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The Iranian Community of the Late Ottoman Empire and the Egyptian “Crisis” through the Persian Looking Glass: The Documentation of the ‘Urabi Revolt in Istanbul’s *Akhtar*

This article focuses on the coverage of the ‘Urabi rebellion of 1881–82 in the Istanbul-based Persian-language newspaper Akhtar. Akhtar was the first periodical to be published in Persian outside the auspices of the Qajar state, and first appeared on 13 January 1876, from the press owned by Mohammad Tāber Tabrizi in the Valide Han in the Ottoman capital. The objective of the present article is twofold. First, it aims to interweave the history of the Persian-language publication Akhtar with broader questions of how the Hamidian state strove to situate itself within a changing international order in a bid to affirm its legitimacy and sovereignty. It then proceeds to examine the ideological leanings of Akhtar set against the complex background of censorship laws implemented by the Hamidian state (1876–1908). To this end, by scrutinizing the reportage of this one specific event—the Egyptian crisis of 1881–82—it attempts to shed light on how the editors of Akhtar successfully maintained the delicate equilibrium of appeasing both its patrons: namely, the Hamidian state and its readership across the region where Persian was spoken. Thus, the article seeks also to highlight the ways in which inter-imperial dynamics lie at the heart of the history of this “Persian” publication.

Observers of nineteenth-century Iran have long acknowledged the significance of the first Persian-language newspaper *Akhtar* (1876–96) in facilitating the dissemination of views critical of the Qajar state and have stressed that it served as a paradigm for other newspapers published in Persian outside of Iran prior to the Constitutional Revolution (1905–11).¹ Indeed, it has become commonplace to maintain that this “reformist” Persian-language publication played a crucial role in encouraging its readers to engage actively in political discourse by reporting on current events relating to the Ottoman Empire, Qajar Iran as well as Europe, Russia and India. Although such

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studies serve as useful preliminary discussions, they also tend to distort the tremendously complex history of the publication: over the course of the twenty years it remained in publication, *Akhtar* successfully navigated through political crises, weathered internal disputes amongst its contributors, was suspended from publication more than once and occasionally fined by the Ottoman state. Its contributors were members of multiple social and political formations rather than a fixed “community” of Iranians, and accordingly, different worldviews were articulated in its pages. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to give a comprehensive account of the history of *Akhtar*, it seeks to return specificity to the study of this Persian-language publication. Accordingly, it will briefly discuss the particular conditions in which *Akhtar* was born, and will then proceed to focus on the publication’s treatment of one of the major political upheavals of the 1880s, the ‘Urabi crisis, which resulted in the British occupation of Egypt in July 1882. By treating the news pieces and views published in the pages of *Akhtar* as having been conceived against a complex background of diverse socio-political processes, it will be possible to move beyond more general accounts of the purported significance of the publication and examine it in context. Such an approach in the consideration of *Akhtar* also offers avenues for putting inter-imperial politics into the frame of writing Ottoman and Iranian history.

Furthermore, in Ottoman history-writing, the challenge of studying Persian-speaking and Iranian communities in the empire lies in transgressing the boundaries of Ottoman historiography which typically overlooks the fact that the history of the late Ottoman Empire is not an exclusively “Turkish” story. This literature tends to view those groups that fall outside clearly defined ethnically Turkish and Muslim categories, and which were linguistically more diverse, as constituting a class of “foreign” elements.² Thus, the present article argues that there is a need to complicate Ottoman perspectives as they relate to the nineteenth century. This involves looking beyond more traditional narratives of writing Ottoman history and incorporating into mainstream Ottoman history-writing the consideration of Iranian communities of the late empire. Accordingly, this article will draw on the Persian-language publication *Akhtar* to demonstrate that the consideration of the context in which the publication came to be established and its treatment of developments in the Ottoman Empire might help adjust broader understandings of the dynamics of late Ottoman state and society. In this way, the article also aims to bring the consideration of Iranian actors in the empire onto the stage of late Ottoman historiography.

Reading the Establishment of Akhtar in the Context of Ottoman History

Akhtar was initially intended to be an organ of the Qajar state in the Ottoman Empire where a substantial community of Iranian expatriates resided with connections to Iranian Azerbaijan and the rest of the Iranian plateau. It was Mohsen Khan Mo‘in al-Molk, the ambassador to Istanbul between 1873 and 1891, who convinced Nasir al-Din Shah that a newspaper published in Persian in Istanbul could serve as a medium of influence on Iranian subjects living in the Ottoman Empire, and asked

that such an enterprise be supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³ The ministry responded to this request by financing *Akhtar* with a sum that would ensure the publication of its first sixty issues. However, following the publication of those sixty issues, the newspaper was forced to discontinue publication due to a lack of finance, and remained out of circulation for nine months between April 1876 and January 1877.⁴

Crucially, when help did come, it was not in the form of a donation from Tehran, but rather as a gift from the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph Abdülhamid II who had recently acceded to the throne (r. 1876–1908). First, the editor, Âqâ Mohammad Tâher Tabrizi,⁵ a member of the Azerbaijani community in Istanbul was granted the “privilege” (*imtiyaz*) to publish *Akhtar*. Mohammad Tâher had previously applied to the Ottoman authorities for publishing rights to establish a newspaper, but had been denied the privilege.⁶ In addition to granting him the publishing rights to *Akhtar*, the Yıldız Palace also committed to partially financing the newspaper by sending Mohammad Tâher a fixed sum each month and subscribing to fifty-five copies of each issue.⁷ As a consequence of the Ottoman state’s intervention, *Akhtar* resumed circulation on 11 January 1877.

The Hamidian state’s decision to sustain and sponsor a Persian-language newspaper run by Iranian residents of the late Ottoman capital must be viewed as representing in microcosm one of the primary goals of Hamidian state strategy: the affirmation of Ottoman sovereignty and power in a changing international order in which the empire had to look outward and beyond its borders. By supporting the publication of a Persian-language newspaper in the capital, the Hamidian state envisaged reaching beyond the formal borders of the Ottoman Empire and into Iran, the Caucasus, Egypt and India, where *Akhtar* came to have a wide readership that consisted mainly of Shi‘i Muslims: And, in exchange for the protection of the Ottoman state, Mohammad Tâher and the other contributors of the newspaper agreed implicitly to promote Ottoman prestige by transmitting news of developments taking place in the empire and to endorse the sultan’s sovereignty to Persian-speaking audiences across the region. This tacit agreement ensured that its editors and contributors could publish in *Akhtar* ideas and criticisms relating to Iran’s state of affairs and on matters of importance in the region beyond the borders of Iran and the Ottoman Empire.⁸

Given that the offices of *Akhtar* were located outside of Iran, and funded by both readership subscription and the Ottoman state, the nature of discussion that took place in its issues was far more open to engaging in vigorous debate concerning the state of affairs in Iran than any publication coming out of Iran at the time. This notwithstanding, the establishment of *Akhtar* in 1876 also coincided with a period of growth and bureaucratization of the Ottoman state under Sultan Abdülhamid. One of the features of this bureaucratization was the formalization and institutionalization of censorship which was enforced by newly established government boards and committees. These were commissioned to ensure that all publications—including newspapers, periodicals, books and works of poetry—complied with the strict censorship regulations of the Hamidian state and could demand the immediate suspension of publications which were deemed “unfit” for public consumption.⁹

This article contends that studied against this backdrop, *Akhtar*'s editors appear to have understood that one of the prerequisites for remaining in publication was to successfully maintain the delicate equilibrium of ensuring that the publication continue to publish material of interest to its readership without jeopardizing its continuance by challenging the jurisdiction of the Hamidian state. The reciprocal understanding reached between the Hamidian state and the offices of *Akhtar* is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that over the years, the Ottoman state tolerated "offences" committed by the editors of *Akhtar* by either turning a blind eye or administering little more than "cautions" (*ihbar*) in instances when the Persian-language publication was reported to have engaged in "mischievous" (*muzir*) behavior.¹⁰ In return, *Akhtar* promoted the Hamidian project of pan-Islamism and reported extensively on literary, scientific and political developments in the Ottoman Empire. The newspaper also kept altogether silent during the Armenian massacres of 1894–1896 and did not report on the 'Ubeydullah revolt of 1880–81. Such was the nature of the reciprocal friendship between the Iranian editors of the Persian-language *Akhtar* and the Hamidian state.

