

Preliminary Thoughts Upon The Policies of The Ottoman State In the 16th Century Indian Ocean

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Abstract: This article aims to sketch concisely about the relationships between the Ottomans and the Portuguese pertaining to the developments in the Indian Ocean in the first half of the 16th century. The purpose of the Portuguese Kingdom to establish hegemony in the eastern seas occurred in an era when Ottoman State's borders reached nearly the central Europe. After annexing the Mamluk Sultanate, the Ottomans expanded its borders and became adjacent to the Indian Ocean. After having great efforts to be a vigorous power in the Black, Aegean and Meditterreanean Seas from the mid of the 15th century onwards, the Ottomans gave prominence on the advancement of the navy which was considered as complementary to the conventional army in the expansion of the state. Nonetheless, there are disputed accounts among the academicians pertaining to assessment of the Ottoman sea-power against its challenge to the Portuguese sea power in terms of the developments in the Indian Ocean.

Key words: Indian Ocean • Ottomans • Portuguese • Sulaiman the Magnificent • Hadım Sulaiman Pasha

INTRODUCTION

The place of the Ottoman State during the Exploration Age is a salient subject to have been discussed by academics [1]. In regard of this, whilst the Exploration Age is generally aligned with the expansion of the Western powers, the place of the Ottomans in comparison with the former one is a related issue. In this article, the present writer will not delineate the issue, instead try to approach preliminarily referring some crucial Turkish and English sources.

There is no doubt that the Ottomans exercised a robust power in the Black, Aegean and Meditterreanean Seas throughout the centuries commencing from the mid of the 15th century. Further, the Ottomans gave more prominence on the advancement of the navy which was, of course, considered as complementary to the conventional army in the expansion of the state. The Ottomans also contributed to the establishment of maritime tradition in the above-mentioned seas in competition with the European counterparts, particularly throughout the encountering with Venice [2]. Nonetheless, this point is the place where the problem starts. Indeed, there are disputed accounts among the academicians pertaining to assessment of the Ottoman

sea-power whether it was really a superior establishment or left behind due to the prioritizing land army, though the Ottomans were regarded to have established a world Islamic state attributed its expansion and gaining the power in the entire Arab World in the beginning of the 16th century [1].

It must also be affirmed that the Ottomans' involvement in the Indian Ocean known "a salient sea-way in terms of trade interactions between the East and the West throughout the centuries" [3], could not be detached from the common developmental phases of the Ottoman history divided on the basis of the nature of the changing power. In terms of this, whilst the period of the first ten sultans which ended by the reign of Sulaiman the Magnificent is regarded as the conquest era [4], the era of Selim II is regarded as the inception of the stagnation, even the decline an atrophy of the state power [5]. Though the declining power of the Ottomans can be deduced from the era of the above-mentioned sultan onwards, the present writer shall peruse whether the interests and policies of the previous sultans towards the Indian Ocean were perennial.

Beyond some material reasons, there must have been an intangible aspect of the Ottomans' interest to the developments in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean. It is

right to remind here a scholarly work informing about Chinese Empire which was presented to the Sulaiman I in the initial years of his reign might have had impact on the decision making process of the court into this ocean. And as it is argued in this work, Chinese Empire was supposed to have established a sort of mind-set for the molding political philosophy of the Ottoman Palace. Since the Chinese Ming Dynasty, in terms of successive reigns in mainland China, had been the product of a great civilization and had set a significant sample of a great stateship. By the involving of the Indian Ocean developments, it appears that “the geographical consciousness” of the Ottoman authorities commenced to rise which might have inevitably related and led to “universal sovereignty” [6]. In regard with this, it is also important to remind the intention of some Ottoman Sultans including Sulaiman I to expand their power mechanism until India, maybe, Southeast Asia. The prototype of this political dream is Alexander the Great [7].

During that period, the response of the Ottomans who encompassed from the Eastern to Central Europe in mainland and the Mediterranean Sea and molding new alliances is significant in terms of not only overall Islamic history, but also world history. The orientation of the Ottomans to the Indian Ocean had no doubt politico-philosophical fundamentals and in a wider sense, technological domain ought not to be underestimated. Because these two distinct phenomena provide a structure which is supposed to support each other to some extent.

At this juncture, it is admittedly claimed that the geographical consciousness of the Ottoman political elites expanded from the borders of Anatolia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Balkania and Central Europe to the Indian Ocean. At the same time, it is noteworthy to question what sorts of push and pull-factors of this expansion were determinative. In regard with this, the personal ambitions of the Ottoman Sultans, at least of the great rulers, were to be recognized to have a world state like the Alexander the Great. To support this ambition to reach the great land of India, the coming of the ancestors of the Turks originally from Central Asia cannot be underestimated [7].¹ It is also very interesting to think about the motives of the Ottomans’ interest to the Indian Ocean. No doubt the Ottomans had

a vision to be protective of Islam and Muslims then in the known geographies particularly after they conquered the Arabian land and became adjacent to the Ocean. The Muslim communities in the whole region had already been felt threatened by the heralded influences of the Portuguese since the entry of Christian vessels of Vasco da Gama [8], [1].

