PART I

⋆

BACKGROUND

1

Introduction

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Massive size and central control

It is by now rather trite to emphasise that the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries stretched from what were virtually the outskirts of Vienna all the way to the Indian Ocean, and from the northern coasts of the Black Sea to the first cataract of the Nile. But the implications of this enormous presence are so significant that in my view the risk of triviality must be taken. As a recent work on British imperial history has shown, even in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries, King and Parliament wished for the sake of Britain's trade and power in the Mediterranean to live at peace with Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, even though quite a few British subjects rowed on the galleys of these cities.[1] This conciliatory stance was not only due to the fortifications maintained by the three 'corsair republics', or even to the power of their navies, but resulted mainly from wider political concerns. Given the precarious situation of bases such as Gibraltar, angering the Ottoman sultan, who was after all the overlord of the North African janissaries and corsair captains, might have had dire consequences for British trade and diplomacy. Certainly in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, any number of European authors wrote books on the imminence of 'Ottoman decline'.[2] But when it came to the judgement of practical politicians, before the defeat of the sultan's armies in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768–74, the power of that potentate was taken seriously indeed.

In this same context, it is worth referring to the relative peace that prevailed in most of Ottoman territory for most of the time. Even if the sultan's writ ran but intermittently in border provinces, or in mountainous areas, deserts

1 Linda Colley, *Captives, Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1859* (New York, 2002), pp. 70–1.
2 On the early stages of this process: Lucette Valensi, *Venise et la Sublime Porte: la naissance du despote* (Paris, 1987).

and steppes, what was by the standards of the time a reasonable degree of security was the general norm. This allowed foreign merchants, pilgrims and even Christian missionaries to travel the highways and byways of the Balkans, Anatolia and Syria. These activities were often considered so important in Versailles, The Hague or London that accommodation on the political level, with the Ottoman central government but also with a variety of provincial potentates, seemed in order. Compromises with the sultan were deemed necessary in order to effect repairs to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and to allow Franciscans or Jesuits to attempt to persuade Orthodox or Armenian Christians who were also Ottoman subjects that they should recognise the supremacy of the Pope.[3]

But above all stood concerns of trade. Thus allowing the Ottoman ruler to use European ships active in the eastern Mediterranean for the wartime provisioning of his armies and towns seemed a reasonable quid pro quo when the French, British and Dutch governments considered the value of their respective subjects' Ottoman commerce. Apart from the customs and other duties paid by Levant traders in Marseilles, London or Amsterdam, there were important industries, especially in France, that depended on supplies from the Ottoman realm. Marseilles's soap factories, a major eighteenth-century industry, could not have functioned without inputs from Tunis or Crete.[4] The manufacture of woollens was another case in point. When at the end of the eighteenth century the Ottoman market collapsed, the formerly flourishing textile centre of Carcassonne near Montpellier reverted to the status of a country town, its inhabitants now resigned to living off their vineyards.[5]

Once again, the Ottoman Empire was of great size, and moreover its socio-political system had put down deep roots in most of the territories governed by the sultans, whose subjects profited from this situation in their commercial dealings. This becomes clear when we take a closer look at the caravan routes. In the 1960s and 1970s it was customary to emphasise the rise of maritime communications through the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and to conclude that the Ottoman Empire could scarcely avoid declining because it was increasingly

3 Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around it, 1540s to 1774* (London, 2004).
4 Boubaker Sadok, *La Régence de Tunis au XVII^e siècle: ses relations commerciales avec les ports de l'Europe méditerranéenne, Marseille et Livourne* (Zaghouan, 1987); Patrick Boulanger, *Marseille marché international de l'huile d'olive, un produit et des hommes, 1725–1825* (Marseille, 1996).
5 Claude Marquié, *L'Industrie textile carcassonnaise au XVIIIe siècle, étude d'un groupe social: les marchands-fabricants* (Carcassonne, 1993).

