The struggle within: "moral crisis" on the Ottoman homefront during the First World War

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Introduction

Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la decadence.

–Paul Verlain, *Langueur*

Long before the rising scholarly interest in the homefront in the historiography of the First World War, a Turkish academic and journalist as well as a witness to the war, Ahmed Emin [Yalman], wrote a chapter entitled *War Morals* in his well-known work *Turkey in the World War*. He asserted that "people in Turkey were, from the viewpoint of morality, less prepared to resist the social and economic effects of the war than any other belligerents."[1] On the other hand, Ottoman intellectuals of various ideological backgrounds continuously mentioned the problem of moral decline at the turn of the twentieth century, which, according to them, reached a peak during the First World War. This study sheds light on these polemics of moral decline and their preconditions on the Ottoman homefront during the First World War. It argues that morality had important political, social, and cultural implications in this particular period. How was morality related to the war? This single question allowed me to see through the social and cultural transforma-

1 Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 239.

tion that the late Ottoman society experienced in times of political and social turmoil.

Apart from this question, my interest in the topic arose from the central place of morality in the political and social environment of contemporary Turkey. Intermingled with discussions about lifestyle, a powerful discourse on morality, it can be argued, is part of Turkish identity. Every Turkish citizen knows the motto: "We will adopt the technology of Europe but not European morality."[2] On the other hand, moral discourses employing the terms of religion, patriarchy, and tradition prevail in daily life – particularly in provincial towns of Turkey – thereby constituting an important dynamic that suppresses potential challenges to the extant social order. Contributing to the literature, this research draws attention to strong parallels between contemporary and one-hundred-year-old debates on morality. The following chapters sketch, in different ways, how fault lines in today's Turkish society are grounded in the sociopolitical context of the late Ottoman Empire.

The present work explores discourses of moral decline in the context of the First World War. This war not only paved the way for the territorial dissolution of the empire, but also contributed decisively to its socio cultural transformation on which the Republic of Turkey would be founded. Despite the constant debates among late Ottoman intellectuals on morality as an important aspect of Ottoman-Muslim identity, this field has remained largely untouched in Ottoman-Turkish historiography except for a few studies. On the other hand, the topic has been studied at great length by theologians because morality debates are closely associated with religion, in particular with Islam.[3] A recurrent characteristic of such studies is that they treat late Ottoman texts on morality (especially texts written by the Ottoman Islamic scholars, *ulemâ*) as if they are timeless, ahistorical works to be taken as guides for life for all time. However, a close look at these morality texts reveals the context

2 See Yalçınkaya's work on debates on science in the nineteenth century in which he shows how morality and science came to be associated with one another. Yalçınkaya, "Their Science, Our Values."

3 See Çağrıcı, *Anahatlarıyla İslam Ahlâkı*; See, for instance, Kaya, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Osmanlı'da Ahlâk Eğitimi*; Erdem, *Son Devir Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Ahlâk*.

of intellectual disputes following from the social and political conditions of the period in question. This does not imply that the effects of these discourses remained limited to the time of their emergence. These historical disputes over morality have shaped the manner and tone with which social and cultural conducts is discussed today. The contest over morality still prevails in Turkish society in line with ideological and cultural confrontations.

As I started to work on so-called moral decline in the context of the late Ottoman Empire, I had two assumptions in mind that came to be challenged as the study progressed. My first conviction was that the concept of "moral decline" was a reflection of anxiety in society resulting from increasing prostitution due to the circumstances of war. My second assumption was that I would find many punitive measures regarding the protection of public morality on the Ottoman homefront. This was partly because a single party – namely the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) – ruled the Ottoman state and came to be regarded as an authoritarian power deriving strength from the extraordinary nature of wartime. With respect to my first assumption, prostitution was indeed a major topic in morality discussions; however, the direction of the causal link between immorality and prostitution was not as I had assumed. In most contemporaneous accounts, prostitution was not regarded as the reason for moral decline; rather, it was treated as one of the consequences of moral degeneration. Also, the definition of prostitution was broader than I had assumed and encompassed several kinds of misconduct. This also means that prostitution *per se* was only part of a broader discussion on moral decline. With respect to my second assumption, the CUP government truly attached great importance to the protection of public morality, but it never introduced punitive measures – at least not measures as harsh as expected – no matter how heated the debate became. Despite many rumors during wartime about the introduction of new measures, the government defined the violation of public morality broadly and left final decisions to the discretion of the courts. However, as shown in this study, moral anxieties indeed played an important role in the penetration of the state into the realm of family. Protecting the honor of Ottoman citizens was important as part of mobilization efforts. While eliminating prostitution and related vices went hand in hand with anxieties about fading Muslim identity and imperial

prestige, fears over the destructive effects of the war on society constituted the precondition for rethinking the limits of the state intervention. In some cases, immorality in the forms of prostitution and trafficking of women was prosecuted on grounds of national security. Yet, surprisingly, it was not the wartime CUP government but the Ankara Government and the Turkish republic that would realize the expected punitive measures in the name of protecting public morality, including the prohibition of alcohol in 1920 and of prostitution in 1930. Before presenting the detailed arguments of this study, I would like to present the conceptual and contextual framework.

§ 1.1 The Concept: "Moral Decline" in the History of the Ottoman Empire and the Terminology of Morality

The Oxford Dictionary defines morality as "principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior."[4] In Ottoman Turkish, the word for morality is the Arabic *ahlâk,* the plural form of *hulk* or *huluk.* Şemseddin Sami's *Kâmûs-i Türkî* defines *ahlâk* as a "spiritual and inner condition that humans possess either by creation or education."[5]

While keeping these basic definitions in mind, this study avoids both a strict definition of morality as well as an analysis of moral philosophy. This is for the sake of contextualization purposes. Instead of limiting the reader's perspective of morality with a strict definition, this study maintains a broad concept of morality that transcends the Hegelian distinction between ethics and morals. As a work of social and cultural history, anything described or referred to as morality or immorality in primary sources falls under the scope of our analysis. This does not mean that this study negates the importance of philosophical and sociological analysis; instead, it utilizes them to enhance the understanding of the works of Ottoman intellectuals, for sociological analyses have a distinctive place in the study of morality. Throughout this

4 "Morality," *Oxford Dictionaries,* accessed May 12, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/morality.

5 *"…*insanın yaradılışda haiz olduğu veya terbiye ile istihsal ettiği ahvâl-i ruhiye ve kalbiye.*"* Şemseddin Sami, *Kâmûs-î Türkî*, 82.

study, I consider morality to be a contested area in which several actors were involved encompassing both external and internal developments in the broader context of the war. These actors ranged from intellectuals to military men and from ordinary people to state elites.

In a similar vein, this study avoids presenting a single definition of "moral decline." Instead, I argue that this concept is abstract in form yet understood when employed to define certain phenomena. Contrary to the common view that moral decline is merely a consequence of increasing prostitution; this study offers a broad understanding of morality and a novel perspective that encompasses political, cultural, and social dynamics. Broadly speaking, the term moral decline was often used to refer to degradation of social and moral values among the Ottoman Muslims. To my knowledge, no intellectuals of the time who were commenting on morality denied the existence of moral decline. However, the definitions of that decline and the solutions for it varied. Throughout this study, I evaluate these ideas in juxtaposition. As the context of the First World War provides a deep insight into the points of debates, I attempt to limit certain preconditions of moral decline with the war context.

