the local stage, there emerged a kind of order that superseded the rules of imperial states. A new understanding of the border is facilitated, one that was detached from the processes of sovereign state delimitation and demarcation. The villagers internalized this order to the extent that any intervention by state officials caused them consternation, and local authorities were left with no choice but to persuade them of the official status of their lands, as located in Russia.

This was not well received by the local population, however, since what primarily mattered to them was not which state’s territory included their lands but rather how they could easiest utilize them. The Ottoman official, Cemal Efendi, simply became a persona non grata, who, as the villagers claimed, attempted both misappropriation and disruption of the order of the local community by informing the Russian authorities about their activities on the border. As the intervention of Cemal interrupted their activities at the local level, they immediately sought ways to

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138 Ibid., documents 3, 9, 14 and 16. A letter sent by the Ottoman Border Command on 16 April 1907 pointed out that the results of investigations of local officials found the misconduct of Cemil Efendi as the main cause of confusion on the border. Document 3.
139 Ibid. See also letter sent to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior, 29 December 1907. Document 1.
renegotiate with the Russian authorities. When so moved, they simply by-passed the authority of the Ottoman state as invested in its local representative, or, they endeavoured to play one state off against the other.

As Nick Baron argues, the materiality of space is not only decisive in shaping experiences of people, but also is transformed by them.\textsuperscript{140} The Greeks settled in the village of Nariman provide a vivid example of this interrelationship between space and people. As newcomers to the region, they designed novel social and economic survival strategies. After carefully assessing their situation and considering the lack of available lands within their village, their removal of the border marks to provide themselves with extra territory caused great confusion among local people regarding the real borderline, forcing the Ottoman authorities to check the boundary commission maps. It is ironic that, notwithstanding the critical function of maps, the Ottoman authorities could not consult them to solve controversial land issue since they were unable to find them. This was by no means a unique event, and even in a later period, the Ottoman authorities lacked the necessary maps to resolve boundary demarcation disputes in the region.

The Ottoman state was unable to establish territorial sovereignty throughout the length of its Russian border even three decades after its delimitation in 1878. The absence of proper border marks or translocation of them on the ground can thus be read as a weakness of Ottoman territorial sovereignty on the Russo-Ottoman border.\textsuperscript{141} In light of the fact that a map had more potential power to shape the spatial reality than a border mark, the lack of maps in Ottoman hands was a major deficit,


\textsuperscript{141} Popescu, 2012: 35.
clearly illustrating this weakness. The power of a map not only reflected but also shaped geopolitical circumstances.\textsuperscript{142} As J. B. Harley contends, ‘maps were used to legitimize the reality of conquest and empire’\textsuperscript{143}, so their enforcement on the ground was a vital aspect of establishing sovereignty. With this in mind and the Ottoman deficiency noted, the following section focuses on the Ottoman insecurity in the face of what seems to have been Russia’s greater advance in map-making. This will also afford corresponding explanations as to why the Ottomans were suspicious of attempts to produce scientific knowledge on the Russo-Ottoman border.

**Mapping the limits of imperial sovereignties on the Russo-Ottoman border**

By the mid-nineteenth century, states had already started to strive for the mapping of their territories ‘as a preventative security measure for maintenance of borders’.\textsuperscript{144} Cartography was essentially monopolized by states, and worked as one of the central tools of imperial governance in the borderlands by providing a visual depiction of its sovereignty over territory. In this fashion, maps aided the reification of the Russo-Ottoman border, which was a confused and contested process. However, the two states differed from each other in their use of cartography’s ‘representational language of power’ with respect to the Russo-Ottoman border.\textsuperscript{145}


\textsuperscript{145} Even though the Russo-Ottoman context was not as complicated as Seegel shows for the borderlands of East Central Europe, his arguments on cartography are applicable to here also. See his Introduction, Seegel, 2012: 1-21; also Marina Tolmacheva, ‘The early Russian exploration and mapping of the Chinese frontier’, *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 41/1 (2000), 41-56, p. 52. On cartography in the service of state during the late Ottoman period, see Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom. Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 165-201 (the chapter on Maps), specifically pp. 169-170; and Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki’nin Etnisite Mühendisiliği, 1913-1918* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), pp. 115-121.
In Russia, notes Steven Seegel, the Military and Topographical Departments collected and edited more than two million sheets of maps by the mid-nineteenth century. The Ottomans, on the other hand, had to purchase maps of their Balkan territories from the Austro-Hungarian general staff, even in the late Tanzimat period.\textsuperscript{146} It can be safely claimed, therefore, that the development of cartography in the Ottoman Empire followed at a rather slow pace as compared to Russia. Notwithstanding the establishment of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in 1845 and the involvement of professionalized civilian scholars and technicians, the work of map-making in Russia remained centralized in the hands of military and intelligence agents.\textsuperscript{147} Map-making was also a military endeavour in the Ottoman Empire, but it remained meagre when compared to the extensive Russian military work on maps during the nineteenth century. Among the Ottomans, it was not until the establishment of the Map Commission in 1895 that new initiatives among military officers to produce military maps of the Empire really got under way.\textsuperscript{148}

Before going into detail on the Russian superiority in cartography and its manifestation in the mapping of the Russo-Ottoman border, we need to briefly mention the crucial role of the Congress of Berlin in giving a new expression to cartographic realities. The Berlin Congress accompanied the rising prominence of a cartographic order through

\textsuperscript{147} For the relationship between map-making and the military in mid-nineteenth century Russia, see Seegel, 2012: 119-126.
\textsuperscript{148} Mehmet Hacisalihoğlu notes that ‘modern Turkish historiography designates 1895 as the beginning of modern cartography in the Ottoman Empire.’ Mehmet Hacisalihoğlu, ‘Borders, Maps and Censuses. The Politicization of Geography and Statistics in the Multi-Ethnic Ottoman Empire’, in \textit{Comparing Empires}, pp. 192, 189-196. It is perhaps worth noting here that, due to the lack of scholarly works on pre-modern and modern Ottoman cartography and published or unpublished inventories belonging to and separating these periods, it is very hard to follow the course of the transition from pre-modern to modern Ottoman cartography. Historians have thus been constrained to working on ‘occasional and incidental finds rather than systematic surveys of Ottoman map’. See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, ‘Introduction to Ottoman Cartography’, in J.B Harley and David Woodward (eds.), \textit{The History of Cartography. Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies, Volume II, Book I} (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 207.
which states reflected their self-perceptions in the political arena and which emerged as a way of maintaining the stability of the new state system in Europe. It was inevitable that the ruling elites’ perceptions of their own territories and their governmental policies within newly conceived borders would differ from the perceptions of their subjects, who reacted to the changes and also sought stability. In fact, new cartographic realities generated resistance from both the state and its subjects, required to redefine their own communities and thus daily practices. While the states made use of modern technology (guns, maps, bureaucracies) to realize their goals, local people, who inevitably became embroiled in violence, adopted ‘strategic identities’ to protect their livelihoods. The result was anything but the realization of order and stability on the borders of imperial and newly established states.\textsuperscript{149}

The impact of the Congress was also contextualized by its positioning in an Ottoman reform era dominated by the notion of spatial integration, which changed the central authorities’ sense of space and their perceptions of people living in the margins of the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{150} As Sabri Ateş argues in relation to the case of the Ottoman-Iranian borderland from the first decades of the nineteenth century to 1914, the process of spatial integration or boundary-making evolved parallel to the process of centralization. One of the crucial phases of centralization was the elimination of indirect rule, which was also required for the establishment of territorial sovereignty over imperial space. Equally, and as an important element in this process, boundary-making emerged as a threat to the movement of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups

\textsuperscript{149} Isa Blumi, ‘Illicit Trade and the Emergence of Albania and Yemen’, in I. William Zartman (ed.), \textit{Understanding Life in the Borderlands. Boundaries in Depth and in Motion} (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), pp. 63 and 65. In the Ottoman case, as Blumi states, the actualization of the cartographic reality established through the European map at the Congress of Berlin was obstructed in accordance with the intensity of the resistance to and incapacity of the Ottoman state in respect of its imposition of its new borders. Blumi, 2010: 67. Also Blumi, 2012: 48-52.

\textsuperscript{150} Ussama Makdisi, ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ \textit{The American Historical Review}, Vol. 107, No.3 (June, 2002), pp. 768-796.
across the Ottoman-Iranian border. When these groups were obliged to obtain citizenship of one of these states, their situation was particularly affected, since this development corresponded to choosing a (relatively) settled life, on one side of the border or the other. The spatial transformation of the Ottoman notion of borders from ‘borderlands into bordered lands’ not only left a deep impact on people’s daily lives that happened to span both sides of the border but also put these people into a situation in which they had to prove their loyalties by becoming the subjects of the Ottoman Empire. As Ateş notes, ‘in response, communities reacted with distinct positions and expressions of identity.’

There was an implicit tension between the responses of local people and the central authority’s growing sense of territoriality. Clearly, this tension cannot be recounted without taking into account the social realities and political transformation of the border regions. In Eastern Anatolia, the conflict-prone relationship between Kurds and Armenians and their relations with the Ottoman state formed the background to interlinked and previously overlooked problems with which, following the Treaty of Berlin, the state was now confronted. Considering that ‘the most tangible nineteenth-century European encroachments on Ottoman sovereignty’ were ‘territorial’, the treaty can be identified as doubly critical, since, in addition to its importance in terms

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151 Ateş, 2013: 199. For the previous arguments, see chapter one, especially pp. 32-34. According to Ateş, the Erzurum Treaty of 1823 signed between the Qajars and Ottomans, which ‘predicts the transformation of the borderland into bordered lands’ was a turning point in terms of both states’ claims of sovereignty over their own territories and their subjects living within these territories. See details, Ateş, 2013: 54-57 and also Sabri Ateş, ‘In the Name of the Caliph and the Nation: The Sheikh Ubeidullah Rebellion of 1880-81’, *Iranian Studies*, 47:5, 2014, 735-798, pp. 759, 783-84. For the problems the transboundary movements of tribes encountered as a result of the modification process of the border by the Anglo-Russian attempt during the late 1860s and early 1870s, see Richard Schofield, ‘Narrowing the frontier. Mid-nineteenth century efforts to delimit and map the Perso-Ottoman boundary’, in Roxane Farmanfarmaian (ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia. Implications past and present* (Routledge: London and New York, 2008), p. 165.

of the establishment of internal territorial sovereignty, it also subjected the Ottoman state to intervention from European powers. In fact, the Ottoman desire to avoid foreign intervention in the Armenian issue, particularly from Russia, was closely linked to both its aim and capacity to maintain and develop its authority in Eastern Anatolia generally, and especially in the Russo-Ottoman border region. Therefore, the highly sceptical Ottoman attitude towards the Russian presence in Eastern Anatolia was crucial in this case, both as indicator, and result of the more general Ottoman endeavour to establish its territorial sovereignty.

Two examples may serve to illustrate the otherwise apparently undue concerns of the Ottoman central and local authorities regarding Russian activities near the border. The first covers the travel adventures of Mikhail Alekseevich Prejevalsky, a Russian subject and chancery of the Russian Consulate General in Erzurum. Our knowledge of Prejevalsky as derived from the archival documents begins when he and his family travelled to the north-west part of the province of Erzurum. Because the inhabitants of this region were mainly Armenians, his travel attracted the attention of Ottoman officers. The command of Bayburt reported that Prejevalsky was escorted on his journey by Armenian gendarmes, one of whom was armed and dressed in Circassian clothes (Prejevalsky’s aide-de-camp, in fact). The Ottoman officers recognized Prejevalsky as one of the most experienced Russian commanders on Ottoman territory, which made his uncontrolled travel through the militarily strategic locations near the border a matter of great concern. They criticized the officials of the province of Erzurum, who exhibited an attitude of indifference to his passage, noting that Prejevalsky’s movements should have been closely followed by an accompanying
Islamic official or gendarme. The explanations made by the province of Erzurum revealed that the Russian consuls used to travel with their families at this time of year for the purpose of rest and his travel near to Bayburt was officially known by the local authorities of the province of Erzurum. They even warned the district of Bayburt, so that the officials there could arrange a gendarme to keep track of his activities.

The Ottoman agitation was entirely justified, however. We learn from Peter Hopkirk that Prejevalsky spoke fluent Turkish, dressed as a peasant and roamed around the region for weeks on foot or by pony. Hopkirk states that, ‘unknown to the Turkish authorities, he [became] intimately acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of the surrounding forts, as well as with the best approach routes to the city [Erzurum] itself.’ Prejevalsky was one of three European delegates on the Armenian Inquiry Commission sent to Sasun to examine the events after the Armenian massacres in the region, and also one of the foreign officers who accompanied Ahmet Şakir Pasha, the President of the Committee of Inspection for Reforms, travelling with him to various places in Eastern Anatolia. He had been employed as a chancery by the Russian Consulate General in Erzurum for five years and, as the local authorities contended, his local knowledge was even better than that of the local people.

Thereafter, letters from the province of Erzurum indicate that local authorities in Erzurum were following Prejevalsky’s activities near the border. They informed the General Command when he travelled to Hınıs and Tutak in order to examine the passports of Russian subjects. The local authorities also became concerned about his

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153 BOA, DH. TMIK. M 37-28, From the directorate of the Fourth Imperial Army in Erzincan, 23 July 1897.
154 Ibid. From the province of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 11 August 1897; From the General Command to the Commission for accelerating the initiatives, 18 August 1897.
visit to Circassian villages, his collection of information regarding the Hamidiye Regiments, his stay in a village which was not situated on his way to these border regions and the place of his final destination, Alashkerd. They suspected he was travelling through the border region on a covert military reconnaissance mission. However, they were unable to find concrete proof of any transgressions with which to substantiate their concerns, and anyway they speculated that if they forced the central authorities to replace him with another (Russian) officer, the new one would not differ significantly in terms of his inquisitive attitude.\textsuperscript{157}

The second example of Ottoman concern is a telling instance of ‘the generally suspicious but increasingly curious official attitude toward maps’ during the late Ottoman period.\textsuperscript{158} This example, drawn from a document about the journey of a Russian subject called Permakov into Ottoman territory around 1908, clearly shows that his trip agitated the local authorities, who suspected that he was engaged in map-making in the areas near the border. The Ottoman local authorities first heard that Permakov intended to cross the border to take photographs of ancient landmarks in the Tortum region in the coming month. Although the journey was supposed to be a scientific investigation, they wanted to discover its true motives. Their suspicion was that under the pretext of the scientific investigation, Permakov would travel around the districts close to the border in order to map them.

The Russian Consul General in Erzurum asked for help from the Ottoman authorities to facilitate the trip. Permakov indeed received an imperial rescript dated 21\textsuperscript{st}

\textsuperscript{157} BOA, DH. TMIK. M 37-28, From the province of Erzurum to the General Command, 25 August 1897; From the General Command to the Ministry of the Interior, 17 October 1897. According to notes of the General Command, if foreign subjects aroused suspicion due to their missions, the procedures for replacing them would essentially lay in the hands of the Ottoman government. Ibid. From the Commission for accelerating the initiatives to the General Command, 28 November 1897.

\textsuperscript{158} Fortna, 2002: 166.
September, 1907, enabling him to carry out his scientific investigations in Tortum and specifically to photograph the ruins of old churches in this region.\(^{159}\) Although Permakov initially declared that he would only go to the region of Tortum, it was subsequently understood that this would not be the only place he wanted to visit. The local authorities claimed that he had already travelled to a village in Pasinler, mapped this area, and asked for some information from villagers regarding the roads. His unauthorized travel to Pasinler and disclosure of his next intended destinations as Keskim and Namrevan further increased doubts about him, as he should have received additional permissions to go to these districts. In the view of the Ottoman authorities, it appeared that he was travelling through the region for military, map-making purposes.\(^{160}\)

As Mark Monmonier argues, ‘maps, like speeches and paintings, are authored collections of information and also are subject to distortions arising from ignorance, greed, ideological blindness, or malice’.\(^{161}\) Clearly, the Ottomans were well aware of the modifying power of maps and the hidden agendas a map-maker might have while producing maps. Failure to correctly document these border regions resulting from their own lack of appropriate maps could only have made the Ottomans more suspicious of Russian subjects interested in the region. Moreover, it seems that both the Russian and Ottoman authorities considered cartography a tool for managing the

\(^{159}\) BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 255-42. The governor of Erzurum confirmed that there were two ancient churches in two villages in Tortum that had been converted into mosques. In addition, in the two other villages of the region of Azort in Tortum, there were both large and small ancient ruins. Cipher letter sent by the Governor of Erzurum, 29 April 1908.

\(^{160}\) Ibid. From the Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of the Interior, 10 December 1907; From the Commission for accelerating the inspections and reforms to the Province of Erzurum, 1 October 1907, to the Grand Vizierate, 23 April 1908; to the Province of Erzurum 25 April 1908.

Russo-Ottoman border and acquiring and maintaining power over it.\textsuperscript{162} For instance, Ottoman border officers attested that the Russians already had Ottoman maps of several scales, with their 1:84,000-scale maps containing the provinces of Erzurum and Van being particularly exquisite. Rather than undertaking a new set of maps, they thought, the Russians were working on earlier copies of the Ottoman maps. They claimed that the commanders of the General Staff were employed at the Russian Consulates in Erzurum, Van and Rize in civilian clothes for the purpose of amendment of Ottoman maps of these regions and informed the relevant military authorities in Tbilisi about the Ottoman military forces near the border.

The Ottoman officers complained that these commanders were never forbidden from travelling into the Ottoman territories and were never questioned about their actions in the course of their travels. They thought that the Ottomans should curb the movement of these commanders, who most probably travelled through the border for the purpose of mapping the nearest regions, and that they should also closely observe Russian Consuls who travelled around surreptitiously meeting Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. According to the Ottoman border officers, the activities of such commanders and consuls should even be followed more attentively than spies dispatched by the Russian local governments to Ottoman territory or travellers who moved back and forth across the border.\textsuperscript{163}


\textsuperscript{163} BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 255-42. For instance, the activities of the Russian Consul in Bayezid, who went to Iğdır via Karabulak without informing the Ottoman local authorities, received attention. From the Commission for accelerating the inspections and reforms to the Grand Vizierate, 23 April 1908; official letter of Border Command, dated 30 April 1908.
The absence of any definitive borderline between the Russian and Ottoman Empires and a lack of providence on the part of Ottoman authorities in solving the problematic issues arising from this clearly increased their general suspicion and deep-seated fear of Russian activities. Again, however, it appears that the fear was well enough grounded. Placed in the context of the relationship between knowledge and power inherent in cartography, it can be claimed that the Russian attempt to map the border region was a crucial part of the overall process of gaining knowledge of the contiguous border areas of these two states. The Ottoman reaction can be read in the same context, as a process regarded as a threat not only to simple (military) security but also to territorial integrity, to the sovereignty of the Ottoman state. The sceptical Ottoman attitude towards the activities of Russian subjects such as Prejevalsky and Permakov, regardless of whether they really were engaged in mapping the border region or not, supports the notion of Ottoman weakness in respect of the border when compared to Russia, as the following section also illustrates.\footnote{Prejevalsky would later become commander of the Caucasian Army, one of Russia’s World War One generals when it occupied the Ottoman provinces of Trabzon, Erzurum, Van (and for a short period, Bitlis). For details of the Russian scientific investigations and archaeological studies in the occupied lands and in respect of this Russian interest in the region, see Halit Dündar Akarca, *Imperial Formations in Occupied Lands: The Russian Occupation of Ottoman Territories during the First World War*, PhD Dissertation, (Princeton University, 2014), pp. 151-196.}

The meeting of the Russo-Ottoman border commission in 1912: Lost Maps and Unclear Borders

Some of the original border markers placed by the Russo-Ottoman border commission between 1879 and 1880 became ruined or damaged over time. In 1908, these were re-erected or restored by a joint commission, but such occasional efforts tended to be somewhat ineffective in clearly demarcating the border. In addition to maintaining these border markers, there was also a need to situate new border markers at specific
locations where they were not obvious enough to be easily noticed by people and local officials. According to the protocols and original maps of the joint border commission of 1879-80, border markers had to be located in contentious areas, so that people would be clear about the actual line of the border. In addition to this clarification, there was another crucial issue concerning the retention of people’s economic benefits from their lands and properties: the legal situation had to be clarified to guarantee the usufruct and disposal rights.\(^\text{165}\)

These issues concerned both the Russian and Ottoman authorities, as is revealed in the diplomatic notes between the Russian Consulate in Istanbul and the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, beginning in 1909.\(^\text{166}\) As a result of diplomatic correspondence and negotiations, a joint commission was convened in Istanbul on 18\(^{\text{th}}\) May, 1912 at the office of the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of the military attaché of the Russian Embassy, Mr. Holmsen, the chief dragoman of the Embassy, Mr. Mandelstam, and the head of the Ottoman delegation of the Russo-

\(^{165}\) It is worth mentioning that under Ottoman rule, Kars and Batum had been largely composed of miri (state-owned) lands. Russian administrators did not remain indifferent to the Ottoman land legacy and read the Ottoman land code of 1858 in order to provide a legal framework for their own agrarian policy. As Ekaterina Pravilova states, Dmitrii Bakradze, the head of the Caucasus Land Commission, published ‘the first (and, it seems, only) translation into Russian of excerpts from the Ottoman Land Code’ and also ‘two surveys of the historical development of land property’ in these provinces as a result. Moreover, in spite of inconsistencies in its land policies in Kars and Batum, the Russian central government eschewed executing the patrimonial ownership of lands, which was seen as an Islamic model of property, due to the different understanding of state land (kazennye) in Russia. Ekaterina Pravilova, ‘The Property of Empire: Islamic Law and Russian Agrarian Policy in Transcaucasia and Turkestan’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* (Volume 12, Spring 2011), 353-386, pp. 368-369. For similar arguments, see Candan Badem, *Çarlık Rusyası Yönetiminde Kars Vilayeti* (Istanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2010), pp. 127-133. Badem states that the Russian government significantly extended the villagers’ disposal rights to the lands. (The Ottomans referred to ‘disposal rights’ and the Russians to ‘usufruct rights’ and it seems that the terms are used interchangeably here.)

\(^{166}\) The British Consuls in Erzurum also provide us with information about the ongoing activity of Russians in controlling the Russo-Ottoman borderline. For instance, H.S. Shipley reported that Colonel Vichinsky, who was attached as Second Secretary to the Russian Consulate General in Erzurum, travelled to the ‘frontier’ between Oltu and Rize so as to examine the position of boundary markers there. PRO, FO 195-2318, From Erzurum on 5 October 1909.
Ottoman border commission, Fahri Bey, to address these issues and draw up a common regulation.\textsuperscript{167}

The main aim of this commission was to define the mission of another joint commission, which was to be sent to the Russo-Ottoman border regions to conduct an investigation that would fit the requirements of common regulation.\textsuperscript{168} One of the main concerns of this joint commission would be the demarcation of the Russo-Ottoman border based on the maps of 1879-80. The authorities concurred on the need to erect additional border markers at required locations, which would be indicated by superintendents of either side and similar in shape to previous border markers.\textsuperscript{169} The commission would also meet local officials and people living near the border in order to determine the lands and properties of Russian subjects living in Ottoman territory and of Ottoman subjects in Russian territory. The size of these lands would be measured, and this information, along with their type, registered in the protocols of the commission and indicated on the border maps. In the case of any disagreement between the two sides of the commission on the lands and properties in question, or if the people who used them objected to the restrictions of the commission, these contentions and objections were also to be stated in the protocols and indicated on

\textsuperscript{167} BOA, HR. HMŞ. İSO 149-16. The official report of the Russo-Ottoman border commission which met under the chairmanship of the undersecretary of the commission, 18 May 1912. Also see HR. HMŞ. İSO 149- 17; HR. HMŞ. İSO 149-12, A memorandum sent by the Ministry of War regarding the common regulation presented to the delegates of two parties who would be dispatched to the Russo-Ottoman border, 25 June 1912.

\textsuperscript{168} A memorandum of the Ministry of War about the Russo-Ottoman border, dated 7\textsuperscript{th} June, 1911 mentioned that the joint commission would be sent to the border in the spring of 1911. Since the diplomatic correspondence and investigations took time, it had been expected that the delegates would have set up their work on the border in the summer of 1911. BOA, HR.HMŞ. İSO 149-13. However, as indicated by other documents, the delegates only started their work on 28\textsuperscript{th} May, 1912. It was assumed that they would be able to complete it within the summer months of 1912. HR. HMŞ. İSO 149-16 and 17.

\textsuperscript{169} While the costs of new border markers would be covered by the government to which this superintendent belonged, the cost of repairing the damage would share equally between both governments. BOA, HR. HMŞ. İSO 149-13, 16 and 17. Also, the Ottoman side proposed that instead of writing in French on the border marks, it would be better if the border marks situated on the Ottoman side were written in Turkish letters while Russian letters should be used for the border marks within the Russian side. HR. HMŞ. İSO 149-13.
the maps. The local authorities would be informed about the disputed matter, and the commission recommended that they be charged with the cost of the necessary investigations and finalization. Until the conflict was resolved by the local authorities in accordance with the legal procedures, the standing usufruct and disposal rights would remain.

Crafting a common regulation proved difficult, because disputes had to be individually negotiated and variously amended.\(^{170}\) Also, for the Ottoman authorities, the common regulation necessitated an adjustment with respect to the usufruct and disposal rights of people with lands and properties on the other side of the border. The Ottomans intended to provide legal support for these people, to enable them to claim these rights. According to the common regulation, if the participants of this joint commission or the local people disagreed, they were to take their cases to the judicial courts. The disputed lands would be subject to the judicial process of the state on whose side of the border the lands were situated provided they had been used by the plaintiffs before delimitation of the border in 1879-80. Although the Ottomans considered this term to be reasonable if the plaintiffs could prove their claim with official documents, the Russians opposed it, arguing that both governments should be authorized to solve such issues. It was finally agreed by the commission that the judicial process would take place within the border and thus under the judicial system of the state that had sovereignty over the lands and properties in question, although the other state could

\(^{170}\) For instance, in the preface of the common regulation, it was remarked that both governments pledged to follow the diplomatic note from the Russian Consulate dated 8-26\(^{170}\) June, 1909 for resolving controversial issues on the border; in fact, the diplomatic note in question sought to evacuate the lands within Russia of Ottoman subjects, and, as the Ottoman authorities could not accept this, they made an amendment to the preface. For the amendment and addition of Fahri Bey to the Russian project for a common regulation, see BOA, HR. HMS. İSO 149-13. It was also decided that the local authorities would be invited to serve as assistant commissions to investigate and gather information about some of these issues. Even though Fahri Bey thought that the local authorities could help the border commission to investigate certain events, he thought that they should not be involved in decision-making as the delegates of the joint border commission.
be included in the process, if necessary. In addition, and again contrary to the stance of the Ottoman commission, the Russians insisted that until the case ended up in court, no-one would be permitted to cross the border in order to benefit from their disputed holdings.

It is emphasized in the Ottoman documentation that the insistence on developing a system to resolve these controversial issues came from Russia. For their part, the Ottomans strove through the almost two years of negotiations to ensure the recognition of rights that would be to the economic benefit of the Ottoman subjects whose lives were negatively affected by the new border delimitation. The Ottoman authorities believed that by the end of the negotiations they would be able to achieve these aims, with the Russian desire to solve the controversial issues regarded as evidence of its amicable feelings towards the Ottoman government. The Ottoman authorities therefore felt obliged to state that they harboured the same feeling towards the Russian government.  

It was with this combination of wishful thinking and perception of mutual understanding that the Ottoman members of the bi-lateral boundary commission prepared to depart for the borderland. However, not everything went as planned. As the time came to leave Istanbul, they found they did not have the original agreements and border maps signed and exchanged by the sovereigns of the two sides. Fahri Bey called upon the officers concerned within the General Staff, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Imperial Chancery, and the archives of the Ministry of War to find the original maps. At first, not even the record of the original documents and maps could be found. Eventually, two sets of documents and some border maps were located at

171 BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-16 and 17.
the General Department of the General Staff. The border maps were lithographed print reproductions, not the originals required. Thus, contrary to what had been agreed, the Ottoman commission travelled to the border with only the two sets of documents and lithographed border maps.

When the Ottomans met up with the Russian delegates and went to their starting point (the Orucuk field near Oltu) it became apparent that the Russians had also brought lithographed maps. Obviously, the Ottoman representatives were in no position to object to the fact that the Russians had not brought their originals, either. There was one significant difference between the two sets of lithographic maps, however: those brought by the Russians, which were officially confirmed as based on the originals by a person holding the rank of general, had been diligently printed. The Russian maps showed various features (places, roads, forests, etc.) that were missing from the Ottomans’. These differences were to give rise to heated argument and mutual recriminations when the Russian delegates attempted to designate various intermediary markers. But this already problematic situation was then further compounded, first, by the fact that the two sets of maps contrasted with respect to the explanations of the documents demarcating the boundary, and then again, since neither matched the actual topography of the field in front of them.

Moreover, the Ottoman maps ceded more territories to Russia along the border markers near Oltu than did the Russians’. The Russian commission drew their own

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172 According to an earlier document written by the General Department of the General Staff, on 17th June, 1883, the fifteen copies of original maps and protocols prepared by two joint commissions after the Treaty of Berlin convened first in Istanbul (17th May, 1880) and second in Karakilise (11th August, 1880) were printed and sent to the office of the Grand Vizierate with their originals. BOA, Y.A. HUS 173-114.

173 BOA, BEO 4105-307829. 29 October 1912. One of the document sets had been printed at the press of the Department of War, in 1873, and the other at the military press, in 1909 (as indicated in the official letter sent by Fahri Bey on 23 September 1912).
conclusions from this disparity, assuming to act as though the Ottoman maps were correct in this respect, even if not in others. The Ottoman commission unsurprisingly preferred an opposite approach requesting from the head of the Russian commission that his side attempt to provide copies of their maps for the Ottomans. He replied that there were no second copies in Tbilisi; however, Fahri Bey was informed by a member of the Russian border commission that there were numerous copies of these border maps in the General Staff library in Tbilisi. Fahri Bey thought that if the lost maps attached to the documents demarcating the boundary could not be found at the archives of the Yıldız Palace or the Imperial Chancery in Istanbul, the copies of the maps in the Russians’ hands should be procured from Tbilisi through the Ottoman Consulate. For him, the maps in the Ottomans’ hands were not in an appropriate state to be presented to the Russians anyway. Thus, he offered to generate a map based on the Russian documentation, which would be examined in comparison with Ottoman maps and documents at the same time and then used by subsequent commissions.\textsuperscript{174}

During the meeting of the joint border commission in Oltu, Fahri Bey was engaged in diplomatic correspondence with the central government regarding not only the state of the missing maps but also the controversial land issues of Ottoman subjects within Russia. His telegram sent on 20\textsuperscript{th} September, 1912 indicated that the discussions in the previous meeting in Istanbul concerning the Ottoman usufruct and disposal rights in Russia protracted the negotiations in Oltu.\textsuperscript{175} Disagreements between the parties about the validity of claims complicated their work. The various complications faced by

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid. In order to display the difference between the Ottoman and Russian maps, Fahri Bey drew a copy on straw paper of some sections of Russian maps with full explanations of that particular side of the border, including roads and forests, and attached it to his letter to Istanbul. According to a note written by the secretariat of the Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of War on 27\textsuperscript{th} November, 1912, the required maps were not found at the archives of the Imperial Chancery.

\textsuperscript{175} BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-14.
Fahri Bey clearly testify to the lack of control by the Ottoman bureaucracy over the borderland region generally, and particularly in respect of its Russian counterpart as the stronger side in negotiations.

The statements from Russian delegates hint at the reasons for increased tensions between the two parties. The delegates stated that within the borders of the provinces of Batum and Kars, foreigners did not have usufruct rights (hakki intifa’) or ownership rights (hakki temlik). Even though people on this borderland whose lands and uplands were crossed by the border had been allowed to utilize their lands since the signing of the Treaty of Istanbul in 1879, this permission meant a temporary usufruct, and its withdrawal was possible at any time. The Russian delegates, meanwhile, were able to display the relevant land registers, which had, moreover, enclosed maps indicating the borders. By means of these documents, they openly revealed their objective of delimiting the lands on the Russo-Ottoman border, which startled the Ottoman party. They also demanded that legal rights, pursuant to the local rules, which would be definitely enforced with respect to people on the borderland in terms of usufruct or disposal rights, should be clarified by an agreement between both contracting governments. And even beyond this, they further stated that these legal rights might be annulled by state law.\(^{176}\)

The Russian delegates thus displayed a certain disregard for common regulation, which caused a dispute between the two parties in the Oltu meeting. The Ottoman delegates claimed that the Russian position was not only detrimental to the possession rights of Ottoman subjects but also contrary to the agreement reached by the Ottoman

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 25 September 1912.
government and Russian Consulate in Istanbul.\textsuperscript{177} Fahri Bey informed the central authorities about the dispute, and as a result of the diplomatic correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, it was decided that one of two options would be approved as a solution to this dispute: either the Ottoman delegates could remain neutral on the matter or else Fahri Bey could postpone the meeting.\textsuperscript{178} The Ottoman authorities understood that the first option would not be pejorative to the disposal rights of Ottoman subjects, since these would be neither denied nor annulled. While these rights might remain temporary, they would not be subject to any state law annulling the agreement.\textsuperscript{179} However, because the Ottoman authorities complained to Fahri Bey about this dispute and given the shortage of time in which to resolve it, he was obliged to choose the second option.\textsuperscript{180}

Summarising, the meetings of the joint commissions in Istanbul and Oltu clearly demonstrate the inability of the sovereign states to solve the problematic issues arising after the delimitation of the border in 1879-80. Conflict and ambiguity regarding the demarcation of the border certainly seems to have continued until at least 1912. Discussions of border-crossings and land issues directly linked to the status and rights of people regarding their lands and properties extended over decades. At the heart of this malfunctioning process was the absence of an overarching social and administrative contract into which both states entered with the local people of the borderland. In the absence of a precisely defined border line and such a contract, the

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid. Undated.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. The Ottoman delegates at the meeting were officially told that they should reveal their reservations about the issue of disposal rights. While the joint commission would continue working on other issues, the Ottoman reservation was to be recorded in the official minutes and the legal issue postponed to another time.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid. Fahri Bey noted that, recognizing the prominence of the issues divulged by the Russian delegates at the meeting, the two governments could deal with these in the following year.
Russo-Ottoman border created the opportunity for officials to re-interpret and even manipulate the issues for their benefit. This was the chief reason why the attitude of the Russian delegates towards the usufruct rights of the Ottoman subjects in Russia worried the Ottoman delegates. The Russian declaration that these rights would only be conferred upon Russian subjects put the status of Ottoman subjects with holdings in Russia in a precarious position. Although the Ottoman delegates worked to remove the possibility of change in this respect, it was too late. As is explained in the following chapters, incentives for following the pre-existing economic structure led many Ottoman subjects living near the border to obtain Russian subjecthood.

