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The Levantine Press of Istanbul and the Outbreak of the Great War (1914)

Abstract

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of intense reforms in the Ottoman Empire in a variety of sectors including public administration, law, and education. The French connection played an important role in the development of the period's reformist ideas. The French presence in Ottoman civil society was also striking from the 1850s on. The present paper aims at analyzing the public opinion in the Ottoman Empire in 1914, at the moment of the outbreak of the Great War, as reflected in the French-language press of Istanbul. The first part presents a general panorama of the period preceding the outbreak of the war. The second part covers the political comments published in the French-language newspapers of Istanbul during the crisis of summer 1914 and in the weeks following the declarations of war.

Keywords: Public opinion, Ottoman Empire, Levantine community, history of press, social history

The study of public opinion is of crucial importance for the historiography of 20th-century wars. Pierre Renouvin, pioneering French historian of international relations, in his efforts to overcome the classical approaches to diplomatic history, underlined the importance of a multi-factor approach of historiography that took into consideration public opinion along with other components of social and political reality. The present paper aims at analyzing the public opinion in the Ottoman Empire in 1914, at the moment of the outbreak of the Great War, as reflected in the French-language press of Istanbul. The scholarly study of the aforementioned theme has a threefold importance:

1.) At the very beginning of the Great War, the Ottoman Empire didn't belong to either Bloc; when the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary took place, the Ottoman Empire had established close ties with Germany on the one hand, and France and United Kingdom on the other. Hence, the hesitations that marked the diplomatic attitude of a manifold of countries in the summer of 1914 were also part of the Ottoman attitude. Within this context of uncertainty and hesitations, French inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire tried to convince the public opinion and politicians of the Ottoman Empire to adopt a pro-French position.

2.) Ottoman-French bilateral relations covered not only political relations, but also a variety of domains, including economy, culture, and education. The eventuality of a war between the two countries affected

the French citizens who worked on these sectors.

3.) The French-language press wasn't only read by French citizens; the French language was a widespread language at the moment of the outbreak of the war, and literate, Westernizing Ottomans were also capable of reading the columns of the French-language newspapers. Non-Muslim Ottomans were an important target group of the French-language newspapers of the Ottoman Empire, as demonstrated by the contents of the advertising columns.

The present paper is intended to analyze the positions taken by the French press of Istanbul during and in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the Great War. The first part will present a general panorama of the period preceding the outbreak of the war. The second part will cover the political comments published in the French-language newspapers of Istanbul during the crisis of summer 1914 and in the weeks following the declarations of war. The last part will tackle the question of the economic and social problems as reflected in the French press of Istanbul. The main sources that have been used for the research are the collections of *Stamboul* and *Le Moniteur Oriental*, two most important French-language newspapers published in Istanbul, which averaged between 4.000 and 6.000 copies.

French-Ottoman Relations in Context (1850-1914)

French-Ottoman relations have been developing steadily since the sixteenth century, and the early modern era was marked with an effort by the two powers to collaborate against a common enemy, the Holy Roman Empire. The diplomatic relations established within the context of the rivalry with the Holy Roman Empire were complemented by economic relations stimulated by commercial privileges („*capitulations*”) accorded by the Ottoman authorities to French merchants from the sixteenth century on. The Napoleonic Wars and the ambitious Napoleonic enterprise of the conquest of Egypt by French armies had changed the course of the Ottoman-French relations, but peaceful relations were soon reestablished.

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of intense reforms in the Ottoman Empire in a variety of sectors including public administration, law, and education. The French connection played an important role in the development of the period's reformist ideas. For instance, Masonic lodges played an important role in the spreading of reformist ideas from the 1850s on, and most of these lodges were of French obedience.¹ The French legal system inspired the reforms undertaken in the 1850s in the Ottoman legislation. The Code of Commerce of 1850 was an adaptation of the French one; the Penal Code of 1858 was also a French adaptation of the French Penal Code. In the following decades, other laws were also

¹ Jacques FREMEAUX: *La France et l'Islam depuis 1789*, PUF, Paris, 1991. 76.