The Ottomans’ stand was distinct enough from the Portuguese in terms of their political, military and economic activities in the Indian Ocean. Undoubtedly, there might have been a variety of reasons. But it seems that the crucial reason of the Ottomans’ involvement in the developments in the Indian Ocean was caused not by their own intention developed on the basis of their political design, instead they were pushed by external factors such as the challenge of the Safavids on the land, the Portuguese in the seas and the military demands of the petty Islamic states around the Indian Ocean. This can be also proved by the Ottomans’ volitional existence in the domain of European continent since the very outset of its establishment.

It is right here to ask whether the success of the Ottoman navy in the closed seas were realized while it encountered the Portuguese navy power in the Indian Ocean. Due to the above-mentioned separation, I assign that the Ottomans’ paradigmatic approach to navy was distinct than the European counterparts whose priority and target were to mobilize their technological advancement rather than their human-power. While the latter put their efforts on the technological and qualification of their seamen, the former was not on the same trait to enhance the navy policies [9].

In addition, not only the ventures of the Ottomans so as to be a crucial actor in the Indian Ocean ought to be merely considered regarding its military might, but also the civil, trade facilities and activities must also be examined. The enterprise of the Ottomans in order to build a congruent navy power similar to the Portuguese one in the Oceanic conditions were inevitably crucial. And the impact of the critical approach of Selman Reis, since the very outset of his being appointment as the head of the Red Sea fleet as seen in his writing which is called ‘*lahiya*’, on the practicability of the attempts by the authorities in Constantinople cannot be underestimated.

¹One of the latests among those sorts of writings was published in *the Journal of Ottoman Studies* [6]. The writer in her article designates that the Ottoman’s territorial consciousness and understanding was determined by a book titled “Book on China”, a sort of travel account, completed by Ali Ekber Khitayi May 3, 1516 in Constantinople (Istanbul). Though the writer intended to present the book to Sultan Selim I (Blond Selim, 1512-1520), due to some various reasons, it was presented to the Sulaiman the Magnificent (1520-1566).

Furthermore, some crucial points pertaining to the developments in the ocean in terms of the pre- and post-Ottoman involvement shall be highlighted. First, the native elements among the Arab and Indian folks constituted the real power structures which based on a strong tradition particularly in terms of the civil maritime activities in the Indian Ocean. Second, the Portuguese also paved the way by a marked desire in this geography molding the native trade system by their military might and gave a distinct direction to the trade business for their own favor to larger extent. Third, the material existence of the Ottomans was hampered in Basra, the vicinity of the Western part of the Indian Ocean, which can be rightly regarded as the terminus of the Ottoman's involvement in farther regions such as Eastern India, the Bay of Bengal, the Malacca Straits etc.

In the Vicinity of the Indian Ocean: The issue of whether the Ottoman fleet became a dominant factor in the Indian Ocean has been discussed by researchers. Hence it cannot be urged that there is an undisputed conception among the opinions. In regard of this, if the Ottomans are not regarded to have become a sovereign power in the Indian Ocean, the reasons ought to be discussed by asking questions such as what the difficulties were in front of the Ottomans not to be able to have substantive roles in power sharing in the region against the Portuguese?.

Before having a discussion about this and similar questions, it is better to exert concisely some plausible reasons attracting the attention of the Ottomans to the region. The existence of the Portuguese forces us to envisage multilineal understanding of the developments including Muslim communities in terms of their direct involvement in commercial ventures, affairs and travels to the Holy Cities of Mekkah and Madina, trans-ocean trade business reaching to European coasts through the Mediterranean cities etc. Whilst these developments were happening, the variety size of Islamic Sultanates or petty city states, as commonly mentioned in Western scholarly works, were persistently and succesively entailed to request particularly military aid of the Constantinople so as to be able to defend their positions and encounter the Portuguese' assaults and invasions. Among these the demands of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam ought to be given lengthy consideration due to its geographical distance. The present writer asserts that the Acehnese attempt served to the recognition and establishment of a sort of global perception of territorial legitimacy and hegemony of the Ottoman rulers. Further, the Acehnese

