

*A Brief Overview Of The Effects of Mediterranean Politics
And Ottoman-Habsburg Conflict On The Modern
European Identity*

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Mediterranean politics in the 16th century are not just relations of constant conflicts nor continuous cooperations of states. Most of the time the cooperations/alliances between the nations/states were temporary and also conflicts were not permanent. In fact, some warring states cooperated from time to time while some alliances were thrown away in favor of gaining more power and influence over the Mediterranean. To give an idea of these relations, we can take a look at the Ottoman-French alliance, Venetians vs Ottomans, Ottomans vs Spanish kingdoms, Ottoman conquest of Egypt, French's occasional cooperations with Italian city-states. These alliances-cooperations and conflicts were not permanent. Alliances lasted as long as they were useful and conflicts more often resulted in one side's acceptance of the other's superiority. Often, alliances dragged allies into new conflicts with other powers, and conflicts forced sides to make alliances.

First, one must look at the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and understand its place in the imperial goals of the Ottoman. Many wars have been fought over it for the imperial goals of different powers because of its rich fields that could produce vast amounts of grains and also from time to time, its geostrategic position had allowed Egyptian imperialism (Hess,1973:57). After conquering Istanbul, Conqueror brought the sailors who once served the Byzantium and added them to his forces along with merchants, corsairs, and the like. Therefore developing a high-cost and strong navy became the main goal of the Ottomans and dragged them to institutionalized naval warfare (Hess,1973:62). The Ottomans did not just want to Egypt but also wanted to take control of the Levant trade. Egypt was the first step to take control of the Levant trade and to do that they also needed to establish a navy that could rival the Euro-

pean naval powers. Ottomans wanted to take control of the Levant trade and while Venetians wanted to maintain their control over the region which intensified the tension between the nations which would spark wars later. Ottomans made the Black sea an interior lake and made two-pronged assaults on the Christian outposts in the Aegean Sea by the end of the conqueror's reign. Bayezid II, the successor of the conqueror, developed a strong navy that was unparalleled (Hess,1973:63). The Ottomans defeated Venetians in 1499 and win a naval-war that lasted almost 4 years. Venetians who wanted to keep their commercial advantages agreed to Ottoman demands. After the 1500s there were no naval forces that could rival the Ottomans (Hess,1973:66). The Ottomans did not launch an aggressive campaign on the Mamluk Sultanate but rather made them dependent on themselves and isolated them in their external politics. This occurred when the Mamluks lost their fleet while trying to prevent the Portuguese from taking over the Egyptian-Indian trade network. Having lost their fleet, Venetians persuaded the Mamluks into asking for the aid of the Ottomans. The Ottomans did not only rebuilt their navy but also manned the navy with the Ottoman sailors meaning now the Mamluks fleet belonged to the Ottomans (Hess,1973:67). After Selim the Grim eliminated the Şafavid threat at the south he launched an expedition against Mamluks who are now isolated, weak, and dependent on the Ottomans (Hess,1973:68). Turks before the Ottomans showed the willingness to fight on the seas and so did the Ottomans. By absorbing the coastal regions of Anatolia and absorbing Egypt and Syria they made use of the maritime populations of these regions and launched raids to the Christian shores (Hess,1973:61).

After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, the Pope turned to the French king Francis I for leading an Anti-Turkish league. King himself promised to defend Christendom against Turks he were elected to the throne of the holy roman emperor. All the while he allied with Suleiman the Magnificent (Jensen,1985: 451). After Francis I's decisive defeat at the battle of Pavia (1525) where he was captured by Charles V, *A traite de circumstance*. He sent out envoys to the Sultan to ask to save him (the tone was clearly begging for help), Francis wanted to establish a long-range alliance to prevent Habsburgs from dominating Europe(Jensen,1985: 452). With the aid of the Ottomans, Francis might have a chance to regain control of Milan and increase his influence in the Mediterranean. The Ottomans and the French had more common goals which were unusual. If the French could increase their influence over the Mediterranean region, they could gain privileges like Venetians and Ottomans would also gain the benefit of having more influence over the Levant trade(Jensen,1985: 453). French was taking a risk by allying with the Ottomans as they would have more to lose than gain because if the Ottomans expanded too far in Hungary, the French were concerned that it would unite the German princes under one banner which some were Lutheran. (Jensen,1985:454). Sultan gave the French the privileges such as reclamation of captives, no new taxes, and prejudicial

