

OTTOMAN'S EXISTENCE IN AFRICA IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SUEZ CANAL

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Abstract

The 19th century is an important period in terms of Africa becoming the great powers' focal point. Great powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, and the Ottoman Empire wanted to have influence in the continent and had conflicts between them. The Suez Canal was very effective in intensifying this conflict. As a matter of fact, the Suez Canal, which connects Africa to the Mediterranean, is of great geopolitical importance. In this direction, with the opening of the Suez Canal on the agenda as a project, a geopolitical conflict occurred between the great powers. The study analyzes how the Suez Canal affected the Ottoman Empire's presence in Africa in the 19th century. The first part of the study examines the importance of the African continent in the 19th century and the Ottoman interaction with Africa. The second part evaluates the process leading to the opening of the Suez Canal. The third and last part analyzes how the opening of the Suez Canal affected the great powers with an evaluation on the Ottoman axis. As a result, it found that the opening of the canal accelerated the decline and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire because of increasing the interest of other great powers and the desire to establish influence in the region.

Keywords: Africa, Ottoman Empire, Suez Canal, Mediterranean, Geopolitics

OSMANLI'NIN 19. YÜZYILDA AFRIKA'DA VARLIĞI VE SÜVEYŞ KANALI'NIN ÖNEMİ

Özet

19. yüzyıl Afrika'nın büyük güçlerin odak noktası haline gelmesi açısından önemli bir dönemdir. Birleşik Krallık, Fransa, Portekiz ve Osmanlı gibi büyük güçler kıtada söz sahibi olmak istemiş ve aralarında çekişme yaşamışlardır. Bu çekişmenin yoğunlaşmasında Süveyş Kanalı oldukça etkili olmuştur. Nitekim, Afrika'yı Akdeniz'e bağlayan Süveyş kanalı jeopolitik açıdan büyük önem arz etmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, Süveyş kanalının açılmasının proje olarak gündeme gelmesiyle birlikte büyük güçler arasında jeopolitik bir çatışma meydana gelmiştir. Çalışma Süveyş Kanalı'nın 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Afrika'daki varlığını ne yönde etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın ilk kısmı 19. yüzyılda Afrika kıtasının önemi ve Osmanlı'nın Afrika ile olan etkileşimini incelemektedir. İkinci kısım Süveyş Kanalı'nın açılmasına giden sürecin değerlendirmesini yapmaktadır. Üçüncü ve son kısım ise Osmanlı ekseninde bir değerlendirme ile Süveyş Kanalı'nın açılmasının büyük güçleri ne yönde etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Sonuç olarak, çalışma kanalın açılmasının diğer büyük güçlerin ilgisini arttırması ve bölgede nüfuz kurma isteğinin bir sonucu olarak Osmanlı'nın gerileme ve dağılma sürecini hızlandırdığı bulgusuna ulaşmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Afrika, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Süveyş Kanalı, Akdeniz, Jeopolitik

1. INTRODUCTION

The African continent has attracted the attention of other continents and states throughout history and has been a region worth exploring. With the discovery of the continent, the geopolitics of the world changed, and the powerful Northern-Western states reached new raw materials, trade routes and a continent that they could colonize, that is, enrich their wealth. Looking at the studies on the African continent (e.g., Ade Ajayi, 1989), it would not be wrong to conclude that it was in the 19th century that the continent began to be the focus of attention of foreign states that were not in the continent. It is known that since this century, especially European states have shown attention in the African continent and have experienced various geopolitical conflicts of interest with other states, such as the Ottoman Empire (Çınar, 2008).