request was deliberately and austere structured as the concrete representation of the Acehnese political and ideological consciousness as a part of a global Islamic union, beyond its very commercially oriented state structure. The volition of the Acehnese ruler were witnessed in the attempt of military attack on the Portuguese fleets and ports [10]. The salient reason of this opinion predicated upon the jeo-strategic position and political tradition of Aceh political administration structured in the previous centuries throughout the petty city states in the northern part of the Sumatra Island. Unlike the other states around the Malacca Straits or further establishments in Java Island, Aceh had enough experiences with the world outside the Archipelago throughout the history. This aspect can be assessed, to some extent, as witnessed in the fundamental policy of international relations of the state determined and penned down during the reign of Alaaddin Riayat Syah, the founding father of the Sultanate.² There is no doubt that the attempts of the Acehnese Sultan(s) to establish a political alliance with the Ottomans requesting or inviting the latter to commercial and war affairs in the Indian Ocean, as argued by Inalcık in the Ozbaran's quotation [9], by the Ottomans were brought right to the fore to some very limited extent.

The Indian Ocean became both a contiguous land and a conflict zone for the Ottomans due to the conspicuous existence of the Portuguese owing to this reason both were opposed positions commencing from the early years of the 16th century. Though the difficulties to be able to control the Southern Arabian Sea and Western Indian Sea shores, the Ottomans reached the Persian Gulf through vehicle of their traditional expansion, say, using the mighty land army sources in the course of time. In addition, territorial expansion of the Ottomans such as Yaman, Basra etc. did not lead any long-term involvement in commercial ventures in the Indian Ocean owing to the traditional land system, except some initiatives in Jeddah [9]. Even the iterated enterprises observed in the middle of the 16th century, the Ottoman authorities met some more difficulties to manage the navy established in Basra [11].

Briefly the import of Basra ought to be mentioned due to its the farthest border of the Ottomans adjacent to the Indian Subcontinent. No doubt that Basra and other similar port-cities in Persian Gulf controlled only partly the commercial activities as end-points, hence the Portuguese were capable to retain the trade traffic through seaways until Europe. In particular, the territorial protection was the priority and without losing the contact with the mainland of the Ottoman borders, Basra was regarded as

²This account can be found in a variety of books of Prof. Dr. Ali Hasjmy. (See: [44]).

the last terminus. Owing to the difficulties in the seas which shall be discussed in the following pages, for instance, the governor of Basra had an intention to develop peaceful relations with the Portuguese administration in Hurmuz in order to hold a stronger position in Basra [12]. In the vicinity of these points, I would like to argue that Basra, as the last territorial position of the Ottoman power, did not have much influence on the dominions of the Portuguese in neither Western nor Eastern spheres of the Indian Ocean beyond minor palpable issues such as protecting its coastal regions from the attacks. Despite the fact that the maritime technological lacknesses were argued as an overall reason, the Indian Ocean became the natural border of the state, like the Alpien Mountains in the Eastern Europe. And it cannot be assigned that the Ottomans had an ambition to expand territories in and further of the Indian Ocean [13].

And less or insufficient concentration of the Ottoman court on direct commercial transactions in the Indian Ocean or the revenues collected throughout the port cities under the control of the Ottomans are the factors thwarted the latter to be a consistent playmaker in the region. This weakness is also noticed in the absence of the trade fleet during Sulaiman the Magnificent. While pertaining to the scope of trade conducted by the Ottomans seems to be limited if compared with the ones enhanced by the Euro-Mediterranean powers [9]. Furthermore, the Ottomans did not even gain a foothold in the pepper-production centers in the Western India where both the native ruling and commercial elites and the Portuguese dominated relatively to larger extent the commercial activities.

I shall sketch on here the native factor which significantly played a role in the declining of the Ottoman involvement in the region. Since the beginning of the history of merchandise in the seas, the locals used to have interactions with various types of people belonging to distinct races and religions. Since the peoples' material existence were very bound on international trade, the factors which had an impact on this issue were very critical on their cooperation with any outer powers. This was one of the reasons why some leaders preferred conditionally the help of and cooperation with the Portuguese.

Encounters Between the Ottomans and the Portuguese:

The Ottomans court' policies to the drastic changes in the Indian Ocean necessitate a multi-faceted research. What sorts of reactions of the Ottoman court concretized against the Portuguese who established a strong stand in

salient trans-national port cities in a large geography expanding from East Africa through Southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf, the West Indies to the Malay Archipelago until Chinese coastal cities in relatively very short time span commencing from the initial years of the 16th century is worth being revisited. Nonetheless, these geographies were relatively limited to the interests of Ottoman ruling elite and political intellectuals until the beginning of the 16th century. In particular, the influences of the Portuguese into the trans-ocean trade affairs centered throughout the Indian Ocean whose borders expand from Eastern Africa until Chinese coastal cities cannot be underestimated [14].

