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Transportation, Steamships and the Rise of Postal Protectionism in the Ottoman Empire under the Reign of Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876)

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the increasingly protectionist policies of the Ottoman government against the foreign steamship postal services operating between the imperial ports under the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876). This remarkable phenomenon has both local and international dimensions. First of all, rising postal monopoly claims of the Ottoman government against the foreign postal services on its territory are the striking consequences of increasing autonomy of the local steamship networks in the Ottoman Empire. In other words, foreign postal services had lost their utility in the Empire as a result of the development of the local postal services. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Postal Administration under Abdülaziz manifested substantial deficiencies in relation to its services outside the Empire. By adopting protectionist policies, the Ottoman government aimed to eliminate financial and political threats to the Empire that were coming through foreign postal channels. Finally, at an international level, the protectionism of the Ottoman government was a local response to the globalisation of postal communications.

Keywords: Abdülaziz, Ottoman government, foreign postal services, steamships, protectionism

1. Introduction

Under the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876), there was a notable increase in the protectionist policies of the Ottoman government against foreign maritime postal administrations in the Empire. At the beginning of the 1860s, this increase came to the point where the Ottoman government made several attempts to ban foreign steamship companies completely from postal services between the imperial ports. This unprecedented attitude was a turning point; until then, the European ships had enjoyed the right to carry mail between the imperial ports under the regime of capitulations.

After Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481) conquered Istanbul in 1453, he gave significant commercial privileges to Venetian ships in the Ottoman ports, especially in Marmara and the Black Sea.[1] In following centuries, other European ships under French, Dutch or Swedish flags obtained such privileges, which enabled them to carry goods, passengers and mail in the Ottoman Empire. It is through capitulations that the French opened their first permanent diplomatic and consular missions in the 16th century. Thereafter, the French ships started carrying diplomatic and con-

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1   Bağış 1983, 2-3.

sular mail between Marseille and Istanbul. These French missions spread all over the Ottoman Empire, strengthening the political and commercial presence of the French in the Levant. The French opened their permanent post offices in the Ottoman Empire starting from 1812. The Austro-Hungarian Empire began its regular postal services between Vienna and Istanbul following the Pasarowitz Treaty of 21 July 1718. The Russians, for their part, established their regular postal communications between St Petersburg and Istanbul in 1748.[2]

As overland transportation networks in the Ottoman Empire were weak at those times, European states preferred ships for their diplomatic and consular communications with the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, journeys on sailing ships between Western European ports and Ottoman ports could take months. In addition, frequent shipwrecks and breakdowns often led to delayed or interrupted transportation. Through time, the development of long-distance steamship navigation, especially starting from the 1830s, enabled faster and more regular communications between Europe and the Ottoman Empire overall.

Initial attempts at steamship navigation were made in France at the beginning of the 18th century.[3] The US played a crucial role in the development of steamship navigation in the early 1800s.[4] The first steamship that crossed the Atlantic, sailing from the port of Savannah in the United States to Liverpool in Great Britain in 1819, carried an American flag. Six years later, a hybrid British steamship named Enterprise sailed from Falmouth to Calcutta.[5] However, despite this remarkable progress on the oceans, there were only a limited number of short-distance steamship lines in the Mediterranean Sea sector established by Genovese and Sardinian companies.[6]

Long-distance steamship navigation in the Mediterranean started to flourish in the early 1830s. The French sent their steamships from the port of Toulon to North African coasts as they occupied Algeria in 1830.[7] They established their regular postal steamship lines between Marseille, Istanbul and Alexandria by the mid-1830s.[8] During the same period, the Austrian steamship company Lloyd, based in the port of Trieste, started its commercial and postal lines in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean Sea.[9] British steamships were also regularly serving the Eastern Mediterranean sector through their ports in Gibraltar and Malta. To ensure their expansion in India, the British government had already established its first steamship lines between the ports of Suez and Bombay by 1836.[10] Austrian and Russian steamships were navigating in the

2   Kütükoğlu 1992, 91-138.
3   Guillerm 1996, 4; Victor D. 1842, 6; Fohlen 1971, 18.
4   Large 1826, 2.
5   *Moniteur Universel* 1862, November 7 and 8, 6-7.
6   Jouham 1878, 7-8; Giraud 1929, 13.
7   Gille 1960, 43.
8   Tristant 1985, 6-8.
9   *Journal de Smyrne*, No. 207, 1836, 4; *Journal de Smyrne*, No. 265, 1837, 4; Coons 1975, 61-63.
10   *Journal de Constantinople* (J.C.), No. 60, 1843, 2.

Danube and the Black Sea in the early 1830s. Nevertheless, beyond the Danube, the Russian steamship lines established by the *Odesa Company* were limited to the Russian Black Sea Coast and Istanbul.[11] Russian lines expanded towards the Mediterranean, especially after the birth of a new Russian steamship company in 1857.[12]

The Ottoman Empire occupied a strategic geographic position at the crossroads of seas and continents, and accordingly the territory played a significant role in the evolution of steamship enterprises. Numerous foreign steamships started to serve ports within the Empire, allowing them easy access to vibrant local markets in raw materials and to the increasing domestic demand for manufactured goods. In particular, the industrialised European states benefited from these advantages from the beginning of the 1830s by developing their commercial and postal activities in the Ottoman Empire, with the help of advances in technology that was making ships travel much faster.

The Ottoman Empire also profited from these technological advances during the same period, but for different reasons. For the Ottoman state, steamships were not primary instruments of global expansion, as they were for most European states. Local steamship services in the Ottoman Empire were initially reserved for the use of the imperial government and its provincial administration. Besides, due to the lack of private entrepreneurship and significant investments in the steamship sector, local commercial lines hardly developed before the 1850s.

The Ottoman government considered the steamships as essential instruments for the political and fiscal cohesion of the Empire against the birth of new nation-states in the 19th century. In this framework, a steamship was sent by the Egyptian governor Mehmed Ali to help the Ottoman Navy against Greek and European forces during the Greek War of Independence (1821–1830).[13] Subsequently, Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) purchased a steamer from England in 1827.[14] Ottoman governments bought other steamers in following years. In the 1830s the Ottomans started building steamships in local arsenals, often with machines imported from Europe. For these constructions, Sultan Mahmud II called upon the support of American and European naval engineers, who offered their technical support in response.[15] Subsequently, several steamships were built in the arsenals of Istanbul, Gelibolu, Izmit and Sinop.

