

OBSERVATIONS ON THE OTTOMAN POLITICAL VISION IN THE EASTERN EUROPE

The Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) was one of the largest and longest-lived empires in history, and it represented one of the greatest civilizations. Its territories, at its height, included Anatolia, the Arabian Peninsula, parts of East and North Africa, and south eastern Europe, comprising a total area of more than 22 million square kilometers (about 8.5 million square miles).

The Ottoman state was established by a tribe of Oghuz Turks as one of many small Turkish principalities that emerged in Anatolia during the Mongolian breakdown of the Anatolian Seljuk State. Situated on the borders of the tottering Byzantine Empire, the founder Osman I (ca. 1258-1324) quickly became a warrior of Islam.

In the early 1360s the Byzantium city of Edirne in Thrace fell to Turkish forces. Serving as a base for further expansion into the Balkans. Hence by 1387 large parts of the Balkan Peninsula come under Turkish rule. In 1453 Mehmed II besieged Constantinople and the Byzantine capital fell to the Ottomans in May 29, which marked an important turning point in world history.

After Constantinople, the expansion continued by annexing Serbia and More a the Genoese colonies on the Black Sea coast, several islands in the Aegean Sea, and Albania. Bosnia-Moldavia (a region in present-day Romania and Moldova) was forced to pay tribute, and the Khanete of the Crimea (in Ukraine) was made an Ottoman vassal state.

Towards the end of the XVth century Herzegovina and Moldavia were fully added to the empire.

Under Süleyman, (ca. 1494-1566), Belgrade and most of Hungary were absorbed after the Battle of Mohacs (1526). In 1540 Hungary became an Ottoman province. Süleyman died in 1566 while besieging the castle of Zigetvar in Hungary, and his son, Selim II (ca. 1524-1574), succeeded him.

Süleyman was undoubtedly the most powerful ruler in the world at the time. During his reign, the Ottoman Empire expanded greatly, both to the east and west, and threatened to overrun the heart of Europe. He was also a major player in European politics. He aimed to ensure that no state became powerful enough to unify Europe. To this end, Süleyman financially supported Protestant countries when European Christianity split Europe between Catholics and Protestants. It can be argued that Protestantism would never have succeeded but for Ottoman support.

In 1683 the grand vizier Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa (1634-1683), besieged Vienna for a second time. But the siege proved disastrous and the European coalition defeated the Ottoman army. The Treaty of Karlowitz to end the war was signed in 1699, marking the beginning of the Ottoman withdrawal from Europe.

The Ottomans also began to lose control of strategic trade routes, upon which their wealth had largely depended. Traders from the east to the west had by now changed their route, bypassing Ottoman lands. The northern trade route also had to be abandoned after Russia took control of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556).

The Pruth war (1711) with Russia was the last opportunity for the Ottomans to regain lands lost at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Treaty was signed after a Russian defeat brought the Castle of Azak in the Black Sea region back to the Ottomans. This development kept Russia from expanding towards the Mediterranean.

In XVII and XVIIIth century the Ottomans abstained from the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) in Europe and did not participate in the scheme of alliances and counter-alliances that ensued. Russia, on the other hand, continued the policy of seeking access to the Mediterranean and formed an alliance with Austria against the Ottomans.

Hence wars that occurred between 1768 and 1774 and from 1787 and 1792 with Russia were to prove devastating for the Ottomans. Crimea was first separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1774 by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca; the region was then annexed by the Russians. The Ottomans also had to renounce their claims to Moldavia and Walachia. Thus, Russia once again had a free hand in the Black Sea.

A new development in Europe, namely, Napoléon Bonaparte's (1769-1821) emergence soon altered the entire situation. The Ottomans had entered a new century that was to be dominated by European wars and expansion, and by the notions of the «Eastern question».

The Eastern question basically, centered around one issue: If and when the Ottoman Empire disappeared, what should happen to its territories (especially the European ones)? Not surprisingly, the Ottoman Empire became a focus for European politics, and the European powers generally formulated their positions based on developments within the Ottoman Empire.

XIth century started with burdensome for the Ottomans. The wars with the Greeks and later the Russians were devastating. Greece declared its independence with the European support and the Russians gained lands in eastern Anatolia.

The Russians started another war, the Crimean War, in 1853. It was during this conflict that the Ottoman Empire came to be called the «sick man of Europe». Britain and France sided with the Ottomans primarily for their own purposes namely, to check Russian ambitions. In fact, the Crimean War was a European conflict that was fought on Ottoman territory, rather than an exclusively Ottoman-motivated war.

