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The Ottoman Empire and the emergence of its ‘Irish Question’

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Ireland had a strangely prominent position in the early revolutionary formulations. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels placed the country at the centre of their political blueprint. There was an overall positivity about it. The Irish peasantry had proletariat-like qualities; an honour bestowed upon no other rural community. Even the nationalism in Ireland was a progressive force. They argued that the power of the British aristocracy stemmed from their possessions in Ireland. Therefore, a united Irish and English proletarian movement could end the authority of the landed nobility and this would, in return, trigger a European uprising. ‘The lever’, which was going to unhinge a global revolution, ‘must be applied in Ireland’, Marx wrote to Engels in a letter dated December 1869.

It has been suggested that this disproportionate interest, disproportionate at any rate given the size of the country, was a result of the individual connections of the two men. John Rodden stated that Marx and Engels in fact ‘struggled’ to incorporate Ireland into their political framework because of their intimate bonds. According to him, it was the ‘compelling and lifelong personal and cultural tie [that] wielded unacknowledged and possibly decisive force on their theoretical program and helped make Ireland the historical exception that it became in their work’. As an Ottoman historian living in Dublin, I can sympathize with the famous duo. Ireland is a fascinating country with an equally fascinating history, and one would ideally like to include it into one’s scholarly writing. But does it fit in?

Hitherto the history of the Ottoman Empire and Ireland has been subject to popular accounts focusing solely on the Sultan Abdülmecid’s celebrated aid to Ireland during the Great Hunger in 1847. Two countries have been considered to ‘lie a continent apart’ and without any connection save a chance happening. Was it really the case? Were the Ottomans not aware of the happenings in Ireland? In other words, was the Ottoman help to Ireland really by chance or rather a result of deliberate and watchful policies developed over the years? This article analyses the Ottoman Empire’s perception of Ireland and how it evolved through different stages in connection with the Empire’s own political trajectory. Here, in a nutshell, it is proposed that another history of Ireland and the Ottoman Empire is possible.

The Ottoman diplomatic history is one of the least studied aspects of the Empire. When historians talk about its foreign relations at its last phase, they tend to depict the Sublime Porte as a pawn of European power games without any agency of its own. We often forget that non-Western regions had their international relations strategies, political agendas, and foreign policy priorities even in the nineteenth century. As Selçuk Esenbel has shown, there were ‘alternative pattern[s] of international relations [which were not] registered in treaties’. Even though a new generation of scholars are looking at various aspects of the Empire’s social and intellectual history, its relations with the outside world, apart from those with great powers, remain uncharted territory. The aim of this article, to repeat the main point here more succinctly,
is to contribute towards a better understanding of the Ottoman relations with the outside world through the perspective of Ireland, or rather through the Ottoman perspective of Ireland.

To this end, the article starts with a review of the historical background. This part conducts an archaeology of the word Ireland and aims to establish precisely when the term first appeared in Ottoman sources. The next section deals with the increasing Ottoman preoccupation with Europe. Especially after the French Revolution, Istanbul not only lost an historical ally but also found itself struggling to understand the ever-changing European political kaleidoscope. Here the French expedition to Ireland in 1796 and the Irish Rebellion of 1798 were recounted through the lens of Ottoman informers in Europe. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the growing Ottoman interest in Ireland. Their concentration on the O’Connell affair and the Repeal Year are particularly described with various sources from the archives. It is also briefly disputed that the Ottoman aid during the Great Hunger could be a calculated decision based on historical knowledge of the situation on the Island. An account of the Ottoman network in the country is also offered here. These links were either official channels like consulates in different cities or informal webs of Ottoman agents maintained by Istanbul through various means. The article ends with an evaluation of the historical synchronicity which marked the beginnings of Modern Turkey and the Irish Free State.

**Historical background**

Those who are used to hearing about the Ottoman apathy for the outside world would be surprised to learn that the intellectuals of the Empire were aware of a country named Ireland from very early on. A late sixteenth-century Ottoman traveller and cosmographer, Âşık Mehmed (d. 1613) wrote about it at length as the last refuge of paganism in Europe. The details, which were based on earlier books of geography, are puzzling. With its frequent references to fire-worshipping and whaling, the passage probably meant some sort of Viking settlement rather than Ireland per se. The Vikings were known as fire-worshippers (majus) by the Medieval Arabs, and unlike the Irish, they were great whalers. Yet this confusion does not change the fact that the word Irlanda found its way into the Ottoman vocabulary and began to appear, albeit sporadically, in Ottoman sources.

The seventeenth-century Ottoman polymath, Kâtib Çelebi (d. 1657), is probably the first person to give a detailed description of the island as Hiberniya in his Levâmi’u’n-Nûr fl’ Zulmet-i Atlas Minor. The book, as the title intimates, was mostly a translation of Gerardus Mercator’s Atlas Minor, first published in 1606 as a ‘pocket edition’ of the Atlas sive Cosmographia. In a surprisingly accurate rendition, Kâtib Çelebi gave a thorough history of Ireland from Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair to Henry VIII. He, following the original text, divided the population into two distinct groups: unruly wild Irish (vilt iriş) and law-abiding Anglo-Irish (anglo ibernisi). The text is intriguing. One can see from his choice of words that Kâtib, as an Ottoman civil servant, understood and sympathized with the English in their ‘civilizing mission’. In parts where he talked about subduing the population, his language became approving and even stronger than the original writing. Kâtib, one should remember, had participated in the campaigns against Ottoman rebels in Central Anatolia in his salad days and this experience had left a profound mark on the man in the following years.

The Ottoman literary scene was not inundated with references to Ireland after the translation of Atlas Minor. There were, nevertheless, occasional mentions which can be traced back to its influence. A late seventeenth to early eighteenth-century jurist, Uşşâkizâde İbrâhîm Efendi (d. 1724), who knew of Kâtib enough to testify to his good character, referred to Ireland in his chronicle of Ottoman history. Râmi Mehmed Pasha, another seventeenth century figure, had also mentioned Ireland in connection with England in his History of the Peace. These intermittent references, admittedly trifling, can be seen as signs of mounting Ottoman interest in Europe.
Just before the beginning of a global conflict, which was later to be known as the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), Istanbul began to receive more regular intelligence from the West through its network of informants. The likelihood of a French arrival on Irish soil was reported in March 1756, even before the start of the war. The Topkapı Palace archives have quite a few dispatches reporting recurrent famines or ‘English cruelty’ taking place in Ireland. The Ottomans, however, had to wait until the end of the eighteenth century to make themselves more familiar with the affairs of Europe in general and of Ireland in particular.