The Imperial Arsenal (*Tersane-i Amire*) and the Imperial Treasury (*Hazine-i Hassa*) used these ships to create their own companies. However, these first steamship services were exclusively reserved for government and military transportation and were inaccessible to civilian populations. This exclusion was prompted by scarcity – even after these first constructions, the Ottoman administration owned very few steamships. The costs of ship maintenance and charcoal hit the imperial treasury hard. However, from the beginning of the 1840s a local steamship company, *Fevaid-i Osmaniye*, started to

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11   *Carte réduite du cours du Danube, de la Mer Noire et de la Méditerranée* 1840.
12   Sciaky 2006, 18; J.C., No.778, 1857, 1-2.
13   Panzac 2009, 274.
14   Mac Farlane 1850, 117.
15   Panzac 2009, 293.

carry mail, goods and public passengers in the Marmara Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Other companies emerged later to serve the populations of the Ottoman capital, such as *Şirket-i Hayriye* (founded in 1851) and *Haliç Vapurları Şirketi* (founded in 1857). In addition, Egyptian companies like *Mecidiye* (founded in 1856), *Aziziye* (founded in 1863) and the *Khedivial Steamship Company* (founded in 1873) contributed to the development of the communication systems within the Ottoman Empire. It was not until the birth of the imperial steamship company, *İdare-i Aziziye* (established in 1872-1873), that Sultan Abdülaziz's imperial maritime transportation networks reached their high point.[16] Many other local steamship companies offered their services throughout the Empire, resulting in high connectivity within the Empire.

The Ottoman Postal Administration used the development of local steamship companies to improve postal communications between the ports of the Empire, especially during the reign of Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861). As a result, steamship navigation became a significant instrument in the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms which aimed at the political and fiscal centralisation of the Empire. Alongside these advances, the development of telegraph and railways following the Crimean War (1853-1856) contributed to the improvement of overland communications in the Empire. From 1856, the Ottoman government under Abdülmecid began to organise the imperial postal services using steamship navigation. Later, from 1863, the Ottoman government under Abdülaziz organised the coastal postal services in the Empire under the name of *Sahil Postaları Teşkilatı* in 1863.[17]

Under the reign of Abdülaziz, imperial steamship postal networks developed to such an extent that the Ottoman Postal Administration started to assert itself as a monopoly within the Empire. In 1864, the Foreign Minister of the Sublime Porte, Ali Pasha, sent a letter to the foreign embassies in Istanbul. In his letter, he announced the monopoly of the Ottoman Postal Administration regarding the transportation of the letters and other articles between the imperial post offices.[18] According to this letter, foreign postal administrations established in the Ottoman Empire and their steamship companies would henceforth transport only letters that 'had originated from' or 'were being sent' abroad.

Once it was reported in the European press, Ali Pasha's declaration provoked a diplomatic reaction. According to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, the Ottoman Postal Administration was not sufficient enough to replace the foreign postal services – it needed the support of foreign postal services. This undermined the government's in-

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16   *Ceride-i Havadis*, No. 1884, 7 Safer 1289 (16 April 1872), 1; Ottoman Archives (O.A.), A.MKL., 80/36, 12 Safer 1289 (20 April 1872), article 7; O.A., I.DH., 625/43463, *Statuts du Şirket-i Aziziye, Compagnie Impériale Ottomane de Navigation et de Commerce du 10/22 novembre 1870, article 4.*

17   Yazıcı 1992, 170.

18   Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (C.A.D.N.), Nantes, 166PO/E/400, Sublime Porte, *letter no. 9199-4 from Ali Pasha to the French Embassy in Constantinople*, 4 February 1864.

sistence that the imperial steamship postal services were able to satisfy the local demand for communications.

The Ottoman government considered the monopoly of the Ottoman Postal Administration to be crucial, both politically and financially. By means of the monopoly, the Ottoman government was trying to control the flow of any political information that might threaten its imperial integrity. And it sought to capture the income generated by the postal services, which had hitherto been flowing into the pockets of the foreign postal administrations and steamship companies.

The monopoly was declared in 1864, the year after the first International Postal Congress, held in Paris and initiated by the United States. The Ottoman Empire had not participated in this Congress and continued to adopt protectionist policies throughout the Abdülaziz period. However, by becoming a constitutive member of the General Postal Union in 1874, as well as joining other similar organisations, the Ottoman state found itself within several international structures.[19] Nevertheless, this participation did not stop the Ottoman government from continuing its protectionist policies.

To sum up, during the Abdülaziz period, the Ottoman government increasingly made sovereign claims on postal services within the Empire, and increasingly excluded foreign postal services and their steamship companies. These claims were in direct correlation with the rising autonomy of the Ottoman Postal Administration within the Empire. In other words, the imperial networks were becoming self-sufficient with the development of the local steamship services at the same time that the Ottoman government was seeking to prevent foreign services from operating between Ottoman ports. In any case, in a world increasingly characterised by the globalisation of postal communications, the monopoly reflected local efforts to aggressively exclude any foreign incursion into imperial territory.

In this context, this paper raises two main questions: Firstly, what was the actual degree of autonomy of the Ottoman steamship postal services under the reign of Abdülaziz? And secondly, what were the local and international causes behind the Ottoman government's protectionism?

I will answer these questions across three main sections. In the first section, I will demonstrate how the Ottoman Postal Administration was exercising its postal monopoly via overland networks. Secondly, I will discuss the development of local steamship postal networks in the Ottoman Empire, and the increasing protectionism of the Ottoman government against foreign postal services. In the third section, I will examine the political and financial reasons behind the growing postal protectionism of the Ottoman government, and the meaning of this protectionism in the context of international (postal) relations.

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19   Chaubert 1970, 15-16.

2. Postal Monopoly of the Ottoman Government on Land and its Limits

2.1 Evolution of the Imperial Land Postal Services under Government Control

The Ottoman government organized the postal networks of the Ottoman Empire under the vizierate (*sadaret*) of Lütfi Pasha (1539–1541).[20] These networks connected Istanbul to the imperial provinces through relay points (*menzilhane*) over different geographical positions on the immense territories of the Empire. Later Abdülhamid I (r. 1774–1789) established the service of *Tatars* under a specific administration named *Tataran Ocağı*.[21] The *Tatars* were postal agents carrying mail through the postal relay points. Imperial postal networks were necessary for the Ottoman government to stay informed on the political and economic situation of the imperial provinces. Provincial taxes were also transferred from the periphery to the centre through these channels (especially from the 18th century onwards). That is why the Ottoman governments made efforts throughout the centuries to improve postal communications within the Empire.

Until the establishment of the Ministry of Posts in 1840, imperial postal services were reserved exclusively for the communications of the Ottoman government and its various administrations. That is to say, the Ottoman government strictly controlled these services. However, this did not prevent fiscal corruption within local administrations, especially under the regime of tax farms (*iltizam*).[22] The imperial postal services suffered other shortcomings. In the provinces, it was insecure. And the network lacked adequate overland transportation technologies and systems. The Ottoman government tried to correct these problems with reforms following the Edict of Gülhane of November 3, 1839.