marginalised by world trade.[6] This view is widely held even today. However, if I am not mistaken, there are good reasons to be somewhat wary of this interpretation, at least with respect to most of the period studied here. First of all, we have come to see that even though land routes – or combined land–sea routes such as the connection from Aleppo to India – now handled a smaller share of overall traffic, what remained in the hands of Ottoman merchants, Muslims, Christians and Jews taken together was still substantial. Second, a relatively declining demand in Europe for raw silk and other goods from the Balkans and the Middle East gave Ottoman manufacturers a 'breathing space' before, in the early 1800s, they were exposed to the full force of the European-dominated world market: an advantage rather than a disadvantage.[7] It is therefore not so clear that the Ottoman economy was in fact being marginalised before the mid eighteenth century, and in consequence unable to service the sultan's armies and navies. Fernand Braudel's conclusion, in the later phases of his career, that the Ottoman Empire maintained itself well into the later 1700s due to its control of the overland trade routes is therefore well taken.[8]

Linkages to the European world economy

However, even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain regions of the Ottoman Empire maintained close and even intimate contact with European traders. Evidently the olive-growers of Crete and Tunisia depended on French demand for their oil. There is also the example of Izmir: this city had been of no particular importance in the 'classical' urban system of the sixteenth century, and only grew to prominence when that system lost some of its solidity after 1650 or thereabouts. Here, French, English and Dutch merchants established themselves over long periods of time, profiting not only from the transit trade in Iranian silk but also from the export of cotton and raisins, trades which were sometimes legal and at other times not. Certainly Izmir remained a primarily Muslim town, with locally prominent families constructing khans and renting them out as investments. Yet the city's economy by 1700 certainly

6 Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago and London, 1973), p. 81.
7 Murat Çizakça, 'Incorporation of the Middle East into the European World Economy', *Review* 8, 3 (1985), 353–78.
8 Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle: économie et capitalisme*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1979), vol. III, pp. 408–10.

was geared to trade with Europe; and when Iranian silk fell away after 1720 or so, once again locally grown cotton was available to fill the gap.[9]

Thus until about 1760 the Ottoman centre remained in control of its overland routes. Local production, which until this catastrophic decade had managed to prosper in quite a few places, was mainly geared to domestic markets. After all, before the advent of steamships and railroads it was not a realistic proposition to import consumer goods for ordinary people. Even after the 1760s, especially once relative security had been restored under Mahmud II (r. 1808–39), many local producers competed reasonably well with imported goods.[10] But even so at this time certain regions were becoming increasingly integrated into European commercial networks. Further links were established during the second half of the eighteenth century, when the need for financial services and the concomitant lack of Ottoman banks allowed French traders especially to engage in financial speculation and export money from the Ottoman Empire, an undertaking not usually profitable in earlier times.[11] While the Ottoman central government resorted to foreign borrowing only in the course of the Crimean war, at least some of its provincial representatives had become implicated in the financial dealings of European merchants about a hundred years earlier.

The attractions of eastern neighbours

Well-to-do Ottoman consumers did not limit their purchases from foreign lands to European goods, and thus Ottoman merchants traded both with the East and with the West. In Cairo around 1600, there were even some merchants who, through their trading partners, maintained contacts in both directions.[12] Spices from South-east Asia were consumed in the Ottoman lands: in the years before and after 1600, when Yemen was an Ottoman province, certain ports paid their dues in the shape of spices, more valuable in Istanbul than they would have been on the shores of the Indian Ocean. The quantities of pepper kept in the storehouses of Anatolian pious foundations indicate

9 Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650* (Seattle and London, 1990); Necmi Ülker, 'The Emergence of Izmir as a Mediterranean Commercial Center for French and English Interests, 1698–1740', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4, 1 (1987), 1–38; Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700–1820)* (Athens, 1992).

10 Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1993).

11 Edhem Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1999).

12 Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Syracuse, 1998), pp. 64–5.

that this was a popular condiment even in medium-sized cities. Moreover, just as eighteenth-century consumers in Europe came to prefer the sweetness of cinnamon to the sharpness of pepper, the Ottoman court, though otherwise conservative in its tastes, also switched to cinnamon at about the same time.[13] All this demand made Ottoman merchants into active participants in the Asian spice trade. In addition there were Indian cottons, with imaginative designs in bright, durable and washable colours, that enchanted the better-off Ottoman consumers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries just as much as their counterparts in early modern Europe. Indian producers of printed cottons thus worked simultaneously for the European, African, South-east Asian and Ottoman markets, entering some 'Turkish' motifs into their repertoires.[14]

