



## THE IMPACT OF THE CRIMEAN WAR ON THE OTTOMAN STATE: REFLECTIONS IN THE GERMAN PRESS

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### Abstract

Historians consider the Crimean War from 1853 to 1856 as the turning point in the politics of the Great Powers in Europe in the 19th century. The Crimean War, which also affected the continental Europe, constitutes the first war between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I in which more than two great powers participated. Even the countries who decided to be neutral felt the effects of this war. This war also introduced new methods and techniques for the world history of war and politics. This research paper examines why and how this war broke out and what the consequences were for Ottomans and especially for the relations with Britain. Rather than delving into military operations of war, this paper will first analyze the policies of England, France and other European states towards the Ottoman Empire. Then it will present an analysis of news appeared in the German press regarding the reaction of the Ottoman public and government during the pre- and post-war period. In the final part, problems and novelties introduced by the war will be studied with special reference to their outcomes for the Ottoman Empire.

### Key Words

*Ottoman Empire, Crimean War, European Great Powers, German Press, Ottoman public opinion*

## KIRIM SAVAŞI'NIN OSMANLI DEVLETİNE ETKİSİ: ALMAN BASININA YANSIMALARI

### Özet

1853-1856 Kırım Savaşı Tarihçiler tarafından 19. yüzyıl Avrupalı Büyük Güçlerin Politikalarında bir dönüm noktası olarak kabul edilmektedir. Kırım Savaşı, Napolyon Savaşları ile Birinci Dünya Savaşı arasındaki dönemde tüm Avrupa'yı kapsayan ve ikiden fazla büyük gücün katıldığı ilk savaştır. Tarafsız kalan ülkeler dahi bu savaştan dolayı olarak etkilenmişlerdir. Ayrıca bu savaş dünya savaş ve siyaset tarihi açısından da birçok ilki beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu araştırma savaşın nasıl ve niçin patlak verdiğini ve Osmanlılar için sonuçlarını, özellikle İngiltere ile ilişkileri

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<sup>1</sup> Gerd Fesser, "Europas erstes Verdun. Im Sommer 1853 begann der Krimkrieg. Zum ersten Mal zeigte sich der Krieg in seiner neuen, industriellen Gestalt [The first Verdun of Europe, the Crimean War started in the summer of 1853, as the first of the wars presenting itself in new, industrial form]", *Die Zeit*, Aug. 7, 2003.



açısından ele almaktadır. Çalışma öncelikle savaşın askeri operasyonlarından ziyade İngiltere, Fransa ve diğer Avrupa devletlerinin Osmanlı Devleti'ne yönelik politikalarını özetlemektedir. Ardından Kırım Savaşı öncesi ve savaşın ilk aylarında Osmanlı kamuoyu ve hükümetinin gelişmeler karşısındaki tutumu hakkında Alman basınında çıkan haberler analiz edilmektedir. Sonuç kısmında ise savaşın getirdiği sorun ve yenilikler ile Osmanlı Devleti açısından sonuçları tahlil edilecektir.

#### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

*Osmanlı Devleti, Kırım Savaşı, Avrupa Büyük Güçleri, Alman Basını, Osmanlı Kamuoyu*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every era has its own jargon of words, concepts, phrases and metaphors. Thus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of Europe, every newspaper reader and politician was familiar with the meaning of the '*sick man of Europe and the Eastern Question*'. While the '*sick man of Europe*' was used in reference to the Ottoman Empire that ruled over a geographical area from the Balkans to the entire Arabic Peninsula, and from Mesopotamia in the east to Tunisia in the west, the '*Eastern Question*' expressed the problematic of its continuity or disintegration.

With the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire had entered a general process of disintegration during which its economic status receded to a semi-colony importing its raw materials from developed countries of Europe. The most imminent threat in the process was posed by Russia. Related developments leading to the Crimean War, one of the most horrific war ever witnessed in Europe, surfaced as early as the beginning of 1853 and ultimately cost the lives of numerous Russian, French, British and Turkish soldiers. The exact number of Turkish casualties has not been precisely determined. The driving force behind this mounting crisis was the autocratic Russian Czar Nicholas I, also known as the '*Gendarme of Europe*' for his bloody suppression of the Polish rebellion in 1830/31, and the Hungarian rebellion in 1849. Anticipating the inevitable end for the '*sick man of Europe*', the Czar was determined to realize the historical Russian aims of expansion starting with the capture of İstanbul and the Bosphorus<sup>2</sup>.

In the summer of 1853, the European great powers adopted the policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire against the aggressive policies of the Russian Czar and forced Russia into negotiations in order to protect their own interests in the context of the '*Eastern Question*'.

The Crimean War, which also affected the continental Europe, constitutes the first war between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I in which more than two great powers participated. Even the countries who decided to be neutral felt the effects of this war. This war also introduced new methods and techniques for the world history of war and politics. The course of the war; apart from being the first emplacement war of the modern era, it became the ground for the first-time application of the landmine and the armour-plated warships in weaponry. Moreover, the *reelpolitik* model was developed in reference to the concept of interests that emerged in international relations as opposed to idealism.

On the other hand, the European states confronted a new problem within the framework of the Crimean War developed in the kind of attitude to adopt against

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<sup>2</sup> Gerd Fesser, "Europas erstes Verdun. Im Sommer 1853 begann der Krimkrieg. Zum ersten Mal zeigte sich der Krieg in seiner neuen, industriellen Gestalt [The first Verdun of Europe, the Crimean War started in the summer of 1853, as the first of the wars presenting itself in new, industrial form]", *Die Zeit*, Aug. 7, 2003.



the Ottoman Empire. The Paris Treaty of 1856 did indeed declare the Ottoman Empire as a member of the European community under the law of the European states. However, despite maintaining control over the Balkans for another quarter of a century by means of this treaty, the Ottoman Empire was consequently dragged into multiple problems such as the collapse of its economy following the first foreign loans and the foreign intervention in its reform policy.