With the institution of the Ministry of Posts in 1840, the Ottoman government expanded the imperial postal services to the civil populations of the Empire. In 1841, the Ottoman government made efforts to consolidate its postal monopoly on the Ottoman territory and declared that the monopoly of the transportation of letters belonged to the Ministry of Posts.[23] The same year, the Ministry of Commerce proposed *Meclis-i Vala* for the transportation of light objects and currency by the Ottoman Postal Administration. And to provide security to the postal agents, the Ottoman government decided in 1847 to implement the use of gendarme controls on the postal roads.[24]

Compared to the maritime postal services on which we will dwell later, overland postal services were under the strict control of the imperial government throughout the Tanzimat period. This meant that the Ottoman Postal Administration, apart from the *iltizâm* exceptions during specific periods, did indeed have a monopoly of the

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20   Yazıcı 1992, 139-209.
21   Eskin 1942, 14-15.
22   Eskin 1992, 20-21.
23   Yazıcı 1992, 175-176.
24   Eskin 1942, 20.

Table 1: Principal Land Postal Services in the Ottoman Empire in 1864[25]

In Rumeli	Edirne, Üsküb, İslimye, İşkodra, Ohri, Ehlona, Elbasan, Pravişta, Priştine, Perlepe (Prilep), Plevne, Tırhala, Tekfurdağı, Tiran, Cuma-i Atik, Çorlu, Hasköy, Dupnice, Rahova, Rusçuk, Zağra-i Atîk, Zihne, Saraybosna, Selanik, Silivri, Servi, Seniçe, Siroz, Şumnu, Şehirköy, Samakov, Sofya, Travnik, Osman Pazarı, Aleksanca, Gabrova, Firecik, Filibe, Kızanlık , Kazgan, Kavala, Keşan, Köprülü, Köstendil, Gümülcine, Lofça, Lülebergos, Loma, Malkara, Mekri, Manastır, Mostar, Niş, Vidin, Vişkarad, Hezargrad (Razgrad), Yanbol, Yanya, Yeni Pazar, Yenice, Yenişehir-i Fenar, Yeni Varoş, *İbrail, İzvornik, İstolça, İnöz, Ivranya, Baba dağı, Bar, Berat, Berkofca, Belgrad, Belina, Banaluka, Bihke, Dırac, Drama, Dimetoka, Ziştovi, Silistre, Taşlıca, Tolçu, Ergiri, Kırkkilise, Kalas, Köstence, Gelibolu, Maçin, Menlik, Narda, Mostar, Varna, etc.*[26]
In Anatolia and **Bilad el-Şam**	Adana, Erzurum, Ergani Madeni, Ürgüp, İzmid, İzmir, İznik, Isbarta, Eskişehir, Akşehir, Amasya, Antakya, Urfa, Ayaş, Aydın, İncesu, Bursa, Bağdad, Beypazarı, Burdur, Bolu, Beyrut, Birecik, Bilecik, Tokad, Çerkeş, Cizre, Hama, Haleb, Harput, Denizli, Diyar-ı Bekr, Siverek, Sivas, Şam, Trabzon, Taraklı, Tosya Osmancık, Karahisar Karacalar, Karaciran, Kırşehir, Koçhisar, Kula, Konya, Kayseri, Keban madeni, Kudüs, Kerkük, Gerede, Kütahya, Göynük, Geyve, Lefke, Mardin, Mudurnu, Merzifon, Manisa, Musul, Nallıhan, Nevşehir, Hendek, *Erzincan, Antalya, Alâiye, Beyazıd, Balıkesir, Basra, Trablusşam, Tarsus, Ayntab, Kars, Kastamonu, Lazkiye, Van, etc.*

transportation of mail on the Ottoman territory. The overland postal networks of the Ottoman Empire were ancient compared to the maritime postal services. That is why they included a large number of locations in different parts of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, during the Abdülaziz period, imperial overland postal services were organized in two central regions of classical origin: Rumeli and Anatolia.[27] In 1864, in Rumeli, there were about 63 postal relay points. In Anatolia, there were 67 relay points (See Table 1).

At first sight, one might conclude that there was reliable connectivity within the Ottoman overland postal systems. However, in practice, postal communications in the Empire were hampered by fundamental weaknesses in the imperial overland transportation networks.

25 *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye* 1864, 'Postalara dair malumat', 144-145.
26 In locations indicated in italic characters the Ottoman postal agents were only carrying letters, and in others they were also carrying other objects.
27 Halaçoğlu 1995, 14.

2.2 Weakness of Overland Transportation in the Ottoman Empire

Under Mahmud II, Ahmed Fevzi Pasha sent a letter to his government to underline the importance of the road between Istanbul and Izmit for commercial activities and postal communications in the region. In his letter, he proposed the establishment of five postal stations on this road as well as the use of 30 animals and several postal cars between these stations. However, the road in question was not viable for commercial use in the long term, since postal cars could not traverse it.[28] Aside from this ill-fated plan, the Ottoman government did continue to improve overland transportation in this region.

To this purpose, railway projects were inaugurated in Rumeli during the Crimean War, especially in the second half of the 1850s.[29] These railways reached peak development in the 1870s, when they connected a vital network in South-Eastern Europe to Istanbul.[30] English entrepreneurs and engineers contributed to the construction of a railway between Alexandria, Cairo and Suez from 1851 to 1857.[31] This railway was a revolution regarding the transit of goods, mail and passengers between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Moreover, in 1866, Izmir was connected to its hinterland with two main railway lines to Kasaba and Aydın.[32] The Izmir railways brought significant advantages for the inhabitants of the Empire and to international trade, especially between Persia and Europe, since the caravans from the East came to the Port of Izmir. Before the construction of railways, camels and other animals facilitated transportation between the port of Izmir and its hinterland. However, these traditional animal-powered means of transportation were quite expensive compared to the railways or waterways.[33]

However, despite the efforts made in this era, the railways did not provide adequate coverage given the vastness of the Empire. The imperial roads were also insufficient in number and were mainly concentrated around and between significant imperial ports, like the route between Trabzon and Erzurum.[34] Difficult mountainous

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28   Eskin 1942, 13-14.
29   C.A.D.N., Constantinople, Ambassade, Série D, Sous-Série Varna, 166PO/D102/3, *Rapport sur le Commerce et la navigation de Varna pendant l'année 1860, from the General French Consulate in Varna to the French Embassy in Constantinople, Varna, April 22, 1861*; C.H., No. 781, 20 Receb 1284 (17 November 1867).
30   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/408, Chemins de fer, *Compagnie générale pour l'exploitation des chemins de fer de la Turquie d'Europe, Assemblée générale ordinaire et extraordinaire du 20 septembre 1872, rapport du Conseil d'Administration;* Engin 1993, 117-120.
31   J.C., No. 337, mardi, 4 novembre 1851, 6e année, 2; *Courrier des chemins de fer ou guide alphabétique des chemins de fer, bateaux à vapeur diligences, télégraphes électriques et hôtel*, No. 386, Paris, 21 July 1860.
32   Clarke 1861, 12-14.
33   Güran 2014, 79.
34   A.O., BEO.AYN.d., Ticâret ve Nâfia, 1283-1287, No. 595-994, Muharrem 1283 (June 1866), 1.