Here I would like to briefly remind some developments regarding initial attempts of the Portuguese. Sailing off the Portuguese to the Eastern seas caused great concerns of particularly the Mamluks and the rest petty city states in Western coastal line of India. The main reason of this concern was the threat to the crucial profit from the east-west commercial activity left to the Mamluks. This treat can be considered in a variety of aspect such as economic, political and religious. The Mamluks, by its very nature, a landlocked state in the face of the Portuguese sea power needed to demand military aid from the Ottomans. And this support was given commencing from the era of Yıldırım Bayazid (1498). While the Mamluks had to face the Portuguese challenge, during the initial clashes around the Red Sea and Southern Arabian Sea, the flotilla possessed by the Mamluks did not wield a quality fleet the same as the ones the Portuguese had. What the former had in terms of navy power was because of the Ottomans help during the Sultan Bayezid. During the Portuguese attacks on the Sacred Lands, though there were some sorts of military aid of the Ottomans, as Clot [7] argues "Turkish involvement in the struggle against the Infidel who threatened the Holy Places had gone no further". On the other hand, after the Ottomans gained the power in Egypt against the Mamluks, they were felt to involve in the developments in the Indian Ocean. This was a very unique development in the history of the Ottomans, since this was the first time a land-based state reached the Ocean and encountered the maritime states.

In fact, the Ottomans regained the position of the Mamluks after they annexed the whole region adjacent to the Red Sea. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the definite steps taken by the Ottomans was a result of the political tensile with the Safavids to larger extent. Whilst the geographical features of the eastern borders of the Ottoman State did not allow much its army to conduct mainstream war tactics, but temporary wars against the

Safavids³, it can be argued that the terrain in the southern border was more appropriate rather than the mountainous landscape of the Safavid land for the expansion policy of the State. One another motive forced Selim the Grim to head to the east might have been related to not only the threat caused by Shia based religio-political interferences of the Safavids, but also establishing an alliance between the Safavids, the Mamluks. Nonetheless, the probability of the alliance between the Safavids and the Portuguese cannot be ignored. Since the latter powers had a common enemy, their alliance might not have been a surprise. An indication of their close relations can be observed in the accounts of some researchers such Meilink-Roelofs [15], Boxer [16], İnalçık [17] and Clot [7] regarding the Portuguese allowed the Safavids trade with the Western Indian coastal cities. On the other hand, this policy change is deserved to be rightfully considered with the connection of the developments in Europe. After the conquests were successfully conducted in the Balkans the Ottomans reached a satisfaction and found opportunities to intervene to the developments in the eastern and southern borders.

It is the indication of the Ottoman State' preponderance on the Mamluks and becoming adjacent to the Ocean in 1517 that it inevitably could not remain indifferent to the reality of the region. This plight put the Ottoman State into a place of being protectorate of the Sacred Lands. On the other hand, it exerted that the petty states already destabilized owing to the enmity of the Portuguese looked for the tutelage of the Ottomans. The order of Selim I to establish a navy in the Red Sea aimed to defend the Sacred Lands against the mostly religiously motivated Portuguese attacks after he gained the status of custody of Mekkah and Madina. Nonetheless, this could not reach bizarrely an austere policy to intervene commercial activities in the larger region. The most salient reason of this can be found in the fact that the Arabs and Indian Muslims steered the trans-oceanic trade business in the littoral of the Ottoman territory for a long time [18] and the tax revenue to be incurred from this activity was satisfactory enough for the Ottomans [19].

Beside maritime and navigation technology of the Ottomans, the importance of *lahiya* written and presented to the Ottoman court by Selman Reis cannot be underestimated. He highlighted some crucial issues in his writing such as the inertness of the Ottoman navy in Red Sea. Furthermore, this process, of course, had a close

relation with the global economic policies of the period. It also can be argued that the *Kitab-i Bahriye* (Book of the Maritime Knowledge) written by Piri Reis allowed - even tacitly- Selim I to execute certain actions and constructed his policies [20]. In particular, after the report of Selman Reis reached Istanbul, Sulaiman I ordered navy preparation in Suez to make a fresh attack on the Portuguese establishments in the Red Sea and the Western part of the Indian Ocean in around 1529. Nonetheless, the priority of the palace was leaning to the expansion in Europe which was a very determined target of the Ottomans since the very outset of the establishment of the *Beylik*. John. F. Guilmartin argues, as quoted by Özbaran, Sulaiman the Magnificent preferred to concentrate on the expansion in Central Europe (Hungary), instead the Indian Ocean [9], [7]. Here it must be put forward that no doubt the existence of some rival factions in the court was conspicuous. In another word, this salient issue is related with the disputes among the political factions who were influential determining the orientation of the state in terms of expansion policies [1]. Some of the factions seem not to have been fervent exponents of the Indian Ocean policy.