**Conclusion**

It has been argued in this chapter that divergent processes of delimitation and demarcation and their contrasting manifestations on maps and on the ground created a complex situation. Effectively, a type of interface between villagers and officials emerged in which the local people were able to maintain traditional and develop novel practices in response to the new bureaucratic realities that could not be easily restricted by interventions from the imperial states. The archival documents explicitly show that the ‘disunity’ of lands throughout the Russo-Ottoman border and the heated discussions about their status persisted up to World War I. Remarkably, some local people whose lands were divided by the border did not eschew negotiation and compromise. Especially when their daily interests were threatened, the villagers negotiated with the sovereign states not only for their socio-economic benefits but also about the official laying-down of boundary lines. Rather than just the imperceptible objects of imperial policies as implied in the grand treaties, therefore, they became actors who helped to form the border.
Parallel to the difficult issue of the state-citizen relationship in the context of land was the similarly fraught state-state relationship. The governments of both states attempted to exercise sovereignty over the territories they regarded as theirs, defined not only by their jurisdiction over lands and the people living on and their movements over those lands but also in relation to the other government. The definition of the line between the two imperial sovereignties was not something that concerned them equally. If we recall the tension inherent in Ottoman cartography during the late Ottoman period ‘between the advantages of explicit geographical delineation and the benefits of a less precise aura of sultanic and caliphal authority’,¹⁸¹ it is plain that the unclear line of demarcation was not something that would overly disturb the Ottoman existence on the border. Rather, what they sought was, to a large extent, continuation (protection) of a traditional order positively nourished by conflict and ambiguity.

The opposite was the case for the Russians motivated to stake (i.e. map) their claims and administer the new imperial reality. They were more concerned to establish clear, once-and-for-all definitions and push for a sharper sovereign border. The result of this fundamental clash of visions of the place of delineation and demarcation was an Ottoman fixation on Russian attempts to clearly demarcate the lands belonging to Ottoman subjects. The Ottoman authorities’ suspicion of the mapping process of the Russians on the border, their prudent stance with respect to the more detailed Russian maps and also their concerns over the course of the meeting of the joint border commission in Oltu serve as examples of perceived threats to the Ottomans. These examples demonstrate that following the Treaty of Berlin and until 1914 the Ottoman

state was unable to establish its territorial sovereignty in the Russo-Ottoman border region.
CHAPTER II. The Ottoman Management of Muslim Mobility across the Russo-Ottoman Border: An Example of Tolerance

Just as territorial sovereignties were not absolute in the Ottoman Empire on its Russian borderland, so also was the Ottoman state unable to properly control people’s cross-border movements there. The state tried to compensate for these deficiencies with sanctions to enforce a policy determining which people could cross, who would be kept within and who outside of the border. In other words, the Ottoman state effectively introduced into people’s lives its distinctions between ‘subject’ and ‘foreign’ and ‘loyal’ and ‘non-loyal’ people. It is in this context that the present chapter looks at the stance taken by the local and central Ottoman authorities towards the different manifestations of migration and cross-border mobility between 1878 and 1914. Relying mainly on examination of some (legal and illegal) cases of Muslim movement across the Russo-Ottoman border and of the way that these cases were treated by the Ottoman officials, this chapter identifies a general pattern of the Ottoman approach towards the mobility of Muslims. This is used to reveal some ‘hidden’ standards of inclusionary and exclusionary aspects of Ottoman citizenship. While discussions around imperial citizenship and belonging have largely focused on textual and legal discourses, therefore, the aim of this chapter-and the following two- is to investigate implicit expressions of imperial citizenship and belonging manifested in everyday politics.

The theoretical framework on ‘strangeness/ambivalence’ provided by Zygmunt Baumann in *Modernity and Ambivalence* is essential to this research. Baumann defines
the issue of ‘strangeness’ as the by-product of modernity’s constant attempt to classify the world so as to leave nothing undefined and render all of reality legible. To Baumann, strangers are those who undermine the border that the modern state creates between ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’, between citizens, non-citizens and outsiders.\textsuperscript{182} As this and subsequent chapters will show, the domain of ‘strangeness’ was extensive in the Russo-Ottoman borderland. This was not only because of the incongruity of the border with the material reality of the borderland people and the constantly changing dynamics of the region resulting in high levels cross-border movement and numerous cases of dual citizenship. It also owed much to the Ottoman state’s lack of the necessary infrastructural power to enforce the border and border laws, or, in other words, to clearly draw the line dividing friends and enemies. As a modern state with a claim to sovereignty, the Ottoman state was reluctant to give up on defining friends and enemies, but it faced a wide gap between friends and enemies as defined on paper and the reality on the ground. The response to this ‘strangeness’ was thus to produce concepts, distinctions, practices, procedures and ways of reasoning that sought to take control of ‘strangeness’ rather than to eliminate it totally.

Our argument is that to the extent that these discourses and practices distinguished less dangerous from more dangerous strangers and differently treated different stranger groups, a redefinition of friends and enemies can be said to have taken place through these discourses and practices. To express this in terms of the distinction made between formal and substantive aspects of citizenship by Rogers Brubaker, friends and enemies redefined at a substantive level diverged from friends and

\textsuperscript{182} Baumann, 1993: 53-74.
enemies defined at a formal level (of laws, constitution and other legal regulations). In fact, despite the formal Ottoman stance of not defining friends/inside/we as opposed to enemies/outside/they on any religious basis, the particular discourses and practices employed by the Ottoman authorities to control the ‘strangeness’ posed by loyalties and movements across the Russo-Ottoman border displayed a remarkable inclination to equate friendship with Islam. Here, we should also note that the Ottoman authorities tended to view Muslims as a single entity in this border region rather than dealing with them according to their sectarian divisions of Sunni and Shi’ite, as they did in Ottoman Iraq where Sunni and Shi’i conflict agitated by Ottoman and Iranian rivalry was intense.

While Chapters Three and Four develop this argument via an analysis of the state’s handling of the dual citizenship of Muslims and the rigid non-permeability of the border for Armenians, this chapter considers the Ottoman tolerance and even welcoming stance towards the cross-border mobility of Muslims. To regard the border as a ‘citizenship boundary’ the level of permeability of the border was rather high for Muslims, regardless of ethnic identity. This is what we seek to demonstrate with the evidence presented here. First, we analyse the extent of the Ottoman state’s capacity to monitor the movement of people across the Russo-Ottoman border. Then, in relation to this, we address the emergence of ambivalent loyalties among Muslims. Finally, we review three ways used by the Ottoman state to manage ambivalent loyalties on the Russo-Ottoman border, namely its welcoming policy, tolerance and specific discursive tools.

183 While the formal definition of citizenship is predicated on a citizenship status constituted by common rights and obligations irrespective of its contents, the substantive aspect of citizenship emphasises particular political rights and obligations. For details, see Rogers Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 39-43.
Monitoring the Movement of People on the Russo-Ottoman Borderland

Starting from the early nineteenth century and with an increasing intensity after the Treaty of Berlin until the end of 1914, the Russian and Ottoman Empires both strove to preserve and strengthen their control of the shared border. Patrolling on the border, controlling entry into and exit from the country, incorporating local administration into the central governance and integrating people of the borderland into the imperial body were among the main policies of these imperial states which aimed to assert their sovereignties in the border areas.¹⁸⁵ For its part, the Russian state immediately began to militarize the border and protect it from any potential attacks. The Russian government declaration of Batum as a military port in the latter part of 1883, thus abrogating the clause of Article LIX of the Treaty of Berlin which had constituted Batum as a free port, can be regarded as an early Russian militarization of the borderland.¹⁸⁶ A secret note sent from St. Petersburg to the governors of the southern districts of Transcaucasia in 1886 also reveals the Russian militarization. The secret note informed the governors that foreign officers were not to be allowed to visit localities situated near its border with the Ottoman Empire and Iran or to pass the military roads within the recently annexed territories of Kars and Batum; nor were foreigners in general, including subordinate officials or soldiers of the frontier guard, to be exempted from search or arrest. In order to enforce this regulation, the local authorities would assist the frontier guards and the Cossacks along the boundary line, which ran nearly 1000

¹⁸⁵ Nathan J. Citino’s definition of borderland, which regards ‘the primacy of the state’ in either ‘designating the geographic arena for political rivalry among states’ or ‘referring to land both claimed by a state and adjacent to an acknowledged boundary’ can be applicable to our context. See Nathan J. Citino, ‘The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach’, in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds.), Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 196.
miles from the Black Sea to the Caspian. According to the British Consul in Batum, D. R. Peacock, a considerable Russian military force was employed in the border area to ‘watch any movements of strangers across or along the frontier.’ To him, it was political purposes, not commercial reasons like taking preventive measures against the smugglers in Transcaucasia, which were decisive in the militarization of the border area.

The Ottoman state was well aware of and far from indifferent to the Russian actions. Like the Russian state, the Ottoman state also aimed to establish its authority in the border area, by establishing military cordons and assigning military officers to patrol the border and control the movement of people across it. As a response, however, this has also to be contextualised as part of an overall development of territorial sovereignty. Indeed, we know that the Ottoman central authorities had long since applied regulatory measures to control both the internal and trans-border movements of people.

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187 PRO, FO 65/1339. 27 October 1888.
188 Ibid. According to Peacock, the message was ‘an imperial order of 9/21 June 1887 [that] invests the Governor General of the Caucasus with full power to expel any foreign subject whose presence in this country for some reason or other might be disapproved by the respective local authorities’.
189 For instance, an earlier report dated 13 August 1882 sent by the Ottoman Consul in Kars to the Consul in St. Petersburg gives information about the level of military procurements of Russians across the borderline. His report states that the province had two Cossack regiments, one scattered through the border regions of Kars and other deployed in Iğdır. There were four regiments in Kars, Kağızman and Sankamış and one in Ardahan. The gradual accumulation of soldiers near the border was continuing and, according to information he received, the number of military personnel had exceeded ten thousand.
190 The Ottoman government had been controlling the movement of people within the Empire and along its borders before they were subjected to new regulations during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-39) and the period of Tanzimat reforms (1839-76). Due to security gaps in cities, especially Istanbul, with the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826, the Ottomans established the İhtisab Nezâreti (Ministry of the Marketplace) to maintain security and monitor the movement of people. The populace was already familiar with the internal passport (mürûr tezkeresi) and the prevention of passage (men-i mürûr) before new regulations were introduced in 1826 and 1841. On 14th February, 1867, the Regulation of the Passport Chamber (Pasaport Odası Nizamnamesi) designated new rules for travelling abroad and returning. Musa Çadırcı, ‘Tanzimat Döneminde Çıkarılan Men-i Mürûr ve Pasaport Nizamnameleri’, Belgeler, C.XV 119, (1993), Ankara, 169-181; Christoph Herzog, ‘Migration and the State: On Ottoman regulations concerning migration since the age of Mahmud II’, in Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora
In 1887, a regulation was introduced that revised and specified the procedures for using internal passports. With some modifications, the 1887 regulation stood until the revolution of 1908 (so applied through the greater part of the period covered here). The new procedures that had to be followed to obtain a travel permit became a mechanism through which the Ottoman state not only watched over the movement of its subjects but also tried to keep them under control.\textsuperscript{191} The enforcement of the Passport Regulation on the new Russo-Ottoman border was an outcome of this control mechanism. According to Ottoman accounts dating from the mid-1880s, the Ottoman officers at the Kars border were charged with the inspection of all passports, and they assiduously checked whether passports had visas before allowing their holders to cross.\textsuperscript{192} This hardly meant that the borderline was an impenetrable barrier, however. Indeed, it may be said that the Ottoman state’s attempt to control its borders was ‘more dream than reality’ as was the case in many other states’ attempts to control their official borders around the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{193}

There were various reasons why Ottoman subjects would sometimes try to travel to Russia without the necessary documentation (passports, with official notes). One was that people had trouble adjusting to or just resisted the new circumstances. After all, they had not been obliged to obtain even a passport let alone special permission to


\textsuperscript{192} Apart from registering people for surveillance, security purposes but also as an enactment of power expressing its territorial sovereignty, the Ottoman state also used travel permits as a means for collection of revenues: people who did not pay their taxes and clear their debts, were unable to obtain a travel permit. Turna, 2013: 147, 201, 220-21, 225.

\textsuperscript{193} Those border officers who worked scrupulously were rewarded; for instance, the head of Consulate Affairs in Kars declared that the officers at Kaleboğazi and Karakilise should be promoted. BOA, DH. MKT 1358-77. 13 May 1886.

cross imperial borders until the Ottoman Law of Nationality in 1869. Another reason was the border officers, who were drawn from the military department. A report made by the Ottoman Consulate in Kars a decade after the border had been set stated that sometimes subjects wanted to evade the military and, in particular, that the misconduct of military border officers led some Ottoman subjects not to use official border crossing points.

A third reason was that people might decide to avoid the long process of applying for a passport or visa. For instance, we learn from a report sent by the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum in 1892 of people from Hopa or Arhavi who could obtain neither passport nor visa as there was no relevant Ottoman government bureau or Russian Consulate near these places. Having obtained standard identification cards instead, they continued their journey to Batum by boat but were intercepted by Russian officials. In Batum, they told the Ottoman Consulate General that they wanted to be subject to the same regulations as those imposed on Russian subjects, who could easily pass the border from Batum into Ottoman territory.

It seems that the facilities for obtaining a passport in this borderland region did not improve greatly over the subsequent two decades, as evidenced by the experiences in late 1911 of some people, who had to move back and forth across the border because their lands were in Russia. As there was still no passport office near Kötek, where one

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195 This situation reduced the revenues of the Ottoman Consulate in Kars. As a result of an exchange of official notes between the Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs, the Fourth Imperial Army was informed on how to handle the issue. A short note with two sample passports was sent from the Directorate of Consulate Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of War was warned that further border-officer misconduct would lead to further complaints and should be managed. BOA, DH. MKT 1576-51. 19 December 1888.

196 BOA, HR. TO 93-36. From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 21 March 1892.
of the Ottoman border crossings was located, people were forced to go to Erzurum to get their passports. It seems that Ottoman customs officials in Kötek were given an order to follow the Russian regulation, as had been requested, thus allowing its subjects to crisscross the border with a safe-conduct pass, authorizing passage. This also indicates that the Russian and Ottoman governments did not establish a common regulation, or implicitly agreed regulatory approach even, which would apply equally to local people from both sides, allowing them to crisscross the border. Rather, the two states established parallel systems, reflecting and expressive of their sovereign territories (in which the Ottomans followed the Russian lead).

Although little attention appears to have been given to easing the considerable difficulty that some of its citizens experienced in securing passports, archival documents show that the Ottoman state devoted considerable effort to improving its control and surveillance capacities throughout the Russian border area. In other words, attempts to restrict movement as an expression of sovereignty increased, while the needs of ordinary people for movement to be facilitated as a legal norm went unmet. One may speculate that this was the result of a modernisation failure: the Ottoman state attempted to expand its reach but lacked the administrative, technical and other capacities to do this, resulting in major inefficiencies. This was particularly the case from the mid-1890s, when the growing Ottoman concern for the lack of adequate infrastructure at the border crossings coincided with a period of turmoil in Eastern Anatolia.

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197 BOA, DH. SN-THR 27-98. From the Secretariat of the Administration of General Register Office to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 October 1911.
In 1895, for instance, an urgent need was perceived for rules to be laid down concerning the establishment of checkpoints (kapu) near the sites of known border passages (i.e. border crossings) and for the appointment of border officers who were experienced, literate and knew Russian, or at least one of the European languages. The related offices of the provinces of Trabzon and Erzurum and the commander-in-chief of these regions cooperated in finding convenient places to establish the checkpoints, which would work to stem the flow of illegal entries and exits. Needs related to monitoring the border would be determined by a commission, consisting of officials selected by the local authorities. Ultimately, this commission had to decide on the location of checkpoints by evaluating the results of the investigation undertaken by border province officials. According to a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these checkpoints would ideally be located opposite the Russian checkpoints. In an official report dated 21st August, 1895, the Grand Vizier Mehmed Said Pasha indicated five locations that would be convenient for the establishment of border crossings. As his report clearly reveals, the military character of the Russo-Ottoman border became increasingly apparent during the course of the 1890s. Illegal cross-border mobility persisted despite these arrangements, however, primarily due to the infrastructural shortcomings of the Ottoman border administration. For example, there was a lack of sufficiently educated border officers capable of dealing

198 BOA, DH. MKT 427-70. 14 September 1895.
199 Ibid.
200 Mehmed Said Pasha suggested the closing of other sites of passage, leaving only the five mentioned, at Karabulak, opposite the Russian gate at Kars, between Kaleboğazi (in Tortum) and Milo (in Keskim) Ibid. 14 September 1895. A subsequent official letter indicated that three locations were planned to be made permanent: a mountain pass between Beyazet and Yerevan, a place (in Kaleboğazi) near to the mountain chain of Kars, between Kars and Erzurum, and a location in Milo where the Çoruh River crossed the border. Also, a further three border crossings were inaugurated, located on the military cordon extending through the township of Hopa adjacent to the Russian border, two of them opposite the crossing points on the Russian cordon. Even though there was no need for extra border crossings on the cordon, apparently there would be needs to supplement the military cordon and increase border patrols. BOA, DH. MKT 2079-2. 5 January 1897.
with the complicated border issues. We know from Said Pasha’s letter that since the
Ottoman border officers did not know Russian, they were left with no choice but to
check the documents of people with the assistance of Russian superintendents of
trade.\textsuperscript{201} Said emphasised that three officers who had a command of both Turkish and
French were employed by the province of Trabzon at the crossings on the military
cordons. If this were to prove insufficient, further officers with Russian language skills
would be stationed there. In addition, those in the regiments and battalions policing
the borderline who knew either Russian or French were put in charge of passport
control.\textsuperscript{202}

We cannot conclude, however, that the problems pertaining to the shortage of
educated manpower were overcome by these additional measures. For instance,
according to the department of the Fourth Imperial Army, only three of its lieutenants
who met the language requirements were identified.\textsuperscript{203} Despite a declaration by the
same department that they did, in fact, have officers with a command of Russian who
could be assigned to the checkpoints, the Ottoman authorities on the ground were
unable to find passport officers who would work for the three-to-five hundred piaster
payment, or officers who knew Russian.\textsuperscript{204} Even worse for the Ottoman state were the
issues of illiteracy among officers and the erratic payment of the already low salaries,
which resulted in officers’ widespread abuse of their legal authority.\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid. Also, policemen (\textit{zabita}) at the rank of major or adjutant major were needed in places near to
the checkpoint. The report notes that quarantine and passport officers dealt with the same job at the
Russian border crossings.
\textsuperscript{204} BOA, DH. MKT 2079-2. 5 January 1897.
\textsuperscript{205} Abuse of authority and the language skills deficit were not problems specific to the Russo-Ottoman
border. Corruption was rather common among gendarmes who policed the Ottoman countryside
generally and also other border areas in the late nineteenth century. Nadir Özbek, ‘Policing the
Countryside: Gendarmes of the late 19th Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908)’, \textit{International Journal of
Another less than successful attempt to build infrastructure during this period was the Ottoman endeavour to renovate the Trabzon-Bayezid road. Located not far from the Russo-Ottoman border, the renovation of the Trabzon-Bayezid road in the late nineteenth century backfired because of the persistence of highway robbery. The perpetrators ‘envisioned the region to be a common ground for their coexistence’ and ‘functioned within the logic and perimeters of a regional network which transcended imperial borders.’ Such a territorial imagination – one that denied state authority and eschewed any notions of a sovereignty defined on this basis – could only be countered by a cooperative, trans-imperial approach. With the lack of anything like a common regulation, all that was left for the Ottomans was to at least increase the security presence on its side of the border. Instead of bringing peace and order to the borderland region, therefore, the road renovation just precipitated its further militarization. Overall, Ottoman attempts to increase its infrastructural power throughout the border area, especially during the mid-1890s, did not gain it the capacity to efficiently monitor the movements of people across the border and clarify the citizenship status of these people.

The Ottoman state practice of using the Passport Regulation in an effort to control cross-border flows at the turn of the century is shown in the case of a group of Russian Muslim subjects who appealed to the Ottoman border officers at the Kopmuş cordon. These Muslims held some documents (bilet) given by Russian authorities for the purpose of visiting their relatives living over the border. According to their statements,

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Middle East Studies, 40 (2008), 47-67, pp. 55 and 58. Finding police officers who could meet basic (Bulgarian and French) language requirements was also an urgent need at border crossings on the Bulgarian border. BOA, DH. SN. THR 35-56. From the department of General Staff, the 4th branch, to the Ministry of the Interior, 12 August 1911.

these documents were valid for a year, but they were declined entry on the grounds that the documentation was not issued by an Ottoman consul.\textsuperscript{207} As we can observe in other cases, the Ottoman central authorities put the Passport Regulation into practice during this period, to which end, the passport officers were required to enforce the Regulation rigorously.\textsuperscript{208} The Regulation stipulated that foreigners wishing to enter the Empire had to have a passport with a verbal description of their physical appearance. This applied in particular to people who could not readily reach the Ottoman consuls or ambassadors to get their visas.\textsuperscript{209}

People living near the border continued to cross without proper documentation, however. Weak coordination between the Russian and Ottoman governments concerning fundamental issues of border control certainly played a role in the persistence of this. For instance, the Ottoman central authorities claimed that the Russian government refrained from taking measures to support Ottoman policies aimed at standardizing border-crossing and disallowing exceptions.\textsuperscript{210} As many archival documents clearly show, the Ottoman state aimed at the rule of reciprocity as a policy, according to which it established conditions for passage into and through Russian territory that were parallel to those applied on the other side of the border. The aim of this was to enable its subjects to pass into Russia smoothly as well as to protect their

\textsuperscript{207} BOA, DH. MKT 690-36. From the department of General Staff, the 4\textsuperscript{th} branch, 24 May 1903.
\textsuperscript{208} See the case of nine people without passports from Pasinler (within the province of Erzurum) conveying tea to Russia who were stopped by the Ottoman border officers before they crossed the border. BOA, DH. MKT 2408-138. From the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Province of Erzurum, 29 September 1900.
\textsuperscript{209} BOA, DH. MKT 690-36. The 11\textsuperscript{th} article of the Passport Regulation. People who neither held proper passports nor provided a means to prove their identities were forbidden from entering Ottoman territory. If they did not have an Ottoman visa from their home country, they had to pay double the normal fee for a visa upon entry. The 14\textsuperscript{th} article of the Passport Regulation.
\textsuperscript{210} BOA, DH. SN-THR 27-98. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, 13 December 1911.
rights vis-à-vis the Russian government.\textsuperscript{211} It appears, however, that the Ottoman state was not capable of realizing the reciprocity policy for the cross-border mobility of its own subjects.\textsuperscript{212}

One of the primary goals of a joint commission that convened in Istanbul on 18\textsuperscript{th} May, 1912 was to overcome this lack of cooperation and consensus. Border crossings were its primary concern, particularly the ever thorny issue of dealing with the movement of people who had holdings on the other side of the border. Further issues discussed included designation of the types of documents required to cross the border, the provision of customs-free passage for agricultural produce obtained by the cultivation of the lands on the other side, identification of suitable locations or nearby bazaars for the sale of these products within the country of origin, and resolution of the conditions under which people could cross the border with their livestock and herd them into pastures.\textsuperscript{213} The Ottoman central authorities tried to insist on standardizing these procedures, but without success. The joint commission, therefore, has to be judged a failure, certainly from the Ottoman perspective.

On the eve of World War I, a new era began with respect to Russian and Ottoman government monitoring acts in the borderland and increased cross-border movement of Ottoman and Russian subjects. From around the middle of 1912, significant numbers of Ottoman subjects in Russia, mainly Muslims, were detained and deported. The main reason given for this by the Russian government was simply that they did not have passports. In order for the detainees to be turned over for deportation, however, 

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, 30 September 1911 and 5 October 1911. 
\textsuperscript{212} It was not only for the passages of humans but also for livestock and any sort of materials transported across the Russo-Ottoman border that the Ottomans attempted to maintain a reciprocal relation with Russia. For details see, BOA, DH. MKT 1643-132. 29 July 1889; HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-15, 7 and 25 September and 1 October 1912; DH. İD 168-10, 15 December 1913 and 11 March 1914. 
\textsuperscript{213} BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-13 and 16.
the Ottoman Consular officials in Kars were required to interrogate the detainees and provide border officials with a report explaining their identities and situation. Russian Consuls in Eastern Anatolia were also in charge of collecting information about them and verifying its accuracy. However, enquiries (e.g. about place of residence) made by the consuls to provincial Ottoman officials close to the border were not answered promptly. This further complicated the issue, to the extent that Russian officials could not even confirm citizenship, causing the detainees to be interred for long periods of time.\footnote{BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-15. The official letter written by the head of the Ottoman delegation of the Russo-Ottoman border commission on 10 June 1913 upon the telegram from the province of Erzurum dated 22 May 1912 and another official letter written on 26 March 1913. See also, DH. İD 65-37, 17 June 1913; DH. İD 63-35. 11 January 1914.}

The change in respect of the Russian approach to Ottoman citizens on its lands should be seen in the context (as part) of a wider policy shift enacted with the entry into war. Indeed, the Russian detention, deportation and banishment of its Muslims along with its parallel treatment of Ottoman subjects in Russia immediately before, during and after the war are issues that ought to be addressed in a full-length study.\footnote{According to Lohr, over 10,000 Russian Muslim subjects from the provinces of Kars and Batum were interned and deported until the middle of 1915. Eric Lohr, \textit{Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during the World War I} (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 152. There are numerous documents in the Ottoman archives related to the detention, deportation and ‘banishment’ of Ottoman/Muslim subjects and confiscation of their property in Russia during World War I. All these documents need to be diligently processed and analysed.}

Within the context of this chapter, it is important to note that many detained people who identified themselves as Ottoman subjects when they were interrogated by the Russian officers did not have any documentation to prove it.

In summarising this section, we might recall the analysis of George Gavrilis on the governance of the Greco-Ottoman border by the two states before the Treaty of Berlin. According to Gavrilis, the local authorities on the Greco-Ottoman border were
in cahoots with each other. Indeed, border guards from the two sides had already established ‘a common institutional zone’ that facilitated the task of boundary administration in the 1830s, within the first decade of this border’s formation. It was only after the late 1860s that this arrangement started to unravel, as the Greek and Ottoman central authorities came to perceive the border as ‘a sovereign line’ that entailed state intervention and control.\textsuperscript{216} The militarization of border policing soon after the Treaty of Berlin made the Russo-Ottoman border another such sovereign line. The Russian and Ottoman states did not allow the establishment of a common ground to direct affairs on this border, although monitoring deficiencies meant also that its functioning as a sovereign line was never absolute.

The major and immediate outcome of the Ottoman state’s incapacity to enforce the Russo-Ottoman border, and thus the line dividing friends and enemies, determined the extent of a domain of indeterminacy. Identities and loyalties within this domain were somewhat fluid. The status of even Muslim locals as friends as assumed or dictated by the notion of state territorial sovereignty could not be easily fixed. Rather this had to be constantly re-defined in parallel with and in response to the shifting balance of regional power and dynamics of imperial strategies. The following section further reveals this, concentrating on the everyday manifestations of this indeterminacy and strangeness in the uncontrolled cross-border connections of Muslim subjects of the Ottoman state.

Ambivalent Muslim Loyalties on the Russo-Ottoman Border

We already know from the available literature on Russian colonialism in the Caucasus and the Crimea that the Russian encounter there with the native, partially Muslim population of its southern borderland during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was too complicated to be described simply in terms of the submission-resistance duality.\footnote{The natives of the Caucasus were actively involved in making their own contribution to the process of empire-building in various ways, while the Crimeans deliberatively stayed neutral in this process. Sean Pollock, Empire by Invitation? Russian Empire-Building in the Caucasus in the Reign of Catherine II, PhD. Dissertation, (Harvard University, May 2006); Kelly Ann O’Neill, Between subversion and submission: The integration of the Crimean Khanate into the Russian Empire, 1783-1853, PhD. Dissertation, (Harvard University, October 2006). For a theoretical discussion of the inability of the duality of imperialist intervention and indigenous resistance to explain the dynamics on both sides, see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, ‘Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda’, in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (eds.), Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 6 and 8.} As a biographical example, we may cite Bitter Choices in which Michael Khodarkovsky features the story of Semen Semenovich Atarshchikov in a depiction of Russian rule and its relationship with the natives of the North Caucasus during the first half of the nineteenth century that underpins the existing scholarship by pointing out a third alternative between collaboration and resistance.

Atarshchikov had a Chechen father, descended from a noble family, and a Nogay mother. As can be seen in the change of the family name from ‘Otar’, the name of Ismail’s, his father’s hamlet, to ‘Atarshchikov’, associated with Russian Orthodox Christianity, the family members moved between these two contradictory identities. Local elites, educated in Russia and made liable to render service to Tsarist interests in their own local regions, experienced the third way. They remained ‘privileged outsiders in both worlds’, querying their loyalties to the empire and questioned by the agents of both. His ultimate change from Semen Semenovich Atarshchikov to Hajret Muhammed...
is a very striking example of the mutability of identities and ambivalent loyalties at the Caucasian borderland.\textsuperscript{218}

Atarshchikov’s case as an indeterminacy undermining the colonizer-colonized, collaboration-resistance and friends-enemies dualities was by no means specific to Russian colonial expansion in the Caucasus. The source of indeterminacy and strangeness resided in the choices and acts of borderland people in response to the risks and opportunities posed by the ever-changing and fluid character of the line dividing friends and enemies. This implies that the impossibility of fixing Atarshchikov as friend or enemy during his evolution from Atarshchikov to Muhammed was not something exceptional but rather symptomatic of the fluidity of loyalties on the Caucasian borderland during the nineteenth century. Just as the Ottoman Empire had difficulties in establishing sovereignty on its side and interests even in maintaining ambiguities in the borderland zone as a whole (Chapter One) and the poorly enforced border did not clearly define population movements in the area, so also was the imperial borderline not necessarily a decisive factor in building regional alliances and loyalties.\textsuperscript{219}

It is not surprising, therefore, that we can see the manifestations of ambivalent loyalties among the erstwhile Ottoman subjects who remained in Russia after the territorial change. On the one hand, there were clear expressions of loyalty. The initial reactions of the local people upon learning that their Batum region had been given to


\textsuperscript{219} In this regard, we should refer to the works of Michael A. Reynolds and Sabri Ateş discussing respectively, the divided loyalties and transformation of identities in connection to imperial rule on the Russo-Ottoman and Ottoman-Iranian borderlands. See bibliography.
Russia as a war indemnity was one such. Having sent a telegram to the Ottoman Central Command, these people stated that they were ready to collect money among themselves or take a loan from a European Bank in order to cover the indemnity for their region. Considering the huge amount of the indemnity, these unrealistic offers may be best viewed as a way of showing their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire on the eve of Russia’s seizing control of the region. On the other hand, there were also instances of questionable allegiance and the Ottoman authorities soon came to be suspicious about the fluidity of allegiances of people residing near the borderland. One of the earlier reports sent by the Ottoman Consul in Kars (in August, 1882) complained about two notables from the most important families of the region. The Consul argued that they secretly corresponded and collaborated with Russians and regretted that they had been employed in various positions in local government offices under the Ottoman rule. He was particularly upset with one of the two, who was from Ardahan and had obtained a Russian passport despite migrating to the Ottoman Empire, although this seems to have been a common practice among the Muslims of Russia during this period. The report warned that in the province of Erzurum and the regions of the Russo-Ottoman border, there would be many notables who opted for and rendered service to the side from which they could obtain money. In the eye of the Consul, such fickleness was incompatible with ‘love of their native land’, presumably meaning loyalty to the state.

As the biggest Muslim ethnic group in Eastern Anatolia, Kurds were at the centre of Ottoman concerns about the disorder promoted by the borderland ambivalences. The

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220 Mustafa Tanrıverdi, 'The Treaty of Berlin and the Tragedy of the Settlers from the Three Cities' in *War and Diplomacy*, pp. 453-454. Tanrıverdi also mentions that the people of Ardahan showed similar reactions displaying their unease about Tsarist rule.

221 BOA, HR. TO 333-46. 13 August 1882.
ambiguity the Kurdish tribes posed to the Ottoman authorities was twofold, one political and the other ‘criminal’. Regarding the first, it is well known that the Ottoman authorities doubted the allegiances of Kurds in some of the more remote regions in Eastern Anatolia during the 1870s. Their suspicion was not groundless, as some of the Ottoman Kurdish tribal chieftains on the Caucasian front collaborated with Russian generals during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78.\textsuperscript{222} Indeed, as Article LXI of the Treaty of Berlin testified, a reasonable solution to the Armenian question could not be found as long as the Kurdish issue was isolated from its political and social realities in Eastern Anatolia. The period following the war witnessed the emergence of certain Kurdish tribal leaders with ‘trans-border authorities’ and shifting loyalties on the Russo-Ottoman and Iranian borderland, which greatly worried the Ottoman central authorities.\textsuperscript{223} Placed in a broader perspective, imperial confrontation in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia made the Kurds realize their significance for the surrounding states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this sense, ‘switching their loyalty proved to be the most fruitful negotiating tactic for the Kurds and was the basis for their privileges.’\textsuperscript{224}

Kurds occasionally made common cause with the Russians on the Armenian question, especially after the revolution of 1908, despite the Russian emphasis on the threat

\textsuperscript{222} The British Consul of Erzurum, J. Zohrab, alludes to the Ottoman Kurds and their dubious relationship with the Ottoman government in one of his letters to Sir Henry G. Elliot, the British ambassador in Istanbul. He concludes with the following sentences: ‘In case of war the [Ottoman] Government will have another enemy besides the Russians to oppose: the Koords [Kurds]. The nomad Koords are now practically in revolt, and many of the Chiefs are known to be in Russian pay. As the Government avoids all action which would make the attitude of these Koords apparent, the position they have assumed is not evident, but it is well known to those who go amongst them, and a war with Russia would at once bring them to the front as the enemies of the Porte, and the paid auxiliaries of Russia.’ PRO, WO 106/1. 5 November 1876. Brad Dennis, ‘Patterns of Conflict and Violence in Eastern Anatolia Leading Up to the Russo-Turkish War and the Treaty of Berlin’, in War and Diplomacy, p. 283.