The Ottoman Empire and Ireland during the French Revolution

France was the closest thing that the Ottoman State had to an ally in the West. Since the times of Süleyman (r. 1520–1566) and Francis I (r. 1515–1547), two empires had an understanding against their common enemy, the Habsburgs. It was to France that Istanbul sent their most important missions and the country played a central role as a model in the history of Ottoman modernization. Selim III (r. 1789–1807), who was the Sultan at the turn of the eighteenth century had even corresponded with Louis XVI (r. 1774–1792) as an heir apparent to ask his advice regarding the Empire’s future. According to one diplomatic source in Istanbul, when the news of Louis’s execution reached the Topkapı Palace, Selim fell ill, terror stricken with what had happened to his royal brother.

Whatever the feeling of the Sultan was, the Ottoman civil servants must have been more worried about the implications of the Revolution to their country. After all, the execution of an undesirable monarch was not something unprecedented in the history of the Empire. Securing accurate information from Europe at this crucial time, however, proved rather difficult. The Ottoman Foreign Office was still in the making back then and it would not come to full force until the 1850s. Even the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, which was supposedly the most important diplomatic post in Europe and in an ideal world should have been filled with the best available candidate, often exasperated Selim with his credulity. Due to the inexperience of Muslim cadres, Istanbul relied upon the reports of Christian Moldovan and Wallachian governors who were traditionally responsible for garnering intelligence from Europe.

It was within this context that the governor of Moldova (Boğdan Voyvodası), Alexandru Callimachi (d. 1821) gave a very detailed account of the 1796 French expedition to Ireland. This was a failed mission to assist the Irish republicans in their projected rising against British rule. As with everywhere else in the world, the French Revolution had changed the political landscape in Ireland. William Pitt the Younger (d. 1806), British Prime Minister, had to deal with the rampant popularity of the Society of United Irishmen throughout the 1790s. Initially formed in Belfast with the aim of reforming the Irish Parliament, the Society had turned into a republican organization under the influence of the American and French Revolutions. As the report pointed out, however, the timing of the French campaign could not have been less opportune. The weather, Callimachi wrote, was extremely unfavourable with adverse winds and heavy seas. The French fleet was not prepared for such an operation: several ships were wrecked, and thousands died without ever seeing Bantry Bay, which had been the target of the campaign. Yet Alexandru Callimachi was impressed with Ireland’s willingness to join the fight. The nine provinces, he maintained, already took up arms to free their state from England. In his opinion, France understood very well (fehim ve teyakkun etti) that Ireland was becoming more and more revolutionary each day. For the Ottoman governor, it was only a matter of time before France came back with a better equipped fleet.

Later developments proved Callimachi right. France indeed came back and landed in Mayo in August 1798. Upon their arrival, French General Humbert distributed revolutionary material in which he asked, ‘Brave Irishmen’ to shed their blood ‘in the sacred cause of liberty.’ Ireland rose once more against England. Istanbul monitored these developments closely thanks to the
thoroughness of its informers. The governor of Wallachia, Alexander Ypsilantis (d. 1805), for instance, pointed out the economic difficulties that the Prime Minister, Pitt, was facing because of the endless ‘commotion and sedition’ (şûr u fitne) taking place in Ireland. The public in Britain, he asserted, wanted him to be replaced by someone more willing to bring peace to the country. From time to time, the Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, Ibrahim Afif Efendi, also weighed in and informed Istanbul about the course of the rising. In October 1798, for instance, he reported that despite 24,000 deaths, the revolt was boiling ever more loudly and violently (günbegün isyanın cûşiş üzere olduğu).

It is worth noting that during the climax of the conflict, William Wyndham Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville, (d. 1834), wrote three detailed memoranda to Istanbul in which he explained what one might call the Crown’s side of the story. The letters, which are only available through Ottoman translations, are interesting as Grenville, then the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, documented almost day to day operations taking place in Ireland. He particularly emphasized that the dispute had no religious colouring and was simply orchestrated by ‘violent individuals’ (zorbalar). In his account, the dignitaries of the Catholic Church tried very hard to subdue the insurrection by pointing out that they were never discriminated against on the basis of religion. ‘We would have,’ they reportedly said, ‘sacrificed our lives and wealth if this was a question of rite (ayin). But it is not, and this will end badly. You will lose your lives and goods for nothing.’ True to the character of a capable politician, Lord Granville successfully conveyed the feeling that the uprising was well under control. Indeed, in February 1799, Moldovan governor, Callimachi, wrote that Ireland was finally free (müberrâ) of any ‘sedition and revolution’.

In 1803 Mehmed Sıdkı Efendi was appointed as the Ottoman ambassador in London. His mission coincided with one of most decisive periods of Anglo-Ottoman history just after the French campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798–1801). Two empires were in collaboration against Napoleon, a rapprochement which would wax and wane but ultimately culminate with the Anglo-Ottoman Treaty of 1838. Like his contemporary in Paris, however, Sıdkı Efendi was not cut out for the position which was thrust upon him. There were basically two reasons for the ill-fated choices that the Sublime Porte made while appointing ambassadors during this time. First, the distant posts meant nothing but exile for Ottoman civil servants. In fact, anything outside of Istanbul would be considered a cruel punishment. Therefore, it was difficult to convince the members of the high bureaucracy to leave their lucrative positions to go to far-off lands. After all, whatever the image of the Empire was, the Sultan had to do a lot of convincing to rule without impediment. But perhaps more to the point, the Ottoman bureaucratic machinery did not also immediately grasp the vital impact of permanent missions. Before the Tanzimat or Reform Era (1839–1876), they were often forced by European powers to send representatives to the Western capitals, and when they did send them, they did it unwillingly. Consequently, early ambassadors were habitually men of little or no distinction. Sıdkı was not an exception to this general rule and was instantly taken in by the carefree atmosphere of the metropolis. He did not, to put it mildly, make a great impression on his British hosts. He was not out of the top drawer.