Hence, it must be underscored that how successfully this awareness functioned well and occasioned to the embodiment of the policies. It is noteworthy that the exploration of the Ottomans in Red Sea and the Indian Ocean did not cause an administrative mechanism to initiate sound commercial and political relations with the regional powers [18]. Hence it seems it was left to "single-minded" decisions as seen in the interests of Hadım Sulaiman Pasha [1]. Furthermore, I would like to affirm right at this point as witnessed in the samples of the Fatimids and the Mamluks reigning around the Red Sea for quite a long time, the Ottomans were also reluctant to participate in a direct commercial activities exercised in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean such as exclusive ports of Pasai and Malacca [21].

On the other hand, it was the strong connection of the Portuguese to the Indian Ocean which fashioned the concept of geographical expansion of the former mentioned as "from East Africa to the Far East". This expansion was the result of the policy of the Portuguese authorities not to involve land annexation, instead having control of factories in crucial ports which rendered them to be mobilizer of all the regional mercantile transactions. Pertaining to the military might, the Portuguese possessed, no doubt, more advanced maritime

³The Safevids knows as a Turcic dynasty acquired Islamic and Persian identity ruled in Iran and became a significant opponent to the Ottomans particularly between 15th and 17th centuries (See.: [45])

technology [20]. But, their military tactics and strategies on the basis of great experiences in the seas and cavalry cannot be ignored [22].

This concept did not include merely geographical idea, but rather it connotes their well-organized structure as seen in commercial methods. Further, it cannot be underestimated that the Portuguese occupied professional bodies such as being administrators and politicians in all levels of around the coastal cities including Church men in the Indian Ocean which allowed them to be a main play-maker among the variety of trade sectors and many political powers in the whole region [23]. All these fundamentals which were entailed to consolidate a robust economic and military existence in the Indian Ocean, both in its the western and eastern parts, were raised on the “a network of alliances” [24]. In addition, against the overall assumption that the Portuguese conducted all trade business between Lisbon (Europe) and the ports in the Indian Ocean, there was a salient fact that they involved much in inter-Asian trade in the course of time [25].

At this juncture, it ought to be argued that there were distinct approaches to the perception of the world seas between the Ottomans and the Iberian counterparts. Starting from the reign of Henry the Navigator, in the mid of 14th century, the Portuguese had a state policy to set off the oceans in a consistent way [26], [16], [20]. Hence, it is difficult to argue that there were similar approaches in the policies conducted by the Ottoman Sultans. The fact is that the seamen undertook the sporadic initiatives in the field as seen in the sample of Mustafa Bayram who conquered Diu in 1531 without the planning of the Ottoman courts [1], [27]. Since Selman Reis was appointed to a position in the navy in the Red Sea long before the Ottomans dominated the Red Sea, it is hard to say that his attempts to lay great emphasis on encouraging the Ottoman court to design a policy towards the oceanic developments throughout the years seem not to have had more potent. A further point, though Piri Reis presented his both world map to Selim I in 1513 and *Kitab-i Bahriye* to Sulaiman the Magnificent in 1525, it is difficult to affirm that there was any consistent and sustainable effort to establish a mechanism to organize great voyages in the seas.

The Era of Sulaiman the Magnificent and the Role of Factions in the Court: Another substantial point in terms of the change in the Ottomans’ major territorial expansion from the vicinity of the Indian Ocean to the eastern borders of the Balkans and Central Europe was the death

of Selim I. And to be able to understand the political and military expansion of his son, Sulaiman I, the conditions in the Mediterranean and the Balkans must be considered particularly in the very early decades of this reign. In this context, the vantage point of the new sultan based on the entrenchment of the above-mentioned regions which lie in the very vicinity of the Ottoman State. For this purpose, the Sultan gave precedence to these regions and had to encounter the presence of the great powers of the European states particularly the Venetians in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. The existence of this danger was a threat to the entity of the Ottoman territory. Whilst the initiatives were implemented to eliminate this threat, the islands which were indispensable for the border security and territorial sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean were one after another conquered.

It cannot be purported that Sulaiman I, who paid gradually much attention to the expansion policies in utmost priority in the Balkans and the central Europe, ignored totally the Indian Ocean. In addition, ascending the throne in the peak of the Ottoman history, there is no doubt that his policies were based on his political intelligence. Hence it ought to be asked which factors hampered him during the salient discussions to decide the priority whether the European ground offensive or the naval attack in the Indian Ocean must be chosen in the court for the future of the state in 1525 [20].