\textsuperscript{223} Sabri Ateş uses ‘trans-border authority’ for Sheikh Ubeidullah who emerged as an influential figure on the Ottoman-Iranian borderland after the widespread destabilization following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. Ateş, 2014: 740-44.

posed to Armenians by Kurds. The Ottoman authorities were therefore wary of the special attention the Russian authorities paid to Kurds. This was only heightened insofar as the Kurds desired to maintain sovereignty in their eastern Anatolian lands, whose often only nominal status as Ottoman territory was increasingly contested by the state through the nineteenth century. To the Russian authorities, Eastern Anatolia was far from an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. War Minister Sukhomlinov, and Foreign Minister Sazonov even contemplated sending troops across the border into Erzurum in the middle of January 1914. In addition to Eastern Anatolia, the collaboration of Kurds was also crucial for Russia to maintain its rule in northern Iran.

It was thus entirely understandable that Ottoman officials should be highly suspicious of Russian officials who were somewhat familiar with the Turkish and Kurdish languages and travelled through the regions close to the Russo-Ottoman border in April 1914. According to the information obtained by the Ottoman authorities, such Russian officials established contact with groups of people from the Kaskanlı and other Kurdish tribes who earned their livelihood through cross-border trade and thus passed back and forth between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. The Ottoman authorities claimed that some Kaskanlı Kurds were employed as Russian spies and that some other people from the Greek population in Sarıkamış (then in Russia) were sent to the Ottoman border districts of Alashkerd, Pasinler and Hınıs to mix with people from the Kurdish tribes in these districts for some unknown reasons.

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227 BOA, DH. EUM. EMN 71-29. From the Province of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 6 May 1914. Also, from the Ministry of the Interior to the Province of Van, 9 May 1914. One of the chief
Kurdish tribes made use of their location at a poorly enforced border not only politically, to emerge as an authority in the region, but also for economic gain, through illegal cross-border trade and robbery. According to a report dated 16th October, 1886, for example, a Kurdish group of fifteen to twenty people entered Russian territory and were involved in several acts of pillage near Kars and Erivan. Following this, the Russian Consulate officially requested the prevention of encroachments by Kurds and the reinforcement of military cordons on the border. According to the Consulate, this was stated as a requirement for the two empires to remain at peace in the borderland.228

Even though, as we see in this case, the Ottoman authorities tried hard to refute the Russian complaints, it was obviously impossible to conceal the general sense of lawlessness or lack of state authority resulting from the independent and illegal actions of the Kurds living on the border. According to the notes of an official from the Correspondence Office of the Ottoman Grand Vizierate, the residents of a number of Kurdish villages on the Russo-Ottoman border earned their livelihood through smuggling and robbery. They had houses, families and relatives in Russia, and many of them were not registered in the Ottoman Empire. They would spend part of the year in Russia and the rest of it in their own villages, inside the Ottoman territory. In the course of their cross-border travels, they would sell goods and livestock they stole from Russia in the Ottoman Empire, where they similarly stole items to sell in Russia.

Kurdish suspects was Abdürrezzak from the Bedirhan tribe, who was continuously meeting with the General Governor of the Caucasus.

228 The Ottoman authorities confirmed that the nephew of one of the chieftains of the Celali tribe from the district of Bayezid was killed in Ottoman territory, where the border with Russia met the territory of the Yazidis. The conflict arising from this event was resolved. BOA, DH. MKT. 1386-1. A letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 December 1886.
And in various ways, they also assisted, as the Ottoman official put it, ‘unruly Armenians’, taking money in return.\textsuperscript{229}

To sum up, the incapacity of the Ottoman state to enforce the border turned the border area into a zone of ambivalence where friends and enemies tended not to be easily identifiable. Not only the Armenian experience of the border, which is analysed separately, in Chapter Four, but also that of Muslims was characterized by conspiratorial, clandestine and furtive actives involving little controlled political, commercial and criminal cross-border contacts. In the following sections, we analyse the way the Ottoman state dealt with the ambivalence posed by these contacts between Muslim subjects living in the border area.

**The Management of Ambivalence on the Russo-Ottoman Border**

As is well known, large scale cross-border movements of people occurred during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Russo-Ottoman borderlands of the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region. Territorial changes resulting from a series of wars fought between the Russian and Ottoman Empires during the nineteenth century accelerated this. Religious belonging was mostly the foremost factor impelling people to leave their lands and migrate after territorial changes of sovereignty, but many other considerations ranging from socio-economic, political and cultural reasons to health and security concerns were at play in the decisions about where the migrants would ultimately settle. This turned many people of these borderland regions into ‘trans-imperial movers’.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{229} BOA, DH. TMIK.M 227-50. 4 August 1906.

\textsuperscript{230} Andrew Robarts, ‘Imperial confrontation or regional cooperation? Bulgarian migration and Ottoman-Russian relations in the Black Sea region, 1768-1830s’, *Turkish Historical Review*, 3 (2012), 149-167, pp.
The transfer of three Ottoman sanjaks, Kars, Çıldır (including the Ardahan district) and Batum or Elviye-i Selâse, as it was called by the Ottomans to the Russian Empire after the Treaty of Berlin brought about a new wave of trans-imperial movers over the Russo-Ottoman borderland. Given that the Russian military threat had been a reality for more than half a century, the Muslim inhabitants of this borderland region, who made up the majority of the population of the ceded territories, tended to acquiesce to the new realities without attempting or even wanting to put up conventional resistance. Nevertheless, becoming subjects of a Christian Empire remained a perplexing issue for many Muslims of the Caucasus as well as for the erstwhile Ottoman Muslim subjects of this borderland.

Caucasian and previously Ottoman Muslims constituted the major part of the trans-imperial movers across the Russo-Ottoman borderland after the territorial transfer. This was due mainly to the attitude of the Ottoman state, which embraced the Muslim immigrants. One can easily follow this policy by looking at the existing literature on the immigration policy adopted towards Muslims who sought to cross the Ottoman border using both legal and illegal means. Here, however, we address this immigration as a policy domain involving conscious decisions about who should be accepted and embraced and who should be declined and deported. It is only through

151, 153; for push and pull factors in Bulgarian migration between the Ottoman and Russian empires, pp. 153-159.

231 According to a correspondent of the Daily News, ‘the town [Kars] is quiet, and its Turkish inhabitants, ruled by a police force of their own countrymen, submit to their new form of government without complaining. Some fanatics may mutter harmless prayers addressed to Allah and his Prophet for the restoration of the old rule, but the bulk of the population is quiet, and even satisfied. The renewal of hostilities, on a large scale at least, is not likely.’ The War Correspondence of the Daily News 1877 with a Connecting Narrative (London: Macmillan &Co., 1878), p. 643.

such evaluation that we will be able to see what the immigration policy tells us about the management of ambivalence and risk and the definitions of friends and enemies.

**The Welcoming Policy of the Ottoman State towards Muslim Population Movements**

Migration from the ceded territories to the Ottoman Empire between 1879 and 1881 was enabled by the Treaty of Istanbul (8 February 1879). According to the terms of this Treaty, whoever wished to leave the territories ceded to Russia was allowed to sell their property and move within three years. Otherwise, all would be counted as subjects of Tsarist Russia. According to British Consul Peacock, the Muslim migration from Batum and Kars in these years was due to the ‘religious fanaticism or because of spontaneous repugnance to submit to Russian rule’. Although emotionally overladen (we can be sure that rather more prosaic considerations also weighed, such as assessments based on reasonable fears for the future), Peacock’s explanation can be taken as a rough depiction of the general tendency for the initial stage of Muslim migration after the war. For its part, the Ottoman Empire continued to accept Muslims even after February 1882, provided that they met certain conditions. Muslim emigrants arriving from the ceded territories with the stated intention of settling permanently in the Ottoman Empire were obliged to renounce their Russian subjecthood. They had to submit their petitions, stamped with a seal and signed, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate the process of gaining Ottoman subjecthood. Only when the renunciation of their Russian status had been officially completed, were they able to obtain official Ottoman identity documents. Thus, the Ottoman state adopted a welcoming immigration policy towards the ex-Ottoman Muslims: it did not

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234 PRO, FO 65/1387, 23 December 1890.
235 BOA, DH. MKT 942-35. 28 March 1905.
restrict the immigration of Muslims to the Ottoman Empire within the three year grace period, and it further sought to continue this policy thereafter in a smooth fashion.

The overall pattern of migration out from the ceded territories, it should be mentioned, conceals complex flows involving a huge return migration as well as circulatory movement between the two empires. The return movement is indicated by the population and migration numbers for the province of Kars, although it should first be noted that there are various complications with these figures. Problematic issues include the general back-and-forth migration pattern in the Russo-Ottoman borderland, which makes it hard to establish the number of Muslims who eventually migrated to the Ottoman Empire from the ceded territories. The total number of Muslims under Ottoman rule just before the war of 1877-78 is unclear, as is the number of people who migrated to the Ottoman Empire during the war; within the three-year grace period of permitted migration, moreover, not all of the people who obtained their official papers for migration (bilet) eventually moved. Finally, counting difficulties are further compounded by issues around territorial specification, in this case, the area demarcated as within the province of Kars.  

According to Candan Badem, over 110,000 Muslims from Kars and Ardahan and more than 30,000 Muslims from Batum and Artvin emigrated from Russia during the three-year period. Moreover, from the detailed statistical population research provided by

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236 For example, we learn from the annual report of the governor-general of Erzurum province that the adult male population (not including military personnel) of the province of Kars (then, the territories of the Ottoman sanjaks of Kars and Çıldır) in 1876 was 60,720 Muslims and 5,609 Christians. However, in addition to omitting women and children, as was usual at the time for official Muslim millet figures, these totals excluded from Çıldır the numbers for the district of Ardanuç and the sub-district of Şavşat, whose 11,159 Muslims and 1,212 Christians were attached to the province of Batum. Salname-i Vilayet-i Erzurum, Sene 1293 [The Annual of the Province of Erzurum, 1876], p. 144. 

the annual reports of the governor-generals of the province of Kars, it can be concluded that the Muslims there numbered around 90,000 in 1882 and 1883, about 60% of the total population. Thereafter and through to WWI, the gross numbers of Muslims in Kars would grow (reaching 145,852 in 1897, according to a general census held in Russia), although proportionately they would shrink by some 10%, to around half of the total (temporary and permanent, including military) population of the province, as Russians and others moved in.\textsuperscript{238} As Badem estimates, therefore, it appears that nearly half of the Muslim emigrants from the ceded territories returned to their native lands in Russia, either legally or illegally.\textsuperscript{239}

The large percentage of returnees notwithstanding, there remained a massive net movement of many tens of thousands of Muslims from the ceded territories after the three-year grace period and the continued Ottoman acceptance of more thereafter. One can follow the welcoming stance of the Ottoman state towards these people through particular cases that show us that the Ottoman Empire would embrace them without reservation. The story of Ali Pasha from Çürüksu (Batum) and a group of Georgian Muslims connected to Ali Pasha, who settled in the Black Sea town of Ordu, illustrates this well. Even though they openly challenged the local orders in their new environment, they were still accepted, since their status as Muslim immigrants was more important than their lack of compliance.\textsuperscript{240}

\textsuperscript{238} Badem, 2010: 46-47, 50-51, 93-95. See Chapter 3 for details of Tsarist settlement policy, as well as migration and changes in the demographic structure of the province.

\textsuperscript{239} Badem, 2014: 222 and 228.

Inevitably also, there was a political dimension to the open-arm policy of the Ottoman state to Muslims from its ex-territories, in that it was also interlinked with conditions over the border. Muslims from the ceded territories were allowed to take refuge in the Ottoman Empire whenever they sought to avoid meeting the demands imposed on them by the Russian state. For instance, according to an official letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Russian government attempted to conscript men into the army from various regions in Tiflis, Akhaltsikhe (Ahıska) and the province of Kars. This was to apply to all without exception, which caused uneasiness among the Muslim populations of the region. The Russian government had already started to conduct a census, scheduled for completion by the end of 1886, in order to conscript the men or collect fees for exemption. The response of the majority of Muslims was to refuse not only military service and its exemption fee but to be counted in the census. As a result, hundreds of Muslim families headed to the Ottoman Empire.\footnote{BOA, A. MKT. MHM 491-23. From Field Marshal Nafiz Pasha of the Fourth Imperial Army in Erzincan to the Ministry of War, 27 July 1886. The number of men finally summoned for military service with the Army of the Caucasus was quite low in Kars compared to the total number in the Caucasus. It was 288 men (out of 11, 539) in 1899, 312 (out of 12, 221) in 1900 and 314 (out of 13, 191) in 1901. PRO, FO 65/1588. 14 September 1899; FO 65/ 1610. 22 August 1900; FO 65/1631. 18 October 1901, respectively. As Peacock stated, ‘the national or political meaning and object of the compulsory military service are far from being realized by anyone of the natives of the Caucasus in a patriotic spirit.’ FO 65/ 1387, 22 December 1890. Peacock also noted the ‘forbearance’ of native populations (Georgians, Armenians, Turks, Tatars, Hebrews and Russian Sectarians) in the Caucasus from the imperial patriotic manifestations at the start of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). FO 65/1690. 18 February 1904. It seems that although the idea of ‘a modern national army of citizen-soldiers’ had been officially evolving in Tsarist Russia since the first day of 1874, its implementation in this borderland region was inevitably problem-ridden. Josh Sanborn, ‘Military Reform, Moral Reform, and the End of the Old Regime’, in Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe (eds.), The Military and Society in Russia 1450-1917 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 511. See also Badem, 2010: 116-117; Özel, 2010: 487.}

The Russian inclusion – or non-exclusion – of Muslims for military service may be regarded as an imposition of sovereignty rather than an anti-Muslim policy intended to drive locals out of the ceded territories. On the contrary, the return migration suggests that Russia had its own welcoming attitude, which would seem reasonable. After all, it could hardly have wanted to gain unfarmed lands and decimated cities from the
concession it won at Berlin. In fact, the Russian government opposed Muslim migration from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire from the mid-1880s, as evidenced by its employment of various blocking strategies. For example, a payment of seventy-five manat for exemption from military service was required five years prior to emigration (causing some Muslims to plan their escape). In 1886, government officials collaborated with the mufti of the Sunni Muslim Assembly of the Caucasus in order to deter Muslims from emigrating. And in one incident, some five thousand people were kept waiting in Pert (a township of Batum) to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire when the issue was left in abeyance by the Russian government. Even though the people of Pert sold all their property and livestock and went in large numbers to the docks, they were not able to board ship, an event that was simply denied by the Governor of the Caucasus.

The Batum incident again displays the Ottoman state’s welcoming immigration policy, here reacting in plain opposition to Russian policy aiming to maintain the population of its ex-Ottoman territories and even though the three-year migration period had already ended. The Ottoman welcoming policy thus made its object, the ceded-territory Muslims, another social site of borderland contestation between the two empires. Indeed, the Ottomans began to take a proactive stance on the matter. In July

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242 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 491-23. From Field Marshal Nafiz Pasha of the Fourth Imperial Army in Erzincan to the Ministry of War, 27 July 1886.
244 BOA, DH. MKT 1382-100. A letter written to the Office of the Grand Vizierate on 5 December 1886. Apparently, the Caucasian government officials repeatedly asked the Ottomans where to transport these families despite the fact that the Russian government had been previously informed that the migration of these people to the Ottoman Empire and their settlement in some provinces of Anatolia was found to be feasible by the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had already received the would-be emigrants’ official documents for these purposes. For the Ottomans, the priority was just to confirm the number of emigrants to be settled and in which provinces, and included the Ottoman Consulate General in Tiflis in the process to accelerate a solution. BOA, DH. MKT 1387-69. 26 December 1886. (Note: Tanrıverdi using this document refers to Muslims who sought to migrate to the Ottoman Empire as ‘Turkish-Muslims’, but there is no such expression in the original. Tanrıverdi, 2011: 454.)
1886, it was decided that the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul should be told openly that Muslims wanting to migrate to the Ottoman Empire should be given permission to do so. Then, in October of that year, a memorandum written by the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha reiterated the Ottoman position for several hundred Muslim families prevented by the Russian state from leaving (Batum, again and also Kars) and kept waiting in the Caucasus.

Following the 1886 conscription that prompted Muslims to make use of the Ottoman state’s welcoming stance, ceded territory Muslims were again led to seek refuge over the border when Russia increased taxes and introduced a levy to cover military expenses. According to a report sent by the Ottoman Consulate in Kars in 1900, the reason for the additional revenue measures was an imminent war in China. Tariffs on foreign commodities and taxes on tea, tobacco, kerosene and other items as well as the exemption fee for military services, were all increased; a new income tax was introduced for owners of estates in cities and towns; and the government tax (‘nemki naluh’) imposed by the state treasury and the land tax demanded of rural smallholders were also raised. As a result, the Consulate report shows, many Muslim people of Kars submitted petitions to the department of Consulate Affairs to obtain permission to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman officials on the ground forwarded their requests accordingly and readily assisted those who wished to resettle.

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245 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 491-23. From Field Marshal Nafiz Pasha of the Fourth Imperial Army in Erzincan to the Ministry of War, 27 July 1886.
246 Kamil Pasha mentions the inhabitants of four villages in Batum, including the people of Livane, and the people of Kağızman, Çamuşlu and Bardız from Kars, as expressing their desire to migrate to the Ottoman Empire. Stating that the Russian government should be persuaded to permit Muslims to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire, he refers again to Tiflis, Akhaltsikhe (Ahiska) and the province of Kars. BOA, DH. MKT 1387-69. It appears, therefore, that the driving force behind this push to have Muslims allowed to emigrate was the Russian attempt at military recruitment prompting them to want to leave.
247 BOA, Y.A. HUS 412-122. 7 January 1901.
As well as embracing occasional Muslim migration to the Ottoman Empire from the territories ceded to Russia, the Ottoman government would tolerate the non-legal cross-border movement of certain people. Some local Muslim families in Kars and Kağızman, for example, were allowed to pass by Ottoman border officers and go back and forth between the two empires even without the proper papers. Although they had Ottoman travel documents, they had no other identification and officially no subjecthood even: they were neither Ottoman subjects and registered at one of the local offices of registry, nor did they have birth certificates.²⁴⁸ We learn from a letter from the Ottoman Consul in Kars that these people had migrated to the Ottoman Empire after the war but later returned to their homelands in Russia without registering themselves in the Ottoman Empire. They were not Russian subjects as they had formerly emigrated from the country and were regarded by the Russian government as immigrants.²⁴⁹ The Ottoman authorities were inclined to regard these people as Ottoman subjects and even determined to prevent them from obtaining Russian passports.²⁵⁰ It was most probably for this reason that the Ottoman Consulate in Kars issued them annual visas to cross the border and without stating restrictions and explanation on the papers.²⁵¹

Not only ex-Ottoman Muslims, but also people of various other diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds wished to cross the Russo-Ottoman border, with the intention of emigration or for other motives. In many cases, such as of military deserters and

²⁴⁸ BOA, DH. MKT 2150-8. 18 December 1898; DH. MKT 2232- 139. 10 August 1899; DH. MKT 2238-36. 25 August 1899; DH. MKT 2398-101. 3 September 1900.
²⁴⁹ BOA, HR. HMSC İSO, 188-21. From the Ottoman Consul in Kars to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 November 1898.
²⁵⁰ Correspondence between the Ottoman Consulate in Kars and the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in BOA, DH. MKT 427-70.
²⁵¹ Ibid. 14 September 1895. Even though this issue was raised several times in discussions among provincial government officials at Erzurum, as well as at the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs, it remained unresolved, ultimately left at the General Register Office.
persecuted Russians, affiliation with Islam was the key element to facilitate access to
Ottoman territory and subjecthood. The story of Vasili Buhalenkov, for example, a
sergeant-major of the Cossack regiment in Kars who deserted in Sivas in 1901,
illustrates that the Ottoman authorities saw no need to return such people to their
country if they converted to Islam. As Buhalenkov’s case testifies, this held even
against Russian demands for repatriation. In order to eliminate the diplomatic
tension arising from this issue, the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs had planned to
pursue the policy of reciprocity (i.e. return him on the understanding that the Russians
would do likewise). However, it was unclear as to whether the Russian government
allowed Ottoman deserters to be returned back, and the Ministry of War was charged
with learning the various procedures applied by the Russian government in such
cases. The result of this investigation is not in the related documents researched
here; however, according to the Ottoman Council of Ministers, ‘the treaty stipulations
were very clear regarding the exemption from extradition of those who had converted
to the religion of the other side.’

While conversion to Islam provided an opportunity for migrants crossing the Russo-
Ottoman border to settle in the Ottoman Empire, this opportunity did not apply to
communities adhering to other religious traditions, as we see in the case of persecuted
Russians in Kars. A consulate letter sent to the department of Foreign Affairs of the
Sublime Porte revealed that a group of Russian religious dissenters (Subotniki sect) in

252 Selim Deringil, Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge
253 BOA, DH. MKT 2544-140. 14 October 1901.
254 The Ottoman Council of Ministers, 13 June 1901. Deringil, 2012: 183. Buhalenkov’s case was rather
odd in that he came into Ottoman territory at Damascus, where he stayed for four months introducing
himself as Mehmed Şamil from Dagestan, and later went to Beirut for work, planning to go on to Homs
if he did not get any. His whereabouts then became lost to the Ottoman authorities, who were still
uncertain about whether he had actually converted to Islam or not. BOA, DH. MKT 2571-27. An official
letter sent to the province of Sivas, 25 December 1901 and DH. MKT 466-27. 1 April 1902.
Kars had been forced to leave the country by the Russian government upon their conversion to Judaism. Some 1,600 people intended to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire and settle in Palestine if their requests for migration were approved. They had recourse to the assistance of an official from the Ottoman Consulate in Kars, which forwarded the issue to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry’s reply indicated that the Russian Jews would have to become Ottoman citizens in order to settle in Palestine, but then the Grand Vizier Halil Rifat Pasha countermanded this by not approving the migration. Though they were persecuted by the Russian government because of their religious affiliation, the Ottoman authorities perceived these potential immigrants ‘as Russians, and therefore as members of a hostile power against which the Empire had just fought a war.’

The settlement of any kind of mobile group in the Empire, such as nomads, migrants and refugees, and the issue of their ethnic and religious background, particularly in the border areas, preoccupied the Ottoman government a great deal. Even though it initially attempted to resolve such issues without resort to notions of identity,

255 Subotnikis were one of the groups of religious sectarians who were sent to the South Caucasus by the Russian state during the nineteenth century. The religious identity of dissenters, irreconcilable differences from Tsarist confessional affiliation, and the perceived threat to social, political and religious life in the interior Russian provinces caused their resettlement to the newly conquered territories. They later came to be considered ‘model colonial settlers’ due to their success, taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the borderland and turning it into an asset. For details see Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Heretics and Colonizers. Forging Russia’s Empire in the South Caucasus (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Due to their invaluable services during the Russo-Ottoman Wars of 1855-56 and 1877-78, officials of Transcaucasia were more than willing to resettle them in the province of Kars. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, ‘Caught in the Crossfire? Russian Sectarians in the Caucasian Theatre of War, 1853-56 and 1877-78,’ Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, Volume 2, Number 4, Fall 2001, 713-750, pp. 744-746.

256 BOA, Y.A HUS 394-100. 5 April 1899.

257 Gudrun Krämer, A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 121. We learn from another Ottoman document a few years later of eighty households from the Jewish population of the province of Kars that presented petitions to the Consulates in Kars and Batum for Ottoman subjecthood and migration to the Ottoman Empire. Their petitions unanswered, they sent representatives to Istanbul who delivered them by hand to the Grand Vizierate (on 16th June, 1906). Their request was found to be contrary to the imperial edict and rejected. BOA, BEO 2863-214653. 2 July 1906.
citizenship or nationality, ultimately it did so resort.\textsuperscript{258} As indicated above, religion was the primary basis for accepting or refusing migrants. There were clear official reservations about the acceptability of non-Muslim immigrants into the Empire, while the entry of Muslims was entirely acceptable, upon permission of the other state and the condition that they acquire Ottoman subjecthood.\textsuperscript{259} Not only migrants’ Islamic identity, but also their eventual transfers into Ottoman subjecthood were required by the Ottoman state to settle them in Ottoman territory. Even after longstanding discussions between the Russian and Ottoman Empires about the procedures for transferring would-be-migrants from Russian into Ottoman subjecthood, and not helped by Muslims’ reluctance or lack of means to follow the procedures that were applied, this process remained quite complicated and never fully regularized.\textsuperscript{260} This resulted in the emergence of a dual subjecthood among many Muslim migrants from Russia, or an ‘ambivalence’. This ambivalence posed an obstacle to the fulfilment of the late Ottoman state’s mission to ensure that Islam was ‘the bonding force between the state and its core population’.\textsuperscript{261}

In many cases, legal loopholes or overlapping regulations enabled Muslim migrants to make use of their Russian or Ottoman subjecthood for their own benefit, although the Ottoman state took measures to prevent it. Taking account of the overlapping policies of the two states in this respect, the Ottoman authorities tried to follow a prudent strategy towards Muslim migrants’ travel to Russia once they were officially Ottoman

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\item 258 Kasaba, 2004: 45-47.
\item 259 BOA, BEO 2863-214653. 2 July 1906. Emigrants who came to Anatolia without permission and were also identified as non-Muslims after investigation were sent back to their home countries. Fuat Dündar, \textit{İttihat ve Terakki’nin Müslümanlan Işkan Politikası (1913-1918)}, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), p. 51.
\item 261 Frederick F. Anscombe, \textit{State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 113. According to Anscombe, the Ottoman state had complex relations with its Muslim subjects compared to its relation with Christians during the Hamidian period. Anscombe, 2014: 113-117; Karpat, 1990: 142-147.
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subjects. When migrants declared, for example, that they had to go to Russia to sort out specific matters, such as transporting their personal property, the Ottoman authorities advised them to manage these matters without going to Russia themselves. The Muslim migrants kept on travelling to Russia, however, and attempted to make occasional and expedient use of Russian subjecthood in both empires. It is worth noting that the Ottoman state neither forced them to leave the country nor hindered their cross-border movement, nor stripped them of their Ottoman status when they were also Russian subjects.

**Tolerance towards Kurdish Tribes**

The role of religion as one of the decisive criteria the Ottoman state relied on when distinguishing between its subjects in terms of the level of threat or risk they posed in order to control and manage the ambivalences around the Russo-Ottoman border can also be followed in the Ottoman approach to Kurdish tribes there. As described above, the Kurdish tribes constituted a source of ambivalence and disorder with their disregard for but utilization of the border, including cross-border mobility used for robbery and smuggling, and their contacts with Russian authorities, who sought to develop ties with Kurdish tribes based on their geo-political calculations. The Ottoman approach to this was determined by the Islamist strategic perspective of Abdülhamid II, which approached Kurdish tribes as the main ally in Eastern Anatolia. As he said, ‘in a war with Russia, tribes who are gathered as disciplined units can be of great service to us; the sense of loyalty that they will learn in organised units will also be good for them.’ The ambivalences were thus regarded as a cost incurred to ensure

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262 BOA, DH. MKT 1217-25, February 1908; HR. HMŞ. İSO 138-3.
cooperation in the struggle against more dangerous ambivalences and plain threats posed by Armenians and Russians; they needed constant surveillance and non-hostile intervention if they went too far.

The Ottoman doubts about Kurdish tribes did not call into question their loyalty to the Ottoman state as long as the tribes were organised under Hamidiye Regiments. The Ottoman state was not able to assume direct control through a monopoly of power in these borderland regions in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, establishing its power meant restoring loyalties among Kurdish tribes, many of which had become alienated from the Ottoman state as a result of its centralization drive during the Tanzimat period. Organized as Hamidiye Regiments, which gained a reputation for imitating the Russian Cossack regiments, the Kurdish tribes were delegated the power to maintain order in Eastern Anatolia, provide a bulwark against Russia, keep the eastern border secure and, most importantly, police rebellious Armenians.264 Although the Ottoman central state could not exercise full authority over these regiments, the delegation of power to them in one crucial respect went hand-in-hand with the agendas of Ottoman political expediency. It provided a means for the central authorities to follow their own policy towards Armenians in the region, while not assuming any responsibility for the actions of these regiments against Armenians. It meant, in fact, that maintaining the loyalty of Kurdish people took precedence over law and order in this vulnerable borderland.265 Thus, despite the ambivalence of Kurds for the Ottoman state in respect of their independent and illegal cross-border actions and connections, they were ultimately regarded as Muslim and thus reliable as ‘friends’ by the Ottoman state. Unlike Armenians living in the same border area who

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had similar commercial and political cross-border connections with Russia, Kurds were expected to remain loyal to the Empire.

One can argue that this relatively tolerant stance towards Kurds in the border area had much more to do with the weakness of the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia than to the view of Kurds as inherently loyal. The Ottoman state largely lacked the infrastructural capacity to carry out comprehensive measures against the Kurdish disobedience in the borderland. For example, regarding an incident in 1897, the Ottoman state had to ask for military support from Russian troops stationed near the Russo-Ottoman borderline in order to put an end to disturbances carried out by the Kurds. Against this argument, however, one may note that the weakness of the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia did not prevent one Ottoman official from drawing attention to the illegal cross-border activities of Kurds, and suggesting the need to transfer them away from the border area. He argued that as long as the Kurds remained in the borderland, the Ottoman government would not be able to prevent the abuses committed by them there, or the daily struggle and conflict between them and the Ottoman soldiers or even, interestingly, the ‘brigandage and atrocity of Armenians’ implying that the problem of the Kurds prevented resolution of the problem of the Armenians and thus that whole late Ottoman approach to these issues was fundamentally flawed.

We can see a manifestation of the state approach towards Kurds in the borderland in the report of Fazıl Pasha, an agent of an inspector of the Fourth Imperial Army in

266 PRO, FO 65/1540. 26 April 1897.
267 The official who reported these issues in a letter came across a large Kurdish village, Hezbek, while travelling through the region near the Russo-Ottoman border. Noticing that the arable lands of this village were strikingly small, he asked a sergeant in his retinue about the means of subsistence of these people; the sergeant casually responded that they lived very well since they were engaged in smuggling. BOA, DH. TMIK.M 227-50. 4 August 1906.
Baghdad. In this report, on the collaboration of Kurdish tribes with Russia, Fazıl Pasha declared that the Russian contacts with the Kurdish tribes on the regions bordering Kurdistan were threatening for the Ottoman authorities. Yet, he avoided accusing Kurds of collaborating with the Russian state. Instead, he accused Ottoman officials who ‘pursued personal benefits, wasted their times in idleness and did not take any measure against this burning issue while the Russians were preoccupied with winning over the leaders of Ottoman Kurdish tribes with great promises.’ Fazıl did recognize that the ‘available Ottoman forces in the region were mainly charged to carry out trivial works, such as collecting taxes on crops and livestock as gendarmes’ meant that they ‘thus largely lacked the military deterrent capacity necessary to maintain domestic order’. The main point here, however, is his positive approach towards Kurds, such that he opposed the dispersal of Kurdish tribal forces, preferring the peaceful co-optation of these forces.²⁶⁸

Finally, we may mention a justification of the position of Kurds by the governor of Erzurum. The governor was well aware of the social unrest and disorder engendered by Kurdish tribes in the Erzurum region, including, therefore, the borderland in question. He admitted in 1913 that the establishment of Hamidiye regiments and the arming of Kurdish tribes under the Hamidiye organization had actually worsened the situation there. Tellingly, however, the responsibility for this manifestly worsening situation in his view did not belong to the ‘ignorant’ tribal members but should be...

²⁶⁸ BOA, DH. EUM. EMN 71-29. A telegram sent by Fazıl Paşa, the agent of an inspector of the Fourth Imperial Army in Baghdad on 4 October 1913.
found in ‘the Hamidian regime which preferred to turn its own ‘innocent’ citizens into brigands’. 269

*Discursive Tools of Struggle against Ambivalences: Erbab-ı Namus and Eshab-ı Su-ı*Niyet

The Ottoman officials’ attempt to overcome ambiguities on the Russo-Ottoman border by producing certain concepts or distinctions prompts us to analyse the discourses used by the Ottoman authorities when narrating the stories of smuggling there on the eve of World War I. The difference in the reactions of Ottoman authorities to local Muslims and to non-Muslims involved in the smuggling activities is quite striking, even though on some occasions the two collaborated with each other.

Both small and large scale smuggling operations were carried out at strategic locations on the Russo-Ottoman border, such as in the area of the Kötek and Karaurgan Customs Houses, and despite preventative measures, the numbers of smugglers travelling from Russia did not decline. 270 In their struggle with smuggling, the Ottoman authorities were disposed to filter the movements of people through the lens of imperial loyalty or disloyalty. They were disposed to think of non-Muslims engaged in smuggling as disloyal subjects of the state, but they did not follow the same line of thinking for Muslim smugglers, even though their activities also worried them. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the discursive line dividing strangers as more or less

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270 For details, see BOA, DH. SYS 3-46, the official letter sent by the border commissar Ali Rıza Bey, 21 April 1912; a letter from the undersecretary of the Ministry of War to the Ministry of the Interior, 25 May 1912. BOA, DH. EUM. EMN 101-60, an official report from the department of General Staff, the 4th branch, 21 December 1913; another letter sent by Ali Rıza Bey, 22 December 1913; from the Ministry of War to the Ministry of the Interior 5 January 1914; from the security department of the Public Security to the province of Erzurum on 7 January 1914.
dangerous according to assumed loyalty was largely drawn according to the criterion of religious belonging.

In a letter written by the Ministry of War to the Ministry of the Interior in 1912, we see a clear example of the conceptual distinction between more dangerous and less dangerous strangers around the Russo-Ottoman border. The letter shows that the Ottoman authorities were especially concerned about those people who crossed the border by declaring plausible reasons such as visiting or trade but were suspected of concealing their real intentions. To the officials of the Ministry of War, this group of people might promote feelings of enmity against and betrayal of the Empire. What needed to be done, according to the Ministry, was to determine the intentions of people going back and forth over the border; it was necessary to decide who might either be upright people (*erbab-i namus*) or have wicked intentions (*eshab-i su-i niyet*), and punish heavily the illegal attempts of those having wicked intentions as deterrence.\(^\text{271}\) This letter does not suggest the use of religious belonging as a criterion for distinguishing so-called ‘upright’ people from those having wicked intentions. However, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that the Ottoman border officials were strongly inclined to equate ‘upright’ people with Muslims and the people with ‘wicked intentions’ with non-Muslims. A report sent by the Ottoman border patrol situated on the Russo-Ottoman border clearly reveals this distinction.

Made by the border patrol in 1913, this report focused on the characteristics of the population in the Russian district of Oltu, close to the border crossing in Kaleboğazi.\(^\text{272}\)

\(^{271}\) BOA, DH. SN. THR 35-56, From the Ministry of War to the Ministry of the Interior, 16 Mart 1912.