translated from French into Turkish.²

The French presence in Ottoman civil society was also striking from the 1850s on: Frenchmen began to predominate in the monastic orders after that decade, as a result of the closure of the monasteries in Spain and of troubles between the Church and the nationalists in Italy.³ In the same decade, educational relations were also going through a phase of developments, with schools such as the Pensionnat Saint-Joseph in Pera/Istanbul that was opened in 1857. Regarding the press and publication, the French language was rising in importance. English-language newspapers of the 1850s, such as the *Levant Herald* and *Eastern Express* were publishing French articles along with the English-language columns. It is especially after the 1860s that the French-language press in Istanbul went through a „prodigious development”.⁴

The growing French presence in the region after Napoleon Bonaparte’s Egyptian campaign became even more marked after 1860, during the reign of Napoleon III in France. After 1860, France intervened in the inter-community struggles between Christians and Druze or Muslim communities, which resulted in the recognition of France as a de facto protector of the Christian minorities within the Ottoman Empire.⁵ Moreover, 1860 also saw the beginning of the construction works of the Suez Canal, which was a project conducted by the Suez Canal Company, a joint stock company founded in 1858 by Ferdinand de Lesseps, in which the French capital had the major share. The Ottoman Imperial Bank was a platform for French financial interests in the Ottoman Empire.⁶ The 1860s were a decade during which the French language became predominant for commercial affairs in the Eastern Mediterranean, overcoming the importance of the Italian and Greek languages that had predominated so far in Mediterranean exchange.⁷ France also undertook a cultural policy towards the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s.⁸

The French influence in educational institutions established on the Ottoman territory was already a reality in 1860, the year of the opening of the Ottoman branches of the Alliance israélite universelle. When the Imperial High-School of Galatasaray was reformed and reopened in 1868 as

² Toktamis ATEŞ: *Les relations franco-turques des origines à nos jours*, AGF Garanti Sigorta, 1992. 57.

³ Mathew BURROWS: ‘Mission civilisatrice’: *French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914*, *The Historical Journal*, 29(1), 1986: 112.

⁴ Johann STRAUSS: *Le livre français d’Istanbul (1730-1908)*, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 87-88, 1999. 283.

⁵ BURROWS (1986): 111-113.

⁶ Later, from 1881 on, when the Public Debt Administration was established in order to administer c. 30% of the revenues of the Ottoman Empire as a substitute for the Ottoman public debt, French companies became even more predominant. Cf. Jacques THOBIE: *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l’Empire ottoman (1895-1914)*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris, 1977. 717.

⁷ BURROWS (1986): 111.

⁸ BURROWS (1986): 114.

a modern high school, the French-Ottoman cooperation on the field of culture and education reached an important momentum. The Ottoman educating system was reorganized in 1869 on the councils and recommendations of Victor Duruy.⁹ From the late 1860s on, the French community of Istanbul was even capable of producing a genuine literature. A teacher from Geneva, Emile Julliard, who was teaching literature in Galatasaray High School between 1869 and 1875, wrote a manifold of works, poems, tales, dramas, literary treatises, and articles on Richard Wagner's operas.¹⁰ Charles Mismar's novel on Istanbul, entitled *Soirées de Constantinople* (1870), was published in at least six editions in Istanbul.¹¹ Istanbul was also a major attraction for French travelers, seduced by Orientalist impulses: In 1876, Pierre Loti made his first journey to Istanbul, and this was the beginning of a long-lasting active interest that made the famous French writer publish several novels and travelogues inspired by seven journeys to Istanbul he made between 1876 et 1913. At the end of the nineteenth century, a novel, *Mystères de Péra*, by Jacques Loria, teacher at Alliance israélite universelle, became a bestseller.¹²

The French interest in the Ottoman Empire had obviously a counterpart: the Ottoman interest in France manifested itself in a plethora of indicators. For instance, Cevdet Paşa wrote, towards 1870, the sixth volume of his *History*, and included a narrative of the French Revolution in his text: this was the first serious and systematic effort by an Ottoman historian to understand and study the French Revolution, as well as the Egyptian Campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte.¹³

The French also played an important part in late nineteenth-century architectural works in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth century was the product of architects of various origins,¹⁴ including people of Turkish, Greek, Armenian, French, Italian, and German origin. The last quarter of the 19th century was a flourishing period for the French construction works. In 1874, for instance, a building to the Palais de France (the French Embassy in Istanbul) was added to house the dragomans (translators) of the embassy. New buildings were added in 1880 to an already existing school complex, Ecole Saint-Benoît. In 1882, Capucine priests established the seminary „*Saint Louis des Français*“. One of the most famous architects of the Ottoman Empire in the 1880s and 1890s was Alexandre Vallauray, a Levantine with French origins, who designed several

⁹ FREMEAUX (1991): 75.