Unlike two previous Ottoman ambassadors who rarely mentioned Ireland, his reports often touched upon the Irish issue, which makes one think that he was specifically commanded to provide information on the subject. His material, in spite of this, was not up to date and at times inaccurate. Around the end of 1803, for instance, he wrote about the Cornwallis’s Retreat, a 1795 naval engagement in which a British Royal Navy was attacked by a superior French Fleet. His big idea was to show that Britain was horrified at the possibility of a French invasion of Ireland (Frencelünün İrlanda’ya gelüb zabt etmesinden İngilterelü ziyâde havf ediyor). But there was also a genuine interest on his part in the Catholic and Protestant division of the Kingdom. The topic of greater political emancipation to Catholics was one of the most critical public discussions of the day. It was considered in detail at the time of the Acts of Union between Great Britain and Ireland in 1800, but George III (r. 1760–1820), who had sworn an oath to
uphold the country’s Protestant constitution at his coronation, would not hear of it. ‘I will tell you, that I shall look on every Man as my personal enemy who proposes that question to me,’ he once said, much to the dismay of his audience.\(^{39}\) In Sidî’s reports, conversely, the King emerged as a great exponent of the proposal and considered the employment of Catholics in state service ‘very becoming and appropriate’.\(^{40}\)

From the official writings found in the archives, it is clear that Sidî was cautioned by Istanbul to secure and dispatch more information from London.\(^{41}\) It is surprising that he was not sacked from his post sooner. During this time, Istanbul also received intelligence from its governors of Moldova whose reports, as usual, were more substantial. In 1808, Scarlat Callimachi (d. 1821), for instance, detailed the population, parliamentary arrangements and again the religious divide between Ireland and England, something which was emphasised repeatedly in different reports.\(^{42}\) This period of heightened interest considerably slowed down with the repression of the uprising and the Bourbon Restoration. But the significance of the affair was not lost on Istanbul and from this point on it was always referred as the ‘Irish Question’ (Irlanda meselesi).

The ‘repeal year’ and the famine

The three decades which followed the fall of Napoleon were among the most momentous in the history of the Ottoman State. It was a time of massive social and political transformations. Mahmud II who became the Sultan in 1808 changed the face of the Empire forever with his new schools and military revolutions.\(^{43}\) The Moldovan and Wallachian princes, who were once ‘the two eyes of the Sublime State’, vanished from history. Scarlat Callimachi was poisoned by the order of Mahmud in 1821 following the Greek War of Independence.\(^{44}\) Alexander Ypsilantis had been executed earlier for having contacts with the Russians.\(^{45}\) The posts in European capitals were no longer occupied by depressing looking minor civil servants but by debonair young bureaucrats. In 1843, Mehmed Emin Âli Bey was in London and Mustafa Reşid Bey was in Paris, both future grand viziers. It was a different time and a different Empire.

There had been occasional references to Ireland in the writings of Yanko Mavroyani (d. 1841) the head of Ottoman mission in Vienna.\(^{46}\) These were, however, hardly more than passing mentions and only in 1843 did the Ottoman Empire have a chance to go back to its Irish question. From this year, we have the first comprehensive report on Ireland in the state archives.\(^{47}\) This is remarkable because here the country emerged not as a part of ‘bigger’ political issues like the French Revolution but as an object of interest on its own account. Unfortunately, there is no certainty regarding the authorship of the document nor the circumstances under which it was produced. But it is safe to assume that it was either written by Mehmed Emin Âli Bey in London or it was penned in Istanbul, thanks to the information provided by him.

For anyone who is familiar with the affairs of Ireland and Britain in the nineteenth century, the report does not say anything original. There is no latent anthropological knowledge of Irish society. It is very straightforward and at times simple. It is, however, not without interest. For one, it shows what an Ottoman bureaucrat made of the Irish political scene just before the Famine. From this point of view, it is possible to argue that this information was instrumental in inducing the Ottoman state to join the relief efforts in the following years. The report emphasized strongly the abject condition under which the majority of Irish people lived. This was not an exaggeration. In 1838, the famous Duke of Wellington (d. 1852), who had served in India for years and was obviously familiar with destitution, stated that ‘there never was a country in which poverty existed to the extent that it exists in Ireland’.\(^{48}\) According to the report, the English had usurped the land and goods which rightfully belonged to the Irish people and lived by burdening the peasantry with extortionate rents. The outcome was entrenched animosity (husumet) and pervasive ignorance (kemâl-i cehl ve nadaniye) in the country. Especially after the Acts of Union in 1800, the political situation, it was reasoned, deteriorated rapidly and against
this background there emerged Daniel O’Connell (d. 1847), whom the report called the ‘soul of Ireland/İrlanda’nın ruhu’. Daniel O’Connell was a prominent figure who campaigned for Catholic emancipation in the first half of the nineteenth century. He is generally considered not a revolutionary but a political reformer who toiled for the repeal of the Acts of Union. A good many Irish people believed that without separating the parliaments, their country could never be prosperous again and O’Connell became their leader. He pushed for the re-establishment of an independent Ireland to govern itself with Victoria as its Queen. To achieve this goal, he held a series of ‘Monster Meetings’, each attended by well over 100,000 participants. His philosophy of nonviolence was almost proverbial which irrevocably alienated some segments of the opposition and led to the formation of the Young Ireland movement. The author of the report intimated that this pacific attitude, however, was just a façade to mask his real political ambitions. ‘People began to tattle,’ he wrote ‘and the clergy follows him. Considering the notorious ignorance of the aforesaid public, it is certain that they will go to any length to reach their aims and will not be disobedient to the word of their chief.’ A separation between Ireland and Britain, however, did not appear likely. ‘It will not be beneficial for Ireland and O’Connell knows it,’ the writer argued. In his opinion, the whole thing was ‘just a scheme to acquire new privileges and,’ he added, ‘all will be over when they obtain them.’

Such close interest of Istanbul in O’Connell’s doings is really striking. There were comprehensive dispatches written almost every month, and sometimes sooner, appraising the political situation in the country. Increasing participation in the Monster Meetings and the split between Tories and Whigs regarding their policies towards Ireland were described in detail. These two factions, it was pointed out, could not decide between a direct military approach and pacifying reforms. The ministers therefore found a middle ground and engaged in what the writer called masterly inactivity (şimdiki halde hiçbir şey yapmayub şöylece durmak). Istanbul must have found the religious division between Catholics and Protestants enthralling. As a still vast, multireligious empire, the Ottoman State came under considerable pressure from European powers to redress the inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, Britain, being the leading European nation and a self-appointed champion of liberty, was something of an oddity for the Ottoman elite when it still struggled with Catholic emancipation within its borders. It would be interesting to know if Ottoman diplomats indeed used Ireland as a counter example in their dealings with Britain before the formal declaration of religious equality in the Ottoman Empire in 1856. It should be heavily underlined that the same man, Mehmed Emin Âli Bey, who reported the affairs of Ireland from London, was going to be the principal architect of the 1856 Reform Edict as the Grand Vizier.