The opening of the Suez Canal, which is the focal point of this study, is of great importance in increasing geopolitical clashes of interest on the continent. The Suez Canal, even as a project, caused an increase in the pertinence of European states that were far from the continent and created a pressure on the Ottoman state to protect and maintain the Ottoman lands, especially in North Africa, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. This study proceeds by focusing on the question of how the Suez Canal affected the Ottoman Empire's presence in Africa in the 19th century. In this context, first, the place and importance of the African continent in the world in the 19th century was mentioned, and then the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the African continent were examined century in question. After examining the Ottoman-African relations, the opening of the Suez Canal was investigated in the axis of historical development, and finally the study was concluded by mentioning the effect of the Suez Canal for both the Ottoman Empire and other states in general. According to the results of the study, the opening of the Suez Canal challenged the Ottoman Empire's presence in Africa in the 19th century. It accelerated the decline and the disintegration period of the Ottoman Empire that had already started at that time*, and the powers in the Suez region, leaving the Ottoman Empire and cooperating with other powerful states, were one of the important factors affecting the state's approach to the collapse process step by step. In addition to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the opening of the Suez Canal increased the interest of great states such as England and France in the region.

This study has the feature of being the first and only research in the literature in terms of the subject, starting from the place of Africa in the world in the 19th century, its relations with the Ottoman Empire and the opening of the Suez Canal, bringing together and examining the existence of the Ottoman Empire in Africa as a whole. While creating the study, a very comprehensive literature review was made, and the conceptual framework was formed by bringing together other sources in the literature.

2. 19TH CENTURY AFRICA

Africa is one of the largest continents which covers 24% of the world's land. It is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the Indian Ocean in the south, the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and the Sinai Peninsula, Red Sea, and Suez Canal in the east. With its rich underground resources and population power, it is thought to be more effective in the international arena and to affect the developments in this arena more (Özdemir, 2017). The fact that African countries have rich underground resources has made Africa a target for colonization. The region has a good source of raw materials for Europe and America, which carried out the Industrial Revolution.

Africa saw enormous upheaval in the 18th century, some were caused by famine and illness. The territorial aspirations of African kings led to certain adjustments. Alliances with European traders and missionaries came to influence how African leaders attained their objectives more and more as the century went on. Europeans still knew very little about the continent at the turn of the century. Africa has never had as intense contact with other parts of the world as it did at the end of the 19th century. In the 19th century, Africa underwent a tremendous change and transformation under the influence of the great powers of Europe. Western states, with the expeditions they sent in the 19th century, started works to learn about Central Africa, especially to find the sources of rivers such as the Nile and Congo (Bostan, n.d.). Areas connecting with the world appeared in certain regions. The Mediterranean coast, across the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic coast

* The Decline of the Ottoman Empire is the period from the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) to the Treaty of Yassi (1792) in the Ottoman history. The disintegration period of the Ottoman Empire lasted from 1792, when the Yassi Treaty was signed with the Russian Empire, until 1922, when the sultanate was abolished and the state was abolished.

were within this area (Ajayi, 1989 as cited in Akalın, 2011).

In the early part of the 19th century, the methodical colonization of Africa, which gained speed in the 1880s, was not even a possibility. European trade had been limited to primarily coastal areas. African and Arab traders managed the slave and merchandise traffic in the interior. Following the British banning of the slave trade in 1807, the British navy started coast-patrolling and arresting slave ships headed for other countries. Conflicts and rivalries in Europe started to directly impact people in Africa during the latter two decades of the 19th century. European powers split up Africa among themselves in the 1880s without the local population's permission and with little understanding of the territory they had stolen. The First World War began in 1914 as tensions in Europe reached a breaking point (BBC, n.d.).

Besides of all these, it is necessary to briefly mention about the famous notion for Africa which is “the Scramble for Africa”, also known as the Partition of Africa or Conquest of Africa. It was an episode of New Imperialism in which seven Western European nations invaded, occupied, divided, and colonized the majority of Africa between 1881 and 1914. By 1914, approximately 90% of Africa was under European administration, with only Liberia and Abyssinia remaining independent from the 10% that was under legal European rule in 1870 (Childs Daly, 2019). It is commonly agreed upon that the Berlin Conference in 1884 marked the start of European colonialism and commerce in Africa (Bratlinger, 1985). Due to intense political conflicts among the European empires in the latter quarter of the 19th century, the African continent was divided without the need for wars between European countries (Robinson et. al., 1989). Direct authority replaced “informal imperialism” which consisted of economic and military supremacy, in the latter decades of the 19th century (Shillington, 2018).

