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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

THE OPINIONS AND ASSESSMENTS OF THE ENGLISH DIPLOMAT DAVID URQUHART REGARDING THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL*

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Abstract

This study is based on the assessments of the Suez Canal in the work of British politician and diplomat David Urquhart titled "Progress of Russia in the West, North, and South, by Opening the Sources of Opinion and Appropriating the Channels of Wealth and Power" published in London in 1853. The study aims to evaluate the historical background of the canal, the diplomacy followed by the great states such as England, France and Russia against the canal project, and the developments which occurred in the region, especially in the context of the Ottoman State and Egypt.

Keywords: 19th century, David Urquhart, Suez, The Suez Canal, Great Powers.

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There is no study that would require the approval of the Ethical Committee in this article.

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İNGİLİZ DİPLOMAT DAVID URQUHART'IN SÜVEYŞ KANALI'NIN AÇILMASINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞ VE DEĞERLENDİRMELERİ

Öz

Bu çalışma, İngiliz siyasetçi ve diplomat olan David Urquhart'ın 1853 yılında Londra'da yayımlanan "Progress of Russia in the West, North, and South, by Opening the Sources of Opinion and Appropriating the Channels of Wealth and Power" eserindeki Süveyş kanalına dair verdiği bilgilere ve değerlendirmelere dayanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, kanalın tarihsel geçmişi, kanal açılmadan önce bölgenin sahip olduğu jeo-stratejik öneme bağlı olarak İngiltere, Fransa ve Rusya gibi büyük devletlerin kanal projesine karşı izledikleri diplomasi ve yine Osmanlı Devleti ve Mısır özelinde bölgede yaşanan gelişmeleri ele alarak değerlendirmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 19. yüzyıl, David Urquhart, Süveyş, Süveyş kanalı, Büyük Güçler.

Introduction

So as either to shorten or ease transportation, the idea of opening canals has been one of the greatest achievements of civilization. Whereas the straits connect the seas and the oceans with one another naturally, canals achieve this through the developments in the field of engineering. The project of connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, in other words, the Indian Ocean dates back to the very ancient times. Since the Suez canal is situated in a strategic position, connecting the Asian and the African continents and the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, several attempts have been made to build a canal in the region throughout history.¹ For instance, a canal linking the Mediterranean to the Red Sea through the Isthmus of Suez has, since time immemorial, has been one of the most important schemes about which some statesmen had been dreaming. In this sense, during the time of Pharaoh Ptolemy II (285–246 B.C.), a canal connecting the Gulf of Suez to the River Nile was constructed but it fell into disuse. It was later restored by the Romans, in 98 A.D., but shortly thereafter, was neglected again. It was reopened for a limited period during the reign of Caliph Omar in 641. This canal, however, was intended primarily for regional use, especially for the benefit of the Egyptian ruler and was also used sparingly as a transit point between the seas. The potential of a waterway through the Isthmus of Suez had remained inactive for more than a thousand years, because of the limitations of sea transport, which meant that commerce and travel were highly dangerous over long distances. However, with some of the advances and improvements in maritime technology from the twelfth century onward, having allowed the Republics of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice to grow prosperity, the matter of a maritime route to the East started to be discussed. However, the hatred and some prejudices between the European and the Islamic world which emerged as a result of the expansion of Islam into Europe and the Christian “Crusades” to the Holy places put a barrier against it.² Therefore, It was not until the steamship was developed as a means of transport that the passage up the Red Sea became more practicable and a short and convenient route could be opened known as the Suez Canal.³

- 1 Özlem Şahin, “Ferdinand De Lesseps’in Süveyş Kanalı Projesi (1854-1856)”, *Yeni Türkiye*, sayı 86, 2016, p.164; M. Bürkan Serbest, “Süveyş Kanalı'nın Ulusallaştırılması Sorunu ve Süveyş Bunalımı”, *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 6/4, 2017, p. 690; Durmuş Akalın, *Süveyş Kanalı (Açılışı ve Osmanlı Devletine Etkisi) 1854-1882*, Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, (Unpublished PH.d), Denizli 2011.
- 2 Jean Allain, *Imperial Attitude toward the Suez Canal. International Law in the Middle East: Closer to Power than Justice*, Ashgate Publishing, UK 2004, p. 48; Bedford Pim, “Remarks on the Isthmus of Suez, with Special Reference to the Proposed Canal”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 3(4), (1858-1859), p. 181
- 3 Pierre Crabités, *The Spoliation of Suez. George Routledge and his sons*, London 1940, p. xxvii.

It is thought that the first effort to build a modern canal on the Isthmus of Suez was made by Napoleon Bonaparte during his campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798-1801). His main purpose was to create some trade problems for the English, forcing them either to pay the French to use the canal or to go on using the slower route of sending goods overland or around the Cape of Good Hope. In this regard, the Suez project began in 1799. However, its feasibility raised some doubts owing to an incorrect calculation by cartographers and engineers that the Red Sea was 30 feet higher than the Mediterranean. Upon the advice that the construction of the canal would cause the flooding of the Nile Delta, he had to abandon the project.⁴ It was not until 1847 that this error was amended, when some members of the French intellectual movement Saint-Simoniens reviewed the Suez project and prepared a new report.⁵ Especially, Count Henri de Saint Simon, the founder of the St. Simoniens, was well known for the renewal of the world and thus he was showing great interest in such huge and great projects for the development of the world.⁶ In order to create a direct link between the two seas raised some questions, the thought of digging a canal would not come to the fore again until it was proposed by Ferdinand de Lesseps.⁷

In more than 150 years since the Suez Canal was opened, it has been a site of colonial and postcolonial struggle. However, when the literature concerning the subject taken into consideration, it is possible to say that the academic studies carried out concerning the Suez canal have not been sufficient enough. This study is based on the opinions and assessments of David Urquhart regarding the Suez Canal in his work titled as "The Progress of Russia in the west, north, and south" (Rusya'nın Güney, Kuzey ve Batı yönünde İlerlemesi) published in 1853 in England. The purpose of the study is to deal with and assess his critical ideas concerning the Suez Canal and thus throw a light on Turkish history and make some contributions to the field of literature. Before starting to discuss the subject, it will be much better to give some brief information about David Urquhart, the English diplomat in order to understand his influence on foreign affairs and his opinions on Turkey, which makes him outstanding, for only when discussing the Ottoman Empire did he write from his first-hand experience and study, but it is not possible to say the same of his works on other subjects.⁸

4 John Marlowe, *The Making of Suez Canal*, London Cresset Press, London 1964, p.35.

5 Honae Cuffe, "The Suez Canal: Its History and Significance", *Semaphore*, 4, 2021, p. 1

6 John C. B. Richmond, *Egypt 1798-1952*. Methuan & Co., London 1977, p. 91.

7 Allain, *ibid*, p.48.

8 Senior, Hereward, *The Activities of David Urquhart in British Diplomacy and Politics, 1830-1841*, Master of Arts (Unpublished), Department of History and Classical Studies, McGill University, 1951. p. 178.