¹⁰ STRAUSS (1999): 283.

¹¹ STRAUSS (1999): 288.

¹² STRAUSS (1999): 298.

¹³ Wajda SENDESNI: *Regard de l'historiographie ottomane sur la Révolution française et l'expédition d'Égypte : Tarih-i Cevdet*, Les Editions Isis, Istanbul, 2003. 37.

¹⁴ STRAUSS (1999): 294.

important buildings, including the Cercle d'Orient, Pera Palace, Tokatliyan Hotel, Union française, Archaeological Museum, and the Prinkipo Greek Orphanage. His mastery of Ottoman and European styles were astonishing, as reflected in the two works he had done for the Ottoman Bank. The headquarters of the Ottoman Bank (and of the Tobacco Administration) he designed between 1890 and 1892 reflect a European eclectic taste, dominated by neo-renaissance elements, and embellished by neoclassic details, thus paying homage to the centuries long European presence in the neighborhood of Galata, in which the building was situated. However, the Ottoman Bank building of Eminönü, also Vallaurý's work, has more neo-Ottoman elements in its architecture, making a reference to the Ottoman classical culture that predominated the historical peninsula; moreover, the back façade of the Galata headquarters of the Ottoman Bank, that also face the historical peninsula, also reflect neo-Ottoman stylistic features.¹⁵

In matters of press and publishing, the French-language newspapers' growing importance was manifest after the late 1868. Baron Hanly, an Irish entrepreneur, with a French team, published the journal *Stamboul*. Other French-language newspapers and journals of the second half of the 19th century included *La Turquie*, *Levant-Herald*, *Levant-Times*, *Le Courier d'Orient*, *Phare du Bosphore*, *L'Orient illustré*, *Presse de Constantinople*, *Journal des travaux publics de l'Empire ottoman*, *Moniteur du Commerce*, *Minerve*, *Polichinelle*, *Annonces-Journal*.¹⁶ In 1882, an English entrepreneur, D. A. Bellis, founded the *Moniteur Oriental*, a long-lasting newspaper. *Le Moniteur oriental* averaged 4000 copies, *Stamboul* had similar circulation figures, and *Levant Herald* had a daily average circulation of 5.200.¹⁷

The Outbreak of the War: Political Comments in the French Newspapers of Istanbul

The Levantine community of Istanbul was hosting an illustrious guest, Maurice Barrès, during the last days of the peace, in June 1914. Barrès, an iconic figure of French nationalism, was making a journey of two months to Eastern Mediterranean, and he reached Istanbul at the end of June 1914. He was described by the newspaper *Le Moniteur Oriental* as a major personality around whom French patriots gather.¹⁸ Another major French-language newspaper, *Stamboul*, put the stress on his Lorrain origins, and named him „Lorrain

¹⁵ Edhem ELDEM: *Bankalar Caddesi: Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Voyvoda Caddesi*, Osmanlı Bankası, Istanbul, 2000: 105; Pierre PINON: *Les paradoxes de l'occidentalisation de l'architecture à Istanbul à la fin du XIX^e siècle*, *Romantisme*, 131, 2006. 59.

¹⁶ STRAUSS (1999): 278

¹⁷ Cf. also *La France à Constantinople ou Présence française dans la capitale ottomane au début du 20^e siècle*, Istanbul: Isis, 1907. 2002. 32-34.

¹⁸ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 29/06/1914

patriote".¹⁹ This was obviously a reference to the question of Alsace-Lorraine that haunted French politics and especially nationalist discourse after the French-Prussian War of 1870-1871, which resulted in the transfer of Alsace and Lorraine from France to Germany. The journal was thus implicitly referring to the link between Barrès and Lorraine, which was a stylized means to invoke the patriotic feelings regarding the loss of these territories to Germany.

