




**SPECIAL FOCUS ROUNDTABLE: UNVEILING UNCHARTED REALMS: THE OTTOMAN GRAND VIZIERATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND THE KÖPRÜLÜ DYNASTY REVISITED**

## **An Evaluation of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's Foreign Policy**

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### **Abstract**

Historiographical tradition has tended to view the Köprülü-era foreign policy as one of conscious expansion, fueled by religious fervor. The descriptions of the seventeenth-century Ottoman chroniclers to that effect influenced the researchers of the twenty-first-century, too. However, in the reports of European diplomatic representatives active in Istanbul at the time, we see that the expansionary policy in the Köprülü period was not actually a pre-planned phenomenon with religious motivations; it was more likely that the grand viziers responded to the urgent problems arising from the political conjuncture of the period. To be more precise, this study argues that events such as the Érsekújvár Expedition (1663), the Siege of Candia (1667–69), and the Campaign of Kamieniec (1672), which all took place during the reign of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (r. 1661–76), could not be explained by religious motivations alone. Instead, the present study argues that a better way to understand Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy is interpreting it from an international relations perspective through the neoclassical realist parameters of the individual, state structure, and international system.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Foreign Policy; Seventeenth-century; Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha; Ottoman Wars in Europe; Grand Vizierate; Neoclassical Realism

In the years between 1661 and 1676, that is, during the grand vizierate of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, the Ottoman frontiers in Europe were at full stretch. Conquests in Central and Eastern Europe brought Érsekújvár (1663), Candia (1669), and Kamieniec Podolski (1672) under Ottoman control, increasing the authority of the grand vizier.<sup>1</sup> These acquisitions came on top of the successful grand vizierate of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (1656–61), Fazıl Ahmed's father, from whom the latter

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<sup>1</sup> Gábor Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 480–90.



inherited this prestigious office. The empire, one could argue, almost returned to the glorious days of the Suleymanic golden age in the sixteenth-century while father and son Köprülü acted as the premiere ministers of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman historiography has commonly attributed terms such as *revival* or *restoration* to the Köprülü era in light of these military accomplishments, a period marked by a rash impulse of expansionism. That the contemporary chroniclers portrayed the Köprülü grand viziers and Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648–87) as piety-driven decision-makers who prioritized expanding the frontiers of Islam fortified that image and inevitably influenced present-day scholarship. Besides, even scholars who did not observe a pietistic intentionality in the Köprülü era tended to contextualize the territorial expansion as a deliberately pursued foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> However, a closer evaluation of the available sources with an eye for finer details between the lines reveals a different explanation.

The present study suggests that the Ottoman foreign policy during Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's grand vizierate was not necessarily marked by a fervent pietism or a deliberately expansionist stratagem. Instead, I propose that a reactionary approach to emergent situations in Southern and Eastern Europe might have guided Köprülü Ahmed Pasha. His actions across Ottoman boundaries seem to have been motivated by threats in these regions. However, such an interpretation does not necessarily impute a lack of intentionality to Ahmed Pasha's decision-making: the signing of trade treaties with, and granting of commercial privileges (i.e., capitulations) to, European states that were not affected or targeted by Ahmed Pasha's campaigns strengthen the argument that his foreign policy was as rational as it could be at the time. In that respect, instead of imbuing Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy with any specific agenda, this study argues that his management of international affairs should be approached from an international relations (IR) perspective, namely, that of neoclassical realism, which rationalizes the pasha's decisions and emphasizes the personal, systemic, and structural framework of his choices.

Blending historical analyses with IR studies is a recently burgeoning occupation for scholars. While studying early modern Ottoman foreign policy, historians have successfully acknowledged the pragmatic functioning and realist worldview of the House of Osman,<sup>3</sup> but not yet analyzed it from the framework of international relations. IR researchers considering this field, on the other hand, have relied heavily on secondary studies on the early modern Ottoman Empire and adopted large temporal scopes.<sup>4</sup> As a result, case studies

<sup>2</sup> Metin Kunt, "The Köprülü Years: 1656–1661" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1971), 134–35; Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The term "restoration" seems to be introduced by Kissling, see Hans Joachim Kissling, "Die Köprülü-Restauration," in *Internationales Kulturhistorisches Symposium Mogersdorf 1969, Österreich und die Türken* (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Landesarchiv, 1972), 75–84.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Rhoads Murphey, "Ottoman Expansion, 1451–1556. I. Consolidation of Regional Power, 1451–1503," in *Early Modern Military History, 1450–1815*, ed. Geoff Mortimer (Houndmills, New York, 2004): 43–59; and the third section below.

<sup>4</sup> For some groundbreaking examples, see Ali Balci, "Bringing the Ottoman Order Back into International Relations: A Distinct International Order or Part of an Islamic International

conducting more specific historical investigations from IR perspectives are required.<sup>5</sup>

This article draws upon embassy reports (dispatches) of European representatives in Istanbul in order to reevaluate the actual moments of foreign policy decision-making, and mindset and rationale of the grand vizier, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. To do so, the article shifts away from the traditional focus on chronicles (*vekyiname*), i.e., the principal source of Ottoman political history writing,<sup>6</sup> to contemporary European embassy reports about the Ottoman Empire. European embassy reports written by external observers occasionally manifest prejudices and biases. However, they also reflected the realities of the time in which they were written. The audience of these dispatches were European courts and administrators; therefore, their viewpoint tends to be less susceptible to skewing toward the sultan, which is usually the case with Ottoman chronicles. For the home court they were addressed to, the reports had to provide accurate snapshots of major Ottoman policy decisions and resolutions. Furthermore, they were produced at or around the time of major decision-making moments, military actions, or political developments, and in the course of regular diplomatic record-keeping, which increases their reliability. In contrast, the chronicles were penned retrospectively to glorify the past – generally to please the author’s patron, who was almost always a member of the Ottoman ruling elite. Moreover, the final version of a chronicle was usually completed long after the events in question had taken place. As a result, deliberate modifications (such as favorably editing the image of the sultan, a vizier, or a pasha during a military campaign), selective recollection of events, and avoidance of certain facts were constant features of Ottoman chronicles.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, even though the chronicles are the traditional source material for Ottoman political history, it is imperative to utilize European diplomatic reports to complement them, especially for the purpose of gleaning, or confirming, particular details.

A brief survey of the literature on the perceived rationale that guided the Köprülü administration is set forth in the first section. Next, the focus shifts to the moments of decision-making before or during Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s major military campaigns in order to emphasize that his drive to expand Ottoman territory was not preconditioned by any particular religious or self-seeking motivation. Instead, the last section will analyze Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s foreign policy through the lenses of neoclassical realism: it was a combination of (a) the structure of the early modern international state system on the one

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Society?” *International Studies Review* 23.4 (2021): 2090–2107; Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Elman & Elman spoke of a “qualitative turn” or “historical turn” while referring to the then-recent convergence between IR and history, Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, “The Role of History in International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (2008): 357–64. But their perception of history seems to go no further back than the twentieth century.