The "Egyptian Question" Defined

In what follows, this article will examine how one of the first popular uprisings in the region against imperial powers—namely, the 'Urabi uprising in Egypt—was documented in *Akhtar*. This examination reveals how the editors of the newspaper reported on the escalating political crisis in Egypt in 1881 and 1882—which was under Ottoman rule, even if only nominally—in ways that reverberated with its readership, but also managed to circumvent Ottoman censorship during its coverage of the event.¹¹ *Akhtar* was in a unique position of being the only non-official Persian-language newspaper in print at the time, reporting from the seat of the Ottoman Empire where it nevertheless remained in publication under the watchful eyes of Sultan Abdülhamid's recently established Inspection and Supervision Committee (*Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*).¹²

From September 1881 through to September 1882, *Akhtar* reported extensively on the escalating political crisis in Egypt and published a series of articles regarding what it labeled the "Egyptian question".¹³ In the summer of 1882, the British occupied Ottoman Egypt as a response to the 'Urabi crisis. The alleged purpose of British action was to restore the rule of law in Egypt and to re-establish the political authority of the governor of Egypt, Khedive Tevfik Paşa, who had been unable to suppress the ongoing national movement led by Colonel 'Urabi. As a consequence, Egypt was formally recognized as a protectorate of the British Empire, and although it remained under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, it was administered by the British Foreign Office until December 1914.¹⁴

In September 1881, the editors of *Akhtar* reported on the ever-increasing popular support in Egypt for Colonel Ahmed 'Urabi, and in January 1882 they also commented on Britain and France's endorsement of the Khedive, Tevfik Paşa, at the expense of

'Urabi Paşa. By the summer of 1882, the newspaper had become increasingly concerned with what it labeled the "Egyptian question", and between mid-June and August it was reporting on Egypt in its every issue. This was done in a variety of ways: the newspaper's editors published translated articles from European newspapers, relayed news they had received by telegraph from Egypt and printed a number of editorials which communicated their own opinions relating to the Egyptian question. Unobtrusively or at times directly anti-British, openly pro-'Urabist and subtly critical of the Khedive (who was considered a British puppet), these articles offer interesting insights into the sensibilities of *Akhtar's* editors through their treatment of a popular rebellion against imperialist political and military encroachment.¹⁵ A thorough examination of how the 'Urabi movement is recorded in *Akhtar* is relevant as the failure of 'Urabi's forces vis-à-vis further penetration of Egypt by European powers and the subsequent intervention of Britain in the country's affairs arrested the claims made by native Egyptians on the power and resources previously reserved to the Ottoman aristocracy in Egypt. The exploitation of the country's resources and markets as well as the political transgressions of imperial powers reverberated with an Iranian audience who experienced similar threats to their national sovereignty throughout the Qajar period.¹⁶

Hence, the 'Urabi uprising coincided with a time of great political anxiety for the Qajars and Iranian onlookers due to increasing foreign presence within the country—and broke out less than a decade before widespread revolts in Iran against the 1890 tobacco concession granted by Nasir al-Din Shah to Great Britain. Set against this backdrop, the study of the coverage of the 'Urabi movement—which simultaneously raised questions of national identity ("Egypt for the Egyptians") and the articulation of national sovereignty against foreign powers—demonstrates the strategies *Akhtar's* editors employed in their treatment of a popular movement against "foreign" powers. This was in spite of the fact that their patron, the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid, viewed the question of local control and autonomy in lands under his rule as destructive not only where Egypt was concerned, but also for the empire as a whole. This calls into question the notion of "foreign", which in the case of Egypt in 1881–82 expanded beyond Britain and France to include the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to European sources,¹⁷ wherein the dominant interpretation of the British occupation of Egypt focuses on Anglo-French rivalry,¹⁸ examinations of the Ottoman response to the crisis, how these events affected the Sublime Porte and how they were treated in the Ottoman press have been limited. This is in part because Egypt's vassal status is a fact played down by European and nationalist Egyptian scholars alike.¹⁹ With notable exceptions, scholars have generally treated the Ottoman sultan as a passive bystander in the course of events and have not considered the Ottoman response to the crisis as being of particular interest.²⁰ Moreover, the question of how the news of one of the first nationalist movements in the region traveled to Iran, and how the historical narrative was framed to make these events relevant to Persian-speaking audiences in the region remains uncharted territory.

Akhtar was concerned with the question of Egypt and the unfolding of the events of 1881–82 from both Ottoman and Iranian perspectives. Set against the background of

the dynamics of the relationship between the Yıldız Palace and the editors of *Akhtar* and the newspaper's espousal of the sultan's imperial and pan-Islamic policies, the treatment of the crisis is shrouded in layers of meaning, highlighting the newspaper's attempts at achieving a subtle "balancing act".²¹ Significantly, although original material pertaining to the illegality and outrage of a "foreign" takeover of Egypt was published in *Akhtar* in considerable detail, the chief foreign policy goal of the Hamidian regime, namely the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, remained unchallenged by its editors.²² For example, although the 'Urabiist slogan at the time was "Egypt for Egyptians", there was no room for such sentiment in the pages of *Akhtar*, in which this phrase did not appear even once throughout the crisis. In fact, the newspaper's editors attempted to depict Colonel 'Urabi and the Ottoman sultan as being on the "same side", even though Ottoman sources attest to Abdülhamid's hostility towards Colonel 'Urabi and his followers, who the sultan-caliph regarded as constituting a threat to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire with their demands for Egypt's national sovereignty.²³

This article will argue that although it was not the Ottoman sultan's policy to support the resistance movement led by Colonel 'Urabi, but rather to ensure the maintenance of the status quo and continued Ottoman sovereignty in Egypt, the editors of *Akhtar* were able to circumvent this "complication" by two means. First, all the while they engineered the narrative to portray 'Urabi "Paşa" as a popular leader who insisted that European claims over Egypt be renounced, they also underlined that 'Urabi was a loyal servant of the Ottoman sultan. Second, they stressed Abdülhamid's imperial identity as caliph of all Muslim societies, and accentuated his role as the head of the Muslim world with full and equal diplomatic relations with European states.²⁴ Considered thus, the Ottoman Sultan's purview over Egypt was portrayed as a matter that expanded beyond the Ottoman Empire's dealings in a land under its rule. Rather, the Egyptian crisis was portrayed as being a shared cause for concern for all global Muslim communities that came under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman sultan in his capacity as their caliph.