A glimpse at the history of the Ottoman Empire shows that morality discourses had a significant place in political and social life long before the nineteenth century. The *nasihatname*s (advice letters), for instance, exemplify the motives and context of moral discourse in the early modern Ottoman Empire. This literary genre, which appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century and continued up until the eighteenth century sought to teach manners and advise statesmen on various issues. They were similar to European literary products such as Machiavelli's *The Prince*.[6] The authors of this genre employed a strict moral discourse with an emphasis on growing corruption and the degradation of moral and social life that accompanied a discourse on the decline of state power and the disruption of the world order (*nizâm-ı âlem*). Abou-El-Haj argues that the "moral polarization" between the virtuous and avaricious characters in these stories actually referred to po-

6 Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 23; Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Nasihatname as a Discourse over 'Morality'," 18.

litical struggles among the ruling elites. *Nasihatname* writers such as Koçu Bey and Mustafa Ali manifested their discontent as they were losing political power to new social classes.[7] According to Abou-El-Haj, the *nasihatname*s and the rise of moralistic discourses were the products of a socio economic context in which great transformations and crises were emerging in terms of the land system, taxation, and the rise of commercialization.[8] In addition, gender relations were central to these moralistic discourses. This was clearly depicted in one of the most popular *nasihatname* of the sixteenth century, Kınalızade Ali Efendi's *Ahlâk-ı Alâî* (Supreme Morality). As discussed by Baki Tezcan, Kınalızade's work was based mainly on the "idea of equilibrium" among social "classes" and associated the continuation of the political order with the preservation of the patriarchal family as the latter was essential for establishing the hierarchy among members of the household.[9] In a similar vein, moral discourses that accompanied clothing laws in the eighteenth century emerged from the considerations of the ruling classes hoping to preserve the social order on the basis of gender, class, and ethnic separation.[10] In this way, the Ottoman state institutionalized moral authority as a means of restoring order, particularly after crises that were followed by loss of territories.[11] Kırlı emphasizes the importance of the context of political crisis for the emergence of sumptuary laws targeting public spaces such as coffeehouses, taverns, and similar venues.[12]

From this perspective, it is possible to argue that transitory periods had a significant role in the rise of moralistic discourses. However, each period must be evaluated in light of its own peculiarities. I believe that the point about nineteenth-century polemics of moral decline that distinguishes them from those of early-modern discourse was their inclusivity. Owing partly to

7 Ibid., 19-20.

8 Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 40–41.

9 Tezcan, "Ethics as a Domain to Discuss the Political: Kınalızâde Ali Efendi's Ahlâk-ı Alâî," 112-114.

10 Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829," 409.

11 Ibid., 411.

12 Kırlı, "The Struggle over Space," 38-49.

the development of the press, the rising literacy rate, and the wide circulation of the newspapers particularly after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, morality debates had become polyphonic with the participation of new authors and audiences coming from different social backgrounds. The popularity of these debates also contributed to the changing nature of morality discourses from monologs to dialogues, particularly with the participation of women in the discussion. This implied that the monopoly over moral authority by the ruling elites and their entourages became vulnerable and open to challenge. The growing economic integration of the Ottoman Empire with European capitalism increased social and economic conflicts, and the consequences of this integration manifested itself in increasing cultural polarization.[13] Particularly apparent in literary works, morality came to be identified with these problems, and it was translated into a common discourse of anxiety.[14] As shown in the following pages, the discourse of moral decline in Ottoman reformist circles also reflected intellectual debates about decadence, degeneration, and regeneration in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Europe.

There are a few studies that mention discourses of moral decline and their reflections in politics and society. I only mention some briefly here since the chapters deal with them in detail. Along with sumptuary laws and various measures, public education in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century has become the subject of scholarly attention in terms of its emphasis on morality. Given that education was central to the Ottoman bureaucratic and military modernization process, Selçuk Akşin Somel discusses the fact that public education during the Tanzimat and Hamidian eras was an instrument for inculcating modern notions such as order, discipline, and material progress together with the ideology of the Ottoman state and Sunnism in pro-

13 For the history of the penetration of capitalism in the Ottoman Empire, see Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme, 1820-1913*; Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908*.

14 Müge Özoğlu discusses this anxiety from the masculine standpoint with reference to the declining power of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century in literary works. See Özoğlu, "Modernity as an Ottoman Fetish."

vincial areas.[15] According to him, until the 1860s, Ottoman educational reforms retained "the ancient tradition of viewing education as a means of inculcating religious and moral values," through which "obedience and loyalty" for the central authority were reproduced.[16] He asserts that particularly during periods of political crises, children and adults were forced by the central authority to frequent mosques and attend Quranic schools.[17] On the other hand, morality textbooks such as *Ahlâk Risalesi* by Sadık Rıfat Paşa were representative of educational policy during the Tanzimat era and provided both religious and rational justifications for shaping ideal social norms.[18] During the Hamidian era, additional emphasis was put on moral and religious values in school curricula. Benjamin Fortna examines the gravity of "Islamic morality" in "secular" schools and argues against the "presumed split between 'religious' and 'secular'" while drawing attention to the combination of the traditional Islamic "underpinning that had been crucial to official Ottoman legitimation for centuries" and "the optimism engendered by the relatively new conception of education as worldly or profane science (*maarif*)."[19] Moral instruction in public education, according to him, was a general trend in the nineteenth century instead of being unique to the Ottoman or Hamidian cases.

> Such simultaneity suggests that there was a common world-time reaction to the perceived speeding up of time, to concerns about keeping abreast with the "demands of the present," and to the feeling that flight from the "traditional" theological understandings of the way in which the world worked was accelerating, leading to moral decay. New-style education appeared as a seemingly universal beacon of

15 See Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908*.

16 Ibid., 6.

17 Ibid., 7.

18 Ibid., 62–64.

19 Fortna, "Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman 'Secular' Schools," 375.

> hope, particularly when it was meant to convey a reworked but "traditionally" inspired notion of morality.[20]

Hamidian public schools thus sought to instrumentalize moral instruction to fight "foreign encroachment and internal moral decline."[21]

Betül Açıkgöz, in her doctoral thesis on Ottoman school textbooks between 1908 and 1924, argues that moral instruction was central to public education even after the Hamidian era, but in a different way: "In the Constitutional years, morality was needed not only to make God content and the other world secure, but also for the purpose of this world's rescue and happiness, which was prosperity and progress. The latter was overemphasized and prioritized the former."[22] During the Balkan Wars and the First World War, a "regeneration thesis" that argued that the loss of morality in the Ottoman Empire resulted in the loss of lands in the battles was also integrated into school textbooks.[23]

There is a positive correlation: as political crisis increases so does emphasis on morality. Another crisis that came to surface particularly in the turmoil of the First World War was formulated by Elizabeth Thompson as the crisis of paternity. In her book *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon,* she employed the term "crisis of paternity" to describe the "widespread gender anxiety" encompassing both the First World War and the postwar years to which French rule added another dimension in Syria and Lebanon.[24] Following years of war and famine, "a climate of profound uncertainty and social tension" altered traditional definitions of paternal authority, family, and community.