<sup>6</sup> Erhan Afyoncu, “Osmanlı Siyasî Tarihinin Ana Kaynakları: Kronikler,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 1(2) (2003): 101–72.

<sup>7</sup> For one such case, see Metin Kunt, “Naima, Köprülü, and the Grand Vezirate,” *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* vol. 1 (1973): 57–64.

hand, (b) the Köprülü strategic culture, and (c) improving economic conditions and regime stability of the Ottoman Empire that rendered the territorial expansion possible.<sup>8</sup>

### Searching for a Meaning in Köprülü Foreign Policy

Modern scholarship has developed numerous approaches to understand Köprülü foreign policy, which was marked by a series of Ottoman conquests in Central and Eastern Europe. In Metin Kunt's formulation, "Ottoman Northern Policy" was a deliberate design that aimed to incorporate "Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia into regular Ottoman provinces" by seizing Yanova (Ineu) and Podolia (Kamieniec) around the 1660s and 1670s.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Kunt assumed that the conquests were the products of a predetermined policy the Ottoman administration applied under the father and son Köprülüs.

Mark David Baer, in his *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, treated Köprülü expansionism from a different perspective.<sup>10</sup> Baer believed that a pietistic revival characterized the second half of the Ottoman seventeenth-century and argued that Islamic motivations gave shape both to the internal affairs of the empire and to its foreign policy. According to Baer, Sultan Mehmed IV was a ghazi monarch who strove to conquer Christian territories and convert Christian populations.

A third argument is that the conquests were intended, as a collateral reason at least, to increase the political prestige and financial capital of the Köprülü family. Kolçak, inspired by another article of Metin Kunt (where the latter suggested that the Köprülü family became *part* of the state) has recently argued that the Köprülü grand viziers established pious endowments (*vakıf*) one after the other in the newly conquered territories in order to accumulate wealth for their family. In that scenario, the Köprülüs are projected to have deliberately opted for "aggressive ways and methods in handling the empire's foreign policy that emerged in its palpable form in the 1660s."<sup>11</sup>

In a recent work on the second Ottoman siege of Vienna (1683), Kahraman Şakul relies predominantly on Kunt's and Kolçak's arguments concerning northern policy and accumulation of family wealth, respectively, to explain Ottoman expansionism. Yet Şakul adds a new layer to the narrative: the idea

<sup>8</sup> In a recent article, Yasir Yılmaz portrayed a picture (of Sultan Mehmed IV's choice of grand vizier) that "counters widespread perceptions about irrationality of the Ottoman decision-making process in the seventeenth-century, as implied by the religious revivalism debates." In a similar way, I aim at rationalizing foreign policy during the same timeframe. Yasir Yılmaz, "Grand vizierial authority revisited: Köprülü's legacy and Kara Mustafa Paşa," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (2016): 36.

<sup>9</sup> İbrahim Metin Kunt, "17. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Kuzey Politikası Üzerine Bir Yorum," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* 4-5 (1976-1977): 116.

<sup>10</sup> Baer, *Honored by the Glory*.

<sup>11</sup> Özgür Kolçak, "Köprülü Enterprises in Yanova ([Boros]Jenö/Ineu) and Varad ([Nagy]várad/Oradea): Consolidating Ottoman Power and Accumulating Family Wealth (1657-1664)," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 37 (2020): 84. Kolçak refers to Metin Kunt's "The Waqf as an Instrument of Public Policy: Notes on the Köprülü Family Endowments," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, ed. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul, 1994): 189-98.

of universal monarchy. The notion of universal monarchy often features in analyses concerning the sixteenth-century rivalry between Charles V and Suleyman I; in Şakul's narrative, the notion re-emerges as a motive of the Köprülü. The religious fervor fanned by the Kadızadeli movement in the seventeenth-century, Şakul argues, further prompted the Ottomans to take measures to punish "the infidels on the border regions in order to serve the state and the religion."<sup>12</sup>

All of these explanations, explicitly or not, suggest that the Ottoman armies marched into Europe as a result of a persistent expansionary vision adopted by consecutive Köprülü grand viziers. The contemporary European embassy reports, however, cast doubt on that common interpretation and invite a different consideration of the Köprülü era. According to the embassy reports, ambivalence better describes the Ottoman decision-making mechanism during the Köprülü era. The reports show that the Ottoman court was often hesitant about the direction of the campaign on the eve of major military decisions. The Ottoman armies were deployed on battlefields where there was an urgent need to preserve Ottoman interests, while the court concurrently granted concessions of a commercial nature to friendly or neutral European powers. In other words, the foreign policy followed by Fazıl Ahmed Pasha government should rather be regarded as reactive than proactive.

In the following, the present study will try to demonstrate that the three military expeditions commanded by Fazıl Ahmed Pasha were not actually undertaken with any hidden expansionary agenda. As will be underlined below, the 1663 and 1672 campaigns were borne out of necessity to respond to recent foreign policy developments while the original targets of the Ottoman grand vizier were different geographies. And the campaign against Crete between 1666 and 1669 was not even a new front opened for any personal or religious reason; it was the closing chapter of a prolonged military endeavor inherited by the father and son Köprülü grand viziers. The final subchapter contextualizes the Ottoman conquests from an IR perspective, suggesting that instead of attributing Fazıl Ahmed's expansionism to religious fervor or individual profit without any underlying context, one can also utilize the tenets of neoclassical realism in understanding the grand vizier and his era.

### *The Uyvar/Érsekújvár Campaign (1663)*

The 1663-64 Ottoman campaigns in central Europe against the Habsburgs are well-known episodes of seventeenth-century Ottoman military history: even though the Ottomans managed to conquer Érsekújvár (Tr. Uyvar, a salient bridgehead in central Europe) from the Habsburgs in 1663, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's army was stopped at St. Gotthard the next year, forcing the two parties to conclude the Vasvar Treaty.<sup>13</sup> These campaigns were actually offshoots of

<sup>12</sup> Kahraman Şakul, *II. Viyana Kuşatması: Yedi Başlı Ejderin Fendi*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınevi, 2021), 54.

<sup>13</sup> For one of the most recent contributions, see Kahraman Şakul, *Uyvar Kuşatması 1663* (İstanbul: Timaş, 2021).