During his journey to Istanbul, Barrès met the representatives of the French government in Istanbul, as well as leading members of the French community of Istanbul. In one of his speeches, he was mentioning the pleasure he got from his two-month journey to the Ottoman territories, and expressing his gratitude to the Ottoman authorities for their help throughout his travels. His main objective was, to paraphrase his own words, to witness the services rendered to France and to the cause of civilization in the Orient.²⁰ In another speech, Barrès was praising the French efforts in the areas of culture, civilization and language. These efforts, which resulted in various realizations from Alexandria to Istanbul, were benefic to both France and Ottoman Empire.²¹ He was also promoting a project that would consist of a more systematic, state-endorsed implementation of educational and cultural institutions in the regions across the Danube.²² On the same occasion, the president of the Union Française, Alexis Rey, was putting the emphasis on the importance of the good relations between France and the Ottoman Empire since Suleiman the Magnificent's reign in the sixteenth century.²³ He was also asserting that French language was equated with prestige, and emphasizing that they (the members of the Union française) were „*excellent Frenchmen*”, whose duty was to bring honor to France.²⁴ Hence, at the moment of the outbreak of the diplomatic crisis of July 1914, the representatives of the French community of Istanbul were bearers of a nationalistic and patriotic discourse.

On June 29, 1914, the day the article on Barrès' speech and Rey's approbating response was published in *Stamboul*, the main columns were reserved to an event of major importance, the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo. During the first day of the crisis following the Sarajevo assassination, the French newspapers of Istanbul adopted an extremely cautious tone. Pierre Le Goff, chief editor of *Stamboul*, was optimistic about the situation, and he was asserting that Austria-Hungary would not take the Serbian state as responsible of that political assassination. However, a week after the Sarajevo assassination, on July 4,

¹⁹ *Stamboul*, 29/06/1914

²⁰ *Stamboul*, 24/06/1914.

²¹ *Stamboul*, 29/06/1914.

²² Cf. also Maurice BARRÈS: *Une enquête aux pays du Levant*, Plon, Paris, 1923. 174-176.

²³ *Stamboul*, 29/06/1914.

²⁴ *Stamboul*, 29/06/1914.

he was publishing another article, reminding that the course of diplomatic events, and the anti-Serbian public meetings in Bosnia, Agram (Zagreb) and Vienna were worrying developments.²⁵ According to Le Goff, Austria-Hungary should adopt a less aggressive attitude towards Serbia.²⁶

In the following days, towards mid-July 1914, the overtone of the articles in French newspapers was reflecting a still-optimistic attitude: Despite the anti-Serbian feeling in Austrian-Hungarian public opinion, there were indicators of a peace- or stability-oriented policy. The emperor Francis Joseph and newspapers such as *Neue Freie Presse* and *Zeit* were calling for moderation, while „vengeance-thirsty papers” like *Reichspost* and *Wiener Tageblatt* were adopting a belligerous discourse that would provoke a Russian implication into the crisis.²⁷ This was a stylized way to present an eventual Russian entry into the Balkanic conflict as a response to Austrian-Hungarian aggression, and not as a result of an interest-oriented interference in the Balkan affairs.

The optimism about the Austro-Hungarian emperor’s and government’s moderate policies would vanish gradually in the coming days. On July 11, *Stamboul* was criticizing the Count Leopold Berthold, Imperial Foreign Minister, who was so far considered as a moderate politician, but who was now adopting policies that were contradicting both the initial expectations and the emperor’s policy of moderation.²⁸ The same issue included also a criticism of the policy of nationalities of Austria-Hungary. According to the newspaper’s editor, Austria-Hungary, in alliance with Croats, had tried to oppress Serbians in Bosnia. The Austrian nationalities policy was strikingly similar to the Ottoman policy in Albania, and the result was rather negative, as Albanians had revolted to the Ottoman oppression.²⁹

War became an eventuality for the readers of *Stamboul* after July 21, when the newspaper published a plethora of statistical data on the Serbian army, and a comment on the courage inherent to the Serbian people, who would fight with valiance in the case of a war. The journal was also putting the stress on the fact that it was still possible to avoid war; however, as Austria-Hungary was willing to annex Serbia and Montenegro, war was a possibility, and a Russian implication into the war was also an eventuality.³⁰ The note presented by Austria-Hungary to Serbia was commented as the beginning of a process during which Serbia would be turned into an Austrian protectorate. An article published on July 25 was also asserting that Francis Joseph was under the influence of the war party.³¹

²⁵ *Stamboul*, 04/07/1914.

²⁶ *Stamboul*, 04/07/1914.