topography within some regions complicated the construction of overland transport infrastructure. This weakness meant some regions within the Empire were effectively inaccessible. The lack of overland transportation had severe consequences on communications, especially during winter. For example, traffic between Konya and Mediterranean Port cities like Silifke could be cut off due to mud in the rainy winters. These negative impacts upon communication prompted the governor of Konya to ask the Ottoman government to improve overland transport infrastructure in the region.[35] According to a testimony of the chief accountant of the Beirut branch of the Ottoman Bank, between 1856 and 1858 the road between Beirut and Damascus was impracticable for two months of the year, especially in the winter.[36]

The construction of the roads in the Empire was also necessary for the effective transfer of the imperial armies from Istanbul to different provinces, especially during the frequent episodes of revolt. Military routes were organised in two main directions. The first led to the north of Syria, and from there, indirectly, to Mesopotamia, Syria, Arabia and Egypt. The second led to Eastern Anatolia, and therefore indirectly to Caucasia and Iran.[37] The survival of those living in the interior of the Empire depended on access to the economic life of the ports.[38] For example, the population of Anatolia depended on the port of Gemlik for manufactured goods and agricultural products when their own production was low. For this reason, the construction of a road between Bursa and Gemlik was crucial.[39]

During the periods of famine, those living in the provinces were even more vulnerable. During the famine crisis of 1875, the populations of Konya and other Anatolian provinces could not receive necessary food aid sent by the Ottoman government. Consequently, they migrated to other regions of the Empire.[40] Given the challenges to improving overland transport networks, the Ottoman government concentrated its efforts on developing its maritime postal networks. It did so by taking advantage of its well-placed ports on the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

3. Development of Ottoman Steamship Companies and Increasing Postal Protectionism under Abdülaziz

3.1 Towards the Organisation of the Imperial Steamship Postal Services

The Imperial Arsenal (*Tersane-i Amire*) and the Imperial Treasury (*Hazine-i Hassa*) formed the first local steamship companies in the Ottoman Empire during the 1830s.

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35   C.H., No. 975, 23 Rebiülahir 1285 (13 August 1868), 1.
36   Fawaz 1998, 19-28.
37   Çetin 2017, 34.
38   J.C., No. 317, jeudi 24 juillet 1851, 6ᵉ année, 3.
39   J.C., No. 558, jeudi 19 février 1852, 7ᵉ année, 1.
40   Erler 2008, 231-238.

The first transportation services of these companies were reserved for communications of the Ottoman government in Istanbul with the provincial ports. Later, the *Fevaid-i Osmaniye* (established at the beginning of the 1840s) gave the wider population of the Empire access to steamship services.[41] *Fevaid-i Osmaniye* started its transportation services in the Marmara region and then expanded its networks to other Ottoman ports of the Mediterranean Sea. By the mid-1850s, other local companies established their services in different parts of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1856, the Egyptian *Mecidiye* company started its regular lines in the Red Sea, intending to carry pilgrims and the local population, especially between the ports of Suez, Hejaz, Muscat, Bandar Abbas and Bandar Bushehr.[42] In a short period, the Egyptian *Mecidiye* expanded its networks to a higher number of Ottoman ports in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In doing so, it became one of the major actors of the imperial maritime transport sector. Egyptian networks in the Ottoman Empire continued to develop with the birth of *Azizye* in 1863,[43] and grew to an even greater extent after the establishment of Khedivial Company in 1873.[44]

The imperial networks reached their pinnacle under Abdülaziz when the Ottoman company *İdare-i Azizye* was established in 1873. The steamships of this company started a regular service carrying mail, goods and passengers between Constantinople and Batumi in the Black Sea, Alexandria in the Mediterranean and Tripoli in the Western Mediterranean, and the Albanian ports in the Adriatic.[45] During the same period, the ports of the Persian Gulf were connected by the services of the Ottoman Oman Company (*Umman-ı Osmaniye Kumpanyası*).

Beyond the maritime ports, the local steamship services started to develop in the major waterways of the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the reign of Abdülmecid. For example, by the end of the 1850s, the Ottoman government authorised Camondo, Costaki Boyadjoglou and Nissim Alfassa[46] to establish a regular steamship service on the Meriç River, between İnöz, Edirne and Filibe for a period of 22 years.[47] During the

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41   Güleryüz 2006, 13; Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères (A.M.A.E.), La Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale, Smyrne, 1862-1866, *letter no. 69 from the General French Consulate in Smyrne to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, Smyrne, March 29, 1865*; J.C., No. 60, lundi 6 novembre 1843, 4.

42   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/D25/61-63, Agence et Consulat général de France en Égypte, *Projet d'établissement d'un service de bateaux à vapeur dans la mer Rouge, letter from Benedetti to French Embassy in Constantinople, Alexandria, August 28, 1856.*

43   A.M.A.E., La Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale, Suez, Tome 26, 1849-1865, *letter no. 50 from Vice Consulate of France in Suez, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris*, Suez, 29 November 1863.

44   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/400, Postes françaises, *letter of the France Consulate in Alexandria to the Direction of the French Posts in Constantinople, 1875.*

45   O.A., A.MKL., 80/36, article 1 and 15 of the agreement between the Ottoman State and İdâre-i Aziziye of 1 safer 1289 (10 April 1872).

46   J.C., No. 872, mercredi 6 janvier 1858, 13ᵉ année, 3.

47   O.A., A.DVN.MKL. 1/9, 6 Cemaziyelevvel 1274 (23 December 1857), *Meriç nehrinde vapur işletilmek üzere mukavele name, birinci madde.*

reign of Abdülaziz, several steamship lines were established on other important Ottoman waterways, such as the Sakarya River[48] and the Kızılırmak River[49]. The Oman-
Ottoman Administration established its services on the Dicle River, next to the services of the British Lynch Company, carrying goods and passengers between Baghdad
and Basra from the beginning of the 1860s.[50] Furthermore, a major imperial company
established its services on the lower Danube in 1867, under the name of *İdare-i Nehriye*.
This company was quite influential in its sector until the great crisis of 1873; it finally
collapsed in 1875.[51]

These steamship lines on the Ottoman rivers improved transport links between the
inner parts of the Empire and the seas. However, successful steamship navigation on
these rivers required essential engineering works. And navigation on rivers was hampered when the water flow reduced in summer and froze during cold winters.[52] Despite these difficulties, the Ottoman government used the increasing number of local
steamship companies in the Empire to improve and organise its maritime postal networks. To establish the autonomy of the imperial maritime postal services in the first
place, the Ottoman government under Abdülmecid bought steamships such as *Gemlik* and *Sürat*[53], then reserved other steamships of different sizes for the use of the
Ministry of Post and Telegraphs in 1859 (See Figure 1).

Significant improvements took place regarding the imperial steamship postal services under Abdülaziz. In 1863, the imperial government established the Organisation of the Coastal Postal Services (*Sahil Postaları Teşkilatı*). As a result, maritime postal
networks in the Empire developed considerably, in parallel with overland networks.
In 1873, the Ottoman Postal Administration (*Postahane-i Amire)* granted the imperial
steamship postal services privileged rights to the newly formed Ottoman steamship
company *İdare-i Aziziye* for 25 years and with an annual subsidy of 10,000 Turkish lira.[54]
This company also benefited from tax exemptions relating to the import of coal from
abroad.[55] These privileges helped the company develop its networks and overcome
strong competition from foreign steamship companies. All these efforts were indicating the Ottoman government's desire to become self-sufficient in relation to its imperial steamship networks.