Ottoman intervention in Transylvania in the late 1650s,<sup>14</sup> as a result of which Habsburg forces entered into the Ottoman tributary state of Transylvania in 1661 and garrisoned certain fortress inside Transylvanian territory before the main Habsburg army withdrew from the principality.<sup>15</sup> So it is also possible to read the Ottoman campaign against Érsekújvár ultimately as a response to increasing Habsburg influence in Central Europe. For our case, the campaign of 1663 and its aftermath need to be dealt with in isolation as Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's first military undertakings. An in-depth analysis as to how the campaign eventually unfolded might correct certain suppositions in literature. A recent study, for example, prompts readers to conclude that the Ottoman army had started to gather outside Istanbul as early as February 1663 for the campaign against the Habsburgs.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, a closer reading of the sources at the time begs to differ.

To start with the literature, Şimşirgil has remarked on the basis of Ottoman chronicles that by late 1662, the Ottoman administration intended to bring the Venetian wars to an end, which had been afoot since 1645. Venetian holdings such as Cattaro (Kotor), Sebenico (Sibenik) and Spalato (Split) on the Dalmatian coast were the preferred targets of Ottoman forces, as decided at a council meeting at the Porte on 24 September 1662.<sup>17</sup> A contemporary witness, Simon Reniger von Reningen, the Habsburg resident representative at the Porte, also confirmed it with a slight shift of the date: on 26 August 1662, the Ottomans had publicly declared Venice as the target of the next campaign and sent orders of mobilization to European and Asian territories of the empire.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Ottoman archival evidence supports both the chronicle and the report: an imperial command issued around September–October 1662 specified that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was appointed to lead the campaign against the Venetian holdings on the Dalmatian coast, while similar imperial decrees commanded local authorities to repair the bridges in Bosnia, confirming that Venetian territories would be the campaign's destination.<sup>19</sup> It must have been with reference to such an order that the Dutch embassy in Istanbul also wrote in December 1662: "valiant and experienced men have been sent to the borders of Kotor and Split in order to inspect the passes and topography in the region" when it was suggested that the next year's campaign would be

<sup>14</sup> Özgür Kolçak, "XVII. Yüzyıl Askerî Gelişimi ve Osmanlılar: 1660-64 Osmanlı-Avusturya Savaşları" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2012), 271-85.

<sup>15</sup> Ağoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 479.

<sup>16</sup> M. Fatih Çalışır, "War and Peace in the Frontier: Ottoman Rule in the Uyvar Province, 1663-1685" (Master's thesis, Bilkent University, 2009), 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ahmet Şimşirgil, *Slovakya'da Osmanlılar (Türk Uyvar) 1663-1685*, (Istanbul: KTB Yayınları, 2012), 42-43, 66-67.

<sup>18</sup> Alfons Huber, "Österreichs diplomatische Beziehungen zur Pforte, 1658-1664," *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte* (LXXXV, II. Hälfte, 1898), 568.

<sup>19</sup> Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Msc. Dresden Eb 387, f. 78r: "Hala Venedik keferesinin Büyük Kıyı'da olan kalalarının inşaallah-ı teala feth ve teshiri için ... vezir-i azam Ahmed Paşa serdar-ı zafer-şiar tayin olunub... (Fi S [10]73/ 15 September-13 October 1662)"; Dresden Eb 387, f. 83v: "Serdar Ali Paşa'ya hüküm ki, ... evvel baharda olacak sefer-i hümayunun levazım ve mühimmatı tekmilinde ve Bosna tarafında müceddeden ta'miri lazım gelen cisrleri bir gün evvel yapılub... (Fi evasıt-ı R [10]73)."

Dalmatia against Venice.<sup>20</sup> Hence, one can deduce that the Ottomans were willing to keep peace with the Habsburgs in 1662 and to settle their long-lasting difference with the Venetians.

Simon Reniger von Reningen, however, informed his government on 24 February 1663 about his latest meeting with the Ottoman authorities: regarding the rising tension between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans at the frontier region, Fazil Ahmed Pasha had given the Austrians the chance to choose between war or his conditions. The latter included the demolition of certain Habsburg fortifications around the Ottoman castle of Kanizsa/Kanije, confirmation of the local Hajduk people's allegiance to the Ottomans, acceptance of a more active Ottoman role in the future choice of Transylvanian princes, and, specifically, the restitution of a fortification named Székelyhíd to Transylvania. If the Austrians rejected these, then the Ottoman army would march into Central Europe instead of attacking the Dalmatian territories of Venice.<sup>21</sup> That is to say, by early 1663 it was still possible that the Ottoman army would not have attacked the Hungarian territories of the Habsburgs, should Vienna accept Fazil Ahmed's conditions. Similarly, the Dutch, English, and French representatives wrote to their governments at the end of March with only probabilities of an Ottoman strike against the Habsburgs.<sup>22</sup>

The conditionality present in the grand vizier's ultimatum to Austria and the rumors reported by European diplomats to their superiors regarding the uncertainty of the Ottoman army's objective indicate that the decision of Érsekújvár campaign developed over time, that is, after the army started assembling for the Venetian campaign. As hostilities with the Venetian Republic had played out for more than a decade and a half, the Ottoman administration was now willing to open a new land front against Venetian holdings on the Dalmatian coast. In this way, the pressure on the republic would be increased and the protracted war could hence be ended.

It appears, however, that the Ottoman administration eventually considered the Habsburg reluctance to accept its terms of peace as a more decisive disruption along the empire's western frontier. A further way to interpret this is to suggest that Fazil Ahmed Pasha ("Pasha") wished to capitalize on the fear factor of the Ottoman army, which could have possibly persuaded the Habsburg ministers to compromise with the Pasha even though the army's marching route would take it through Croatia. Nonetheless, the Austrians were not sufficiently intimidated nor willing to make the necessary concessions in time. And this was coupled with the Ottoman awareness of the Habsburg military weakness at the time, a weakness well exploited by the

<sup>20</sup> Levinus Warner, *De Rebus Turcicis*, G. N. Du Rieu ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 84: (Pera, 7[17] Dec 1662).

<sup>21</sup> Alfons Huber, "Österreichs diplomatische," 563-74.

<sup>22</sup> Levinus Warner, *De Rebus Turcicis*, 87: (Pera, 29 March 1663); *Report on the Manuscripts of Allan George Finch. Esq. of Burley-on-the-Hill. Rutland, Vol. 1*, Mrs. S. C. Lomas ed. (London: The Hereford Times, 1913), 247-48: (Pera, 30 March 1663); Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Turquie, 7, f. 64r: "Le com[m]un bruit est que c'est contre l'empereur, d'autre part on assure que les aff[air]es s[']accomoderont et que cette tempeste se deschargera sur la dalmatie" (Pera, 31 March 1663).