1. David Urquhart

David Urquhart was born at Braelangwell, Cromarty, in 1805 as the second son of David Urquhart of Braelangwell. In 1817, he was taken to the continent, in which he had his early education. After a year at a French military school, he studied at Geneva, and then travelled in Spain with his tutor. Due to his health problems, he could not continue his studies there. Jeremy Bentham encouraged him to travel in the east. In the beginning of 1827, he sailed from Marseilles with Lord Dundonald to participate in the Greek war of independence. In November 1828, when he left the Greek service, the war was nearly over. In 1831, he sailed again to Constantinople, this time to start his post on the mission in order to deal with the disputed border between Greece and Ottomans.. Gradually, while negotiating with the Ottoman officials, Urquhart developed a great interest in Ottoman civilization and culture. He also developed an awareness of Turkey's strategic position as a potential barrier against rising and aggressive Russian colonial expectations in the Black Sea, the Crimea and the Caucasus.⁹

In November 1831 he came to Turkey with the ambassador Sir Stratford Canning and he returned with him in September 1832. In 1833, he was despatched on a secret mission to collect information regarding the advantages for British trade in eastern countries. After he arrived Constantinople (İstanbul) early in 1834, he succeeded in getting the implicit confidence of the Turkish government, at that time bothered by the aggressions of Mehmet Ali, the viceroy of Egypt. The Turkish officials relied on Urquhart so much that they immediately informed him of all communications made to them by the Russian ambassador. Lord Palmerston, however, was alarmed at Urquhart's intimate relationship with the Sublime Porte, and wrote to Lord Ponsonby to remove him from İstanbul as he posed a threat to the peace of Europe. On his return, Urquhart found that Melbourne's ministry had been succeeded by that of the Duke of Wellington. Therefore, he was unable to persuade the duke to follow an active policy against Russia. Urquhart was appointed as a secretary of embassy at İstanbul and in 1836 he came to İstanbul as secretary of embassy. During his career, it is possible to say that Urquhart acknowledged that Ottoman State would play an active and important role in British trade in future. To him, if Britain would not give a hand to Ottoman Sultan, Russia would replace her. As a consequence, Britain would also lose the advantages of her future commercial interests. And also pointed out that if Russia gained dominance in the region, it would put the British trade into risk and in order to prevent this, Britain should pursue a policy to decrease Russia's influence in the region.¹⁰

9 J. Milojković-Djurić, "David Urquhart's Perceptions of the Eastern Question". *Balkanica*, 45, 2014, p. 205; Arif Uğur Gülsaran, *The Role of David Urquhart within the Framework of the Ottoman-British Relations During the 19th century*, Master of Arts, Unpublished PH.d, Yeditepe University Department of History, İstanbul 2020, p.5.

10 George H. Bolsover, "David Urquhart and the Eastern Question 1833-1837: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy", *The Journal of Modern History*, 8(4), 1936, p.445; Margaret Lamb, "Writing up the Eastern Question in 1835-1836.", *The International History Review*, 15 (2),

Due to his health problems, in 1864 he had to leave England for the continent, where he lived partly at Montreux, and partly in a house on a spur of Mont Blanc. In 1876 his health broke down completely and he died at Naples on 16 May 1877, and was buried at Montreux in Switzerland.¹¹

2. The Suez Canal and its History

First, Urquhart provides some information related to the Suez Canal and its history. In this sense, he states that it can be traced back to the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies and the Caliphs. However, he adds that the function of the canal in the ancient times was quite different when compared with its function now, for none of them claimed to achieve power all over the world through mechanical enterprise or commercial ambitions as England did. For instance, neither Pharaohs supplied China with woolens nor the Ptolemies supplied India with cottons.¹² To Urquhart, since its history traces back to the ancient times,¹³ the Suez Canal is mentioned in the works of ancient authors, such as Herodotus, Pliny, Diodorus, Siculus, and so on. During the Roman period in Egypt, it was restored by Roman emperor Adrian. Yet, due to the shifting sands, it was closed up. When the Arabs established their domination in Egypt, in other words on the Nile, the conquerer Amru completed the work and for 120 years the canal had been open, but it took place amidst the hostility between Abbaside and Omniade Caliphates.¹⁴

1993, pp. 239-268. Moreover, referring to Nash Kennedy asserts that Urquhart's "romantic Orientalism" meant that he wished to see Turkey change only in accordance with its ancient principles," yet at the same time he was instrumental in arguing for her opening up in the name of international free trade see. Valerie Kennedy, "Romantic Orientalists: Urquhart and Kinglake on The Ottoman Empire", *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, Vol. 49, No. 1, 2022, p.4. The short period 1831-37 was the most influential in Urquhart's career. It was during this time that he became one of the most prominent 'advocates of the advantage to Britain of a free and independent Turkey. This also coincided with a sudden manifestation of anti-Russian feeling, which he was partially responsible for fanning. Between 1831-32, Urquhart acted as 'confidential agent' in Istanbul of Stratford Canning, the British ambassador extraordinary. During the following year he worked on a memorandum on Anglo-Turkish commerce in which he argued knowledgeably and persuasively for the establishment of free trade between the two countries so as to, among other things, reduce Britain's trade imbalance with Russia. See. Geoffrey Nash, *David Urquhart, From Empire to Orient: Travelers to the Middle East (1830-1926)*, I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., London and New York, 2016, p.44.

11 Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900/Urquhart, David; Robinson, 1970, p.1; Senior, 1850, p. 1-2

12 David Urquhart, *The Progress of Russia in the west, north, and south*. London: Trübner & Co., 1853, p. 420

13 In order to connect Mediterranean to the Red Sea several efforts and attempts had been made since the ancient times. Therefore, some of the emperors aimed to open some small canals. However, none of these efforts yielded good results. Moreover, the first efforts to open a canal did not aim to open a canal between Port Said and Suez, but connect the Nile to the Crocodile river see. Süleyman Kani İrtem, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Mısır, Yemen, Hicaz Meselesi*, haz. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, Temel Yayınları, İstanbul 1999, p.3 ; Kaptan Süreyya Gürsu, "Dünyanın En Mühim Geçiti Süveyş Kanalı", *Deniz*, VI/ 64, 1960, p. 20

14 Urquhart, *ibid*, s. 421.

As has been pointed out by Urquhart, the idea of building a canal dates back to very ancient times and the first attempts to construct a canal were made by the Pharaohs and it is known that the oldest canal was created during the period of Pharaohs extending from the Nile to the Suez through the valley of Tumulat. The canal, created during the reign of Sesostris, was extending from the Nile to the Bitter lake and to the Suez. The first canals were constructed only for the purpose of irrigation, but later, they were used for transportation as well.¹⁵ In addition, in the works of Herodotus and Diodorus during the reign of Necho a canal project started from the Red Sea to the Nile and through the Nile towards Pelusiac passing through the valley of Tumulat. Strabo says that the Persian emperor, Darius Hystapsis continued this project and it was completed during the reign of Ptolemy.¹⁶ The Suez Canal, having been redug during different times in history, fell to disrepair soon after nearly 700 A.D and was totally abandoned after the trade routes around Africa were discovered by the Europeans.¹⁷

From the accounts of Urquhart, it is understood that when compared with its function in the modern times resulting from the technological and mechanical advances in the world, the Suez Canal had a different function. For instance, it is stated that it would seem that when Egypt (780 B.C.) had gained a maritime supremacy, and its commerce had begun to extend to Arabia and India, the project naturally began to be discussed in order to create an easy access to the Nile through a canal connecting that river with the Red Sea. According to Strabo, Pliny, and Aristoteles, the attempt to cut a canal to the Red Sea was first made by Sesostris about the time of the Trojan war. This canal, however, appears to have been only planned for irrigation.¹⁸

Referring to the past, Urquhart gives his own opinions related to how it would be much easier to make the canal more functional as follows:

“The physical difficulties are nothing: the dangers of navigation of the Red Sea have disappeared. We have now the aid of locks and steam, we have illimitable capital and inventions. If, therefore, a canal had proved impractical in ancient times, that would be no argument now. What then are we to say of those who, despite the evidence of its former existence, pronounce its impossibility?”¹⁹

As can be seen, Urquhart indicates that even though there have been some difficulties for the construction of the canal, the recent advances in the technology render it possible to be constructed. In this context, he gives some examples of the persons who announced that the construction of the canal was impossible.

15 Akalın, *ibid*, p.3.

16 Khandakar Akhter Hossain, “Suez Canal: The Modern Maritime Wonder”, *Symbiosis*, 2018, p.2

17 Olukoya Ogen, “The Economic Lifeline of British Global Empire: A Reconsideration of the Historical Dynamics of the Suez Canal, 1869-1956. *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1(5), 2008, p.525.

18 Pim, *ibid*, p.181.

19 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.420.