Rather than delving into military operations of war, this paper will first analyze the policies of England, France and other European states towards the Ottoman Empire, the relations between them and the process leading them into helping the Ottomans in the Crimean War. Then this paper will present an analysis of news appeared in the German press regarding the reaction of the Ottoman public and government during the pre- and post-war period. In the final part, problems and novelties introduced by the war will be studied with special reference to their outcomes for the Ottoman Empire.

### 1.1 Research Report

The Ottoman-Russian war of 1853-56 and the Paris Conference have been sufficiently studied by American and European historians in terms of the relationships between the European great powers, their joint policy pursued against the Ottoman Empire, and the formation of national states (Germany and Italy) in Europe in its aftermath. Although the Crimean War is one of the most intensely studied subjects by European historians, there is a lack of comparative studies thoroughly conducted in Turkey. The available ones mostly examine the context of pre-war diplomatic developments, struggles of the great powers, war frontiers (Europe and the Caucasus), the Sinop raid, or economic and technologic developments associated with the war such as housing and migration policies<sup>3</sup>. Despite constituting one of the first 'mediatic' wars of world history, the concern of Turkish historiography with the Crimean War has been extremely limited in terms of its reflections in press.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the attempt here is to examine how the process leading to the Crimean War was reflected in the German press. Although Germany followed a policy of impartiality throughout the war, it was not hardly indifferent to it. In fact, a leading German newspaper, '*Berliner Zeitung*,' conveyed the attitude and preparations of the Ottoman State, and the stance of the public, religious scholars and government to the German public through the related news it reported from İstanbul. It is

<sup>3</sup> The articles on the Crimean War in the recent Turkish encyclopedias are very limited. David M. Goldfrank, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kırım Savaşı'nın Çıkış Nedeni: Kaynaklar ve Stratejiler." *Türkler* 12, 826-839; Özcan Yeniçeri, "Kırım Savaşı, Islahat Fermanı ve Paris Barış Antlaşması", *Türkler* 12, 840-858; Besim Özcan, "Kırım Savaşı (1853-1856)", *Osmanlı* 2, 97-112.

<sup>4</sup> In remembrance of 150th anniversary of the Treaty of Paris the Ottoman Archive in İstanbul has published the Ottoman documents on the Crimean War under five sections which are diplomatic relations, reforms, military activities and finally war and economy. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı (1853-1856)*, Ankara 2006.



even possible to argue that favourable evaluations of the newspaper on the position of the Ottoman State positively influenced the European public opinion.

Therefore, the contexts of both *Berliner Zeitung* (Newspaper of Berlin), published in Berlin, and the wider German press are worth examining in terms of their potential in instilling new depths into fields of international relations, political history and diplomatic studies, as well as journalism and culture. This article also deals with some very important concepts of the Ottoman-German relations of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as image and public opinion. Overall, the Ottoman State as perceived through the German press at a most critical time period is studied here in great detail.

## 2. PRE-WAR DIPLOMACY, ECONOMY, AND PUBLIC OPINION IN THE GERMAN PRESS

*Berliner Zeitung* transmitted the events in the Ottoman Empire at the eve of and during the Crimean War under the heading '*Istanbul and Egypt*'. The newspaper did not only publish news submitted by its own reporters but also communicated news gathered from other agencies in the region to its readers<sup>5</sup>.

This study concentrates on the analysis of newspaper articles starting from April 1853, six months before the war started, when it seemed inevitable. The war formally started on October 4, 1853. Many concerns of the period found their voice in newspapers as represented in the following headlines: The diplomatic relations developed with Russia on the issue of the holy places, the confirmation of rights and privileges granted by the Ottoman State to its non-Muslim subjects as well as the state's attempts to restrain annoyances of these subjects, the view of the non-Muslims on the defense of the country, the attitude assumed by the Greek Ottoman subjects against the Russian expansionism, opinions of Muslim inhabitants regarding non-Muslims and limitations of tolerance shown to them, calls for moderation by the government against the European and Christian inhabitants of the Empire known as *Frenks* (Europeans), armament and defense measures, the Ottoman military preparations for the war and the request from the community for riding animals and extra help, soldier procurement, fortification of castles in the war zones including the Straits, financing of the war, the character of the Turkish soldiers and army, and the attitude of the European public opinion towards the Ottoman State, negotiations of foreign ambassadors in İstanbul with their superiors and the Ottoman State.

<sup>5</sup> The exact identification of the Newspaper of Berlin (*Berliner Zeitung*) is "Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen". *Berliner Zeitung* besides mobile correspondents, also publishes the articles of the other correspondents, European Journal such as *Times*, *Galignani's Messenger*, *Impartial* and Ottoman Journals such as *Journal de Constantinople*. The semi-official Ottoman publication, *Journal de Constantinople*, is explained as the journal which 'receives 50 thousand lira annual grant from the government, published 6 times a month and is distributed heavily in Beyoğlu and Europe'. (*Berliner Zeitung*, Aug. 19, 1853). The journal generally locates the origins of the news articles as Beyoğlu (Pera), Bursa (Brussa), İzmir (Symma), İstanbul (Konstantinopel), Selanik (Salonika), Trapezunt (Trabzon), and Varna.



The Ottoman State remained in constant diplomatic contact with the European great powers before and after the Crimean War. The ambassadors and journalists from the Great Powers in İstanbul constantly reported the developments of the war to their governments and public.