Pasha in 1663.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, the Ottoman intervention in Hungary in 1663 should be regarded as a rational and timely strike at the enemy rather than as a wild attack guided by religious fervor.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Campaign against Crete (1666-69)*

An Ottoman chronicle, *Tarih-i Sefer ve Feth-i Kandiye*, opens with the following claim: “On the first day of Shawwal 1076 [6 April 1666 AD], His Imperial Majesty the Sultan set out from Adrianople against the remnants of the Candia Castle on the Cretan Island (which had proven impregnable for the last twenty-five years) with the intention of *ghaza and jihad*. . . .”<sup>25</sup> Such an introduction by a contemporary author is a good example of how sources written by eyewitnesses could provide religious motives for Ottoman campaigns. One should, therefore, approach these sources with some hesitancy and critical attention. Indeed, religious explanations were often merely expressions of a stylistic pattern deployed by pre-modern Ottoman authors.

By the end of the conflict with the Austrians in 1664, it was now anticipated that a more assertive attitude toward Venice should be taken. The siege of Candia had started in 1645, and, hence, Ottoman military and economic resources were near exhaustion. As mentioned above, even though Ahmed Pasha’s preferred target had been Venice in 1663, circumstances led him to turn the barrel against the Habsburgs. Accordingly, even before peace with the Habsburgs was cemented through a ceremonial exchange of ambassadors in 1665,<sup>26</sup> it was sensed in Istanbul that Ahmed Pasha’s next initiative would be waged against the Venetians. The Dutch representative at the Porte reported home in December 1664 that the Ottoman armies’ next target would be, again, Kotor and Split.<sup>27</sup> A few months later, he continued: “a portion of the army the grand vizier formerly commanded against the Austrians is now reserved against Dalmatia.”<sup>28</sup> This was a clear sign that Ahmed Pasha was diverting forces from Hungary to the Adriatic before the middle of 1665. Apparently, he intended to complete unfinished business. In early 1666, the issue was canvassed at a *divan* meeting, where it was suggested that successive commanders

<sup>23</sup> Georg B. Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under siege: Ottoman expansion and Hungarian revolt in the age of Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661-76)* (London, Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 31; Ağoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 479.

<sup>24</sup> Şakul also refers to a council meeting in April 1663, where it was concluded that “Venice not being strong on land, it did not pose an urgent threat” at that moment, rendering it possible for the Ottomans to prioritize the Habsburg front. Kahraman Şakul, *Uyvar Kuşatması 1663*, 28-29.

<sup>25</sup> Mustafa bin Musa, *Tarih-i Sefer ve Feth-i Kandiye: Fazıl Ahmed Paşa’nın Girit Seferi ve Kandiye’nin Fethi -1666-1669* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür-Sanat, 2016), 100. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>26</sup> For the conclusion and ratification of the peace, see Ö. Kolçak, “XVII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Habsburg Diplomasi Tarihine Bir Katkı: 1664 Vasvar Antlaşması’nın Tasdik Sürecine Dair Yeni Bulgular,” *Divân Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 22, no. 43 (2017): 25-88. For the peace committees sent to Vienna and Istanbul, see Özgür Kolçak, “Nezakette Kusur Etmeyen Barbarlar: Diplomasi ve Kültürel Yargılar Arasında Bir Cizvit Rahibin Osmanlı Gözlemleri (1665-1666),” *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 30 (2019): 23-48.

<sup>27</sup> Levinus Warner, *De Rebus Turcicis*, 113; (Pera, 22 November [2 December] 1664).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.



had proven unable to crack the Venetian resistance at the siege of Candia: the matter called for the grand vizier's command in person.<sup>29</sup>

The English ambassador at the Porte wrote home in January 1666 that the grand vizier had already started to prepare for the campaign against Candia.<sup>30</sup> Of course, the ambassador was referring only to material preparations that he could observe from the Ottoman capital. What matters more for our subject were the diplomatic dealings that hint at a further aspect of Fazil Ahmed Pasha's reactionary foreign policy: the Genoese, the commercial rivals of the Venetian Republic, were given capitulations in 1665 and hence recognized once more as a Mediterranean power with a legitimate embassy in Istanbul.<sup>31</sup> This recognition was clearly a move that aimed to undermine the Venetian commercial presence in the eastern Mediterranean.

In addition to the reinforced Genoese position *vis-a-vis* the Venetians in the Ottoman territories, the demands of the Dutch Republic to attain confirmation concerning certain commercial clauses also received a positive response from the Ottoman court in 1668.<sup>32</sup> In both cases, the European diplomats initiated the demands. Their requests may not have been conceived by the grand vizier, but they were happily approved by him. In short, the Ottomans were not motivated by blind commitment to religious ideals. Just as in Europe, the Ottomans easily sidelined religion in matters of *realpolitik*: while Catholic France under the leadership of Cardinal Richelieu and Protestant Sweden became allies against the Habsburg Monarchy during the Thirty Years War (1618-48),<sup>33</sup> Fazil Ahmed Pasha followed the logic of cabinet diplomacy in a similar fashion.

### The Polish Campaign (1672)

Fazil Ahmed Pasha's next target after bringing the Cretan Campaign to a successful resolution was, as is well known, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Seen from the perspective of Kunt's "northern policy," the conquest of Kamieniec Podolski in 1672 was a deliberate choice in order to contain the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia before their proper incorporation into the Ottoman core territories.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, this suggestion is also a retrospective reading.

In a dispatch from the English embassy dated July 1671, the text emphasized that the grand vizier was planning a military undertaking through Aleppo or Damascus against the Arabs in the southern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ersin Gülsoy, "Girit'in Fethi ve Adada Osmanlı İdaresinin Tesisi (1645-1670)" (PhD diss., Marmara University, 1997), 107. This work has been published as Ersin Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi ve Osmanlı İdaresinin Kurulması, 1645-1670*, (Istanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> *Report on the Manuscripts*, 407 (Pera, 25 January 1666).

<sup>31</sup> Onorato Pàstine, *Genova e l'Impero Ottomano nel secolo XVII*, (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1952).

<sup>32</sup> Jacobus Coljer, *Dagh-register van't gene de Heere Justinus Coljer, Resident wegens de Ho. Mo. Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenighde Nederlanden...*, (The Hague, 1668).

<sup>33</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 58-62.

<sup>34</sup> Kunt, "17. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Kuzey Politikası," 115.

<sup>35</sup> The National Archives, State Papers, 97/19, f. 168 (Belgrade [Istanbul], 27 July 1671).

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's operation was reportedly aimed at suppressing rebellious groups in Yemen that were blockading the pilgrimage routes.<sup>36</sup> Later, in October 1671, the target was still Yemen. Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was willing to directly pass from Adrianople (Edirne) to Alexandria, while the Ottoman court was on the road from Adrianople to Bursa (Anatolia). Sultan Mehmed IV had, by now, even sent orders for the collection of timber from around the Black Sea in order to furnish twenty ships to use in the Red Sea.<sup>37</sup> It was only in January 1672 that one can observe the change in campaign direction: the Ottoman "preparations here for warr," remarked the English embassy, "are very extraordinary, & tis not doubted, but they are made against Poland."<sup>38</sup>

One can here extrapolate that the Ottoman preference for a northern campaign was driven by expediency. Historiographical tradition points to the Ottoman vassalage extended to Petro Doroshenko, the leader of the Cossacks, in 1669 and the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian general Jan Sobieski invaded Cossack territory in summer 1671.<sup>39</sup> Since the Cossacks were vassals of the Ottoman Empire, it was obligatory to protect them. Under these circumstances, the renunciation of the Yemen campaign in favor of a military undertaking against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth following the Polish attack on the Cossacks in 1671 was a necessary action.