To him, Mr. Galloway was the first to announce its impossibility, but he thought that it would prove to be financial. The other person is Mr. Stephenson, who argues that it is very difficult to create such a canal for the reason of the required source and also its cost at 8.000.0000 pounds. Yet, Urquhart asserts that these two persons were railwaymen and also they were under the influence of the English consul at Alexandria. As can be seen from the accounts of Urquhart, the reports of the two persons aforementioned above are not objective, but political rather than based on the scientific truth. Moreover, it is argued that during the period of Arabs in the region, the Egyptians convinced the commander of the Caliph, Amru that the canal would cause a great number of difficulties to overcome due to the drain of provisions. Urquhart also attaches great importance to the facilities of the Suez Canal it would present when compared with the times of Necho, for there was no steam in those times and it was not a domestic matter as it is for England today.²⁰

Then he proceeds to provide some information as to the competition between the two lines in the region. He says that whereas the first one from the Suez to the Nile river is at the ancient city of Bubastis, the second one is the direct one extending from the Suez to the Mediterranean, but it is not important to talk about their relative characteristics because the most expensive and difficult one would be more profitable and practical. In addition, he argues that during ancient times, the first line to the Bubastis was mostly preferred on the ground that they did not have the means and technology to shorten labour and they did not need a passage for very big ships which now navigate in the Indian Ocean. However, the ancient canal was deep enough that allowed for the line of battle ships to float. For instance, during the reign of Arabs in Egypt, the Canal of Omar was completed and ships floated through it carrying grain to Mecca.²¹

Urquhart also focuses on the considerations of the English engineer, captain Vetch, who made some scientific research regarding the lines and he decided that the best one would seem to be the direct one from the Suez to the Mediterranean pointing out the fact that the greater specific gravity of the waters of the Red Sea, discharging into the mouth of Bubastis would remove the deposit carried by the current of the Mediterranean eastward. Moreover, Mr. Vetch estimates that the works at both entrances cost slightly over two million sterlings and he thinks that the money needed for this work is sufficient enough to carry out such an enterprise.²² It is seen that despite some ungrounded opinions of some persons mentioned above, the English carry out some scientific research in the region regarding the construction of the Suez canal using the recent technology, for it would provide great benefits for the political and economic interests of England.

20 *Ibid*, p.421.

21 *Ibid*, p.422.

22 *Ibid*, p. 423.

3. The Suez Canal and The Great Powers

When the construction of the canal began to be discussed, several countries started to conduct surveys. In this regard, as has been aforementioned by Urquhart here, a great number of persons were despatched to the region in order to survey.²³ For instance, the list of the countries conducting surveys and preparing reports as to the construction of the canal are as follows: England, Austria, Belgium, Brasil, Spain, America, France, Greece, Holland, Italy, Prussia, Russia, Sweden and Denmark.²⁴ The number of countries showing interest in the canal indicates that European countries are aware of the economic and political benefits which the canal would present.

First of all, in relation to the Suez Canal, Urquhart gives his accounts about France. It is said that when Napoleon I came to the desert for the search of some traces of the ancient work and when he discovered it, he ordered a team to carry out a survey about the feasibility of building of a canal in the region. When the report was brought to him, he was told that it would be feasible and easy to reconstruct a canal there. Upon this, he said *"Well, it is a great undertaking, publish a report, and force the Turkish government to find in its execution, profit and glory."* Then he mentions the report published by France. In this report, it is said that the total distance from Suez to Tyneh on the Mediterranean is 180.852 meters or less than 90 miles and it is estimated that the cost would be 30.000.000 francs or 1.250,000 sterlings. Moreover, with the construction of the canal, some hundred millions of acres of the irrigable land would be recovered as well.²⁵

However, Urquhart argues that even though he did not have any chance to read the surveys conducted by Mr. Linan, they were considered to be more favorable and cost less than the ones made by the French scientific committee. He further adds that the French made wrong calculations about level of the Red Sea saying that it is 30 feet²⁶ higher in level than the Mediterranean.²⁷ However, as late as the commencement of this century, nearly nobody dared call this theory in question, but it is worth noting that Laplace and Fourier agreed on the fact that a difference between the two seas was impossible. Moreover, it is now considered as an axiom that no matter how narrow the separation between the two seas is, both of them belong essentially to that vast expanse of ocean. Therefore, they are subject to the same leveling law.²⁸ At a lecture in Paris in April 1870 about the origin and progress of the project, Lesseps also conceded that the disadvantages that existed 50 years ago would be easily resolved by means of steam, electric

23 For more detailed information regarding the construction activities and the surveys conducted see. Akalın, *ibid*, pp.154-162.

24 Akalın, *ibid*, p. 232.

25 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.421.

26 1 foot is 30,48 cm.

27 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.422

28 Pim, *ibid*, p. 184.

telegraph, and the great advances in the science rendered it possible to construct a canal, which once seemed impossible due to the differences in the levels of both seas.²⁹

As has been pointed out by Urquhart, the consideration to connect the Mediterranean and the Red Sea emerged during the expedition of Napoleon I in Egypt in 1798 and some of the French engineers made some surveys about it.³⁰ In accordance with these surveys, it was understood that the Suez region is not appropriate for the entrance of ships due to the Stellar, Northeast and Northwest winds. As a result of this unpleasant condition, ships had to go to the African or Arabian coasts, which led to some hardships for them.³¹ In 1846, another project was developed about the construction of a canal, but it did not yield a positive result.³² The main drive of France for the canal project stemmed from the fact that she was considering that the one who gains control over Egypt can also establish political and economic domination in India.³³ It was only when Said Pasha became a viceroy in Egypt, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the close friend of him, brought it to the fore in 1854.³⁴

The close relations of Mehmed Ali Pasha with France and the political ambition of France to gain influence in the region are believed to lead to France's having taken an active role in the canal project. In fact, Said Pasha the fourth son of Mehmed Ali, was well-educated and he had some great ideas like his father in order to make contributions to the development of Egypt. He was advised to construct a canal by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the French consul in Cairo before Said Pasha became a viceroy. When he became viceroy in Egypt, in November 1854, Lesseps presented a memorial on the subject to Said Pasha.³⁵ When he was talking to Said Pasha about the canal project, first he mentioned the importance of the corporate finance, with which he was not familiar in order to increase his economic power, which meant the financial institutions which could bring the savings together.³⁶ It can be said that in the canal scheme Said Pasha saw a means of making his country more powerful and in time capable of breaking Ottoman overlordship. Therefore, waning British power at the Porte after 1856 facilitated his task.³⁷

29 Ferdinand de Lesseps, *The History of the Suez Canal*, (trans. S. H. Drummond Wolff), W. Blackwood and Sons, Edinburg 1875. p.5.

30 Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi (1856-1861) Islahat Fermanı Devri VII*, TTK, Ankara 1995, p.9.

31 Şahin, *ibid*, p.165.

32 Serbest, *ibid*, p.697.

33 Şimasi Altundağ, *Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa İsyanı ve Mısır Meselesi*, TTK, Ankara 1988, p.22-23.

34 Serbest, *ibid*, p.697.

35 For more information about Said Pasha see. Şinasi Altundağ, "Said Paşa", İA X, MEB, İstanbul, 1967, pp. 86--89.

36 Kuntay Gücüm, Sömürgecilikten Emperyalizme Açılan Suyolu Bir 'Çılgın Proje': Süveyş Kanalı, *Bilim ve Gelecek Dergisi*, sayı 99, 2012, p.63; Ferdinand de Lesseps, *Lettres, (Seance de 10 Avril 1870) Histoire Du Canal Du Suez Par*, Libraires Editeurs, Paris 1870, p.10; Ferdinand de Lesseps, *Origines Du Canal De Suez*. Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1890, p.4.