²⁷ *Stamboul*, 08/07/1914. Cf also *Stamboul*, 17/07/1914.

²⁸ *Stamboul*, 11/07/1914.

²⁹ *Stamboul*, 11/07/1914.

³⁰ *Stamboul*, 21/07/1914.

³¹ *Stamboul*, 25/07/1914.

Similarly to the articles published in *Stamboul*, which were mainly the work of Pierre Le Goff, the *Le Moniteur Oriental* was also publishing several articles on the diplomatic crisis. At the end of July, the articles were mostly focusing on diplomatic alliances and enmities. A. de la Jonquière, chief editor of *Le Moniteur Oriental*, was asserting that the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia would result in a danger of German expansion in the Balkans: If Austria-Hungary manages to get Thessaloniki, the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) would reign over the Mediterranean. For the very same reason, it was of crucial importance for France and Russia to stay in alliance.³² *Stamboul* was publishing articles on similar concerns, with a special emphasis on the role Russia, France and the United Kingdom would play for assuring peace; moreover, *Stamboul* was emphasizing that the German Kaiser, William II, would also want to avoid war.³³ Retrospective articles published after the declarations of war at the end of July-beginning of August 1914 were different in tone, and they accused more directly Germany of the outbreak of the war. According to an article by De la Jonquière at the end of September 1914, France, Russia, and even Austria-Hungary were ready for peace, while the intervention of Germany resulted in the outbreak of the Great War. Referring to an article originally published in the *Journal de Genève*, the editor in chief of the *Le Moniteur Oriental* was claiming that it was not Austria-Hungary, but Germany that was the main responsible of the war.³⁴

In the second half of August 1914, *Le Moniteur Oriental* published a series of articles by A. De la Jonquière, who had an in-depth knowledge of military tactics and strategy. One of his conclusions was that the most important feature for a military victory was an energetic command and strategy, and not the numbers.³⁵ De la Jonquière published another series of articles beginning on September 18, 1914, and tried to summarize German strategies and tactics. In these articles, he was stating that the German tactics were rapid, result-oriented and offensive-based. De la Jonquière was praising the Napoleonic tactics (*Le Moniteur Oriental*, 21/09/1914).

The most important concern of the French community of Istanbul was, obviously, the attitude of the Ottoman Empire towards the war. However, articles published on that theme are relatively scarce, probably for reasons of self-censorship and precaution. Pierre Le Goff was writing on August 3, 1914 about the mobilization of the Ottoman army, putting the stress on the fact that the mobilization was not aggressive.³⁶

³² *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 27/07/1914.

³³ *Stamboul*, 27/07, 1914.

³⁴ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 28/09/1914.

³⁵ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 26/08/1914.

³⁶ *Stamboul*, 03/08/1914.

National days and commemorations were an occasion for emphasizing French-Ottoman friendship. For the occasion of the Bastille Day (July 14, 1914), both *Stamboul* and *Le Moniteur Oriental* published messages of friendship. *Stamboul* was praising the French ambassador Bompard for having reestablished good relations between the Ottoman Empire and France.³⁷ In August, when the European war became a reality, the commemoration of the French soldiers who were died during the Crimean War of 1853-1856 were used for emphasizing the importance of French-Ottoman relations. The French club of industrialists and merchants of Istanbul, Union Française, was calling for a massive participation in the ceremony of commemoration.³⁸ The French ambassador and the Minister of Navy, Cemal Pasha, assisted the ceremony. Representatives of Russia, Belgium, United Kingdom and Italy also took part in the ceremony. Russia's presence was especially remarkable, as the Crimean War had been fought against the Russian Empire.³⁹ The French ambassador called the ceremony a „family meeting”, and also mentioned that the time came for the revenge of the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. Another participant of the ceremony, Nazim Bey, spoke on behalf of the ruling party of the Ottoman Empire, the Committee of Union and Progress. Within his speech, he mentioned the importance of the alliance between France, United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire established during the Crimean War.⁴⁰

German shellfire burned and destroyed the Reims Cathedral on September 20, 1914. The result was a traumatism in French public opinion, which was reflected in *Le Moniteur Oriental*. In a first article, A. de la Jonquière was stating that Atheists would be right if God was supporting Germans and wouldn't punish them in these horrific acts.⁴¹ Later, on September 23, he took the destruction of the Reims Cathedral as a reference point for making comments on German civilization. Germans were proud of their civilization, overstressing the importance of German culture, science, and spirit. However, according to De la Jonquière, they would better take the Ottomans as their models: The Sultan Mehmed II, when he conquered Constantinople in 1453, never went that far in his attitude towards public and private property, and always took care of protecting monuments. The German shellfire was, according to De la Jonquière, brightening the great figure of Mehmed II the Conqueror.⁴²

Economic problems and everyday difficulties were amongst the important issues to be tackled by the Levantine newspapers of Istanbul. The

³⁷ *Stamboul*, 15/07/1914.