3. OTTOMAN - AFRICA RELATIONS

The first state established by the Turks in Africa was the Tolunogullari^{**}, which ruled Egypt. Ahmet bin Tolun declared his independence in Egypt and captured the region up to Tarsus, including Damascus. Tolunogullari ruled Egypt and Damascus until 902. Later, the Mamluks (mostly Turks) founded a state in Egypt. It is known that these states have established strong relations in the geography extending as far as Tunisia, including Tripoli (Özdemir, 2017). Information about the domination of the Turks in Africa before the Ottoman domination is scattered in the history books of that period. Since the 16th century, there has not been enough work on the Ottoman Empire, which has partially existed in the continent, and its dominance in this continent has unfortunately been neglected. The documents in the Ottoman archives constitute the primary sources of domestic and foreign researchers on this subject (Kavas, 2003, p. 520). The limited number of books written and published on Ottoman Africa in the second half of the 19th century, with exceptions, cannot be translated into today's written language, so they are far from being used by large audiences of readers and researchers (Kavas, 2003, p. 521).

The first contact of the Ottoman Empire with the African Continent began with the Egyptian expedition of Yavuz Sultan Selim in the first half of the 16th century (Özdemir, 2017, p. 18, 19, 70) and then the annexation of the lands of the Mamluk State. During the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, many regions, especially Tripoli, Algeria, Sudan and Tunisia, were included in the borders of the Ottoman Empire. African provinces and regions remained under the rule of certain families that the state deems appropriate under the Ottoman rule. The Ottoman domination, which was established in port cities such as North Africa, Egypt, and the Red Sea, continued to expand into new regions in the following periods. The sailors crossing the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean tried to protect the African coast from Portuguese occupation (Özbaran, 1977). Relations were also established with Muslim states in the south of the Great Sahara Desert (Orhonlu, 1969).

Ottoman hegemony was firmly established in Africa mainly in Egypt since 1517, developed in a short time compared to other provinces. The conquest of Egypt opened up all the northern coasts of Africa to the Ottomans, as well as the coasts of the Red Sea stretching from the Arabian Peninsula to Yemen, especially the west coasts. Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha made expeditions to the inner regions of Africa in the 1820s on behalf of the Ottoman Empire (Kavas, 2006). Egypt had been always felt the weight of being like a state

** Exact translation from Turkish is “sons of Tolun”.

within a state in a short time. The Ottomans named their provinces in North Africa “Warp Hearths”. In fact, this name coincides with the word Maghrib and means “Western Hearths” (Kavas, 2003, p. 516).

The Ottoman Empire’s dominance in North Africa, which is called İfrikiye and Maghrib after the conquest of Egypt in 1517, is the result of its desire to ensure the security of its regions in the Eastern Mediterranean and its political, commercial, and religious rivalries with the Christian European states in the Mediterranean. With the conquest of the Western Hearths, Ottoman domination was established in the Western Mediterranean. The rivalry and political disintegration between the small Muslim states on the North African coasts paved the way for the penetration of the Spanish and Portuguese from the west and the Ottomans from the east in the early 16th century. Thus, at the end of the Spanish-Ottoman struggle for influence in İfrikiye and Maghrib, Algeria, Tunisia and Tripoli came under Turkish domination, and the Ottomans won the struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean (Çetin, 1996). Having colonized many parts of Africa since the beginning of the 19th century, France had begun to complete its colonial empire. Having acquired many colonies in North and Central Africa, France would colonize Morocco in 1912, after capturing Central Africa and Chad between 1901 and 1913. The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, closely followed these colonization activities of France in the African continent (Yeşilmen, 2017). Over time, North and Central Africa and the Middle East regions began to gain importance as the main defense line of the Ottoman lands. The strategic interests of the Ottoman administration in the African region and the activities of Sultan II. Abdulhamid towards Islamic unity became inseparable parts of each other (Özdemir, 2017, p. 36).