37 Cavid Oral, *Akdeniz Meselesi I*, Bugün Matbaası, Adana 1943, p.192; K. Bell, "British Policy

As a consequence, Said Pasha the viceroy of Egypt, granted a firman of concession to him, subject of course to the approval of the Ottoman Sultan (Pim, 1858-1859, p.187). In other words, Lesseps succeeded in convincing him to accept the project prepared by Negrelli and he was allowed to found a company named as "Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez company". In 1858, the company's capitals reached at 200 million francs, which was made up of 400,000 shares of 500 francs each. The viceroy purchased 176,602 shares, or 44 percent of the total. In the Article 5 of the concession, the viceroy who holds the licensing authority, had a right to 15 percent of total disposable income. However, the arrangements that combined the interests of the viceroy to those of the company soon disappeared. Thus, in November 1875, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli bought the Egyptian shares for 4 million pounds, and in 1880, the right to 15 percent of the income was yielded to the Crédit Foncier de France for 22 million francs.³⁸ In fact, the purchase of the Egyptian shares not only caused Britain, which initially showed great opposition to the canal project to gain economic power, but also enabled her to have a political and strategic influence in the region. For instance, Britain had 44% of the Canal stock, which accounts for more than 80% of the traffic.³⁹ In fact, there had been no change in policy and no systematic assertion of British influence. British policy in the east was no different in 1875 from what it had been for nearly fifty years such as supporting the Turkish empire and prevent any other power from gaining power and influence in Turkish dominions. In other words, the purchase of the canal shares by Britain enabled her to achieve the latter one.⁴⁰

As has been aforementioned above, whereas the Suez canal project carried out under the leadership of France through the support of Said Pasha was not favoured by England in the initial stages, for it would pose a great threat to the route that lead to India, France displayed a consistent and a willing attitude towards the realisation of the project.⁴¹ However, as the time passed

towards the Construction of the Suez Canal (1859-65)", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. XV . 5th Ser.,1965, s. 121 ; Ali Tanoğlu, "Mısır ve Süveyş Kanalı", İstanbul Üniversitesi Coğrafyaya Enstitüsü Dergisi , II/3-4, İstanbul, 1952-1953, s.35.; Altundağ , "Said Paşa", s. 88.

38 Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East Penguin*, New York 1991, p. 87; Caroline Piquet "The Suez Company's Concession in Egypt, 1854-1956: Modern Infrastructure and Local Economic Development.", *Enterprise & Society*, 5(1), 2004, p. 112; Charlotte Peevers, *The Politics of Justifying Force: the Suez Crisis, the Iraq War, and International Law*, Oxford, Sydney 2013, p. 70. Peevers also states that occurring at precisely the same time as the 'Scramble for Africa', the Canal's early operation arguably had a profound effect on the colonization of Africa. As with colonization, so with the Suez Crisis Egypt became the 'driveshaft' in a vast geopolitical machine see. Peever, *ibid*, p.70-71.

39 Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, Columbia University Press, New York 1982, p. 51.

40 Geoffrey Hicks, "Disraeli, Derby and the Suez Canal, 1875:Some Myths Reassessed", *History*, 97(326), 2012, p. 202.

41 Fatma Uygur, "Süveyş Kanalı Projesinde İstanbul'da Cereyan Eden Diplomatik Mücadeleler", *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*. 22(3), 2018, p.701

by, as a result of the incidents experienced, Britain had to show interest in it. In addition, since England had some political and commercial expectations in the east, she feared that if the Suez canal were opened, it would ease the communication with the east and it would probably open the way for the other countries to use this waterway endangering her existence in the region.⁴² Indeed, throughout the 19th century Britain had focused on the Eastern Mediterranean, in which there were a number of strategic and commercial British interests. In the post-Napoleonic period, it is seen that there was a great deal of European interest and investment in Egypt, nominally part of the Ottoman empire, but ruled by semi-autonomous pashas. The role of Britain expanded after a trade treaty was signed in 1841. In the second half of the 19th century, as the Ottoman empire dealt with some serious internal pressures and Egypt politically and industrially acted independently, European interests in Egypt grew more. The French, under Ferdinand de Lesseps, constructed the Suez Canal, completed it in 1869, while British finance and workers made a significant contribution to the development of Egyptian infrastructure. Increasingly, British nationals were employed in Egyptian service. At the same time, British imperial ambitions were more and more centered upon India.⁴³

Despite the objections of England to the construction of the canal claiming that it would endanger her interests in India, Urquhart places a greater emphasis on the construction and opening of the Suez canal pointing out that independently of India and its 150 millions of inhabitants, the canal would not only enable shortening the trade of England by six weeks, which covers roughly 420 million souls but also reduce the charges on the double voyage of large ships by at least 2000 pounds. Moreover, when the population examined, there has been no rival of England, for they are all the customers of England. More importantly, the opening of this canal would offer England great benefits in order to possess a second India, which is of the equal significance for England in places such as eastern Africa, Arabia, Australia and New Zealand, Borneo, Ceylon, China, Java, Persia and so on.⁴⁴ From these accounts of Urquhart, it is understood that the opening of the Suez canal would not threaten the commercial interests of England. On the contrary, it would open a new path for her to expand her trade market and gain more economic power through the passage easing her to reach a large population. In that sense, contrary to the policy pursued by English government towards the construction of the canal, Urquhart particularly emphasizes the economic importance of the canal for her.

Urquhart presents further information regarding how the Ottoman State adopts a policy that shows indirect resistance to the projects of England in the region. In this sense, he argues that the Ottoman State has been opposed to the

42 Akalın, *ibid*, p.95.

43 Hicks, *ibid*, p.183.

44 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.423.

Cairo railway and the Euphrates expedition. However, the resistance of her can be attributed to some other reasons. Then he exemplifies the attitude of the Ottoman State to be able to understand and make a clear judgement about the indisposition of the Porte and the barriers that she set in the way of England. For instance, at the end of 1834, Colonel Chesney made great efforts to convince the Foreign office about the plan for the navigation of the Euphrates, it was told the British Embassy and upon this a demand was made for firman by the next messenger. Urquhart, who is about to leave for England, tells Ponsonby that the firman would be declined and offered him to leave a sealed note with him that could be used in such a case. As had been expected by him, it proved that their demand for firman was refused. However, his note was sent to his destination and the following day the firman came.⁴⁵ He gives more details related to the obstructions thrown in the way by the Porte saying that on his recent visit to İstanbul he was able to learn more. To him, one of the Foreign Ministers, having paid a visit to the chief dancing dervishes, the favorite of Sultan Mahmoud, sees a snuffbox, which is of excellent craftsmanship with a butterfly, the emblem of their order and in diamonds and enamel given as a present by the Russian ambassador.⁴⁶

Urquhart details the conversation between the chief of the dervishes and the Foreign Minister as follows:

*“The dervish then brought out an atlas, in which Mesopotamia, was marked to illustrate the proposed stations for the English expedition and began to expatiate on the deep and perfidious purposes of England in her pretended desire of navigating the Euphrates. On inquiry, my friend discovered that these visits of Russian ambassador, which were made by night and the presentation of these gifts had coincided with the demand for the firman. Had the firman been refused, it would have been by the snuffbox: Henceforward the principle would have been introduced in to policy of the Porte of setting its face against all schemes for communication with India through its territory”.*⁴⁷

The accounts given above related to the hindrances thrown in the way by the Ottoman Empire indicate that England seems to be disturbed by the influence of Russia over the Porte. It is not groundless, for despite the treaty signed with Mehmet Ali Pasha, II. Mahmut doubted that Mehmet Ali Pasha⁴⁸ might take a step to attack again. Therefore, he did not trust him and also the attitude of France and England displayed during the Egyptian issue not only did

45 *Ibid*, p.424.

46 *Ibid*, p.424.

47 *Ibid*, p.425.