In his report sent to Friedrich Wilhelm IV on March 29, 1853, the German Ambassador Ludwig von Wildenbruch in Beirut stated that Russia had reclaimed its active eastern policy in line with the ambassador to the Porte in 1853 Alexander Sergeievitch Menschikoff's mission to rival the influence that Britain and France had acquired within the Ottoman State. He claimed that from then on, Russia could at any time provoke independence movements of the Balkan nations. As a matter of fact, Menschikoff had aimed to not only solve the issue of the holy places, but also to gain the sympathy of the Greek-Orthodox church and to restore the Russian influence in Montenegro and Serbia. The return of Stratford to power signified the herald of a severe rivalry between Britain and Russia<sup>6</sup>.

As early as the beginning of the Ottoman-Russian crisis, the British and the French ambassadors had made it clear that their governments would not leave Turkey to the hands of Russia. It was expected for the Sublime Porte to resist the Russian requests once it received the support of the France and Britain<sup>7</sup>.

The Ottoman public opinion was interested more in the reaction of these four great powers than in the actual Russian threats. Indeed, the German Ambassador Wildenbruch interpreted the Sublime Porte's take on the draft agreement signed with Russia on May 5, 1853 in the following manner; the Ottomans believed that Britain and France had abandoned the Ottoman State and that the Ottoman government sought support also from Prussia and refused Menschikoff's demands on May 10<sup>8</sup>.

The day following Menschikoff's departure from İstanbul and the termination of diplomatic relations with Russia, the Sultan, who was forced to reject the Russian requests on May 23, repeatedly asked in a state of emotional distress; '*is there no other course to follow?*' When the ongoing process was once again explained to him, he expressed his pain with teary eyes in the following words: '*I do not know what they want from me. I want the best of everything for any member of any religion among my non-Muslim subjects to the extent that has never been wished by any Sultan before. In spite of this, no matter how much I care about the welfare of my non-Muslim subjects, I receive less and less gratitude from the neighbouring Christian principalities*'. Having signed the imperial edict in this spirit, the Sultan received much sympathy from his Muslim subjects<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Winfried Baumgart (Hg.), *Preußische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkrieges, Band 1, 25. Januar 1853 bis 8. August 1854*, München 1991, Wildenbruch an Friedrich Wilhelm, 29 March 1853, Nr. 8, 79-84.

<sup>7</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, May 1, 1853 (News from İstanbul on April 10, 1853).

<sup>8</sup> Baumgart, *Preußische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkrieges, Band 1*, Wildenbruch an Friedrich Wilhelm, 12 May 1853, Nr. 14, 95-100.

<sup>9</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 7, 1853.



Menschikoff departed to Odessa following the Sublime Porte's refusal of the note that summarized his demands for a last time. After his departure from İstanbul on May 26/27, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Drouyn de Lhuys pointed out to the French Ambassador, Alexandre Walewski in London that the Russian attack on Ottoman independence and European balance could be countered only by a common stance of the great powers. The most important duty of France and Britain was to defend İstanbul and the Straits against a sudden Russian assault. Vienna and Berlin also stood by the Western forces in diplomatic terms<sup>10</sup>.

Meanwhile, the French-British Fleet was still alert at the Beşik Bay in a position to reach İstanbul within 29 hours. According to the news reported from İstanbul on June 27 with reference to Turkish newspapers, a regular army unit of 80 thousand soldiers in Erzurum and a mobile army in Trabzon consisting of Circasians, who were temporarily settled in Turkey, were gathered to be directed, during a possible war, to the service of Sheikh Shamil, who was preparing a great military campaign similar to that of Genghis Khan<sup>11</sup>.

When the news of the Russian occupation of Wallachia-Moldovia (July 3, 1853) officially reached İstanbul, the Sublime Porte protested it in front of the allied powers. The necessary defense measures were immediately taken, as this act was perceived as an intervention in the Turkish territories and a declaration of war. Particularly the British and Austrian ambassadors preached discretion to the Sublime Porte in the midst of a diplomatic traffic accelerating in the capital city. While admitting that the Sublime Porte had a legitimate right to defense, they also advised to wait for Russia's reply to the peace proposals and for their possible evacuation of Wallachia-Moldovia<sup>12</sup>.

*Berliner Zeitung* commented that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Reşit Pasha, had been successful in turning the issue of the unannounced Wallachia-Moldovia occupation into a European problem rather than a simple Ottoman-Russian conflict. Accordingly, the moderate reply of the Sublime Porte to Russia's note exacerbated the anti-Russian sentiment within the European public opinion. Against the manifesto of the Russian Czar, the Ottoman Council of State invited Muslims to treat the Christian subjects in moderation and with tolerance<sup>13</sup>.

Encountered in another newspaper article of early September attributed to once again Turkish newspapers, the following commentary clearly addressed Europe: 'If Europe believes that the Turkish-Russian conflict, which is fed by the four great powers, will end with the mediation of Austria, then it is a mistake. The journalists may spread conciliatory news to the world; however, the situation in Istanbul appears to be different from what is written in the European journals'. On wide-spread bulletins ad-

<sup>10</sup> Winfried Baumgart (Hg.), *Französische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkrieges, Band 1, 18. Dezember 1852 bis 27. März 1854*, München 2003, Drouyn de Lhuys an Walewski, 26/27 May 1853, Nr. 71/72, 231.

<sup>11</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 12, 1853.

<sup>12</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 21, 1853.

