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# **The Age of Bureaucratic Overhaul: A study of Ottoman Diplomacy and the role of reciprocity in the Ottoman Empire's international treaty-making, 1839-1876**

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## **Citation**

Sunuç, M. (2024). *The Age of Bureaucratic Overhaul: A study of Ottoman Diplomacy and the role of reciprocity in the Ottoman Empire's international treaty-making, 1839-1876*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

**The Age of Bureaucratic Overhaul:**

**A study of Ottoman diplomacy and the role of reciprocity in the Ottoman Empire's international treaty-making, 1839 – 1876**

Bachelor's Project on Global Peace Treaties 1648-1914

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Date of Submission: 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Word Count: 7, 519

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## 1. Introduction

The Mediterranean was once home to one of the largest Muslim empires in history, its reign spanning from the late Middle Ages up until the early twentieth century; the Ottoman Empire. Originating from central Anatolia and gradually expanding its territory into neighboring regions, the Ottoman Empire frequently clashed with powerful polities located in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. In the field of Historical International Relations (HIR), discussions of European political history have consistently acknowledged the Ottoman Empire's presence as an influential force in political outcomes. These political outcomes often manifested as intra-European alliances so as to fend off Ottoman invasions, for the Ottomans were not yet recognized as a prospective target for diplomatic relations.

Even when reputed as “the Sick Man of Europe” since the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's unique geopolitical position and strategic flexibility were desirable features that European great powers wished to exploit. Since as far back as the Middle Ages, the Empire had constructed a capitulatory regime in which successive Ottoman Sultans were powerful enough to grant unilateral capitulations to predominantly, but not limited to, Christian nations (De Groot, 2003). These capitulations usually took the shape of defensive alliances, commercial agreements, and concessions for the protection of religious minorities residing within Ottoman domain. However, the Empire's waning influence gradually gave way to the necessity for bilateralism and formal reciprocal diplomacy (Oakes & Mowat, 1970, pp. 158-159).

The Ottoman Empire grew increasingly accepting of European law of nations when it became clear that its survival was at stake. In a bid to appeal to their European counterparts, the Ottomans sought to reform their existing administrative practices and governmental institutions into a bureaucratic system based on the Western model. Inspired by the European state system, the Ottoman Empire broke its long and historical streak of militaristic statecraft in favor of changing its approach to foreign affairs. Instead of unilateral declarations of will, the Ottomans would now be concluding international relations through reciprocal diplomatic deliberation. The Empire's capitulatory regime came to a close, formal treaties replacing capitulations as main tools of foreign policy. Thus, this study will be dedicated to answering the following research question; **“What is the role of reciprocal diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire's international treaty-making during the modernization of Ottoman bureaucracy (1839-1876)?”**

The following research has academic relevance, and will broach the topic of reciprocal treaties in the declining Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, a timeframe in Ottoman history that remains severely overlooked in IR literature. Although the non-availability of certain records is often cited as one of the main difficulties in conducting research on the Ottoman Empire during its modernization period, I hope to supplement the gaps created by insufficient records through context provided by various scholars. This thesis aims to contribute to existing academic debate on the assimilation of non-European polities into European international law – the Ottoman Empire is the perfect case study of a “semi-colony” struggling to adapt to a shifting balance of power, wherein reciprocal diplomacy is a crucial tool in securing external sovereignty and state consolidation (Yasamee, 2011). This thesis also holds social relevance, offering valuable insight into the complex history between European great powers and modern-day Turkey. Many of the past issues surrounding the decline of the Ottoman Empire are still prevalent talking points in current IR, such as the governance of multi-ethnic and multi-religious states and regional power politics.

First, I will start this paper by including a brief section on the history of Ottoman foreign affairs dating back to the Treaty of Karlowitz. Next will be a literature review showcasing the many different approaches scholars have taken to Ottoman diplomacy so far, and their discussions of Ottoman circumstances. Subsequently, I will identify a conceptual framework before clarifying my research design and case selection. These will be followed by the results of my research, whereafter a section will be dedicated to discussing these results prior to presenting my concluding thoughts.

### **1.1 Historical review: An empire in decline**

Before delving into the Ottoman Empire’s treaty-making and reciprocal diplomacy in the nineteenth century, it is important to be informed of the decades leading up to this time period. The Ottoman Empire’s position on the hierarchical map of state power was confronted by a sequence of decisive losses in the seventeenth century. For the first time in a long while, the Ottomans were faced with the dilemma of not possessing enough material power to subdue European forces.

The date that marked the Empire’s onset of decline was in 1697 at the hands of the Holy League, an alliance comprised of Austria, Poland, Venice, and Russia. Following the end of what was named the Great Turkish War of 1683-1697, the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of

Karlowitz in 1699 to establish an armistice with the Holy League. Substantial territories in the Crimea were lost as a result of the treaty terms espoused by European powers (Sicker, 2001, pp. 32-33). Karlowitz was a critical event in the history of Ottoman diplomacy, precisely due to it being their first participation in both a multilateral and a reciprocal peace conference that paved the way for future treaty negotiations with the West. It was the earliest record of the Ottoman Empire acknowledging the territorial integrity of its European adversaries and accepting border demarcations through diplomatic deliberation (Palabıyık, 2014).