The most intense period of relations between the African continent and the Ottomans come across the time when Sultan II. Abdulhamid was on the throne in the Ottoman Empire. When Sultan II. Abdulhamid came to power in 1876, the Ottoman lands visibly was stretched on the African map from Algerian-Tunisia border to Suez. The provinces here consisted of the Regency of Tunis, the Province of Tripoli, and the Province of Egypt. The relationship between these provinces and Ottoman domination gradually weakened (Özdemir, 2017, p. 20). During the reigns of Mahmud II^{***}, Sultan Abdulmejid^{****} and Sultan Abdulaziz^{*****}, Ottoman administrators tried to revive the state’s relations with the rulers of African countries, and to make the effect of the Ottoman presence felt in the circumstances where possible. However, Sultan II. Abdulhamid developed his North African policy under very different conditions than those of his predecessors. When II. Abdulhamid became the sultan, the situation and conjuncture of the state was certain. On the one hand, trouble, and negativity in domestic politics, on the other hand, intense efforts were made to resist the ambitions of the Europeans. Efforts were made to drive the British out of Egypt, to stop the French from entering the Sahara, to prevent the Italians from coveting Libya, and to maintain good relations with all of these states (Özdemir, 2017, p. 36).

The African policy implemented by the government after 1882 aimed to strengthen the Ottoman influence in the Sahara and Central Africa with tax exemptions and to entice the local people and their leaders by giving more authority to local administrations. The Ottoman policy by referencing the foreign policy understanding of II. Abdulhamid at that time namely Pan-Islamism (Özdemir, 2017, p. 70), which called the Muslim community to solidarity and loyalty to the caliphate, thought that it would be beneficial for the local people to participate in the administration, so it switched to an innovative and effective policy (Karpas, 2005).

4. OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL

The Suez Canal is one of the most important canals in the world. It connects the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. This connection can also be expressed as the union of the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean-Mediterranean-Suez-Red Sea-Indian Ocean waterway is about 4,000 miles shorter than the waterway that circumnavigates the southern coast of the African continent. The Suez Canal is 160-170 km long (Akalin, 2011, p. 192). On the canal, where an average of 40 ships can pass a day, some arrangements were made in 1948 and the daily ship transit capacity was increased to 60. Except for a short time in 1956-1957, the canal has been open to maritime traffic since its inauguration.

*** 30th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, the duration in the reign 28 July 1808 – 1 July 1839.

**** Son of Mahmud II, 31st Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, the duration in the reign 2 July 1839 – 25 June 1861.

***** Son of Sultan Mahmud II and succeeded his brother Abdulmejid in 1861. Duration of reign 25 June 1861 – 30 May 1876.

The idea of combining the Mediterranean and the Red Sea goes back to the ancient times. It is known that the Romans, Arabs, Abbasids, and Ottomans were eager for this purpose. The Ottomans focused on opening a canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean in the 16th and 18th centuries (Atmaca, 2008). During the reign of Selim II^{*****}, the idea of combining the two seas with a canal was put forward by the Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmet Pasha in 1570. This idea was brought up again by Napoleon Bonaparte during the French invasion of Egypt nearly 200 centuries later. However, as a result of the mistake made in the calculations in the feasibility studies, there was a misconception that there was a level difference between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and the opening of the canal was delayed for a while (Atmaca, 2008, p. 1).

Against Portugal's increasing military and commercial power in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, states such as Venice, the Ottoman Empire and the Mamluks began to act together in the region (Erol, 2013; Brumett, 1994). In this process, the idea of opening a canal came to the agenda of the Ottoman Chief of Staff Kılıç (Uluç) Ali Pasha (Karal, 1983/2007 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019). Kılıç Ali Pasha, with this project, thought of solving the Portuguese problem by passing the Ottoman Suez fleet through this canal. However, the flotilla's expulsion of Portugal from the Red Sea (Erol, 2014) and other issues dealing with the state led to the suspension of the project (Büyüktuğrul, 1982 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 731). Kara İbrahim Pasha, the Governor of Egypt between 1669 and 1673, also took action to connect the Nile River and the Suez Gulf with a Canal and to reach the Mediterranean Sea during his governorship. However, the notables of the region gave up this initiative because of the idea that the transfer of the Nile to the Red Sea would cause economic problems (Öztuna, 1977 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 731).