<sup>13</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 31, 1853.



dressing Sultan Abdülmecid, which were most probably penned by the *Ulema* (religious scholars), the following lines spoke out: 'Your people have armed themselves with the available arms in order to defend their rights. If you are bearing the honour of your ancestors and your throne, gird yourself with your sword and lead us into war. Otherwise dethrone yourself and leave your throne to somebody with more honour.' Even though Sultan Abdülmecid was not really an advocate of war, he realized that it was to become inevitable unless the power of the religious scholars was broken<sup>14</sup>.

With the war encroaching upon İstanbul, Muslim subjects were treating Christians in a congenial manner despite their own inclination for war. It is worth noting how the British and French governments assumed an attitude exactly contrary to their former discourse, when the war was officially declared by the Ottoman State. France immediately announced that it had no obligation to assist the Ottomans. While the British ambassador, Lord Redcliffe recommended a peaceful solution to the government, he also promised to provide naval support to the Ottoman State in case of a war<sup>15</sup>.

The European public opinion had impact over their governments about the Ottoman-Russian War in both the pre- and post-war periods. The British government, in particular, had to respect opinions and pressures of its own public opinion. Although the onset of the Crimean War was not triggered by the public opinion, it is the first European war that was actually encouraged by it. The course of the war was not monitored by only the German press, but also the British journalists who informed their public with the available information. For instance, *Punch* Ltd., established in London in 1841, had acquired a significant position inside the British public within a short time with the help of its political cartoons. Even though it published a cartoon entitled 'Turkey in Danger' for the first time during the Crimean War on April 9, 1853 with the aim of addressing the approaching crisis, the journal did not react to the destruction of the Turkish naval force by the Russian fleet with a surprise attack on November 30, 1853 at Sinop. In fact, this 'massacre' would not be sufficient to stir the allied forces to action for another few months<sup>16</sup>.

The Crimean War could also be considered as the first 'mediatic' war in the course of history. The first telegram installed at fronts enabled the intervention of politicians and commanders from long distance and thereby, it caused interruptions in operations. The first professional war correspondent was W.G. Russel from *The Times* and the first war photographer was Roger Fenton. Fenton's images of the war had a serious impact over the public opinion. James Robertson, who

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<sup>14</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Sept. 18, 1853.

<sup>15</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 20, 1853.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Cross, "The Crimean War and the Caricature War", *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 84, Nr. 3, (July 2006), 459-480, 462.



substituted the sick Fenton, was able to take pictures of İstanbul during the last two years (1853-55)<sup>17</sup>.

## 2.1 News on Non-Muslim Ottoman Subjects

The situation of non-muslims in Ottoman Empire after Tanzimat had become a very important issue for the Empire's relations with Great Powers and in its internal politics. The state of Ottoman Christian and Jews were intensively discussed in the press.

*Berliner Zeitung* of May 19, 1853 analyzed the attempts of the Ottoman Greek community to win over the protection of Russia from different perspectives. According to these news, some of the Greek subjects could not understand why the Sublime Porte resisted the Russian demands, which asked no more than what Mehmed the Conqueror had already granted to Greeks in his imperial edict. Most of the Greeks explained that the status of non-Muslims subjects was already satisfactory and that therefore, they should not be complaining. The Turks, on the other hand, were extremely angry at the final threat of Russia<sup>18</sup>.

While the İzmir Greeks were initially certain of a Russian victory, they appeared ready to defend their country when it became certain that the Turks would receive foreign support. The same source also stated that the news on the so-called Christian massacre performed by the 'fanatic' Turks in Bursa should not be given credit, since treating believers of different religions with tolerance was one of the chief virtues of the Turks that allowed various religions to coexist within the Turkish territories<sup>19</sup>.

Fearing the increasing rage against Russia among the Turkish population, the Ottoman State established more checkpoints in İstanbul to prevent attacks against Christians. Moreover, imperial edicts declared at mosques announced to Muslims that Christian subjects within the Ottoman Empire were not Russians, that some were befriended with the Turks while some others were enemies of Russians, and that due to all of these reasons, none of Christians should be verbally or physically harmed. The persons acting otherwise would be punished<sup>20</sup>.

On October 13, 1853 Halil Rifat Pasha, Gouvernor of Provinz Hüdavendigâr, received an order from the Sultan which orders Pasha to not discriminate the subjects of other states and of the Empire base on religion, sect or races on the pretext of war.<sup>21</sup>

The public opinion in İstanbul was in support of the Council of State (Meclis-i umumî). In general, Muslims seemed to advocate war, whereas the Christian population remained noncommittal or impartial. Two factors were perceived as

<sup>17</sup> Gowing, op. cit., p. XII. These first photos of İstanbul were published by Sedat Hakkı Eldem, *Boğaziçi Anıları*, İstanbul 1979.

<sup>18</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 2, 1853.

<sup>19</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 7, 1853.

<sup>20</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 15, 1853.

<sup>21</sup> BOA, HR.SYS. 903/2-80, Nr. 30, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı*, 102-104.



assurances for the preparation and execution of the massive reforms and the protection of the necessary peace; the Imperial Rescript (*Hatt-ı Hümayun of 1856 or Islahat Fermanı*) aimed to equalize the status of the Christians within the Ottoman State to that of Muslim subjects. On July 3, a delegation consisting of four metropolitan members and other notable figures visited the Minister of Foreign Affairs to deliver their satisfaction with this imperial edict formulated in favour of Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects<sup>22</sup>.