\(^{272}\) According to the imperial Russian census of 1897, the total number of Turks in the district of Oltu was 20,719, and the total number of Kurds 3,505; the total number of Armenians was 3,125 and Greeks 2,704. Badem, 2010: 95.
The report classified the population there into Muslims and non-Muslims, characterizing the Muslim population, thus:

Most of the population in Oltu and nearby villages are Muslim. Their national zeal and Islamic morality are very strong and they nourish profound and sincere love and respect for the Ottoman government. Due to their deep affiliation with the Ottoman state, they have not forborne any opportunity of providing financial support to the Empire and even sacrificed themselves (their very shirts) for the sake of our state at the moment of national disaster in spite of the absolute rule of the Russian government. The Ottoman government should be well-organized in taking the initiative to establish beneficial political relationship with this Muslim population, without disregarding the potential fact that this political expectation might cause a Russian intervention.  

The non-Muslim population in the district of Oltu appeared less reliable:

The non-Muslims consist of Greeks and Armenians, each of which is one fifth of the whole population. The Armenians are partly Catholic. They are generally farmers. While the wealthiest among them are traders, the poorest take up smuggling as their craft. It is impossible to predict the real intents and opinions of Armenians. They tend to stay on the side which is more favourable for them. The Russian government is good at manipulating them in opposition to the Ottomans. As for the Greeks, they are extremely submissive to Russia. They are eager to cause problems between the Ottoman and Russian governments.

The representations and distinctions of this binary classification were not mere descriptions from the Ottoman perspective. To the extent that they provided the lens through which the Ottoman officials saw the actual situation, they also constructed and shaped that reality, by criminalizing non-Muslims as seditious people who had hidden, threatening agendas behind their everyday mask. One immediate result was that non-Muslims around the borderland were routinely rendered suspect. Even when there were not denunciations against them or other specific reasons for suspicion, some non-Muslims, especially Armenians, might be easily coded as ‘non-Muslim.

273 BOA, DH. SYS 3-46. A relevant part of a report sent by the Ottoman border patrol concerning the Kaleboğazı border squad; The same report sent by the department of General Staff, the 4th branch under the name of Deputy to the Ministry of War to the Ministry of the Interior 21 October 1913.

274 Ibid. The report notes that according to Greek population, the idea of their settlement on the Russo-Ottoman borderland originated from Peter the Great.
treacherous people’ (gayri-Müslim eshâs-ı muzirra) and investigations launched into their cross-border activities and interests in Ottoman territory.

For instance, a report from the Kötek border squad indicates how the Ottoman officers effortlessly detected the ‘real’ intentions underlying the mobility of non-Muslims across the border. It reported that some ‘non-Muslim treacherous people’ in Kötek were rendering service to the benefit of Russians and in collaboration with Armenian committees. While they were ostensibly dealing with their own businesses, such as watch-selling or blacksmithing, they collaborated with one another by providing information for and supporting Armenian committees, concealing their ‘real aims.’ One was a Russian Armenian subject residing in the village of Karaurgan in Russia. Because he was engaged in trade and his firm was located in Kötek, he used to traverse the border every day, and, as he was a reserve officer in the Caucasian Army, his cross-border trading activity aroused suspicion among the Ottomans. The report states that he daily transmitted all the information he obtained from the passengers, carters and muleteers in Kötek to the Russian side. In addition, according to the report, he encouraged non-Muslims attached to the 7th and 8th Ottoman border squad to escape to Russia. The Ottoman authorities took measures against this, such as reassigning border patrols with non-Muslim elements to the troops of the regular army stationed at the Ottoman interior.

Regardless of whether Ottoman doubts about the loyalty of non-Muslims were justified, the report of the Ottoman Border Squad in Kötek shows the authorities as feeling that they needed to observe the activities of suspected Armenians and their cross-border movements particularly carefully. They had to learn what was really going

275 Ibid. A report sent by the Ottoman Border Squad in Kötek on 21 October 1913; From the department of General Staff to the Ministry of the Interior 2 December 1913.
on, since the Armenians were intrinsically suspect. In the Kötek case, it was suggested that an undercover police presence was advisable.\textsuperscript{276} In viewing the Armenians and responding to their movements thus and even acting on reports of questionable loyalties among the border squad non-Muslims by reassigning them, moreover, the Ottoman authorities operated from an assumed perspective of distance. Their preconceptions appeared never to allow them to give the others a space to voice their own feelings and intentions. Regardless of whether the perception had any origin in concrete evidence, therefore, the Ottoman identification of non-Muslims with \textit{eshab-i su-i niyet} was generally projected onto all Armenians with cross-border contacts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The (re)formation of the Russo-Ottoman border after the Treaty of Berlin caused the immediate movement of huge numbers of people to the Ottoman Empire, as allowed for by the Treaty of Istanbul. There then followed a much lesser but also very large movement back to the Russian side. This outward and return migration involved an approach by the Ottomans that was very much defined by religion. While Russia initially kept neutral and then generally wanted to maintain the population of its new provinces as a priority, which meant keeping its Muslims, the Ottomans facilitated the entry of its ex-subject Muslims in particular. This became apparent in the years that followed the end of war and the three-year grace period for migration, when the Ottomans not only continued to facilitate the entry of ceded-territory Muslims, but also accepted non-Muslims wanting to convert. Thereafter, despite the fact that the Ottoman state lacked a strong infrastructure to effectively enforce the border, its

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid.
formation nevertheless emerged as a decisive dynamic shaping the volume and forms of mobility of the people inhabiting the Eastern Anatolia and the Russian Caucasus. We may hazard that this at least began to affect the ethno-religious make-up of the region at the empirical level of demographics, but we can claim with some confidence that it started to determine the politics of the territory as confirming the Muslim character of the sovereign authority.

The conclusion arrived at here then, is that the Russo-Ottoman border was rendered permeable to Muslims through the welcoming policy of the Ottoman state towards Muslim migrants, and its perception of Muslims who had daily cross-border movements as secure and reliable, together with its tolerance of Kurdish cross-border mobility and connections and its disregard for the engagement in illegal activities of certain Kurds and Muslims. As a result of these factors, Muslims easily attained and secured their ‘visibility’ on the border, which was firmly associated with the operation of imperial rule. Thus, for example, the fact that many (Ottoman and Russian) Armenians and certain Russian officers travelling in the Ottoman borderland preferred to dress up in Muslim attire can be seen as a utilization of the Ottoman state legitimation of Islam, or Muslim identity.

The argument that the religious belonging of people was a factor in the level of permeability of the Russo-Ottoman border does not lead us to conclude that ethnicity had no role at all in the formation of the border policy of the Ottoman state. It is understood that the everyday and diplomatic cross-border contacts of Kurds as the biggest ethnic group living in Eastern Anatolia occasionally became the source of trouble for the Ottoman authorities not merely during the Hamidian regime but also and especially after the end of this regime. Yet, the central authorities of the Hamidian
regime were more concerned with involving Kurdish tribes in the imperial system, through which they hoped to consolidate their relationship with them and secure their loyalty. And crucially, this was a loyalty that, at a deep level, could be assumed accessible, because the Kurds, even as ‘strangers’, were ultimately ‘friends’; Armenians, on the other hand (and Greeks, for that matter), were fundamentally unreliable, always potential ‘enemies’, and treated thus. We can sum up the official stance taken by the central authorities using the words of Abdülhamid II: the Muslims would ‘always be moved with [a feeling of] loyalty and reverence toward the office of the sultanate and the caliphate under the influence of their upbringing at home’.277

Even though certain Kurdish tribes moved toward Russia as a result of the new regime’s (short-lasting) cooperation with Armenians and despite, moreover, their disturbing cross-border connections in Iran, the Ottoman authorities’ overall perception of Kurds remained unchanged. Kurdish intellectuals affiliated with the newspaper Kürdistan at the turn of the twentieth century, predominantly from the Bedirhani family also supported the idea that Kurds could continue to be Ottoman by virtue of their inherent relationship to the state. Regarding the Empire ‘as their primary homeland of which Kurdistan formed an indivisible part’, they emphasized that they were loyal subjects. As they claimed, after all, ‘the fate of the Kurds was intertwined with the continuation of the Ottoman state’ since ‘the Ottoman Empire was first and foremost a Muslim empire and the Kurds a Muslim people’.278

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People living in the borderland tended to acquire and/or keep both Russian and Ottoman subjecthood as it was advantageous and practical for those who wished to maintain active ties on both sides of the borderline. However, this dual status rendered them ‘strange’ in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, who wanted to distinguish ‘subject’ from ‘foreign’ and, among subjects, the ‘loyal’ from ‘non-loyal’. In other words, different dual subjecthood not only raised the question of which state would have legal authority over trans-imperial Muslims, as James Meyer states, but also generated uneasiness around people’s loyalties.\(^{279}\) It seems that as long as Muslim migrants acquired Ottoman citizenship, the Ottoman authorities were assured of their loyalty and disregarded (as they could not officially confirm in many cases) whether they renounced their Russian citizenship or not. This was also a reflection of what is dubbed here the ‘welcoming’ policy of the Ottoman state towards Muslim migrants, or rather, both are expressions of the Islamic identity of the Ottoman state in respect of the Russo-Ottoman borderland.

It is in this light that we should view the fact that although dual subjecthood was not actually allowed by the Ottoman Law of Nationality (OLN), many migrants from Russia who were settled in various places in Anatolia kept their Russian citizenship, wittingly or otherwise. Since they were Muslim migrants, that is, there was no immediate concern forcing them to rescind their Russian citizenship. The Ottomans’ reluctance to apply to the OLN to resolve the ambiguous citizenship position of Muslim migrants once they settled in the Ottoman Empire is explained by their understanding that the different (dual) status did not demand intervention and deserved to be tolerated as they were ‘migrants’. In the next chapter, therefore, we will direct our attention to the

class of Muslims living close to the Russo-Ottoman border who were both Russian and
Ottoman subjects, so possibly but not necessarily migrants, in order to see how the
Ottoman authorities approached the ambiguities created by the overlapping
subjecthood of these Muslims and the implications of this.
CHAPTER III. Overlapping Citizenships on the Russo-Ottoman Border

Although it was the Muslim identity of migrants and those whose lifestyles utilized cross-border mobility that determined Ottoman friends, these were, crucially, Muslims who were either ex-Ottoman subjects or at least originated from the ceded lands and were thus Ottoman by birth-right, as it were. The friendliness of these Muslim strangers was specified, that is, by their Ottoman subjecthood. Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was not a new practice to resort to political identities rather than religious ones to resolve issues that arose between the Russian and Ottoman states due to the ambiguous subjecthood status of people such as fugitives, deserters and converts. As Will Smiley clearly argues, it can be inferred from various agreements made between the two empires during the eighteenth century that political identity had been the main motive not only for the release of Russian captives in the Ottoman Empire but also, at times, the return of Russian subjects who had converted to Islam.\(^{280}\)

Smiley relates numerous telling examples to depict the functioning logic of political subjecthood in the minds of the Russian and Ottoman authorities in the late eighteenth century. For example, there was the liberation of Russian subject slaves, who were assumed to be examples of ‘true Russians’ within Ottoman territory, and this with the exception of Georgian slaves, who were only able to become Russian subjects after the annexation of the Georgian kingdom by Russia at the turn of the

century.\textsuperscript{281} Another example is the story of the unreliability of a Russian officer’s conversion to Islam in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities due to his ‘invisible but immutable’ Russian subjecthood, despite the fact that he had even been circumcised.\textsuperscript{282} Or again, there is the example of the return of Russian Muslim deserters from the Ottoman Empire to Russia. Because the treaties signed between the empires only exempted converts to Islam from returning, Muslim deserters from Russia were not exempted.\textsuperscript{283} As Smiley claims, ‘Russian Muslims were Russian subjects first and foremost, as it was not religion but conversion that mattered politically.’\textsuperscript{284}

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman authorities became increasingly concerned by the ambiguous status of non-Muslim Ottomans who attempted to escape Ottoman jurisdiction by the use of the protégé (or protection) system and ultimately become the subjects of foreign states with extraterritorial rights in the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, the recognition of non-Ottoman Muslims as foreigners first and Muslims second became increasingly clear through the nineteenth and then early twentieth centuries, established as a hegemonic practice that ‘reflected an ongoing process in the centralization and rationalization of the Ottoman state.’\textsuperscript{285} Indeed, the position of foreign Muslims who wanted to exploit legal loopholes related to their Muslim identity, former Ottoman subjecthood or overlapping status, or else who claimed consular or other privileges within the Ottoman territory, troubled the

\textsuperscript{281} Smiley, \textit{Turkish Historical Review}, pp. 199, 205-206, 216-219, 225, 227.
\textsuperscript{282} Smiley, \textit{The International History Review}, pp. 570-572.
\textsuperscript{283} Smiley, 2014: 82.
\textsuperscript{284} Smiley, 2014: 87.
\textsuperscript{285} Reynolds, 2011: 96.
Ottoman authorities. Like any modern state, the Ottoman state distinguished its members from foreigners and imposed restrictions and regulations by generating an explicitly defined Ottoman identity and extending its jurisdiction over that, as well as establishing state sovereignty over its territory and those in it.

Due to the entangled relationships among Muslims of the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, the two states were each obliged to exercise their sovereign practices in respect of the other in order to distinguish their own Muslim subjects. This was part of a larger effort of eliminating ‘strangeness’ dealing with the stranger categories of people with denizen status, dual subjecthood or protected status, as well as migrants, refugees and the stateless and others who began to be seen as a problem for both empires. The emergence of modern ideas about state and society, the enactment of liberalizing and egalitarian reforms, and the demand for the guaranteed loyalty to the imperial polity in extraordinary times of such people combined to make their status highly problematic. Their presence was a ‘challenge to the reliability of orthodox landmarks and the universal tools of order-making’. In response, the state authorities gradually attempted to remove such ambiguity through administration procedures governing their subjecthood status. Significant changes was made during and after the Ottoman Tanzimat reform period and the era of Russian Great Reforms, when both imperial states enacted laws dividing their subjects into members and non-members of the body politic.


287 The situation of these mostly borderland people fits well into Zygmunt Bauman’s definition of strangers, who can be classified as neither friend nor enemy and thereby undermine the friend-enemy opposition. Bauman, 1991: 61. For details see Introduction.
It is with these considerations in mind, specifically the ambivalence posed by the non-Ottoman Muslims in Ottoman territory, that the present chapter focuses on the overlapping subjecthoods of Muslims living on the Russo-Ottoman borderland. Specifically, we look at how the Ottoman authorities responded to this matter towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, a time when Russia’s increased border patrolling began to be perceived as a security threat by the Ottomans. This chapter contends, moreover, that the new understanding of imperial citizenship was not only a reflection of the ‘necessities of governance’, but also a tool of survival for ordinary people in the region.\textsuperscript{288} The following pages thus explore the tensions and also interrelationship between these two interpretations of imperial citizenship.

By asking how the Ottoman state dealt with the ‘strangeness’ arising from the overlapping citizenships of Muslims and especially why it was unable to eliminate this through straight-forward legalistic approaches, the present chapter considers specific cases with the aim of identifying patterns in the types of belonging produced by the individual and state strategies at work on the Russo-Ottoman border. First, we focus on the main regulations and legislation through which the Ottoman state defined its normative approach to this issue. Then, applying this to the Russo-Ottoman border context, we look at how the people in question used citizenship as a tool for their daily survival. Finally, we analyse how the Ottoman state developed alternative definitions of belonging in response to and in search of the management and control of pragmatic actions of Muslims in the region.

\textsuperscript{288} Alexander Morrison, ‘Metropole, Colony, and Imperial Citizenship in the Russian Empire’ \textit{Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History} 13, 2 (Spring 2012): 327-64, p. 330.
The Emergence of the Modern Concept of Citizenship in the Russian and Ottoman Empires

Until the urgency of creating a modern concept of citizenship became apparent during the age of reform in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, these states governed their multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities through their own distinct, traditional methods. In the Russian Empire, a social estate (soslovie) bound a subject to a collective body with concomitant specific rights and obligations, while in the Ottoman Empire, it was the division of society into communities along religious lines (the millet system) that determined the status and position of a subject. Russian subjecthood was characterized by ‘its embrace of exceptions’ or ‘separate deals’, in Eric Lohr’s phrasing, whilst dealing with different immigrant, ethnic and religious groups and social orders. This experience of subjecthood brought forth a different combination of rights and obligations for each group. The Ottomans, meanwhile, applied the dhimmihood system, in which the rights and obligations of religious groups were defined by Islamic law. This made a distinction of status between recognised religious groups and gave legal priority to Muslims. Not until the beginning of the reform period in these empires was there any significant effort to assess the concept of citizenship on the basis of comparable rights and obligations. In theoretical terms, the modern concept of citizenship inevitably made the ‘separate deal’ paradigm in the Russian Empire and the dhimmihood system in the Ottoman Empire fundamentally

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290 Lohr, 2012: 2.
untenable. And yet, despite both empires’ claims about the adaption of the modern concept of citizenship into their imperial laws, their traditional approach to subjecthood continued until 1914, with certain revisions.

**The Normative Ground and Belonging**

One of the main concerns of the nineteenth century reform movement in the Ottoman Empire was the escalating tensions and solidifying boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. This induced Ottoman reformers to enact laws in order to eliminate cases of special status, exploited by Muslims or non-Muslims and the cause of inequalities between these groups. First of all, as the Ottoman authorities attempted to embrace all subjects and incorporate them equally into imperial law, they had to take precautions against the abuse of the protégé system. The protégé system essentially enabled Ottoman subjects to ‘acquire foreign nationality or foreign protection without being required to reside in the country granting the protection’. 292 Individuals and groups utilizing this were thus ‘entitled to the capitulatory privileges enjoyed by the nationals of that country’ while still living in, as subject of, the Ottoman Empire. The opportunities afforded by this were ‘the most abused privileges under the capitulatory regime.’ 293

It is often claimed that it was the employment by foreign embassies and consulates of Ottoman subjects as their interpreters (*dragomans*) that initiated the slide to abuse of the system. Under the protection system, *dragomans* enjoyed the same privileges as the foreigners employing them (exemption from the poll-tax (*cizye*) and other taxes and from military service). Through the first half of the nineteenth century growing

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numbers of Ottoman non-Muslims in particular were illegitimately enrolled into this position by the embassies and consulates. Thus, dhimmis became protégés of foreign states with capitulatory rights in the Ottoman Empire and foreign encroachment into Ottoman sovereignty was facilitated. Eventually, these privileges evolved into a serious demand through which non-Muslims sought to become subjects of the foreign states.

Before the promulgation of the Ottoman Law of Nationality (OLN) in 1869, there was a visible effort by the Ottoman government to regulate the relations of subjects with the state and to wipe out the abuses that arose from the demands of dhimmis and their foreign protectors. A memorandum sent to foreign embassies for ‘the required procedure for anyone who abandons his Ottoman nationality’ (1850) exemplified this attempt. According to this memorandum, a considerable number of Ottoman subjects had obtained foreign protection enabling them to utilize the benefits and concessions (menafi ve imtiyazat) granted to capitulatory states, while avoiding taxes and military service not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in their new state. In order to resolve this, the memorandum stipulated that Ottoman subjects transferring to a different nationality would have to leave the country within three months from the date declared. In accordance with the old principles and procedures, this person would be deprived of inheritance and possession rights in the Ottoman Empire. From the point of view of the Ottoman central authorities, the dhimmi avoidance of obligations was unacceptable since it was a sign of disloyalty. Already by the middle of the

nineteenth century, therefore, the Ottoman authorities were tackling the issue of ‘stranger’ status in the Empire, here, of certain non-Muslim Ottoman subjects.

From the preamble to the ‘Regulation on Ottoman Nationality’, as the OLN was initially entitled, it is evident that the Ottoman authorities felt compelled to introduce this measure in response to the excessive numbers of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects obtaining foreign passports. This regulation constituted the recognition that, just as there were basic laws in Europe governing citizenship and any change in this to that of foreign state, so had it become necessary now to introduce similar legislation in the Ottoman Empire. The need to move towards a Western model and clearly define members of the state prompted by the capitulation abuse obliged the Ottoman authorities to introduce a specific law on citizenship. The OLN, enacted on 19th January, 1869, was among the most prominent pieces of legislation of the Tanzimat era.

The OLN emerged as an overarching law equally encompassing all Ottoman subjects, and the ‘doctrine of equality’ became official Ottoman policy in the nineteenth century. Although variable in application, it was of immense import in the development of the Empire. Certainly, the traditional Ottoman legal categories of

296 According to Osmanağaoğlu, the most apparent reason behind the promulgation of the OLN was dhimmis’ claim that they were subject/citizens of foreign states. Osmanağaoğlu, 2004: 173-178, 187, 195. Adanır similarly emphasized that one of the primary reasons for constituting a standardized system of nationality were Ottoman subjects who obtained either foreign nationality or protection as a result of maltreatment of privileges conferred upon foreigners by the Ottoman state through capitulations. Fikret Adanır, ‘Çarlık Rusyası ve Habsburg İmparatorluğu Arasında Osmanlı’da Vatandaşlık’, Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi, 182, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 54-63, p. 60.


298 The OLN was not repealed until 1st of January, 1929. Even though there were various memorandums, regulations or laws concerning specific issues, the OLN remained the main text to be resorted to in a case of any complexity. For a case study, see Mutaz M. Qafisheh, The International Law Foundations of Palestinian Nationality. A Legal Examination of Nationality in Palestine under Britain’s Rule (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008), specifically pp. 25-44.

299 For Davison, during the Tanzimat period, ‘many efforts-some valiant, some half-hearted, some merely for the record; some spontaneous, some under diplomatic pressure were made by the Ottoman
Muslim, dhimmi and foreigner witnessed significant changes. Henceforth, the word ‘foreigner’ (ecnebi) did not merely denote non-Muslim outsiders, but all foreign nationals, regardless of their religious affiliation. Within the Ottoman state, both Muslims and dhimmis started to be called ‘Ottoman’, thereby flattening the old distinction between them, (even though this was still maintained through the designation of the latter as ‘non-Muslim Ottoman’).

Thus, there resulted a shift away from the traditional form of subjecthood with its millet boundaries towards a ‘composite or collective’ understanding of Ottoman citizenship. As Roderic Davison argues, ‘by fostering an egalitarian citizenship, and by attempting to blur the demarcation lines between millet’s, they [the Tanzimat officials] were taking a significant step on the road to a purely secular concept of state and citizenship’.

The OLN was a departure from the traditional Islamic principle of subjecthood. However, in keeping with Islamic tradition, it did not break with the rule of following the paternal line for allegiance (i.e. by descent rather than place of birth). It also left space for conversion to Islam as a direct way of obtaining Ottoman nationality.

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301 Davison, 1990: 118.

302 While its first article explained the character of jus sanguinis (acquisition of nationality by descent), the OLN did not include an explicit provision on jus soli (acquisition of nationality by birth within the territory of a state). It declared that people who were born when (at least) their father had Ottoman nationality were considered Ottoman subjects. However, the concept of jus soli was not totally absent in the second, third and ninth articles of the OLN. Rona Aybay and Cihan Osmanağaoğlu concur that while basic principles of the OLN were based on jus sanguinis, the principles of jus soli were accepted for specific cases. Osmanağaoğlu, 2004: 203, Rona Aybay, Vatandaşlık Hukuku (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), pp. 65-66.

303 The fourth article of the OLN stated that the Ottoman government could accept foreigners as subjects if it considered them worthy, even if they did not meet the requirements of the preceding articles. Unat, 1966:8. The difference from the old principle was that now, ‘citizenship by conversion could be demanded but not imposed’. Gianluca P. Parolin, Citizenship in the Arab World. Kin, Religion and Nation-State, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), p. 74.
brief, the OLN amalgamated Islamic religious heredity and political affiliation by residence and birth.\(^{304}\) It provided for the formal establishment of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims and for dealing with the status of individuals irrespective of the community they belonged. The designation ‘Ottoman subject’ (tebaa-yi Devlet-i Aliyye) was made without any religious or ethnic emphasis, so was rooted just in the dynastic origin. In this regard, even though some aspects of the OLN reflected limitations of Islamic Law and placed an emphasis on bloodline, it was, indeed, ‘liberal in granting and recognizing citizenship’.\(^{305}\) In formalizing new meanings for old terms such as ‘foreign’, the OLN was ultimately predicated on a territorial principle for holding citizenship of the Ottoman state.\(^{306}\)

The OLN set rules for the acquisition and loss of Ottoman nationality and denial of the right of expatriation.\(^{307}\) It demonstrated that the Ottoman authorities wished to designate the limits of Ottoman citizenry not only as a precaution aimed at those who became naturalized citizens of another state under the protégé system, but also as a reaction to the overlapping citizenship policy of various states which unilaterally naturalized numerous Ottoman subjects.\(^{308}\) Since its main object was to generate criteria for belonging, which revealed the divisions between fully-fledged citizens, foreign residents and foreigners, the OLN remained silent with respect to civil rights and duties. Notions such as equality, the rights and duties of state and its subjects and


\(^{307}\) Qafisheh, 2008: 30.

the rule of law were substantially inherited from the reform decrees of 1839 and 1856, later adapted to the first Ottoman constitution, proclaimed on 23rd December, 1876.\textsuperscript{309} The 1876 constitution did not include any provision to limit the sovereignty of the Sultan, however, so these liberal concepts of rights and duties were employed by Ottoman statesmen while still assigning priority to the more traditional concept of imperial sovereignty, which thus underpinned them.\textsuperscript{310}

The OLN was promulgated as one of the centralizing policies of the Ottoman government, aimed at exerting sovereign power and maintaining control within its borders. For Ottoman reformists, especially after the reform decree of 1856 (\textit{İslahat Fermanı}), a concrete path toward imperial citizenship should have been taken in tandem with the reinforcement of centralizing policies and elimination of vernacular forms of power.\textsuperscript{311} Although the Ottoman central authorities invested considerable efforts into realizing this goal, they were unable to systematically apply the OLN as the Ottoman state was late in its attempt to centralize and was limited in terms of infrastructure and economic development.\textsuperscript{312} However, this did not prevent the Ottoman authorities from using the citizenship policy when it was required by the exigencies of specific cases. After the Crimean War, for example, the Ottoman

\textsuperscript{309} The Constitution ended the era of \textit{Tanzimat} and heralded a new era of ‘all-inclusive imperial citizenship’. Iordachi, 2006: 131. The eighth article of the Constitution explicitly stated that all people who held Ottoman citizenship were to be referred to as Ottoman regardless of their religion and ethnicity. The seventeenth article confirmed that all Ottomans were equal before the law and had the same rights and duties toward the country, irrespective of religion and creed. Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, \textit{Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüzüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Edition, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), pp. 37-38.


\textsuperscript{311} Salzmann, 1999: 41 and 44. This also reminds us of Charles Tilly’s statement that ‘strong citizenship depends on direct rule’. According to Tilly, ‘the Ottoman Empire only moved to a semblance of direct rule in the process of disintegrating.’ Charles Tilly, ‘The Emergence of Citizenship in France and Elsewhere’, \textit{International Review of Social History} 40, Supplement 3 (1995), 223-236, pp. 228 and 231.

\textsuperscript{312} Salzmann, 1999: 38.
government decided to follow a prudent policy on immigration and citizenship due to considerable refugee flows into the Ottoman Empire.\footnote{Kasaba, 2009: 108-109. Kasaba states that the Ottomans’ first immigration code (in 1857) was an early attempt to regulate their policy of citizenship. It was succeeded by the establishment of ‘the Board of Immigrants’ (Muhacirin Komisyonu) in 1859. By the end of the Empire, this board had charge of ‘not only refugee matters but also questions of citizenship and thus identity in the empire’. Kasaba, 2009: 110-111.}

Karen Kern’s research on the Iraqi provinces provides a more palpable example of how the Ottoman state produced an exception to the imperial definition of citizenship as enacted in the OLN. The 1874 law prohibiting marriages between Ottoman women and Iranian men was contrary to the OLN but passed in order to control this frontier region. By the terms of this law, Ottoman women lost their right to take on the citizenship of their husbands if they married Iranian men. The strategic mind-set of the Ottoman authorities in this case was clearly shaped by demographic and geopolitical realities of the region. Essentially, it was a response to the potential threat posed by Sunni conversion to Shi’ism. Its objectives, Kern states, were those of ‘maintaining the loyalty of the population, decreasing the number of soldiers in the Sixth Army who were suspected of being Shi’a, and also preventing the material wealth of the empire from falling into the hands of Iranian citizens’.\footnote{Kern, 2011: 27 and 149. The frontier region to which this law applied was formally severed from the Ottoman Empire in August 1920 with the Treaty of Sèvres, after which it became a British-administered Mandate of the League of Nations; nevertheless, the law was adopted by the new republic and remained in force until 1926.}

As there was no fixed borderline between the Ottomans and Iranians until late 1914, the establishment of Ottoman territorial sovereignty was social, its capacity to control physical borders determined through the introduction and enforcement of this exceptional citizenship law.\footnote{Ateş, 2013: Chapter Six, specifically p. 314.} Similar to the situation with the long land borders and the Russian inability to control them by the end of the nineteenth century, as emphasised by Lohr, in the Iranian case
also, the Ottoman state was required to rely on policies that delimited its citizenship boundary.\textsuperscript{316}

Indeed, as explained in Chapter One, the Ottoman state was not capable of establishing its territorial sovereignty over its section of the Russo-Ottoman borderland after the Treaty of Berlin. While, in reality, there had not been a clear-cut border for years, provisional boundaries had cut across many villages. It was this incongruity between the putative borderline and social and economic realities on the ground in particular that resulted in the emergence of overlapping citizenships among the people of this borderland. In the next section, we will look at the reasons behind the people’s choice of dual subjecthood, or citizenship, before going on to explore the Ottoman use of the OLN as a means of removing the ambiguities created by the dual status of Muslims and establishing its sovereignty in the region.

**Dual Citizenship as Survival**

The Ottoman military defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 must be acknowledged as one of the decisive factors in the emergence of the use of citizenship by Ottomans as a tool of control because it caused unprecedented population movements between the two empires. As a result of diplomatic manoeuvres by the great powers, the Ottoman state found itself isolated and diplomatically defeated at the Congress of Berlin, compelled to relinquish ‘two-fifths of its entire territory and one-fifth of its population, about 5.5 million people, of whom almost half were Muslims.’\textsuperscript{317} The attempts of many of the Muslims who suddenly found themselves residing in a foreign state to move into territories still under Ottoman control after the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Lohr, 2012: 26-27.
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end of the war represented a significant phase in a long period of immigration into Ottoman territory that had started in the late eighteenth century and continued through to the end of the Empire.

What is however noteworthy about the immigrants from the areas that had become part of Russia after 1878 was that their movement was largely not merely a one-way or return journey since many went back and forth across the border attempting to preserve their connections and interests in both empires, including, most importantly here, their status as subjects. Against this, the incompatible policies of the Ottoman and Russian states compelled immigrants to choose one subjecthood by renouncing the other. However, immigrants into the Ottoman Empire were able to exploit what basically amounted to a loophole in the Ottoman regulations. Muslim immigrants from Russia were granted Ottoman citizenship immediately upon their arrival regardless of whether they had renounced their Russian citizenship or not.

The Ottoman government promoted the virtues of its empire to these people by providing land and exempting them from conscription. The Russian government, though, was firmly against denaturalization, and the procedures for this were highly complicated and costly. Unless the immigrants officially renounced their Russian citizenship, the Russian government continued considering them as its own subjects. Thus, they were often recognized as subjects by both states at the same time.\(^\text{318}\) This overlapping citizenship of immigrants encouraged the Ottoman authorities to deal more actively with their status trying to separate loyal and original subjects of the Ottoman state from the rest.

The procedure that was followed for the immigration of people from the ceded territories to the Ottoman Empire differed from other cases. The sum effect of the Treaties of San Stefano, Berlin and Istanbul was ‘path-breaking in the history of Russian practices’ because of its divergence from the Russian tradition of ascribed subjecthood after annexation. Now, with the unprecedented allowance of the three-year grace period, inhabitants of the annexed territories were endowed with legal rights that effectively enabled them to opt for the subjecthood of their choice. Both states had reasons to be quite cautious about dual citizenship on the border, yet this was a phenomenon quite specifically allowed for. Indeed, Lohr points out the discrepancy between Russia’s principled non-acceptance of dual subjecthood and the stipulations of Article VII of the Treaty of Istanbul, which enabled this.

The ambiguous status of these immigrants invited them to utilize loopholes to avoid compliance with the state policies where these conflicted with their interests. In doing so, they took the opportunity to use one state’s policies against the other. For instance, immigrants who decided to settle in the Ottoman Empire frequently strove to attain benefits through the Russian Consulate or other privileges by making use of their Russian citizenship. As Kern argues, Michael Mann’s analysis of citizenship as a ‘ruling class strategy’ imposed on subjects to incorporate various social groups can be taken as a starting point for the Ottoman case, in which the regulatory framework of belonging was created by a centralizing monarchy. Nevertheless, this

319 Lohr, 2012: 40.
320 Lohr mentions the abuse of this article by Armenian and Greek Ottoman subjects, who moved to the Ottoman Empire as foreigners after becoming Russian subjects in the course of the grace period. Lohr, 2012: 40-41. See subsection ‘The Provinces of Kars, Batum, and Ardahan’ in the chapter ‘Annexation and Naturalization’, pp. 38-43.
conceptualization does not afford us very much insight into imperial practice from the position of its subjects, specifically the people of the borderland.

The ambiguities regarding the citizenship status of people who straddled two empires and the limits of imperial power to oversee the lives of people in the frontier region offer valuable insights into how empires attempted to manage their borders and control people by means of the politics of citizenship. In the case of the frontier regions of Ottoman Iraq, for example, the 1874 law on prohibition of marriages between Ottomans and Iranians seems to have caused more confusion than clarity, and the Ottoman authorities were ultimately unable to prevent these marriages and exert essential control over people’s lives in their domestic spheres.\footnote{Kern, 2011: 92, 112-113.} Here, therefore, taking into consideration these arguments for the case of the Russo-Ottoman borderland, we investigate the practices of imperial subjecthood by considering this not merely as a ‘ruling class strategy’, but also as a ‘survival strategy’ for people there.