The Treaty of Karlowitz signalled the start of a period in which the Ottomans set out to learn more about European common law. Due to the West's emphasis on reciprocal diplomacy, it was a given that the Ottoman bureaucratic elite decided to familiarize themselves with the European system of international law in order to adjust themselves to the shifting balance of power. The capitulations of fiscal and commercial privileges granted to non-Muslim populations within Ottoman domains were not reciprocal, in the sense that the Ottomans seemed largely uninterested in establishing formal consulate services and embassies on Christian soil. In fact, capitulations were granted to Western foreigners residing in Ottoman territory well before there was any formal diplomacy established with their home states (De Groot, 2003, p. 596). The Ottomans gradually started to stray from their reliance on traditional Islamic codes of foreign affairs, and started to adopt a European style of IR – this was facilitated by the fact that both modes of diplomacy had similar approaches to customary law (Palabıyık, 2014, pp. 236-237). With that in mind, the Ottoman Empire came to rely on European technical assistance in order to mitigate their weakened militia, which would further serve to contribute to a budding economic crisis. By the start of the nineteenth century, the economic disruption brought on by its public debts had become so debilitating that the Empire was described as practically bankrupt (Findley, 1980, p. 115).

Looming threats from both within and outside of the Empire for almost two centuries eventually drove the Ottoman elites to drastic measures – namely, a series of bureaucratic reforms that would call in question the Empire's very existence. Between the years 1839 and 1876, a period of continuous legislation and reform known as the *Tanzimat Hayriye*, or “Auspicious Reorderings”, swept through the Ottoman Empire (Shaw & Shaw, 1977, p. 55). The most important event preceding the bureaucratic reforms was Mahmud II's introduction of a new hierarchy of civil ranks between the years 1832-1833 before his death in 1839; an administrative transformation that would establish new ranks, dismiss pre-existing ones, and incorporate a new

salary system. Although this resulted in a clear delineation of collective identity for the previously fragmented bureaucratic hierarchies, it also gave way to new concerns of the need for record keeping, regulation, and possible inflationary impacts of fiscal centralization (Findley, 1980). The Tanzimat period is characterized as extremely politically unstable due to the dominance of civil bureaucracy and the new elite's attempts to consolidate power. The struggle to maintain this modernist reform of the politico-bureaucratic tradition is directly and manifestly connected to the current Turkish Republic's political and administrative history – and likewise, the tale of this conflict also plays a role in the histories of the other successor states in more subdued and occasionally indirect ways (Findley, 1980, p. 347).

Numerous ethnic groups residing within the Ottoman Empire's boundaries were united only administratively; their cultures and economies had been largely left to themselves due to the non-interfering nature of previous capitulations. Because economic development was left to the local populations, many regions, especially those East of the Balkans, continued to be extremely underdeveloped, rural, and dominated by tradition. Since the seventeenth century, European military, economic, and political imperialism had encroached on the territory under the control of the Ottoman government, particularly in the Balkans. By the start of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's control over the Balkans was incredibly shaky (Weiker, 1968). Such instability contributed to the growing unrest among the Ottoman bureaucratic elite, resulting in wishes to accelerate the reforms. However, the Empire's poor socio-economic situation could not keep up with this rapid pace. Ottoman diplomacy in this period relied heavily on making concessions to Western states: in addition to taking part in formal diplomatic negotiations with Western powers, the Empire also continued its long tradition of granting capitulations in the hopes of appealing to its neighbors and guaranteeing its survival. These circumstances further accelerated modernization efforts, the gradual westernization of bureaucratic institutions enmeshing with the Ottoman Empire's approach to foreign affairs and international treaty-making.

## **2. Literature review: From unilateral capitulations to reciprocal treaties**

While there is an abundance of scholars who venture into the topic of Ottoman diplomacy, there are only a few who delve into its complex character throughout the decades. The Ottoman Empire's vast territory, diverse ethnic and religious inhabitants, and relative longevity make it an impressive case study for those interested in the growing prevalence of European international law in non-European polities (Barkey, 2016). There has been much attention given to its decline and

subsequent dissolution, while the convoluted social, political and economic predicaments that led to the end of the Empire's capitulatory regime remain neglected. The Ottoman Empire's adoption of reciprocal diplomacy in favor of unilateralism is often viewed through a Eurocentric lens, an issue that recent scholars interested in the Ottoman case are seeking to rectify (Palabıyık, 2014).