The Ottoman Empire is often left out of the study of inter-imperial competition of the late nineteenth century.²⁵ As illustrated above, although much has been written on the Egyptian crisis of 1881–82 from the British and Egyptian point of view, surprisingly little has been written on the subject of how the Ottoman state reacted to this crisis. Overlooking the participation and role of the Ottoman Empire in investigations of late nineteenth-century imperialism risks underestimating the mechanisms put in place by the Ottoman state to exercise its territorial sovereignty. To this end, the study of the 'Urabi movement as reported in the Persian press of the Ottoman Empire draws attention the competitive strategies used by the Hamidian state as it attempted to manage the evolving crisis in Egypt, and highlights that the Yıldız Palace played an appreciable role in the events leading up to the British takeover of Egypt in 1882 by carefully crafting its policy in Egypt (which also included controlling how the press reported the event from Istanbul). Accordingly, this article also attempts to accentuate that the Ottoman Empire was a "major if not weak actor in European diplomacy" during this significant political crisis which saw the incorporation of Egypt

into the British Empire as a protectorate.²⁶ Thus, the consideration of this political event through the medium of *Akhtar* also challenges perspectives that treat the Ottoman Empire as a “symbolic” player which abandoned Egypt to the British following the 'Urabi crisis.²⁷

Akhtar's Coverage: A Persian-language Newspaper Reports on Egypt from the Ottoman Empire

On 7 September 1881, there appeared in *Akhtar* the first editorial piece reporting on the unrest in Egypt. Published under simple heading “Egypt” (*Mesr*),²⁸ the piece disclosed that “for over a month now, disturbing reports are coming out of Egypt ... these reports are unfortunately largely contradictory of one another”.²⁹ Since August 1881, *Akhtar* had occasionally relayed news coming out of Egypt under its “Telegrams” section. For example, on 26 August 1881 it had reported that “according to the Official Gazette of Egypt, Egyptian army officers have presented the Khedive a petition”.³⁰ This petition—demanding the expansion of the Egyptian army after it had been radically reduced in size—had in fact been delivered to the Khedive in January that year, which indicates that there was a significant delay in the transmittance of news from Egypt.

According to the author of this editorial piece published on 7 September 1881, a number of European newspapers had recently reported on the alleged disorder and rebellion in the ranks of the Egyptian army. These same newspapers had also raised the possibility of the dispatch of British, French and Ottoman forces to Egypt to restore order. In the words of the contributor to *Akhtar*:

There are reports that [Egyptian] soldiers have become rebellious and that therefore these soldiers must be dispersed, and in their place, a necessary number of British, French and Ottoman soldiers must be sent into Egypt in order to ensure that order and peace are maintained!!!³¹

Significantly, in this first article discussing the Egyptian crisis, the author chose to refer not only to reports of British and French soldiers being sent to Egypt to quell the unrest, but also of an Ottoman army alongside these European forces. This initial inclusion of Ottoman forces as part of a “foreign” intervention in Egypt is significant, especially as throughout the crisis, the editors of *Akhtar* were careful to differentiate between (hostile) “non-Muslim foreign foes” and the (legitimate and amicable) relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. Indeed, the express policy of the Yıldız Palace throughout the crisis was to avoid Ottoman forces being used in Egypt at any cost.³² *Akhtar's* position that the use of Ottoman forces in Egypt to quell “unrest” was senseless was a view echoed by other publications in the capital. For example, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*³³ declared that “the Ottoman sultan wished that no harm befall on Egyptian forces ... any bloodshed has been caused by Britain alone”.³⁴

That the author was clearly not entirely convinced of the necessity of sending foreign troops to Egypt—especially if these were to include Ottoman forces—is clearly illustrated by the use of the three exclamation marks: the use of “!!!” at the end of certain passages is a feature of the newspaper that was used on different occasions. For example, in its issue published on 18 July 1882—a week after the bombardment of Alexandria—*Akhtar* relayed snippets of British Prime Minister Gladstone’s address to Parliament on the Egyptian crisis as relayed from the *Times*: “Mr. Gladstone, in his response to a member of parliament’s question stated that ‘Britain is not at war with Egypt. Seymour, the head of the British Navy, [by bombarding Alexandria] has only acted in defense.’ !!!”³⁵ The newspaper’s editors obviously thought that the suggestion that Britain’s bombardment of Alexandria had been an act of military “defense” was too absurd to simply relay without comment.³⁶ Instead of elaborating on the pretext for the bombardment of a city under Ottoman rule in words, the exclamation marks illustrate what the editors would not—or could not—say.

Additionally, the author of the 7 September 1881 article communicated that a number of other reports since received by the editors contradicted the claim that Egyptian soldiers had shown signs of rebellion in the first place. Rather, such reports had been unjustifiably treated by European observers as signs of disorderliness. “Undoubtedly”, the article reported, these grievances had been treated as such “because there is a design to dissolve the Egyptian Army”, and to substitute it with European forces:

[Those making such claims] treat the matter as such suggesting that the Egyptian army must be dispersed to ensure order and safety. The placement of European forces [in Egypt] is an age-old design that Egypt’s enemy—and perhaps the Muslim world’s greatest enemy—disguised as its friend, has drawn out.³⁷

In the meantime, the article in *Akhtar* also stressed that “the true official keeper of Egypt is [the Ottoman sultan]” (*estenādghāh-e haighi-ye mesr ast*). Notably, throughout the affair, news of Egypt was published under the newspaper’s “Domestic Matters” section (as opposed to under “Foreign News”). Abdülhamid was depicted as the legitimate ruler of Egypt, and a symbol of the Muslim world’s demands for justice and reform in the face of European aggression.³⁸ Moreover, as in other Ottoman publications such as the *Ceride-i Resmîye* and *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*,³⁹ the ‘Urabist slogan demanding national sovereignty—“Egypt for Egyptians”—was (presumably) purposefully omitted in *Akhtar*, as Egyptian articulations of sovereignty went against the foreign policy goal of the Hamidian regime, namely that of preserving the status quo in Egypt. Instead, the editors stressed that Egypt was legally part of the Ottoman Empire, and that European interference in its affairs would amount to a breach of law:

It is not to the advantage of Egyptian soldiers to revolt against authority without cause or reason. However, let us suppose that this is all true. [Even] in that case,

the dispatch of British and French soldiers to Egypt is unnecessary. Egyptian soldiers are citizens in the service of His Majesty the Sultan and belong also to the Ottoman army. Their pacification is the concern of the Ottoman state. As long as Egypt is part of the Ottoman Empire, on what grounds can the entry of British and French soldiers [into Egypt] be justified and legitimized?⁴⁰

For much of the crisis, the Yıldız Palace insisted on framing the troubles in Egypt as an internal matter and asserted that the disorder in Egypt was merely “a local affair involving controversy over the dismissal of some officers”.⁴¹ It is notable that this assertion was reiterated by *Akhtar* and the official stance of the state—that the incidents taking place in Egypt, regardless of whether they were rumors or reality, were strictly internal matters of state—was defended.

The Porte's position was also illustrated by its response to European calls that the Ottoman state participate in a conference to discuss the Egyptian crisis. In January 1882, Britain proposed that a conference be held in Istanbul to discuss the Egyptian question, and invited all European nations that had previously attended the Berlin Conference—which famously marked the “Scramble for Africa”. Sultan Abdülhamid initially refused to attend the conference, stating that the situation in Egypt did not concern European powers and would only commit to the conference in July 1882. This was reportedly a “delaying tactic” while the Ottoman delegation in Egypt, led by Derviş Paşa, “tried to find a solution to the crisis”.⁴²

Akhtar was not the only publication in the Ottoman capital to reiterate that the Egyptian crisis was a domestic matter: For example, in June 1882, when it was decided that the Istanbul conference would go ahead, the Ottoman publication *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* wrote that “the Ottoman state is in control of the situation in Egypt. To this effect, it has already sent two delegations to resolve the matter ... It is also in possession of the facts on the ground and does not require the assistance of foreign states who think they know more [than the Ottoman state]”.⁴³ What sets the material in *Akhtar* apart from other Istanbul-based publications is that it was published with a Persian-reading and non-Ottoman audience in mind, the implications of which will be discussed further below.