Most goods from South-east Asia entered the Ottoman Empire by way of Cairo, but the Cairene merchants did not often venture further south than Jiddah. In consequence, the importation of these spices meant that Indian merchants, usually Muslims, appeared not only in Cairo or Istanbul, but occasionally even in small Anatolian towns. Unfortunately for our understanding of these connections, Indian merchants did not count on support from their respective home governments. There was thus no diplomatic correspondence of the type that has allowed us to evaluate, at least to some extent, the implications of the French, Dutch and English presences in Istanbul, Izmir or Sayda.

Rather more information is available on Iranian Armenians, from documentation produced by these traders themselves, but also from Safavid and diverse European sources; that these merchants also have found their way into Ottoman records is less well known.[15] Trade with Iran was often disrupted by political conflict; in certain years of the early eighteenth century it ground to a virtual standstill when war brought silk production to an end.[16] Yet even so, Armenian merchants subject to the shah are documented not only in the major port cities, but also in minor provincial towns. Thus we must assume that at least some of them traded in other goods apart from silks; perhaps the far-flung connections of the Armenian trade diaspora allowed certain of its members

13 Christoph Neumann, 'Spices in the Ottoman Palace: Courtly Cookery in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph Neumann (Istanbul, 2003), pp. 127–60.
14 Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India* (Delhi, 1985), p. 123.
15 Concerning the eighteenth-century privileges of these people: Başbakanlık Arşivi-Osmanlı Arşivi, section Maliyeden müdevver (MAD) 9908, p. 268; MAD 9906, pp. 581–2.
16 Neşe Erim, 'Trade, Traders and the State in Eighteenth-Century Erzurum', *New Perspectives on Turkey* 5–6 (1991), 123–50.

to bring in Indian fabrics. While Ottoman trade connections to India and Iran are thus more difficult to document than their European counterparts, at least some of them have come out into the open and, with some patience, more can surely be unearthed.

In addition, the study of these eastern trade connections also has made us understand that the different commercial centres of the empire did not all provide the same conditions for trade. Certainly the Ottoman central power had adopted principles of administration valid throughout its territories, to wit a tendency to orient itself according to precedent if at all feasible, a concern with provisioning the consumers' markets at low prices and, most importantly, an inclination to consider economic action unremittingly and exclusively as a source of fiscal revenue (traditionalism, provisionism and fiscalism, according to the formula invented by Mehmet Genç).[17] But this general framework did not prevent trade conditions in Cairo or Aleppo, where long-distance merchants were accorded considerable leeway, from differing vastly from those prevailing in the sultans' rather over-administered capital.[18]

The perils of war

However the size and – until the 1760s – still impressive power of the Ottoman Empire was relevant not only to traders, but above all to sultans, viziers, kings and ministers – including the Estates General of the Netherlands.[19] It is often forgotten that while the Ottoman sultans by the mid sixteenth century had reached more or less permanent frontiers against Habsburgs and Safavids, they were, over a century later, still quite capable of major conquests from second-order states such as Venice and Poland. According to recent research, the seventeenth-century Habsburgs at their eastern fronts used technology and tactics reflecting the early modern military reformation; and since down to the late 1600s, the Ottomans held their own against the emperors' armies, their own procedures were less old-fashioned than they have often been made out to be.[20] Thus very large cannons, so often viewed as a sign of Ottoman

17 Mehmet Genç, 'Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics and Main Trends', in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey 1500–1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany, 1994), pp. 59–86.
18 Hanna, *Big Money*, p. 166.
19 Mehmet Bulut, *Ottoman–Dutch Economic Relations in the Early Modern Period, 1571–1699* (Hilversum, 2001).
20 Gábor Ágoston, 'Ottoman Warfare in Europe 1453–1826', in *European Warfare 1453–1815*, ed. Jeremy Black (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 118–44 and 262–3.

military inefficiency, were apparently produced 'for show', while just as in European armies the real job of fighting devolved upon medium-sized and small guns.