By the 18th century, Egypt and its surroundings would become the center of attention of France as a result of a project presented by the German philosopher Leibniz to the XIV. Loui. In the report he presented to the French foreign ministry, the French ambassador to Istanbul, Saint Priest, mentioned the importance of opening a canal in Suez for France to settle in Egypt and provide economic gain, and said, "*Egypt is the shortest route to India. It is possible to threaten England's dominance over the rich Indian lands from Egypt. Egypt can also be the warehouse of world trade*" (Soysal, 1964 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 731). It is also known that when the thought of opening the Suez Canal began to gain intensification in France, the III. Mustafa^{*****} had Baron de Tott^{*****} make investigations for a canal opening project in Suez. It is possible that in the formation of this thought, France aimed to prevent its political, military, and economic influence in this region (Armaoğlu, 1997). Indeed, during Napoleon Bonaparte's rule of France, the French thought of opening canals came to the fore again, and even Bonaparte had engineers conduct investigations on this issue (Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 731). However, on his way back to France as a result of the developing events, he said, "*Opening a canal is a lofty job. I am not in a position to do this job. However, the Turkish government may one day ensure its existence and greatness with the implementation of this project.*" (Karal, 1983, 2007, p. 91 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019). Le père's^{*****} claim of the difference in altitude between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean caused the work to be stopped and the issue of the canal did not come to the fore until the period of Mehmet Ali Pasha (Akalin, 2011, p. 11).

During his governorship, Mehmet Ali Pasha was forced by the French to bring the canal opening activity to the agenda. Pasha, pretending to adopt this idea in order not to offend France, had engineers make discoveries and distracted the French. The issue of the straits had an effect on Mehmet Ali Pasha's distraction policy, and the Pasha said, "*The Straits were the disaster of the Ottoman Empire. I do not want to create a straits issue in Egypt, either.*" (Güler, 2004, p. 44; Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 732). Abbas Pasha, the grandson of Mehmet Ali Pasha, was of the same mind and tried to delay the opening of the canal during his governorship (Şahin, 2016). Mustafa Reşit Pasha, one of the grand viziers of the relevant period in the Ottoman Empire, who was the other important interlocutor of the issue, did not take kindly to this project, and it is known that the developments in this matter had an impact on the termination of his duty (Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 732). The administrators after Mustafa Reşit Pasha remained silent on this issue in order not to deteriorate relations with England and France due to the political conditions of the period (Şahin, 2016, p. 165). Ottoman statesmen brought the railway project to the agenda in order to block the ideas of the canal project

***** Son of Suleiman the Magnificent, duration in the reign 7 september 1566 – 15 December 1574.

***** The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1757 to 1774

***** The descendant of a Hungarian nobleman, who had emigrated to the Ottoman Empire and then moved on to France

***** The engineer that Napoleon put in charge fort he duty.

(Şahin, 2016, p. 165).

Sa'id Pasha's period was the last point of the canal project works. Said Pasha put forward important ideas about the development of Egypt. Among these, there is also the economic development of Egypt by connecting the Mediterranean and the Red Sea with a canal. Because it is known that the idea of the canal was suggested to him by Ferdinand de Lesseps before he was the governor (Karal, 1983, 2007, p. 90 as cited in Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019). The French consul in Cairo, Ferdinand de Lesseps, took the project of opening the Suez Canal seriously, taking into account various previous studies. He received the first license for the excavation of the canal from the Egyptian governor, Mehmed Said Pasha, on 30 November 1854 (İrtem, 1999). The opening of the Suez Canal was completed in 1869, after a long adventure. Many problems arose up to that point. The calculations of Europe, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire showed changes in the opening of the canal. As a follower of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who was the most interested and privileged in the business, he also played a leading role in the completion of the work. In the solution of the problems, İsmail Pasha's governorship period was a critical turning point. First, Ismail Pasha accepted the commitments regarding the canal, and in 1866 England stopped opposing the initiative. Under the pressure of Napoleon III, the Porte accepted the works related to the canal.