The 7 September article set the tone for the content of the material that appeared in the newspaper from September 1881 through to September 1882, and gives the reader a general idea of the newspaper's stance towards the “Egyptian question”. It was no secret that by September 1881, British intervention in Egypt was designed to protect their own financial interests in the country and was made necessary by the possible threat to Anglo-French involvement in Egyptian finances.⁴⁴ Colonel 'Urabi had led a military demonstration in September 1881 to protest that the chamber of delegates had not met in some time. Created in 1866, the chamber of delegates was by that point considered little more than a symbolic body which performed the role of “giving a veneer of popular sanction to the decisions of the khedival government”.⁴⁵ 'Urabi, who spoke as a “delegate of the people”, demanded that the army be increased to its full complement of 18,000 men as was decreed in the *fermans*

granted to Mehmed ‘Ali in 1841 by Sultan Abdülmecid.⁴⁶ Furthermore, he also appealed for the drafting of a constitution which was to impose limits on khedival autocracy, and declared that the portion of the revenues not allocated to the payment of interest on debt should be subject to the chamber’s jurisdiction. Such a measure would inevitably result in the removal of European employees in the Egyptian government who were placed “in positions that were virtual sinecures”.⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, the demands outlined by the ‘Urabiists and the support garnered by Colonel ‘Urabi caused the British and French great alarm. They believed that if left unchecked, any success of the ‘Urabi movement could result in Egypt repudiating its financial obligations.⁴⁸ Moreover, Colonel ‘Urabi’s designs did nothing to ensure that the Sublime Porte’s policy of maintaining the status quo in Egypt was realized. In other words, European ministries and the Yıldız Palace shared the common goal of “restoring order” in Egypt and removing ‘Urabi.

In the issue published following 7 September 1881, *Akhtar* printed a lengthy article on the question of *Ettehād-e Islām* (Islamic Unity) and stated that “in whatever way we treat the question of Islamic unity we can verily observe that the protection of piety and one’s [Islamic] character is the most necessary duty (*‘amr-e lāzemtarin*) that concerns all Muslim tribes and peoples today”.⁴⁹ An Istanbul-based Persian publication critical of the Qajars but on favorable terms with the Ottoman state writing for a predominantly Shi‘i readership, *Akhtar* considered the question of Islamic unity as one of primary importance and espoused its own description of Sultan Abdülhamid’s imperial vision of pan-Islamism.⁵⁰ The editorial piece in *Akhtar* draws attention to the existential threat imposed on the Islamic world by European imperialism and calls upon the members of Muslim communities to stand as one, because “today, Islamic unity and oneness is necessary” (*emruz ettehād-e Islām va yegāneh shodan lāzem ast*). After discussing at some length the scientific developments pioneered by the West, the article appeals to Muslim communities of the world to follow in the footsteps of reason and science, and asks that the ‘ulema across the region promote Islamic unity. The author then affirms that there is one sultan in the Muslim world—the Ottoman sultan-caliph—who must act as the head of all other Islamic states and to whom all other Muslim leaders must be accountable:

We must realize that among all the Muslim sultans there must be one chieftain, and he must be greater [in rank], and all the others must recognize his authority. And because it is thus, certain conditions and limits will be imposed and accepted. For example, the shah of Iran [although he is the head of a Muslim state under the Ottoman sultan’s protection] must be distinguished as an independent sovereign and be given the same treatment [other sovereign] European emperors are accorded by the King of Kings of the Islamic world [i.e. the Ottoman caliph-sultan]. And when he visits the Ottoman lands, he must be considered to be the most important of foreign guests. ... It is thus that a great step for Islamic unity can be taken.⁵¹

The article refers to the Ottoman sultan as the “King of Kings of the Islamic world”, adding that he “must not stand silent in the face of injustice inflicted on its subjects”.⁵²

Whom did the editors of *Akhtar* have in mind when they wrote these lines? By 1881 *Akhtar* had a solid readership in the Ottoman Empire, but was also widely circulated within Iran, India, Egypt, Russia and the Caucasus. Thus, the editors of *Akhtar* could reach Persian-speaking Muslims in India, Iranian subjects in Iran as well as Iranian merchants and laborers residing across Russia, Egypt and the Caucasus, and Iranian embassy staff, students and political dissidents in Europe.⁵³ How was the Egyptian crisis and question of Islamic unity relevant to this Persian-speaking, Shi'i and non-Ottoman readership? What interest could a Persian-speaking readership have in supporting the claims of an Ottoman sultan?

The above-quoted article highlights that the question of Muslim unity, as understood by the editors of *Akhtar* was immensely complicated precisely because its call for Islamic unity needed to be framed in such a way that it appealed to a non-Ottoman, Shi'i and Persian-speaking readership. To this end, the author argues that although as caliph, the Ottoman sultan was responsible for ensuring that the Muslim world come together in solidarity against European encroachment, he would also need to respect the jurisdiction and sovereignty of, for example, the shah of Iran, in the same manner as the independence of a European state was recognized by the Ottoman state. In other words, *Akhtar's* sense of Abdülhamid's pan-Islamism recognized the sultan's prestige as the head of a Muslim state with equal diplomatic relations as with European powers, and called upon the head of state of the Ottoman Empire to represent the rights of all Muslim societies in its dealings with the West. However, vitally, it also stressed that it was critical that the Ottoman sultan recognized the sacrosanct sovereignty of other Muslim heads of state, such as the shah of Iran, in the same way he was expected to respect the sovereignty of European emperors.

The language used by its contributors and the appeals made in *Akhtar*, illustrate the common concerns its editors believed were shared by its Persian-speaking readers, making the political situation in Egypt highly relatable to its readership beyond the formal borders of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the unfolding of the 'Urabi crisis coincided with the annexation of Akhal and Marv by Russia—which considered the occupation of this region to be of the first importance in its struggle against Britain in the so-called “Great Game”. Indeed, throughout the 'Urabi crisis, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran continued to negotiate the terms of a new treaty delineating the border between Iran and Russia and hoped to finalize an agreement without causing Britain too much alarm.⁵⁴ *Akhtar* commented on these developments in its issues published on 14 July 1881, 10 February 1882 and 29 February 1882.⁵⁵ *Akhtar* reported that the Iranian Foreign Ministry's inability to act decisively could come at a great cost, given that Britain and Russia were moving dangerously close to military action on Iranian soil. The Egyptian question would have resonated with the publication's readership in light of these developments. From the point of view of the editors of *Akhtar*, the Egyptian crisis provided an opportunity to report on what was yet another episode in the classical age of imperialism, where two expan-

sionist powers—in this instance, Britain and France—threatened to collide with a nationalist movement.

Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar was aware of the Ottoman sultan's overtures to Muslim populations across the region. One letter addressed to the shah in 1880 informed Nasir al-Din that "a group of fanatical flatterers" were guilty of encouraging Sultan Abdülhamid to rally the support of the Islamic world behind him. The statesman who penned the letter, Mirzā Malkum Khan, who was head of the Iranian legation in London at the time, also remarked that the Ottoman sultan wished to be recognized as the caliph of all Muslim societies, and that he had even sent out proclamations of his station as caliph to Egypt, India, Iran and Central Asia:

A group of fanatics and flatterers have convinced the sultan that because European countries are determined to rid Rumelia of Ottoman sovereignty indefinitely, such a great defeat can only be compensated by an Ottoman claim to the right and power of the caliphate. From Egypt to India, and especially in Iran and Central Asia, by this use of the little power that still remains [in Abdülhamid's hands], they are taking advantage of the power and dominance that the caliph possesses. Books have been written on this claim and one newspaper has been established exclusively for the purpose [of spreading this propaganda]. People in Istanbul are very keen on this idea at the moment and it is truly a fantastical idea, but the incompetence and impotence of [those] in Istanbul is beyond measure.⁵⁶

The claims in Malkum's letter were substantiated by the Iranian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Mirzā Hosain Khan (1858–71), who wrote to Nasir al-Din Shah independently in 1878 to inform him that "the Ottomans have embarked on a new policy of promoting Islamic unity under the leadership of the sultan as the caliph of the Islamic world".⁵⁷ Nasir al-Din Shah was therefore made aware of the Ottoman sultan's bid to draw on the appeal of a global Muslim leader. However, this vision of the caliphate—as a symbol of anti-colonial struggle and reform—did not necessarily contradict other imperial identities,⁵⁸ as succinctly outlined by *Akhtar* above. Perhaps for this reason, although Sultan Abdülhamid increasingly promoted his pan-Islamic policies, the mid-to-late nineteenth century is also generally considered a period of rapprochement between the Ottoman and Qajar states.

On 17 July 1882, the first issue of *Akhtar* following the bombardment of Alexandria by British forces on 11–13 July appeared. News of this event had clearly reached Istanbul without delay. This (short) front-page article informed its readers of the bombardment as reported in the London *Times*. It was on 25 July that a lengthy editorial piece concerning Egypt appeared as front-page news. In this editorial, the author presents a case for Egypt's strategic importance and then painstakingly described the diplomatic strategies employed by Britain, France and Russia throughout the Egyptian crisis, and outlines how these political maneuverings related to each state's strategy in the context of broader imperial designs. He then declares that "if Britain think they can be rid of Ahmad 'Urabi and his aims so easily, they are mistaken", and

adds that “[due to the maneuverings of the British,] the Ottoman sultan has no choice but to attend the Istanbul conference he has so far refused to take part in”.⁵⁹ The article also refers to the meeting of the Egyptian chamber of delegates and adds that the assembly had insisted on having a greater say in the allocation of Egypt’s revenues. However, “Şerif Paşa [the prime minister of Egypt] abstained from accepting such a proposal and declared that he would resign from his position the moment the assembly insists on accepting such a proposal in regard to the question of revenue”.⁶⁰ As stated above, by 1881, the chamber of delegates had no oversight over the allocation of Egypt’s revenues, and was considered little more than “a debating society”.⁶¹ The demand that half the budget not already pledged to European debts be managed by the chamber signaled ‘Urabists’ designs to significantly expand the powers of the body. It was disagreement over the question of who would control surplus revenues that led to the collapse of the Şerif Paşa government on 2 February 1882. On 9 February 1882, one week after the Şerif Paşa government fell, *Akhtar* reported that a new cabinet had been formed by the Circassian Mahmud Sami al-Barudi. The article labeled this development as being “auspicious news” (*khabar-e farkhondeh*): Not only had Colonel ‘Urabi been appointed minister of war, but the Khedive Tevfik Paşa had approved the new budget.

Between February and July 1882, *Akhtar* relayed news of the evolving situation in Egypt by publishing accounts that had reached Istanbul by telegram and translated articles from British and French newspapers. None of these include commentary from the newspaper’s editors. However, the newspaper followed the crisis closely and reported accordingly. News of British and French fears that the new cabinet would place debt service in doubt; the Khedive’s dismissal of the al-Barudi cabinet (along with ‘Urabi) in May 1882; Colonel ‘Urabi’s reinstatement a few days later; the dispatch of British gunboats to Alexandria harbor; the arrival of the Derviş Paşa mission from Istanbul to resolve the crisis on behalf the Yıldız Palace on 7 June 1882; and the tension between Egyptian and foreign nationals and the unrest (or so-called “riot”) in Alexandria in mid-June which led to the bombardment of Alexandria in July were published in its pages with only minor delays.⁶²

However, careful examination of *Akhtar*’s treatment of the khedive, and the khedive’s relationship to Derviş Paşa and Colonel ‘Urabi, highlights the publication’s tendency to promote the khedive’s authority in Egypt and the idea of his (allegedly) amicable relationship with Colonel ‘Urabi. Derviş Paşa was the head of the delegation from Istanbul that had arrived in Egypt on 7 June 1882 in order to prevent the escalation of the political crisis. He was tasked with giving support to Khedive Tevfik Paşa—who was the legitimate representative of the sultan in the province of Egypt; to remove ‘Urabi from Egypt by inviting him to Istanbul; and to prevent any military entanglement of Ottoman forces in Egypt.⁶³ Although *Akhtar* was keen to portray the relationship between ‘Urabi, Derviş Paşa and the khedive as harmonious, this was inconsistent with the reports coming out of the Sublime Porte. It was therefore a conscious policy on *Akhtar*’s part to portray the Khedive and Colonel ‘Urabi as being on better terms than they actually were. The newspaper’s editors appreciated the need to strike a delicate balance between depicting ‘Urabi as a popular leader on the one hand and as the servant of the sultan on the other, especially at a time when his popularity

was growing both in Egypt and in Istanbul. Colonel 'Urabi may have been an Egyptian challenging the specter of European imperialism, but his calls for an "Egypt for the Egyptians" also threatened the jurisdiction of the Sublime Porte over Egypt.

In another article printed in *Akhtar* on 14 June 1882, it was reported that a number of European newspapers had published claims that "a truce between the khedive and 'Urabi Paşa is not possible. Embassy staff in Egypt confirm this".⁶⁴ Despite these rumors, following the unrest in Alexandria in late June there was news in *Akhtar* that "Ahmed 'Urabi Paşa has accepted, on the khedive's request, the mission to ensure the restoration of peace and order in Alexandria". Reportedly, this was a statement relayed in the official gazette of the Ottoman state, the *Ceride-i Resmîye*.⁶⁵ It also stated that "the khedive is dispatching his orders through 'Urabi Paşa, who is acting on [the khedive's] orders".⁶⁶ Indeed, when a new cabinet was appointed in mid-June by Tevfik Paşa, 'Urabi Paşa retained his position as minister of war. From where the editors of *Akhtar* stood, given that 'Urabi Paşa had agreed to participate in this "royalist" assembly, there was no reason to suspect that there was any discord between 'Urabi and the khedive. Both were seen to be reporting back to Derviş Paşa, who had been commissioned by the Sublime Porte to execute Abdülhamid's orders in Egypt.

As a matter of fact, Derviş Paşa was under strict orders to remove 'Urabi from Egypt. The Yıldız Palace was anxious that 'Urabi's growing popularity would result in the further undermining of the authority of the Sublime Porte in the region. In early 1882, the Porte received news that newspapers in Egypt were spreading "Urabist propaganda at the expense of the Ottoman sultan".⁶⁷ Colonel 'Urabi's fame had indeed spread as far as Istanbul, and he was more popular than ever in Egypt. This explains the ambiguity of the news published in *Akhtar*: on the one hand, its editors made no secret of their esteem of 'Urabi as a force that had caused such alarm in the corridors of Whitehall, and yet, on the other hand, they were willing to overlook the anxiety his demands were causing to policymakers in Istanbul. After all, the success of the 'Urabist forces and establishment of an Arab government in Egypt would have damaged Ottoman prestige just as much as it hurt British interests in Egypt.