Roughly around the same time that Metin Kunt was formulating his "northern policy" interpretation, the Romanian historian Tahsin Gemil touched upon similar issues, focusing on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and its Danubian tributaries of Wallachia and Moldavia. As Gemil accurately observed, even though the Ottomans seized Kamieniec from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this conquest was actually triggered by the increasing Muscovite power in the region. With the securing of Kamieniec, the Ottomans were actually blocking Russian headway toward the Danube or the Black Sea.<sup>40</sup> So he endorses the idea that Ottoman intervention in Eastern Europe was a necessity. Nevertheless, his suggestion of Ottoman intentions against the tributary principalities was the opposite of Kunt's idea: rather than planning to incorporate these principalities into the Ottoman system, Gemil asserted, the Porte increased their autonomy by allowing the boyars of Moldavia in 1661 and those of Wallachia in 1664 to choose their princes. In this manner, the Porte was aiming to enlist the support of the feudal lords (aside from the princes) in pursuit of "the affirmation of its foreign policy in Europe."<sup>41</sup> Gemil's interpretation of the dynamics in Eastern Europe contradicts Kunt's claim. The Fazıl Ahmed administration

<sup>36</sup> Nazire Karaçay Türkal, "Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, Zeyl-i Fezleke (1654-1695)" (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2012), 586.

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives, State Papers, 97/19, f. 170r-v, (Pera [Istanbul], 20 October 1671).

<sup>38</sup> The National Archives, State Papers, 97/19, f. 172r, (Pera [Istanbul], 24 Jan 1672).

<sup>39</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century): An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 1999), 146.

<sup>40</sup> Tahsin Gemil, "Les pays roumains dans la politique européenne de la Porte ottomane au XVIIe siècle," *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Européennes* XIII, no. 3 (1975): 427-28.

<sup>41</sup> Tahsin Gemil, "Considérations sur les rapports politiques roumano-ottomans au XVIIe siècle," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* XV, no. 4 (1976): 665.

desired alignment between the foreign policy priorities of the Danubian principalities and the Ottoman center's interests. Meanwhile, integrating these states into the empire as proper territories was not part of the plan.

The conquest of Kamieniec Podolski in 1672 provoked a series of clashes between the Ottomans and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that would end only in 1676. And it was during these clashes that the Fazıl Ahmed Pasha administration made a concession on the diplomatic scene: the French demand for the renewal of capitulations was eventually accepted in 1673, after almost seventy years since the last renewal and following three years of persistent inquiries by the French ambassador at the Porte. And it happened despite Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's aversion toward the French.<sup>42</sup> This might be considered as a move to secure a Christian third party's neutrality while the Ottoman army was operating in Eastern Europe. To summarize: Ahmed Pasha's Kamieniec campaign was undertaken to respond to the changing power dynamics in Eastern Europe, while the renewal of the French capitulation shows that the Pasha sought Ottoman interests over any religious concern.

Perhaps, a few words on the Köprülü foreign policy execution might be useful here. Köprülü foreign policy was not much different than the first period of Ottoman dynastic rule, but conquests were understandably taking place faster due to the stability of the regime, as will be addressed below.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the main principles of westward expansion had been well entrenched since the early days of the dynasty, but it came to a halt by the end of Süleyman the Magnificent's reign. The Long Wars with the Habsburgs (1593-1606) made it clear that even protracted military engagements yielded relatively minor gains by the early years of the seventeenth century. It was, however, during the Köprülü period that the latter trend came to be reversed toward the direction of territorial increase with a higher tempo.

### An Alternative Approach

The traditional approaches addressed in the first section are only one way of analyzing Köprülü foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Recently, Georg Michels challenged the predominant views concerning the intentionality of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy and, in particular, Metin Kunt's argument of a "Northern Policy" with regard to the 1672 Polish campaign. Michels suggested that "Köprülü did not consciously pursue a northern strategy to protect the Black Sea region, . . . [r]ather he was drawn into a prolonged war over Ukraine against his wishes, and he failed to extricate himself."<sup>45</sup> In a similar fashion, I have tried to

<sup>42</sup> Phil McCluskey, "An Ottoman envoy in Paris: Suleyman Aga's mission to the court of Louis XIV, 1669," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları-The Journal Of Ottoman Studies* 48 (2016): 341-42.

<sup>43</sup> M. Halef Cevrioglu, "Yeni Çağ Osmanlı Kuzey Siyasetinde Köprülü Mehmed Paşa Dönemi Üzerine Birkaç Gözlem (1656-1661)," in *Türk Diplomasisine Yön Verenler: Osmanlı Dönemi*, ed. Ahmet Dönmez and Yakup Kaya (Konya: Necmettin Erbakan University Press, 2023), 20.

<sup>44</sup> In his most recent book dated April 2022 Kahraman Şakul adopts the idea of "a new northern policy" "asserted first by Metin Kunt and commonly accepted today" without any modification, see Kahraman Şakul, *Çehrin Kuşatması 1678*, (Istanbul: Timaş, 2022), 21.

<sup>45</sup> Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under siege*, 343.

argue that the Ahmed Pasha government might not have been following a pre-meditated expansionist policy. Then, how can one introduce an alternative explanation for the territorial growth of the empire during his term? Instead of looking for reductionist explanations such as greed or religious determinism, we may profit by interpreting Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy in terms of international relations (IR) approaches.<sup>46</sup>

Before focusing specifically on the Köprülüs, it is useful to survey how the Ottoman historiographical tradition in general tried to interpret the territorial expansion of the dynasty within the framework of a possible Ottoman "grand strategy." Ágoston argued that an Ottoman grand strategy was formed during the early years of Süleyman I's reign (r. 1520-66) and defined it as the combination of clear imperial vision, intelligence gathering, and the execution of this imperial vision through foreign policy and propaganda. Nonetheless, the strategy failed by the 1540s, i.e., even during Süleyman's lifetime, when he realized that his advance into Europe was obstructed by the Habsburg monarchy. Thereafter, realpolitik concerns became the basis of Ottoman expansion in Europe.<sup>47</sup> Fodor does not explicitly state whether he supports Ágoston's interpretation but suggests that by the 1340s Ottomans had started to follow a coherent foreign policy. The three cardinal motivations adopted to explain the Ottoman conquests were holy war (*cihad*), loot, and militarism.<sup>48</sup> What the latter actually meant might admittedly seem a bit unclear, but Fodor's reference elsewhere to "the expansionist aims of the state"<sup>49</sup> consolidates the idea that he also perceives the Ottoman Empire to be functioning along the realist lines in terms of international relations.