Local authorities in provinces also received orders from the capital to preserve peace and order. In addition, governors were charged with guarding the property and lives of Christian subjects and preventing at all costs the excessive anti-Christian rowdiness by Muslims. *Berliner Zeitung* commented that this attitude sufficiently revealed the good intentions of the Sublime Porte and that under such conditions, other improvements and reforms such as making of new concessions to Christians beyond the Imperial Edict would not be considered. Such an act would be perceived as an indication of weakness for the Turkish government, which would be disgraced in the eyes of Muslim public opinion<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.2 Economy, Public Opinion and Politics towards the War

The newspaper included also news on the financing of the approaching war starting from the mid-June 1853. One particular piece reported to *Kölnische Zeitung* from Beyoğlu in the beginning of July exhibits some striking information regarding financing of the war. It looks into the interrogation of means of the government to cover defense expenses conducted by those people aware of the corrupt economic status of Turkey. Rumours of the period suggested that the majority believed properties of rich foundations would be confiscated or loans would be borrowed from probably Britain in return for the pledge of one of the big islands in the Archimedes region<sup>24</sup>.

The cash shortage in September seemed to put the Sublime Porte in constraint. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance was allowed to be indebted up to 40 million liras<sup>25</sup>. By mid-October, a further tightening of the economic bottleneck was observed. Another proposal offered to the government to reduce the costs was for wealthy Turks to arm voluntary soldiers, to pay them a certain salary and then to place them under the service of the Ministry of War. However, the Sublime Porte started with confiscating some of properties of foundation (*Waqfs*). It was believed by public that more measures would include further confiscation of foundation properties and the increase in real estate taxes. The Officers offered horses of their carts and race horses to the service of the government<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 3, 1853.

<sup>23</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Aug. 11, 1853.

<sup>24</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 17, 1853.

<sup>25</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Sept. 18, 1853.

<sup>26</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 25, 1853.



Attitudes and reactions adopted by the public, religious scholars, and political and bureaucratic segments of İstanbul, Anatolia, and Arabia at the eve of the Crimean War also had their repercussions within the newspaper columns. Such news discussed the defense of the country and the fortification of the army. The Prussian Lieutenant Blum, who was in charge of the School of Engineering in İstanbul, departed to Silistra in order to inspect fortifications. The government planned to maintain 40 thousand Kurds and Circassians in the Caucasus in order to be able to encircle the Russian Army and to draw dissident Russian villagers to their side<sup>27</sup>.

By the end of May, it was also observed that uncertainty in weather conditions damaged the commercial life in İstanbul. Summer mansions in the Bosphorus and the Prince's Islands, where the elite of İstanbul passed their summers, remained empty since practically no one had the courage to leave the city. On the other hand, the Bosphorus was filled with battleships and the Ottomans were in a courageous preparation against the '*moskof gavuru*' (Infidel Moscow), their eternal enemy. All volunteers were drafted at a bureau in Tophane without any discrimination on the basis of religion and nationality. Interpreting this practice as an act of great inattentiveness, *Berliner Zeitung* noted that immigrants would probably rush there to create further problems for the Sublime Porte as they had done before<sup>28</sup>.

Turkish people were becoming increasingly war-oriented with the expectancy of a victory. Instrumental in this spirit were open commentaries of religious scholars and some fanatics at the traditional Ramadan gatherings in houses and public places. In addition, theatrical shows organized to entertain the public often included scenes in which a Turk would kill thousands of Russians with his sword and the defeated Russian Czar would kneel at the sultan's feet begging for forgiveness. Even the joy of the religious festivals celebrated by Muslims with enthusiasm was shadowed by the hate fostered against the Russians<sup>29</sup>.

In the middle of July, *Berliner Zeitung* wrote changes in the European public opinion in favour of the Ottoman State. According to these detailed news, those who had been especially interested in the disintegration of Turkey until that point, those who had worked to weaken it, and those who had been preparing to blow the final strike, had recently adopted a completely contrary attitude for some reason. While the Muslim presence in the Orient had appeared to be old and weak, the situation had now altered. The striking Ottoman problem of standing upright at the face of the West was replaced by the image of a state with a will and courage to endure. An obvious fanaticism had encompassed the entire population down to the lowest layer. According to the newspaper, it was possible to hear the following from the Turks, who possessed nothing more than a rusty knife: '*We conquered Istanbul with our swords and we also know how to defend it with our swords*'. The rapid

<sup>27</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 7, 1853.

<sup>28</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, June 15, 1853.

<sup>29</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 17, 1853.



recruitment of novices and the sudden rush of discharged soldiers, which would have normally consumed a long time and effort, were good indicators that these words did indeed have the power to assert themselves<sup>30</sup>.

Meanwhile, a mechanical telegram line was installed over rock cliffs of the Black Sea at the Bosphorus with the purpose of closely observing the Russian navy<sup>31</sup>. Many vessel guides, who were well informed about the Black Sea, were also recruited under the command of the navy. Many pilgrims on their way to the holy lands returned half way through to be voluntarily enlisted to the Ministry of War. In the midst of these preparations, however, the news coming from Erzurum was not bright. Russia was moving along the Armenian border, while at the same time provoking Iran against Turkey through its agents<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, defense measures were taken at the Black Sea shores. Walls and forts were constructed along the coastal line in Trabzon. Inhabitants of the city were summoned through official announcements to halt their businesses and to participate in fortification works. All of the Christians, including priests and metropolitans, joined in helping the ground works<sup>33</sup>.

The Prussian officers under the Ottoman service inspected fortifications in the Danube, Black Sea and Asia Minor. Ten battleships from the Turkish naval fleet at the Bosphorus accompanied 10 thousand soldiers, who had been transferred from the armies in Arabia to Batumi. Moreover, observer troops were deployed at the Turkish-Greek and Iranian borders.

The Turkish population in and around İstanbul was now resisting rumours of peace with the belief that the government had betrayed them. According to another news article in *Berliner Zeitung*, the Turkish defense did not seem like it would be easily terminated by the Russians and that Christian subjects did not seem to be inclined to side with Russia. Thus, Russia's declaration of a 'War of Religion' had become meaningless and the war had become reduced to a struggle in which Russian soldiers alone faced Turkish soldiers<sup>34</sup>.