**Survival Strategies on the Russo-Ottoman Border**

When Batum was surrendered to Russia in 1878, the lands and pastures of the people in Hopa, a township on the Ottoman side of the border, were given over to Russia. This made it difficult for the people to access their holdings, as they now had to pass through two cordons, at Kopmuş and İskaristi, to get there. Two decades later, around 1910, the Russian government started to resist this cross-border movement of Ottomans obstructing their passage through these cordons by requiring them to have a passport or a safe-conduct pass.\footnote{BOA, DH.SYS 4-1. According to official reports of the provincial general assembly written over the course of a year (31\textsuperscript{st} March, 1909 and 5\textsuperscript{th} March, 1910) to the Ministry of the Interior, they were only allowed to pass the border at Milo in the province of Erzurum.} As the farmers needed their lands and pastures for their livelihood and, had to move back and forth over this border, they looked for a
solution. The local authorities agreed that people both from Hopa and directly opposite, on the other side of the boundary, should be given identity papers allowing for easy passage across the border. 325

As is clear from an earlier (1884) letter from the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, there was no standing agreement between the Ottoman and Russian governments on what sort of official documents people of the borderland should have to cross the border, or live in Russia for that matter. People who went to Russia from places like Hopa and Arhavi, in the Ottoman region of Lazistan (a subdivision within the province of Trabzon, and situated on the border with Russia) had been given official certificates or simple identity papers by local authorities. However, as was noted by the Ottoman Consulate in Batum, the Russian officials tried to prevent these people from residing in Russia on the grounds that these documents were not prepared according to the agreed standards and could not be substituted for passports. 326 Explanations from Ali Rıza Efendi, a man from Hopa and a member of the provincial general assembly, indicate that not much changed thereafter. In his view, the customs and passport officers assigned to work fifteen years previously on the border cordons in Kopmuş, İskaristi, Potocur and Zaluna, had done nothing but receive their salaries. 327 Even

325 Ibid. An official report sent by the provincial general assembly to the Ministry of the Interior 31 March 1909; From the secretariat of the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 May 1909; An official report sent by the provincial general assembly to the Ministry of the Interior, 5 Mart 1910; From the governor of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 10 Mart 1910.
326 This situation caused difficulty between the local authorities and the Consulate in Batum. BOA, HR. TO 90-76. From the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 August 1884.
327 It was agreed by the local authorities that these posts should be abolished. BOA, DH.SYS 4-1. An official report sent by the provincial general assembly to the Ministry of the Interior 31 March 1909. Furthermore, the government of the Caucasus was determined not to allow Ottoman subjects to come into Russian territory with ordinary identity papers and forced them to obtain new passports by following the official regulations. In addition, the governor of the Caucasus declared that the Ottomans did not possess any land on the Russian side. As the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted, under these conditions, the Russian government would not take any further action regarding these issues. Such a declaration attracted the attention of the Ottoman authorities, who advised these Ottoman subjects that since a loss in their usufruct rights would be detrimental to them, they would have to
though little may have changed with respect to the Ottomans’ policing on the border, the Russian state, it appears, did increase its efficiency in monitoring its borders at the turn of the century, and it was this that obstructed the usual cross-border movement.

We can safely claim that many Ottoman subjects were inclined to choose Russian subjecthood due to the complexities and ambiguities of procedures involved in crossing the border. People with dual citizenship could easily crisscross the line, as we see in the case of the Hatinoğulları, a Muslim family living in Hopa. Because they needed to herd their cattle, goats and sheep into Russian territory all year round, they chose to facilitate this by taking on Russian subjecthood. A report by the head of the Ottoman delegation of the Russo-Ottoman border commission Fahri Bey further illuminates this issue. According to Fahri Bey, land resources suitable for arable agriculture were limited in Hopa, and many people from the Hemşin villages of Hopa sustained themselves through livestock breeding. Because the mainstay of their economy, the rangelands and uplands of Hopa, were now within Russia, these people were forced to pasture their fifty-odd thousand sheep under the paid guardianship of shepherds, who obtained Russian passports. However, this was not the whole story. During the journey of the border commission into this region, it was learnt that many owners of the livestock were Ottoman as well as Russian subjects. They had taken on prove their title deeds on the land at issue and appeal to the Russian government. Ibid. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, 19 September 1910; From the General Correspondence of the Ministry of the Interior to the Province of Trabzon, 22 September 1910.

328 Ibid. From the head of the Ottoman Border Commission, Fahri Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, 4 October 1912. Rewritten to Trabzon, 2 November 1912.
329 Ibid. From the head of the Ottoman Border Commission, Fahri Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, 4 October 1912. Rewritten to Trabzon, 2 November 1912.
330 According to Hovann Simonian, an estimated 200 Hopa Hemshin households fell under Tsarist rule after the 1878 border change. The Hopa Hemshinlis were Armenian Muslims, but the change of territorial status did not lead them to revert to Christianity, as they had been Islamicized for a long time. Hovann H. Simonian, ‘Hemshin from Islamicization to the end of the nineteenth century’ and ‘Interactions and mutual perceptions during the 1878-1923 period. Muslims of Armenian background and Armenians in the Pontos’, in Hovann H. Simonian (ed.), The Hemshin. History, Society and Identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 80-81 and 124-125.
331 Ibid. While in summer, they were grazed on uplands on the side of Ardahan and near countries, they spent winters on pastures through the valley of the Çoruh River.
Russian subjecthood for their farming needs (move the livestock, pay upland fees etc.) with no difficulty.\textsuperscript{332}

There were still major issues to be reckoned with, however, and it is quite apparent that the people of this borderland faced socio-economic problems because of their inability to utilize land resources effectively after the border shift. For instance, the pasture of the Hatinoğulları that was now in Russia became a bone of contention between them and a group of people from the district of Keskim, in the province of Erzurum, who had been pasturing their animals on the same lands for nearly ten years. The animal husbandry and thus material welfare of this family were badly affected by this encroachment on their pasture in Russian territory. They demanded that in order to prevent people of Keskim from coming into these lands, the authorities should officially restrict their movement.\textsuperscript{333} Fahri Bey, who had the opportunity to visit some of the remote villages in the district of Keskim located on the border, gives crucial information about the geographical limitations on arable lands and pastures in this border region:

What is apparent and was told to me is the harshness of physical environment within the district of Keskim. The villages are formed on the steep slopes. The lands suitable for agriculture are located on the slopes of mountains, where arable fields are situated five or six hundreds of metres in altitude and two or three hours distance from the villages. Whichever household finds one acre of agricultural land is the contented one. Half of the population consumes corn. Those who do not own any fields or do not have enough corn for their own consumption try to grow fruit on precarious locations to sell, or else work as shepherds or muleteers to get the corn they need from either Russia or our sub-district, Arhavi. Villages are connected to each other and their arable fields by a narrow goat-trail. Walking on these pathways without praying is particular to

\textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid. Hatinoğulları was a family living in Üçüncü, one of the neighbourhoods of the Potocur village in Hopa. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, 9 September 1912; From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the province of Erzurum, 13 October 1912; From the General Correspondence of the Ministry of the Interior to the Province of Trabzon, 11 November 1912.
people from this neighbourhood, who possess no more than a palm of smooth land and a cottage.\textsuperscript{334}

Clearly, the topography of this border region forced people to cross into what was now Russian territory, and contention over the limited pasture was not peculiar to the Hatinoğulları and the people of Keskim. In the area where the provincial borders of Trabzon and Erzurum met the Russo-Ottoman border, conflict arose among local people unable (or unwilling) to share the scarce lands. The statements of expert officials in Hopa reveal that the upland of Çukur, situated on the Russo-Ottoman borderline and also used by people from the provinces of Trabzon and Erzurum was a site of tension. The officials claimed that if this upland were not assigned for the sole use of people from Hopa, the problems arising from the lack of sufficient grazing lands required for the great number of livestock in Hopa could not be resolved.\textsuperscript{335} As it was, however, the local people evidently preferred to continue using the pastures on the Russian side of the border, anyway. It was thus concluded that in all likelihood, the Russian government would sooner or later incorporate within Russian subjecthood those Ottoman subjects who used the Russian uplands to graze their livestock.

\textsuperscript{334} BOA, DH. İD 56-2 – 42, From Fahri Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, 7 August 1912.  
\textsuperscript{335} Apparently, there was a partial solution, which involved bringing two-thousand sheep and goats for grazing on the İnekli, Kükütlü, Şoval and Çamurlu uplands of Russia back into Ottoman lands and stoping the illegal passage of cattle, which suffered badly on the journey from Hopa towards the pastures in Russia. In addition to setting aside the upland of Çukur for the use of people from the sub-district of Arhavi in Hopa only, the expert officials recommended that people from the village of Kobak in the district of Keskim and from Abu in the sub-district of Viçe should also be prevented from herding their livestock there. Official information related to the usage of upland areas in Çukur by the adjacent villages was contradictory, however. The governor of Erzurum emphasized that while the people of Kobak had used the upland of Çukur from days of old, the area in which it met with Lazistan was used by both the villages of Arhavi and Viçe. Although some contention occurred between these villages, it had never prevented the people of Kobak from using their lands in Çukur. The governor underlined need of the people of Kobak for pasture lands in Çukur, since much of the land in the district of Keskim was stony and unsuitable for grazing. If they had to leave these lands in Çukur, they would have to cross into Russian territory or see their approximately two hundred head of cattle would perish. Thus, the governor concluded that it would be better if the people of Arhavi would be given pasture lands from a place within Lazistan. BOA, DH.SYS 4–1. From the governor of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 8 July 1913.
Fahri Bey frankly admitted that it was not possible to provide the necessary grazing land around Hopa, even if the commission helped with tax collection and regularized citizenship status. Yet, even though he was aware of the urgent needs of these people to cross the border, as a representative of the Ottoman authority and its interests in this region he had to consider the expectations of the central authorities. As a result, he instead proposed a fair distribution of the pastures and uplands of Trabzon and Erzurum equally among the villages near the border and in this way disallowing others from using their lands; freed from the need to cross into the Russian uplands – and crucially, thus, to proclaim themselves Russian subjects the people of Hemşin and Hopa in general could then be compelled to stay within their country. 336 Unsurprisingly, this proposal met with opposition from the local administration. As an official letter sent to the government of Lazistan declared that if the regulation were followed, some villages would lose vital lands allocated to them and constant arguments would result, along with a deterioration of relations between the villages. 337 Thus, Fahri Bey’s suggestion was rejected.

In ensuring easy passage for these people, the Ottoman authorities generally tried to follow the rule of reciprocity in their relations with the Russian government. They expected that as Russian subjects used a safe-conduct pass, valid for one year and two weeks, to cross the border into the Ottoman lands, then Ottomans should be subject to the same regulations, and the Russian government should not impose visa requirements. However, as local people were dependent on the lands now located within Russia for their survival needs, they sought to go beyond this implicit, sometime one-sided and always potentially fragile arrangement. Instead, they aimed at assuring

336 Ibid. To the governance of Lazistan, 14 December 1912.
337 Ibid.
a smooth transit across the border for local people through a mutual agreement between the two empires.\textsuperscript{338} The Ottomans anticipated that a formal agreement on this matter would expedite border-crossing for these people while also stopping them from becoming Russian subjects.

Illustrative in this context is what Fahri Bey regarded as one of the reasons for the villagers wanting to become Russian subjects ‘not to be obliged to pay more than one hundred piaster per year in order to obtain an Ottoman passport’.\textsuperscript{339} Insofar as saving money on passport fees was a major reason for people to acquire Russian subjecthood (in addition to their existing Ottoman one), the local authorities were highly motivated to regularize and facilitate the cross-border movement of local people with the implementation of regional cooperation. The desire here was also informed by the need to develop and maintain an affective commitment to the Empire of its borderland subjects. This can be deduced from the concluding statement of an official letter, which states that ‘such an implementation would be in correspondence with the mental and social structures of people under discussion and help them to keep their patriotism alive’.\textsuperscript{340}

Furthermore, it appeared to the local authorities that the Russian government was insistent on pursuing its agenda of enabling only its own subjects to cross the border smoothly. As an official letter from the local government of Hopa revealed, even though some time had elapsed after an attempt had been initiated by Ottoman

\textsuperscript{338} Ibid. For instance, if there was a dispute with respect to the subjecthood of the people of Hemşin, it could be resolved only if these people and their livestock were allowed free passage back and forth over the border. For livestock crossing for the Russian uplands, there would need to be custom officers at each gate responsible for issuing relevant documents free of charge according to the quantity and type of animal. What was expected from the Russian government was that Russia should hasten the process of crossing the border for the borderland people irrespective of subjecthood or at least for their livestock. From the governor of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 9 March 1913.

\textsuperscript{339} Ibid, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid. An official report to the governance of Lazistan, 14 December 1912.
authorities to deal with this, the Russian government stayed silent on the matter.\textsuperscript{341} Contrary to all expectations on the part of the Ottoman authorities, there was no emergence of additional regulations for or new treatments of the Ottoman subjects on the borderland. Considering the likelihood of border incidents as a result, the Ottoman border commission went so far as to alert the command of the Hopa border squad that livestock should not be allowed to pass into Russian territory or even put out to pasture near the borderline. The Ottoman local authorities were aware that the villagers would easily be thrust into a position in which they would ultimately have to choose Russian subjecthood.\textsuperscript{342}

It is worth noting that there was a substantial difference between the expectations of the Ottoman central and local authorities in dealing with the disputes between the two empires in these border areas. The main cause of this difference was the fact that, in contrast to the local authorities, the central authorities were unappreciative of the social and economic realities of the borderland people’s lives. What Fahri Bey observed and reported to the Ministry of the Interior during his visit to remote villages in the district of Keskim can serve as evidence of the fact that this difference could not only be explained by the physical distance between the centre and this border region. Recognising the general situation of the villagers as crushingly poor – ‘they were almost intimately acquainted with poverty’ – Fahri narrated his experience thus:

\begin{quote}
The miserable inhabitants, who might never have seen a government official in or near their villages since they were born, came running to me. They poured out many troubles with no regard to their relation to my mission there. They made an effort at showing their wounds to me. I willingly promised them that I would bring
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{341} ibid. An official letter of the district of Hopa dated 27 May 1913.

\textsuperscript{342} ibid.
some issues which I considered necessary to the attention of the relevant authority.\footnote{BOA, DH. İD 56-2 – 42, From Fahri Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, 7 August 1912.}

The central authorities claiming sovereignty over these border areas perceived the local socio-economic realities and dynamics of this border region quite differently, however. This reminds us of the ‘enormous gap between the rhetoric of border maintenance and daily life in borderlands’.\footnote{Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, ‘Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands’, \textit{Journal of World History}, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall, 1997), 211-242, p. 220.} And herein lies the reason for the irreconcilability between the acts of local people in acquiring dual citizenship in order to use their lands in Russia, on the one hand, and the central authorities’ opposition to this practice, on the other. A statement in a report written by the Office of the Legal Consultancy of the Sublime Porte is crucial at this point.

The report states that the people connected to ceded lands on which they did not necessarily dwell but where they owned arable fields were not obliged to stay in Russia and obtain Russian citizenship in order to dispose of their properties.\footnote{BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-14, p. 10.} According to this report, the disposal rights of such people desiring to keep their Ottoman citizenship were not specified in the Treaty of Istanbul. In fact, as mentioned, a common regulation agreed by both states stipulated that such people were allowed to keep their citizenship. Thus, since there was ambiguity concerning lands on the other side of the border in the treaty, the disposal rights for these were subjected to specific conditions.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 13-14.} In practice, as we see in many examples, the disposal rights of these people could not easily be restricted, due to their urgent needs to use them.
Another point made by Fahri Bey that appeared in one of his telegrams may be cited here.\(^\text{347}\) Apparently, people had not been able to sell their properties for their true value in the three-year period after the Treaty of Istanbul. In addition, the registers of the head official of Hopa show that people took up residence in Russian territory and became Russian subjects merely in order to have the option of disposing of their properties easily if and when needed, without having the intention to do so immediately.\(^\text{348}\) Again, this contradicted the intentions of central authorities wishing to prevent dual citizenship. It was asserted in the aforementioned report that until these people waived their rights to these holdings, the Russian government would not give up its claim on these people.

The report further detailed the necessities of an attempt to bring the issue of protecting the rights of these people in the event of renunciation of their Russian citizenship under the consideration of the Russian government. Remaining solely as an Ottoman subject and permanently settling down in the Ottoman Empire required discontinuing one’s relationship with Russia, which these people might still do. The report underlined that if they could not sell their land at its full value within the required time period, the Ottoman government should compensate their losses in return for the political benefit.\(^\text{349}\) While dual citizenship was a common phenomenon in the everyday practices of the people of this borderland and the local authorities were willing to take this issue into account, it was perceived as a source of ‘strangeness’ by the central authorities, which stimulated further investigation of the issue.

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\(^{347}\) BOA, HR. HMŞ. İŞO 149-14, p. 10. This report referred to the telegram sent by Fahri Bey dated 17 July 1912.

\(^{348}\) Ibid, p. 11.

\(^{349}\) Ibid, pp. 13-14.
One official report on three villages close to the border at the coast (Makriyal, Gönye and Sarp) provides information about how the Ottoman authorities investigated and classified people who had dual citizenship. Again, the settlements had stayed in Ottoman territory, land that the villagers had been using ended up in Russia, and in order to be able to continue making use of their land the local people had registered as Russian subjects (Rusya’da Rus sıfatıyla kaydolunmağa). At the same time, they not only kept paying their taxes to the Ottoman Empire but were also included in the Ottoman registers for their military service. It seems that the people in question were mainly classified according to the location of their homes and the amount of time they spent there. Thus, there were those permanently resident in Russia, others spending most of their time there, some half of the year there and others not living in Russia at all, while another group comprised five boatmen who registered themselves in the Russian Empire. Since, as Ottoman citizens, they were deprived of the right of coastal navigation or shipping (cabotage) within Russian borders, they obtained Russian nationality in order to freely navigate in Russian waters. These cases serve as an example of the extent of dual citizenship in that border area while highlighting the Ottoman authorities’ notions of ‘strangeness’.

In certain cases for people of the borderland, dual citizenship meant not only gaining rights and opportunities but also escaping from obligations. The Ottoman authorities were concerned with the problematic citizenship status of people in several villages on the Russo-Ottoman border about which the Erzurum and Trabzon provincial authorities were given notice. We glean from the initial reply of the governor of

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350 Ibid. From the office of the legal consultancy of the Sublime Porte, 18 September 1912.
351 Ibid.
352 BOA, DH. SYS 3-46. 6 December 1913. From the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the provinces of Erzurum and Trabzon on 26 June 1913. The letter of the governor of Trabzon revealed that two villages
Erzurum in September, 1913 that he could not totally substantiate these claims and nobody with Russian subjecthood was detected there. Some people in the village of Hod on the Russo-Ottoman border whose lands were in the Russian territories had to cross into Russia, but only in order to sell their produce. However, it was later understood that in that context they posed as Russian subjects.\(^{353}\) A report sent by an office of Russian border police further clarified this issue.

According to this report, some people in the villages in question were both Ottoman and Russian subjects. For the Ottoman officers, this was tantamount to ‘improper actions’. The report described the reasons for the dual citizenship as follows: for people to crisscross the border on their way to their lands without trouble, to visit their relatives and friends on both sides of the border easily and to free their sons from military obligation. It is striking that despite their refusal to do military service, almost all the men of these villages were fighters, and many of them possessed weapons and munitions. According to the report, their use of guns on the border caused many problems. The governors of Erzurum and Trabzon and the men of these villages were requested to put an end to their use of firearms on the border, but to no avail.\(^{354}\)

From these examples, one can conclude that although diplomatic treaties separated these people from their lands in Russia, these did not prevent them from using their lands to maintain their livelihood. Dual citizenship was indispensable for them to carry on as they had done. It enabled them to more easily use their lands in Russia (both for arable farming and, as in the Hatinoğulları case, for animal husbandry), as well as to
cited on the Russo-Ottoman border were actually not located within the province of Trabzon. From the governor of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs on 17 July 1913. These villages most probably were located within the province of Erzurum, and were Kurdish villages.

\(^{353}\) Ibid. From the governor of Erzurum to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 18 September 1913.

\(^{354}\) Ibid. Report of the office of Russian border police.
cross into Russian territory and also to escape from their obligations in the Ottoman Empire. This does not mean that they were not exposed to pressure from the Ottoman local authorities due to their dual citizenship. Citing a certain Hâtinoğlu Ömer Ağâ, a resident of Hopa, Fahri Bey concluded his report by noting the importance of the dual status for local people. In reaction to a notice he had received from the local government of Hopa, Ömer Ağâ cried out that ‘if you punitively grab and confiscate my property because I obtained Russian subjeactly for the sake of my animals, here is my ramshackle house’.  

Fahri Bey was surprised to encounter a not dissimilar attitude among some people from the Ottoman border villages of Keskim who harboured generally positive attitudes toward Russia. In this case, the local people complained about the Ottoman tax collectors (mültezim), saying that they imposed taxes that were two or three times higher than those warranted by their actual agricultural production. Apparently, the Russian government collected less tax revenues from people living in the uplands on their side of the border than did the Ottoman authorities from those inhabiting the Ottoman side, and it would help these people when required. Fahri observed the contrast made between the tolerance of the Russian government towards its borderland people with the troublesome practices of Ottoman tax collectors, stating that he had ‘closely and personally observed that even though Muslims from the ceded territories to Russia temporarily made reservation against Russian rule, they sustained a prosperous life there’, while on ‘the Ottoman side of the border, people had to put up with the inconvenient conditions due solely to their affection towards Islam’. While dual citizenship was not an issue raised here by Fahri, another obvious

355 BOA, DH.SYS 4-1.
356 BOA, DH. İD 56-2 – 42, From Fahri Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, 7 August 1912.
source of concern was located. Implicit in this comparison was another survival strategy on the border causing various types of movement including changes – and thus dualities – in citizenship.

As will be discussed below, the Ottoman authorities were disposed to recognise these people merely as Ottoman subjects even though they were aware that they had dual citizenship. The Ottoman government was opposed to dual citizenship, which was seen as a manifestation of strangeness on the border. It was not in compliance with the OLN. And the Ottoman central authorities foresaw the complexities and problems dual citizenship would cause on the border. However, this was something they could not prevent. Officials on the ground declared that people who acquired Russian citizenship should be directed to obtain Ottoman citizenship once again and that the central authorities should concern themselves the socio-economic welfare of these people. However, the Ottoman central authorities were late to calculate the costs and benefits of this suggestion as well as to investigate the citizenship status and land issues of people of this borderland. This delay in taking decisive action related to the issue of unwelcomed citizenship conditions on the Russo-Ottoman border showed the division between the approach and perspective of the central and local authorities. It also represented the difference between the logic of ruling versus survival in terms of the practice of imperial citizenship on the Russo-Ottoman border.

**Addressing the Strangeness of Dual Citizenship**

Veena Das and Deeborah Pole suggest that a study of margins ‘offers a unique perspective to the understanding of the state, not because it captures exotic practices, but because it suggests that such margins are a necessary entailment of the state,
much as the exception is a necessary component of the rule. A study of margins implicitly sheds light on the very structure of what is normative. The argument of Das and Poole may be applied to issues of collective belonging. In the case at hand, analysis of the way the Ottoman state handled exceptions, the dual citizenship of borderland people informs us about the standards of belonging to the Ottoman body politic that are not spelled out in the OLN.

As indicated, the approach taken by the Ottoman state towards the ‘strangeness’ of dual citizenship was not the automatic denaturalization of those Muslims registered as subjects of the Russian state implied by the OLN. Rather, a real political compromise based on the realities on the ground was typically adopted. The report from the Office of the Legal Consultancy of the Sublime Porte gives important clues about the approach of the Ottoman authorities to imperial citizenship on the Russo-Ottoman border. In line with the principles of general international law, the report declared that every person has only one nationality. However, sometimes when internal laws and regulations of states conflict with each other, a person may have two nationalities at the same time or, by renouncing one nationality without reason and not obtaining a new one, a person could end up with no nationality. Neither case was welcomed by states. While statelessness (the German term heimatlos is used in the document) was regarded as contrary to the general principle of law, people who were subjects of more than one sovereign state would encounter constant impediments in terms of rights, obligations and protection. Thus, states routinely stipulated that people who desired to obtain a new citizenship should renounce their current one. While the Ottoman government took an interest in foreigners wishing to gain Ottoman

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citizenship, however, the OLN did not make provision for Ottoman citizens to
denaturalize themselves.\textsuperscript{358}

It is evident in the report that the Ottoman authorities were opposed to statelessness
or dual citizenship, in principle. However, as the report also states, a lenient attitude
towards dual citizenship could at times be acknowledged as beneficial for the people
on the Russo-Ottoman border. It was recognized by local authorities that these people
had to choose Russian citizenship in order to dispose of their properties easily and
maintain their livelihoods. Yet, they did not break off their relations with the Ottoman
Empire, and nor did they necessarily refrain from paying its taxes or being recruited
into its army. Thus, the report acknowledged that the inclination of these people to
dual citizenship should not be regarded as illegitimate. It urged that the OLN not be
interpreted too narrowly, which would strip people of their Ottoman citizenship. And it
further stated that the maintenance of their Ottoman citizenship was not contrary to
the content and objectives of the law concerned.\textsuperscript{359}

An observation on the sixth article of the OLN is pertinent here. This article entitled the
Ottoman authorities to decide whether to annul the subjecthood of a person who
accepted that of a foreign country or entered into the military service of a foreign state
without authorization from the Ottoman government. Crucially, therefore, it left the
door open to interpretation on this matter, such as for the benefit of people of the
borderland. Summarizing, dual citizenship, even though it was against the terms of the
OLN, remained a real possibility for Muslim Ottoman subjects on the Russo-Ottoman
border.

\textsuperscript{358} BOA, HR. HMŞ.İSO 149-14, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., p. 7.
This political compromise with the reality on the ground was made to exert sovereignty, in order to continue to hold power over these borderland people. It was made at a price, of course, since it also produced ambiguities regarding their belonging. Yet, the Ottoman authorities believed that this ambiguity needed to be overcome, because it was a way through which the Russian government could have a say on the ‘internal issues’ of the Ottoman state, potentially destabilizing its order and producing tensions within. Therefore, the report clarified why the Ottoman authorities refrained from giving their full consent to dual citizenship.

Inasmuch as Ottoman subjects obtained Russian citizenship, paid taxes in compliance with this and opted to reside in their lands in Russia, it would be difficult for the Ottoman government to protect and defend them in any conflict with the Russian government. Multifarious and complicated situations could arise as a cause of conflict on this border. For example, if a person with dual citizenship was involved in an action that entailed a legal prosecution in the Ottoman Empire, the Russian government could oppose it. Likewise, interference of the Ottoman government into any conflict between the Russian government and the people who held dual citizenship would result in tensions.360

Such considerations further prompted the Ottoman authorities to think that ‘strangeness’ had to be eliminated. This had to be achieved carefully at the everyday level because a strict application of the OLN provisions would only alienate people, as reflected in the outcry from Hatinoğlu Ömer Ağa (above). Therefore, each case had to be assessed on its own merits, effectively to reveal who the friends and enemies of the Ottoman state were. Our argument is that in this act of clarification of the borderland

360 Ibid., p. 8.
people, we can find other standards of belonging to Ottoman society other than those addressed in the OLN. As considered below, the main standard the Ottoman state employed to decide about Muslims living near Hopa and its neighbourhood was their loyalty, and this was measured in the first instance by the fulfilment of tax payment and military service obligations.

**Measuring Loyalty and the Fulfilment of Obligations to the State**

The Ottoman government categorized and registered people on the borderland in order to clarify their citizenship status and, related to that, their loyalty to the Ottoman state. This was a hard task since their many entangled positions greatly complicated the designation of their citizenship status and allegiance. We know that a period of residence in Ottoman territory was required to become an Ottoman subject. For instance, ‘somewhere between seven and ten years of residence’ was required from Russian subjects to acquire Ottoman citizenship in the first half of the nineteenth century.\(^{361}\) For these borderland people with their overlapping status, however, it appears that the Ottomans assigned priority to the fulfilment of obligations to the state over residence in the Empire. The privileged place of the fulfilment of the obligations towards the state when assessing loyalty in cases of dual citizenship can be seen in an assessment of loyalties of three people who had been residing in Russia, for eight years, eighteen years and since the Russo-Ottoman War. It was stated in the same report that spending most of one’s time in a particular place did not entail a legal belonging, or citizenship. What really mattered was that these people went to the Ottoman side to pay their taxes and, above all, do their military service.\(^{362}\) Yet still,

\(^{361}\) Smiley, 2014: 85.

\(^{362}\) BOA, HR. HMŞ.İŞO 149-14, p. 12.
because of the elusiveness of loyalty, it was added that further inquiry was still necessary to decide on citizenship status.

Inquiries into the situation of a teacher at a primary school in the village of Sarp, by Hopa, are well detailed in the report. In fact, this teacher originally did not come from the land ceded to Russia and did not have any particular relationship with people who had property there. Simply, he was an Ottoman subject with familial roots on the Ottoman side but residing and registered in Russia as a Russian subject (Rusya’dan Rusyalı sınıfiyle tescil olunmuş). The report stated that since foreign subjects were not allowed to teach in Russia, he had had no alternative but to register as Russian in order to become a teacher. As far as it can be followed in his records kept by the Ottoman authorities, he settled in the village of Sarp due to his teaching job. Nevertheless, he had retained his Ottoman nationality (tabi’iyeti asliye). The implication was clear: this man identified himself as Ottoman and took up Russian citizenship for practical (employment) reasons.

The Ottoman authorities, however, had reservations. Even though he resided in Russia and despite his new Russian citizenship, he was paying all his taxes, including estate tax, to the Ottoman government and not to the Russian government. Apparently, he did not declare his reasons for this. The Ottomans wanted to determine whether the reasons had to do with his moral consciousness concerning Islam and the Ottoman state, or whether there was some other reason. According to the report, his original residence needed to be clarified, as well as what sort of relationship he had with the

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363 Ibid., p. 4.
364 Ibid., p. 4.
365 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
Ottoman Empire, what kind of taxes had been collected from him and whether he had fulfilled his military duty.\textsuperscript{366}

Although we do not know about the final decision on the teacher, the interpretative stance taken towards his situation is revealing. The statement of the report to the effect that ‘since foreign subjects were not allowed to teach in Russia, he had no alternative but to register himself in Russia’ seems to suggest that in cases where dual citizenship was a necessity, it could be tolerated; the need to investigate further, however, suggests a level of suspicion. This stranger was probably a friend, but that did need to be confirmed. This case may be compared with others in which dual citizenship was not a necessity, but the level of tolerance on the part of the Ottoman authorities was markedly lower.

In these other cases, the Ottoman authorities were disturbed by the fact that people in the border areas exploited dual citizenship not only for their disposal rights but also for finding work in Russia. The report requested that the local authorities should warn people, who did this. These people should find a different way of earning a living that would not require Russian citizenship, and the local authorities should help with this. The report noted that if they insisted on keeping their Russian citizenship, they would be denaturalized and might be exposed to a penalty. If they complied with the notice of the local authorities regarding the renunciation of their Russian citizenship, or did at least consider it, the Ottoman government would decide either to be tolerant toward them or to apply the OLN.\textsuperscript{367}

\textsuperscript{366} Ibid., pp. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid., pp. 14-15.
In both cases of dual citizenship, resulting from a clear need or otherwise, there was an indeterminacy in Ottoman policies. This was to be settled by a decision, essentially, on whether to be tolerant or to apply the OLN. As was evident in the treatment of the case of the teacher in Hopa, what really mattered for the local authorities was not so much the legal status, but rather something subjective, which may be described by the term ‘loyalty’. The report shows us that in the assessment of the loyalty of the teacher, it was the fulfilment of the obligations towards the state that the authorities assessed as critical. Yet, the report signifies also the unbridgeable gap between the materiality of the obligations towards the state and the elusiveness and subjectivity of loyalty. Hence, the ‘real reasons’ behind the payment of taxes to the Ottoman state were deemed important.

Given that it was loyalty that the Ottoman authorities sought in people with dual citizenship and loyalty was ‘measured’ first and foremost by the fulfilment of obligations towards the state, it is not surprising that the Ottoman authorities did not recognise the two individuals described below as Ottomans. One person was categorized as among the group of natives of the land ceded to Russia. He was registered as an emigrant, from the Ottoman village of İskaristi, but he did not possess any property or land in the Ottoman Empire and his permanent residence was in Russia. Relying on this limited information, the report stated that it was hard to know whether he should be considered as Russian or Ottoman (merkumenin Rusyaluluğunu ya da Osmanlılılığını kestirmek müskil olduğundan).368 Another person had neither Ottoman citizenship nor owned any land in İskaristi and resided in the village of Düzköy in Russia. An investigation into his situation carried out by the local authorities

368 Ibid., p. 17.
found that rather than the dual citizenship status listed in the previous Ottoman record, he ought to be classified as Russian (*merkum Rusyalu adolunmak lazım gelüb*).\(^{369}\)

Similar to the difficulty in demarcating the Russo-Ottoman border, the process of determining citizenship status of people in the border areas was also a complex and inherently messy affair. As people in between, with various connections, past and present, to both empires, the people of this borderland utilized the opportunities provided by this situation and the different policies of the two governments for their own ends. Muslims on the Ottoman borderland decided to take up Russian subjecthood, even though it rendered their citizenship status ambiguous in the eyes of Ottoman authorities. The Ottoman authorities were then charged with the (partly self-imposed) task of ascertaining friends from among these (new) strangers. The way they went about this reveals the central importance to the Ottoman state of a rather abstract notion of loyalty, a commitment materially expressed by financial payment and armed service. These signified subjecthood, although they were not quite enough to define it.

**Conclusion**

Archival research on the making of the Russo-Ottoman border following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 shows that citizenship as a ruling strategy did not exhaust all the possibilities of imperial belonging. While for the two imperial states, citizenship was primarily a tool of centralization, classification and control, for the people of this borderland it was used more as a vehicle of survival. By adjusting their subjecthood status according to state law and local conditions, these people accessed sources of

\(^{369}\) Ibid.
livelihood and gained rights and avoided certain duties and obligations. The various examples cited in this chapter show that pre-existing economic motives were the main driving force behind borderland people’s adoption of Russian, thus dual, citizenship. In particular, the functions of dual citizenship, the possession of which was often required to maintain what had become cross-border livelihoods, show imperial citizenship as a moment of survival, and not a mere reflection of the ‘necessities of governance’.

Eric Lohr’s handling of the intricate issue of Russian citizenship has provided a methodological foundation for this chapter, but our approach differs from his in one respect. Lohr replaces the physical border of the Empire with a ‘citizenship boundary’ and emphasises that Russian authorities were more concerned with curbing or encouraging the movement of people through various measures and transforming their citizenship status than they were with exercising a merely physical control over its lengthy external borders. While border guards and checkpoints are essential in his research, Lohr gives priority to Russia’s imperial conduct, which designated who should remain in the country and who should leave. Here, we emphasize the importance of local practice. For us, the citizenship boundary was not so much imposed by the state as negotiated between the central state and its agencies and officials ‘on the ground’ as informed by people’s actual practice.