> The woes of World War I fell upon the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire like a nightmare. Communities, families, and even per-

20 Ibid., 373.

21 Ibid., 375.

22 Açıkgöz, *The Epistemological Conflict in the Narratives of Elementary School Textbooks (1908- 1924)*, 80.

23 Ibid., 81.

24 See Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*.

> sonal identities were transformed, sometimes beyond recognition.… The general struggle for food fueled a mad and cut-throat competition between citizen and state, peasant and landlord, consumer and merchant, even parent and child. Gender norms of honor and protection between men and women were also violated. Memories of this world seemingly turned upside down would haunt the postwar era. For many, it would take years to piece together their shattered lives. For all, the subversion of order and authority at home and in the community produced a pervasive crisis of paternity.[25]

As discussed throughout this study, emphasis on gender roles and sexual norms constituted a major part of the moral decline thesis among the Ottoman intellectuals.[26] It is possible to think of Thompson's "crisis of paternity" together with the "crisis of family" voiced by intellectuals and novelists of the 1910s and the decades that followed. As Zafer Toprak notes, the novels of these decades are particularly important for historiography because they fill the vacuum of what history books have excluded.[27] In this respect, Behar and Duben's study of Istanbul households evaluates late Ottoman and early Republican novels with specific emphasis on the "crisis of family." They reach out the conclusion that the discourse of crisis increased during the war years and encompassed themes of moral decline, the clash of generations, and the lack of paternal authority.

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25 Ibid., 19.

26 This leads to the assumption that sexual immorality was central to moral decline. Nonetheless, the notion of moral decline had complex social and political implications. Some descriptive accounts were published on moral decline, social problems, and prostitution during the First World War and the armistice period, predicating a story of an inevitable social and moral disintegration without questioning the term moral decline itself. For instance, see Özer, "Mütareke ve İşgal Yıllarında Osmanlı Devletinde Görülen Sosyal Çöküntü ve Toplumsal Yaşam"; Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi,"; Ulu, "I. Dünya Savaşı ve İşgal Sürecinde Istanbul'da Yaşanan Sosyal ve Ahlaki Çözülme 1914-1922."

27 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935)*, 283.

> At the beginning of the 1910s the situation starts to be viewed in crisis proportions as Ottoman society frees itself from nearly three decades of repressive authoritarian rule under Abdülhamid II. It is during this period, and especially during the war years and the 1920s, that reference is made to a 'family crisis'."[28]

As Toprak discusses in detail, the crisis also offered reform-minded intellectuals the opportunity to demand social change in line with the idea of creating a "national family."[29]

The terminology of moral decline, indeed, speaks for itself. Several expressions were used to define this phenomenon in the works of Ottoman intellectuals: moral crisis (*ahlak buhranı*), moral decay or decline (*ahlâkî çöküş*), social crisis (*ictimâî buhran*), movement of immorality (*ahlaksızlık ceryanı*), social ills (*ictimâî hastalık*). On the other hand, state documents referred to the phenomenon in a rather different way: acts against morality (*ahlâka mugâyir hareketler*), violation of public morality (*ahlâk-ı umûmîyeye hıyanet*) and breaking public morality (*ahlâk-ı umûmîyeyi iskât*). The point these expressions had in common was emphasis on "acts" or "behaviors" that promoted decadence. In this respect, state documents treated immorality more concretely and approached it as a type of crime. To be discussed in detail, this further illustrates that the Ottoman State considered morality within the wider scope of protecting public order.

§ 1.2 The Context: The Ottoman Empire in the First World War

The Ottoman state declared its mobilization on August 2, 1914, and entered into the war in late October on the side of the Central Powers – Germany and Austria-Hungary – against the Entente Powers – namely Britain, Russia, and France. At the time, the ruling party was the Committee of Union and Progress, the organization behind the victorious Constitutional Revolution that had overthrown the regime of Abdülhamid II in 1908. After the Tripoli

28 Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 199.

29 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935),* 14-16.

War with Italy in 1911 and the subsequent outbreak of the Balkan Wars, the empire was on the verge of territorial dissolution. Faced with a difficult decision when European powers called upon it to mobilize following the murder of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914, the Ottoman government hoped to restore its previous territorial losses with the help of the Central Powers. In Turkish historiography, the decision of the Ottomans to enter the war is discussed at great length with emphasis on the role of the "triumvirate," – the three powerful men in the CUP: Enver, Talat and Cemal – in the decision to side with Germany, ultimately to be defeated in the First World War. In his book, Mustafa Aksakal presents a complex picture of the Ottoman Empire's entrance into the war that employs both internal and external dynamics.[30] Indeed, in political circles in the Ottoman Empire, the war was an opportunity "to transform the empire into a politically and economically independent, modern country by removing foreign control and cultivating a citizenry that would be loyal to the state."[31] We should highlight the latter for the sake of our topic: wartime constituted a laboratory for reformers advocating social reform as a means to regenerate the Ottoman-Muslim community. They were convinced that national revival would only be possible when its social aspects were taken into consideration.

Expecting to revive opposition in the Muslim colonies of France and Great Britain as well as in the Muslim territories of Russia and to establish a religion-based unity with Arabs and Kurds in the empire, the Ottoman government proclaimed jihad in November 1914.[32] Hence, the war became "sacralized" both at home and abroad to legitimize and popularize the mobilization among the Muslim masses in Anatolia.[33] As discussed in this study, the declaration of jihad added to concerns about morality and strengthened moral discourse in both international and domestic debates regarding the

30 See Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*.

31 Ibid., 14.

32 "Introduction," Teitelbaum, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph: Sharifian Propaganda in World War I," 17–20.

33 Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad: The Role of Religious Motifs and Religious Agents in the Mobilization of the Ottoman Army," 95–96.

legitimation of the holy war. Acting in line with the Islamic principles and morality became a standard to test the legitimacy of an Ottoman-led jihad.

The Ottoman Empire succeeded on two fronts: Kut al-Amara and Çanakkale along with the conquest of the Transcaucasian region in 1918 and successful campaigns in Galicia and Romania in 1916-17. Especially Çanakkale became symbol of Ottoman resistance and blessed in public as a moment of national revival. However, on other fronts, especially on the Caucasian front against Russian troops, the Ottoman counter-offensives resulted in disastrous defeats. The Arab Revolt in 1916 led by Sharif Huseyn in Mecca with the support of British forces as well as attacks by British troops in Palestine and Mesopotamia broke the Ottoman resistance. Furthermore, Ottoman soldiers were poorly equipped and suffered from starvation and diseases including malaria, typhus, typhoid, syphilis, cholera, and dysentery.[34] Desertion was a significant problem caused both by harsh conditions on the battlefront as well as conditions on the homefront that made Ottoman soldiers and their families vulnerable.[35] In October 1918, with the defeat of Bulgaria, the Central Powers lost their territorial continuity. The Ottoman government immediately resigned and the new government started the process that resulted in the Armistice of Mudros on October 31, 1918.[36]

A significant amount of the scholarly work on the war points out that the homefront inquiry is as important as the battlefield. The very concept of "total war" implies the central role of domestic mobilization. The Ottoman Empire was no exception in this regard. However, homefront dynamics that dominate Ottoman historiography are ethnic conflicts. Along with tensions that occurred upon the arrival of the Muslim refugees from territories the empire had lost, massacres targeting the Armenian community dominate homefront narratives. Moreover, hunger, poverty, compulsory labor, and the heavy taxation of agriculture and husbandry as well as the constant attacks of deserters and plunderers on villages defined the living conditions of the Ot-

34 Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 176.