When discussing Ottoman diplomacy during and prior to the modern period, the commercial capitulations granted to non-Muslim inhabitants by Ottoman Sultans take center stage. Ottoman capitulations were unilateral, temporary declarations of the Sultan's will, necessitating their renewal following the ascension of every successive Sultan: due to the unconventional nature of these contracts, the Ottoman Empire is said to have employed non-reciprocal diplomacy (Hurewitz, 1961; Yasamee, 2011). Unlike the renaissance diplomacy employed by most European great powers, in which they established overseas colonies in foreign continents, Ottoman capitulations to "infidels" within their domains demanded reciprocal loyalty instead. Fiscal and commercial tributes were to be given to the Empire in exchange for land and protection (De Groot, 2003, pp. 576-577). Despite their non-reciprocal nature, capitulations still constituted a form of diplomacy, in stark contrast to claims that the Ottoman Empire entered European international society as late as the 1856 Treaty of Paris (Oakes & Mowat, 1970). It can be argued that the Ottomans were part of the European state system well before 1856, due to their previous exposures to European treaty-making and customary laws in, for example, the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz (Hurewitz, 1961; Gong, 1984; Yasamee, 2011). The Treaty of Paris merely served to formally affirm the previously existing diplomatic and legal bonds between the European states and the Ottoman Empire (Hurewitz, 1961; Palabıyık, 2014). As such, it can be inferred that the Ottomans were aware of European understandings of reciprocal diplomacy well before the nineteenth century. They simply did not feel inclined to adopt European international law in favor of their own until they were confronted with the necessity to do so.

The Ottoman Empire's traditionalist Islamic legal character decreed that it should avoid negotiations with non-Muslim entities, religion playing a crucial part in its refusal of reciprocity. Reciprocal diplomacy would suggest that Christian states were their equal. This notion was not acceptable in the legal customs and Islamic written laws through which imperial jurists determined Ottoman policies (De Groot, 2003; Ardıç, 2010; Rudolph, 2013). Capitulations allowed the Empire to have a certain degree of diplomatic conduct by neither implicating its religious laws nor declaring war to the non-Muslim world at every turn. In addition, they also benefited the Ottomans

by attracting international trade in the Mediterranean. However, it is of important note that capitulations did not equal to peace treaties: they were merely commercial privileges granted by the Sultan to foreign residents, not an extension of peace to their home states (De Groot, 2003). The Ottoman Empire was still driven by religious ideology, through which it justified its expansionist foreign policies and permanent state of war against non-Islamic states (Yurdusev, 2004; Rudolph, 2013). This view is in stark contrast to the standpoint that the Ottomans were a pragmatic and flexible state in the making, pursuing the allegiance of non-Muslims and adapting their institutions accordingly (Pamuk, 2004, p. 228).

Concepts such as sovereignty and territorial integrity were not exercised in Ottoman diplomatic texts, showcasing the Empire's avoidance of reciprocal language in capitulations (Yurdusev, 2004). Western scholars often overlook the impact of specific European legal language being adapted to Ottoman Turkish in order to interact with European law in Islamic terms. They speak of a turn to modern bureaucracy and European-style administration without discussing the specific change in language that made it possible (Davison, 2000; Barkey, 2016). Due to being an Islamic Empire, the Ottomans had their own legal system based on Sharia law. Despite that, they did not shy away from using Islamic terminology and references to religious texts in order to justify conducting diplomatic relations with the West (Ardıç, 2010, p. 90-91). With the Empire's continuing relations with the European great powers, particularly France, England, and the Netherlands, they soon developed their own legal jargon based on terminologies existing in European international law. Only a few scholars point out that the Ottomans were well-versed in the Roman/Christian customary principles that European states invoked in legal contexts, such as *pacta sunt servanda* and *uti possidetis* (Yasamee, 2011; Palabıyık, 2014). Arguably one of the most important considerations in Ottoman law-making is the difference between its practice and doctrine. Although traditional, conservative Islamic language was used in legal text, the foreign commercial and political relations they pursued through capitulations did employ bilateral reciprocity in practice (De Groot, 2003; Palabıyık, 2014). Following this track of thought, it is evident that contextual understanding of past legal deliberations is key in gaining a deeper insight into the practice and doctrine of historical documents (Wallenius, 2017, pp. 108-109).

Most scholars agree that in the nineteenth century, it became impossible for the Ottoman Empire to avoid formal reciprocal diplomacy (De Groot, 2003; Yasamee, 2011). Though, some do not make the distinction between nonreciprocal and reciprocal diplomacy: claiming that Ottoman

diplomacy may not have existed in the first place, either due to its unconventional nature or complicated legal language (Yurdusev, 2004). The Empire's decline in both military strength and economic influence at the start of the eighteenth century drove it to issue frequent capitulations. There were consequences to this: the privileges granted to Christian residents in Ottoman domain gave European states the opportunity to constrain the Empire's fiscal and commercial freedoms. European powers could now wield the non-Muslim populations in the Ottoman Empire as leverage to proceed with a tactic of peaceful penetration (Gong, 1984; Yasamee, 2011). The intentions of the European great powers were not to conquer the Ottoman Empire, but instead to use it as a buffer state (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; Yasamee, 2011). Despite the long-lasting struggle between the Habsburgs and Ottomans, the rising Russian Empire presented a more imminent threat to the regional balance of power (Hedley & Watson, 1984; Yasamee, 2011; Barkey, 2016). The Ottoman Empire, recognizing the less-than-ideal position they now stood in, decided to adapt to the circumstances they were presented with.