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48   O.A., Ş.D., 1173C/3, 26 Şaban 1290 (19 October 1873).
49   O.A., MVL., 1043/9/13, 6 Zilhicce 1282 (22 April 1866).
50   Issawi 1966, 146-148; O.A., HR. ID., *letter no. 17451-389 from Ali Pasha to the French Embassy in Istanbul, December 5, 1866.*
51   *La Turquie*, No. 280, dimanche 5 et lundi 6 décembre 1875, 9ᵉ année, 1-2.
52   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/400, Postes, *letter of the Direction of the French Posts in Constantinople for the French Embassy, Constantinople, January 9, 1858.*
53   Eskin 1942, 21.
54   C.H., No. 1893, 19 Safer 1289 (28 April 1872).
55   O.A., A.MKT.MHM., 449/6, 2 Muharrem 1290 (1 March 1873).

Figure 1: The monopolisation measures of the Ottoman government for the improvement of the imperial postal services by means of regular steamship lines.[56]
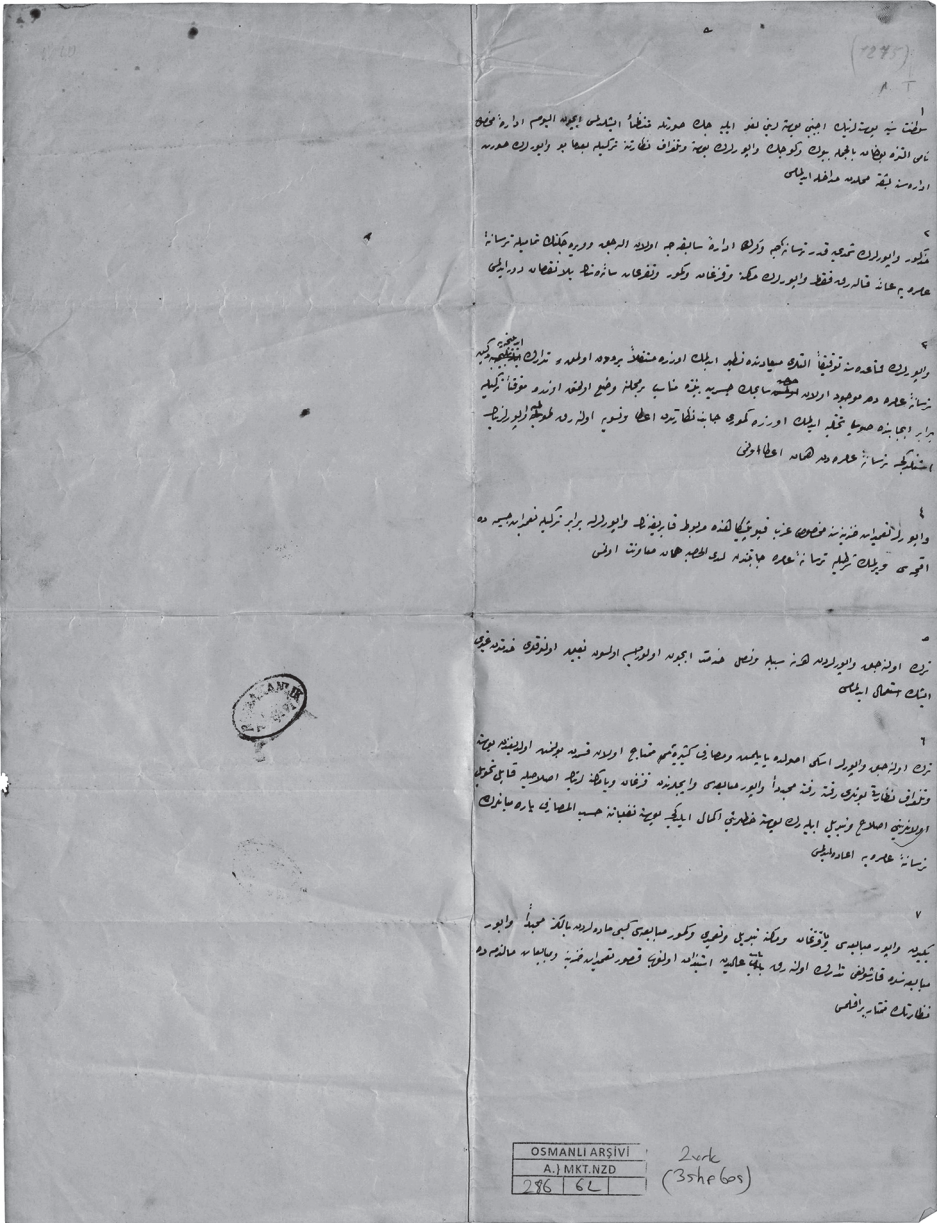
3.2 Importation/Internalisation/Exclusion as a Monopolisation Pattern

The developments outlined above demonstrate how the Ottoman state successfully appropriated the steamship technology that had been imported from Europe at the turn of the 1830s. The Ottoman government cannily exploited European knowledge and capital to build up its networks. However, once the Ottoman government had imported vehicles and infrastructure, it sought to seize control from foreign investors. For example, Haydarpaşa-Izmit railways were placed under an Ottoman administration from the beginning of the 1870s. Improved overland transportation infrastructure did not emerge at the same rate – because of the scale of work and the expense, these networks only really began to modernise in the final years of the 19th century.

However, compared to overland transport infrastructure, telegraph lines were easier to build. This telecommunication technology was brought to the Ottoman Empire by the French and the British during the Crimean War (1853–1856),[57] and spread rapidly across the territory.[58] The Ottoman government quickly appropriated the telegraph lines built in the Empire. To improve imperial telegraph networks and services, the Ottoman government sent agents to European capitals to learn about this new technology. The Turkish letters that were missing from European alphabets started to be used in imperial telecommunications networks in 1856.[59] In 1865, the Bagdad telegraphic lines were connected to the Persian Gulf and from there to Karachi by undersea cable.[60] The same year, with the initiative of the British, the Istanbul-Alexandria line was connected to Bombay. The Ottoman government benefited financially from the enhanced role of the Empire in global telegraphic networks by charging high prices for the use of the Ottoman systems.[61] However, the quality of the Ottoman telegraph services was an issue for the users.