lawsuits, etc. These privileges remained active till the death of Suleiman (Jensen,1985: 456) Preveza battle marked the beginning of the Ottoman triumph of the Mediterranean for nearly 30 years (Jensen,1985: 458). Even the Spanish wanted to grow its trading revenues from the Mediterranean, therefore, decided to make a truce with the Ottomans (Jensen,1985: 465). English offered tin and other munitions to the Ottomans that needed a lot. French was tied on its civil war and had none to spare. With the help of Sokilli English obtained similar privileges to the French in the Mediterranean. French wanted to revoke the new treaty and so they did, and now they signed a treaty with Ottomans on more favorable terms which exempted the French from many taxes and also all the other nations who wanted trade in the Mediterranean had to be under the French flag and protection (Only Venetians granted to open their own banners) (Jensen,1985:466).

These conflicts and alliances to gain control over the Mediterranean trade, caused the Habsburg and the Ottoman Conflict that combined with the Mediterranean affairs that shaped the identity of modern Europe. Habsburgs and the Ottomans would eventually come to face each other on the battlefield but the Mediterranean affairs and the French influence made it happen quicker. It occurred when the Suleiman invaded Hungary with Francis I's influence in 1526 (Tracy,2015:1). Suleiman and Charles V were enemies but they also had to fight against the enemies in their own culture. Europe was divided because of the infighting, supporters of the Habsburgs accused the Valois and vice versa. And the Ottomans had to fight Persians (Tracy,2015:20). It was one of the main principles of the Ottomans to support Calvinians and Protestants through the 16th and 17th centuries (Karpas,2015:81). Christian states, powerful or weak, often allied with Turks to wage war against each other ever since the late Byzantine period. Turks are may not be as much as alien as the scholars have thought before as it is presented that the Ottomans had also involved in the internal affairs of Europe (Tracy,2015:21). But for the Europeans, Turks were seen as barbarians that presented a threat to their civilized world just like Goths presented a threat to ancient Rome (Tracy,2015:23). "...If we grant that a civilization's sense of identity can be shaped by a threat from outside, how were the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg monarchy affected by the long conflict between them?" (Tracy,2015:25). Saracen was the term used for the infidel but later the term itself faded away as the term Turk/ To become a Turk took its place (Veinstein,2012:164). The unification of the European Christendom against Islam actually shaped around the idea of the Turks being barbarians ;

"...Such acts demonstrated the Turks' disdain for all the laws of nature and humanity. In his pamphlets on the Turks, Francesco Sansovino listed sultans who had been guilty of such crimes, under the title Lords Who Murdered Their Own Blood and Usurped Power. 32 The practice of polygamy and of other vices such

as sodomy, portrayed as being very widespread, was another mark of their bestiality. Finally, commentators pointed out the Turks' ignorance and contempt for works of art, and especially, for books. In a letter from Lauro Querini, a Venetian from Crete, to Pope Nicholas V on July 15, 1453, shortly after the taking of Constantinople, he notes that more than 120,000 volumes were destroyed at that time, obliterating the work of many centuries. The conclusion to be drawn was that the Turks were "a barbarian people, an uncultivated people, living without clear laws or customs but in laxity, nomadism, and arbitrariness, full of perfidy and deceit."(Veinstein,2012:174)

In conclusion, conflicts in the Mediterranean affairs played a major role in shaping sixteenth-century Mediterranean politics but the role of the alliances can not be undermined as those alliances also had a major part in European international politics. Such as the clash of the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, which could be considered as a world war as it was fought with proxy states and sometimes directly. We can not say it's a clash of civilizations as there was no unified Latin Christian Europe and the Islamic world also had its own infightings. These conflicts also shaped the identity of modern Europe. In short, conflicts caused alliances to emerge and some alliances cause conflicts to occur as presented in this essay.

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