After the imprisonment and subsequent death of O’Connell, the strong interest of Istanbul subsided for a short time only to be reignited with one of the worst humanitarian tragedies of the nineteenth century, an Gorta Mór or the Great Hunger. As the Ottoman administration was aware there had been quite a few episodes of famine and mass starvations in the history of Ireland. Some of them were in fact proportionally deadlier. The Famine of 1740–1741, for instance, is said to have killed as many as 38 per cent of the population. With its dire and overarching consequences on the demography of the island, through immigration as much as through death, the Great Hunger of 1845–1849, however, became the ‘defining moment of Irish history’. To justify such a summation, it would perhaps suffice to point out that even today the island has not yet reverted to its prefamine population of 8.2 million. England, on the other hand, was about 14 million in 1841. Today it is almost 60 million.

It was not so much the lack of food that killed people. In fact, there was plenty of food available for those who could afford it. It was the blithe laissez-faire attitude of the policy makers. Irish people had mostly lived on potatoes which they had cultivated in waterlogged lands. When a new kind of blight, with an unknown aetiology, diseased the crop, the harvest simply could not feed the population. The upshot was widespread suffering and mass mortality.
It is estimated that between 1845 and 1850 over a million people died from starvation and disease with another million leaving the country for the New World(s). In 1847, which became later notorious as the Black '47, the Famine was at its worst. Because of the loss of life and displacement, few potatoes had been planted in the previous year. Death rates increased all over the country. The Takvim-i Vekâyi, the official Ottoman gazette, reported how hunger reduced people to eating horses, dogs and cats all over the island. The year, as a result, was ‘marked by fund-raising activities on behalf of Ireland throughout the world’. In that fateful year, Sultan Abdülmecid also joined the international effort and sent his now well-known donation for the relief of the Irish poor.

The episode is often suggested, somewhat anachronistically, as the beginning of the relations between Turkey and Ireland. According to the established narrative, which spreads far and wide, while living in his Beylerbeyi Palace and surrounded by ‘international scientists’, Sultan Abdülmecid learned of the affair from an Irish physician, perhaps Washington McCarthy. The Sultan was moved by the suffering of the people. He initially wanted to donate £10,000 but was persuaded against it by the British ambassador, who reminded of him the royal etiquette by pointing out that Queen Victoria was donating less. There is also the talk of some ships arriving to Drogheda from the Ottoman Empire with provisions. Even though there is nothing in the generally exhaustive Ottoman archives to support such a claim, local historian Brendan Matthews found the records of ‘foreign ships’ from Salonica entering the port at Drogheda in 1847. In a hitherto unnoticed passage published in 1854, William Wilde, eminent doctor and the father of Oscar Wilde, also revealed how ‘some were kept alive by… the corn and gold of Sultan Abdul Medjid’.

Historiographically speaking, this is an engaging story on a few levels, but it is not without certain problems. First of all, there is an element of comedy, or perhaps coarse orientalism in this description. An Eastern monarch’s hearing the tale of strange lands from a wise physician is like a scene from the pages of the Arabian Nights. Evidently, Ireland was not terra incognita for the Ottoman state in the middle of the nineteenth century. Other than regular embassy reports, there were also established newspapers which began to circulate accounts of the Irish suffering as early as the autumn of 1845. From that time onwards, they printed something on the Famine practically every week, keeping the emerging public abreast of the situation. This is not to say that the donation could not have anything to do with an Irish doctor, clearly it could. Yet it must be also clear that the Ottoman government was aware of the situation from its very commencement with historical knowledge of the destitution and the religious division on the island.

The emotional strain experienced by the Sultan upon hearing the sufferings of the Irish people should be also taken with a grain of salt. Exactly around this time, the Ottoman Empire was struggling with its own famine. Perhaps it was not in the same league with the Great Hunger, but people were still dying, children were begging on the streets in different parts of Anatolia. 1847 was a bad year for the Ottoman Empire as well as for Ireland. Thus, rather than seeing it as an act of charity motivated by Islamic ideals, the Ottoman help to Ireland should be understood within the context of the Empire’s changing relationship with the West. Istanbul was trying hard to be included into the Concert of Europe. Only a few months earlier, the slave market of Istanbul, an establishment deeply embedded in the fabric of Ottoman society, was also closed down by order of the Sultan. This was a deliberate strategy to build up alliances against the looming threat of Russia. Eventually a society of zoology in Paris, a trade association in Manchester, or a Mozart society in Brussels would benefit from imperial munificence with the same inspiration, which was to establish the Empire’s position as a modern, civilized state in Europe.

In 1849 Lucius O’Brien, 13th Baron Inchiquin, arrived in Istanbul and sought an audience with the Sultan. For something which attracted so much political and public interest, the Ottoman aid to Ireland is oddly understudied from an academic perspective. There is a very interesting article that appeared in The Illustrated London News (see Figure 1) in the same year
which gives an illustration of the scene between the Sultan and O’Brien, both surrounded by dignitaries. Here O’Brien presented an elaborate letter of which he was one of the signatories. ‘The noblemen, gentlemen and inhabitants of Ireland’ were profusely thankful to Abdülmecid for his generous help ‘to relieve the sufferings of the Irish people’. It was once more emphasized that ‘the Sultan originally offered to send £10,000 to Ireland, as well as some ships laden with provisions’. Abdülmecid was pleased, the article declared, because of the consideration displayed to him and to his country.

Later events must have pleased the Sultan even more. The Empire had a good press in the West, perhaps for the first and last time. It was not a coincidence that only a few years later they would be universally supported against Russia in Crimea. A great many Irish soldiers also fought in the War. Ireland, it was asserted, ‘had not forgotten the charity shown by the Sultan during the Irish Famine’. Before the beginning of conflict, the Ottoman Empire made the
headlines once more when it gave asylum to Italian, Hungarian and Polish political refugees after the failed revolutions of 1848. Even the leader of Young Hungary, Lajos Kossuth, sought refuge in the Empire by using a fake British passport in 1849.77

For Kossuth and his men, the Ottoman Empire was the obvious choice. It was just a matter of crossing the border. They had historical and geographical ties to the land. What is more baffling and less explored is the decision made by some leaders of the Young Ireland movement. Long before Kossuth and his men arrived, Richard O’Gorman, Daniel Doyle and John O’Donnell, all organizers of the failed uprising in Limerick, sailed on board Prince Albert to escape from authorities in September 1848. Their destination was, curiously enough, Istanbul.78 It is not exactly known how long O’Gorman stayed with them, but Doyle and O’Donnell remained in the city for more than a year. During their sojourn, they found a compatriot, a certain Dr Glascott who became their host in the capital.79