48 In fact, after Napoleon's efforts had failed, France forced Mehmed Ali Paşa to open a canal during his reign in Egypt again. However, Mehmed Ali Paşa thought that if a canal connectin the East to the west had been opened, it might have caused the region to be a field of competition among the western powers and he did not favour the canal project see. Mehmet Mustafa Saffet, *İngiltere ve Süveyş Kanalı (1951-1854)*, İskenderiye 1903, s. 11; Zeynep Güler, *Süveyş'in Batısında Arap Milliyetçiliği: Mısır ve Nasırcılık, Yeni Hayat Kütüphanesi*, 1. Baskı, İstanbul 2004, p. 44; Fahir Armaoğlu, *Siyasi Tarih (1789-1914)*, TTK, Ankara 1997, p. 404; Cavid Oral, *Akdeniz Meselesi I*, Bugün Matbaası, Adana 1943, p.191.

make him displeased but also caused him to lose his faith in these two countries. As a consequence, he thought that the only power which he could trust against the likelihood of an attack by Mehmet Ali Pasha was Russia.⁴⁹ In addition, Urquhart held the view that although she did not possess any of great military and economic strength, Russia was strong because of the ability of her agents to corrupt and mislead the ministers of other states through bribery, flattery and intrigue. However, as Hereward puts it right, paradoxically, he repeatedly accused Russians of pursuing the sort of policy that he himself advocated for England (Hereward, 1950, p. 34).

Urquhart also points out that the route passing through the Suez is much shorter than the Cape of Good Hope by 1/3. Even though some of the English merchants were in favour of the canal project, it was not favoured by English Foreign Office, for Palmerston insisted on the fact that it would lead to “the second strait conflict” and he focused on the Euphrates project that offered a shorter route to India.⁵⁰ Accordingly, Chesney carried out some expeditions in Asiatic Turkey, Syria, Arabia, and Persia, in the years of 1829,1830,1831 and 1832 and he despatched some reports to the British government concerning the results of his observations, especially the different lines of communication between England and India.⁵¹ As is narrated by Urquhart here, Lord Ponsonby demanded a firman from the Porte so as to navigate steam ship over the Euphrate for the purpose of easing the communication between India and England. After long debates over it, it was accepted at the end of 1834.⁵²

As to the Cairo railway, another obstruction for England was caused by Mehmet Ali Pasha. After all these hindrances had been removed, the firman was granted to England. Yet, Urquhart refers to the fact that if the meeting in London had taken place a month earlier, English government would have to experience a new incidence as in the Euphrates project.⁵³ Since the Egyptian route consisted of two main sections, the first starting in Alexandria where the commodities coming from Europe were unloaded there, to be loaded onto small vessels sailing through the Mahmoudiya canal, dug in 1819, then through the Nile to Cairo, the 269 kilometres long trip took three to four days. To some

49 Altundağ, *ibid*, p.151; Khaled Fahmy, *Paşanın Adamları: Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa, Ordu ve Modern Mısır*, çev. D. Zarakolu, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2010; Fahrettin Tızlak, “İngiltere’nin Fırat Nehri’nde Vapur İşletme Girişimi Hakkında Yeni Bilgiler (1834-1836)”, *Ondokuzmayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6, 1991, pp.293-301.

50 Mübühât Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz İktisadi Münasebetleri I (1580-1838)*. Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara 1991, p. 76-77.

51 Francis Rawdon Chesney, *Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition*, Longmans Green and Co., London 1868, p.142.

52 Uğur Akbulut ve Selahattin Tozlu, *İngilizlerin Hindistan Yolunu Güvence Altına Alma Çabası: Fırat Nehrinde İlk Vapur İşletme İmtiyazı (1834)*. Selçuklu ve Osmanlı İdaresinde Orta Doğu’nun Siyasi ve İdari Vaziyeti. Altıncı Uluslararası Orta Doğu Semineri (Elazığ 11-13 Ekim 2012), p. 425-426; Uğur Akbulut, “İngilizlerin Hindistan’la Olan Haberleşmeyi Hızlandırma Çabaları”, *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları*, 13 (25-26), 2014, p.105-106.

53 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.425.

sources it would even take a 42 hour day navigation to end it at the port in Bulaq. Commodities, mail and passengers were then transferred to Suez by desert caravans, which in good weather conditions covered the 144 kilometres distance in 16 to 18 hours.⁵⁴ All these facts caused the British to think seriously about establishing a fast land link to connect the two naval central points in Alexandria and Suez through building a railroad, which would be a sound decision. Therefore, the project began in 1834 and the first stage would be a 128 kilometer, single-track railroad on the land section of the between Cairo and Suez and the distance would be covered in 6 hours, as the trains then could only run at a speed of 20 to 24 kilometers per hour.⁵⁵

Urquhart also mentions the attitude of the Ottoman State towards such projects. Firstly, it is said that the Porte is not slow to appreciate the value of steam and the advantage of opening canals that can increase commerce and present some other advantages. In this sense. He mentions the great value of the Suez canal project for the Turkish government in that the opening of the canal will bring more advantages in regard to Arabia just as it does England in regard to India in order to be able to preserve her control over Egypt. Furthermore, the matter is not of military and political importance, but it is also of religious importance, for the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire would be able to have an easy access to the Holy places.⁵⁶ As Mehmet Ali Pasha and his family gained more and more power and influence in Egypt, it posed a serious threat to the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. During his reign the foreign countries started to show great interest in Egypt and proposed several projects. Among one of the most significant ones was the Suez canal. When it was mooted, the Ottoman State did not consider that it would be possible to realise the canal project. However, as a consequence of some of the developments which occurred through the course of time, Porte adopted a much clearer policy towards it. During the reign of Mehmet Ali Pasha the general attitude of the Porte over Egypt was to strengthen the sovereignty of the Ottoman State in the region again.⁵⁷

In the beginning of the 19th century, when France began to increase her power and gain more influence in the Mediterranean and England started to establish herself on the Red Sea, the Ottoman State regarded the Red Sea as essential for her existence and authority in the region. As Urquhart puts it here, since the Ottoman Empire was close to Arabia, it was religiously prestigious for her. In other words, as the security of Egypt is closely related to the Red

54 Gary Goldfinch, *Steel in the Sand, the History of Egypt and its Railways*, Dorset Press., England 2003, p. 3.

55 Amr Nasr-El-Din, "Railroads in the Land of the Nile", *Young Scholars Conference. Economic and Business History Research Center (EBHRC)*, 2006, p.21.

56 Urquhart, *ibid*, p.426.

57 Akalın, *ibid*, p. 21; Rifat Uçarol, *Siyasi Tarih (1789-1994)*. 4. Baskı, Filiz Kitabevi, İstanbul 1995, p.168-170.

Sea, not only viceroys in Egypt but also the Ottoman State took it seriously and therefore some attempts were made in order to prevent the increasing foreign interest in the region.⁵⁸ It should be borne in mind that from the end of the 15th century to the early years of the 19th century when some attempts were made in order to open a canal, it can be said that there had been no European political intervention in the Suez region.⁵⁹ For instance, the attempts of the foreigners to establish political and economic domination over the Red Sea gained momentum in 1849, due to the fact that a new government came into power upon the deaths of Mehmet Ali Pasha and his son, İbrahim Pasha. Therefore, the Ottoman State despatched a firman dated 20 April 1849 to the region and she expressed her concerns about it.⁶⁰

In his accounts, Urquhart also touches on how the Suez canal project was delayed temporarily. In this sense, he argues that whenever the canal came to the fore, Mehmet Ali Pasha objected to it giving a pretext that there was a railway project and when that was pressed, he expressed a strong desire for the canal. However, both were not put into effect due to the balancing policy pursued by Egypt, for the canal was project of the French whereas the railway was the English one. In fact, In November 1834 Mehmet Ali approved of the construction of Egypt's first railroad and sent Thomas Galloway to Britain to purchase the essential equipment. By the end of the year most of the equipment, including the tracks, had arrived in Alexandria only to be left in their containers, for the ruler of Egypt had suddenly decided to abandon the project. A set of political failures and fear of foreign intervention are believed to have caused him to change his mind and put an end to this immense and great project before it even started.⁶¹ It is pointed out that the fear of foreign intervention, political or economic, could be partially explained by the high cost of the project, which would have forced Egypt to resort to foreign capital. However, Mehmet Ali decided it would be much better and cheaper to focus on digging irrigation canals, since they could be achieved using local expertise at minimal costs. In addition, he thought that they would be more useful both for irrigation and transportation as well. Furthermore,, an Egyptian railroad constructed by Britain might not only contribute to the improvement of the overland route to India, but also might lead to a direct British involvement in Egypt. It should be noted that the British desire to manipulate the Egyptian railroad project for political interests was further sharpened by their fear that the French, who at the time were trying to convince Mehmet Ali to approve their idea of digging a canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, started to gain more political influence in Egypt.⁶²

58 Akalın, *ibid*, p. 21.

59 Danyal Bediz, "Süveyş Kanalının Önemi", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10/3, TTK, Ankara, 1951, s.331.