It is notable that the contributors to *Akhtar* chose not to inform their readers of yet another salient issue: when Khedive Tevfik Paşa dismissed the al-Barudi cabinet, Colonel 'Urabi was amongst those dismissed. His dismissal caused widespread unrest across the province, however, and the khedive was left with no choice but to reinstate 'Urabi. Upon his reinstatement, 'Urabi immediately demanded that British fleets leave the harbor of Alexandria. He also continued to insist on a number of institutional reforms and called for limitations on the khedive's power.⁶⁸ Although *Akhtar* reported Colonel 'Urabi's demand that British fleets leave Alexandria, it failed to comment on 'Urabi's demands for constitutional reforms. Nor did it report that he had called for the khedive's powers to be curbed. The editors of *Akhtar* were much more sympathetic towards Colonel 'Urabi than Khedive Tevfik Paşa. However, there seem to be limits to what was deemed appropriate: After all, Tevfik Paşa was the representative of the Ottoman sultan in Egypt and therefore the legitimate ruler of the province. The Yıldız Palace considered the replacement of the khedive an "extremely undesirable last-minute measure",⁶⁹ since it was understood

that the replacement of the khedive could only come about as a result of foreign intervention, which the Porte wished to avoid at all costs. Therefore, any mention in *Akhtar* that Colonel 'Urabi had demanded that the khedive's power be limited could have been taken as a suggestion that the Sublime Porte's authority in Egypt also be curbed. Although they were supportive of Colonel 'Urabi, the editors of *Akhtar* understood that to report on the demand for constitutional reforms elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire would get them into trouble with the Inspection and Supervision Committee. Indeed, Abdülhamid's own concerns regarding the question of setting a precedent had been communicated to Malet, the consul general of Egypt, during an interview in 1881: "It was not possible for me [as sultan] to allow a Constitution in one province of my dominions and to withhold it from others".⁷⁰

Akhtar's coverage of the event also implied that it was only when Khedive Tevfik Paşa was unable to bring the crisis to an end that the Ottoman sultan decided to send his own representative, Derviş Paşa. Nevertheless, in its 14 June 1882 article, the editors hinted that Derviş Paşa may have been acting unreasonably, even though he was on a mission to "solve the crisis once and for all". *Akhtar* published the news that:

Today four members of the 'ulema visited Derviş Paşa and informed him of their view that Egypt can rid itself of foreign dominance only with the efforts of 'Urabi Paşa. They then asked Derviş Paşa that foreign battleships be asked to leave [Alexandria]. Derviş Paşa informed them "I have not come here to listen to your advice; I am here on a mission to execute the orders [of the sultan] and to represent the will of the Sublime Porte".⁷¹

There is something to be said about the fact that *Akhtar* had reported on members of the 'ulema expressing their support of 'Urabi Paşa, and that Derviş Paşa had consequently dismissed the suggestion that Colonel 'Urabi's "efforts" to rid Egypt of foreign intervention were of any significance, stating that his mission was above such considerations. However, among all the reports *Akhtar* published at the time, this extract is the only one which comes anywhere near criticizing Derviş Paşa, even if between the lines.

Akhtar's coverage of the Egyptian question does not vary dramatically from that of other Istanbul-based publications such as *Tercüman* or *Ceride*. However, the number of telegrams it received and chose to publish in a reasonably timely fashion, and the nuanced understanding of its editors of the international dimensions of the crisis, suggest that the newspaper's contributors were very well-informed of developments taking place in Britain, France and Egypt and in an excellent position to gauge the mood in Istanbul. And, as a consequence, this information was published and distributed through the medium of *Akhtar* across the region, beyond Turkish-speaking communities and into Iran, India and the Caucasus. That its contributors knew how to read the mood of the Sublime Porte is illustrated in their treatment of the Istanbul conference.

The editors demonstrate an acute awareness that Ottoman participation in the Istanbul conference was extremely undesirable to the Ottoman sultan. On 14 June

1882 it was stated in *Akhtar* that “Now that Derviş Paşa has arrived in Egypt, foreign delegations cannot insist on the convening of a conference in Istanbul” as Derviş was in Egypt “to ensure that an agreement be reached between all the different parties”.⁷² However, the Great Powers were not satisfied with this line of argument and continued to insist that an Ottoman delegation participate in the conference, which first convened on 3 June 1882. On 25 July, *Akhtar* commented that:

[The Great Powers] demanded that the sultan, who is the sovereign of Egypt, organize a conference that would be held in Istanbul in order to reach a decision on Egypt. The Sublime Porte rejected this offer, demanding that “if the governance of Egypt rests with us, what is the meaning of your interference in its affairs and what is the meaning of this conference? How can you explain the meaning of dispatching battleships to Alexandria and still ask for a conference?”⁷³

It is doubtful that the statement attributed to the Sublime Porte was a direct quote from the palace. Nonetheless, in relaying the “response” of the Sublime Porte to European attendees of the conference, the editors of *Akhtar* sought to highlight the Porte’s continued steadfastness in the face of European pressure. In the same article, the bombardment of Alexandria was portrayed as British “maneuvering” to oblige the Ottoman sultan to come to the negotiating table at the conference.⁷⁴ In this issue, there is also a significant shift in *Akhtar*’s stance concerning the khedive. The author sums up the causes of the Egyptian crisis in detail and states that:

Britain and France’s previous interference in Egypt first started some years ago in matters stretching from the law and court procedures to the management of financial issues, to the appointment of numerous [foreigners] to governmental posts and the flood of foreign nationals to Egypt and their employment in the country. [All this] has resulted in the humiliation of the men and women of Egypt in the hands of foreigners. It is evident to all that Tevfik Paşa, Khedive of Egypt, was appointed only as a result of Britain’s design.⁷⁵

As for ‘Urabi Paşa, *Akhtar* states that, when “the great powers demanded that he be summoned to Istanbul to facilitate the resolution process, Abdülhamid ordered Derviş Paşa to communicate this order”.⁷⁶ The implication was that only if ordered by the Ottoman sultan would Colonel ‘Urabi agree to leave Egypt. Furthermore, the article gave the impression that ‘Urabi Paşa, had only he had the chance, would have been willing to follow Derviş Paşa’s instructions:

‘Urabi was sent his summons to Istanbul and was invited to compliance. He was prepared to [comply with these orders]. However, Egyptian soldiers did not permit him to do so and a message reached the Sublime Porte informing [the sultan] that Egyptian forces will not allow Ahmed ‘Urabi to budge [from his current position].⁷⁷

These two extracts illustrate the dramatic shift in the newspaper's treatment of Tevfik Paşa, who is described as being a British puppet. This change must be attributed to the fact that by 25 July 1882, the British navy had bombarded Alexandria and Derviş Paşa had returned to Istanbul having largely failed in his mission.⁷⁸ As a consequence of these developments, the khedive was removed from office for failing to do his duty and was no longer the Ottoman Empire's representative in Egypt. Thus, the editors of *Akhtar* could now state openly that the khedive had allied himself with Britain in a bid to retain some symbolic station. On the other hand, the publication interpreted 'Urabi's continued presence in Egypt—despite the fact that the Ottoman sultan had summoned him to Istanbul—as being beyond his control. After all, the Egyptian army “would not release him” of his obligations in Egypt. This explanation not only accounted for Colonel 'Urabi's failure to journey to Istanbul, but it also saved Abdülhamid from losing face. Indeed, *Akhtar* did not cease reporting that 'Urabi was and had been loyal to the Sublime Porte.