What we do not know or know very loosely is the comings and goings of ordinary people between two countries. Dr Glascott is a good case in point. John Nassau Glascott was born in 1813 to a family of landowners in Wexford.80 He studied medicine and came to Istanbul sometime before 1845.81 He was one of the alleged physicians to Abdülmecid who evidently had a penchant for Irish doctors.82 Glascott was reportedly the first man to use ether as a general anaesthetic during surgery in the Ottoman Empire.83 His clinic was located in a very conspicuous site near Istanbul harbour and he became the cicerone, to use a contemporary expression, of his many expatriates in the city.84 His brother, Adam Glascott, worked in an early survey of Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea regions.85 Dr Glascott finally died in Istanbul but we know that at least once he visited his native land. He shocked his countrywomen, it was reported, by his peculiar habits of wearing Turkish ‘fez, gown and slippers, [along with his] ceaselessly smoking Turkish tobacco’.86 In any case, after the 1850s, it is easy to see a growing number of visitors from Ireland who left their traces in the archives.87

Increasing relations

The volume of Ottoman documents on Ireland increased dramatically as the Empire appointed vice consuls in major Irish cities. Belfast, Derry and Limerick consulates were established in January 1850.88 Cork opened its doors two years later in 1852.89 Surprisingly the Dublin vice consul was the last one to be assigned and he was given his title only in 1864 with the expectation of the forthcoming International Exhibition of Arts and Manufactures, a world’s fair held in the city in 1865.90 From time to time, it is possible to see these cities referred in the so-called Consulate Records (Şehbenderlik Defterleri).91 These positions were first and foremost commercial concerns and their chief object was to protect the financial interests of Ottoman citizens. Did they also collect intelligence for the Ottoman State? From the available documentation, it is difficult to say. Their reports cannot be located in the archives. The number of Irish newspapers which were banned in the Empire, however, is staggering. The Witness, Belfast News-Letter and quite a few others were prohibited from being circulated in the Ottoman lands at various times, for various reasons which are not quite clear today.92

The attention of the Ottoman state to ostensibly trivial details in Ireland is most fascinating. One expects them to be interested in major developments such as the general elections,93 or the Irish support to France during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.94 But even the Irish University Bill of 1873 was dispatched urgently to Istanbul as something of great consequence.95 The Ottoman Foreign Office also received help from diverse quarters in their mission of collecting intelligence. Mir Aulad Ali (d. 1898), professor of Arabic, Hindustani and Persian at Trinity College Dublin seems to have been in regular contact with the authorities.96 He wrote, for instance, to the Ottoman ambassador in London after a lecture by Arthur Cunynghame (d. 1884) at the Drummond Institution in 1872, with a cutting from The Irish Times, and asked him to contradict
a particularly offensive statement. There were also newspaper proprietors with suspiciously close ties to the Ottoman administration. Istanbul knew the importance of public opinion and did not shy away from spending money for what they considered a good cause. Hence a newspaper with a very limited circulation, such as *The Fermanagh Mail*, could bring to its proprietor, Thomas R. J. Polson (d. 1908), a decoration for his support of the Ottoman policies. Istanbul was probably the only place, including Fermanagh, where *The Fermanagh Mail* was read with such avidity with articles translated into Turkish, and French, for the Sultan’s inspection.

After Abdülhamid’s enthronement in August 1876, two main features emerged which characterized the Ottoman perception of Ireland until the end of the Empire in 1922. The first one was apprehension. As a multinational state, the Ottoman Empire had its full fair share of dissidence and contestation within its borders. The fact that the most powerful state in the world could not contain a relatively small island next door was simply worrisome for the government. The impossibility of bringing peace to Ireland became almost a joke (*reductio ad absurdum*) among the Ottoman public. Thus, they monitored the political agitation closely with the aim of drawing necessary conclusions for the running of their own Empire. The emergence of secret societies and their fear campaign through sensational acts especially rivetted their attention. The fatal stabbing of the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phoenix Park on 6 May 1882, only hours after his arrival in Dublin was reported next day to Istanbul. A few days later, the measures taken against these secret societies were again portrayed in detail. The Ottoman state was very keen to see how Britain was going to handle the situation.

The second one was the potential use of Ireland for the Ottoman state in their dealings with Britain. This idea was at the back of their minds, it appears, from the moment that they realized the Catholic/Protestant rift on the island. At the beginning, it had only religious connotations as we see exhibited in the reports of Sıdkı Efendi. Şanizade (d. 1826), official chronicler, also wrote about the discrimination that the Catholics faced in their own country. The bureaucracy was trying to understand how the experience of Ireland could serve as an example in their internal religious divisions and more importantly how it can be exploited as a counterexample in their diplomatic encounters with Britain. Even though it is now very difficult to prove, or disprove, the much criticized 1856 Reform of religious equality seems to have had some connection with the conclusions that Ali Pasha drew during his tenure in London from the ‘Irish question’.

Eventually, however, the idea of Ireland as diplomatic ammunition became more sophisticated and gained political overtones. Ahmed Lûtfi Efendi (d. 1907), official chronicler, while mentioning the British criticism over the forced expulsion of the Peloponnesians during the Greek Uprising, pointed out that the Ottoman State had no obligation to explain itself or its internal affairs to Britain. According to Lûtfi Efendi, if England began asking questions about Ottoman subjects, then the Sublime State had every right to ask questions about Irish people (*İrlanda halkı*). The same sentiment can be easily found in contemporaneous newspapers. Let Great Britain bring justice to Ireland first, Ebüzziya Tevfik wrote in 1910, while criticizing the veiled protectorate in Egypt. For the Ottoman state, the Irish card could be played against Britain whenever they had problems with international implications, be it Greek, Egyptian or even Albanian. In the end, the members of the ruling elite did not hesitate to bring it up one last time when they were indicted for their treatments of the Armenians. During his meeting with Aubrey Herbert, British intelligence officer, in Germany in 1921, Talat Pasha (d. 1921), one of the engineers of the disasters of the First World War, compared the Armenians to ‘Sinn Féiners’. ‘Now, I don’t know,’ he said, ‘what is happening in Ireland, and I don’t believe all I hear, but you are certainly doing some very stiff things to the Sinn Féiners.’ ‘After all,’ Talat Pasha asked Herbert, ‘what is your Irish problem to ours of Armenia?’
It is relatively easy to write on the Ottoman Empire and Ireland when there is not much to write about. The eighteenth century left us only a handful of documents. In such cases, available material often dictates the narrative in an obvious fashion. As E. H. Carr once noted, with fewer facts available, historians always look more competent.\textsuperscript{113} For the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the sheer size of archival collections makes it difficult to discern an overall pattern, or to put it more idiomatically see the wood for the trees. Some tracks are more visible than others. The Home Rule movement, for instance, had a wide coverage by Ottoman diplomats in London.\textsuperscript{114} But there are also countless bits and pieces on practically everything from Irish soldiers wishing to serve in the Ottoman army,\textsuperscript{115} to Belfast manufacturers, such as Robinson & Cleaver, sending catalogues.\textsuperscript{116} What one might truly regard as the last phase of Ottoman-Irish relations, however, was characterized by a historical coincidence. Just as Istanbul was under allied occupation, Irish republicans formed a breakaway government (\textit{Dáil Éireann}) and declared Irish independence on 21 January 1919. Another breakaway government was going to be formed in Ankara only a year later. Both Ireland and whatever remained of the Ottoman Empire fought against the British imperialism simultaneously until 1923.\textsuperscript{117}