On August 11, an interesting article, entitled 'a self-respecting peace or an urgent war' appeared in *Journal de Constantinople*, the official broadcast organ of the Turkish government. It was stated here that an urgent decision on war should be preferred to an unacceptable peace. According to the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, Russia's demand for patronising the Greek Church was contrary to the independence of Turkey and to the Straits Convention of 1841, which gave the four great powers the right to handle the Russian requests at their own courts. These courts would refuse Russia's requests on the grounds that they were unjustifiable. 'If the four great powers had showed that they would not avoid entering war against Rus-

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<sup>30</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 21, 1853.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 31, 1853.

<sup>33</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 5, 1853.

<sup>34</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, July 31, 1853.



sia, the council of ministers of Petersburg would have acted in a more foresighted way and another European war could have been prevented from the start. Turkey did everything possible to please Russia. Now, what should be done, although it is late, is to stand against the unjust requests of Russia. Should Turkey not be able to protect an honoured peace, it will fight with the courage of its soldiers, the justness of its assertion, and the tangible and intangible support of its allies<sup>35</sup>.

Turkey had not gathered such a huge army power since the military reform of 1826. Such enthusiasm observed in the capital city also spread over to Christian groups. Three thousand volunteers from the leading Bulgarian families proposed to enter the service of the Ottomans against Russia<sup>36</sup>. The solid stand of the Council of State and the Ministers, the excitement of the Turkish nation and the optimism of Christians indicated that the Ottoman State had the power and will to live, which were vital for survival. Respectful treatment of impartial Christians in Europe by Turkish soldiers demonstrated that the Sublime Porte was not making concessions to fanaticism. Fidelity to the sultan, the faith in the continuity of the Empire, and the potential to sacrifice lives and properties for this sake would help Turkey to resist the enemy<sup>37</sup>.

By the beginning of October 1853, the Russian-Turkish conflict did not seem possible to be resolved through peaceful means. Religious scholars (*Ulema*) and *medrese* students in and around İstanbul collected 60 thousand signatures to show that they would resort to all means to stand against Russia. The entire youth had assumed a pro-war attitude<sup>38</sup>.

Finally, the sultan seemed like he would submit to the pressures of the war supporters. The rage against him had mounted to such an extent that *mullahs* threatened not to preach the Friday sermon in his name unless he assumed the role of the protector of Islam<sup>39</sup>. *Sheikh ul-Islam* announced that in case the problem was not resolved within 14 days, he would break out a revolt under the flag of the Prophet. After this point, even the peace advocate Reşid Pasha did not have the power to stop the fanaticism of the war supporters. The final decision on war was reached unanimously by the Council of State, high bureaucrats, religious scholars and *medrese* teachers. The army commander in Danube, Ömer Pasha, and Selim Pasha in Erzurum were both ordered to get ready. The decision of war taken by the Council of State was delivered to ambassadors of the four great powers and the Russian embassy following its signature by the Sultan. Although the properties of foundation were not yet utilized as a necessary source of income, *Sheikh ul-Islam* granted the necessary consent<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Aug. 25, 1853.

<sup>36</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Sept. 1, 1853.

<sup>37</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Sept. 6, 1853.

<sup>38</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 2, 1853.

<sup>39</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 11, 1853.

<sup>40</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 13, 1853.



British and French ambassadors received the order for the allied naval forces to cross the Dardanelles with the possible consent of the Sublime Porte<sup>41</sup>. Meanwhile, the press in İstanbul and İzmir transmitted the opinions of the European press to their readers. The Newspaper *Impartial* stated that Russia had the notion of dismantling Turkey; however, Turkey would protect its political presence until the end, and Europe would help in emergency situations in order not to risk its own future<sup>42</sup>.

### 3. ATTITUDE OF EUROPEAN STATES DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

All suspicions of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century about the future of the Ottoman Empire having become an inseparable component of European concerns were totally eliminated with the Crimean War. Identified with the Crimean peninsula at a first glance, the Crimean War first erupted as an Ottoman-Russian war following the Russian occupation of the Wallachia-Moldavia principalities on October 4, 1853. However, it expanded over two years to an area from Kars to the banks of Danube. Despite the initial British and French promises for support at the eve of the war, their actual intervention occurred a year after it broke out. In fact, this intervention was only actualized following the wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and the Sinop raid. Ottoman provinces excluding the Caucasus were indirectly affected by the war. One factor related to this development was the presence of western military and civilian personnel in İstanbul, who transformed the structure of the city and the city-dwellers in a few years. In this context, western clothing, furniture and architecture in İstanbul acquired new dynamics. The area of Beyoğlu, which was connected to Europe via a telegram line, became a new administrative *model* in modern terms<sup>43</sup>.

As the third Ottoman-Russian war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that preoccupied the Ottoman State for three years, the Crimean War also constituted vital significance for European states. Two factors seem to outweigh others among the war's causes; the aggressive and expansionist policy adopted by Russia towards the Ottoman State since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the problem of the holy places. The latter acted as a triggering motive rather than a decisive reason especially in connection with the historical role of France in protecting the Catholic Christians of the Orient<sup>44</sup>.

The Ottoman State had granted various privileges to both the Catholic and the Orthodox Christians regarding the holy Jerusalem and its surroundings. By 1853, Russia and France had entered a conflict over these privileges. In the process, Rus-

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<sup>41</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 25, 1853.

<sup>42</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, Oct. 29, 1853.