60 Akalın, *ibid*, p. 22.

61 Nasr El Din, *ibid*, p. 21.

62 *ibid*, p. 21.

Urquhart goes on to give further details saying that in order to delay the Suez canal for 25 years the railway project was eventually carried into execution. As has been mentioned by Urquhart, the British efforts to convince Egyptian rulers to build railroads continued and when the viceroy Abbas came to the Egyptian throne, a new and more vigorous campaign to persuade him to accept the project was launched. Unlike the others, these attempts succeeded, partly due to the efforts of Britain to support Abbas to overcome the Ottoman's refusal to his accession to the throne. Therefore, in November 1851 the contract to build the first railroad in Egypt was signed between Egypt's foreign minister, Stephen Bek, and a representative of Robert Stephenson, the son of George Stephenson, the inventor of the railroads. It was planned that it would be a single line from Alexandria to Cairo, then from Cairo to Suez, following the footsteps of the old famous overland route. Thus, it can be strongly argued that the reason behind the building of the first railroad line in Egypt was the political and economic interests of England in maintaining a link with her colonies in Asia. Thus in April 1853, the first section, 105 kilometres long, between Alexandria and Kafr Al-Zayat on the western bank of the Nile, was opened.⁶³ However, Urquhart inquires what benefits could be gained by means of the railway. To him, a group of persons with their local interests are not in favour the canal project and therefore they use their position in order to maintain this hostility. Then in the following lines, he explains it as follows:

*"The local traffic no doubt may support the railway, and some of the lighter and more valuable goods may be conveyed by it as far as Cairo, but is that the opening up of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans through the Mediterranean and the Red Seas? If the line be hereafter carried on from Cairo to Suez you will only have a railway, ships will not pass. The distance will be 250 miles and even at the rate of an English railway 10 sterling a ton in addition to the expenses of unloading and relading, amounting on the full freight out and in of a vessel of 1200 tons to 2500 sterling."*⁶⁴

As can be seen from these accounts, Urquhart criticizes the attitude of the English policy adopted towards the canal project. In this sense, he favours the canal project, for it would present more economic and political benefits for England. He asserts that the French project might be impracticable, but there has been no rationale behind the railway project backed up by England. However, when the railway project came to the fore, it received huge backing from the British government since it meant less transit time and increased security on its main trading route to India. Moreover, all the essential equipment and experts would come from Britain and it was automatically assumed that Mehmet Ali Pasha would resort to British capital to finance it.⁶⁵ As has been pointed out by Urquhart here, it is known that the ships sailing in the south Africa between

63 *Ibid*, p. 22.

64 Urquhart, *ibid*, p. 427.

65 Nasr- El Din, *ibid*, p. 21.

England and India could complete the voyage within seven months when the weather conditions were not favourable. Bediz refers to the fact that since the Indian route being very long not only rendered the development of land and the sea transportation, but also it led to the necessity to build a canal in the Suez region again.⁶⁶ Indeed, the canal had a dramatic effect on trade, drastically cutting the length of time it took for goods to travel across the world's oceans. However, it should be stated that occurring at precisely the same time as the "Scramble for Africa", the Canal's early operation arguably had a profound effect on the colonization of Africa as well.⁶⁷

Moreover, he attaches greater importance to the canal project providing an example from the history. To him, the commander of the caliph Omar, Amru also objected to the construction of the canal. However, Omar, who knew better than him, told Amru that he would punish him if he did not dig the canal in order that the vessels may sail upon them. It is seen that Urquhart not only refers to the importance of the project but also advises that England pursue a more reasonable and sensible policy towards the canal project. Besides, he also focuses on the projects of Louis Philippe, the nephew of Napoleon, who revived the canal project in modern times saying that when he came into power, he naturally directed his attention to Suez. However, due to the rivalry of the two engineers of the two countries in Egypt he thought that there must be some mistake and as a consequence, he told his minister in London to talk to Lord Palmerston about the matter and suggested working together. However, the French diplomat was really bewildered by the manner displayed towards him, for he was told that it was a project of France and England would not suffer it. Urquhart critically points out that it resulted from the fact that the Minister figured out that Louis Napoleon had a strong desire to drive England out of India and possess it.⁶⁸

It should be noted that Urquhart directs his criticisms towards the foreign policy of England on the ground that she neither handles the matters from a broader political perspective nor acts reasonably. In this sense, he justifies his arguments referring to the fact that France is considered to have a strong desire for the canal so as to come nearer to Egypt so as to reach India, but in fact, England with Malta in her hands is nearer to Egypt than France is. On the contrary, it is not France, who threatens England, for she once had influence there, but she lost it due to the maritime suzerainty of England in the region.⁶⁹ To him, contrary to France, Russia does her best not to carry the canal project into execution because the European press is in the hands of Russia. In addition,

66 Bediz, *ibid*, p. 331.

67 Ronald Robinson - John. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians the Official Mind of Imperialism*, Macmillan& Co. Lmtd., London 1965; William R. Louis, *The Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization*, IB Tauris, London 2006, p. 5.

68 Urquhart, *ibid*, p. 428.

69 *ibid*, p. 428.

Russia shows a particular interest in the canal project and opposes it because she does not want a shorter and a safer route such as Euphrates or isthmus of Suez for England to lead to India. Moreover, Russia pursues a policy to put hindrances against the canal project, for it is apparent that it would serve for the world.⁷⁰ Few shared his extreme view of the "Russian menace", but there was enough suspicion of Russian intentions, which won him a large and attentive public audience among the ultra-Tories, who could if they liked, trace their enmity to Russia back to Pitt, and among the Radicals whose hostility resulted from the more recent Russian suppressions of Poland. In this sense, Urquhart's views and influence would be unintelligible without considering these three things: the position of Russia in Europe, Palmerston's policy, and the opinion of the "Russian menace" in England.⁷¹

Urquhart in his work states that his opinions related to the canal might be considered as incredible and it might also be thought that an English statesman should have objected to such a work. However, he asserts that he did his best to show the political interests of Russia in the region, and pointed to the facts regarding the matter. Besides these, he acknowledges that he published all the details about the benefits which the Suez canal project would present for England and they were not contradicted either. In this sense, he not only directs his criticism towards English policy followed towards the canal project but also the Franks residing in Cairo because what they know or believe about the canal is solely based on innuendo and whisper. He states that when the reasons sought for it, it is evident that they make some superficial evaluations on the basis of the expedition of Napoleon in Egypt when he directed his attention towards India and they argue that he proposed the canal project to possess India.⁷² Similar to the unfavorable opinions regarding the Suez canal project, Urquhart also touches on the attitude of Mehmet Ali Pasha regarding the canal project pointing out the fact that he has difficulty in understanding how such a man as Mehmet Ali Pasha, who is brave, intelligent and reasonable and has a strong desire to make it the seat and the passage of commerce, can overlook it. Even though the project was presented to him not only by his engineer but also some of the scientific men, American and French consuls, the current director of the Austrian railways and so on. Moreover, even though the things needed for the project such as scientific data and the capital were ready, he did not want to approve of it and he always put forward some pretexts when it was pressed on him. Interestingly, John Galloway, the brother of Thomas Galloway, reoffered the railway project in 1843 to Mehmet Ali, but he refused it once more on very much the same grounds as he did before.⁷³

70 *Ibid*, p.430.