During this process, the place of the Indian Ocean in the lights of Sulaiman I’ political genius and statesmanship must be revisited. Though there was a support to increase the number of the navy in 1525 by 25 galleys (the number of 80 units, according to İnalçık and Giancola), there is a great doubt of the operation of this fleet which was not proper for the high seas conditions was not capable of the war in terms of its technology. But it brings in mind that the main objective of this fleet was not to act offensively but defend the major points around the vicinity of the State’s border. The Ottoman court’s decision on the Indian Ocean policy taken in 1525 no doubt was the impact of the report presented by Selman Reis who was the master of understanding the importance of the region and its advantages intimately, developed the strategies revealed in stages. Hence this policy can be regarded to be too gingerly or an overall assessment to be bumpy. The classical policy and organization of the Ottoman State constitutes on financing military budgeted. In aware of it, Selman Reis asserted that by the existence of a strong navy the Ottomans would control the commercial trade in the Indian Ocean and its vicinity and further gain new

incomes from the tax revenue of the newly conquered lands. However, when the Ottoman court determined its policy regarding the developments in the southern part of its borders, it had to find a solution between the patrimonial mentality of the Ottomans and the merchantalist policy emerged in the West [28]. Hence, there were not any salient and consistent inclinations as an indication of the state policy and the Ottomans seem not to have kept pace with the demand of those states. There might have been some discussions in the court whether there would be changes and new approaches in Ottoman classical economic structure.

In this juncture, I would like to highlight the attempt of Sultan al-Kahhar, the Aceh Sultan, sending his envoy to Constantinople. During the visit, whilst the envoy revived the idea of being a vassal state of the Ottoman by sending annual tribute, Sultan Selim II kindly declined this idea arguing the geographical distance between two states [29] [30]. It might be indeed urged here the fact that Sultan Selim II declined the offer of the Acehnese to pay yearly tax which was regarded a significant income from the vassal states, can be considered as a clue of the political continuity of the Ottoman court. As seen in the court meeting in 1525 the Ottoman authorities did not decide for the favor of the developments in the Indian Ocean, Sultan Selim II also did not approve the political contract of the Acehnese. Of course the potential decision would no doubt have a great impact on the future of the state. Hence, there was no any tradition of volition to perform the lack of action in the developments in two distinct front lines. Taken into consideration of the history of Turks, the decision agreed on by the court was aligned with the ancient tendency of being a land state commencing from the Central Asia.

Technological Challenges: In terms of the oceanic developments, the material and technological advancement must be considered. There is a plausible question whether the Ottomans were able to establish such a navy power in comparison with the Western European sea empires. There are some characteristics pertaining to the phenomenon of Ottoman navy power. The first one is that the Ottoman navy was related indirectly to its profound establishment as a state and its military. And the second one the naval power of the Ottoman State which developed on the basis of requirements of the closed seas such as the Mediterranean Sea. Despite of the fact that the Ottoman navy underwent some developmental changes particularly from the era of Mehmed II onwards and it had, to some

extent, the strength to withstand marine technology, it was not equal to the steps exercised in the scope experienced by the Portuguese navy which had already commenced to play salient roles in the oceans from the beginning of the 15th century onwards. In particular, the existence of this power was not competitive enough beyond the shores of the Southern Arabia and against the Portuguese maritime power having three-masted and large type of vessels [31], [27], [20].

In regard with this, the Ottoman navy remained overall in the defensive position to retain its borders as seen in the sample of Jeddah attack of the Portuguese in 1509. This attack which was encountered by Selman Reis is an indication of the defensive position of the Ottomans [20]. Furthermore, this strategic determination of the Ottoman navy seems to have continued even until the mid of the 16th century. As argued by Orhonlu [11], during the war between the navy under the leadership of Seydi Ali Reis and the Portuguese navy around Oman in 1554, the technological gap was inevitably exist.

It must be questioned whilst the Ottomans embraced all sorts of artillery technologies introduced first in Europe and then provided themselves as seen in the sample of cannon production, why they did not comprise the maritime technology following the same steps in the context of the encountering with the Portuguese. Cipolla argues that this was the reluctance of the Ottoman administration and it is related to the socio-cultural institutions in the State. The ideology of expansionism of the Ottoman court aimed to grasp agricultural lands pledged huge revenue to finance consistently both detailed bureaucracy and the army having a large number of troops. Since the expenditure of the Ottoman economy and also army relied upon these sorts of taxes [32], [20]. In this sense, the presence of the Ottoman State were proportional to the size of its possessed pieces of land. However, though this was the overall inclination of the Ottomans, it cannot be said that they had an ambition to expand territories around the Indian Ocean.