Thanks to a number of studies both of individual campaigns and of Ottoman warfare in general, the strengths and weaknesses of the sultans' armies now can be evaluated with a degree of confidence. Well into the seventeenth century, one of the Ottomans' strongest points was the commissariat. While the miseries of war were universal, the sultans' armies were on the whole somewhat better supplied than their European counterparts.[21] Peasants provisioned the stopping-points along army routes, and craftsmen were drafted to accompany the soldiers, so as to obviate recourse to urban markets, where military discipline would have been difficult to maintain. Of course this arrangement had its disadvantages; peasants were paid little if anything for their services, and artisans also could not hope to recover their costs. Thus wars exacerbated the difficulty of capital formation, even under normal circumstances the Achilles' heel of the Ottoman socio-economic set-up, and the collapse of the army supply system in the second half of the eighteenth century seems to have been at the root of the military debacle of those years.[22] When food, clothing and tents were no longer supplied, soldiers attacked townsmen and villagers in order to provision themselves 'at source'. Even worse, Orthodox villagers taxed beyond the limits of endurance now tended to side with the Tsar, while in previous centuries, projected incursions into Ottoman territory on the part of Christian rulers had in most cases attracted but minimal support from the sultans' non-Muslim subjects.

In all probability the supply system collapsed when it did due to overload. It had long been customary in the Ottoman realm to demand deliveries for the military at prices that in many cases did not even cover production costs. Artisans responded by lowering the quality of their goods, and presumably the grain supplied at stopping-points by hapless peasants must often have been inedible.[23] Yet down to the late seventeenth century, the problems involved presumably remained manageable because the quantities of food and clothing demanded remained within – admittedly often rather wide – limits. But by the second half of the eighteenth century, if not earlier, military demand had reached a level that was simply too high for Ottoman taxpayers to support any

21 Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (London, 1999), p. 85.
22 Mehmet Genç, 'L'Economie ottomane et la guerre au XVIIIe siècle', *Turcica* 27 (1995), 177–96.
23 Genç, 'Ottoman Industry', p. 69.

longer. Perhaps this collapse was comparable to the war-induced crises that France for instance suffered in the years around 1700, and it was the Ottomans' misfortune to be confronted at this particularly dangerous moment with the empire of Catherine II.[24] After all, even if Russian resources were mobilised at but a minimal level, Russia possessed far greater supplies of wood, metals and other raw materials than were available in the Balkans or the Middle East.

Supplies apart, a number of studies have focused on military manpower. Already in the second half of the sixteenth century, the importance of cavalry armed only with swords and lances was on the wane, and this process continued during the 1600s. In order to recruit the large armies that the major empires fielded during their assorted wars, the sultans, like many European rulers, came to rely on musket-wielding mercenaries hired for a single campaign only.[25] By contrast, the holders of tax assignments (*sipahi*), who owed cavalry service and were counted as members of a privileged corps of men serving the sultan (*askeri*) were gradually phased out. Musketeers hired on a short-term basis throughout the seventeenth century mutinied with some frequency, usually because of their rivalries with the established military corps. After all, the latter possessed a job security unattainable to the mercenaries, who did however own the weapons with which they might force the provincial governors who had originally recruited them to lead them in their rebellions. In their turn the pashas themselves, as contenders for the grand vizierate, might need little prodding.

Particularly during the early seventeenth century, these mercenary rebellions were extremely destructive to Anatolian taxpayers in town and country. Entire regions were laid waste for many years, as the inhabitants fled to walled towns or barricaded themselves in rural fortresses. From the central government's viewpoint, this situation meant that no taxes could be collected; yet official attempts to repopulate abandoned villages met with mixed success at best. The desertion of the more arid regions of central Anatolia, especially of the plains and valleys, dates from this period and was only reversed from the late nineteenth century onwards; this catastrophe must be viewed as an indirect consequence of the transition to mercenary warfare.[26]

24 Niels Steensgaard, 'The Seventeenth-Century Crisis', in *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Geoffrey Parker and Lesley Smith (London, 1978), pp. 26–56.
25 Halil Inalcik, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980), 283–337.
26 Wolf Dieter Hütteroth, *Ländliche Siedlungen im südlichen Inneranatolien in den letzten vierhundert Jahren* (Göttingen, 1968), p. 201.