71 Hereward, *ibid*, p. 34-35.

72 Urquhart, *ibid*, p. 428.

73 Nasr El Din, *ibid*, p. 21.

Urquhart continues to make criticisms related to the unreasonable policy of the English government through the Panama scheme. To him, if anyone examines the globe, one will easily see that the distance not only from London but also from New York to the Indian ocean is greater than by Suez and by the cape of Good Hope. Moreover, he states that this scheme is only based on the increase in the local traffic of the back of America with China and proposes to connect the east and west. Therefore, the ones who are speculatively and practically in favour of this scheme are opposed to the Suez canal project. In addition, the isthmus uniting the north and south America is unlike the one uniting Africa and Asia in terms of its difficulties and advantages it would present. For instance, according to their calculations of Louis Napoleon 900.000 tons of shipping would pass from Europe and pay 10 sterling a ton whereas 20 sterling a ton is paid from America. That's to say a vessel of 1200 tons that leaves London and New York for Calcutta would take a circuit some thousand miles for the privilege of paying some thousand pounds. It is also pointed out that when Panama canal is compared with the Suez canal, it is seen that the former not only lengthens the voyage at 9300 miles from London to Calcutta and from London to Hong Kong 4600 miles, from New York to Calcutta 4500 miles but also it increases the expenditures by three-fourths and decreases the traffic by three-fourths as well.⁷⁴ Moreover, it is underlined that the Panama scheme is the project of America to establish herself on the Pacific ocean, but the English government closes her eyes and ignores the sound ideas against it. In other words, it is stressed that it is not realistic and practical to favour such a project and it does not offer any benefits in terms its returns it would come for England and it does not serve for the political and economic advantages of England as well. More importantly, in order to reveal the wrong policy adopted by England he justifies why the Suez canal project should be favoured rather than the other projects through some reasonable explanations and examples.

The accounts of Urquhart related to foreign policy of England, particularly in the context of the Suez canal project here, should be taken into consideration in relation to how he was regarded. For instance, the researchers who study the first half of the 19th century constantly stress that Urquhart has been forgotten, yet they nevertheless refer to his name within the framework of some important events or incidents. In this sense, the British historian, A. J. P. Taylor describes Urquhart as the most bizarre dissident of the 19th century. In Taylor's view, Urquhart was not a radical when he entered into politics, he simply desired to develop an image of how Britain should pursue its foreign policy and was really disappointed when his opinions on foreign policy were solely favoured by the radicals.⁷⁵ In addition, it should be noted that Urquhart was a man with two

74 Urquhart, *ibid*, p. 430-431.

75 A. John Percivale Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939*, The Ford Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1956, Indiana University Press, USA, 1958, pp. 42-45.

obsessions, the first personified by Palmerston, and the other one which was directed against Russia. The years between 1831-1837 were considered the most influential in Urquhart's career. It was during that time that he became one of the most prominent supporters of the advantage to Britain for the maintenance of a free and independent Turkey. This coincided with a sudden manifestation of his anti-Russian feeling, which he was partially responsible for fanning.⁷⁶ Urquhart was also of the view that diplomacy as a whole does not depend on moral values and that this immorality could be evidently tracked through the official diplomatic reports. For instance, It was not simply that Palmerston was soft on the expansionist policies of Nicholas I around the Black Sea. Rather, he alleged that the prime minister was an open supporter of Russian policies even when those policies were plainly at odds with those of the government that he was supposed to be serving. Urquhart soon launched a campaign against Palmerston, one that lasted for nearly the entirety of that politician's long career. He published tracts denouncing the policies of the Palmerston government.⁷⁷

Closing

A canal connecting the Mediterranean to the Red Sea through the Isthmus of Suez has been a scheme since the time immemorial which caused some prominent statesmen to dream about. Thus, several attempts were made to construct a canal in the region dating back to the reign of Ptolemy II (285–246 B.C.). However, when compared to the modern times, the main function of the canal was primarily intended for regional use and for the benefit of the rulers of Egypt. The possibility of a waterway through the Isthmus of Suez had not been carried into execution for long ages, partially due to the limitations of maritime transport. Yet, with some advances and improvements in technology from the twelfth century onward, the probability of a sea route to the East began to be discussed again in detail. With the opening of the sea route to the East via the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco da Gama in the late 15th century, the need to pierce the Isthmus was not important for the European merchants any longer, for instead of commerce, it was political intrigues that caused Napoleon's army to conquer Egypt and consider the building of a canal to give France a geopolitical advantage over Britain. If France could build a canal, it would mean that troops, leaving Mediterranean ports, could invade India other than Far East British colonies. However, contrary to common policy of Britain towards

76 Geoffrey Nash, *From Empire to the Orient*, IB Tauris, London & New York, 2005, p. 44

77 Charles King, "Imagining Circassia: David Urquhart and the Making of North Caucasus Nationalism", *The Russian Review*, 66 (2), 2007, p. 247. it is important to stress that only a very small number of works deal with the personality of David Urquhart himself see. Margaret H. Jenks, *The Activities and Influences of David Urquhart 1833–1856*, with Special Reference to The Affairs of The Near East, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1964; Gertrude Robinson, *David Urquhart : Some Chapters in the life of a Victorian Knight-errant of Justice and Liberty*, B. Blackwell, Oxford 1920.

the canal project claiming that France desired it in order to realise her political dreams in the region, it is seen that the diplomat, David Urquhart makes severe criticisms arguing that such a diplomacy does not sound rational and sensible in that it overlooks a number of economic and political advantages of the opening of Suez canal for England. For instance, it is pointed out that when compared with the route of Cape of Good Hope, it would not only shorten the distance to reach her colonies but also it would enable her to reach millions of inhabitants in Africa, Arabia, Australia and New Zealand, Borneo, Java Ceylon, China and so on and increase the potential of her commerce. In this sense, it is striking that he likens it to possession of second India in terms of its benefits it would present. In addition, he criticises the unreasonable attitude of England favoring the projects such as Panama, which would not bring any advantages to her instead of the Suez canal that would present several advantages and therefore accuses England of closing her eyes to the facts and encouraging entrepreneurs to invest on such impractical projects as the Panama scheme. In the following years the policy of England towards the Suez canal would change and she would concentrate her attention on it in terms of her political and economic benefits in the region. Therefore, she decided to purchase the Egyptian shares, which not only caused her to gain economic power, but also enabled her to have a political and strategic foothold in the region.

Moreover, Urquhart takes a different stance against the opening of this passage stressing the fact that contrary to what Britain foreign policy claims, it is not France that poses a great threat to her, but it is Russia, for France lost her suzerainty to England in the region. In this sense, he seems eager and willing to exemplify the Russian threat and her political machinations pointing to how she tries to establish domination over the Ottoman Empire and Egypt not to put the canal project or projects that would bring benefits for England into execution through resorting to other means such as bribery. Besides, it should be noted that the accounts of Urquhart regarding Russia and her policies in the region should be dealt with cautiously because he is known for his great obsession with Russia. It is also possible to say that he has a deep sympathy for the Ottomans because when he talks about the benefits of the opening of the Suez canal, he also lists its political and economic benefits for the Ottoman State, for he is well known for being a Turcophile in publicity in Britain. In addition, his diplomatic career in the Ottoman lands seems to have caused him to get involved in the Eastern question, on which he wrote some books, which affected the European public.