Far before the nineteenth century, the Ottomans are said to have often invoked the European law of nations in order to protect their own interests while negotiating with European powers. The law of nations allowed them to justify war on a legal basis (Yasamee, 2011; Palabyk, 2014). However, the nineteenth century is the time period many scholars set their sights on when discussing modern Ottoman diplomacy. The Empire's shift to modern diplomacy invites discussions of their place in the Concert of Europe, their previous unilateral capitulations being overlooked in favor of compartmentalizing their more conventional international relations in the European states system (Davison, 2000; Yurdusev, 2004). This is due to the fact that documents on Ottoman IR in the nineteenth century are not only available in European languages, but also employ diplomatic language that narrows down the possibility of conjecture on what might have been originally meant. The majority of Ottoman interactions with the West prior to their conversion to modern diplomacy took place on Ottoman territory and in the Turkish language, limiting their accessibility to European scholars (Hurewitz, 1961, pp. 146-147). This was one of the reasons why the Ottomans are believed to have previously employed non-reciprocal diplomacy: if an agreement was to be made, then it would have to be on their terms. Alas, when they started finding themselves at a disadvantage at the turn of the seventeenth century, they became much more amenable to European treaty-making.

What marked the beginning of their diplomatic transformation was their capitulations to France, with whom the Ottoman Empire shared neither tributary territories nor any common borders (De Groot, 2003, p. 595). England and the Netherlands soon followed as well, the Ottomans being the ones to offer their capitulations in a proposal of friendship (De Groot, 2003; Yasamee, 2011). This is in contrast to the view that the Ottoman Empire was an unwilling actor unable to elude the European state system (Heywood & Parvev, 2020). Some scholars attribute the Empire's diplomatic initiative to the rising urgency of the Eastern question, propagated by the Russian Empire's aggressive claim on residents within the peripheries of Ottoman territory (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; Barkey, 2016). The Ottoman Empire's perusal of peaceful relations with Western European states suggests that, contrary to the importance it placed on religious character, it was open to reciprocal IR – and the peace treaties that would follow along with it if it meant securing its survival. Suddenly, European international law conceptualizations were necessary to secure Ottoman territories from belligerents. The Ottoman Empire's flexibility in the face of their declining influence in the Levant is occasionally described as Ottoman *realpolitik*, a mixture of Islamic ideology and political pragmatism (Rudolph, 2013, p. 162).

Most scholars refer to the modernization of Ottoman bureaucracy in the nineteenth century as the *Tanzimat* reforms, a period characterized as the harbinger of western ideas and the dawn of an increase in diplomatic relations. However, only a few delve deeper into the internal political intrigues of the modernizing Empire (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; Findley, 1980). Furthermore, not many clarify the distinction between the Reform Decree in 1839 and the Reform Edict in 1856. While the Reform Decree was in part an attempt to appeal to the European states with no real intention for extensive bureaucratic overhaul, the Reform Edict in 1856 formalized the need for a secular approach to foreign affairs (Ardıç, 2010). Instead of preserving and restoring old institutions, the Edict supported a modern outlook of replacing them with new ones imported from the West. Scholars contend that the Tanzimat period's modernization efforts were an indication of increasing European intervention in the Empire's domestic affairs (Palabıyık, 2014). This standpoint is corroborated by literature pointing out the French and British rivalry between diplomats and ambassadors stationed in Istanbul. Ottoman bureaucrats within the imperial circle were pulled into the diplomatic rivalry between European great powers, subsequently intensifying the already fragile internal politics of the Empire (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; Findley, 1980). Ultimately, the bureaucratic reforms of the nineteenth century resulted in an internal dilemma and not a coherent

Ottoman society (Weiker, 1968; Çifci, 2019). On the other hand, the Tanzimat served as sufficient basis to transform the Ottoman Empire into a modern state, capable of applying European international law not just in their international treaty-making, but also in domestic legal contexts (Pamuk, 2004).

Although there is an extensive array of existing literature on the Ottoman Empire and the development of its international relations, there is not enough scholars investigating the specific treaties concluded by the Empire during the nineteenth century. Analyses of treaty-making in the nineteenth century have been neglected in the field of IR overall (Keene, 2012, p. 477). Arguably, the shift from unilateralism to reciprocal bilateralism in the Empire's international treaty-making should be the most noticeable during its modernization period. There is not enough literature focusing on the Ottoman Empire's international relations during the Tanzimat reforms, let alone its treaties with European states. They are too focused on past Ottoman foreign policies and too little on the nineteenth century, or vice versa. Reciprocity is stated as a crucial element in differentiating between traditional and modern diplomacy, but the literature does not further elaborate on it. There is a lack of discourse analysis. This thesis hopes to provide an incentive to take a closer look at nineteenth century Ottoman treaties, and the reciprocal features they contain.

### **3. Conceptual framework: The ambiguity of reciprocity**

The conceptual framework for this thesis will draw not only on scholars who have based their research on IR, but also those who use economics and game theory in their definitions of reciprocity. In discussions revolving around the Ottoman Empire, the concept of reciprocity rarely takes center stage, if ever. Capitulations are not acknowledged as diplomatic tools, overlooked due to their unilateral and mainly commercial nature. Only a few scholars successfully distinguish between non-reciprocal and reciprocal diplomacy, keeping reciprocity separate from diplomacy itself (De Groot, 2004; Yasamee, 2011; Palabıyık, 2014). Some argue that reciprocity itself is an integral part of diplomacy by nature, claiming international relations cannot be fostered without considering the interplay of reciprocal interests in an anarchical world (Keohane, 1986).