Thus, in this chapter, we have looked at how the ‘citizenship boundary’ as understood by Lohr was created and formed on the Ottoman side of the borderland. This has opened a new domain of enquiry with normative implications for Ottoman (state) studies. Given the complexity of the situation on the ground, the creation of all-

370 Concomitant with this aim is his attempt to unearth how the ‘citizenship boundary’ was ‘conceived, crossed, documented, controlled, and evaded’ in Russia from 1860s to the early 1930s. Lohr, 2012: 1-2.
encompassing regulations regarding citizenship issues in this borderland was almost impossible. Therefore, imperial authorities leaned toward making specific new regulations for distinct regions or adapting the existing ones to local circumstances. In this regard, this chapter argues that, despite the fact that the Ottoman central authorities defined citizenship clearly through the OLN so as to effectively designate the ‘citizenship boundary’, they were not able to completely eliminate strangeness. Fundamentally, this was due to the divergence between the Ottoman state and people of the borderland with respect to their understanding of citizenship and its functions.

The findings of this chapter allow us to conclude, therefore, that the citizenship boundary on the Russo-Ottoman border established a ground for negotiation. This compelled the authorities, particularly at the local level, to revise the idea of imperial citizenship in a way that ultimately led to a new conceptualization of it. The citizenship boundary in the north-eastern part of the Empire was not only determined on normative grounds, since it was also shaped by the stance taken by people of the borderland and the stance, moreover, towards the citizenship policies of the two imperial states, not just the Ottoman. The Ottoman citizenship boundary was a function, therefore, of the relationship between these two dynamics, of the Ottoman state norms in respect to local realities, on the one hand, and of local people’s practice in relation to (Ottoman and Russian) state policies, on the other.

We can specify two everyday methods that the Ottoman state resorted to in order to eliminate the ‘strangeness’ posed by the dual citizenship of Muslims on the Russo-Ottoman border. One was to encourage them to opt for Ottoman over Russian citizenship; the other was to seek clarification of their identities and status through an assessment of loyalty (on the basis of the records concerning their place of residence,
property ownership, employment and their fulfilment of obligations towards the state). This chapter, therefore, concludes that in these two methods of elimination of the ambiguity posed by dual citizenship of Muslims, we observe informal, implicit standards of belonging other than those stipulated in the OLN. Insofar as they were not only inherently less clear but also developed in relation to local people’s actions and interrelated with Russian policies in this matter (through the reciprocity principle, taxation and military duty requirements, etc.), the ambiguities tackled were not dissolved. Rather, they were heterogeneously reshaped. Strangeness was not so much eliminated as redefined.

Thus, as a final remark, the main thing to be underlined about the response of the Ottoman state to the ambivalence posed by the cross-border movement and contacts of its subjects is that it sought to take control and contain this ambivalence. Recognising, in effect, that an eradication of strangeness as normatively defined was not possible, the Ottomans distinguished people who were supposed to pose more of a threat to the state from those who were found to be less dangerous and treated different stranger groups in different ways. Parallel to the welcoming stance taken to would-be immigrants, there was a relatively embracing, case-by-case approach towards those dual-citizen strangers regarded as less risky, as can be seen in this and the previous chapter on Muslims. On the other hand, a decidedly stricter, more totalizing approach was taken towards those regarded as more risky, as shown in the next chapter on the Armenians.
CHAPTER IV. The Russo-Ottoman Border as a Barrier: The Case of Ottoman Armenians

Like Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire inhabiting the borderland of Eastern Anatolia and the eastern Black Sea region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Armenians also moved across the Russo-Ottoman border. And again, there were many movement types, ranging from regular back-and-forth passages to one-off migrations and for a similarly wide range of reasons, spanning everyday livelihood requirements and kinship connections to religious identity and security concerns. Yet, there was a major difference between the Muslim and Armenian mobilities from the Ottoman perspective, since the latter was regarded as a security threat.

The Ottoman state perception of a danger in the Armenian movement increased with the rising political tension in the region and the transformation of this tension into an international diplomatic issue after the Treaty of Berlin. The authorities adopted a strict border policy towards Ottoman Armenians and towards Armenians holding Russian passports. Especially from the 1890s and continuing until the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, this tended to take the shape of a totalizing approach, wherein all Armenians were assumed by the state as ‘enemies’ and approached thus. Some

Christopher Clay provides some evidence on the strict stance of the Ottomans’ border regime against people’s temporary crossing of the border. While remarkable economic development occurred in Russian Transcaucasia, particularly from the 1880s, and there was a ‘sharp rise in the number of Armenians leaving for Russia from 1893 onwards’, it was also the case that ‘the total of temporary and seasonal workers was lower in 1897 than it had been thirty years before’. According to Clay, as a result of the Ottomans’ increasing concerns about the cross-border penetration of Armenians terrorists, many Ottoman Armenians who left their territory and wanted to return began to be refused in the early 1890s, which provided an evident disincentive to seasonal or temporary migration and had adverse economic effects. Clay suggests this as an important factor in the change of the socio-economic structure of the region and consequent turmoil. Even though the economic aspect of Ottoman border politics is not addressed in this chapter, Clay’s argument is crucial insofar as it underlines that the static
inclusive regulations and discourses along with authorized return practices for
Ottoman Armenians during the revolutionary period may be interpreted as a
relinquishing of the strict border policy. However, as we will show in this chapter, this
proved ephemeral, and the Ottoman government had already reverted to its old ways
just a year after the revolution.

In general terms, it is the non-permeability of the Russo-Ottoman border for
Armenians that forms the central focus of this chapter. By non-permeability of the
border for Armenians, we refer to the legal limitations introduced by the Ottoman
central authorities to impede Armenian cross-border movement. For more clarity, we
draw on Eric Lohr’s ‘metaphor of the filtering state’, by which he argues, especially
within the context of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that
‘the regime used citizenship policy as a filter, blocking unwanted nationalities, religions,
and character types from entering while setting the outgoing filter to hold in the
nationalities it wanted, allowing others to slip out’.\(^{372}\) Then, examining Armenian
mobility across the Russo-Ottoman border, and bearing in mind Lohr’s metaphor, it is
argued that the border was made into a citizenship boundary. Ottoman Armenians
who crossed the border were treated separately from other Ottoman subjects, refused
entry to the country and thus, either legally or practically, deprived of Ottoman
citizenship as a function of state boundary-making.

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border regime of the Ottomans left a deep impact on the borderland region and its people. Christopher
(ed.), *Turkey before and after Ataturk: Internal and External Affairs* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 24-
25. For a comparison of intense labour migration from Iran to the Caucasus during the same and later
periods, see Touraj Atabaki, ‘Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the margins of the Tsarist
Empire’, in Touraj Atabaki (ed.), *The State and the Subaltern. Modernization, Society and the State in

\(^{372}\) Lohr, 2012: 8.
This chapter opens with an overview of the changing perceptions of Armenians in the eyes of officialdoms in both empires in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Then, in this context, it looks at the negotiations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires on the subject of Ottoman Armenians who emigrated to or took refuge in the Russian Caucasus at the end of the nineteenth century and began to be seen as a threat to the security and authority of these states on the Russo-Ottoman borderland. The next part focuses on the struggle that occurred between the Ottoman state, which strove to prevent the return of Ottoman Armenians from the Russian Caucasus through restrictive regulations on sovereignty and border passage, although with only partial success. The final section considers the same issue within the context of the constitutional revolution of 1908. This reveals that, despite the revolution, the totalizing border policy towards Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus continued, preventing the emigrants from returning to their homes.

Historical Background: Armenians Straddling the Empires

For Russian and Ottoman Armenians, the Russo-Ottoman border of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not simply mean a physical border dividing the two empires, since more than that, it was a line marking their identities, loyalties, hopes and aspirations. Russian Armenians were different from their Ottoman counterparts socially, politically, economically and intellectually and, moreover, the two sets of Armenians were each internally stratified as well as highly fragmented. Although the idea of the emergence of a unified Armenian nation in the historic Armenian territory

373 Ronald Grigor Suny, Looking Toward Ararat. Armenia in Modern History (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 18-20, 23. After the 1908 revolution, for example, there was an appreciable division between Istanbulian and provincial Ottoman Armenians. Provincial Armenians were highly critical of the political domination of Armenians from Istanbul and their general indifference to the problems of Armenians in Anatolia. See Kılıçdağ, 2014: 66-126 (Chapter III) and 111-115.
excited Armenians in both empires from the mid-nineteenth century, they were not likeminded in their views on how to achieve such an end. Yet, the ideas and aspirations of Armenian revolutionary movements, which circulated throughout the border regions, were enough to cause concern amongst both the Russian and Ottoman authorities.

The divided nature of Armenian society did not thwart the development of a more unified perception of Armenians in the sight of both Russian and Ottoman officialdoms, and the positions of Armenians in each empire were also specified by this perception.\(^{374}\) Both the Russian and Ottoman perceptions of Armenians moved from loyal to disloyal during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In the Russian Empire, this represented the combined results of ‘Russia’s interests in Caucasia and the developments taking place among the Armenian themselves’.\(^{375}\) In the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Berlin was a watershed in the history of its Armenians, and decisive in shaping the Ottoman perception of them.

The Treaty of Berlin brought the Armenian issue to the attention of the European public by providing a political arena for Armenians to advocate a programme of reform in the Ottoman Empire. Concomitantly, it represented a rupture for the Ottoman central authorities, who started to associate Armenians with ‘a serious existential threat to the integrity of the empire’.\(^{376}\) This perception primarily concerned Armenians who became politically active, both at home and abroad, in calling

\(^{374}\) For Armenians in Russia on this, see Suny, 1993: 32.
\(^{376}\) Mayersen, 2014: 31 and 33. As Donald Bloxham states, after the Treaty of Berlin ‘the Armenian question was dragged into international debate to the distress of the Ottomans who saw the stipulated reforms as a harbinger of future impositions leading to pressure for Armenian autonomy or even independence’. Donald Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 16; for the internationalization of the Armenian issue, see Bloxham: 11-17 and 44-46.
attention to the issue of the Armenian reforms and the socio-economic difficulties of Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. It was also applied, however, to Armenians in Eastern Anatolia generally. Many repressive actions against Ottoman Armenians were triggered by this changing perception, notably the 1894-96 massacres. Furthermore, and notwithstanding Russia’s endeavour to protect the Ottoman Armenians through the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin in 1878, its non-intervention during these massacres showed that it had diverged from its tradition of providing protection to the Armenians as Christians.  

Russia had claimed protection over the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire since the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed between the two empires in 1774. By 1808, almost 120,000 Greeks were registered by Russia as ‘protected persons’. Many Ottoman Armenians exploited rights provided by this protected status, but at the same time they were wary in their relations with Russia due to religious differences, primarily between Armenian Christianity and Russian Orthodoxy. The Armenian confession in Russia was dealt with separately by the Russian government. This it did with a strategic mind-set concerned with its imperial interests in increasing its influence on neighbouring states and general power in the region. Crucially, this involved the Russian administration of the monastery of Echmiadzin. Seat of the spiritual head of the Armenian Church, and ceded to Russia after the annexation of Eastern Armenia in 1828, Echmiadzin served as a vital instrument of Russian foreign

378 The rights granted to Russia by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca were ‘to build one Russo-Greek church in Istanbul, to make diplomatic representations about that one church and those who served it, and to make similar representations about the Christians of Moldavia and Wallachia.’ Russia regarded these provisions as enabling ‘larger rights of representation, protection or intervention’ over the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire through the nineteenth century. Roderic H. Davison, ‘“Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility”: The treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered’ in Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History 1774-1923, pp. 42 and 29-50.
policy over the course of the nineteenth century. The Russian state thus supported the policy of bolstering the authority of the head of the Armenian Church, the Catholicos, for its own strategic reasons. After the 1890s, Russia departed from her traditional patronage of Echmiadzin, when a reverse and, for Russia, adverse movement through the monastery was discerned. It started to be argued that ‘rather than serving as an instrument for the exertion of Russian influence abroad’, the Catholicos had become ‘a conduit for the transmission of dangerous ideas of Armenian independence from the Ottoman empire into Russia’. 380

Indeed, the Armenian population in the border regions of Eastern Anatolia and the Russian Caucasus provoked conflict and competition between the two empires. Their presence there became increasingly suspect for both sets of officials at the turn of the twentieth century. Equally, the various and variable imperial policies on issues from population politics and social engineering to imperial citizenship meant that Armenians had to straddle the empires. Furthermore, the internal colonization by the Russians in the South Caucasus and the Ottomans in Eastern Anatolia hints at the imperial citizenship policies pursued by both empires in these borderland regions, which functioned to the detriment of the citizenship rights of Armenians. 381 By looking

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380 Paul Werth, ‘Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad’, in Osamu Ieda and Tomohiko Uyama (eds.), Reconstruction and Interaction of Slavic Eurasia and Its Neighbouring Worlds (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2006), p. 217. Mkrtich Khrimian, Catholicos in Echmiadzin between 1892 and 1907 and one source of such Russian angst (for his opposition to the Tsarist confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903) well illustrates also how a class of Armenians with high status faced movement and sovereignty issues. In respect of the Ottomans, Khrimian had evolved a theory of Armenian administrative autonomy and he eventually advocated this notion during the negotiations in Berlin in 1878. Later, when he took up his position as Catholicos, it was more than a year after his election, due to the opposition of the Ottomans. Not only were his travel rights within Ottoman territory denied, but also the Sultan initially refused to denaturalize him (presumably due to his political standing). Pertinently here, this further exemplifies how the Ottoman state used the subjecthood status of Armenians with entangled relations between the two empires as a means of control. Werth, 2006: 223; Bloxham, 2005: 44; Adalian, 2010: 446-447; Hovannisian, 1967: 18.

at the reflections of this colonization in the region through the border policy of the
Ottoman Empire, this chapter aims to show how the changing attitudes and policies of
the Ottoman state towards the movement of Armenians across the Russo-Ottoman
border created a new citizenship boundary which excluded Ottoman Armenians from
the Russian Caucasus.

**Negotiations between the Russian and Ottoman Empires: Ottoman Armenians in the
Russian Caucasus**

During the nineteenth century and especially after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78
great numbers of Ottoman Armenians moved back and forth across the Russo-
Ottoman border. Apart from controlling the movement of these people, one of the
main concerns of the Russian and Ottoman governments was how to populate these
border areas through the distribution of people. The essential aim of the imperial
governments was the settlement of the most reliable subjects at crucial points on the
borderline. Neither the Russians nor the Ottomans placed the Armenian population
into this category. Recent studies based on Tsarist archival documents have
demonstrated that the Russian administration in the province of Kars kept a close eye
upon the Armenian population and never encouraged an increase in its size. For
instance, of all the Armenians who followed the return of the Russian Army from
Erzurum to Kars in 1878 to settle there, less than half were accepted and allowed to

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stay in the province. The Caucasian Command even allocated 15,000 roubles to the military government of Kars to assist with the return of some Armenians to their villages in the Alashkerd Valley, which remained on the Ottoman side of the border.\footnote{Badem, 2013: 154-156; Badem, 2010: 54. According to Hovannisian, ‘approximately twenty-five thousand Ottoman Armenians accompanied the army of Loris-Melikov beyond the revised borders of Transcaucasia’. Hovannisian, 1967: 12. It is important to remember here that even though the Alashkerd Valley was retroceded to the Ottoman Empire in the Treaty of Berlin, the actual borderline cutting this valley was not clear to the authorities (see Chapter One). Moreover, as we learn from P. Stevens, the British consul in Batum, some Armenians in Alashkerd came to Kars again among the wave of immigrants of 1893. PRO, FO 65-1452, 23 August 1893.}

It seems that the Tsarist authorities promoted what they perceived as a more balanced population distribution in the Caucasus by the end of nineteenth century, especially concerning the Armenian population. The military-civil administrators produced very detailed statistical works and manifested their concerns regarding the population of the Kars oblast from the beginning of Russian rule.\footnote{Eventually referred to as the military-civil administration (voenno-narodnoe upravlenie), this system of governance had become institutionalized under the authority of the Caucasus Mountain Administration almost two decades before the emergence of the Kars oblast largely as a result of the protracted wars between local Muslims of the North Caucasus and Russian military units. Unlike the system of civil administration (grazhdanskoе upravlenie), the military-civil administration was implemented only in the unsettled and unstable parts of the North Caucasus (in the province of Dagestan), and Transcaucasia (in the districts of Zakataly, Sukhum, Batum and Kars). Vladimir Bobrovnikov, ‘Islam in the Russian Empire’, Dominic Lieven (ed.), The Cambridge History of Russia. Imperial Russia 1689-1917, Volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 216; Timothy K. Blauvelt, ‘Military-Civil Administration and Islam in the North Caucasus, 1858–83’, Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, 11, 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 221-255.} One of the earliest reports stated that in the future its population should be reliable and faithful to the state, as a mainstay against ‘the dubious Muslim population’ in the Caucasus, and should distinguish itself from Turkish districts and centres of influence. Russians should be the dominant element of the population, while the number of Muslims should be negligible and the rest of the population constituted by Armenians and Greeks in equal proportions.\footnote{The letter of the governor of Kars General Frankini, 18 February 1879. Badem, 2010: 52-53. Frankini stated in his subsequent report that the issue concerning the settlement of Armenian population in Kars had specific political implications. Badem, 2013: 157. The British consul in Tbilisi also confirms that General Frankini was opposed to replacing the Islamic villagers of the lately annexed territory with
A speech by the governor of Kars, major-general Piotr Ivanovich Tomich, delivered before a committee of notables of various ethnic origins meeting for the celebration of the Orthodox New Year in 1896 may serve to exemplify Russia’s carefully balanced population politics. It also gives a good insight into the Russian government’s view on the Armenians and how it tried to manipulate them. Referring to massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Tomich spoke thus:

Even though the Armenians did not cause a serious problem here last year, I deem it necessary to remind them that especially this year they should be more careful not to deviate from the path of obedience. Let me repeat it lest you say that you have not heard or been warned about it. (Addressing the Armenian religious leader) I request you listen to me carefully, since you are a religious official. The most obedient people under my rule within the Kars oblast were Dukhobors [a Russian religious sect]. Today, however, the prisons swarm with Dukhobors. I suggest Armenians draw a lesson from the case of Dukhobors.

Tomich then increased the warning to the point of threat, referring directly this time to the massacres:

Please remember once more what happened to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire who caused trouble by turning away from the right path and resisted Ottoman authority. As you may remember, the Ottoman Empire punished defiant Armenians. Consider that if such committed resistance is observed among Armenians here, they will be punished tenfold more than they were punished in the Ottoman Empire. I am allowed to execute such people or send them into exile in Siberia.

So, the Russian expectations of and approach to Armenians were similar to those of the Ottoman. Both could accept an Armenian population residing in the borderland as long as it remained tractable. The 1890s witnessed negotiations between the Russian

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388 See Footnote 255 in Chapter Two regarding the religious dissenters in the province of Kars.
389 BOA, Y.A. HUS 346-2, A letter from the Ottoman Consulate in Kars, 19 January 1896.
and Ottoman authorities on the subject of the resettlement of Ottoman Armenians on the border and at various places throughout the Caucasus. The issue in the Caucasus was discussed at the Council of Empire in Russia at the end of 1894, and the idea of the settlement of Transcaucasia with Russian peasants to replace hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Armenians was firmly supported by the Russian political groups.\footnote{PRO, FO 65/1497, From the Batum Consul P. Stevens to the Foreign Office, 16 March 1895.}

At the end of the century, the Russian government was still seeking ways to send Ottoman Armenians in the Caucasus back to the Ottoman Empire. For instance, it was negotiating with the Ottomans to provide Armenians with documentation to facilitate their travel to the Ottoman Empire. It seems that until the spring of 1898, the Russian government did not take any concrete steps to expel Ottoman Armenians from Russia. Then, upon the suggestion of the Governor-General of the Caucasus and receiving the imperial sanction on 6\textsuperscript{th} April, the Russian government ordered that all Ottoman Armenian immigrants resident in Baku, Kutais, Tiflis, Erivan and Kars had to leave Russia within a year.\footnote{PRO, FO 65/1564, From the British Consul in Batum P. Stevens to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1898. The police master in Batum issued an order stating that whoever among the Ottoman subjects residing in Batum would not comply with leaving the country by the 27\textsuperscript{th} of June 1899 would be expelled from the country.}

For its part, after the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman state was concerned to prevent the outflow of Armenians. Due to economic and security concerns, it initially attempted to prevent their migration to Russia.\footnote{The economic concern was related to taxes collected from the Armenians who were engaged in intensive farming. The security concern was with the possibility that they could obtain a Russian passport and return to the Ottoman Empire as Russian subjects. Indeed, some Armenians who had gone to Russia in 1877-78 did do this. McCarthy, 1995: 122, 132.} Then, from around the second half of 1880s, but especially with the new decade, when Ottoman Armenians sought refuge in Russia as a result of the deteriorating political situation in Eastern Anatolia, the Ottoman
government became highly insistent on not accepting their return. The authorities stated that they could only accept those Armenians who were engaged in trade, who had provided a bondsman before they had left for Russia or who were declared as reliable by the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. The Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs explained that the reason behind the refusal of Armenians’ insistent attempts to return to the Ottoman Empire was nothing more than a sincere intent to maintain imperial order. The subsequent explanations of the Ottoman authorities indicate that although they thought that the prosperity of a state would grow in proportion to the growth of total population, the primary objective of the Ottoman state was then to keep public order, which, it was perceived, could have been disrupted by the return of Armenians. The necessity of removing the causes of discontent on the Russo-Ottoman border was frequently cited in the official documents of the period. It is evident that keeping Armenians far away from the border areas was regarded as the best and most secure option by the Ottoman central authorities.

Neither the Russian nor the Ottoman authorities knew the exact numbers of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus. Nevertheless, the Ottoman government was

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393 According to a letter sent to the Council of State dated 9th November, 1886, Armenians taking refuge in Russia were not to be accepted back (this might be one of earliest decisions taken by the central authorities towards the Armenian refugees in the Russian Caucasus). Serbestoğlu, 2014: 167.


396 OBERI, Volume I, Document no. 92, a letter sent to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 9 July 1898, p. 134.

397 OBERI (1899-1906), Volume II, Document no. 1, a letter sent from the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 12 July 1899, p. 23.

398 As a conversation between the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul shows, there was no consensus between them on the number of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus. Their numbers were either ten thousand or ten thousand households. OBERI, Volume II, Document no. 1, 12 March 1899, pp. 3-4. An official letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Russian Consulate underlined that even though the exact numbers of Ottoman Armenians were not certain, it was most probably above thirty thousand. Ibid, Document no. 2, 14 March 1899, p. 5. Also see Serbestoğlu, 2014: 172.
prepared to cover the expenses of Armenians in need if they would decide to settle in places outside the Empire. The resettlement of a number of Armenians in Siberia (Rusya memâlık-i vesi’ası dahilinde iskânları) by the Russian government was also regarded by the Ottoman government as meeting the interests of both governments. In this case, the Ottoman government would supply 100,000 liras to cover the estimated total expenses. It even pledged not to settle Tatars, Circassians and other Muslim migrants from the Caucasus constantly streaming into the Ottoman territory on the border, which would be a sharp divergence from its previous border practice. In response to this suggestion, the Russian government stipulated that they could only accept the Ottoman state’s offer provided that the Ottoman government gave it full concession for railway construction in the Black Sea region (Russian officials were closely following the issues regarding the possible laying of a rail line in north-eastern Anatolia along the Black Sea coast and in Eastern Anatolia throughout the Russo-Ottoman border region). Terms were finally reached with the Russo-Ottoman Black Sea Agreement of 1900, according to which ‘the Russian Tsar reserved the right to veto any railway development projects in northern or eastern Anatolian areas abutting the Caucasus’. It seems that this agreement stood until 1914, when a revised version was accepted by the two governments.

399 OBERI, Volume II, Document no. 90.
403 Through this agreement, the Ottoman state obtained Russian acceptance for the railway lines along the Black Sea coast while enabling French investment. It was stipulated that the railway line should not reach Erzurum. However, due to the Ottoman concessions granted to France in north-east Anatolia, Russia wanted to clarify the contents of the concessions given it in 1900 and made another agreement in 1913. In Tanin, 28 October 1913 (1742), referred by Sabahattin Özel, ‘Balkan ve Birinci Dünya Savaşılar 186
At the beginning of 1901, the Russian government gave the Ottoman Armenians who had taken refuge in the Russian Caucasus the right to become Russian subjects by a certain date. According to Candan Badem, as Sultan Abdülhamid II was resolute in his determination not to accept the Armenian refugees back into the Ottoman Empire, the Russian government was compelled to accept them and offer them Russian citizenship. From the letters sent from the Ottoman Consulate General in Tbilisi, we understand that the Ottoman authorities were satisfied with this new development but very surprised by the reactions of some of the people affected. As stated in a letter from Tbilisi, ‘it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the promulgation of this regulation has caused trouble among Armenians to the extent that even they were ready to make sacrifices in order not to lose their Ottoman citizenship.’ Meanwhile, the third article of a new Russian government order stipulated that Ottoman Armenians desiring to remain in the Caucasus or travel to the Russian interior needed to obtain Russian citizenship. Ottoman Armenians unable or unwilling to return to the Ottoman Empire and remaining in the Russian Caucasus were thus compelled to


404 OBERI, Volume II, Document no. 28, a letter from the Consulate General in Tbilisi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 July 1901, p. 59. The Armenian refugees who did not want to be Russian subjects had to leave Russia by the 1st of January, 1903. Otherwise, they would automatically be regarded as Russian subjects. OBERI, Volume II, Document no. 40, from the Ottoman Consulate in Batum to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 January 1903, p. 81. It seems that the Imperial Decree allowing Armenians Russian citizenship was implemented in the Caucasus at different times, while the time period allotted for Russian naturalization varied and was also modified according to local circumstances. PRO, FO 65/1690, From the British consul at Batum, P. Stevens to the Foreign Office, 10 November 1904. In the province of Kars, for instance, Ottoman Armenians were accorded the right to be registered and become subjects of the Russian Empire on 13th February, 1901. Badem, 2013: 165. This right also allowed refugees to select the communities they wished to join and pass into the inland provinces of the Empire if they wished to settle there. From the year 1902, such refugees were also obliged to undertake the standard military service. FO 65-1690, P. Stevens from Batum.

405 Badem, 2014: 246.


407 Ibid., p. 65.
undertake the process of naturalization there and become subjects of the Russian Empire.

Even though some Armenian refugees had gone to Russia to reside in the Caucasus permanently, it seems that becoming a Russian subject was still a difficult decision. They were expected to take immediate action, however, and around the end of August, 1902, the Russian government increased its pressure on them to make the choice between naturalization and leaving. Nevertheless, as we learn from the governor of Bitlis, even at the end of 1904 there were still Armenians living in the border regions of Russia who had not changed their subjecthood. This was because, in the spring of 1905, the governor wished to let the Ottoman central authorities know that, Armenians from Kars, Batum and Erivan intended to return to the Ottoman Empire, since they were being forced to become Russian subjects and accept its Orthodoxy.

The reaction of the Ottoman authorities towards this possible return of Armenians clearly indicates their lack of interest in the return intentions of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus. The central authorities advised the Ottoman consul in St. Petersburg to remind the Russian government that these Armenians would not be allowed to return to the Ottoman Empire, pursuant to the agreements made. Moreover, they also emphasized an urgent need to increase their border patrol against possible Armenian attempts to cross. And they persisted in their efforts to inhibit the Ottoman Armenians' movement (back) into the Ottoman territory over the

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408 As can be gleaned from a letter sent by the Ottoman Consulate General in Tbilisi, some refugees did not renounce their Ottoman subjecthood in any way and started to move en masse towards the Russo-Ottoman border to cross into the Ottoman Empire. OBERI, Volume II, Document no. 38, p. 74, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Office of Grand Vizierate, 7 September 1902.

409 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 549-7, A telegram from the governor of Bitlis, 14 December 1904; From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Office of Grand Vizierate, 5 January 1905; From the Secretariat of Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of the Interior and the General Staff, 9 January 1905 and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 January 1905.
following several years. For instance, Ottoman Armenians who were warned that they would be resettled in Manchuria unless they became Russian subjects were again rejected by the Ottoman government.⁴¹⁰ A 1907 letter sent out by the Grand Vizierate to the Interior and Foreign Ministries made it quite apparent that these were regarded as seditious people wanting to return to the Ottoman Empire to instigate unrest. It was emphasized that the Ottoman state had the right to employ measures to protect public order and security and that foreign powers had no say in this. Again, increasing the power of the border patrols to prevent the entry of Armenians into Ottoman territory was the main solution proposed.⁴¹¹

We can conclude, therefore, that, by a decade or so after the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman imperial authorities no longer entertained the idea of accepting the return back to their homelands of Armenians who had been Ottoman subjects (as residents in Ottoman territory) and who technically still were (insofar as they had not renounced their Ottoman status). Some Ottoman Armenians wanted to return to the Ottoman Empire in order to regain their Ottoman citizenship, while others sought to enjoy privileges provided by their new Russian subjecthood in the Ottoman Empire. Regardless of their motivation, the Ottoman government opposed this return movement. It blocked it both during the negotiations with Russia on the matter and after Russia’s instigation of a new regulation to register the Armenians as Russian subjects if they wanted to stay. The Ottoman authorities reiterated their decision to refuse its Armenians entry when the Russian government attempted to force them to

⁴¹¹ A decision by the Council of Ministers in March 1906 manifested one more time the stern resolution of the Ottoman government not to accept back Armenians that had fled to the Russian Caucasus. Serbestoğlu, 2014: 177. As other examples of this Ottoman attitude see, OBERI, Volume III, Document no. 1, from the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 January 1907, pp. 1-2, and Document no. 5, from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 May 1907, pp. 5-6.
leave Russia and when it threatened to resettle them elsewhere in the Empire as a result of their refusal to take Russian subjecthood. Finally, the Ottoman state looked to bolster security on the border to enforce this policy.

The Russian revolution of 1905 and the political turmoil of the imminent Ottoman revolution of 1908 lessened the surveillance power of the Russian and Ottoman states on the Russo-Ottoman border. This changed political atmosphere did not bring about many changes in these imperial states’ discourse and policies regarding Ottoman Armenians in the Caucasus, however. Intense negotiations between both governments continued, and the Armenians continued attempting to cross the border into Ottoman territory, successfully or otherwise. As we will see below though, the tough stance did not remove ambiguities and problems related to this issue, both practical and legal.

**The Ottoman State and the Illegitimate Mobility of Ottoman Armenians**

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that states were able to rigorously exercise their control of the ‘legitimate means of movement’ into, within and out of their sovereign territory, since this necessitated comprehensive bureaucratic and technological apparatuses. One of these was the emergence of a modern system of passports and identity cards. By enforcing the employment of these documents within and across their sovereign areas of jurisdiction, modern states have introduced the legal means to monopolize people’s movements. This power to render movement legitimate or illegitimate enabled states to distinguish their populations as those they would embrace or not. John Torpey uses the metaphor of ‘embrace’ to show the internal dispositions of states towards inclusion of their populations into the citizenry.

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He further claims that it also helps us better understand the modern nation state system, as based on the mutually exclusive bodies of citizens.\textsuperscript{413}

Although states and the state system claim to monopolize the authority to control the movement of people, this does not mean that they do this efficiently.\textsuperscript{414} Here, we place this issue in the Russo-Ottoman border and Armenian context. This means, of course, that we look especially at the embrace withheld, at the designation of illegitimacy and the response to this in respect of cross-border mobility. We focus on various government and Armenian practices to illustrate the Ottoman attempts to control the ongoing, illegal cross-border movement of this unembraced citizenry. First, we show that due to the poverty of the state apparatus with respect to infrastructural power and autonomy from societal dynamics, the Ottoman state could not prevent the illegal movement of Armenians across the Russo-Ottoman border. Then, we show that given this and because Armenians came to be perceived as a politically risky group, the Ottoman state adopted a strict border policy towards them. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state took a totalizing stance that approached all Armenians as suspects to be declined entry into its territory.

\textit{The Illegal Flow of Armenians in the Russian Caucasus into Ottoman Lands}

Our archival research in the Ottoman State Archives regarding the situation on the Russo-Ottoman border shows that the continual unauthorized and thus illegal movement of Armenians across the Russian border was not so much an exception as the rule. Ottoman Armenians crossed the border without any authorization for the types of reasons mentioned and also because of the physical and political violence


they experienced, including that perpetrated by the Ottoman state itself. What made
the ‘illegal’ mobility of Ottoman Armenians so routine, however, was simply that the
Ottoman state lacked the infrastructural power and societal autonomy to impose the
border as a real barrier.

To proceed further, we need to clarify what we mean by the lack of autonomous
power on the part of the Ottoman state. In historical sociology, state autonomy is
defined thus: ‘States conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and
people [which] may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the
demands or interests of [specific] social groups, classes, or [even] society.’

Reformulating this for present purposes, state autonomy can be characterized as the
capacity of the central authority to organize local officials as its extended arms on the
ground. Cases from Lazistan discussed below clearly show that the local Ottoman
bureaucracy, which was charged with curbing cross-border movements of Armenians,
did not perform this task because local officials preferred to (ab)use their official
power in order to make money by taking part in networks organizing the cross-border
movements of Armenians there.

A report by Hüseyin Efendi gives a detailed account of the movement of Armenians
and their relationship with ordinary people and local officials. This member of the
Police Control Commission in Beyoğlu, Istanbul, was sent to Lazistan to investigate
local officials in April 1904 upon the request of the head of the correspondence office
in Lazistan, Mehmed Fuad Bey, who had promised to cooperate in revealing a series of
illegal activities provided that a trustworthy officer was sent. As a result of his

415 Theda Skocpol, ‘Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research’, in Peter B.
Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds.), Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge:
investigations, Hüseyin Efendi found out that ‘people of sedition’ (*erbab-i fesad*) among Armenians used the harbours in the district of Rize to escape abroad and return to the interior of Anatolia.\textsuperscript{416}

For instance, in one case reported by Hüseyin, Armenian notables from districts in the province of Erzurum located close to Lazistan were among those brought to the harbours in the Ottoman districts of Rize, Atina and Sürmene. There, they were secretly embarked on boats by Muslim boatmen of this region, who received several liras per person to transport them to the ports of Batum, Sukhumi and Poti in Russia. Hüseyin noted that Muslim boatmen told them that any wishing to return to the Ottoman Empire could go to the same boatmen who transported them to Russia on the condition that they pretended to be engaged in trade or similar activities.\textsuperscript{417}

Hüseyin Efendi seems to have assumed that all the Armenians who took part in this illegal transportation had suspect status, regardless of the fact that they were more likely to have been engaged in the trade or similar activities claimed, despite the ban on travel to Russia, as we will see below.