Conclusion

This article has argued that *Akhtar's* analysis of the Egyptian crisis is significant for several reasons. First, it offers insight into how the Persian-language press reacted to one of the first nationalist revolutions against imperial powers in the region. Moreover, given that there were no other privately run Persian publications at the time, it would have predominantly been through the medium of *Akhtar* that news of the “Egyptian crisis” reached Iranian audiences. It is beyond the scope of this article to consider what, if any, implications the British takeover of Egypt had on Persian-speaking communities in the region and Qajar onlookers. However, it seems plausible to assume that at this time of great existential anxiety for Qajar Iran—as it negotiated its position in an emerging world order with Russia and Britain snapping at its heels—the articulation of national sovereignty against European powers in Egypt would have resonated in those communities already experiencing the economic and political repercussions of Russian and British infiltration of Iran.

The anti-European sentiment advocated by *Akhtar* throughout much of the crisis is apparent. The publication maintained that the Egyptian crisis originated from the deliberate (mis)interpretation of British and French expatriates who chose to see “Egyptian-inspired anarchy everywhere”,⁷⁹ when in fact the only examples of genuine civil disorder in June had lasted for a few hours and the Egyptian government had been able to suppress the violence without difficulty.⁸⁰ It also asserted that the invasion of Egypt in September benefited the European investors, diplomats and merchants who feared loss of property and influence in the country.⁸¹

However, given that the notion of “foreign” in this particular instance did not automatically exclude the Ottoman Empire, the matter of describing the relationship between the Ottoman sultan, Colonel 'Urabi and Khedive Tevfik Paşa was ostensibly a more complicated one. The amount of detailed information relayed by the editors clearly illustrates that they were very well-informed of the situation in Egypt. None-

theless, there is not a single mention of the ‘Urabi slogan “Egypt for Egyptians” in the pages of *Akhtar*. In other words, a line had to be drawn between what was and was not suitable for print. This notwithstanding, like other publications in the capital, the editors of *Akhtar* made no attempt to conceal their approval of ‘Urabi Paşa, who had “had to endure all kinds of evil to protect the motherland and [its] honor and people” (*barāyeh hefz-e nāmus va vatan va mellat har guneh mosibat-rā bar khod hamvār kard*).⁸² However, they also wrote approvingly of how Colonel ‘Urabi was acting strictly under the orders of the Porte.⁸³ Although policymakers at the Yıldız Palace were no supporters of ‘Urabi, nor did they officially denounce him as a rebel, and *Akhtar*’s treatment of ‘Urabi’s actions could not be interpreted as out of touch with the Porte’s policy. We can therefore see *Akhtar*’s treatment of ‘Urabi as a creative solution to the problem of reconciling their—and their readership’s—approval of ‘Urabi with their loyalty to the Ottoman sultan.

As we have seen, the Egyptian episode also provided an opportunity for the contributors to discuss the question of Muslim unity as understood by *Akhtar*. By presenting their ideal of a caliph whose responsibility it would be to protect the rights of Muslims in a global order, they stressed the prestige of the Ottoman sultan not necessarily in religious terms, but rather, in a legal and political capacity: The Ottoman sultan deserved the title of caliph because he was the head of a “great Muslim empire like no other”, and was able to negotiate with European powers like no other Muslim head of state.⁸⁴ It was also emphasized that the right to the caliphate did not mean other heads of Muslim states, such as the shah of Iran, were less sovereign than the Ottoman sultan. The emphasis on the caliphate as a political and legal category, rather than a theocratic one, wherein Muslim heads of state could be “equal” in status, with one caliph to assume the role of guarantor of the rights of Muslim subjects vis-à-vis expansionist powers, reveals the nuances to the conception of pan-Islamism as understood by *Akhtar*.

Finally, although the purported significance of *Akhtar* as a pioneering publication in the history of Persian journalism is often underlined, it is this author’s view that *Akhtar* as a depository of information on how Persian-speaking communities of the Ottoman Empire and beyond viewed the late nineteenth-century world is often overlooked. Thus, this article is an attempt to point to *Akhtar* as a relevant source for scholars of Qajar Iran and the Ottoman Empire, as well as world historians interested in studying the perspectives of Persian-speaking communities as they relate to the important political, social and cultural events of the late nineteenth century.

Notes

1. See Pistor-Hatam, *Akhtar as a Transmitter of Ottoman Political Ideas*; Pistor-Hatam, “Progress and Civilization”; Haag-Higuchi, *A Topos and its Dissolution: Japan in Some Twentieth Iranian Texts*; Suzuki, *A Note*; Koloğlu, *Un Journal Persan d’Istanbul: Akhtar*; Zarinebaf-Shahr, “From Istanbul to Tabriz”; Lawrence, *Akhtar*.
2. For an essay on the treatment of Ottoman history as a record that pertains to the Turkish nation-state, and views other ethnic and religious groups living in the Empire as foreign elements which were

- at best marginal in an otherwise Turkish order, see Eldem, "Osmanlı Tarihini Türklerden Kurtarmak".
3. Pistor-Hatam, *Akhtar as a Transmitter of Ottoman Political Ideas*, 142.
 4. Sāsāni, *Yādbudhā*, 205–6.
 5. The other editors of *Akhtar* were Hajj Mirzā Mahdi and Mirzā Mahdi (later called Za'im al-Dowleh). Hajj Mirzā Mahdi was the son of a merchant from Tabriz and did most of the writing for the newspaper, whereas Mirzā Mahdi Za'im al-Dowleh had studied medicine in Tabriz and then traveled to Istanbul to continue his studies there, and after fourteen years of collaboration in the publication of *Akhtar* from 1876 to 1890, he moved to Cairo in 1891 and began to publish *Hekmat* (1892–1911). The three men's common social background and their urban ethos had a significant impact on the tone and content of the newspaper, which was particularly popular amongst merchants, especially from Azerbaijan. Among other well-known contributors of the newspaper were Sheikh Ahmad Ruhi, Mirzā Āqā Khan Kermāni and Mirzā Habib Isfahāni. Some of these men were also connected to one another through the Iranian School in Istanbul, the *Dabestān-e Irāniyān*: Mirzā Mahdi Tabrizi, the editor of *Akhtar*, Mirzā Āqā Khan Kermāni and Mirzā Habib Isfahāni had all taught at this school at different times for extra income. See Gurney, "Mirzā Āqā Khan", 141; Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 33–6.
 6. BOA/Prime Ministerial Archives. MF.MKT. 26/123. 17 safar 1292 (March 25, 1875).
 7. Extract from letter by Mohsen Khan Mo'in al-Molk to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 27 muharram 1294 (February 12, 1877), as quoted from Sasani, *Yādbudhā*, 206.
 8. Farman-Farmayan, *The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran*, 146–7. Despite frequent bans and its ultimate prohibition from entering Iran after the Tobacco Régie in 1891–92, the newspaper's issues were circulated in Iran by one means or another.
 9. *Salname-yi Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiye*, Asır Matbaası, 1321/1903. The abandonment of the Ottoman Press Law in 1878 allowed the government to suspend papers without stating cause or reason. Newspapers published in Arabic and Persian were also closely observed.
 10. For example, when "unlawful" publications were discovered in the offices of *Akhtar* in May 1890, the Ministry of Education decreed that these works should be "confiscated without further investigation". Elsewhere, when it was established in February 1891 that Mohammad Tāher Tabrizi continued to keep such works and publish unauthorized material, the constabulary was told to "fine in moderation". See BOA. MF.MKT 116/107, 3 shavvāl 1307 (May 23, 1890); BOA.ZB. 17/93, 2 rajab 1308 (February 12, 1891).
 11. The present article builds on previous work by the author on the treatment of the 'Urabi crisis in *Akhtar*. See, Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 67–96.
 12. The Ministry of Education's Inspection and Supervision Committee (*Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*) was established in 1882 in order to formalize the means and mechanisms by which the state controlled and censored all published materials in the Ottoman Empire. These acts of censorship had previously been overseen by the Translation and Records Office (*Telif ve Tercüme Dairesi*).
 13. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 67.
 14. Genell, "Empire by Law", 2.
 15. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 67–8.
 16. For an examination of Iran's encounters with imperial powers in the nineteenth century see, Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*; Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*; Atkin, *Russia and Iran*; Guity, *From Bazaar to Market: Foreign Trade and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century*; Martin, *The Qajar Pact*.
 17. Historians have, for the most part, considered occupied Egypt a British colony in all but name, and have treated the events of 1881–82 as having been a straightforward matter of protecting British control over the Suez Canal and the interests of European bond-holders with investments in Egypt. See Robinson and Gallagher, *The Climax of Imperialism*, 76–121; Mansfield, *The British in Egypt*; Hopkins, "The Victorians and Africa".
 18. Genell, "Empire by Law", 2.