East Africa has become a special region with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which has become an important lifeline in the region, connecting the east and the west, bringing the imperialist states in the West, the colonies in the East and the colonial powers of the eastern influences closer (Yüksel and Hashi, 2021). The importance of the Red Sea trade route doubled with the commencement of the Suez Canal.

5. SUEZ CANAL'S IMPACT

Suez is a strategic transition zone connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, the Asian and African continents (Bilge, 2010; Şahin, 2016), and with this characteristic, it has occupied an important place in interstate political, military, and economic relations in the historical process. As a matter of fact, it has been seen that many states, starting from the antiquity until the Ottoman Empire, had the idea of benefiting from the military and economic features of this transition region (Akalin, 2011, p. 3-5).

Before the canal, Suez was an accommodation point on the pilgrimage route from Cairo. Over time, it gained commercial and military importance and become a transit point, and trade ships coming from Asia connect to Europe, the Mediterranean coast or neighboring countries by land or sea via the Suez Port. Known as the "longest canal without hatches", the Suez Canal has geopolitical and strategic importance as it enables maritime transport between Asia and Europe without the need to circumnavigate Africa (Şimşek, 2022). The Suez Canal's inauguration in 1869, had changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean; the Mediterranean Sea turned into a warm sea between the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, the "use" of Africa became easier. When the "essential foods" of the first Industrial Revolution "born" in England in 1780 came to the fore as labor and raw materials, the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference was organized with the aim of "radical solutions" to these basic needs, while the Suez Canal brought basic foods from Africa to Europe. It provided a great convenient transportation (Şimşek, 2022). Additionally, the Suez Canal, the Turkish Straits and the Strait of Gibraltar are the three sea gates of the Mediterranean. Although the last two sea transportation routes were created by nature, the most important feature that distinguishes the Suez Canal from them is that it is a work created by humans (Akalin, 2011, p. 206).

The strategic feature of Suez, connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, showed itself with the geographical discoveries led by the Portuguese navigator Prince Henry (Karakaş-Özür, 2017). The underlying factor of this development is that, with the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese sailors, the commercial incomes of states such as the Ottomans and Venice, which traded in the Mediterranean ports, began to decline, with the strengthening of Portuguese dominance (Özlü and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 729;

***** Mohamed Sa'id Pasha, was the Wāli of Egypt and Sudan from 1854 until 1863, officially owing fealty to the Ottoman Sultan but in practice exercising virtual independence. Construction of the Suez Canal began under his tenure.

***** He was the Khedive of Egypt and conqueror of Sudan from 1863 to 1879, successor of Sa'id Pasha (Wali)

Özkan, 2018; Karakaş-Özür, 2017; Hanilçe, 2009) in the western African coasts and the Indian Ocean. As a matter of fact, this situation reduced the Ottoman's influence in the Mediterranean basin (Brumett, 1994), it also dealt a great blow to the Venetian sailors who transported spices from India to Europe (İnalçık, 2017; Bayur, 1950). In the process of discoveries, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire, which were affected by the change of trade routes, attempted to make the Suez region functional. Thus, Venice thought of making the Mediterranean work by opening a canal to Suez. In this direction, Venice administration met with both the Mamluks and the Ottomans. However, attempts to open channels were unsuccessful (Özlu and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 730; Akalın, 2011, p. 8) at that time as mentioned previously in this study.

In the Ottoman period, after the conquest of Egypt by Selim I, the idea of building a navy was formed in order to establish dominance in Suez and to break the power of the Portuguese. However, it is known that the death of Selim I interrupted this project (Orhonlu, 1996). Other attempts to increase the military and economic power of the Ottoman Empire in this region coincided with the reign of Selim II (Özlu and Tiryaki, 2019, p. 730) and Sokollu Mehmet Pasha. Sokollu Mehmet Pasha wanted to realize a canal project in this region that connects regions such as the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, Arabia, Sudan, and Abyssinia. In this direction, technical studies were carried out by experts in the region (Danyal, 1951). It is even known that an edict was sent to the governor of Egypt to carry out these works (İlgürel, 2002). However, taking Cyprus to the forefront in the Ottoman's struggle to establish dominance over Venice in the Eastern Mediterranean prevented this project (Samarciç, 2004; Altınay, 2001).