Briefly, Urquhart, being a diplomat who also served in İstanbul for while, provides some valuable information and displays a different attitude towards the attempts to open the Suez canal. When his accounts are taken into account in the political and economic context of the 19th century, it can be said that he analyzes the subject in detail and enables the reader to consider it from a different perspective, for more than 150 years since the Suez Canal was opened, it has been a site of colonial and postcolonial struggle between great powers.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Mısır, doğu ile batı arasında yürütülen ticaretin Hindistan'a uzanan kavşağında yer alır. Ticari bakımdan jeostratejik önemi yüzden Mısır, sömürgecilik döneminde büyük güçlerin ticaret yolları üzerinde hâkimiyet kurmak için giriştikleri mücadele ve rekabetin arenası haline gelmiştir. Özellikle I. Napolyon'un 1798 yılında Mısır'a yaptığı seferin diğer devletlerin dikkatlerini bölge üzerinde yoğunlaştırmalarına yol açtığını belirtmek gerekir. I. Napolyon, bilindiği üzere, Mısır'ı ele geçirip Kızıldeniz üzerinde hâkimiyet kurmayı amaçlıyordu. Ancak I. Napolyon, amacını hayata geçirememesine rağmen, ondan sonraki dönemde Fransa'nın Mısır'a olan ilgisi hiç eksilmemiş, aksine artarak devam etmiştir. Hatta bölgeye olan bu ilgi, Kızıldeniz ile Akdeniz'i birbirine bağlayan proje fikrinin gündeme gelmesine önayak olmuştur. Aslında ticareti kolaylaştırmak için Kızıldeniz ile Akdeniz'i birbirine bağlayacak bir kanal inşa etme fikri çok gerilere uzanmaktadır. Hatta bu düşüncenin Büyük İskender'e kadar uzandığı, Sezar tarafından düşünüldüğü, Arap fatihler tarafından yeniden gündeme getirildiği görülür. Bu yüzden kanal inşa etme düşüncesinin kadim bir hayal olduğu söylenebilir.

Süveyş, antik dünyanın ortasında, Asya ve Afrika kıtalarını birbirine bağlayan ancak Kızıldeniz ve Akdeniz'i, yani Hint ve Atlantik okyanuslarını birbirinden ayıran bir konumda bulunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla onun bu özel konumu eski çağlardan beri, bölgede siyasi ve ekonomik hâkimiyet kurmak isteyen devletlerin burayı ele geçirmek yönünde faaliyetler yürütmesine neden olmuştur. Fakat teknoloji alanındaki bazı sınırlamalar ve yetersizlikler nedeniyle Süveyş üzerinde bir kanal inşa etme fikri çok uzun bir süre hayata geçirilememiştir. Nitekim Fransa kralı I. Napolyon'un Mısır'ı işgali sırasında kanalın açılmasıyla ilgili kimi girişimler yapılsa da, özellikle 19. yüzyılın sonlarına kadar Akdeniz ve Kızıldeniz'i birleşmesi yönünde önemli bir adım atılmadığı söylenebilir. Napolyon'un iki denizin birleştirilmesi için yaptığı girişim ise iki deniz arasındaki seviye farkı olduğunu iddia eden bazı bilimsel raporlar nedeniyle sonuçsuz kalmıştır. Ancak 1847 yılında daha önce hazırlanan bilimsel raporların yanlış olduğu ortaya çıkmış ve böylece Saint-Simon entelektüel hareketinin bazı üyeleri projeyi yeniden ele alarak gözden geçirmiş ve kanalın inşası önünde bir engel bulunmadığını belirten yeni bir rapor hazırlanmıştır. Özellikle Saint Simon hareketinin kurucusu olan Kont Henri de

Saint Simon, dünyanın kalkınması için bu tür önemli ve büyük projelere ilgi duyan bir kişi olarak bilinmektedir. İki denizi doğrudan birbirine bağlayacak olan kanalizasyon projesi Ferdinand de Lesseps tarafından yeniden gündeme getirilmiştir.

Said Paşa'nın Mısır hidivi olmasından sonra, eski diplomat ve Fransa İmparatoriçesi Eugine'in kuzeni Ferdinand de Lesseps, değişen siyasi ortamdan ve Said Paşa ile olan kişisel ilişkisinden yararlanarak, İskenderiye'den tanıdığı yeni hidivi ziyaret etmiş ve ona kanal projesi hakkında ayrıntılı bilgiler vermiştir. Babiâli, 1856 yılında patlak veren Kırım Savaşı nedeniyle müttefikleri İngiltere ve Fransa'nın izlediği politikalara bağlı olarak projeye uzun süre onay vermekte isteksiz davranmıştır. Lesseps'in büyük çabaları ve kanalın açılması için yürüttüğü faaliyetler neticesinde 1856 yılında Said Paşa projeyi onaylamış ve Lesseps'e bir kanal inşa edilmesi için imtiyaz vermiştir. Böylece Lesseps, Negrelli'nin hazırladığı projeyi Said Paşa'ya kabul ettirmeyi başarmış ve 1858 yılında kendisine "Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez" isimli bir şirket kurma imtiyazı verilmiştir. Şirket için gerekli finansmanın hisse senetlerinin satışı yoluyla sağlandığı anlaşılmaktadır. 200 milyon frank değerindeki hisselerin her biri 500 franklık 400.000 hisseye bölünmüştür. Kanal hisselerinin yaklaşık yarısı Mısır hidivi tarafından satın alınmış, diğer kısmı ise Paris'te halka arz edilmiştir. Hatta kanal şirketinin hisselerine Avrupa'da büyük ilgi olduğu ve şirketin hisselerinin 15 gün gibi kısa bir sürede tükendiği iddia edilmektedir. Böylece 25 Nisan 1859'da yapımına başlanan kanal 16 Kasım 1869'da tamamlanmış ve o sırada Mısır valisi olan İsmail Paşa, Avrupa'nın önemli şehirlerini ziyaret ederek birçok hanedan üyesini ve devlet adamını açılış töreni için Mısır'a davet etmiştir. 1869 yılında açılan ve 163 km uzunluğunda ve 75-125 metre genişliğindeki kanal, adını Kızıldeniz'in kuzey kıyısında ve Mısır'ın önemli bir liman kenti olan Kulzum olarak bilinen eski şehrin güneyinde yer alan Süveyş'ten almaktadır.

1875 yılına gelindiğinde, Mısır hükümetinin yaşadığı derin mali kriz, Mısır hidivinin kanal şirketindeki hisselerini satması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda Lesseps, şirket adına bu hisselerin satışı için Avrupa'daki bazı önemli kişilerle görüşmelerde bulunmuştur. İngiltere ilk aşamada Süveyş kanalının açılmasına bölgedeki ekonomik ve siyasi çıkarlarını zora sokacağı gerekçesiyle şiddetle karşı çıksa da, Times gazetesi 26 Kasım 1875 tarihli sayısında Mısır valisine ait 177.000 kanal hissesinin İngiliz hükümeti tarafından 4.000.000 sterlin karşılığında satın alındığını kamuoyuna duyurmuştur. Böylece 1879 yılında Mısır'da bir mali kontrol sistemi kurulmuş oldu. Diğer bir deyişle, Mısır valisinin sahip olduğu Süveyş Kanalı hisseleri hem ülkenin ekonomik iflasına neden olmuş hem de Mısır'ın Batı'nın mali kontrolü altına girmesine yol açmıştır.

İşte bu çalışma, İngiliz siyasetçi ve diplomat David Urquhart'ın 1853 yılında Londra'da yayınlanan "Progress of Russia in the West, North, and South" (Rusya'nın Güney, Kuzey ve Batı Yönünde İlerlemesi) adlı eserinde Süveyş

Kanalı ile ilgili görüşlerine dayanmaktadır. Urquhart'ın Osmanlı topraklarına yaptığı uzun seyahatler, onun iyi derecede Türkçe bilmesi, Türk sosyal ve kültürel hayatına dair derin bilgisi ve Osmanlı diplomatlarıyla kurduğu yakın ilişkilerin, onun bölgeye dair kaleme aldığı seyahatnamelerini Türk tarihi açısından önemli kıldığı söylenebilir. Bu çalışmada, Urquhart'ın anılan yapıtından yola çıkılarak kanalın tarihsel geçmişi, İngiltere, Fransa ve Rusya gibi büyük devletlerin kanal projesine yönelik izledikleri diplomasi ortaya konulacak ve bu süreçte Osmanlı Devleti ile Mısır'da meydana gelen bazı önemli siyasi ve ekonomik gelişmeler değerlendirilecektir.