These historical assessments aside, IR scholars have lately begun to incorporate the Ottoman Empire into their own field.<sup>50</sup> But this has taken place, one might argue, with a concern to produce a new framework with an ideational focus rather than to place the Ottomans within the traditionally accepted Eurocentric world order. Beginning with Spruyt, for example, we see arguments that suggest the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals formed a separate international order with a collective belief system.<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire as part of a wide international system

<sup>46</sup> I am inspired in this respect by Seçkin Barış Gülmez' article on Turkish foreign policy regarding Cyprus in 1950s, see S. Barış Gülmez, "From indifference to independence: Turkey's shifting Cyprus policy in the 1950s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 5 (2020): 744-58.

<sup>47</sup> Gábor Ágoston, "Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, 2007): 75-103; Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 228.

<sup>48</sup> Pál Fodor, *İmparatorluk Olmanın Dayanılmaz Ağırlığı* (Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2016), 34-39. Fodor himself admits here that even the holy war was inextricably coupled with the desire to acquire booty, p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Pál Fodor, "Osmanlı Fetih İdeolojisinde Macaristan ve Viyana: Târîh-i Beç Kralı (17. yy)," in *Kızıl Elma*, ed. Pál Fodor (Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2020), 85.

<sup>50</sup> For the most recent review article, see Argun Başkan, "History, International Relations and the Ottoman Empire: A Review Article," *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 38, no. 2 (2023): 371-404.

<sup>51</sup> Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined. Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 169-73.

including Europe and Africa, Buzan and Acharya ultimately chose to position the Ottomans within an “Islamic World” that included “Safavids, the Mughals, the Mamluks, Morocco, and various smaller kingdoms, all of which shared Islamic practices, norms, and laws,” ending up very close to what Spruyt suggested.<sup>52</sup> More recently, Balcı and Kardaş called for a balanced approach toward both ideational factors and materialist reasoning. They coined an “Ottoman international system” by emphasizing the Afro-Eurasian character of the Ottoman Empire and the role of the peripheral states within that system between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>53</sup>

All these approaches by IR scholars, as one can observe, have tended to produce alternatives to the so-called “western” IR by adopting a historical perspective. But within the more specific field of early modern Ottoman studies, it is rather early to look for alternatives: the conventional IR toolbox has not yet been exhausted in analyzing the Ottoman Empire in the traditional understanding of the world order. Therefore, this article employs one such tool, neoclassical realism, to elucidate the role of the Ottoman Empire on the international scene during Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s grand vizierate.

In order to properly conceptualize neoclassical realism, one must start with its intellectual predecessor, neorealism. In his seminal work on the subject, Kenneth Waltz suggested that the causes of international conflicts had to be searched on three levels (or three images, as he referred to them): man, the structure of the separate states, and the state system.<sup>54</sup> The first image (*the individuals*) can be explained as the personhood of the state leader. The second image (*state structure*) refers to the governing mechanism of a particular state, such as its ideology, the character of its bureaucracy, its advancement of a capitalist economy, etc.<sup>55</sup> With regard to the third image (*state system*), the realist assumption suggests that the international system of states is anarchical in nature “with no system of law enforceable among them.” As early as Thucydides (c. 460 – c. 400 BC) called attention in antiquity, states acted on threat perception and calculated their foreign policy options accordingly. Therefore, no state would like to be slow in applying force against another state lest they pay the price for their weakness. This is known as a self-help system where every state has to look after its own safety.<sup>56</sup>

The second (*state structure*) and first image (*the individuals*) explanations are regarded as domestic factors in forming a state’s foreign policy choices while

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<sup>52</sup> Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya, *Re-imagining International Relations World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 106-07.

<sup>53</sup> Ali Balcı and Tuncay Kardaş, “The Ottoman International System: Power Projection, Interconnectedness, and the Autonomy of Frontier Polities,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 51, no. 3 (2023): 866-91.

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32.4 (Autumn, 1978): 901.

<sup>56</sup> Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 159-160; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

the first image (*state system*) is an external determinant. Waltz's understanding of international relations (*neorealism*) focused more on the *state system* level in explaining international relations,<sup>57</sup> while later scholars developed the *neoclassical realist* approach, which attempted to place equal emphasis on all three levels. In accordance with the *neoclassical realist* understanding, even though the primacy of the anarchical international system (first level) explanations is undeniable, how states "respond to the pressures and opportunities that the international system generates" was determined by the *state structure* and the *individuals*, i.e. the domestic factors.<sup>58</sup> Hence, from a *neoclassical realist* perspective, the structure of the Ottoman Empire and Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's personality should also be examined in order to interpret Ottoman expansionism. Neoclassical realism was opted for in this respect due to the particularist nature of the approach. That is to say, rather than bringing forth reductionist explanations or focusing on large-scale systemic responses in analyzing interstate relations, neoclassical realism stands out as being more sensitive to variations in foreign policy-making.<sup>59</sup> In essence, applying a modern international relations theory (*neoclassical realism*) to early modernity might not seem viable; however, it offers, to a certain extent, an alternative to the approaches that suggest a blind enthusiasm for conquest. By evaluating Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy through realist theory, I would like to show that his decision-making process was rational.

Starting from the first image, i.e. the *man*, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's individuality needs to be laid under scrutiny.<sup>60</sup> Political scientists suggest that "studying the personality of leaders can help us understand why some leaders make certain decisions, whereas other leaders facing a similar situation make completely different decisions."<sup>61</sup> Neoclassical realism posits that the foreign policy executive (in this case, the grand vizier) is of utmost importance in making foreign policy analyses since their beliefs and images influence the "perception of the incoming stimuli."<sup>62</sup> Hence, decisions such as war-making also relate to personality to a certain extent. For his personal traits, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was portrayed as a relatively peaceful figure: he started his career as a scholar before he was introduced to administrative service by his father before the latter's death. And, in contradistinction to his father in the treatment of the empire's

<sup>57</sup> Juanita Elias and Peter Sutch, *International Relations: the basics*, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 49-50.

<sup>58</sup> Gülmez, "From indifference to independence," 744-45; Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. S. Lobell, N.M. Ripsman and J.W. Taliaferro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Lobell, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism," 21.

<sup>60</sup> The most informative study on Fazıl Ahmed's life is M. Fatih Çalışır, "A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676)" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016) and his character on pages 56-57.

<sup>61</sup> Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114.