Even though the connections between Irish republicans and other subject peoples, such as Indian nationalists, are well known, their links with the Turkish resistance movement remain unexplored outside of Turkey.\textsuperscript{118} If one can believe a French secret service document, Turkish revolutionaries went so far as to provide financial assistance to their Irish comrades, arguing that they were struggling together in the same fight against the same enemy.\textsuperscript{119} Perhaps the Turkish army was not directly waging war on the United Kingdom. Yet the country was the spearhead of the movement which ended the Ottoman Empire and allowed the emergence of modern Turkey after the First World War. In this framework, the Irish cause found a devoted following in Anatolia. In the words of Ahmed Emin, one of the most prominent journalists of the era, the Turks ‘could not help defending the National Pact of Ireland’ (\textit{Irlanda Misak-ı Millisi}).\textsuperscript{120} Contemporary newspapers fed the public with glowing accounts of Irish bravery: a heroic nation fighting against a ‘nine-headed dragon’\textsuperscript{121} There were hundreds of articles on Ireland and the Irish War of Independence in various dailies. The public thought that the victory of Irish republicans was a harbinger of better days for their own state. The administration was perhaps slightly worried about the Irish sympathy for the Armenians.\textsuperscript{122} But these vacillations had no effect on popular feeling. Many Turks considered themselves ‘true comrades-in-arms of the Sinn Féiners and brethren with the herculean heroes of Ireland’.\textsuperscript{123}

The Ottoman elite called their Empire \textit{devlet-i ebed müddet}, meaning the eternal state. This political philosophy, mixed with wishful thinking, perhaps fell short of its promise; as it had done in Rome centuries earlier (\textit{imperium sine fine}).\textsuperscript{124} But the Ottomans had a good run both spatially and temporally. They had established their state in one of the most contested terrains in the world. The same family ruled over a large state for more than six hundred years, a feat rivalled by only a few dynasties. One can therefore imagine the sense of devastation and desolation that many Ottoman citizens must have felt as their Empire crumbled into pieces. They must have known that the Ottoman political order was coming to an end and very soon. Yet the machinery of government kept on moving; they stayed calm and carried on. The diplomats in London were following Irish affairs religiously to anticipate possible repercussions for their own country.\textsuperscript{125} In September 1921, Mustafa Reşid Pasha wrote the last detailed report on the ‘Irish Question’: a ten-page long document supported by newspaper clippings and myriad minutiae regarding the Anglo-Irish deal. For an official correspondence, the tone was conspicuously pro-Irish.\textsuperscript{126} All these musings and ponderings, however, would be of little value. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which had led the War of Independence, ended the Ottoman Empire in Ankara in November 1922. The new republic, proclaimed a year later, was going to have limited resources and even less desire to be involved with anything outside of its immediate borders.
Conclusion

A few words of caution might be in order here. The situation of a researcher in the Ottoman archives is often similar to the blind men’s struggle with an elephant. In the famous parable, the sightless men try to visualise the animal just by touching it. Each has a different part of the body, hence a completely different conceptualization of the beast. Likewise, it is very easy to get a disproportionate view of the political realities of the Empire within the holdings of millions and millions of documents. The Ottoman state was interested in Ireland, that is a fact. This interest, however, had a relatively minor place in their diplomatic universe. They were also interested in Denmark as they were interested in Afghanistan.⁸⁷ Even the question of Aceh in Indonesia was a more pressing matter for the Ottoman Foreign Office.⁸⁸ This was a reflection of the imperial mentality, which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century to compete with various European powers.

This statement is not meant to disparage the Ottoman concern over the developments taking place in Ireland. It was writ large upon every document. They saw the country as some sort of anomaly (just as Marx did): a Western European state which was not free, sometimes famished and often rebellious. They genuinely tried to understand this obvious variance as it was completely at odds with their idea of the Occident. For earlier periods, we have limited information. In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire was struggling with extensive provincial rebellions in Anatolia and it is no surprise that they equated the Irish struggle with their own problems without taking into account the religious and cultural complexities. In the language of Kâtib Çelebi one can easily detect something akin to sympathy with the British over the control of the island. Obviously one man’s word should not be enough to make overreaching generalizations, even if that man was Kâtib Çelebi.⁸⁹ But at least, it is safe to say that he epitomized the sentiment of certain members of the ruling elite towards Ireland.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, one can feel mounting Ottoman trepidation over the affairs of Europe. A self-contained political system was no longer viable or desirable. This period of Ottoman history has been increasingly dubbed the Eastern Enlightenment.⁹⁰ In any case, it is clear that the Ottoman exceptionalism began to be questioned more seriously and there were more people with the knowledge of the ‘European ways’.⁹¹ The embassies in every capital soon began to send detailed reports to Istanbul from their host countries. This was perhaps not the systematic and academic knowledge of the Occident regarding the Orient. Undoubtedly, we are not talking about the Description de l’Égypte. They did not have the intensity or tenacity that one sees exhibited in the European context. Yet, even the Ottoman concerns over Ireland should be enough to shed doubt on the still prevalent Western depictions of an innately lethargic Ottoman Empire.⁹² In the same vein, it would be curious to examine the pejorative language of the Ottoman civil servants towards Ireland which had frequent references to the ‘public’s ignorance’. Did Ireland serve as an orient for the Oriental par excellence? Or was it just a replication of the contemporary political bias towards Ireland?⁹³ Here we must contain ourselves to make a passing remark about this intriguing question which should be the subject of another study.