In order to understand what reciprocal treaty-making entails, it is beneficial to look at a variety of literature for the differing definitions they provide. Keohane offers a very comprehensive insight into reciprocity as a concept in IR, and the multitude of ambiguous interpretations it entails. For one, he differentiates between *specific* and *diffuse* reciprocity. Specific reciprocity is when exchanges between specified partners happen in a carefully defined

order and involve goods of equal value, and are quite common in economics and game theory. If there are any obligations, they are expressly laid forth in terms of the rights and responsibilities of individual actors: bilateralism between a strict set of actors is a prerequisite. Diffuse reciprocity, on the other hand, involves balance within a group of actors rather than individual actors. The notion of equivalence is less clearly defined, and conforming to accepted social standards is necessary (Keohane, 1986, pp. 4-7). These social standards are most likely implying the European law of nations as well as the standard of civilizations identified by European states. Although, the relevance of the standard of civilizations during the early modern age remains contested, with Gong claiming that it only emerged as a legal, enforceable concept at the end of the nineteenth century (1984, p. 106).

What stands out in Keohane's definitions of reciprocity is his referral to conditional and unconditional most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment in the field of commerce (1986, p. 4). This fits in with literature mentioning the principle of MFN within the context of Ottoman commercial capitulations, wherein France would be granted every privilege given to any other power regardless of the original provisions of the capitulation (De Groot, 2004, p. 599). Therefore, capitulations can be considered to have employed at least one form of reciprocity, despite their distinguishment from reciprocal diplomacy. The two aspects of reciprocity that Keohane points out, contingency and equivalence, further help understand this discrepancy. He defines contingency as gestures that end when the anticipated rewards from others are not received, since the gestures in question are dependent on these expected rewards (1986, pp. 5-6). In doing so, Keohane draws on Gouldner's functionalist approach, wherein reciprocity is a tool for social survival and implies a conditional relationship (Gouldner, 1960, p. 161). Moreover, Keohane warns that reciprocity does not mean equivalent benefits for both contracting parties: a superpowers' obligations would greatly differ from the obligations expected of its protectorates (1986, pp. 6-7). Following this line of thought and applying it to Ottoman diplomacy, it is apparent that they did employ reciprocity in practice, although not in doctrine. It also suggests that reciprocal diplomacy can be coercive in nature, and does not necessarily put both powers on equal ground when concluding treaties (Gouldner, 1960; Keohane, 1986; Keene, 2012).

However, the leading question produced by this assumption is whether the target of reciprocal exchange is even capable of being accorded rights and obligations (Whelan, 2023, p. 10). This brings the discussion right back to the prerequisite of conforming to social standards in

reciprocal interactions, as well as the standard of civilization that European states used to set themselves apart (Gong, 1984; Keohane, 1986). As pointed out by Hebié, agreements made with local political entities were not considered treaties under European international law due to their lack of statehood, relying on tacit consent (2016, pp. 24-25). European international law operated on reciprocity in the Roman law of obligations, in which the duties promised from one party to another required them to provide a service of some sort, and exposed them to liability in the event that they failed to do so (Gouldner, 1960, pp. 175-178; Whelan, 2023, p. 22). This may offer another explanation for why most literature discussing Ottoman diplomacy make an explicit distinction between capitulations and treaties: by the start of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was well on its way to modern statehood in applying its bureaucratic reforms, and therefore capable of treaty-making (Findley, 1980; Barkey, 2016). Conversely, the Ottoman Empire did not view European states as their equals either, in virtue of their differing religious ideologies (Yasamee, 2011).

In light of the popularity of Keohane's interpretations of reciprocity, Parisi & Ghei lay down their own classifications of reciprocity based on economics and game theory. They distinguish between *structural*, *induced*, and *stochastic* reciprocity in international relations based on rational choice models. Structural reciprocity makes the assumption that everything is perfect and that no party has any motivation to unilaterally deviate from the agreement because their incentives are completely aligned. External enforcement measures, such as the legal system or the fear of coercion, are not necessary in these situations (Parisi & Ghei, 2003, pp. 105-106). This type of reciprocity is the most common, due to customary law playing a crucial role in presenting common ground for both the Ottoman Empire and European states to initiate diplomatic relations despite their considerable differences (Palabıyık, 2014, p. 236). Induced reciprocity is based on Keohane's specific reciprocity, seeking to improve it by making it applicable to multilateral situations. Any incentive for unilateral defection is eliminated and the likelihood of hold-outs during treaty talks is significantly lowered when an element of equivalence is added to a hypothetical scenario, in which benefits for all contracting parties remain equal in relative terms (Parisi & Ghei, 2003, pp. 106-107). On the other hand, Parisi & Ghei's stochastic reciprocity is directly based off of diffuse reciprocity, in which an actor cooperates not in anticipation of a specific reciprocal reward but rather in anticipation of a general reciprocal return in the future. In

this case, the actors in question are the nations who participate in frequent negotiations with each other. (2003, p. 108).