On the other hand, it cannot be underestimated that insistence of the Ottomans on the Mediterranean maritime technology might be related to their consistent, challenging existence and triumph in this closed sea. This might emanate from the thought that they did not take into consideration of development of maritime technology as required by the nature of the Suez and Indian Ocean conditions. In addition, the exist navy had, to larger extent, defensive task in the coastal areas of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Hence, some individual Muslim seamen who were among the main actors in power

structure in the Western Mediterranean throughout the middle of the 15th century spearheaded to transfer maritime technology successfully via their contacts with the British and Dutch maritime powers which were on the way to create their own strong establishment in the oceans in the last decades of the 16th century. The new novel attempts of the pirate seamen who played a major role in the transformation of the Ottoman maritime activities in previous century, particularly during the reign of Yıldırım Bayezid, did not lure the same interest of the Ottoman administration [20]. Given the fact that the existence of some Turks in Malacca, Pasai as mentioned by various Portuguese sources it might be possible to assign that again individual Turkish seamen played their role to some extent as their ancestors in the Mediterranean [32]. In addition, on the basis of the accounts of some researchers there were also, though relatively a small number, Turkish individual seamen might have become influential in Malacca and similar port cities by their own individual enterprises [33], [34], [1].

As an overall argumentation, the failure of the Ottomans in the Indian Ocean to be an equal navy power compared with the Portuguese was caused by the inability of its maritime capability. Thus, it cannot be easily affirmed that the Ottomans had “the quality and technical superiority” Özbaran [9] against their rivals, without overlooking some other factors such as political willpower etc. The afore-mentioned weakness inevitably set a constraint for the Ottomans’ power relations with the Western involvement in the Indian Ocean. In regard with this opinion, it is worth reminding that while the Ottomans acquired great developments in terms of gunpowder technology between the second half of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century [35]; [36], it is observed that they failed to invent a sort of shipment which would allow them to be a potent playmaker in the ocean water. Whilst the Ottomans attempted to take part in contention with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, the latter had already established its own ship-building factory in Cochin using the long-standing wooden materials [37]. This was the main factor for the Ottomans could not advance consistently as a sea power in all attempts “either in civil trade business or military work” [36].

The failures of the Ottoman fleets as emerged in the big three attempts between the years 1517 and 1552, were not only based on the technological advancement but also human factor, in terms of the type of relations built up with the regional leaders as seen in the sample of

Hadım Sulaiman Pasha [1]. In brief, I shall remark that this issue of human factor seems to have been overlooked throughout the assessments of the maritime campaigns. The defeats which emerged after the Ottomans constructed navy power can be used as a strong argument that the Ottomans failed to be a “sea empire”. In fact, the fleet’s existence was not to enhance the Ottomans’ becoming a sea-empire, instead new territorial dimension which was caused particularly by the established and successive threat of the Saffavids.

In this context, it is doubtful to denote that the Ottoman State aimed either any territorial or geographical expansion policy in its attempts in the Indian Ocean. In this sense, the Ottoman intervention did not have a long term projection, instead a single attempt policy which may be called as a palliative solution. This approach which was conducted on the basis of the needs driven conditionally owing to the demands from the region was reactive. The connection with the port cities subject to the commercial activity between the east - west might have been a push-factor for the policy change of the Ottoman court.

Failure in Attempts?: The Ottomans’ involvement into the developments in the Indian Ocean raise substantial questions in terms of its global policies. In regard with this, these attempts have been discussed in controversial ways. Some argues by referring these attempts that the Ottomans became a global power. On the other hand, though the attempts were concretized, the results could not be evaluated in terms of mid- or long terms sustainable existence of the Ottomans in the region.

It is right here to question the reason of the Ottomans’ failure in their oceanic attempts. With regard of this matter, Though the Ottomans were principally opponent to the Portuguese on the Ocean, it must be remarked that the Ottomans’ navy power appears not to have successfully been improved aligned with the necessary changes pertaining to the oceanic conditions so as to challenge the strong stand of the Portuguese. In particularly, due to the lackness of maritime technology, which hence was witnessed to have been developed by the entrepreneurs of the Western European sea nations, the Ottomans were bounded much on traditional method in constructing ships, as seen typically in oared ships until the second half of the 18th century [38]. Their war strategies, beyond the underdeveloped material conditions, were not appropriate to the open-sea conditions which was a new phenomenon to larger extent

and they “fought as they did at Lepanto”. The Ottomans’ naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean were insistently bound to the classical navy, say, large galleys (*kadirga*), structure as seen in the examples of the fleet of Piri Reis (1551-2) and Ali Bey (1576-7). Those were not sustainable in case the strong oceanic storms appeared as known in the demolishing of the fleet of Seydi Ali Reis in 1554. These maritime campaigns did not result in success as they had been planned [9].

In addition, the present writer contends that it is right to comment on the maritime enterprises in connection with the the Ottomans’ failure to accomodate into the socio-political relations with power circles in the region. Though the role of the decision makers in Constantinople cannot be ignored, intrinsic responsibility belonged to the implementers in the field, such as the admirals (*Kaptan-ı Derya*), since the latter were the main carriers of the task and were supposed to have capability by developing strategies to improve relations with native components. This also induced an overall failure if mid- and long terms relations are considered. As one of the unique sample which can be observed that the adversarial politics and practices of Hadım Sulaiman Pasha [39] antagonized the native sultanates not only to his own leadership attempt against the Portuguese but also to overall policies of the Ottomans either implicitly or tacitly. In fact, while he was hanging the governor of Aden he seems not to have been aware of sparking the hatred of the native rulers in the region. As seen in later developments, the credibility of the Ottoman rule became affected in the region. At the same time, the policies and power of the Portuguese cannot be ignored on the perceptions of the native sultanates. In this context, it is arguable that as an overall result of the Ottoman enterprise in the Indian Ocean was successful.

Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı [40], one of distinguished Turkish historians, argues that the Ottoman navy which gained great success in the Mediterranean did not conduct the same attempts and efforts in the Indian Ocean. And he remarks that the Ottomans failed to increase the number of vessels in time in Suez. The significant result of this failure emerged in the defeat of Diu [1]. On the other hand, the defeat of Piri Reis in Hormuz and prevention of some other efforts to dominate the Sea of Oman such as Seydi Ali Reis ought to be considered as unsuccessful attempts against the Portuguese in the region. As an overall assessment, whilst the Ottomans were influential in the protection of the Red Sea, to some extent, the Portuguese were not prevented to expand its power in effectively [41].

Behind these failures, particularly pertaining to the Diu campaign, as argued, which was conducted by “the most powerful fleet the Ottomans ever mustered in the Indian Ocean” there were various reasons such as the rejection of Khudavent Khan to help the Ottomans, the rumours of the Portuguese help arriving in Diu and some non-Muslim elements included in this expedition [41]. In another view, though the Ottomans’ attempts to dislodge the Portuguese from trade monopoly efforts was unsuccessful, the former precluded the hegemony of the Portuguese to control fully the Red Sea trade transactions. Faroqi [42] also argues that the Ottomans’ failure had also a negative impact on their potential influences in Southeast Asia regarding the Aceh context. On the basis of these accounts, it cannot be argued that the Ottomans could not facilitate a new geography included into Pax-Ottoman circle.

CONCLUSION

During the first decades of the 16th century witnessed a new global change exercised by the Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean. This development was so distinguished that it would give a lead the direction of the world affairs throughout the colonial process. Due to the fact that the Portuguese were expanding their borders and becoming a significant sea-born empire, the Ottomans had to attempt to the developments in the Indian Ocean. In terms of this, the Indian Ocean policy, initiated by the capturing of Egypt by the Ottoman State, was moulded respectively by the efforts of the Sultans Selim I and Sulaiman I and the court’s servants in the field such as Selmān Reis, Hadım Suleiman Pasha, Piri Reis, Seydi Ali Reis. In particular, throughout the the first half of the 16th century. After the interactions during initial decades between these two powers in around the Red Sea and the Western part of the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese seems to have advanced in strategies, had power relations in favor of its own advantage far beyond the Ottomans in terms of direct dealing with trade affairs establishing fairly successfully the link between the Indian Ocean and Lisbon.

The initiation of the Ottoman involvement as a new constituent in the great Ocean was limited by the Red Sea, Southern Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. In particular, after the Ottomans seized Basra, this city became a stronghold of the state to conduct the relations with India and beyond it. It might be commented on the existence of the Ottomans in Basra that the link established between Basra and Constantinople was an expression of the Ottomans’ being a land-state. No doubt, during that time,

the presence of qualified and experienced land army of the Ottoman Empire had a great impact on the continuing the general policy of expansion in Europe. Moreover, some researchers put forward the fact that Ottoman court did not invoke much to involve in the Indian Ocean in its political and military decisions by arguing that the Portuguese did not become a salient threat as assumed [20].

After gaining a foot adjacent to the Indian Ocean, the Ottomans seems not to have thought much to invest any more for the reaching new geographies. In addition, their attachment to the land areas, such as Basra and the coastal areas of the Southern Arabian Sea and Hurmuz caused a sort of conservative approach to the development of navy construction which might have rendered the Ottomans one of the playmakers in the Ocean, to limited extent. Due to these reasons the ottomans preferred to encounter with the Portuguese in the coastal areas around the above-mentioned cities [27].

While there were some political determination and militarily requests of the Southeast Asian Muslim states such as Gujerat and Aceh to establish a strong alliance with the Ottoman power, the Ottomans' navy enterprise was not enough strong to stand on the challenges both the great ocean waves and the Portuguese [7]. And the Ottomans' militarily contribution to the sultanates in the Indian Ocean and farther, including Aceh was not materialised as it should have been. Since the Ottoman maritime power sent to challenge the existence of the Portuguese fleets in the Indian Ocean were not appropriate to the conditions of the ocean. And all three naval episodes against the Portuguese particularly in the Western Indian seas in the first half of the 16th century failed to get any concrete development for the development of the relationships with the native sultanates [43].

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