35 See Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion"; Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*.

36 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 120–121.

toman people on the homefront.[37] The urban population was affected by economic privation due to lack of access to transport. Istanbul was significantly affected by such privation, due to its reliance on imported goods. At the beginning of the war, the city met consumption needs with existing stock, but as the war went on, speculation, black marketeering, and rising inflation accompanied shortages. Eventually, a new class of war profiteers emerged from this scene.[38] These profiteers are discussed in both political and intellectual contexts as their lifestyles were often associated with moral decline.

As discussed by Mehmet Beşikçi in his book on the Ottoman mobilization, the concept of total war highlights the role of the state in total mobilization by which it gradually expanded its power, but the concept also refers to the reciprocal relationship between state power and society.[39] Also, the need for "mass participation" in the war increased the state's reliance on the people.[40] This point addresses the changing nature of the relationship between the state and society. Yiğit Akın explores this point in his work on soldiers' families by referring to the changing relationship between women and state authorities in the absence of male family members.[41] Through an analysis of women's petitions submitted to state authorities, he states that

> Implicitly or explicitly, the women argued that the state was obliged to support their families, whose sole breadwinners had been taken away by the state and the army. The rhetoric they employed clearly displayed their awareness of the moral obligation that the state had towards soldiers' families, whom it promised to shield in the absence of their protectors.[42]

37 Akın, "The Ottoman Home Front during World War I," 133–134.

38 See Toprak, *Ittihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*.

39 Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 7.

40 Ibid.

41 Akın, "War, Women, and the State."

42 Ibid., 26.

In this study, we discuss this point with reference to morality and family, emphasizing the protection of soldiers' family members from sexual assault. In addition, we highlight the importance of polemics on social values in the formation and dissolution of Muslim families, which, in turn, acted as a pretext for the Family Decree of 1917.

The occupation of Istanbul and some parts of Anatolia was marked by moral discourses that juxtaposed the occupiers and their collaborators with the national resistance movement in Anatolia. Together with occupation forces, the arrival of refugees from Russia who escaping the Russian Revolution brought about a change in the public sphere, entertainment, and leisure in Istanbul that for some contemporary observers – such as the famous neuropsychiatrist Dr. Mazhar Osman – resembled the Pompei of the Roman Empire.[43] With a few exceptions, the occupation years not fall within the scope of this study for both practical and contextual reasons. Although the period is fruitful in terms of discourses of moral decline, in many respects there were fundamental differences in the perception of immorality.

§ 1.3 Between Progress and Decline: The Intellectual Context of Discourses of Moral Crisis in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

What were the characteristics of discourses of moral decline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? What was the contribution of political and social upheavals like the First World War to intellectual debates on moral decline in the European context? The broader intellectual context of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century better clarifies how and why discourses of moral decline became popular among Ottoman intellectuals. Such a contextualization eliminates a particularistic approach to the Ottoman history while at the same time clarifies the distinctive characteristics of the Ottoman case. This further contributes to overcoming the biased view that

43 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935)*, 271–295. For a detailed analysis of the occupation, see Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923*.

the preconditions for discourses of moral decline can be reduced to the rise of prostitution. The notion of a "sense of decadence" has a long past dating back to the political thought of ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, but at that time, the discourse was part of a cyclical understanding of history that presupposed that "what goes up also come down."[44] Koenraad argues that the decline of the Roman Empire particularly influenced European thought to the extent of obsession "in the hope of finding an answer to the question of how their own society could escape a similar fate."[45] Moral decay in a society attracts intellectual and political interest as it was believed that such a decline in virtue constituted the major reason behind the decline of the Roman civilization. This thought is well expressed in Cicero's famous exclamation "O tempora, O mores!" by which he referred to corruption of his age.[46]

The idea of decadence prevailed in the medieval ages, as well; however, it was not perceived as integral to a natural course of events in which things "go up and down." Rather it was part of a "divine scheme preceding the ultimate salvation of the elect."[47] With the Renaissance, this gloomy understanding of history began to transform into an optimistic approach to future.[48] Although complaints about the current state of affairs continued in later periods, what made nineteenth century unique was the insistence on the inevitable victory of progress despite the intrusion of decadence. Moreover, decadence was treated as a necessary step; the old system had to diminish to open up space for the "birth of a new superior phase of civilization."[49] At this point, we should also take into account nineteenth-century discourses of "degeneration" which also applied to morality. Initially coined in psychiatry to define a deteriorated mental condition, the term *dégénérescence* had a powerful appeal in the natural sciences, particularly with reference to the

44 Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, 5.

45 Ibid., 6.

46 Ibid., 3. Edward Gibbon's account of the Roman Empire has been enormously influential for this line of thought. See Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

47 Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, 11.

48 Ibid., 18.

49 Ibid., 61.

theory of evolution.[50] Darwin's followers expanded the theory of evolution to cultural and social realms in search of affirmation of progress in human populations from a scientific point of view. In the context of the nineteenth century, such views became popular, and references to physical and moral degeneration led to infamous biological determinisms and eugenics.[51] Daniel Pick notes that by combining the ideas of evolution and progress, the language of degeneration in the nineteenth century had a different connotation from that of early sentiments that insisted on "the notion, or at least the question, of things getting worse": the language of degeneration "moves from its place as occasional sub-current of wider philosophies and political or economic theories, or homilies about the horrors of the French and the Industrial Revolutions, to become the center of a scientific and medical investigation."[52] However, it needs to be underscored that the term degeneration was not only used to characterize racial differences but also to identify internal dangers and crises within Europe involving moral decadence in terms of crime, alcoholism, prostitution, and suicide.[53] Paradoxically, these "social pathologies" emerged from rapid urbanization and industrialization as a consequence of "progress." Finding the "pathologies" to remove obstacles to progress came to be regarded as the scientific solution for degeneration. Degeneration and progress developed dialectically in a way that "civilization, science and economic progress might be the catalyst of, as much as the defense against, physical and social pathology."[54] Koenraad also draws attention to how paradoxical concepts – progress and decadence – combine: "It is, for example, not at all illogical to be convinced that in certain fields like religion or morality serious decline has taken place and yet to believe at the same

50 Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 2.

51 On the relationship between the social sciences and Darwinism, see Karaömerlioğlu, "Darwin ve Sosyal Bilimler."

52 Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 20.

53 Ibid., 21.

54 Ibid., 11.

time that in other areas like science and art great progress has been achieved."[55]

The language of degeneration is strongly connected to tensions and constant conflicts in the society that emerged in the course of the nineteenth century. The case of France is representative and important given the vast influence of French scholars on Ottoman intellectuals. Late nineteenth-century French republicans were inspired by the ideas and methods of Auguste Comte's positivism and anticipated the triumph of progress over religion: "Thus, a lay Republic that sought to replace religion with a 'scientific' morality, while preserving the 'natural' structures of the social order, could be regarded as a progressive force in history."[56] Auguste Comte, the leading figure of sociology and positivism, condemned the French Revolution in his search for social order, authority, and an organization to facilitate progress.[57] Emile Durkheim, the first professor of sociology, studied the years of tension between the revolution and the counter-revolution during the Third Republic.[58] Durkheim developed his theories as a means of overcoming political and social disintegration in French society and sought the means of "national regeneration."[59] In this respect, morality and moral values were important for reinforcing the ties among individuals that would eventually lead to the "division of labor" and harmonious social life.[60] This point, indeed, is crucial for understanding the approach of reformist Ottoman intellectuals who regarded science as an ultimate guide and sociology as the queen of the sciences with respect to coping with the problems of moral decline and establishing a new understanding of morality.[61]

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55 Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, x.