Lastly, Sahlins played an important part in Keohane's iteration of reciprocity in international relations, cited by him as one of the authors heralding the explanation of the role of reciprocity in economic social exchange (1986, p. 4). Due to the relative lack of literature on reciprocity in the field of IR, most scholars interested in the concept took inspiration from previously existing conceptions of reciprocity in the study of economics (Keohane, 1986; Parisi & Ghei, 2003; Whelan, 2023). Moreover, the Ottoman capitulations predominantly consisted of fiscal and commercial privileges in order to foster economic development to stimulate trade in the Levant, a trend that continued throughout the Ottoman Empire's nineteenth century treaty-making (Yasamee, 2011). Sahlins identifies three distinct modes of reciprocity: generalized, balanced, and negative (1972). Generalized reciprocity can be broken down to a mix between structural, stochastic, and diffuse reciprocity, in which states do not base their transactions on the formal expectation of receiving material benefit in a specified timeframe. Balanced reciprocity is a precursor to the definitions of specific and diffuse reciprocity, requiring both a carefully defined list of provisions and a very specific timeframe in which the agreed upon obligations need to be fulfilled (Keohane, 1986; Parisi & Ghei, 2003). However, negative reciprocity is harder to grasp. Negative reciprocity occurs in transactions in which one party tries to act only in their own best interests in search of a material benefit or profit: to some extent, this can be explained by Keohane's contingency and equivalence aspects of reciprocity, as well as Parisi & Ghei's prisoners' dilemma (1986, pp. 5-6; 2003, p. 7). Nevertheless, negative reciprocity remains the most ambiguous concept among the three, in that it requires very specific contextual understanding of the contracting parties to determine whether it is the case. This is especially relevant when considering the adverse shifts in regional balance of power that encouraged the Ottoman Empire's to weigh its opportunity costs of joining the European states system (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; De Groot, 2004; Yasamee, 2011). In taking these conceptualizations into account, determining the role of reciprocal diplomacy in Ottoman international treaty-making should be facilitated. Perhaps newer theories of reciprocity can be drawn by taking a look at treaty-making during the nineteenth century, centered around a polity that is, even today, considered to live on the fringe of the European states system.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Research design**

Despite the abundance of existing research on when, how and why the Ottoman Empire opted to take part in European international law in the nineteenth century, I have not seen much research actively focusing on the different types of reciprocity found in their international treaty-making. Ottoman capitulations prior to the nineteenth century were generally divided into two distinct kinds: those granted to Ottoman tributary states and provinces, demanding their submission to the Empire, and those given to independent European states outside of their immediate geopolitical sphere of influence (De Groot, 2004, pp. 580-590). Unfortunately, there is no literature as of yet classifying the Ottoman Empire's nineteenth century treaties in reference to their reciprocal character, although some information can be gleaned by juxtaposing their date of ratification and bilateral/multilateral classifications against literary sources.

In order to reach a satisfying conclusion to the question of reciprocal diplomacy's role in Ottoman international treaty-making, I will be using a method of theory constructing process-tracing. This is a form of historical explanation that will enable me to draw a connection between types of reciprocity and the implications they have for the discourse surrounding Ottoman diplomacy. The following research will investigate the reciprocities of several Ottoman treaties concluded in the timeframe between 1839 and 1876. I will make use of qualitative discourse analysis, a method adapted by Foucault in understanding how power is dispersed throughout social relations and analyzes both the implicit production and restriction of certain behaviors (Ardıç, 2010, p. 89). This approach is also characterized as one of the mixed methods of research that has recently been gaining popularity within social sciences, due to case studies being not only context-dependent but also difficult to generalize (Runhardt, 2022). Any conclusions I reach cannot be applied to other polities in the nineteenth century, due to the Ottoman Empire's complex structure and distinctive circumstances that mark it as a mixed case of religious imperium and institutional pragmatism (Pamuk, 2004; Barkey, 2016).

### **4.2 Case selection**

The cases I will select for my research consist of treaties between the Ottoman Empire and predominantly, but not limited to, Western states applying European international law in their nineteenth century treaty-making. The case selection of treaties will feature Spain, Russia, Great Britain, the United States (US), Austria-Hungary, Prussia, Brazil, Italy, France, and Montenegro.

Both bilateral and multilateral treaties will be analyzed, in which I will be mindful of the difficulties in reciprocity for both respective lateralisms. Bilateral, specific reciprocity is not always sufficient basis for cooperation between two nations of equal power, whereas one of the most pervasive problems plaguing multilateral reciprocity is the collective action problem (Keohane, 1986; Whelan, 2023).