As discussed already, the use of steamships for transportation spread quickly in the Empire. Several steamships bought by the Ottoman government from European shipbuilders starting from the end of the 1820s became state property giving birth to public companies. From a technical point of view, despite the significant costs generated by the engine construction and maintenance, as well as the charcoal and still water supply issue, the steamship technologies were easily internalised by the Ottoman central government and its provincial administration. Despite this increased availability of steamships, Ottoman ports did not have modern harbours for loading and unloading operations until the end of the 1860s. Most of the time, small ships (*mavna*) had to

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57 O.A., HR.SFR. (4), 15/45, *letter from the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte, September 10, 1854;* C.H., No. 740, fi 27 Şevval Pazar günü, 1271 (13 July Monday, 1855), 2; Laurencin 1877, 320-321.
58 Suavi 1288, 12.
59 Yazıcı 1984, 753.
60 Rogan 1998, 115.
61 Headrick 1988, 101.

carry cargo between the ships and the ports. French entrepreneurs of the *Société des Quais de Smyrne* only started to build a harbour at the port of Izmir in 1868.[62]

As imperial steamship networks matured, Ottoman governments made attempts to expel foreign postal services and their steamship companies from Ottoman ports. The monopoly declaration of Ali Pasha to foreign embassies in 1864 was amongst the most striking examples of the protectionist turn made during the Tanzimat period under Abdülaziz. The year before this declaration, the Ottoman government had already organised the Imperial Maritime Postal Networks (*Sahil Postaları Teşkilatı*). This organisation served as a basis to the monopoly claim of the Ottoman government in 1864.

Several protectionist attitudes are evident during the Abdülaziz period. These add up to a particular strategy, which I shall now outline. Initially, capital and techniques were imported from Europe in order to build transportation networks. Once these networks were built, the Ottoman government sought to eliminate foreign actors. However, as I will explain below, local steamship services could not adequately serve all ports of the Empire. For this reason, the Ottoman government sought to affirm monopolies in smaller sectors.

For instance, in 1851, the Ottoman government banned foreign steamship services associated with Istanbul and gave the monopoly of this sector to an Ottoman company named *Şirket-i Hayriye*.[63] This ban concerned the transportation of passengers, but not mail. It exemplifies the strategy to create monopolies within certain sectors. It was the first time that the Ottoman government succeeded in evicting foreign companies from the Empire. This success was undoubtedly due to the small size of the geographical sector in question, for which *Şirket-i Hayriye* was capable of serving.

In parallel, Ottoman governments took measures to promote the development of the local steamship sector. They did so by placing operational obstacles in the path of the foreign steamship companies that operated in Ottoman ports. This protected new Ottoman companies from the competition of powerful European steamship companies. For example, in 1865, the Ottoman government prohibited foreign companies from crossing the Straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus at night. However, the Ottoman government exempted the local company *Fevaid-i Osmaniye* from this prohibition. Thus, the ships of the Ottoman company did not have to wait for hours when travelling between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.[64] Whilst he was placing limitations on foreign services, Sultan Abdülaziz made significant efforts to improve the imperial fleet. His reign is marked by several administrative, financial, technological and educational developments in the maritime field. Despite the economic costs and the critics, Sultan Abdülaziz used the naval heritage of Mahmud II and Abdülmecid

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62   O.A., T.TTEK, 490/54, *Procès-verbal des délibérations du Corps Consulaire de la Ville de Smyrne relative à la Construction de Quais de Smyrne, le 20 janvier 1868.*
63   Koraltürk 2007, 28; Güleryüz 2006, 13.
64   A.M.A.E., La Courneuve, Correspondance commerciale, Smyrne, 1862-1866, *letter no. 69, from the French Consulate in Smyrne to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, Smyrne, March 29, 1865.*

and the technical developments in Europe to build one of the world's leading fleets, in terms of quantity. The third dry dock in the Istanbul Arsenal was constructed initially under Abdülmecid in 1857, and then completed under Abdülaziz in 1870. This complemented the first dry dock, which was built by Selim III (r. 1789–1807) between 1797 and 1800 under the direction of the engineer Rhode and by Swedish engineers, and then enlarged by 80 metres under Abdülaziz. A floating dock was added in 1872. Regarding the shipping industry, between 1864 and 1874, Abdülaziz added several ironclad ships to the imperial fleet. When his reign came to an end, there were in total 106 ships in the Ottoman fleet, of which 30 were ironclads, and 76 were wooden ships.[65]

Through these attempts, the Ottoman government sought to reaffirm its sovereignty that had been diluted by the globalisation of transportation and communication networks. Abdülaziz desired to achieve international prestige, and it would not be wrong to say that he gained this prestige from the imperial fleet. However, despite this progress, the Ottoman government was still dependent on the foreign steamship services for its communications abroad.

3.3 Dependence of the Ottoman Government on Foreign Steamship Services

There was a notable increase in the number of local steamship companies in the Empire under Abdülaziz. However, these companies were suffering with financial problems. Their fleets were often small compared to those of big foreign companies like the French *Messageries* or the Austrian *Lloyd*. Therefore, local steamship companies failed to include some imperial ports in their networks. For example, in the early 1860s, Cypriot ports were not included within the imperial systems. The island was experiencing serious problems with communicating with the outside world.[66] The local administration had to ask the imperial admiralty (*kapudane*) for steamships from the Imperial Arsenal or from the neighbour islands to ameliorate this situation.[67]

In 1865, the Governor of Aleppo asked the imperial government for a steamship to serve the route between Mersin and Iskenderun. The Sublime Porte answered in the negative, telling the Governor of Aleppo that the Imperial Arsenal did not have sufficient ships to satisfy the request. However, the Ottoman government was announcing the expedition of a corvette on which the Arsenal was installing a steam engine.[68] Most of the time, due to the lack of steamships, the Ottoman government under Abdülaziz could not – despite its desire – completely ban the foreign postal services between the imperial ports. For example, in 1872, the Ottoman government authorised the French consul to establish a postal service between Aleppo and Iskenderun.[69] In 1870, the

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65   Zorlu 2009, 147-154.
66   Aymes 2010, 108.
67   O.A., A.MKT.MHM., 238/18, 23 Zilhicce 1278 (21 June 1862).
68   O.A., A.MKT. MHM., 355/61/3, letters No. 1 and 2, 19 Nisan 1282 (1 May 1866).
69   O.A., HR.ID., 1705/5, *Les Postes françaises dans l'Empire ottoman, le 5 mars 1872.*

British *T. B. Morton Company* carried the mail of the Ottoman Postal Administration on the Black Sea and the Danube.[70]

One of the most significant weaknesses of the Ottoman administration under Abdülaziz was the lack of regular imperial steamship postal networks abroad, and especially in the Western Mediterranean ports. International postal communication was crucial for the Ottoman government, for the political and economic viability of the Empire.

Nevertheless, Ottoman ships were not wholly absent in Western European ports. For example, a vessel of the Ottoman admiralty had supplied charcoal to four French steamships of the *Claude Clerc et Cie.* company near Marseille in 1869.[71] However, this ship was certainly not the property of the Ottoman Postal Administration. According to the consular agent of the Sublime Porte in Brindisi, 30 Ottoman ships had visited the Italian port in 1873.[72] However, these were rare instances of the Ottoman postal service's international presence, and it did not go further than Tripoli and Benghazi in the West.[73] Therefore, the Ottoman government depended mostly on the services of foreign steamship companies to communicate internationally, particularly with its diplomatic and consular missions in different parts of Europe.