It is not surprising that we should find parallels between the Ottoman perception of Ireland and their own political trajectory (demand indeed creates supply). First, as mentioned, they associated the Irish question with the internal rebellions instigated by bandits and warlords in Anatolia. A century later, when they were struggling to keep their multi-religious population under control, the Ottoman elite was struck by the religious division between England and Ireland. They realized, in other words, that their British colleagues too lived in glass houses. This period was outshone, in the secondary literature, by the Ottoman aid to Ireland during the famine. Two countries chose this event as the starting point of their relations. According to James ‘Turtle’ Bunbury, Turkey and Ireland ‘developed strong ties during the twentieth century, reinforced by the legacy of the sultan’s remarkable donation’.⁹⁴ It is not the intention of this article to use this argument as a punchbag.
After all, it is a meaningful moment. It should, however, be again underlined that the affair did not have the same connotations as it does now. The whole thing was almost forgotten ten years later.136 The Ottoman or Turkish authors never mentioned it until very recently even when they talked about Ireland or Irish potatoes.137

With the enthronement of Abdülhamid in 1876, we see the repetition of the same pattern vis-à-vis Ireland. This time the Ottoman administration was chiefly concerned with the emergence of secret societies which were the personal quagmire of Abdülhamid at home. Throughout his long reign, the Sultan fought against them relentlessly, until his deposition by one in 1909. During this period, Ireland’s position in the Ottoman diplomacy as a counter argument was solidified and later popularized within society. The authors of the time believed that the positive feeling was reciprocal. According to Ahmed Emin, for instance, ‘the Irish were also following closely our great struggle to preserve our existence and protect our independence. It was even known that this attention took special and personal forms. The editor in chief of The Gaelic American, the most important Irish newspaper published in America, is a long-time Turkish friend. He fought in the Turkish ranks voluntarily in the 1293 (1877-78) war.’138 We know that there were indeed Irish soldiers who wanted to fight in the Ottoman army. Two editors in chief of The Gaelic American were particularly known for their support for the Indian cause and their close connections with Taraknath Das, the publisher of The Free Hindustan.139 Did they also back the Ottoman Empire against Britain? It is quite conceivable. One can make this complicated portrait even more complicated by throwing some Algerian revolutionaries into the picture. This was truly a global revolutionary moment from India to Ireland and another ramification which would be worth following.

In 1924, the new state sent a written response to a verbal communication. The Republic of Turkey’, it read, ‘has no objections to the admission of the Irish Free State to the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome.’140 One can imagine that the consideration felt for Ireland lasted for a long time among the Turkish public. There was no channel, however, to convert this sympathy into anything concrete. It was a poor state, established on fragile ideological foundations and had no desire to be an actor in international politics. Two republics went their separate ways. The Turkish embassy in Ireland was established only in 1973. It is easy to picture a clever Foreign Office clerk resurrecting the story of the Ottoman help to Ireland during the Famine to establish a common narrative between two countries, a fine example of invention of tradition. But one cannot help feeling that the story would have been irrelevant for many in the 1920s. They had already something mutual: Ireland and Turkey together became the lever which ended the British Empire.

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**Notes**

14. The details include even the foundation of Trinity College Dublin by ‘the Queen named Elizabeth as an academy to adorn the minds [of the public] with literary sciences’. Çelebi, *Levâmi'u’n-Nûr*, p.43b.
15. ‘When they were invincible like wild horses’, he wrote, ‘they were turned subservient and obedient. When they were savages, they were made to drink from the fountain of humanity by the early English.’ Ibid., p. 40a. In the French translation, the text is much softer: ‘premiers des Anglais assujettirent ce pays & le civiliser – ils firent de sa sauvagery un peuple civilisé et bien éduqué’; Gerhard Mercator, *Atlas Minor de Guérard Mercator ; traduit de latin en françois, par le sieur de La Popelinière, anno 1613 (Amsterodami: Excusam in aedibus I. Hondij. veneunt etiam apud Cornelii[m] Nicolai item apud Ioannem Ianssonium[m] Arnhemi*, 1613), p.42. Unless otherwise stated all the translations into English are my own.
20. BOA, AE.SOSM.III 34/ 2417, 29 Zilhicce 1169 (24 September 1756).
21. ‘Some signs of tyranny (zorbalık) have been reported from the country of Ireland.’ See BOA, TS.MA.e 560/47, 29 Zilhicce 1200 (23 October 1786). The document is undated, and the archival date might be slightly wrong. From the writing and its content, it was probably written in the early nineteenth century. Also see, BOA, TS.MA.e 560/6, 29 Zilhicce 1200 (23 October 1786).
25. On the same day that the ambassador Seyyid Ali Efendi assured his government of France’s goodwill towards the Empire, the news of the French expedition to Egypt reached Istanbul. On the unsuspecting
dispatch of Ali Efendi, sent from Paris, the disheartened Selim III could not help writing ‘what an ass this fellow is’. See BOA, HAT 142/ 5876, 25 Rabiulahir 1213 (6 October 1798).


31. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).


34. BOA, HAT 230/12823, 2 Zilhicce 1212 (10 June 1798), BOA, C..HR..102/5098, 25 Zilhicce 1212 (10 June 1798), BOA, C..HR..125/6232, 29 Muharrem 1213 (13 July 1798).

35. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).

36. BOA, AE.SSLM.III 426/24417, 21 Rabiulievvel 1222 (29 May 1807).

37. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).


39. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).


41. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).


43. ‘From now on he will be cautioned to collect and deliver the news more diligently’. BOA, HAT 145/6108, 5 Rabiulievvel 1218 (25 June 1803).

44. BOA, HAT 1149/45611, 29 Zilhicce 1234 (19 October 1819), BOA HR.SYS. 1910/34 (11 November 1833), BOA HR.SYS. 1911/8 (14 April 1835). Often in the documents belonging to the Foreign Office, the date is given only in the Gregorian calendar. In such cases, only the Gregorian dates are cited.


In 1850, William Knight wrote in *If there’s an Irishman in Parker’s fleet*:

> and that fleet yet have to strike a
>
> Since this society has been supported in various degrees by the great rulers of Europe (Avrupa hükümdar-ı fehamı),

The Ottoman archives contain quite a few petitions from different villages in Anatolia asking for help during the 1847 famine. See, respectively, for Ankara, Sivas and Bolu, BOA, İ..DH.. 151/ 7855, 1 Şaban 1263 (31 August 1847). Also see Mehmet Yavuz Erler, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Kuraklık ve Kıtlık Olayları (1800–1880)* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010), pp.123, 39–45.

Semih Çelik’s article, to the best of my knowledge, is the only scholarly work focusing on the Ottoman side of Abdülmecid’s aid.

The Ottoman archive contains quite a few petitions from different villages in Anatolia asking for help during the 1847 famine. See, respectively, for Ankara, Sivas and Bolu, BOA, İ..DH.. 151/7855, 1 Şaban 1263 (15 July 1847), BOA, A.İ.MKT. 90/83, 8 Şaban 1263 (22 July 1847), BOA, İ..MVL. 104/2299, 19 Ramazan 1263 (31 August 1847). Also see Mehmet Yavuz Erler, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Kuraklık ve Kıtlık Olayları (1800–1880)* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010), pp.123, 39–45.