All treaties I select will be either English or German to ensure accurate interpretations. The qualitative analysis I apply will be an alternative to Keene's methods of treaty analysis, wherein he analyzes treaty-making activity throughout the centuries and does not delve into each treaty individually within a constrained timeframe. Keene remarks that there has not yet been a thorough review of how treaty-making evolved over the course of the nineteenth century (2012, pp. 477-482). In response to that, I hope to shed some light on more focused analyses of international treaties, at the price of generalizability. The selected cases will be sorted into three distinct categories: structural, induced, and stochastic reciprocity (Parisi & Ghei, 2003). Discourse analysis will determine which of these three modes of reciprocity my selected cases belong to, by engaging in the structure of treaty text and taking into account context provided by literary sources.

## **5. Analysis and Discussion**

What stands out in the Ottoman Empire's international treaties of the mid-nineteenth century is their propensity for bilateralism. Their preference of bilateral commercial treaties is unsurprising, taking into account the bilateral and reciprocal disposition of previous Ottoman capitulations (De Groot, 2004, p. 576). Moreover, bilateralism has been prevalent as far back as the ancient times, making it a popular form of treaty to most nations (Whelan, 2023, p. 70). The content of bilateral treaty terms indicate that bilateralism was not only easier to pursue but also more straightforward with its demands. In contrast, multilateral treaties were more convoluted, comprised of long pages and extensive sub-articles on multiple provisions.

There are only a few multilateral treaties to examine, with most of them featuring the Ottoman Empire in an unfavorable strategic position. In these cases, the Ottoman Empire was often subjected to induced reciprocity, wherein it faces one of the worst cost-to-benefit paradigms relative to other contracting parties. Irrespective of multilateralism, Russia's participation inevitably placed the Ottoman Empire on worse reciprocal terms in the mid-nineteenth century. In regards to treaties concerning the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (Oxford Historical Treaties, CTS\_45, 1849) and the navigation of European ships through the Danube (OHT,

CTS\_399, 1865; OHT, CTS\_91, 1870), I observe that the Ottoman Empire has suffered losses of provincial authority. In light of the narrative that European states used the Ottoman Empire as a buffer state against Russia, it can be argued that the Empire's poor administrative capabilities led to decisions to appease Russia at the expense of Ottoman suzerainty (Shaw & Shaw, 1977; Yasamee, 2011). This was noticeably not the case at the beginning of the nineteenth century, wherein European great powers were willing to guarantee the Ottoman Empire's territorial integrity in the interest of preserving the balance of power (Gong, 1984, p. 107). The visible tensions in Russo-Turkish treaty-making can be attributed to growing political struggles over Balkan provinces, as well as the 1856 Treaty of Paris. The Crimean war in 1853-1856 had left Russia discontented. The war had concluded in favor of the Ottoman Empire, their alliance with the European great powers proving fruitful. The Treaty of Paris granted the Ottomans significant legal protections, including a principle of non-intervention in Ottoman domestic affairs during its bureaucratic reforms. Russia believed itself to have a duty to intervene, albeit refrained from belligerence until the Tanzimat came to an end (Davison, 2000, p. 869). This suggests that treaties based on induced reciprocity have their intended purpose, in the sense that the possible actions a state can take are restricted: this makes it easier for other states to predict and prepare against specific scenarios.

To further expand on the prevalence of induced reciprocity in nineteenth century treaties, the Ottoman Sultan's freedom of diplomatic maneuver had been severely limited due to the considerable number of commercial treaties the Empire had agreed to. These commercial treaties obliged the Ottoman Empire to grant equal privileges to all European great powers, with even the smallest of discriminations being out of the question (Yasamee, 2011, p. 49). This was a predicament the Empire had not accounted for when it first started granting European states capitulations. At some point, they became so frequent that the usage of the same corpus of text can be observed in the Empire's treaties of commerce for Great Britain and the United States: the only minor change between documents is the recipient of the treaty. Evidently, there was some form of adjustment made to these treaties depending on the other contracting party, since the Empire's commercial treaty with the United States contains more specifics on gunpowder and weapons of war (OHT, CTS\_83, 1861; OHT, CTS\_299, 1862). This was done to reduce the administrative costs of having to renew capitulations, but instead served to provide a paper trail of the gradual disappearance the tributary elements they contained. Formal international treaties took the place

of capitulations, although whether they yielded more reciprocity is arguable. (De Groot, 2004, p. 602).

An interesting phenomenon that Ottoman commercial treaties presented is that the privileges they had once granted to foreign powers, as a show of status, had now become obligations. Obligations that, under reciprocal conceptualization, could be met with punishment for non-compliance (Whelan, 2023, p. 52). The law of nations that the Ottoman Empire had previously employed to legitimize its conduct of war against belligerent neighbors now had it trapped in a complex, multilateral web of reciprocal diplomacy.

Not all Ottoman treaties suffered from predicaments arising from a losing game of induced reciprocity. Formal diplomatic treaty-making enabled the Empire to foster structural and stochastic reciprocities with both European and non-European states. In the first place, the economic development that the Ottoman Empire sought after had manifested as extensive improvements in infrastructure of their seaports and trading routes as a result of the intervention of the European Commission on the Danube (OHT, CTS\_399, 1865; OHT, CTS\_91, 1870) as well as railways (Yasamee, 2011) and telegraphic communications (OHT, CTS\_329, 1861; OHT, CTS\_477, 1864). These observations show that the type of reciprocity displayed by treaties can change if the treaty in question can apply to several contexts such as commercial, political, and social, instead of just one. This brings us back to the initial claim that the concept of reciprocity is ambiguous, because it can be applied in a wide variety of disciplines even within the frame of specific international-treaties (Keohane, 1986).