<sup>43</sup> Klaus Kreiser, "Das große Versprechen: Vor 150 Jahren wurde die Türkei in das Konzert der europäischen Mächte aufgenommen. Zur selben Zeit entwickelte sie ein erstaunliches Reformprogramm [Great Promise: 150 years ago Turks were accepted into the European Union and synchronously realized an imposing reform program]", *Die Zeit*, March 9, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Georg Franz, "Der Krimkrieg, ein Wendepunkt des Europäischen Schicksals", *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 7 (1956), 448-463, 450.



sia implemented the image of 'the sick man of Europe' in reference to the Ottoman State and manipulated the problem of the holy places in an attempt to realize its ambitions over this geography. Yet it had to manoeuvre alone due to disagreement with Britain regarding these policies. Britain, on the other hand, acted in coordination with France in protecting the territorial integrity of the Ottomans by means of diplomacy and military<sup>45</sup>.

Britain's main priority was maintaining the balance of power in Europe. Upon Czar's re-attempt to share the territories of the Ottoman State, Britain realized that its own stakes were put at risk. After all, the Ottoman Empire had been turned into a market in which the demand for British industrial products had increased eight fold following the 1838 Balta Limanı (Balta Port) Commercial Treaty. Britain sided with the integrity of the Ottoman State against the risk of Russia intervening in these commercial interests and the routes to India<sup>46</sup>. The British press also supported the Ottoman State, which it perceived to be weak and liberal compared to Russia.

What further stirred an anti-Russian aura in the British public were the bloody suppression of the Hungarian revolt by Russia in 1849 and the maltreatment of the Poles. The fact that the Ottoman State had welcomed the Hungarian immigrants regardless of the Austrian and Russian protests worked in favour of the Ottoman sultan and Turks to improve their prestige in eyes of the British public opinion<sup>47</sup>. By being admitted into the service of the Ottomans, these immigrants further strengthened the anti-Russian feelings in İstanbul. Some were converted to Islam and even became fervent defenders of Turkish nationalism. For instance, Michal Czajkowski (1804-1886), also known as 'Sadık Pasha', fought on the side of the allied forces during the Crimean War<sup>48</sup>.

On the other hand the Ottoman government tried to influence British public opinion in case British support was needed. Turkish Ambassador in London, Kostaki Musurus Bey, received a confidential memorandum on August 9, 1853 to influence British public opinion, in form of organizing meetings or sending letters regarding to the situation of the Ottoman Empire to the Members of the Parliament<sup>49</sup>.

Napoleon III also stood firm against the Russian expansion in an attempt to declare French superiority in Europe. The French end of the conflict revolved around St. Petersburg and the issue of the holy places in Palestine. The Crimean War, in this sense, became instrumental for both Britain and France in keeping

<sup>45</sup> Mahir Aydın, "Kırım Savaşı", *Sanatı, Tarihi, Edebiyatı ve Musikisiyle Kırım*, Oktay Aslanapa (ed.), Ankara 2002, 123-127.

<sup>46</sup> Fesser, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Emin Ali Çavlı, *Kırım Harbi ve Paris Muahedesi 1956*, İstanbul 1957, 9. See also: Bayram Nazır, *Osmanlı'ya Sığınanlar: Macar ve Polonyalı Mülteciler*, İstanbul 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Fikret Adanır, "Der Krimkrieg von 1853-1856", *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, Band 2: Vom Randstaat zur Hegemonialmacht, hrsg. Von K. Zernack, Stuttgart 2001, 1196-1197. See also: İvo Andrić, *Ömer Paşa*, (trans.) Ali Berktaş, İstanbul 2004, 35-36.

<sup>49</sup> BOA, HR.SYS. 903/2-26, Nr. 6, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı*, 24.



Russia outside the European continent. As such, the war can be perceived as the 19<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of the 'cold war' that is associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Napoleon III believed that, through a coalition of great powers, the balance of power in the continental Europe could be maintained, the untimely disintegration of the Ottoman State could be prevented and France could ultimately acquire its superior position in Europe. The coalition could also topple down Russia's position as a 'great power' by keeping it outside of Europe and re-establish Poland.

Apart from this strategic alliance, Prussia's policy, as a Central European state, was to pursue impartiality, since it considered the possibility of resorting to Russia for assistance while realizing its grand project of German national integration in near future. Both the allied forces and Russia strove to draw Austria and Prussia to their sides in the process. Regarding entrance into the war, these two countries were themselves divided into two as supporters of the allied forces and supporters of Russia. Due to the ultimate impartiality of Prussia and Austria, it had become impossible for Britain and France to invade Russia over land.

Even though Austria allied with Russia in the beginning of the conflict, it turned impartial towards the middle by abandoning the Metternich policy and later joined the Western ultimatum. Conducting secret negotiations with Russia during the first year of the war, Sweden also switched to the league of Britain and France in 1855. Despite being to an extent the victim of circumstances, the Ottoman State was granted representation at the Paris Peace Treaty as a reward for its victory in the war together with the Allied forces. However, aside from not offering additional advantages to the Ottomans, this political act fell short of bringing viable solutions to the ongoing problems of the state<sup>50</sup>.

As the only war in which the Ottoman scored a victory over Russians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Crimean War officially ended on March 3, 1856 with the Paris Peace Treaty through which the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman State were guaranteed by the participating great powers including Britain, France, Italy, Austria-Hungarian Empire and Prussia. The Crimean War abolished the status quo formulated at the Vienna Congress of 1815. Moreover, the Holy Alliance was dissolved. It also ended the role of Russia as the leading military power and the 'Gendarme of Europe'. Russians, in this respect, were refrained from posing a threat to their neighbours for a while. The determining factor in this first industrial war was the superiority of equipment. The usage of rifles in warfare was first witnessed in Crimea. From this point onwards, there would be less emphasis put on human lives. For instance, in a few years, two hundred thousand soldiers and four hundred thousand civilians would lose their lives during the

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<sup>50</sup> Oral Sander, *Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü. Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine Bir Deneme*, 2. Basım, İstanbul 2000, 225-227.