56 Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France The Medical Concept of National Decline*, 68.

57 Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, 69.

58 Royce, *Classical Social Theory and Modern Society*, 55–56.

59 Ibid., 56.

60 Ibid., 65.

61 On the emphasis of science in the Young Turk movement, see Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 289–311. For the place of sociology in shaping the worldviews of prominent

Interestingly, *fin-de-siècle* discourses on "decadence" together with the decadent movement in literature had lost its influence in France by the eve of the First World War. "A new state of mind" emerged among a new generation "who became known for their realistic attitude toward life, their interest in action and sport, and their antipathy to excessive speculation and self-analysis."[62] The war was welcomed as a step towards further regeneration.[63] Ottoman intellectuals guided by the sociological insights summarized above continued to believe that Ottoman society was experiencing the same sense of crisis, though in a belated fashion. Like the French case, they argue of the crisis was a sign of progress and a signifier of an upcoming national regeneration. On the other hand, a divine understanding of moral decay continued to dominate religious circles intermingled with contests over moral, political, and social authority. While discourses on "decadence" corresponded with discourses on moral decline in the late Ottoman context, "degeneration" had more to do with early republican eugenics, another – albeit more biological and medicalized – approach to morality.[64] Yücel Yanıkdağ's analysis of the concept of degeneration among Turkish neuropsychiatrists demonstrates that Turkish neuropsychiatrists such as Mazhar Osman, Fahrettin Kerim and İzzettin Şadan approached the First World War as a watershed moment that revealed inherited pathological conditions among prisoners of war, including the mental disorders.[65] In this sense, their medical claims served the ideals of reviving the nation by equating the health of the nation with the health of individuals.

The First World War brought about profound changes in the social, cultural, and political realms that had a long-lasting impact on intellectuals and public opinion. During the war, more than eight million men lost their lives

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Young Turks and the CUP, see Toprak, "Osmanlı'da Toplumbilimin Doğuşu." For Darwinism and Ottoman intellectuals, see Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm*.

62 Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, 195–196.

63 Ibid., 198.

64 On eugenics in the early Republican context, see Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e*; Alemdaroğlu, "Politics of the Body and Eugenic Discourse in Early Republican Turkey"; Atabay, "Eugenics, Modernity and the Rationalization of Morality in Early Republican Turkey."

65 Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation*.

on the battlefield.[66] The number of civilians killed during the war may have been even greater given that they were exposed to systematic violence by enemy countries through sieges, deportations, forced labor, mass executions, and bombardments targeting civilians.[67] Civilians were also targeted by their own governments and exposed to similar violence, including massacres such as that of the Armenian population living in the Ottoman Empire.

"For communities at war, military casualties predominate. The fundamental reality is loss of life and limb. All other considerations are secondary," wrote Adrian Gregory, drawing attention to the moral power of sacrifice evoked in the new ideals in society: "The needs of 'total war' subverted the dominant idea of political economy, the idea that the common good was served by the pursuit of self-interest. In its place it resurrected new forms of older ideals, those of Christian martyrdom and 'republican' civic humanism in which self-interest was contrasted to the common good."[68] On the homefront, hunger and famine overshadowed other concerns, adding to the moralization of everyday life. "Moral judgment" worked well to distinguish between "profiteers and the nation at war" and reinforced senses of collective solidarity and the common good.[69]

On the other hand, significant loss of young men during the war put great pressure on the traditional family given the high number of widows and orphans left behind. Those men who returned home were "destroyed" by the physical and mental effects of the war. Many of committed suicide some found solace in alcohol or, as Mazower wrote, "tried to reassert their authority by beating their wives and children."[70] "A newly fatherless community" had emerged further provoking the sense of moral and social disorder.[71] At the end of the war, the rate of population decline triggered governments to in-

66 Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 80.

67 Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*, 46.

68 Gregory, "Lost Generations: The Impact of Military Casualties on Paris, London, and Berlin," 57.

69 Winter and Robert, "Conclusions: Towards a Social History of Capital Cities at War."

70 Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 80.

71 Ibid.

crease not only the quantity but also the quality of their nations' populations.[72] For contemporary observers, the war broadened the reach of the idea of degeneration from psychiatry to different contexts.[73] In this context, family and family values – with a strong emphasis on motherhood – came to be more central to interwar European politics and ideology than before.[74]

The new morality of the collective good was reflected in the foundation of secular morality of the early Turkish republic in line with other continuities between late Ottoman and republican thought.[75] In 1931, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk explicitly wrote in the book titled *Vatandaş İçin Medenî Bilgiler* (Civics for the Citizen) that

> Turks have a shared morality. This high morality does not resemble that of any other nation.… When I say moral, I do not mean advice given in books on morals.… Morals are above individuals, and they can only be societal, national.... Some people say that religious unity can play a role in nation formation, but we see the opposite in the Turkish nation.[76]

§ 1.4 Arguments and Plan of the Study

This study explores discourses of public morality and moral crisis at three interrelated levels. The first is the intellectual level and focuses on polemics of moral decline among Ottoman intellectuals in juxtaposition with each other. Considering morality as a contested space among the conflicting ideologies of the period, I examine journals that represent these ideologies, namely the Journal of Islam (*İslam Mecmuası*), New Journal (*Yeni Mecmua*), and Straight Road (*Sebilürreşad*). Since debates on morality revolved around the

72 Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*, 47.

73 Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 17.

74 Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 82.

75 On the continuities between late Ottoman and early Republican thought, see Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*.

76 Afet İnan, *Vatandaş için Medenî Bilgiler*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), 12, quoted in: Hanioğlu, *Atatürk*, 182.

place of women in society, I also include articles from several women's journals such as Homeland of Knowledge (*Bilgi Yurdu*), Young Woman (*Genç Kadın*), Women's World (*Kadınlar Dünyası*), and Flowing (*Seyyale*). Through the analysis of several articles on morality, this study shows that morality played a vital role in ideological conflicts of the time. The conflict was especially clear between Turkish nationalists and political Islamists.[77] There were some preconditions for this increasing tension. The First World War, in particular, brought an urgency to discussions of social problems in Ottoman society. For moral decline polemicists, the war served as a laboratory in which to ground their theories on the destructive effects of immorality. The war exacerbated a sense of anxiety both about diminishing traditional values and about so-called corruptive new adaptations. On the other hand, particular political and ideological developments such as the rise of Turkish nationalism added to these tensions, the background of which started with the revolution of 1908.