To Hüseyin Efendi, the harbours of Lazistan were not only used for the transportation of suspect Armenians moving back and forth across the Russo-Ottoman border, but they were also the places where ‘people of sedition’ transported arms and explosive substances into the Ottoman Empire. Armenians were not alone in this arms-

\textsuperscript{416} BOA, A. MKT. MHM 664-18, The report of Hüseyin Efendi, member of the Police Control Commission in Beyoğlu Istanbul, sent from Lazistan. April 1904. For some boatmen apparently, the transportation of such Armenians from Russia to various Ottoman shores became their main source of income. Even though they were arrested and brought for trial, there was no legislation to enforce against them other than misdemeanours carrying fines. The central authorities complained that as long as they were not properly penalized, these boatmen continue with their activities. A. MKT. MHM 548-3, From the Correspondence Office of Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of Justice, 20 July 1903. Also see A. MKT. MHM 547-27, From the Correspondence Office of Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of the Interior, 12 April 1903.

\textsuperscript{417} BOA, A. MKT. MHM 664-18, The report of Hüseyin Efendi.
trafficking business, since the Muslim boatmen were involved in it, too. Also, Muslim artisans of the region took an active role in the smuggling of arms and explosive substances to neighbouring districts and selling them there to any buyers regardless of nationality. But even more significant than the collaboration of Muslim boatmen and artisans was the attitude of local officials.

Police officers in the harbour settlements turned a blind eye to the smuggling in return for a share of the business. Other local officials protected bandits who patronized smugglers and helped them to go inland. An example is Osman, originally from the district of Hopa, then residing in Batum, and Mazlumyan, an Armenian holding Russian subjecthood, who facilitated the transfer of Armenians from Russia to the Anatolian interior. According to Hüseyin Efendi’s report, although the illegal transportation of Armenians in and the importation of arms and explosives out of various harbours in Lazistan had been occurring for a long time, the head of the military police in Lazistan, Colonel Hacı Ömer Bey, and police commissioner Halil İbrahim Efendi as well as other police officers did not attempt to prevent this or to arrest those actively involved. Hüseyin further asserted that local officials to whom he referred in his report actively participated in such events, which was precisely the reason why they condoned them.

According to the report, local officers, such as Halil İbrahim Efendi and Colonel Ömer Bey, considerably neglected government affairs by shunning their responsibilities to prevent these illegal activities and preferring to enhance their personal incomes through bribes instead. Hüseyin requested a thorough investigation to reveal whether local officers were themselves the instigators of these illegal practices or whether they merely ignored and thus only abetted them.\footnote{Ibid.}
A specific event that had occurred four months before Hüseyin penned his report points to the former, indicating that local officers were acting as members of local networks organising arms-trafficking and the illegal cross-border movement of Armenians. In this case, a certain boatman from Rize, ‘footloose’ (ipsiz) Receb received seventeen Armenians at one of the harbours in Rize for covert transport to Russian territory. Other boatmen in town who got wind of this came together at night to prevent it. However, Receb and his accomplices opened fire on their attackers, who were forced to flee. Later, the police commissioner Halil İbrahim Efendi, who along with Colonel Ömer Efendi was accused by Hüseyin Efendi of collaborating with gangs, told the leader of the dispersed group, boatman Ömer, that he had known all along about the departure of these Armenians and enquired why Ömer and his fellow boatmen had wanted to prevent the journey. He assured Ömer that if he would like to be a part of this transport business, he could. A further case clearly illustrates that the police commissioner was corrupt. When it was brought to his attention that a boatman called Bayram had smuggled in contraband from Batum on his boat, instead of taking legal action against this boatman, Halil İbrahim summoned him to his office, intimidated him and demanded that he pay him twenty-five manats. In the end, five-manats turned out to be enough for Halil İbrahim to close the case without sending it to the local administrative council of Lazistan.

The weakness of the Ottoman state autonomy, especially in the provinces, was one of the main reasons for the failure of the central authority attempts to prevent the cross-border movement of Armenians. This did not originate only from the response of local officials to the opportunities for bribes and extortions arising from the restrictive

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419 Ibid.
420 Ibid.
regulations, however. The local officials themselves had to contend with the influence wielded by local notables pursuing their own agenda. The report by Hüseyin Efendi indicates that some powerful local notables, beyond the reach of the local authorities, were engaged in the business of facilitating the illegal cross-border transportation. For instance, an inhabitant of Trabzon, Galib Bey, assisted the escape of some Armenians from the harbour of Guvata in return for cash. The local government could not take any action against him, since he was an influential person in this region. This is illustrated by the story of a clerk from the Trabzon harbour commission who complained to the governor of Trabzon about being threatened and insulted by Galib Bey; nothing was done, with the excuse that Galib Bey was a reputable person and always carried arms on his person.\(^{421}\)

To sum up, despite the Ottoman state’s claim to the exclusive right to authorize the movement of Armenians across the Russo-Ottoman border, this was in fact considerably constrained and undermined. In spite of the will and imperatives of the Ottoman central state, Armenians from the Ottoman Empire found ways to get around the prohibitions and cross the border. Conversely, the local officialdom in charge of executing state orders curtailing Armenian movements became the very actors who assisted them to bypass prohibitions and cross the border. In addition to powerful local personages against whom local officials lacked sufficient power or inclination to act, many of these officials themselves collaborated with local networks to take advantage of the financial opportunities on offer. Indeed, it was not only in Lazistan where the interests and imperatives of the Ottoman central state were in contradiction with the overlapping interests of local officials.

\(^{421}\) Ibid.
Similar smuggling networks were observed in the ports cities of Mediterranean coast, such as Iskenderun and Mersin, as well as in other Black Sea ports from where Ottoman Armenians were smuggled to North America during the same period.\(^{422}\) As David Gutman notes, we know that ‘officials at all levels of provincial administration in both interior and coastal provinces ostensibly charged with executing state prohibitions on Armenian migration to North America rather became instrumental in facilitating it through their involvement (both direct and indirect) with human smuggling networks’. \(^{423}\) The participation of Ottoman provincial officials of various ranks and political importance in the migrant smuggling networks should not necessarily be taken as ‘an indication of rampant corruption’, suggests Gutman, but it was the result of ‘the powerful but often ambiguous role that state power played in shaping the migration process’. \(^{424}\) Regardless, and in all cases, one can certainly argue that the weakness of the Ottoman state autonomy in the localities seriously undermined the effectiveness of the Ottoman state in preventing the cross-border movements of Armenians, including across the Russo-Ottoman border.

In addition to the weakness of the autonomous power of the Ottoman state, one should also refer to that of the infrastructural power of the state to understand the Ottoman state’s failure to curb the illegal movement of Armenians on the Russo-Ottoman border. Defining the infrastructural power of the state as its capacity to ‘implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm’, Michael Mann lists

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\(^{424}\) Gutman, 2012: 81.
four basic resources the state employs for this, viz.: ‘A division of the labour between the state’s main activities which it coordinates centrally’; ‘literacy, enabling stabilized messages to be transmitted through the state’s territories by its agents’; ‘coinage, and weights and measures, allowing commodities to be exchanged under an ultimate guarantee of value by the state’; and ‘rapidity of communication of messages and of transport of people and resources, through improved roads, ships, telegraphy, etc.’

Following Theda Skocpol, we can add this list ‘sheer sovereign integrity and the stable administrative-military control of a given territory’, ‘loyal and skilled officials’, and ‘plentiful financial resources’. For the state to act as an autonomous power, it is evident that it must have a high level of infrastructure.

The weakness of the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state in the present context can be usefully discussed through the fact that Ottoman Armenians used to purchase Ottoman passports belonging to Muslim subjects to cross the border. Several documents record how Armenians in the Caucasus represented themselves as Muslim immigrants in order to enter the Empire or used passports not issued in their names.

We know the details of one event in which six Armenians from Ahlat (then within the province of Bitlis) were detained on the border cordon in Milo together with a Muslim helping them as their guide. At the end of the investigations, it was understood that their passports were issued by the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum in the name of six Muslims (Kurds from Ahlat) in accordance with the rules and regulations. It was confirmed that these people had proven their identities when applying for their passports.

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426 Skocpol, 1985: 16.

The failed attempt of these detained Armenians with passports of six Kurds may appear puzzling at first glance. It is obvious to us that since the passports in their hands did not have any photographs attached, the passport officers just had to read the information and make the necessary visual comparison to check, as, in this case, they did. First, however, the information about physical appearances written on the passports and internal travel permits of the period was often so general and vague that it was difficult to use it to distinguish people, and second many of the passport officers were illiterate (the Ottoman authorities used to complain of the mistakes made by these illiterate passport officers at the border). For instance, one document noted that the illiterate passport officers treated ‘Armenian nihilists’ (an epithet often used by the Ottoman officials for suspected, politically oriented or revolutionary Armenians) as Russian merchants and avoided making difficulties for them. Neither, for that matter, were the Armenians purchasing the passports or the Muslims selling them exceptions to the literacy issue. They were also entirely likely not to know

428 BOA, DH.TMIK.M 122-50, From the Commission for accelerating the dealings and reforms to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 April 1902 and 23 June 1902; From the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 May 1902. Also see the document, From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum, 4 May 1902. A man from Ahlat, Hafiz Numan, stood bail for these people to help them to obtain their passports. Because one of them was poor and disabled, he obtained his passport free of charge. It seems that Kurdish people from the province of Erzurum and Ahlat engaged in such illegal activities to support themselves. The officials at the Consulate General complained that unless they could be punished, they would continue in these acts of disobedience. From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum, 28 May 1902.

429 Photographs and subsequently fingerprints began to be used in the Ottoman bureaucracy to establish identities from the end of the century. Criminals, refugees, emigrants, political exiles, deserters, foreigners who wanted to be naturalized in the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman subjects who were denaturalized or formally changed their nationality were among the groups of people who were first selected to be photographed by the Ottoman officials. Starting from the twentieth century, photographs began to be routinely attached to official documents (passports, formal petitions, residence papers, identity cards and certificates of registry etc.), making these an important means of establishing control over subject populations. Gülden Sarıyıldız, ‘Osmanlı Bürokrasisinde Fotoğraflı Belge Kullanımı ve Parmak İzi Uygulaması’ İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi, Sayı 47(2008), 183-208, pp. 185-186, 190.

430 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 533-45, A letter from the Ottoman Consulate in Kars, 12 December 1894.
whether the description on the passport was a good fit for the person aiming to use it. Thus, we can safely assume that the failed attempt of six Armenians was not an exceptional case but rather one of numerous attempts to take advantage of a major security deficit, some of which were successful.\textsuperscript{431}

It was well-known by the Ottoman authorities that some Muslims in this border region assisted Armenians to cross the border for money in various other ways than selling their passports. For instance, a letter from local officials to the Grand Vizierate tells of two Armenians from the village of Köprüköy in Pasinler (Erzurum) were assisted by two men from neighbouring villages to crisscross the border illegally at night. Mehmed helped them to cross into Russian territory without their passports while Ibrahim helped them to return home. The police officers detained the Armenians, whom they tried to return to Russia, while Mehmed and Ibrahim were arrested.\textsuperscript{432}

It seems that Armenians, for their part, knew about safe passages across the border, the routes that best evaded detection by the Ottoman border officers, and how to get help from the local people to use them. For instance, we learn about one of the popular routes taken by the Ottoman Armenians from a consular letter sent from Batum. A group of Ottoman Armenians originally from Erzurum and working in Simferopol (in the Crimea) was able to return to their homes through Kars, which was accessible by train, then along the edge of a village called Nariman to cross the

\textsuperscript{431} As we deduce from the relevant documents, the Ottoman consular authorities began to be aware of the misuse of passports by Muslims and attempted to take precautions against it. Indeed, were that not the case, Muslims without passports who appealed to the Consulate General in Batum to obtain one to return to their homelands would not have been sometimes rejected. BOA, DH.TMIK.M 122-50, From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 18 May 1902 and 28 May 1902.

\textsuperscript{432} Russian officers refused the Armenians, and the Ottoman local authorities wanted to learn what they had to do if they encountered similar cases in the future. BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, To the Grand Vizierate, 9 September 1899.
The consular letter emphasizes that since the Armenians could not have ‘breached’ the border alone, they must have been forced to rely either on muleteers from Erzurum engaged in smuggling on the border or on local Russian or Ottoman villagers. Again, it was mentioned that the Armenians would sometimes put on Islamic clothes and disguise themselves as Muslims being guided by Muslim villagers.

We can follow the role of the weakness of the infrastructural power of the local state apparatus in a case that demonstrates the failure of orders transmitted from the centre. According to a letter from Kadri Bey, governor of Trabzon, there were many Armenians trying to enter into the Ottoman Empire via the harbours at the eastern Black Sea region. The governor was unhappy with unrealistic instructions sent by the Ottoman central authority. For instance, he had objections to an imperial order which emphasized that the success of attempts to stop Armenians without passports and aiming to move towards the Ottoman interior from entering on foreign, especially Russian boats depended on their identification and the clarification of the motives behind their travels. As Kadri Bey implied in his letter, the local officials were not even able to collect information regarding the identity and goals of Armenians living in Trabzon, let alone the motives and goals of those Armenians coming from abroad.

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433 See Chapter One on the details of the border village of Nariman and the variable porousness of the border.
434 BOA, DH.TMIK.M 122-50, From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 18 May 1902. In order to prevent such illegal border-crossings of Armenians, the Ottoman officials at the Consulate recommended that a carter or a muleteer from the province of Erzurum who did not possess any demonstrable income beyond smuggling would not be allowed to cross into the Russian side unless he could find a bail who would act as surety for him. They warned that as well as carters and muleteers, the villagers residing near the Russo-Ottoman border should also be kept under surveillance, especially when using the border crossings at Milo and Nariman. It seems that they wanted to take radical measures against those ‘who attempted to violate the border-guard regime’. From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 18 May 1902 and 28 May 1902.
435 BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the province of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 16 July 1899.
As mentioned above in the case of Lazistan, the lesser Black Sea ports did not have the infrastructure to serve as locations for border control.\textsuperscript{436} In Trabzon, which did have a harbour commission, officials were charged with surveying activity and keeping the central authorities informed. On one occasion, they noticed some Armenians attempting to disembark. The Armenians concerned had embarked in Russia, and their attempt to enter Ottoman territory through Trabzon was hindered by the officials of the harbour commissions as they did not have passports. Yet, the Armenians later succeeded in going ashore from their boats without being caught.\textsuperscript{437} On another occasion, the officials detected a vessel, with men and women sailing from Batum, from which Armenians were taken ashore in travel agency rowing boats just before they weighed anchor. Since their vessel had already started to depart when they arrived ashore, the Ottoman officials were left with no choice but to accept the Armenians.\textsuperscript{438} Kadri Bey admitted that once such people were on land, sending them back would be difficult. Moreover, he had concerns about what to do with such Armenians. While their release would be dubious due to their potential for illicit behaviour, he thought, their imprisonment without reason would attract the attention of foreign officials owing to their considerable numbers.\textsuperscript{439}

\textsuperscript{436} One of the results of the Ottoman state’s attempt to take serious measures to develop surveillance capacity in secondary ports was the eventual creation of harbour commissions there. As Gutman states, ‘the creation of these commissions reflected a shift in the state’s attitude toward port cities that stressed their importance as nodes of surveillance, security, and border control.’ Gutman, 2014: 183.

\textsuperscript{437} BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the Governor of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 16 July 1899. In this file, there are other letters which mention this issue. See, for instance, the 31 July 1899 letter to the Ministry of the Interior, and the 6 August 1899 letter to the Office of the Grand Vizierate.

\textsuperscript{438} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{439} There were many foreign consuls and vice consuls living in the province of Trabzon during the 1890s, representing Russia, Persia, Austria, Italy, France, Greece, Belgium and Spain, as well as American diplomats and missionaries. According to British Consul H.Z. Longworth, a relative calm prevailed in Trabzon within the first half the 1890s due to the efficiency of Kadri Bey. Even though Kadri practiced a discerning attitude towards foreign diplomats that led him to follow a moderate policy towards Armenians, however, this did not assert itself during the turmoil of October 1895. For details see, Barbara J. Merguerian, ‘Reform, Revolution, and Repression: The Trebizond Armenians in the 1890s’, 202
It is also noteworthy that private entities, such as shipping enterprises, did not completely accept the central state’s authority to survey and curb the Armenians’ entry into the Empire and were reluctant to cooperate with officials in this regard. For instance, captains and travel agencies as well as consulates in connection with these agencies complained about the prevention of Armenians from disembarking on Ottoman territory. Neither did travel agencies agree to check the identities of Armenians on the boat or to refuse to issue them tickets for harbours where they asked to disembark. Captains, meanwhile, were obliged to transport Armenians to the correct harbours, as shown on their tickets. They claimed that if they were charged with returning Armenians to the places from where they departed, or not allowing them to leave their boats at the harbours where they would like to land, this would interrupt free travel. Moreover, unless the costs of the return tickets were covered, travel agencies would suffer financially.\textsuperscript{440} As in the case of local officials who looked after their interests in local smuggling networks, such entities showed a reticence to participate in ‘quasigovernmental activities’ that might have reduced their profitability.\textsuperscript{441}

The cases above provide crucial insights into the limits of the central state’s authority to curb the cross-border movement of Armenians from Russia to the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They show us that the Ottoman state lacked the infrastructural power to collect the information necessary to

\textsuperscript{440} BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the governor of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 24 March 1903 and a letter to the Grand Vizierate, 5 May 1903. As these official letters revealed, French, Russian and Austrian Consuls concurred that the right of investigation of passengers was conferred upon the Ottoman police officers after passengers stepped out of the boat. If they detected illegal passengers (here, eşhâs-ı muzûra), they could send them back to the boats but provided that their travel expenses were covered by the Ottoman authorities.

distinguish Armenians who in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities could be considered
a security risk and thus lacked the capacity to formulate different policies for different
Armenian groups coming from the Russian Caucasus. Who was who was largely
unclear to the Ottoman Empire with respect to Armenian groups in constant cross-
border movement between Ottoman lands and the Russian Caucasus. As we will see,
the Ottoman state had to rely heavily on policies that went further than the simple
prevention of free travel of Armenians across the border.

The Totalizing Border Policy: Stigmatizing Armenians as a Potential Threat

Official documents of the Ottoman state indicate that its failure to prevent the illegal
movement of Armenians across the Russo-Ottoman border resulted in significant
unease for the authorities. This unease led the state to adopt a totalizing border policy
against Armenians arriving from the Russian Caucasus. Since it lacked the
infrastructural power to identify the true aims of the arriving Armenians, the Ottoman
state leaned towards not making any distinction at all, neither between Armenians
holding a passport and visa and those lacking official authorization, nor between
Ottoman Armenians and Russian Armenians or between Armenian merchants and
Armenians with no clear professional occupation. In other words, the Ottoman state
was inclined to reduce all Armenians moving between Ottoman lands and the Russian
Caucasus to their Armenian identity, which was characterised in terms of potential
threat. In other words, these Armenians were stigmatized. This policy had fully
crystalized by the end of 1890s.

One instance of the totalizing border policy can be seen in the treatment of the
Russian Armenians by Ottoman officials. Officials would restrict their freedom to cross
the border due to security concerns without giving a good reason and despite Russian
opposition. The Ottoman authorities were particularly concerned about certain Ottoman Armenians who escaped to Russia and were not allowed to return, and in the meantime could easily obtain Russian passports and cross back into Ottoman territory. Due to their threatening but ambiguous (unfriendly stranger) status, they were included within groups that the Ottoman authorities dubbed ‘Armenian nihilists’. It is understood from the cases below that the line dividing an ‘Armenian nihilist’ and an ordinary Russian Armenian was very blurred in the eyes of the Ottoman officials, and it was just Armenian identity itself that came to be perceived as a potential threat.

The story of two Armenians, Agob Semerciyan and Aram Dahanyan, setting off from St. Petersburg for Erzurum via Kars with passports issued by the mayor of St. Petersburg illustrates the situation. Understanding that they could obtain Ottoman visas from the local authorities if there were no Ottoman consulates near to where they lived, Agob and Aram attempted to cross the border without the visas. On the border, they were detained and their passports were seized before they were given a safe-conduct pass to cross. The letter sent from the Ottoman Consulate in Kars revealed the concerns of Ottoman officials, that Armenians holding Russian passports gained more freedom and autonomy in the Ottoman Empire as foreign subjects and could use this freedom to disseminate false information in the Empire. The Consulate officials assumed that Agob and Aram might have used their Russian passports for such a purpose. This is why they were not allowed to enter Ottoman lands with Russian passports and were instead provided with safe-conduct passes.

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442 BOA, A. MKT. MHM 533-45, A letter from the Ottoman Consulate in Kars, 12 December 1894.
443 Ibid. For details, see the 12 December 1894 dated letter sent by the Ottoman Consulate in Kars and also a letter written to the Ministry of the Interior, 8 January 1895.
The important point here is that there was no particular reason for the extra vigilance other than the fact that these were Armenians with Russian passports; this alone was sufficient for the individuals to be treated as suspicious and their passports seized. In another example, two Armenian merchants from Oltu, who had proper passports, were detained on the border before being allowed to cross because they did not have visas, even though, as Russian merchants enjoying commercial privilege, they were entitled to enter without one. The Russian government expressed its opposition to the Ottomans’ interference with the rights of passage of such Armenians, claiming that it would create obstacles to the movement of people and products, and demanded that the Ottomans allow them to cross the border unrestricted.

In the context of the 1894-96 massacres, on the one hand, and high levels of activity among Armenian revolutionary organisations, on the other, the heavy-handed approach of the Ottoman officialdom is perhaps unsurprising. Certainly, as explained below, the level of toleration of the Ottoman state towards the cross-border movements of Armenians decreased. By the beginning of 1900s, even Ottoman Armenian merchants were not exempt from discriminatory border policy and encountered difficulties similar to those experienced by the Russian merchants. This is shown, for example, by a letter written by the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul to the Ministry of Justice and Sects in 1900. The Patriarchate’s letter recounts the story of a group of artisans and merchants in Erzurum who went to Russia for business and then contacted the Ottoman Consulate in Kars for a return visa. Despite the fact that they possessed proper passports, their visa application was refused by the Consulate.

444 Ibid. To the Ministry of the Interior, 8 January 1895.
445 Ibid. As was reminded by the Russian Consulate in Istanbul, Russian subject merchants were permitted to pass into Ottoman territory freely, just with their own passports, according to the third article of a treaty of commerce (1783) between the two empires. BOA, DH. TMIK-M 102-50, From the Commission for accelerating the initiatives and reforms to the Ministry of Public Security.
the refusal of their application, they had to stay in Kars for more than three months. The Patriarchate complained that, such treatment could only be applied to ‘seditious people’ (eşhas-ı şere and muzire) and, since the Ottoman authorities claimed that they distinguished ‘seditious people’ from others, the visa rejection of these respectable Ottoman Armenians was a violation of the de jure regulation of legal entry into the Empire and also against the consent of the Sultan.446

The Patriarchate’s intervention may be considered as evidence that this kind of discriminatory treatment of Armenians at the border had reached a critical level. The people involved may have been ‘respectable’, but they were not people of any standing, and still the Patriarchate felt compelled to respond. Given that the Patriarchate was a loyal ally of the Ottoman state in this period and generally unwilling to intervene in such affairs of state without serious reasons, the problem had evidently reached an unacceptable level, where it felt impelled to act.447 Although the Patriarchate’s strongly worded letter presented this case as an exceptional violation of law, the rhetorical value of this for us is its evidence of how even that institution was motivated to stand up against the stigmatization of the millet it represented.

We do not know whether these Armenian merchants were eventually able to return to Erzurum or not. However, we do know that many Armenians’ entry into the Ottoman territory was hindered by the imperial decree (irade-i seniyye) of 16th August, 1898, stipulating that no Armenians coming from Russia should be allowed entry. In the

446 BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul to the Ministry of Justice and Sects, 20 February 1900.
447 Maghakia Ormanian, the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul between 1896 and 1908, informed British Ambassador Currie on 6th January, 1898 that he had submitted a new petition to the Sultan, making many proposals for the betterment of Ottoman Armenians, including consent for traders to travel and authorization for Armenians with claims against the government to return to their homes. Moudjian, 2012: 102. For more information on Ormanian, see Bedross Der Matossian, Shattered Dreams of Revolution. From Liberty to Violence in the late Ottoman Empire (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 73-74.
event that they were Ottoman subjects and happened to arrive in Ottoman lands without their passports, it was decided by the Council of Ministers that, like people coming from places other than Russia, they could stay in their homelands as long as they could provide a guarantee.\textsuperscript{448} A Council of Minister memorandum promulgated almost a year later confirmed the restrictions. This memorandum showed that in the problematic case of sea entry with the infrastructure problems this had for the Ottomans, the central authorities were completely uninterested in making a distinction between Armenians with the correct documentation and those without:

> Armenians coming from Russia should not be permitted to be boarded on the boats sailing for the Ottoman Empire; they should not be permitted to leave the boats for entry into the country and Armenians who have already entered into the empire travelling by boats should be returned either by sea or land.\textsuperscript{449}

The commission for accelerating the initiatives (\textit{Tesri’i Muamelat Komisyonu}) expressed in the May Reforms of 1895 responded to this memorandum by stating that it would put in whatever effort was necessary to execute the order. That one of the commissions established to execute the reforms and control the course of the reform process for Armenians should be so diligent in its prosecution of legislation directed against them may appear surprising. Even more striking was the commission’s advice about how this order (\textit{emr-i ale-i-ıtlak}) should be implemented.

The commission basically tried to apprise the central authorities of the social realities in the Ottoman provinces adjacent to Russia. It was explained that many among Muslims, Greeks and Armenians went to Russia, Romania or Bulgaria each year to earn

\textsuperscript{448} BOA, DH. TMIK.M 51-74, To the Office of Grand Vizierate, 28 September 1898. It was decided by the Council of Ministers that if such people’s entry into the country was not obstructed, they should be returned to their homeland accompanied by military police, where they would need to show a considerable guarantee to be released.

\textsuperscript{449} BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of the Interior, 31 July 1899. Also see a letter sent to the Grand Vizierate, 6 August 1899.
their livelihood. They stayed there for lengthy periods of time during which they did not cut their connection with their native lands, and then, eventually, returned. Apart from these, other categories of people, such as women and children, went back and forth from the province of Trabzon to nearest Russian cities and specifically to Batum, mainly for commercial purposes but also to visit their relatives. If the refusal of entry of all Armenians from Russia into the Ottoman Empire were enforced, those engaged in agriculture or trade would be badly affected. Somewhat incredibly, the commission’s proposed solution was to not allow the departure of those Armenians from the Ottoman Empire and to refuse to issue them a passport. If Armenians still went to Russia, they would have no right to complain when their re-entry was refused by the Ottoman authorities.450

As seen from the letters sent from the province of Trabzon, the new regulation of the Council of Ministers brought about confusion rather than clarity. The letters complained that there was no precise rule stipulating that all Armenians, including those coming from countries other than Russia, such as America or Bulgaria, should be refused entry, even though some ‘people of sedition’ might be among them.451 This caused difficulties for officials in Trabzon. While they had to follow the strict orders regarding the travel of Armenians from Russia, they were unsure what to do with Armenians travelling from countries other than Russia, or even from Istanbul. Even though some Armenians from the province of Trabzon then residing in Istanbul were sent back to Trabzon by the central authorities on the pretext that they did not have a

450 Ibid. To the Grand Vizierate, 6 August 1899.
451 Ibid. Ottoman Armenians who travelled to Istanbul from foreign countries obtained their visas or new passports from the Ottoman embassies or consulates. However, according to the letter sent by the Ministry of Police dated 21st of August, 1899, Armenians abroad were no longer to be allowed to obtain an Ottoman passport or visa. From the Ministry of Police to the Ministry of the Interior, 21 August 1899 and a letter to the Grand Vizierate, 9 September 1899.
future in Istanbul, local authorities in Trabzon refused to accept these people, following their interpretation of the new regulation.452

In practice, local authorities at the Russo-Ottoman borderland followed one of two options: The first was to prevent all Armenians travelling from Russia by land or sea from entering Ottoman territory. This was mainly based on the assumption that once they were in the Empire, it would not be easy to send them back to Russia. The second option was to detain them until they were identified, and then, if they passed the security test, allow them passage to their original home regions with the guarantee of someone who could vouch for them. It was almost impossible to fully realize the first option, notwithstanding the dramatic warnings of provincial authorities that the acceptance of even one Armenian from Russia might pose a security risk and turn out to be an irreversible mistake.453 As the case of five Armenians detained by the Ottomans in Erzurum in June, 1899 shows us, the second option also could not be smoothly implemented.

The Armenians in question here were refused entry because they did not have passports. The local Ottoman authorities thought that if they attempted to send these Armenians back to Russia, they would be refused by the Russian border guards as well, for the same reason. Even though they were aware of the strict border regulation against the Armenians, and the expectations of the central authorities in this regard,

452 Ibid. See two letters sent from the governor of Trabzon, 31 July 1899 and 12 August 1899. As a result of the turmoil in Istanbul between 1894 and 1896, several thousand Armenian seasonal migrants from Anatolia fled the city or were deported by the government on security grounds. For many of them, the destination was Trabzon, from where they would return to their homelands in Eastern Anatolia. This banishment of unemployed Armenian workers from Istanbul, together with a ban on travel for Armenian workers from Anatolia to Istanbul and the ‘mix of severe restrictions and pragmatic exceptions to Armenian migration’ to Istanbul persisted until the 1908 revolution. Florian Riedler, ‘Armenian labour migration to Istanbul and the migration crisis of the 1890s’, in Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi and Florian Riedler (eds.), The City in the Ottoman Empire. Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 166-174.

453 Ibid. From the province of Bitlis to the Ministry of the Interior, 28 May 1899.
there was nothing they could do.\textsuperscript{454} The detainee statements indicated that they were originally Ottoman Armenians from the provinces of Mamuret-ülc-Aziz and Bitlis. In line with the new regulation, they were sent to their homelands under a military police escort, where they would have to provide a considerable guarantee to be released.\textsuperscript{455} However, their return precipitated further problems, since the provincial authorities had been strictly warned not to accept any Armenians returning from Russia. The five Armenians had to remain under detention until a decision was made on their behalf.\textsuperscript{456}

We also know that the implementation of the new regulation (\textit{emr-i ale-l-itlak}) had unexpected social consequences. The letters of Kadri Bey indicate that, Armenians, either originally from the province of Trabzon or from other provinces, had to wait in Trabzon for an indefinite period of time before crossing into Russia, since they were not sure about what sort of official procedures were in operation at the time or what they would encounter upon their attempt to return. Kadri informs us that during this period of uncertainty at the turn of the century, the fortunate ones found a job and earned their livelihood in Trabzon, while others left for other cities in the western part of the Empire and others again were not able to earn their living and suffered financially.\textsuperscript{457} As a result of the confusion in the local authorities regarding policy toward the cross-border movement of Armenians, many massed in Trabzon. Kadri Bey

\textsuperscript{454} Ibid. From the province of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 19 June 1899. For the same situation within the province of Trabzon, see From the province of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 6 July 1899.

\textsuperscript{455} BOA, DH. TMIK.M 51-74, To the Office of Grand Vizierate, 28 September 1898. As we see in the other examples, some Armenians were allowed to remain in their homelands by indicating a surety.

\textsuperscript{456} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{457} Local police investigations found 125 Armenians who were starving and needed help. The municipality of Trabzon, despite its limited revenue, started to distribute food aid equivalent to one piaster per day starting from 28\textsuperscript{th} December, 1899. BOA, DH. TMIK. M. 70-92, From the province of Trabzon to the Ministry of the Interior, 9 December 1899.
declared that ‘if it continues like this, the centre of Trabzon will become a meeting place for Armenians.’

The story of Stephen Nurhadiyan and his family, originally an Armenian family from the Black Sea town of Samsun, presents an interesting example of Armenian families who were retained in Trabzon by the local authorities on their way back from Russia. The origins of the complications of this case come at the start, when, in 1896, the Nurhadiyan family officially renounced their Ottoman citizenship, had their photographs taken and left their native town Samsun for Batum. The Nurhadiyans went to Batum in search of new opportunities but encountered great hardship. They looked for a solution to change their deplorable situation but without success. In the end, they chose to convert to Catholicism, thinking that this might facilitate their return to the Ottoman Empire and departed from Batum for their native town. Their new religion gave them a new group identity, one that was more tolerated by the Ottoman authorities than Gregorian Armenians. Yet, upon arriving in their native town, they were returned straight away by district authorities due to the strict regulation against Armenians coming from Russia. The Catholic Armenian patriarch, then head of the Catholic Armenian Church in Istanbul, requested that they stay in Trabzon until a decision could be made on their behalf.

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458 Ibid. See also two letters sent from the governor of Trabzon, 31 July 1899 and 12 August 1899.
459 By this time, it was standard for Armenian families renouncing their Ottoman nationality and migrating out of the empire to be photographed. This was done as a precaution, to prevent their potential return, since the Ottoman central authorities firmly believed that if they could return, they would cause trouble and provoke Armenians against the Ottoman state. Turna, 2013: 189; Ahmet Akter, Tehcir Öncesi Anadolu’dan Amerika’ya Ermeni Göçü (1834-1915) (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007), p. 37. This somewhat extravagant, not to say paranoid assumption may be taken as indicative of the Ottoman mind-set at this time and thus relevant to the state’s border policies.
460 For instance, Catholic Armenians were one of the Armenian groups who were excluded from the state violence in Trabzon in October, 1895. Merguerian, 2009: 260.
461 BOA, DH. TMIK.M 51-74, From the commission for accelerating the deals and reform to the Grand Vizierate, 1 June 1898 and to the Ministry of Police, 4 June 1898.
The case of the Nurhadiyan family was complex and the Ottoman officials simply could not decide where they should settle. In official correspondence among the authorities, we see that they referred to the law for Ottoman subjects emigrating to a foreign country to be denaturalized and not accepted back into Ottoman territory and also to the imperial decree prohibiting the return of all Armenians from Russia.\footnote{In point of fact, the OLN did not refer emigration as a reason for denaturalization (also, according to an imperial decree (17th October, 1895), emigrants or refugees who could prove that they had kept their Ottoman nationality with documentation from Ottoman consulates or embassies were to be allowed to enter). Serbestoğu, 2014: 133-134. The officials were also in error regarding the re-entry provision of the OLN, which did not exist. See below.} Thus, they came to the conclusion that the Nurhadiyan family should leave the country. This family could not afford to move anywhere far away, though. They only had sufficient means to go somewhere near such as Batum. Because the family had already expressed their regret for emigrating to Batum, the Ottoman authorities thought that it would be pointless to attempt to send them there again.\footnote{While deciding whether or not they should send the family back to Batum, the Ottoman authorities also rested on the suspicion that the Russian government would transfer Armenians in the Caucasus to other provinces or banish Ottoman subjects. BOA, DH. TMIK.M 51-74, To the Office of Grand Vizierate, 4 August 1898.} Instead they decided that the family would be either transferred to a Mediterranean city, such as Marseille or Trieste (and the state would cover their travel expenses) or else allowed to return to their native town (on condition that they restored their Ottoman citizenship).\footnote{Ibid. To the Office of Grand Vizierate, 28 September 1898. Recall the aforementioned imperial sanction of Russia, dated 6th April, 1898.}

We do not know where the Nurhadiyan family travel story ended, in their native town Samsun or a Mediterranean city or elsewhere. Nevertheless, what we have here is a palpable example of Ottoman Armenians who moved back and forth between the Ottoman and Russian Empires that was not simply a journey between two empires but also involved changes of religious affiliation and citizenship. This story certainly presents an interesting and pertinent example of confusion caused by the cross-border
movement of Armenians and the results of a strict border policy imposed on them as Armenians. First, the Nurhadiyan family was able to cross the border despite both the strict border regulation against Armenians returning from Russia and their official renunciation of subjecthood. Then, while renunciation of Ottoman nationality was conditional on a pledge not to return to Ottoman territory, this was covered by an earlier decision of the Council of Ministers (17th January 1893), not in the OLN, as officials seemed to think. Finally, the proposed solution of restoring Ottoman status to stay in the Empire contrary to the previous ruling that they should leave was inconsistent and ad hoc.

Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus after the Revolution of 1908

The emr-i ale-i-ıtlak of 1899 remained the de jure Ottoman border policy until the 1908 revolution, legislating against all Armenians who wanted to enter the Ottoman Empire from Russia. Revealing in this respect is the response from officials in the aforementioned event involving the Armenians from Ahlat who were detained on the border as they possessed passports belonging to Kurds from Ahlat. The Ottoman officials working at the Consulate General in Batum, which issued these passports to the Kurds from Ahlat, were accused of giving passports to people who used sobriquets in their documents to conceal their real identities. In response, the officials tried to prove that they always adopted a strict policy towards Armenians and did not have any responsibility for what later transpired. Insisting that they followed the existing rules, they stated that they never gave passports to anyone who could not prove their

465 The Nurhadiyan family renounced their Ottoman citizenship with authorization in accordance with the OLN, but there was no provision in the OLN regarding the return of Ottoman subjects who renounced their Ottoman nationality. It was in precisely order to remove ambiguity, according to İlhan Unat, that the Council of Ministers made the new regulation that primarily targeted Armenian emigrants returning to the Ottoman Empire as foreign subjects. Unat, 1966: 23-24.
identity, let alone Armenians, who were by then not allowed to acquire passports.\footnote{BOA, DH.TMIK.M 122-50, From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum, 28 May 1902.}

And the proof the Consul showed to convince the central authorities that passports were not issued to Armenians at the Consulate was his longstanding commitment to the strict border policy towards Armenians:

> It is evident that it is by no means possible for me to know that these Muslim people would sell their passports to Armenians. My principle to act within the limits of the Ottoman laws has been made evident in my already acknowledged loyalty. \footnote{Ibid. From the Ottoman Consulate General in Batum, 4 May 1902.}

In the eyes of the Ottoman consular officials, loyalty to the Ottoman state was equated in part to following a strict border policy towards Armenians. The emergence of this understanding of imperial loyalty was the result of the central authorities’ highly insistent and strict border policy that dominated official correspondence concerning the movement of Armenians almost until the revolution.

Interestingly, just one month before the revolution, the members of the Council of Ministers amended the wording of the previous regulation so as to facilitate entry for non-Ottoman Armenians. The new regulation stipulated that while Ottoman Armenians were not allowed to return to the Ottoman Empire from Russia, Armenians who were Russian or other foreign subjects and wanted to enter the Ottoman Empire from Russia would be admitted in order to prevent the inconvenience about which these Armenians complained.\footnote{OBERI, Vol III, Document no. 21, the decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 3 June 1908, pp. 43-44. The new regulation also accepted Russian or foreign Armenian passport holders without Ottoman visas. In this case, they were obliged to pay double passport fees.} Regardless of the precise motivation for the additional provision, this regulation does appear to confirm the Ottoman state view of Armenians in Russia who, one way or another, had maintained their Ottoman subject status. Essentially, they were not regarded as proper Ottoman subjects.
The 1908 revolution recognized the importance of free movement. The right of every Ottoman subject to travel freely within and to leave and return to Ottoman territory was made part of the new constitution, and a general amnesty was declared, which was also made applicable to political refugees. Here, we are concerned with the new regulation regarding the citizenship status of people who had emigrated before the revolution. A memorandum drawn up by the Ministry of the Interior classified those of these people who wanted to return home into two groups: *rizai* and *firari*. While *rizais*, in accordance with the OLN, had renounced their Ottoman citizenship with authorization from the Ottoman government before emigrating, *firaris* consisted of people who had left the country without authorization and were sub-divided into two further groups according to whether they had been stripped of their citizenship by the Ottoman state or not. As an expression of the relatively liberal politics of the new regime, the memorandum accepted the return of both *rizais* and *firaris* on the performance of fairly straightforward formalities, basically, they were just required to obtain an official document (from the Ottoman Consulates if they were abroad) stating that they renounced their foreign nationality and to make an official pledge affirming that they would not claim foreign subject status again.

We know that many Ottoman subjects were able to return to their original homes soon after the revolution. This was enabled by the all-encompassing, liberal regulations, for political exiles, refugees and ordinary people alike. Although no figures or percentages are given, it is usually emphasized in the literature that the returnees

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469 While *rizai* literally means one who emigrated of her/his own accord, *firari* implies one who escaped abroad. BOA, DH, SYS 67- 1-6, A memorandum written by the Ministry of the Interior, 1908. This memorandum comprised two parts, the first mostly related to the citizenship issue of *rizais* and *firaris* and the second part to their properties and lands. Nedim Ipek, ‘Anadolu’dan ABD’ye Ermeni Göçü’, OTAM, No. 6, Ankara, 1995, 257-280, pp. 270-274.
included large numbers of Armenians, especially from the Caucasus. Nevertheless, if we look at the subsequent regulation, we notice a considerable departure from the all-embracing discourse of the memorandum regarding the return of people from abroad.

Almost a year after the Ministry of the Interior memorandum, the Minister Mehmed Ferid Pasha, announced a new regulation for Ottoman Armenians coming from the Russian Caucasus. This regulation prohibited the entry of firaris who had taken Russian citizenship. The Ottoman government thus decided to accept the Ottoman Armenians from Russia only if they had both officially renounced their Ottoman nationality and lived in Russia without becoming a Russian citizen. It is difficult to establish the accurate numbers of Ottoman Armenians in Russia who could be classified in this category.

Considering that many Ottoman Armenians went to Russia, especially during the 1890s, as firaris, and that there was considerable pressure from the Russian authorities for them to adopt Russian citizenship, then we can safely assume that a large proportion of the people in question were affected by the new restriction. Indicating that just payment of due taxes became sufficient for Armenians to cross into Russia (so very few would do so formally, as rizais), the notes of R.W. Graves, British Consul in Erzurum, provide a good overview of the emigration of Armenians in the mid-1890s:

470 We read this between the lines of the notes of British ambassador in Istanbul Gerard Lowther and Chief Dragoman and First Secretary at the British Embassy Gerald Henry Fitzmaurice. Kaligian, 2011: 65 and 68.
472 In his article on the emigration from the Ottoman Syria to the United States, Kemal Karpat emphasized that it is hard to estimate the numbers of emigrants from this region due to the lack of well-kept statistical data. The U.S. government began to keep statistics in 1869 well after the immigration had already started. Despite the improvement of immigration data gathering in 1880, the numbers of registered immigrants were by no means complete due mainly to illegal and undocumented entries; for instance, none from the Ottoman Empire were recorded for the period between 1881 and 1885, while by 1910 the total numbers of registered immigrants from ‘Turkey in Asia’ constituted nearly one-third of all the U.S. population born in Asia. Kemal H. Karpat, ‘The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914’, in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History. Selected Articles and Essays (Leiden, Brill: 2002), pp. 99-100.
The emigration of Armenians from this province continues on an increasing scale, no obstacle being now raised by the authorities to the departure of such as can show that they are not indebted to the government for arrears of taxes. The great majority find their way into Russian territory, where the construction of the Kars railway affords employment to a large number of labourers. The returns of the Russian Consulate General at Erzeroum show that from the massacre of October 30, 1895 to September 6, 1896, the passports were issued to five hundred and sixty-six entire families and seven single men, all Armenians emigrating to Russia. This represents between three thousand and four thousand souls who left the country after fulfilling all the prescribed formalities and it is probable that a much larger number have passed the frontier clandestinely during the same period. Within the last few days, over twenty families from the village of Arshouni in the Erzeroum plain, whose crops had been ruined by hail, left en masse for Russia without awaiting the harvest and it is anticipated that their example will be followed by a very large number as soon as their crops have been gathered in and disposed of. 473

Graves’ figures are supported by population statistics from the province of Kars. These show that the temporary population there more doubled in 1896, an increase mostly due to escaping Armenians. Of the total temporary population of 33,094, the number of Armenians was 17,789 and of Armenian refugees from Anatolia 12,334. The numbers of Armenian refugees in 1899 was 14,267. Although the main part of the temporary population in Kars retained their Ottoman citizenship even until 1914, still, 18,091 Armenian refugees had been naturalized there by 1902. 474

Even after the revolution and legal changes of 1908 and 1909, however, there remained groups of Armenian refugees who had kept their Ottoman citizenship in Russia and wanted to return to their homelands but were unable to do that. As the Ottoman Consul in Kars explained, they had been obliged to emigrate or escape to Russia during the ‘time of turmoil’ in the Ottoman Empire, and they were not allowed to enter Ottoman territory, even though they could prove that they had kept their Ottoman nationality during their stay in Russia with permission papers obtained from

473 PRO, FO 195/1941, From the British Consul in Erzurum 12 September 1896.
474 Badem, 2010: 54-58; Badem, 2013: 165-166.
the local police and kept at the secretariat of the consulate.\textsuperscript{475} The issue seems to have turned on their non-possession of Ottoman passports, judging from an explanation given by the Ottoman Consulate in Kars in respect of the case of Aram Efendi – a case that reveals quite a lot about the actual practice of re-admittance from Russia of Armenians into the Empire and its divergence from the new policy stated through the constitution and Ministry of Interior regulations.

Aram Efendi was an Ottoman Armenian from Muş employed at the consulate as clerk to translate the statements of Armenian refugees who could not express themselves in the Ottoman language and to facilitate the procedures for their return back to their home. He was suspected by the Russian authorities of encouraging the refugees to return to the Ottoman Empire and evoked confusion also among Ottoman consuls in Russia. The Ottoman Consul in Kars was asked by the Ottoman Consul in St. Petersburg to clarify the issue. He stated that

\begin{quote}
As these Armenian refugees had neither Ottoman nor Russian passports, they were forced by the local government to choose between obtaining Russian subjecthood or leaving Russia. They consequently appealed to the Consulate to return to their home country. The Consulate tried to facilitate Armenians’ exit from Russia specifically for those who contacted the Consulate in this respect. It is clear that this is applicable to Armenians and also other Ottoman subjects in the case that they can prove their Ottoman nationality. Furthermore, helping Armenians in this way does not equate to encouraging them to return to the Ottoman Empire, as some people have implied. Neither has the Ottoman government given an order to encourage Armenian people to return back to the Ottoman Empire, nor have I or Aram Efendi committed such imprudent acts of our own will.\textsuperscript{476}
\end{quote}

Russian suspicions of Aram Efendi were perhaps well founded to the extent that his employment facilitated the return of Armenian refugees to the Ottoman Empire.

\textsuperscript{475} BOA, HR. SYS 2776-63, From the Ottoman Consulate in Kars to the Ottoman Consulate in St. Petersburg, 12 January 1911.
\textsuperscript{476} Ibid. Aram Efendi was indeed investigated by Russian authorities as to whether he encouraged Armenian refugees to return to the Ottoman Empire. During the investigation, his house was even searched by the Russian military police in Kars.
Certainly, the Consulate in Kars appears to have been rather proactive in providing this language (translation) assistance. From the Consulate perspective, however, as understood from the statements of the Consul, it was merely supporting the right of Armenian refugees to go back to their homes as long as they could prove their Ottoman nationality. This was in line with the initial policy of the new regime. However, it did not take into account the thrust of the regulation of 1909, which was to inhibit the return of Armenian refugees from Russia. The consulate support of Armenian return thus became the cause of tension with the central authorities. In fact, they replaced certain staff of the consulate owing to such speculation, especially that linked to Aram Efendi.\footnote{BOA, DH. MTV, 36-17, From the Governor of Erzurum to the Ministry of the Interior, 30 March 1912.}

An article published in \textit{Haraç}, an Armenian journal issued in Erzurum, noted that the considerate treatment towards Armenians in the Ottoman Consulate in Kars had already disappeared within the course of one year. The article complained about Hasan Bey, the consular clerk, who was accused of not only disrupting the application process of Armenians who wanted to travel to the Ottoman Empire but also verbally insulting and humiliating them.\footnote{Ibid. The governor of Erzurum notes that Hasan Bey denied such accusations. This issue was brought to the attention of the Patriarchate in Istanbul to be clarified.} Within a year of the revolution also, the Ottoman central authorities returned to their vigilant policy aimed at preventing Armenian refugees from returning by making it difficult for them to obtain Ottoman identity cards (\textit{Tezkire-i Osmaniye}).\footnote{OBERI, Vol III, Document no. 30, from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the Grand Vizierate, 21 June 1910; BOA, DH. MKT 2889-45, from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 August 1909.}

The return to old ways on the part of the (somewhat) new Ottoman authorities in respect to the Armenian return issue was also evidenced by the wide attention it
received. The freedom of return for refugees was repeatedly put on the reform agenda by both the European powers and Ottoman Armenians. This issue was also high on the agenda of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) when they cooperated with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) during the revolution of 1908. The members of the ARF frequently asserted that the return of Armenian refugees to their homes was indispensable for them to continue their cooperation with the CUP. It was even stated in the ultimatum presented by the ARF to the CUP as a final chance not to break off its relation with the party in April, 1912. The ARF wanted to be assured that ‘the right of return with a government subsidy for Armenian refugees determined by Prelacy lists’ was to be provided- but to no avail.\textsuperscript{480}

It is noteworthy that it was not only the Armenian refugees in Russia but also Ottoman Armenians who had migrated to the United States, with or without authorization, who had difficulties in returning to their homelands as Ottoman subjects. The memorandum of 1908 supposedly provided them with the opportunity to regain their Ottoman citizenship, as long as they abandoned their US nationality. It is known that during the mid-1890s, in order to prevent the illegal migration to the US, the ban on migration was abrogated, but only on the condition that they would never return. According to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, since many people were left with no choice but to formally renounce their Ottoman citizenship to go to the US before the revolution, their Ottoman citizenship should be restored. The Ottoman government ignored the Patriarchate and decided that the records of Armenians who

\textsuperscript{480}Kaligian, 2011: 130. The ARF announced the end of cooperation in August, 1912.
had officially abandoned their Ottoman nationality to go to the US would be erased from the state registry.\(^{481}\)

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have told three stories. The first pertained to negotiations between the Russian and Ottoman Empires on the problems and conflicts generated around the issue of Ottoman Armenian migrants and refugees in the Russian Caucasus in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The second story involved the ongoing, illegal cross-border movement of Armenians, despite the ban against their travel from the Russian Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire. The third story concerned the border policy adopted by the Ottoman state towards refugee return and the cross-border mobility of Armenians, including the period after the revolution of 1908. The argument we put forward through these three stories is twofold.

First, due to the weakness of its infrastructural and autonomous power, the Ottoman state, despite all its attempts, could not prevent the illegal cross-border mobility of Armenians constantly going back and forth between the Ottoman lands and the Russian Caucasus at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. This failure caused profound unease on the part of the authorities, which had serious doubts concerning the loyalty of the Armenian population. Second, the effect of the failure to stem this movement led the Ottoman state to adopt a totalizing border policy towards Ottoman Armenians wanting to return from the Russian Caucasus during this period. An opening for return was provided with the change of

policy afforded by the 1908 revolution, the new constitution and government, but this opening had essentially closed again within the year.

Many rules and regulations were enacted to prevent the return of the Ottoman Armenians from the Russian Caucasus in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Since these were often intertwined and complex, they caused confusion among central and local authorities in terms of interpretation and implementation. The restrictive policies triggered a change of perception among certain local authorities towards Armenians in parallel with that of the central authorities, but the expectations of the Ottoman central state did not always correspond to the social and political realities of the border. This obstructed the work of those local officials who attempted to follow the central orders (indeed, it contributed to the sense of uncertainty and confusion), while other local officials were little concerned with the imperatives anyway, as they had an eye on their own interests (gains to be made in the illegal cross-border movement of Armenians).

Thus, Armenians continued to crisscross the border line despite Ottoman state’s control of its border, which was far from absolute even it adopted a tougher policy. In this regard, while we point out the causality between the structural weakness of the Ottoman central power and the totalizing border policy, we would like to emphasize their concurrent existence and continuity during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and even after the revolution of 1908. Only then we can understand how the Russo-Ottoman border became less permeable for the Ottoman Armenian inhabitants of the borderland and the refugees and emigrants in the Russian Caucasus and what this meant in terms of Ottoman citizenship.
As Lohr rightly argues in relation to the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, while ‘citizenship and border controls meant more and were more effective than most scholars have thought’ and ‘the recent fashion for stressing the inexorable expansion of the state as it strove to incorporate individuals ever more firmly in its nets of knowledge and control describes the intentions of officials well’, yet still this ‘can miss the great chasm between intentions and results’. Our analysis of the permeability of the Russo-Ottoman border for Ottoman Armenians as much lower than it was for other Ottoman subjects (basically, for Muslims) is that this largely held only on a legal level, and we conclude that this gives important clues about the intentions of Ottoman central officials.

We argue that the border was turned into a barrier for all Ottoman Armenians wanting to enter the country from the Russian Caucasus, regardless of who they were and how loyal they were to the Ottoman state. Notwithstanding the fact that the barrier was not an absolute or physical one necessarily barring the Ottoman Armenians from cross-border movement, its strengthening indicates the citizenship policy the Ottoman Empire pursued towards Ottoman Armenians through the Russo-Ottoman borderland. It is hard to give actual figures for the people involved, to estimate, for instance, the numbers of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus who were deprived of their Ottoman citizenship. This is something that may be usefully addressed in further research. For the purpose of this chapter, however, the crucial point is thousands of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus, both migrants and refugees, were unable to return to their homelands and lost their Ottoman subject status as an effect of the totalizing border policy.

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482 Lohr, 2012: 8.
This very real effect supported the symbolic meaning expressed through central Ottoman policy: the inherent ambiguity of borderland Armenians now made them strangers in the case of those residents on the Ottoman side of the post-Berlin borderline and simply foreigners in the case of those on the other side. And thus did the Ottoman state characterize itself, in terms of a modernistic civil polity that still defined the sovereign power as Muslim – an approach, we may note, that was to continue into the foundation period of the Republic with, of course, the added specification of Turkish nationalism.
CONCLUSION

If we seek to identify a turning point in the Ottoman state’s notion of its territoriality and sovereignty in the Russo-Ottoman borderland in the nineteenth century, this could certainly be found in the political developments in the aftermath of the Treaty of Berlin. Not only was the line of division redrawn to Russia’s favour in 1878, but the Ottoman fear of Russian expansion evolved thereafter into a major concern regarding the potential for its political and military intervention in Ottoman internal affairs in Eastern Anatolia. The Ottomans became particularly concerned about the perceived threat from Russia in relation to the so-called Armenian issue. The cross-border connections of Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus, especially of revolutionaries, but also of other Armenian subjects, such as villagers and traders, gradually intensified this perception of threat.

Indeed, the focus of Ottoman apprehension in Eastern Anatolia was no longer only Russia itself or Russia directly, but also Armenian nationalist and separatist inclinations. It was in this context that the Ottoman central authorities set about (re-)asserting the state’s hold over the territory through a redefinition of its source of sovereign legitimacy. This involved a normative nurturing of Islamic unity through border policies and practices that differentially qualified the status of its Muslims and Armenians, and also through wooing and organizing of its tribal Kurds. Despite the conflicting political aspirations of the Ottoman state and its Armenian subjects and the backdrop of the historical and ongoing tensions between the Russian and Ottoman imperial projects at
the two empires’ borderlands, no serious border violation occurred in the region from 1878 until the beginning of World War One.

Yet the Russo-Ottoman border remained a contested boundary. Not only did this fact inform the changing character of border relations, but it also affected the relationship of people in these border territories to the two states themselves.483 In this thesis, we have looked at the delimitation and demarcation processes through which the limits of legitimate state authority were designated in this border region. The Treaty of Berlin roughly delimited the Russo-Ottoman border on paper, and the border commissions that followed attempted to demarcate it on the ground. A clear-cut border did not emerge from this until almost 1914, however, as many areas of land were separated from their villages by the border and constantly contested by villagers living on both sides, who were thrown into competition for land as a result of war and migration in the new borderland context.

Manifestly, the Ottoman state was unable to fully establish its sovereignty over its territory and people in this border region, notwithstanding the efforts it undertook to this end, such as militarization of the border and following the rule of reciprocity with Russia, which smoothed the path in almost every complicated border affair. Indeed, Russia more powerfully than the Ottoman Empire represented a sovereign, territorial state and that in itself also threatened the very integrity of the Ottoman state in this borderland. This Ottoman weakness of territorial sovereignty was reflected in the actions of its citizenry, as people were effectively able to blur or ignore the border in various legal and illegal ways. Such people included tribal Kurds and Armenian

revolutionaries, and especially included those (mostly Muslims) whose holdings were now on the Russian side of the border or who had work, family or other reasons for crossing the border.

Thus, not only the limits of Ottoman state authority but also pre-existing socio-economic realities led many people of the borderland to use imperial policies for their own purposes. One of the difficult issues arising from the Berlin division and the resulting situation was the ambiguous citizenship status exploited by these people for their own needs. Dual citizenship was particularly problematic from a legal perspective, but no less of an issue for sovereignty were the many people who moved across the border without any documentation, with valid passports but without any official citizenship, or with passports belonging to other people. In addition to these complications, their avoidance of obligations and claiming of rights, according to what was best for their situation as they saw it, made them ‘strange’ in the eyes of the Ottoman central authorities. That is to say, overlapping citizenship status created ‘strangeness’ in this borderland.

Looking at the policies and laws issued by the Ottoman central authorities to clarify the status of these people and regulate their cross-border movement, it is apparent that the authorities were opposed to such practices. Importantly, however, we argue that there was a disjunction between the official policies and laws and people’s every-day practices on the ground, including those of officials, who sometimes ignored or abused the law for personal gain and sometimes simply failed to understand what was being asked of them. Part of this confusion seems to have been rooted in a failure by the central authorities to properly grasp local, socio-economic realities. This, combined with a major deficit in Ottoman state infrastructure capacities (poor administrative
systems, lack of educated personnel, etc.), meant that the circumstances in which livelihood patterns were shaped in the borderland tended to induce strategies that were, firstly, oriented towards a citizenry as opposed to territorially defined sovereignty, and secondly, compensating for the lack of effective power by claiming more legal authority. Thereby Ottoman sovereignty, representing the interest and values of the central state, developed in response to regional concerns, to the new allegiances and aspirations of the people there and the perceived threat carried by their cross-border movements.

Although the inhabitants of this borderland were by no means passive agents in resolving the unsettled border issues and carrying on their everyday life as before, this does not mean that they were unaffected by the enforcement of the new political border. On the contrary, legal activities, particularly farming and trading, that involved cross-border movements were both restricted and redefined, while some illegal behaviours (especially smuggling) were changed and others (such as agricultural sales) were prompted by the prohibition of previously unproblematic livelihood arrangements. This somewhat complex picture was a result of the establishment of a radically changed new borderline, the enforcement of which was far from absolute. In short, the permeability of the border enabled various forms of mobility for the local population, but these also varied significantly with respect to the ethno-religious identity of those seeking to cross it.

In this thesis, therefore, we argue that there was a gap between two forms of imperial citizenship at the Russo-Ottoman border at the turn of the twentieth century, one that pertained to the ruling and control strategy of the Ottoman state and the other to the everyday survival of ordinary borderland people. For the local people this entailed
practical decisions based on a number of factors related to their livelihoods and the comparative (dis)advantages of the options presented by the two states. In terms of the Ottoman state, motivated by the desire to keep its subjects and not lose them to its imperial rival, it entailed a certain level of flexibility and ambiguity. But this only served to undermine its already weak hold over the territory.

Thus, despite the fact that the state defined citizenship on normative grounds to determine loyalty, Ottoman authorities were not able to root out ‘strangeness’ through the state’s legalistic, clear-cut generalizing and other either-or approaches. Our argument is that this gave birth to a new approach. Distinct from the normative ground of laws and constitutions on which the Ottoman state was unable to eliminate ‘strangeness’, this new approach was shaped by the adoption of a more strategic and pragmatic perspective by Ottoman officials on the ground. The criteria, standards and procedures of reasoning employed by these officials most often diverged from those employed in normative texts, that is, the position as set out by legislation and directives of the central authorities.

Compelled by conditions at the time to attempt the establishment of a territorialized sovereignty, the 1869 Ottoman Law of Nationality (OLN) had introduced a reconceptualization of the border as a legal entity that designated state membership. Recalling the analysis of imperial formations stating that ‘if the expanse of spatial sovereignty is unstable, so are the terms for the inclusion and exclusion of peoples’, we can judge that the OLN could not be adopted as an all-encompassing citizenship law, at least not very successfully and certainly not fully. As our research has shown, in

dealing with the strangeness of the Russo-Ottoman borderland, the extensive discretionary powers granted to the Ottoman government and the Sultan by the OLN were used in ways that rendered the border a citizenship boundary whose permeability differed considerably between Muslim and Armenian ‘strangers’. In other words, the manner in which the Ottoman state handled the ambivalence posed by the stranger Armenian subjects of the Empire was completely different from the way it dealt with that posed by Muslim strangers. There was a ‘separate deals’ paradigm at work, which specified citizenship and, through this, sovereignty.

The first thing to be emphasized concerning the Ottoman state’s response to the ambivalence posed by the cross-border movement and contacts of its subjects is that it aimed at control and containment of the ambivalence rather than its total elimination. In so doing, the Ottoman state distinguished strangers on the basis of perceived danger, as more risky and less risky, and treated the different stranger groups accordingly. In classifying stranger Muslim subjects, the Ottoman state adopted a case-by-case method. Our investigation of the practices, discourses and distinctions the Ottoman state employed to deal with the strangeness posed by Muslims around the border shows that it retreated from assuming any generalizing inclusionary or exclusionary stance towards them. It was strongly inclined to classify Muslim strangers as less or even not risky, but their inclusion was also conditional in certain instances.

In the case of its stranger Armenian subjects, however, the Ottoman state did not employ a case-by-case method. To the Ottoman state, all stranger Armenians were suspects, and thus potential enemies to be excluded. Proper investigation of each case was not regarded as necessary when identifying the stranger Armenians. In the context of Armenian nationalist agitation and its internationalization at Berlin (and
previously San Stefano) with the ‘six provinces’, the state simply treated the issue as self-evident.

Here, though, it is also informative to refer to Ana M. Alonso’s article addressing the projects of state sovereignty as everyday-life practices and to consider how these practices are linked to the formation of subjects through the border. Focusing on the contemporary US-Mexico division, Alonso declares that ‘since the 1990s, the criminalisation of “illegals” has been conflated with the criminalisation of “smugglers”; after 11 September 2001, both of these categories have been metonymically linked to that of the “terrorist”, resulting in a more threatening stigmatisation of Mexicans at the border’. Alonso shows how ‘the territorial politics of sovereignty at the US-Mexico border totalises the imagined community of “Americans” and individualises subjects through a binary logic of classification’ which defines people as “citizens” or “illegals”, “property owners” or “trespassers”, “people like us” versus “criminals”, “smugglers”, “terrorists” or even “invaders”. Alonso uses this to support the claim that ‘state projects of sovereignty are also projects of subjectification which entail dividing practices, forms of classification and totalising procedures.’ Ultimately, she argues, this gives rise to the militarization of the border area.

The thrust of the evidence presented in this thesis supports the similar claim that the Ottoman state project of sovereignty adopted the totalizing approach towards Armenians, rendering all stranger Armenians unreliable suspects to be excluded. We have showed that there were ambiguities and loopholes in the regulations and bureaucratic confusion in the piecemeal introduction of stricter border and travel

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486 Alonso, 2005: 47.
regulations for Armenians, and that by the end of 1890s, even the movement of local Armenians had begun to be stereotyped by the local authorities in terms of nefarious activities. What is important for our argument here, though, is that the stigmatizing of Armenians in border policy and implementation extended logically on the basic premise of prejudice and fear. The Ottoman authorities became suspicious, for example, not just of the Armenians from Russia in general, but also of their Ottoman guarantors, legally required to support their return. This was a judgement of sedition by association. It was also just the way the Ottoman state, as a weak entity in terms of infrastructure, coped with the ‘risk’.

Given that the ambivalence posed by Armenians became more and more identified with danger in the eyes of the Ottoman state, the totalizing stance towards stranger Armenians emerged as a risk-management method for a state largely incapable of working through individualizing techniques and personal data. Moreover, regarding citizenship as an ‘unstable and invented tradition’, and taking into consideration questions of ‘how and against whom citizenship was defined as a group identity and what kinds of strategies and technologies of citizenship were assembled to make citizens, strangers and outsiders’, we advance a further argument concerning the difference between the ways that the Ottoman state approached the strangeness posed by its Muslim and Armenian subjects. By differentiating between them in adopting case-by-case and totalizing approaches when measuring loyalty, the Ottoman state also situated Muslims and Armenians hierarchically with regard to Ottoman citizenship status. While in some cases the exclusion of stranger Muslim subjects from the Ottoman community as outsiders required an inquiry in order to uncover their true

487 OBERI Volume II, Document no. 33, the record of the Council of Ministers, 9 March 1902, p. 68.
nature, stranger Armenian subjects were, by rule and in advance, assumed to be outsiders.

In this context, it is not surprising that the Young Turk revolution of 1908 did not cause a rupture from the previous regime in terms of its enforcement of the Russo-Ottoman border. As detailed in Chapter Four, after a pause of less than a year, during which Ottoman subjects (migrants, refugees, political exiles) were allowed to return to their homes, the authorities of the new regime reverted to old border policies, legally tightening the border against the passage of Armenians from the Russian Caucasus. Although the Young Turk movement carried a liberalizing promise, it was nevertheless rooted in hegemonic Ottoman values and actually did not involve such sweeping changes in official personnel.

The main demand of the Armenian political leadership, which worked in cooperation with the Young Turks until August 1912, was for land reform in Eastern Anatolia, for the restitution of lands taken by the powerful chieftains of the Hamidiye regiments to their rightful owners. Permission for return was another motive for this cooperation. The land reform did not occur, however, despite some initially positive intents and attempts. Apart from anything else, the new regime leadership soon realized that the legacy left by the Hamidian regime regarding the land issue in Eastern Anatolia was so complicated that it could not be solved without large-scale regulation, which they did not dare to undertake. Meanwhile, Armenians returning from Russia within the allotted period with claims on their old lands only increased the number and deepened the complexity of land disputes. Instead, the government began to allocate more lands to nomadic Kurdish groups and Circassian migrants in the region. In the final instance, the Young Turks did not want to risk alienating the Hamidiye pashas from the putative
control of the centre and thrust them into a position in which, motivated by the desire for land restitution, they would seek cross-border cooperation with Russia.\textsuperscript{489} Thus, it was the failure of the Young Turk regime to meet Armenian demands that ended the alliance between the two political groups, and, one may say retrospectively, destroyed all hopes for an accommodation between the two nascent nationalisms.

It is a rather challenging and quite important to research the total numbers of Ottoman Armenian refugees and migrants in the Russian Caucasus whose lands and citizenship were restored after the revolution of 1908 and the percentage of those who did/could not return. Regardless of the precise figures, however, our research clearly shows that Ottoman Armenians in the Russian Caucasus became the victims of a strict border policy depriving them of their Ottoman status. During neither the Hamidian nor the Young Turk regimes were the Ottoman central authorities disposed to construe the contents of the OLN in such a way as to embrace Ottoman Armenians wanting to return (and even though the OLN left the naturalization/denaturalization processes to the Ottoman government, there was plenty of room for manoeuvre without having to introduce new legislation).

It is worthy of note here that despite the fact that we attach importance to land issue and its decisive factor in directing the imperial borderland policies, this research does not address the land policies of the Ottoman and Russian Empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Russo-Ottoman border region. However, it indirectly suggests that the Ottoman land policy including the land handovers and the settlement policies should also be evaluated from the perspective of the citizenship policies of the Ottoman state, which became somewhat an

\textsuperscript{489} Klein, 2011: Chapter Four.
instrument to control its eastern border. Future research should also clarify whether Russia’s naturalization of Ottoman Armenian migrants/refugees in the Russian Caucasus at the beginning of the twentieth century solely resulted from humanitarian reasons and extracting some concessions from the Ottomans or whether there was another imperial policy behind it. The use of the Tsarist Russian Archives will definitely help us not only to illuminate Russian citizenship, land and settlement policies in this border region, but also to have a better and comparative comprehension of the life of people there in the particular period addressed in this research.

As James Anderson and Liam O’Dowd observe, ‘borders are filters with highly variable degrees of permeability or porosity; and border regions are peripheries of infiltration, transition or separation, defences for the supposed “purity” of the “centre”’.\textsuperscript{490} In conclusion, we may state similarly that the Russo-Ottoman border became an instrument through which the Ottoman central authorities filtered the movement of Ottoman Armenians and a threshold where they were distinguished from other Ottoman subjects in terms of inclusion or exclusion within the Ottoman state. Nevertheless, despite the restriction of their cross-border movement at the legal level, Ottoman Armenians continued to crisscross the border illegally, by taking advantage of the Ottoman shortcomings in border control.

It seems that the new regime did not undertake a distinct programme to increase the capacity of its border control and infrastructure. Considering the continuation of the border policies from the old to new regimes in terms of the establishment of a territorialized sovereignty, therefore, we can argue that there was no clear-cut division between the maintenance of the imperial status quo, as usually attributed to the

Hamidian regime, and construction of a modern sovereign state as ascribed to the political leaders of the Young Turks.⁴⁹¹ In other words, notwithstanding the differences between these two logics of governance, they overlapped in terms of the policies pursued regarding citizenship status and thus definition of the state, at the expense of the Ottoman Armenians. Appreciation of this is necessary in order to full acknowledge how Ottoman Armenian subjects had begun to be categorized as unreliable and pushed towards the margins of the Ottoman community before World War One, despite the all-embracing discourse of Ottomanism and the egalitarian discourse of the Young Turk revolution.

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