19. Egyptian scholars such as Latifah Salim and ‘Abdul-‘Azim Ramadan consider the ‘Urabi uprising to be a nationwide and mass rebellion on the part of intellectuals, urban guilds, both small and large landowners and have sought to understand the movement in the context of class conflict and socio-economic factors influencing political affairs. Juan Cole has built on such works but has opted for what he calls a “social explanation”, examining the manner in which “economic and demographic change and the growth of state power created new interests among the strata that most participated later in the Revolution: the rural population, the local guilds and the intelligentsia”. See Salim, *Social Forces in the ‘Urabi Revolution*; Ramadan, *Social Significance of the Urabi Revolution*; Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*.
20. For notable exceptions, see Genell, “Empire by Law”; Adalı, “Documents Pertaining to the Egyptian” Question; Deringil, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis”; Kızıltoprak, *Mısır’da İngiliz İşgali*.
21. Lawrence, *Akhtar*.
22. Genell, “Empire by Law”, 3.
23. BOA. Y.EE. 39/2012 (undated).
24. Aydın, *Globalizing the Intellectual History*, 164.
25. Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 3.
26. Genell, “Empire by Law”, 1–6.
27. Shaw, “Integrity and Integration”, 40.
28. A number of the quotes from *Akhtar* used in this chapter as they relate to the Egyptian crisis have been borrowed from Lawrence, *Akhtar*.
29. “Mesr”, *Akhtar*, September 7, 1881 (13 shavvāl 1298).
30. *Akhtar*, August 18, 1881 (21 ramazān 1298). There is no indication what the petition read or demanded.
31. “Mesr”, *Akhtar*, September 7, 1881 (13 shavvāl 1298).
32. BOA. Y.EE. 39/2465/121/122.
33. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (1878–1921) was an Ottoman newspaper published by Ahmet Midhat Efendi in Istanbul and is considered one of the most important publications of the Hamidian period, particularly for its literary content.
34. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, February 19, 1883.
35. *Akhtar*, July 18, 1882 (2 ramazān 1299).
36. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 73.
37. “Mesr”, *Akhtar*, September 7, 1881 (13 shavvāl 1298).
38. *Ibid*.
39. Raif and Ahmed, “Bab-ı Ali Hariciye Nezareti Mısır Meselesi”, 71–71.
40. “Mesr”, *Akhtar*, September 7, 1881 (13 shavvāl 1298).
41. Deringil, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis”, 7.
42. BOA. Y.A.HUS. 170/107; BOA. Y.EE. 122/5. The conference first met on June 3, 1882, but the Ottoman delegation did not attend until July 26, 1882, following the bombardment of Alexandria.
43. *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, June 25, 1882 (8 sha’bān 1299).
44. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 74.
45. See Galbraith and Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, “The British Occupation of Egypt”.
46. Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt and Cromer*, 5.
47. Galbraith and Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, “The British Occupation of Egypt”, 474–5.
48. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 75–6.
49. “Ettihād-e Islām”, *Akhtar*, September 13, 1881 (20 shavvāl 1298).
50. Following the 1877–78 Turko-Russia war, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its non-Muslim population in the Balkans. This is considered a turning point in how the empire crafted its domestic and foreign policy: Henceforth, Sultan Abdülhamid chose to increasingly emphasize his position as caliph, and promoted his Arab subjects to more important positions in state bureaucracy. See Deringil, “Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State”; Duguid, “The Politics of Unity”; Aydın, *Globalizing the Intellectual*.

51. "Ettehād-e Islām", *Akhtar*, September 13, 1881 (20 shavvāl 1298).
52. Ibid.
53. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 79–80.
54. Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 72–83. The government of India was especially anxious for a settlement of the Russo-Persian issue as it wished to secure Afghanistan from Russian interference. The India Office was so involved with the "Persian frontier question" that Lord Hartington, the secretary of state for India, sat in conversations between British Foreign Secretary, Granville and the Russian ambassador to London, Lobanov, in 1882.
55. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 80.
56. Letter from Malkum Khan to Nasir al-Din Shah, dated 21 rajab 1297 (June 29, 1880), as quoted from Safā'i, *Asnād-e Now Yāfīeh*, 119. Malkum Khan would become one of Nasir al-Din's most fervent critics and advocate pan-Islamism through the London based Persian-language newspaper *Qanun*, which called for a united Islamic front under the leadership of the Ottoman sultan as a means of challenging the power and undermining the legitimacy of the Qajar shah's government. See Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan*.
57. Safā'i, *Barghā-ye Tārikh*, 114–15.
58. Aydın, *Globalizing the Intellectual*, 166–7.
59. "Hengāmeh-ye Mesr va Motāla'āt", *Akhtar*, July 25, 1882 (9 ramazān 1299).
60. Ibid.
61. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 237.
62. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 85.
63. Deringil, "The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis", 9.
64. *Akhtar*, June 14, 1882 (27 rajab 1299).
65. *Akhtar*, June 25, 1882 (3 sha'bān 1299).
66. Ibid.
67. BOA. Y.PRK.AZJ. 4/05.
68. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 238.
69. Deringil, "The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis", 7–8.
70. Malet to Granville, September 21, 1881, as quoted in *ibid.*, 5.
71. *Akhtar*, June 14, 1882 (27 rajab 1299).
72. Ibid.
73. "Hengāmeh-ye Mesr va Motāla'āt", *Akhtar*, July 25, 1882 (9 ramazān 1299).
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. "Hengāmeh-ye Mesr va Motāla'āt", *Akhtar*, July 22, 1882 (9 ramazān 1299).
77. Ibid.
78. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 94.
79. "Hengāmeh-ye Mesr va Motāla'āt", *Akhtar*, July 25, 1882 (9 ramazān 1299); Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 94–5.
80. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 281.
81. Lawrence, *Akhtar*, 94.
82. *Akhtar*, June 14, 1882 (27 rajab 1299).
83. Ibid.
84. "Ettehād-e Islām", *Akhtar*, September 13, 1881 (20 shavvāl 1298).

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