The CUP government was challenged in the immediate aftermath of the constitutional revolution by the liberals (*Ahrar Fırkası*) that sought to decentralize the empire and the religious class – the *ulema* – who organized around the idea of "restoring the Islamic Law" – although the Sharia had not been abolished at all. In 1909, the opposition against the CUP turned into an armed movement shedding blood in the streets of the capital city and voicing demands that Islamic principles (including prohibition of bars and theatres, the prohibition of photography, and imposing restrictions on the freedom of movement of women) be imposed along with some other political demands such as marginalization of some of the Unionists. The event, known as the Uprising of 31 March, left its mark on the collective memory

77 As discussed by Zürcher, labeling the late Ottoman intelligentsia into three groups "Islamists," "Turkists," or "Westernists" does not reflect the complexity of the Ottoman political spectrum, and such labels do not explain the CUP policies and the inconsistencies within those policies. See the chapter titled "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists" in Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 213–235. I use the labels of nationalist or reformist to indicate intellectual circles who wanted Islam to be adjusted to the needs of society, and of political Islamists for those who wanted society to be adjusted to the rules of Islam.

of the late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic as a counterrevolution. It was a remarkable, as well, since moral crisis was central to the calls of Sheikh Vahdeti, the leader of the uprising: "The empire is collapsing; the foundation of this collapse is in the Western morality."[78] With the Uprising of 31 March, morality discourses gained a new political meaning.

The years following the event were characterized by bitter political struggle up until 1913. In 1913, the CUP took the power via a military coup known as *Bâb-ı Âli Baskını*. The CUP leadership aimed at establishing absolute authority in order to prevent further territorial loss after the outbreak of war in the Balkans. From then on, the Ottoman government was under the control of the CUP and the powerful figures of Enver, Cemal, and Talat Pashas.[79] Amit Bein calls this period as the "political marginalization of the ulema."[80] In this period, a discourse on the similarity between European clergy and the ulema accompanied radical steps to eliminate the jurisdiction of the şeyhülislam over sharia courts and remove his seat from the cabinet. The administration of religious endowments (*evkaf*) was transferred to the newly established Ministry of Religious Foundations (*Evkaf Nezareti*). Islamic schools (*medrese)* were brought under the authority of the Ministry of Education, and their curriculum was modernized.[81] Throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire, family law had remained a stronghold of the ulema. With the introduction of the new Family Decree of 1917, its religious tone notwithstanding, the ulema lost its monopoly over the formation and the dissolution of the marriages. Also, the ulema traditionally had the right to officially answer moral and ethical questions in the Ottoman Empire. Such moral judgments were not mere intellectual exercises, they constituted the

78 Vahdeti, "Buhran-i Vükelâ, *Volkan*, no. 46, 1908, 203, quoted in Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı*, 109.

79 Many works on the period refer to them as a "triumvirate" to emphasize the power of these three famous pashas of the CUP. However, Zürcher asserts that the idea of a triumvirate is an oversimplification, especially during the period of the First World War. The committee had many factions and many other powerful leaders. See Zürcher, *Turkey*, 110.

80 Bein, Ottoman *Ulema, Turkish Republic Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition*, 23–24.

81 Zürcher, Turkey, 121–122.

basis of both religious and secular lawmaking.[82] In this respect, morality discourses had political implications. This explains how and why tensions regarding moral polarizations escalated so quickly and occupied such an important position in political conflicts. In addition, while the CUP eliminated the political power of the Ottoman ulema to an extent, it adopted a pragmatic approach to the relationship between politics and religion. The declaration of jihad as part of the war effort during the First World War clearly shows this. The committee's grand vizier was Said Halim Paşa, who was a declared political Islamist. Such paradoxical attitudes were the result of complex political relations and developments. At the end of the war, when the CUP lost power, Mustafa Sabri, the new şeyhülislam and an opponent of the CUP regime, dedicated his office "to revers[ing] the emasculation of the religious establishment and reassert[ing] the observance of traditional Islamic norms and practices in the public sphere."[83] He used the anti-CUP political atmosphere to revive the moral authority of the ulema. Through a "morality commission" established under the Islamic Academy (*Dar'ül-Hikmet'il-İslamiye*) in 1918, he prioritized the regulation of public morality by issuing official decrees and "guidelines" as well as the reporting of cases of violated morality to police and necessary institutions.[84] Such cases ranged from alcohol consumption to the violation of the fast during Ramadan, to immoral content in theater plays and the press, to disregard for gender segregation, and to women's attire and public appearance. I mention this commission while discussing intellectual views on morality.

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82 Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Nasihatname as a Discourse over 'morality,'"25. Zarinebaf explains the notion of justice as follows: "The notion of justice in the Ottoman Empire was based on two traditions. The first was the ancient Near Eastern and Iranian (Sassanid) theory of the Circle of Justice that passed from the Seljuks and the Ilkhanids to the Ottomans and formed the legal philosophy of the imperial law codes issued by Ottoman sultans, most notably Mehmed II (1444–46, 1451–81), Bayezid II (1481–1512), and Süleyman Kanuni (1520-66). The second involved the Islamic ethical principles of morality, equity, and social justice contained in the Qur'an and the Prophet's sayings and deeds that evolved into the shari'a." *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul*, 149.

83 Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition*, 97.

84 Ibid., 98.

The declaration of jihad during the war made the Ottoman Empire more vulnerable to critique targeting lifestyles within the empire that were "incompatible" with Islam. In this framework, morality was of broad and intense interest in discussions of the legitimacy of the caliphate. The sensitiveness of the political situation increased with defeat at the end of the war. Therefore, the fight over morality became more explicit among the intellectuals, particularly between Turkish nationalists and political Islamists. Interestingly, in this intellectual contest both parties accused the other of being the ideological carrier of degeneration. Especially during the end of the war, the contest was clearly due to increasing political tensions. Since the Ottoman Empire was defeated on the battlefield, the ideology around the Caliphate and jihad was questioned, as well. This counterpropaganda was particularly evident in the British press which explicitly argued that the Ottoman Empire did not qualify for a "holy war" due to widespread amoral behaviours observed among the Ottoman Muslims. In addition to British propaganda, the anti-Ottoman propaganda of Arab nationalists' further questioned the sultan's right to the caliphate. Sharifian propaganda against Ottoman rule was based on the claim that Sharif Husayn was against those who had violated the sharia by ordaining secular laws and lifestyles.[85] This increased the anxiety of Islamists with respect to moral decline and added a dimension that can be formulated as "the whole Muslim world is watching us."

As a matter of fact, the discourse on moral decline was accompanied by a discourse on the need for "social reform" and the transformation of the Ottoman Muslim mentality that was perceived as medieval and backward. Moreover, there was a dilemma that came to the surface during the war: while the Ottomans were at war with the Entente Powers, at the same time they admired the progress and advancement of "enemy countries" such as France and Britain. The influence of yet another country, Germany, was growing in the Ottoman Empire. As a result, fears about the growing influence of European culture and the loss of authentic Muslim identity solidified. As the war progressed, social problems became even more visible and this

85 Teitelbaum, "The Man Who Would Be Caliph: Sharīfian Propaganda in World War I," 284.

caused a gradual increase in the morality discourse. Therefore, for moral decline polemicists, the issue was deeper than the problems of increasing prostitution and venereal diseases.