The War ended in 1856 with the Treaty of Paris, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and recognized it as a member of the concert of Europe. But this recognition depended in part on the application of promised Ottoman reforms, which in turn gave the European powers the right to interfere in the domestic matters of the Ottoman state.

Another war with Russia took place 20 years later which ended with a catastrophic defeat for the Ottomans. The Treaty of Yesilkoy,

signed in 1878, made it clear that Romania and Montenegro had become independent; in addition, Bosnia was left to Austria, and Bulgaria declared its autonomy. Apart from Macedonia and some other regions, the Ottoman hold over the Balkans Eastern Europe had ended.

The aftermath of World War I fundamentally changed the political, cultural, and social order of the world. The empires disappeared and new countries were formed.

The victorious powers saved the worst treatment for the Ottomans. Their lands were divided, with a small region in central and northern Anatolia left for the Turks.

In the light of above the Ottoman interest towards the Eastern European region goes back to as early as to the 15th century. Following the capture of Constantinople, in 1475 the Ottomans effectively turned the Black Sea into an Ottoman lake. This was significant especially for the empire building not only because of its strategic importance but also all sorts of economic resources it availed. Soon in 1484 the gates of Danube and Diniaster, Kili and Akkerman were also integrated into the borders. Naturally the lands at the north of the Black Sea were of utmost importance for the vision of the Ottomans. They preferred to set up provincial rule in the region and the Crimeans were the upper hand in implementing the imperial politics.

Until the late 18th century, the region was more or less under the Ottoman rule and its vassal, the Crimean Khanate. They provided the basis of the Ottoman strategy towards lands further North, the Central-Eastern Europe and Caucasus-Volga regions. It was also constituted the basic orientation of the Ottoman policy of controlling the Russian threat. The alliance with the Crimeans for the Ottomans was to prove remarkably important. It was mutually beneficial for both parties not only in securing the northern frontiers, but also as a source for skilled cavalry. By this way The Ottomans were able to turn their attention especially to Central Europe and the Mediterranean.

During the 17th century, the lands of Ukraine were subject to wars between the Ottomans, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia. In this period the Khanate of Crimea of course played a crucial role against the PLC, and Russia. The turning point was in 1654. With the union of the Dnieper Cossacks with Russia, which constituted a major threat to the Crimeans and the Ottomans and their claims of suzerainty over the Ukrainian steppe.

The Ottoman military power was ultimately broken decisively during the disastrous War of 1684-1699. This enabled Russia an opportunity on which Tsar Peter I quickly seized. He led an attack with his allies against the Ottoman fortress of Azov at the centre of the Crimea, and captured it in 1696. This signaled the beginning of a new era and soon Russia's dominance over the entire region was to be assured.

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РОСІЙСЬКЕ VS ОСМАНСЬКЕ ДІЛОВОДСТВО: КОЗАЦЬКІ ПРИКОРДОННІ ПИТАННЯ У ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ПРОТИСТОЯННІ ІМПЕРІЙ НАПРИКІНЦІ ХVІІІ ст.

Остання чверть ХVІІІ ст. позначилася значним загостренням зовнішньополітичних протиріч у стосунках Російської та Османської імперій. Дві невдалі (для османської сторони) війни, втрата Північного Причорномор'я та Приазов'я, а найголовніше – Криму, болісно позначилися на становищі Османської імперії, поглибивши її кризу¹. В той же час Російська імперія насолоджувалася своїми завоюваннями, підтримуючи та забезпечуючи їх на всіх фронтах: дипломатичному, ідеологічному, інформаційному тощо. Отже, своєрідна «гібридна війна» вдало здійснювалася російськими урядовцями упродовж останньої чверті ХVІІІ – початку ХІХ ст.

Відомий «грецький проект» князя О. Безбородька щодо відновлення Візантійської імперії на північних берегах Чорного моря, схвалення православної церкви і відповідна офіційна риторика щодо захисту «поневолевих» православних народів у межах мусульманської імперії забезпечували ідеологічну підтримку російських завоювань. Важливу роль відігравали російські дипломати, які зобов'язані були створювати відповідний фон: в європейських країнах забезпечувати «правильне» сприйняття політиками і суспільством самого права на завоювання, в Османській імперії – всіляко відволікати постійними дрібницями і натяками на неспроможність турків контролювати свої прикордонні тери-