Structural reciprocity was much more common among treaties discussing the administration of specific communities located on territorial borders. Non-Muslim citizens often invoked the help of Ottoman courts, which suggests a degree of reach and reliability of the Ottoman legal system (Barkey, 2016, p. 116). Terms referring to friendship and compromise were likely to occur in these treaties, wherein the disputes at hand were essentially between neighbors of similar culture and tradition (OHT, CTS\_499, 1858; OHT, CTS\_255, 1874). Overall, what can be gleaned from the results of my research is that the nature of reciprocity changes according to a variety of factors: the treaty partners involved, the policy aims of the treaty, as well as the contextual, political reality of events that led to its conception. There are more clauses on peace for contracting parties in the Americas such as Brazil (OHT, CTS\_309, 1858), whereas nations in relative proximity to the Ottoman Empire have more decisive and candid approaches to treaty-making in what can only be

attributed to their knowledge of previous border altercations, such as Ottoman relations with Montenegro (OHT, CTS\_257, 1862). Geographically close nations are more prone to employing stochastic reciprocity due to their close proximities to one another, making them a constant fixture with whom they enter a variety of altercations. Therefore, it is more probable that establishing diplomatic relations with them will yield a general reciprocal reward in the future.

All treaties employ standard, diplomatic language, although it can be observed in treaties concluded with Western Europe that they have more clauses in which Ottoman officials are to be punished in the case of a breach of agreement rather than the other way around. This suggests that the European states were aware of the obligations they were actively imposing on the Ottoman Empire, in which a coercive reciprocal relationship was created akin to the agreements colonial powers made with their colonies (Hébié, 2016). Reciprocal diplomacy did not only serve to constrain the Ottoman Empire's actions; to a certain extent, it benefited them when it came to quelling malcontent and uprisings on the edges of its territory. It could now justify its hold over those regions through paper trails and diplomatic avenues, and make demands towards smaller nations, such as in the case of the establishment of border demarcations in Montenegro (OHT, CTS\_125, 1864).

## **6. Conclusion**

My goal in writing this research paper has been to propose a more profound investigation on the concept of reciprocity in the field of IR and diplomacy, given that it is applicable to a wide range of disciplines. Especially when discussing international treaties and what differentiates them from other forms of reciprocal diplomacy, such as capitulations, contracts and agreements. My second concern was to build a theory on what role reciprocal diplomacy plays in Ottoman international treaty-making during the nineteenth century.

What I have found is that the adoption of European notions of reciprocal diplomacy served as a double-edged sword that served both as a restraint and an enabler to the struggling Ottoman Empire. A restraint, because it was now bound by international law and the obligations that came with it, but also an enabler, due to the Empire's newfound legal recourse through which they could justify aggressive foreign policies. Reciprocal diplomacy played a facilitatory role that helped transition the Empire's understandings of foreign policy into a more Europeanized application of international relations, in exchange for its religious legal character. However, the Sublime Porte's failure to meaningfully apply European concepts into its Tanzimat reforms, as well as the internal

and external dilemmas propagated by deep ideological and political cleavages, led to structural weakness. In turn, Ottoman international treaty-making suffered in the sense that they consistently failed to retain both contingency and equivalence in their reciprocal diplomacy. The Ottoman Empire was not performing as well as the European states expected it to, resulting in their quiet withdrawal of contingent support. Whereas the Ottoman Empire itself failed to realize that it had lost its advantage of equivalence by making too many commercial concessions, putting the economic development of the Empire in the hands of foreign powers. It can, however, be argued that the financial and military aid afforded to the Empire by European states as well as its efforts to take part in modern international law lengthened the Empire's longevity by almost a century.

There are limitations to both my research design and my findings. Since my research design was based on qualitative text analysis, a statistical approach to my research question with a larger range of treaties would deliver a study with higher external validity. Moreover, it stands to reason that my case selection is limited to only English and German treaties, when there are a magnitude of French treaties I could not utilize due to language barriers. The inaccessibility of these treaties in the Turkish language have also posed some difficulties in the initial planning of the research design, considering that they may have been transcribed in a manner that sheds a different light on certain treaties from the Ottoman perspective. My most pressing concern is the implications of my research results; I feel that the relationship between reciprocal diplomacy and international treaty-making can be explored even further, in the sense that it is difficult to determine whether one caused the other or vice versa. This is the reason I set out to explore what relation they have to one another rather than take for granted a connection of causation and correlation. For the most part, I believe that the Ottoman Empire's history of the nineteenth century has been neglected by most scholars in favor of earlier time periods. Further research may consider notions of sovereignty and territorial boundaries as foundational values that affected how Ottoman diplomacy was structured. The Ottoman Empire's public debt is also a topic of interest, especially since it would create discourse about the relationship between the Ottoman state and the foreign trading companies formed within the Ottoman Empire during its bid for modernization.

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