This study shows that political tension between the Islamists and Turkish nationalists was transfigured in the intellectual realm as a conflict about the sources of morality. While Islamists insisted that Islam and Islamic principles were the only sources of morality, nationalists argued for the need for a new morality, namely "national morality," which would transcend the scope of religious principles and encompass progressive ideals. What united these two ideologies was their critique of the Tanzimat era – wherein European values had penetrated into the society – as well as their critique of materialism with reference to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In fact, it was the nationalist challenge to traditional Islamist thought that triggered the heated debate on morality. Ziya Gökalp invented the concept of "national morality" through which he theorized a "new life" for Ottoman Turks. In an article he published under the pseudonym Demirtaş, titled "Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler" (New life and new values), he asserted that "we have achieved the political revolution; now we are confronted yet with another task: To prepare for the social revolution."[86] Among the principles of new life, morality occupied a central role: "A new life means, obviously, a new form of economy, a new form of family life, new aesthetic standards, a new morality, a new conception of law, and a new political system."[87] He developed this idea further in his book "Principles of Turkism" in which he classified morality under several headings.[88] His idea of solidarity (*tesanüd*) was also established on the basis of new morality. New life would be implanted in the new family to create a national identity.[89] By questioning the content of the morality that Islamists defended, he opened the gate for the reform of untouched zones in Ottoman society. The idea of social

86 Ziya Gökalp, "Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler, *Genç Kalemler*, no.9 (1911), quoted in, Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, 55.

87 Ibid., 56.

88 Devereaux, *The Principles of Turkism*.

89 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935)*, 15.

reform indeed became the genesis of the new values and new morality that would serve the purposes of the advancement of society and the collective good. Obviously, the family and women were important for achieving this purpose.

How, then, could reformists claim the need to reform the very areas traditionally claimed by the sharia? Niyazi Berkes convincingly evaluates this point in *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* and concludes that both the Islamists and the Turkish nationalists agreed on the necessity of reform in the name of progress. The real struggle was to define the limits of sharia and to determine what needed to be changed or replaced in Islamic society. The Islamists "persistently sought arguments for enlarging the scope of the Sharia to cover areas of life that were traditionally regarded as outside the Sharia."[90] The "New Life Group" on the other hand, penetrated the stronghold of the ulema with a simple question: "Which of the traditional institutions are in a state of decline, are thus factors of cultural maladjustment, and therefore are to be eliminated as a pre-condition of reforming those parts of life related to them?"[91] I argue that the last stronghold was morality, and the state of moral decline indeed strengthened the claims on both sides. The new morality, as formulated by the nationalists, prevailed and constituted the basis for early republican secularism. Claiming and re-claiming the spheres of religion is an ongoing debate; its form becomes concrete particularly on morality-related issues.

Following this summary of the intellectual debates on morality, I turn my interest to the second level: political regulations and their limits regarding the protection of morality. This study assesses the extent to which moral decline debates were reflected the political sphere. In this regard, two dimensions of the Ottoman homefront call for careful analysis: the abolition of the capitulations and the expansion of military power due to the extension of martial law. Only after the unilateral abolition of the capitulations at the outbreak of the war was the Ottoman government finally able to control brothels and take action to prevent the trafficking of women by foreign citizens

90 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 361.

91 Ibid., 381.

in the empire. The proclamation of martial law expanded the power of the military to undertake measures to ensure public morality. Based on archival research conducted in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, BOA), this chapter reveals the deportation and banishment of those engaged in prostitution. Accordingly, some civilians whose settlement in territories under martial law was considered harmful were banished from these territories for the sake of the mobilization. This measure was applied to those inciting violations of public morality, such as prostitutes, procurers, and debauchers. Their cases were considered an issue of national security during the mobilization. The punishment of immorality ordered by the military was a significant phenomenon of the war, contextualizing it as a national security concern. Given the insecure environment that emerged during the war, foreign citizens living in the empire applied for Ottoman citizenship. In this study, I examine citizenship applications of foreign nationals that were declined due to immorality. The fact that none of these applicants obtained citizenship shows how moral judgment and national security concern intersected. Such wartime measures enabled the dismissal of "undesirable" elements in the society.

Obviously, the Ottoman government's motivation for eliminating prostitution in certain areas concerned the spread of venereal disease. As discussed in this chapter, this was also the case in many belligerent countries in the First World War. I consider prostitution as a space that one can observe the cultural rivalry that intensified over the course of the war. For many contemporary writers, prostitution was not the reason for moral decline, but rather the result of it.

For state authorities, the violation of public morality was a part of the concern for public order. Despite heated debates that even involved state elites, the Ottoman government kept the definition of public morality offenses under the discretionary authority of the courts and never attempted to define the limits of violations of public morality. Through the end of the war, *Tanin*, the mouthpiece of the government published two editorials on issues

of morality.[92] The articles argued that moral decline manifests itself in three ways: first, prostitution and public manners; second, war profiteering; and third, the misuse of official services. After these two articles stressed the duty of the government to protect public morality, the public apparently considered these editorial articles as new measures. *Tanin* therefore published a short notification indicating that the government had no intention to take new steps to uphold morality; rather, the newspaper reminded the people of existing laws in the Ottoman Penal Code. On prostitution, though, the notification said that the offices were collecting information on prohibitive measures.[93]

In daily life, the protecting public morality had broader implications than counteracting prostitution. Therefore, I include a sub-chapter on the sumptuary laws, war profiteering, regulation of entertainment venues and conspicuous consumption, and official approaches to alcohol and gambling. By juxtaposing the popular perceptions of immorality and political measures, I argue that the Ottoman government's pragmatic approach towards "vices" considered signifiers or causes of immorality intensified during the war. This was partly due to limitations on the state power that accompanied financial concerns, as such "vices" constituted a good amount of the state's budget.

In the final chapter, I focus on the Ottoman family and dynamics in provincial areas that contributed to the involvement of the state in the family vis-à-vis morality. I examine rape, sexual assault, and adultery cases that involved soldiers' families. Throughout the war, soldiers, the women of their families, and locals such as village elders and military officers continuously sent complaints to the Ministry of War, the Ministry of the Interior Affairs, and in some cases to provincial authorities or the Ottoman parliament. I consider these petitions as instruments calling state authorities to take measures

92 "Ahlâk Mes'eleleri," *Tanin*, September 14, 1918; "Adâb-ı Umûmîye Mes'eleleri," *Tanin*, September 16, 1918.

93 "Nezâret mevcud maddenin tatbikini dikkatle takib edecektir. Ceza kanunu âdâb-ı umûmîyeye muhalefeti tarif etmeyerek takdirî bir halde bırakmıştır. Nezâret kanunu tefsire kalkışmayacak ve mahkemelerin hakk-ı takdirine riayet eyleyecektir. Bir fiilin âdâb-ı umûmîyeye muhalif olub olmadığı meselesi hükkâmın takdiriyle ta'yin edecektir." *Tanin*, August 31, 1918.

to prevent rapes, abductions, assaults, and threats. I argue that moral concerns lay behind the attempts at legislation regarding the protection of families. Hitherto in the historiography, these laws are examined separately. Moreover, researchers often suppose that the motivation of the state for penetrating the family was as a means of modernization. However, a close look at individual cases shows that given the circumstances of war, state involvement in the family showed a reciprocal character. In line with the previously discussed point on the changing relationship between the state and society, I argue that state intervention not only stemmed from the keen interest of the state or military alone but was also shaped by demand from below in cases concerning honor.