BOA, İ..HR.. 171/9297, 12 Rebiülevvel 1276 (9 October 1856).

BOA, İ..HR.. 229/13414, 28 Receb 1284 (25 November 1867).

Especially the last document shows this desire of being European power quite clearly: ‘since this society has been supported in various degrees by the great rulers of Europe (Avrupa hükümdar-ı fehamı)’. BOA, İ..HR.. 263/15745, 13 Rebiülevvel 1291 (30 April 1874).


For the original letter, see BOA, MİL.E..1/1, 5 Safer 1265, (31 December 1848).


‘If there's an Irishman in Parker’s fleet,’ William Knight wrote in 1850, ‘and that fleet yet have to strike a blow for the Padisah, we feel sure that the son of the Emerald Isle [i.e. Ireland] will, in the moment of battle, remember the Sultan's well timed and noble generosity; and be the enemy whom it may, Paddy in mere gratitude will then strike hard and home!’ See Mahmouz Efendi [William Knight], ‘Smyrna—the “City of Figs” from a Levantine Journal’, *The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist* Vol. 90, no. 1 (1850), p.151.


82. Finegan, ‘Daniel Doyle and Young Ireland’, p.352.


84. George Buchanan, an army civil surgeon who visited the city in 1855, wrote how ‘only one prominent object arrests the attention of all who land at Galata bridge – a huge board bearing the sign, Dr. Glascott’s Surgery.’ George Buchanan, *Camp Life as Seen by a Civilian* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1871), p.7.


86. Finegan, ‘Daniel Doyle and Young Ireland’, p.355.


88. BOA, HR.SFR.3… 94/31 (24 October 1864), BOA, HR.SFR.3… 106/53 (25 September 1865).

89. BOA, HR.SFR.3… 106/53 (25 September 1865).

90. BOA, HR.SFR.3… 94/31 (24 October 1864), BOA, HR.SFR.3… 13/24 (17 July 1852).

91. See, for instance, the entry for Dublin, BOA, A.[DVNSSHB.d..2, 29 Receb 1317 (3 December 1899), 95.

92. Costaki Pasha (Costaki Anthopoulos), Ottoman ambassador in London, described some newspapers, such as *Belfast News*, as ‘hostile contre la Turquie’ (hostile to the Ottoman Empire) and ‘types du bachibouzouk’ (types of bachibouzouk). BOA, HR.SFR.3… 452/21 (6 March 1896). Also see BOA, DH.MKT. 2546/147, 8 Receb 1319 (21 October 1901), BOA, DH.MKT. 2585/48, 29 Şevval 1319 (8 February 1902), BOA, MF.MKT. 718/70, 20 Rabiuulahir 1321 (16 July 1903), BOA, MF.MKT. 723/21, 10 Cemaziyelevvel 1321 (4 August 1903).

93. BOA, HR.SFR.3… 13/19 (17 July 1852), BOA, HR.SFR.3… 13/25 (17 July 1852).

94. BOA, HR.SFR.3… 13/25 (17 July 1852).

107. Even though the role played by Ali Pasha is well known for the proclamation of the Reform Program, any possible connection with Ireland or the Irish question has never been voiced. For a recent and detailed discussion of the Reform Edict, see Aylin Kocunyan, Negotiating the Ottoman Constitution 1839-1876 (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), pp.70–103.


111. ‘There is no international Macedonian or Albanian question just as there cannot be, for Germany or England, an international question of Alsace-Lorraine or Ireland.’ BOA, HR.SYS. 2463/51 (31 December 1919).


115. See, for instance, a letter by H. Gloster Armstrong, inquiring ‘under what circumstances and what on conditions… [he could] obtain a commission as an officer in the Turkish army’: BOA, HR.SFR.3…276/28 (5 September 1880). He was perhaps the Henry Gloster Armstrong who resigned from his commission in Royal Irish Fusiliers in 1884. See Anonymous, ‘[4th Battalion, Princess Victoria’s]’, The London Gazette, 8 August 1884, p.3572. The Irish soldiers serving under different banners was a common enough phenomenon. As once was said of the Wild Geese, for ‘every cause but their own’. See George B. Clark, Irish Soldiers in Europe, 17th–19th Century (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010), p.205.


117. While the Turkish War of Independence was fought between 1919 and 1923, the Anglo-Irish War lasted until 1921. If one includes the Civil War which ensued and of which Britain was certainly a party, the Irish War of Independence ended only in 1923.


122. They also did not want to make any blunder by acting prematurely towards the new state. They wrote to the Embassy in the Hague and inquired about the formal recognition of the Irish State by other countries as early as 1919. BOA, HR.SYS. 2462/53 (9 August 1919).


125. ‘L’influence que ces questions intérieures exercera sur la politique extérieure d’Angleterre’ [The influence which these domestic questions will exercise upon the foreign policy of England]. BOA, HR.SYS. 2463/51 (31 December 1919).

126. ‘La répression par les armes du soulevement de toute une nation luttant pour sa liberté’ [The repression by arms of the uprising of an entire nation fighting for its freedom]. BOA, HR.SYS. 2468/31 (19 September
Mustafa Reşid Pasha was a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and at that time, he was in London as a special envoy. See, H. Basri Danışman, Artçı Diplomat: Son Osmanlı Hariciye Nazırlarından Mustafa Reşit Paşa [Rearguard Diplomat: Mustafa Reşit Pasha, one of the last Ottoman Foreign Ministers] (Istanbul: Arba, 1998), p.111.

127. For the Danish (The Schleswig-Holstein) question see, for instance, BOA, İ..HR.. 56/2611, 6 Şaban 1265 (27 June 1849). It was covered by Ottoman diplomats extensively, which was perhaps understandable. As Palmerston once said there were around three people, including Palmerston, who understood what the issue was. One, Palmerston said, was dead, the other one was mad, and Palmerston had forgotten all about it. For the Afghan and the ‘Central Asian’ question, see for instance an interesting collection of documents in BOA, HR.SYS. 4/43 (20 February 1879).


136. See, for instance, a letter in French by Henry Bulwer, 1st Baron Dalling written in 1870. BOA, HR.SFR.3... 164/29 (20 June 1870).

137. Hıtm Ziya Ülken, for instance, even when he underlines the importance of potato cultivation for Ireland, does not mention the incident. See Hıtm Ziya Ülken, İctimai Doktrinler Tarihi [The History of Social Doctrines] (Istanbul: Istanbul Üniversitesi Neşriyatı, 1941), p.289.


140. BOA. HR.IM.. 103/6 (19 April 1924).