In the early 1870s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte used the services of the French Companies like the *Messageries* or *Fraissinet et Cie.* to communicate with its embassy in Paris, and with its consular missions in French cities such as Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux and Le Havre.[74] As these communications were expensive, the Ottoman government often asked these companies for an exemption from payment.[75] Merchants or other populations in the Ottoman ports who needed to correspond with Marseille had to use the services of the French *Messageries*, which was the official partner of the French postal administration.

Several other foreign steamship companies carried letters between the Empire and correspondents beyond the Empire. The Austrian *Lloyd* offered regular services between Istanbul and Trieste. Austrian steamships played an essential role for the communications between Ottoman ports and those in Italy (like Venice, Chioggia, Bari or Citta Nova) and Greece (in the Aegean and the Adriatic Sea as well as the Ionian Islands) and Trieste.[76] In the East, the Ottoman government had to use the services of the British steamship companies like the *Peninsular and Oriental* to communicate with

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70   Sciaky 2006, 19.

71   O.A., HR.H., 119/55, *Correspondence between Safvet Pasha and Server Pasha, no. 34-469, 39,* 12 March 1873.

72   O.A., HRC.SFR., *Correspondence between the Turkish Consulate in Brindisi and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte, February 8, 1873.*

73   O.A., A.MKT.MHM., 371/72, 23 Şaban 1283 (30 December 1866).

74   O.A., HR.H., 119/51, *Correspondence between Munir Pasha and Khalil Pasha*, Paris, 11 October 1872.

75   O.A., HR.H., 759/8, *Correspondence between the Swedish Legation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte, Constantinople, November 17, 1866.*

76   *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmâniyye* 1859, 125.

India or Far Eastern ports. Later, with the arrival of the *Messageries Impériales* to the Suez sector in the early 1860s, and the arrival of other companies with the opening of the Suez Channel in 1869, the Ottoman government had other choices.

To summarise, despite the significant progress of the local steamship companies, the Ottoman postal networks under Abdülaziz were limited both within and without the Empire. Therefore, the Ottoman government could not completely exclude the foreign postal steamship services in the Ottoman Empire during this period. This did not prevent the Ottoman government from adopting protectionist policies against the operations of the international postal services on the imperial territory. In doing so, Ottoman authorities inhibited the flows of post through foreign post offices in the Empire.

4. Rethinking the Postal Protectionism under Abdülaziz from Imperial Dynamics to International Relations

4.1 Political and Financial Reasons behind the Intervention of the Ottoman Police on Foreign Postal Operations

Under Abdülaziz, the foreign postal administrations on Ottoman territory complained about the frequent interventions of the Ottoman police in their offices, who would often open mailbags and envelopes. The Direction of the French Posts in Istanbul refused to receive the Ottoman police without any juridical decision coming from an imperial prosecutor.[77] According to foreign postal agents, the behaviour of the Ottoman police was against the capitulations. They argued that Ottoman police were violating the principle of secrecy of correspondence.

Through these interventions, the Ottoman government hoped to censor any political threat that might threaten its imperial integrity. Ottoman authorities were also seeking to prevent smuggling activities that were causing severe damages to the Imperial Treasury. In principle, foreign post offices were operating on Ottoman territory within their consulates. Therefore, they were considered as foreign territories. However, a regulation adopted on July 2, 1287 (1870) authorised the Ottoman police to intervene in post offices in order to control the postal movements. Through this act, the Ottoman government sought to prevent the penetration of foreign newspapers in the Empire that might threaten imperial integrity with their publications.[78] Some of these newspapers were coming from Greece through the French or Greek postal services.[79] For this reason, the Ottoman government closed the Greek Post Office in Istanbul in January 1868.[80]

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77   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/400, Postes, *letter from the Direction of the French Posts in Constantinople for the Chargé d'affaires of France, Constantinople, February 11, 1860.*
78   *Düstûr* 1873, 'Posta Nizamnamesi', fi 2 temmuz 1287, article 1, 461.
79   C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/400, Postes françaises, *letter from the Direction of the French Posts in Constantinople for the Chargé d'affaires of France, March 25, 1857.*
80   Kütükoğlu 1992, 132.

Ottoman authorities also exerted greater control of foreign postal operations for financial reasons. In the Abdülaziz period, the Ottoman authorities complained that the postal communications had become channels for smuggling. Some senders were hiding valuable goods, such as gold, in envelopes.[81] Counterfeit money (*kaime*) manufactured in Europe was also flowing through the foreign postal offices.[82] Ottoman authorities contacted the Central Commissary of Marseille in 1865 to curtail suspicious activity surrounding the manufacture of fake patents (*berat*).[83] During the same year, the Imperial Customs Administration reported numerous violations of postal regulations to the Sublime Porte. All these activities were harming the Ottoman Treasury, which was already in distress because of its level of foreign debt. The foreign minister of the Sublime Porte, Ali Pasha, sought the cooperation of foreign missions in Istanbul.[84] These missions responded positively to Ali Pasha.[85]

Postal services generated income for the imperial budget. This income was necessary for the functioning of the Ottoman Postal Administration, given increased costs associated with modernisation. Ottoman networks were expanding and making use of steamships and other new technologies. To replace the abrogated foreign postal services in some regions, the Ottoman government was making significant financial investments. For all these reasons, the Ottoman Postal Administration had to increase its income. And so, the Ottoman government under Abdülaziz took measures to concentrate the postal profits in the hands of the government. The corruption within the farming system (*iltizam*) between 1852 and 1857 led to the abandonment of this system.[86] To control the collection of taxes, the imperial government adopted the stamp system, abandoning the ancient *tuğra* (monogram of the sultan). These stamps were in different colours corresponding to different prices determined by the weight of the letters.[87]

With these efforts, the Ottoman government aimed to monopolise the postal services on an imperial scale. However, under the reign of Abdülaziz, the increasing interventions of the imperial authorities at the foreign postal offices, as well as several attempts at banning foreign actors, mentioned above, were in contradiction with the liberalisation movement within the international postal communications.

81   O.A., HR.ID., 810/10, *letter no. 102/52 from the General Consulate of Turkey in Paris to Ali Pasha, minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte in Constantinople, August 16, 1866.*

82   C.H., No. 879, 6 Şaban 1274 (22 March 1858), 1.

83   O.A., HR.SFR. (4), 106/20, *letter from Safvet Pasha to Ali Pasha, February 2, 1866.*

84   O.A., HR.ID., 810/6, *Circulaire aux représentants étrangers, no. 15356-31, October 23, 1865.*

85   O.A., HR.ID., 810/6, *letter n. 24 from the Belgian Legation to Ali Pasha, Constantinople, October 26, 1865*; O.A., HR. ID, 810/6, *letter no. 6 from the British Legation to Ali Pasha, Constantinople, December 4, 1865;* O.A., HR.ID., 810/6, *letter no. 67/6 from the Russian Legation to Ali Pasha, Pera, January 27, 1866.*

86   Yazıcı 1992, 177-178.

87   *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye* 1869, 'Malumat-ı Bahriye', 188-89.