I consider four main attempts at legislation in this chapter. The first was a general order by the Ministry of the Interior Affairs announcing measures to be undertaken against the perpetrators of sexual attacks. Second, I focus on a provisional law by which cases of sexual assault of soldiers' relatives were taken to martial courts. Third, I explore an unsuccessful legislative attempt by the Ministry of War entitled "Adultery Draft" that would have authorized the military to file complaints and initiate the legal process against unfaithful wives on behalf of soldiers. Finally, I turn my attention to the Ottoman Rights of Family Decree of 1917 (*Hukûk-u Aile Kararnamesi*) and contextualize it within the moral dynamics.

Although statistics of morality-related crimes are not available, the frequency of attempts to legislate them along with the immense interest of Ottoman intellectuals show that crimes violating morality resulted in the questioning of existing social norms and moral values in society. I argue that the willingness of state authorities to regulate family formation and dissolution, and intellectual concerns about the moral codes of society are interrelated. The ruling elite as well as ordinary people were thereby convinced that it should no longer be taboo to regulate the family realm. As the focus of these regulations was "protecting the honor of the soldiers," I argue that social unrest caused by sexual assaults contributed to these regulations. The sexual assaults, rapes, and abductions targeting soldiers' relatives not only contributed to concerns about morality but also contradicted official war propaganda regarding the protection of women in soldiers' families. In the long run, state

intervention paved the way for more radical but legitimate steps to be taken. I evaluate the topic together with debates on social reform that were based on the degeneration of Muslim families. When advocates of family reform questioned the degeneration of Muslim families, they ended up struggling with existing moral values. Can legislation change the norms in society? Apparently, Ottoman intellectuals and reformers introduced legislation as a means of introduce new family values. The advocates of family reform linked the wellbeing of adolescents, women, and men to those of the nation, legitimizing the need for reform.

Besides the current literature on the First World War, this study is based mainly on documents in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives in Istanbul and on periodicals and newspapers that were published during the period in question. Especially chapters 3 and 4 rely on archival sources. Among the catalogs in the archives, I benefited from the documents of the Ministry of the Interior Affairs (Dahiliye Nezareti) which include files belonging to the Interior Administration (İdare-i Umumiye) and the Police Department (Emniyet-i Umumiye). I also benefited from the First World War collection in the Archives of Turkish General Staff (ATASE). Beside the archival documents of state officials, I examined letters and petitions from people banished from martial law areas to central Anatolia in order to better present the lives of people who carried the stigma of immorality. Given that petitions are among the very few sources in social history that present the voices of ordinary people, I consider the letters from soldiers and the women in their families to various state departments as primary sources that reveal how moral anxieties played a role in state intervention in the family. In addition, such letters indicate the bilateral nature of this intervention. The stories in these documents also expose the wartime circumstances on the homefront that contributed decisively to social and political transformation in the empire. Along with archival documents, the newspaper articles and the minutes of the Ottoman parliament cited in this study help to frame the morality discussion. Articles from various journals that represent the views of the Ottoman intelligentsia offer details on how morality became contested in the turmoil of the war. The term morality was itself a battlefield.

Throughout this study, significant space is reserved for the "women issue" in morality debates. The points of departure for discussions about morality show that Muslim women's participation in social and economic life was a common question. This was partly due to the fact that as more women became visible in the public sphere, their role in the society was discussed more. As harsh economic conditions prevailed in cities, women on the Ottoman homefront – like in other belligerent countries in the First World War – were employed in war factories and state institutions as well as in municipalities and marketplaces. Many middle class women undertook active roles in war aid societies including the Red Crescent (Hilâl-i Ahmer).[94] For the first time in the history of the Empire, women had right to pursue university education following the foundation of the Women's University (İnas Darülfünunu). Although small in number, women also served in labor battalions. All these facts contributed to the heated debates about women's place in society and their political and economic rights.[95]

The Ottoman feminist movement also contributed to these debates. Starting in the 1890s, the movement demanded the inclusion of women in the public sphere in a society where gender segregation and inequality were justified with reference to Islamic law.[96] The movement questioned practices such as polygyny in Muslim families. The voices of Ottoman women in the mid- and late nineteenth century were echoed in literature when the literacy rate among Ottoman urbanites increased due to education campaigns and increasing participation of elite women in the press.[97] The Constitutional Revolution of 1908 completely changed the social and cultural lives of the Ottoman people, and women started to openly ask for legal rights, for family reform, for recognition in social life, to work outside the house, and to have access to higher education. Toprak argues that the ideals of the constitutional monarchy (*meşrutiyet*) paved the way for the socialization of women within the framework of a new public sphere that replaced the old, exclusively male-

94 Van Os, *Feminism, Philanthropy and Patriotism.*

95 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908-1935)*, 1–17.

96 Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız Inkılap*, 42–97.

97 Frierson, "Women in Late Ottoman Intellectual History."

dominated order.[98] By the end of the war, the focus of the "women problem" had shifted from "Muslim women" to the "Turkish women" in line with rising nationalism. Despite this shift, morality continued to be a dominant aspect. For example, Nezihe Muhiddin, the leading feminist figure of the time, formulated an ideal Turkish womanhood that would respect rationality, national consciousness, and national morality.[99]

Immediately after the end of the First World War, many observers were aware that things had changed in the societies of the belligerent countries, and this change was often expressed with gloomy words such as corruption, degeneration, and disorder. Authorities and intellectuals did not welcome this change, regardless of its description. The war had created widespread moral anxiety in almost all belligerent countries including their colonies. At the end of the war, along with emphasis on the need for population growth, family and its power to regenerate the nation became major points of interest. Many works were published regarding the negative effects of war on morality. It was in this environment that the "Einstein of Sex," the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, would write *The Sexual History of the World War.*[100] Sudhindra Lal Roy, the Indian columnist, would contribute to the literature with a book correlating war and immorality, showing "the moral loss of the human society from war."[101]

The war years were reconstructed in the literary works during the early Republic of Turkey as a moment of moral polarization providing further clues to interpret the prevailing mentality of the time. Even decades later, moral degeneration stories continued to evoke the devastating effects of the war and occupation in the collective memory of the Turkish people. Leading figures of Turkish literature such as Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Yakup Kadri

98 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Popülizm*, 260.

99 Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap*, 76–77.

100 Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War*.

101 Roy Sudhindra Lal, *War and Immorality*. To this list we can add Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*) on the cyclical history of the decline of civilizations, which was popular when published in 1918. Spengler argues that the First World War was a further step toward the total fall of Western civilization.

Karaosmanoğlu, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Peyami Safa, and Halide Edip were all inspired by the theme of moral crisis. The imagery of moral degeneration was influential in the formation of Turkish secularism and nationalism.

I intend this study as an integrated account that considers wider internal and external political and social developments together with the experiences of common men and women; however, I abbreviate the political and military history of the period because they have been told by many scholars in a comprehensive fashion.[102] I also limit the discussion to moral crisis, and this study does not claim to offer an exhaustive historical account of prostitution, venereal disease, sexual norms, and moral conduct.

102 See especially Erickson, *Ordered to Die; A Military History of the Ottomans*; Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I*; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*.