American civil war. The First World War also cost lives of ten million people, while being marked in history as the first atrocity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe<sup>51</sup>.

From a broader perspective, the Paris Treaty constitutes a turning point in the history of Europe, if not in the Balkans and the Near East. The treaty focused on two problems regarding the Ottoman-European relations. The first was restraining the Russian control over the Black Sea and the second one concerned the satisfaction of the Balkan people through wide-scale reforms against the possibility of Ottoman disintegration. The solutions on table, however, could not remain permanent<sup>52</sup>.

In his reports sent on April 3 and 18, 1856 from İstanbul to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Earl of Clarendon, the foremost British diplomat in İstanbul, ambassador Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe Canning reported the obstacles in the application of the above mentioned reform plans. Accordingly, Fuat Pasha wanted to initiate the program with measures of infrastructure and promotion of commerce and economy. In Canning's view, the war had removed only one of the obstacles blocking the Turkish reform, while the actual problem still existed. The Ottoman State presented a power vacuum for expansionist policies of the great powers, and since its sole attempt at resistance operated through its call for reform, Britain had to assist Turkey by all possible means<sup>53</sup>. On the other hand, the Crimean War was the first example of the West allying in favour of the Sublime Porte. What mattered more, however, was that this war strengthened the image in minds of the Ottoman bureaucracy that given the alliance with Christian states remained permanent; the state would survive for a longer time than expected.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Although the Crimean War did not cause a loss of territory, it damaged Ottoman political interests. The Allied Forces emerged as political victors of this war in which both sides suffered more than two hundred and fifty thousand casualties. The Crimean War allowed Britain to divert the interest of the great powers away from India and thereby, to develop its commerce further. New rights were granted to non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire with the Imperial Rescript. Prepared in London and Paris and known as the Imperial Edict of Privilege by Muslims, it was simply a repetition of the former Illustrious Rescript (*Tanzimat Edict* or *Hatt-ı Şerif of 1839*) that took the inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims to an international platform. Provisions regarding full freedom to all religious faiths and customs, and the elimination of death sentence for Muslims converting to other relig-

<sup>51</sup> Gülşen Demir (trans.), *Bir Kraliyet Piyadeleri Çavuşunun Kaleminden Kırım Savaşı*, Ankara 2005, X-XI., see also; Winfried Baumgart, *Der Friede von Paris 1856: Studien zum Verhältnis von Kriegsführung, Politik und Friedensbewahrung*, München 1972, 233-241; Fuat Andıç, *Kırım Savaşı. Âli Paşa ve Paris Antlaşması*, İstanbul: Eren Yayınları, 2002; Fesser, op.cit.

<sup>52</sup> Savaş Aktur (trans.), *Avrupa Tarihinden Kesitler 1789-1980*, Ankara 2002, 88-89.

<sup>53</sup> Winfried Baumgart (Hg.), *Englische Akten zur Geschichte des Krimkrieges, Band 4, 10. September 1855 bis 23. Juli 1856*, München 1998, Nr. 606/637, 961; 995-996.



ions were included in the Imperial Edict to serve two purposes; to remove the last traces of the *millet* system and to give the missionary activities a legal status. Utilizing these openings very artfully, France brought about the events of the Middle East that have lasted up to this day. Italy completed its unification by receiving political assistance from the allies. Although defeated in war, Russia acted contrary to the terms of the Paris Treaty to pursue its grand ideal first politically and then physically.

Discussions on bestowing the island of Cyprus to Britain as a pledge for its help in the financing of the Crimean War were mentioned earlier in this paper in terms of their coverage by the German press in the summer of 1853. What is also important is how this case can be perceived as almost a quarter century earlier prototype of the transfer of the island's administration to Britain in return for its diplomatic support to the Ottoman State during the Berlin Conference in 1878. It is interesting to encounter the revival of this theme as a result of the Ottoman defeat at the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877/1878.

As explained above, it became important at the eve of the Crimean War for the decisions taken on issues concerning the public to be shared back with the wider public opinion. On the agenda were developments such as open self-criticism of the Sultanate before the press, incorporation of the public opinion into the decision making process, survey of public opinion, accountability before the community and the renewal of legitimacy. The alliance treaty signed in March 1853 opened doors of the Ottoman capital city to the allied forces, which paved the way for modern expansions that questioned the traditional structure such as the sharing of the military campaign with the public and thereby, the granting of legitimacy. Apart from the European press, publications of the Ottoman press such as first nonofficial newspaper, the *Ceride-i Havadis* and *Takvim-i Vekayi* were useful in reflecting these events into the social memory by means of a close monitoring. The creation of a rudimentary public opinion in Ottoman Empire was supported moreover through publication of books, pamphlets and in secular and westernized education<sup>54</sup>.

Today, the Crimean War that took place more than 150 years ago suffers from a major indifference especially in comparison to the 1915 victory in the Dardanelles in Turkey. However, it has to be acknowledged that the Ottoman State became a full member of *European Concert*. This period also witnessed the development and application of the great reform plans by prominent Ottoman bureaucrats. At the same time, the war and its outcome revealed the obligation of the Ottoman State and Russia had to go through a series of reforms, and thus both countries accelerated their modernization attempts.

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<sup>54</sup> Ann Pottinger Saab, *The origins of the Crimean alliance*, Charlottesville, Va., 1977, 4-5.



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