³⁸ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 14/08/1914.

³⁹ *Stamboul*, 17/08/1914.

⁴⁰ *Stamboul*, 17/08/1914.

⁴¹ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 22/09/1914.

⁴² *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 23/09/1914.

suspension of the stock exchange of Istanbul, almost simultaneously with the British, German, Austro-Hungarian and Italian stock exchanges, was one of the first news about the Ottoman Empire's attitude towards the war.⁴³ Rumors about the suspension of the activities of navigation companies were negated. *Stamboul* published columns on the fears about an eventual rise on transportation fees, which would result in a rise in agricultural prices.⁴⁴ Inflation was mostly feared, and in several occasions, the situation with sugar and flour stock was discussed.⁴⁵

One of the most important economic issues at the beginning of the war was the repeal of the four-centuries-old economic privileges, the „capitulations“. The repeal, which was a unilateral decision of the Ottoman government, was obviously a negative development for the Great Powers, and especially for France. However, the Levantine journals published remarkably positive accounts of the repeal act. According to *Le Moniteur Oriental*, the repeal was desired since the Congress of Paris (1856) by the Ottoman Empire, and it corresponded to the will of the whole Ottoman nation, as demonstrated by the public meetings organized after the repeal. The repeal of the capitulations was indeed a complimentary act of the Revolution of 1908: both the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy in July 1908 and the repeal of the capitulations in September 1914 were the indicators of a „New Turkey“. ⁴⁶ In a similar vein, *Stamboul* was praising the repeal act, and stating that the capitulations were not of egalitarian nature. Moreover, it was clear that the repeal of the capitulations didn't reveal any enmity towards foreign countries.⁴⁷ However, the Levantines suffered very soon the negative effects of the repeal of the capitulations, such as the closing down of the foreign post offices in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁸ Even these developments were not criticized overtly by the French press in Istanbul, for the sake of the maintaining of good relations between the Ottoman Empire and France.

Conclusion

As censorship was strengthened in September 1914 and measures were introduced to the Press Code in order to avoid any non-official publications on the fronts of war, the Levantine Press of Istanbul became silent about the details of the war after autumn 1914. However, their publications during summer 1914 are a succinct but precious information for understanding the mentalities and priorities of the French community of Istanbul that was

⁴³ *Stamboul*, 01/08/1914.

⁴⁴ *Stamboul*, 01/08/1914.

⁴⁵ *Stamboul*, 04/08/1914.

⁴⁶ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 10/09/1914.

⁴⁷ *Stamboul*, 10/09/1914.

⁴⁸ *Stamboul*, 02/10/1914.

linked with close ties to the Ottoman society and economy, and whose wished at any price to avoid the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war against the Entente. Their activities can also be understood as a lobbying and opinion-making activities, as the journals were accessible not only to the French community, but to the a wide array of French-speaking people in Istanbul, including intellectuals and public officials of any Ottoman community, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

The discourse used by the editors of the Levantine newspapers of Istanbul in 1914 reveal an interesting detail about the political mentalities of the period. The French community was open to a nationalistic and patriotic discourse, but when it came to the Ottoman Empire, its representatives tried to overstress the historicity of the good relations between France and the Ottoman Empire, referring mostly to military alliances of the recent past, but also, in some cases, to the portraying of the Ottoman Empire as a bearer of civilized values, as opposed to the uncivilized manners ascribed to Germans. However, it should be also noted that the newspapers archives give a limited and fragmentary evidence of the political mentalities of the French community. A comprehensive and comparative study of other primary sources, such as Greek- and Armenian-language newspapers and the diaries written in 1914 by Levantines of Istanbul and their associates would reveal more clearly the attitudes of the French community of Istanbul towards the war.