Opening of the Suez Canal especially influenced Ottoman-Egyptian relations. The relations between states gained a more sensitive appearance. Before the canal was opened, the Pashas in Egypt wanted to act more independently from the Ottoman Empire. With the canal, a disparity began to appear between the Ottomans and Egypt, and that gap had been filled by foreign governments (Akalın, 2011, p. 195). Egypt's Khedive Ismail Pasha, at the opening of the Suez Canal on November 17, 1869, said that "*my country is no longer in Africa, but a part of Europe*" (Uludağ, 2021), was giving the news of a very important geopolitical change. During these 152 years, the channel affected many things, from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the European political structure, from world trade to Egypt's own domestic policy (Uludağ, 2021).

Due to the location of the canal, its dominance area is wide. In addition to its arithmetic superiority, which is equidistant from almost all important regions, it is also the main route of oil transportation routes. On the other hand, rather than oil, the Suez Canal is a transportation route through which 13% of the world's maritime transportation goods pass (Gürel, 1979 as cited in Atmaca, 2008, p. 17). Another importance of the canal is that it plays a crucial role in the transportation of Middle Eastern oil to western Europe. With the increase in the need for Middle Eastern oil, the belief and curiosity in the region has increased in parallel. Beyond offering easy and low-cost travel opportunities to the British colonies, the canal has created a structure that affects international trade and offers strategic opportunities to countries. Beyond the Franco-British rivalry, the canal has also become a national symbol of the rising Arab Nationalism in the region after the First World War (Atmaca, 2008, p. 17).

6. CONCLUSION

In the 19th century, a new situation emerged for both the Ottoman Empire and the European States with the commencement of the Suez Canal. Compared to the European States, which developed politically, economically, and militarily, the Ottoman Empire declined over time and its soil in the Africa became the clear target of powerful and colonial states. In the 19th century, the colonial European States, which tried to separate the minorities within the empire from the Ottoman Empire by revolting, occupied the remaining strategic lands such as Algeria-Tunisia-Tripolitania one by one.

The most intense period of attacks against Africa was the end of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century. That period coincides with the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who ruled the Ottoman Empire for a long time. Abdulhamid II, who acted against the great internal turmoil, economic and military crises, as well as intense attacks from outside, adopted a unique management style in foreign policy, namely Pan-Islamism. The Sultan saw the survival of the state in the unification of Muslims and in Islamic practice (Özdemir, 2017, p. 70). Although the Ottoman Empire tried to regain the power it lost in Africa with the

Pan-Islamism policy implemented in response to the 19th century colonial policies in Africa, it could not provide great benefits to the state. The Islamic Union and the caliphate policy, which was effectively and actively applied during the reign of Abdulhamid II, aroused interest in Africa as well as all over the world. Muslims in the region, heeded the call of Abdulhamid II as the Caliph, and declared that they were ready to provide material and moral assistance in every sense. It has been understood that this policy followed by the Sultan was met by creating excitement in the Islamic world and seriously disturbed the expansionist European states (Özdemir, 2017, p. 71).

As expressed in the study, the opening of the Suez Canal accelerated the process leading to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The opening of a waterway connecting many points in the region attracted the attention of colonial states in this direction and pushed the Ottoman Empire, which had an effective dominance in Africa until the opening of the Canal, to seek new policies. However, policy changes did not prevent the Ottoman Empire from losing land in the region and all the governorships in Africa separating from their own body and becoming independent until the First World War. This study examined the existence of the Ottoman Empire in Africa in the 19th century through the opening of the Suez Canal. It has been revealed that there is a serious missing point related to this issue in the literature, and this study is of great importance in terms of creating a reference point for the studies to be made about the decline and collapse of the Ottoman Empire

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