<sup>62</sup> Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 61-62.



political problems, once Fazıl Ahmed Pasha took office, he was perceived to overcome his impasses in a less cruel fashion, resorting to bloodshed less than his father.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, depictions continued, Fazıl Ahmed could not be corrupted with money.<sup>64</sup> So, the latter trait implies that he would not be after the spoils of war in his foreign policy. The emergent scholarship related to his character emphasizes his interest in sciences, and thus, his cultural patronage.<sup>65</sup> With these factors in mind, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha did not seem to be the warmongering person who would initiate campaigns unless the conditions did really call for one.

It was, however, another variable at the individual level (first image) that might have turned out to be effective in Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's decisions for campaigns: the strategic culture<sup>66</sup>. In his review of Baer's *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, Metin Kunt refers to "a common bit of political wisdom in this period," which advocated the idea that the soldiery had to be constantly on campaign ('*asker seferde gerek*').<sup>67</sup> This necessity emerged, Kunt continued, from the fact that the janissary troops stationed in the capital, in particular, tended to create trouble and generate internal strife. Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, therefore, preferred them to be out of Istanbul, on the frontier. His son, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, continued to abide by the boots-on-the-ground wisdom after 1661, suggesting that '*asker seferde gerek*' indeed became a main principle of the Köprülü strategic culture for decades.

One important matter relating to the first image (unit level) analyses in the seventeenth-century is the fact that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's privileged position inside the Ottoman administration did actually reflect a contemporary Europe-wide phenomenon. Various seventeenth-century principal ministers (such as the well-known examples of Richelieu and Mazarin in France, Axel Oxenstierna in Sweden, or Olivares in Spain) exercised extensive authority thanks to the close and mutually dependent relationships they cultivated with their monarchs.<sup>68</sup> And, just like his contemporaries, Fazıl Ahmed's

<sup>63</sup> Levinus Warner, *De Rebus Turcicis*, 72-73: (Pera, 15 [25] December 1661).

<sup>64</sup> The National Archives, State Papers, 97/19, f. 150r-v, (Febr. 1670): "The Vizier they say exceeds not the age of two and thirty [sic] yeares, hee is of a middle stature and has a good Mine, hee is prudent and just not to bee corrupted by money, the generall vice of this country, nor inclin'd to cruelty as his father was." The description of pasha's traits by the English embassy is almost a verbatim translation of the famous contemporary Mascellini report, see Nicolae Vătămanu, "Contribution à l'étude de la vie et de l'oeuvre de Giovanni Mascellini médecin et secrétaire princier," *Revue des Études Sud-est Européennes*, t. XVI (1978, Avril-Juin No 2): 281.

<sup>65</sup> M. Fatih Çalıışır, "Sadrazam Köprülüzaade Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın Hâmilîğindeki İlmî Faaliyetler," in XVIII. *Türk Tarih Kongresi*, Ankara: 1-5 Eylül 2018. *Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, IV. Cilt, ed. Semiha Nurdan and Muhammed Özler (Ankara: TTK, 2022): 35-48.

<sup>66</sup> For a recent study that employs strategic culture for unit-level analysis, see Ali Balcı et al., "War Decision and Neoclassical Realism: The Entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War," *War in History* 27, no. 4 (2018): 657-62.

<sup>67</sup> Metin Kunt, "Review of Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe by Marc David Baer," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 411.

<sup>68</sup> David J. Sturdy, *Richelieu and Mazarin, A Study in Statesmanship*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.



vigorous command of political power in domestic affairs must have found a resonance also in his execution of the empire's foreign policy.

The second level, i.e., the *structure of the Ottoman state*, emerges as another factor contributing to the reactionary policies of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. The structure here, however, refers to the fiscal potential of the state, rather than any regime of government.<sup>69</sup> With regard to its economic capabilities, the Ottoman Empire was in better shape by the time Ahmed Pasha took office in 1661 compared to what it had been ten years earlier or to what it was when his father had been installed as grand vizier in 1656.

To begin with the imperial treasury, it recorded smaller deficits in the 1660s and 1670s than in the years between 1648 and 1654.<sup>70</sup> The political stability established by Köprülü Mehmed Pasha provided the treasury with considerable sums. Domestic security also meant steady and safe tax collection. The regular transfer of revenue ensured that the army could be paid without arrears, "which improved morale and permitted an extension of the war with Venice."<sup>71</sup> Thanks again to Köprülü Mehmed's father, the empire's revenue also received an increase in Transylvania's yearly tribute from 15,000 to 40,000 ducats.<sup>72</sup>

On the family side, it would be fair to suggest that Köprülü Mehmed had established a healthy basis to safeguard the family's future. Kolçak, as mentioned above, has convincingly established the connection between the Köprülü conquests and *vakf* (pious foundation) revenue accumulation: around the second year of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's grand vizierate, the Köprülü pious foundations generated a yearly revenue (6.8 million *akçes*) almost equal to the amount of Transylvania's annual tribute (6.4 mil. *akçes*). Out of this revenue, a considerable sum (1.3 mil. *akçes*) was registered as surplus.<sup>73</sup>

Hence, sound finances suggested that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha could respond to foreign policy problems with an army instead of diplomacy. This availability of military action, however, does not necessarily mean that Ahmed Pasha was fond of war-making. I hereby only suggest that he might have regarded, and opted for, military action as a longer-lasting foreign policy solution as long as he had procured the requisite financial base.

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's statecraft, in a similar vein, was so well-entrenched that diplomacy could be set aside for a while when circumstances offered war-making as an alternative: the Pasha could assert his authority almost without stint instead of disregarding foreign policy threats. Such reinforced statecraft

<sup>69</sup> Taliaferro coins this as "state extraction capacity," see S.B. Gülmez, "From indifference to independence," 750-52 and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State," *Security Studies* 15.3 (2006): 464-95.

<sup>70</sup> Erol Özvar, "Osmanlı Devletinin Bütçe Harcamaları (1509-1788)," in *Osmanlı Maliyesi: Kurumlar ve Bütçeler 1*, ed. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 219.

<sup>71</sup> Linda Darling, "Public finances: the role of the Ottoman centre," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol. 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123.

<sup>72</sup> Levinus Warner, *De Rebus Turcicis*, 53; (Pera, 23 November [3 December] 1658).

<sup>73</sup> Özgür Kolçak, "Köprülü Enterprises," 75, 85.

speaks again more to the accomplishments of the Pasha's father, Köprülü Mehmed, than to the Pasha himself. That is to say, Ottoman historiography has suggested that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha inherited a relatively under-challenged authority from his father in terms of domestic politics: both the recalcitrant elements in the Ottoman central cavalry (*kapıkulu sipahi*) corps and provincial governors challenging central authority (such as Abaza Hasan Pasha) had been eliminated during his father's term in office.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, one might suggest that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha enjoyed the liberty of action in his choices both politically and economically,<sup>75</sup> allowing him to pursue a foreign policy that reacted to the most urgent international problem at hand. He could wage wars without domestic opposition when necessary thanks to the internal stability of the Ottoman Empire, instead of waiting for tensions to escalate. In short, the fiscal capability and political stability of the Ahmed Pasha government enabled quick troop mobilization for consecutive campaigns.