4.2 Ottoman Postal Protectionism in a Globalising World

The protectionist policies of the Ottoman governments against the foreign postal services under Abdülaziz brought the diplomatic commitments of the Ottoman state into question. When the foreign minister Ali Pasha declared the abolition of foreign postal services in 1864, the foreign embassies in Istanbul reminded the Sublime Porte of its duties in bilateral treaties. For example, according to the Austrian ambassador, this decision was contrary to the conventions of Pasarowitz of 21 July 1718 and Zistow of August 4, 1791, by which the Ottoman state had guaranteed, 'help and protection' in relation to Austrian diplomatic correspondence between Vienna and Istanbul.[88] However, according to Ali Pasha, these treaties could not prevent the Ottoman government from declaring its postal monopoly on its territory.[89] The diplomatic disputes between the Ottoman government and foreign missions demonstrated that capitulations and ancient treaties were losing their legitimacy in the eyes of the Ottoman government under the reign of Abdülaziz.

The monopoly declaration of 1864 took place one year after the first International Postal Congress took place in Paris in 1863. This congress was organised under the supervision of the American postmaster Montgomery Blair.[90] In total, 15 states from Europe and the USA participated in this congress.[91] Austria, Denmark, Spain, Great Britain, Italy, Holland and Prussia were amongst the participants.[92] This congress was the first of its kind and demonstrated a radical transformation of international postal communications. Beyond bilateral treaties, states were coming together to resolve postal questions like tariffs and other sovereignty issues at a global level. This congress aimed to put an end to arbitrary practices within participant states, such as the exclusive postal monopoly France held within its territory. The Ottoman government had not participated in the first postal congress of 1863, and as mentioned above, adopted particularly protectionist attitudes towards the foreign postal services throughout the Abdülaziz period.

However, the Ottoman Empire had strong political and commercial ties, especially with Europe. The Ottoman economy and its political integrity were dependent on the continuation of these ties. With its strategic position within global transportation and communication networks, the Ottoman Empire was an important actor of the globalisation process. The Ottoman government was also taking an active part in international organisations in the sanitary field. Under Mahmud II, an international sanitary commission was established in Istanbul to help the Ottoman Sanitary Administration prevent epidemics, and to cope with the sanitary catastrophes such as plague and chol-

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88   O.A., HR.ID., 1706/3, *letter no. 204-27 from the Austrian Embassy in Constantinople to Ali Pasha, Constantinople, May 11, 1864.*

89   O.A., HR.ID., 1706/3, *letter no. 11634-66 from Ali Pasha to the Comte of Prokersch Ostow, December 19, 1864.*

90   *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report* 1864, 112-114.

91   Reinalda 2009, 89.

92   *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report* 1864, 128.

era.[93] In this regard, the Ottoman Empire participated in several international sanitary congresses particularly from the beginning of the 1850s, like the International Sanitary Conference in Paris, on July 27, 1853.[94]

The law in the Ottoman Empire was also in transformation. Imperial law was modernised through the publication of codes based on European models, like in the case of the Merchant Marine Code (*Kanunname-i Hümayun-ı Ticaret-i Bahriye*) of 1863.[95] Mixed and impartial tribunals were established for the judgement of international affairs. These changes demonstrate a transfer of competence from traditional consular jurisdictions created under capitulation regimes to more international juridical structures.

In the political field, the Ottoman Empire joined the Concert of Europe through the Conference of Paris of 1856. In return, the Ottoman government adopted a series of reforms in order to establish equality between the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Empire within a constitutional text known as *Islahat Fermanı* on February 28, 1856. As a result of this act, European states obtained privileges in the Ottoman Empire in the fields of trade, industry, mining and transportation.[96] With the Treaty of Paris of March 30, 1856, two European Commissions were formed in the Danube region.[97] These commissions confirmed articles 108 and 109 of the Vienna Treaty of 1815 on the freedom of navigation on waterways shared by numerous states.[98] All these new international structures transformed relations between the Ottoman Empire and foreign states, which had hitherto been mainly determined by capitulations and specific treaties. In this respect, the situation was evolving into a mix of capitulations and international regulations.

With regards to international organisations in the field of communication, the Ottoman Empire became a member of the International Union of Telegraphy, which was formed on the 17th of May 1865 with the participation of 20 states.[99] The Ottoman Empire became a constitutive member of the General Postal Union in 1874. In total 22 countries participated in the General Postal Union: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Denmark (including Iceland and Faroe Islands), Egypt, Spain (including the Balearic islands, Spanish possessions on the North African coast as well as the Spanish post offices on the Western coast of Morocco), the United States of America, France and Algeria, Great Britain (including Malta), Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Nor-

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93   Panzac 1992, 327; C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/465, *annex of the letter no. 161, Rapport collectif des Délégués au Conseil Supérieur de Santé, Pera, September 14, 1859.*
94   Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 5/M/109, *Convention sanitaire internationale de 1853, Règlement sanitaire international de l'année 1853.*
95   Cin 1992, 23.
96   Ortaylı 2011, 46.
97   Scupin 1981, 191.
98   J.C., No. 877, samedi 23 janvier 1858, 13· année, 1.
99   Moynier 1892, 16.

way, Holland, Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores), Romania, Russia (including Finland), Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and the Ottoman Empire.[100]

The overall aim of these international unions was to diminish obstacles that stood in the way of global communications. The postal unions were insisting on the principle of the freedom of transit and the adoption of general tariffs regarding the international postal communications.[101] For the Ottoman Empire, the postal unions were essential instruments of legitimacy and prestige. The Ottoman government used these international structures as diplomatic platforms to defend its interests and postal sovereignty. For instance, during the General Postal Union negotiations in 1874, Ottoman representatives insisted on the necessity of the closure of the foreign postal offices on the Ottoman territory.[102] This attitude was in contradiction with the internationalist spirit of these structures.

Conclusion

This paper has cast light on the hitherto ignored protectionist characteristics of the Tanzimat process. It has demonstrated how the Ottoman government used steamship technology to create its own imperial maritime postal networks. Following the importation of steamship technology in the 1820s, imperial steamship networks multiplied, reaching a degree of maturity under the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz. Once the imperial systems started to meet the demands of local communications, the Ottoman government made several attempts to exclude foreign postal services between the ports of the Empire. The Ottoman government under Abdülaziz tried to recuperate its postal sovereignty in the Empire through significant technical efforts and diplomatic manoeuvres. Despite these efforts, the imperial communication and transportation networks suffered substantial weaknesses. Abdülaziz's period saw a protectionist turn regarding the foreign postal services in the Empire, and this protectionism continued to increase through the reign of Abdülhamid II.

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100 Chaubert 1970, 13.
101 C.A.D.N., Nantes, 166PO/E/400, *Les Actes de l'Union postale universelle révisés à Vienne 1874 et annotés par les soins du Bureau international*, XI.
102 Kütükoğlu 1992, 132.

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