The third image (*state system*) is the level that can best explain Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's reactionary policies against foreign policy developments. The early modern system of states was not much different from the modern one in terms of its anarchical nature: there was no international body to police or impose sanctions against rogue states, thus leaving each polity to its own devices. This made war inevitable, especially between neighbors. The Ottoman Empire shared borders with the Habsburgs, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Venetian Republic along with the Safavids and the Muscovites. These borders were never clearly delineated until the eighteenth-century,<sup>76</sup> and cross-border incursions always had the potential to spark conflagrations.

The changing international atmosphere provoked Fazıl Ahmed's threat perception in his campaigns against the Habsburgs and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The 1663 Érsekújvár Campaign was meant to safeguard the Porte's interests in Central Europe, particularly its suzerainty over Transylvania. Before embarking on the Cretan campaign, it seems Fazıl Ahmed Pasha wished to secure Transylvania as a buffer between the Habsburgs and Ottomans. The threat of increasing Habsburg influence in the region triggered Fazıl Ahmed's decision to undertake military action. As for the Polish campaigns starting in 1672, these can be understood as a pre-emptive strike against the southward aggression of the Muscovite Tsardom that had become a formidable force since the 1667 Peace Treaty of Andrussovo between the Tsardom and the Commonwealth:<sup>77</sup> by annexing

<sup>74</sup> Yılmaz, "Grand vizierial authority revisited," 23-24.

<sup>75</sup> Cumhur Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family: The Reconfiguration of Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2019), 105-06. To understand how the Köprülü family consolidated its power, see Cumhur Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Household: The Transformation of Patronage in the Ottoman Empire in the Seventeenth Century," *Turkish Historical Review* 11 (2020): 229-56.

<sup>76</sup> Maria Pia Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*, (Rome: Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, 2002), 15.

<sup>77</sup> Brian Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 151.

Kamieniec Podolski, Fazıl Ahmed was trying to counterbalance the Muscovite threat that grew by the day.

As for his acceptance of the Genoese and French capitulation renewals, it can be interpreted as a *de facto* recognition of allies in the European balance of power. The Ottoman Empire, after all, was one of many great powers in the seventeenth century, including the Habsburgs of Spain and Austria, England, the Dutch Republic, Sweden, and France.<sup>78</sup> In a system defined by multipolarity, the neutrality of third parties, especially that of France, was of paramount importance to the Fazıl Ahmed Pasha government. Hence, at *the state system* level, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's government was steering the Ottoman Empire as masterfully as possible in a self-help international system.

In short, Ahmed Pasha's foreign policy actions can be regarded as those of a rational actor who did not place emphasis on any particular ideological or self-seeking aim, although the conquests eventually resulted in such benefits. However, these benefits were reaped as consequences; they were not necessarily the causes of action. In his foreign policy, the Pasha acted on the basis of expediency due to the anarchical nature of the early modern state system with the opportunities offered by an improved state structure and a certain level of inherited authority.

## Conclusion

Explanations of the Köprülü foreign policy in Europe have been interpretations presented by modern scholars. It is, therefore, merely an interpretative belief that any of the Köprülü conquests in Southern and Eastern Europe were actually meant to pursue a new northern policy, to accumulate family wealth, or to spread religion in the lands of the non-Muslims. Inarguably, these were the primary results and benefits; however, the lack of Ottoman ego documents blocks our way to an ultimate conclusion: it is hard to say if those conquests were *deliberately* made by the Köprülü grand viziers for any specific ideological or self-interested reason since there is no personal written account left for us to judge their intentions.

The interpretations of modern scholarship thus can be seen as efforts to attach *ex post facto* meanings to Köprülü-era expansionism. The present study cannot afford to offer anything better, either; but by at least analyzing the real-time decision-making of the Köprülü administration, it suggests that its foreign policy decisions were not deliberate, but reactionary and *realpolitik*. The Ottoman wave of conquests in the mid-seventeenth-century admittedly owes a lot to the Köprülü success in economic or military consolidation; nonetheless, the well-spring of the conquests was not home-bred religious fervor or self-aggrandizement. Rather, the conquests were conditioned by international politics and hard threats.

Amid the frantic pace of seventeenth-century European politics, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha appears to be rushing from one part of Eastern Europe to the

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<sup>78</sup> Dylan Motin, "Great Power Politics in World History: Balance of Power and Central Wars Since Antiquity," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 20, vol. 2 (2022): 189-90.

other in order to deal with the exigencies of his time. The reactionary quality of his foreign policy is also attested by his diplomatic dealings: in tandem with the wars he waged in Europe, the Pasha accepted demands for commercial privileges by third-party Christian states. Accordingly, Fazıl Ahmed was neither a pietist warmonger nor a grand strategist. He was a rational actor making what he saw as necessary decisions.

It is, therefore, more productive to understand his conduct through the lens of international relations. To that effect, it has been considered appropriate to adopt a fresh point of view, which attempts to combine an international relations theory with a historical case study. As discussed above, historians who address Ottoman expansionism have searched for an Ottoman grand strategy and concluded that the early modern Ottoman foreign policy was in general shaped along realist lines. This article has suggested that neoclassical realism offers us beneficial tools in analyzing Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's campaigns against the Habsburgs (1663-64) and in Poland-Lithuania (1672-76) in particular.

Starting with the level of the individual (first image), it was not his personality that drove the Pasha's campaigns, but the strategic culture inherited from his father. An analysis of the second image revealed that the Ottoman Empire's economic resources and political stability empowered Fazıl Ahmed Pasha with perhaps the most unchallenged grand vizierial authority in the seventeenth century. Lastly, the anarchic structure of the early modern state system (third image) became a determinant of the Pasha's foreign policy: his reactionary posture toward threats across the Ottoman borders is a sign of the systemic variable. Accordingly, it was Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's inherited strategic culture, the fiscal and political resources of the mid-century Ottoman Empire, and the imperatives of the international system that kept the machinery of the Ottoman military running between 1661 and 1676.

**Acknowledgements.** I would like to thank Associate Professor Ömer Gezer (Hacettepe University) and Associate Professor Güneş Işıksel (Istanbul Medeniyet University) for their generosity in sharing the digital copies of archival material from *The National Archives* and *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*, respectively. Credit is also due to Dr. Yasir Yılmaz and the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive and accurate suggestions during the preparation of the manuscript, along with the editorial team of RoMES.

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**Cite this article:** Cevrioğlu MH (2024). An Evaluation of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's Foreign Policy. *Review of Middle East Studies* 57, 121-139. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2024.21>