

Preserving A Precarious Neutrality: The Ottoman Empire and
the Hundred Days Crisis

Hassas Bir Tarafsızlığı Korumak: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Yüz Gün Krizi

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Abstract

This article analyzes how the Ottoman ruling elite attempted to maintain their traditional policy of neutrality during the Hundred Days Crisis, which occurred between Napoleon Bonaparte's escape from Elba and his second abdication following the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. During this volatile period, the Ottomans found themselves caught between the Allied powers, which demanded Ottoman alignment with the coalition formed against Napoleon, and Napoleon himself, who sent an envoy to the Porte to secure Ottoman recognition of his emperorship. Furthermore, the demonstrations and symbolic actions of Bonapartist French diplomats in the Ottoman capital and its periphery, such as displaying Bonaparte's flag and wearing his imperial decorations and symbols on their clothing and diplomatic premises, led to diplomatic crises between the Ottomans and the French embassy, involving other diplomatic representations of the concerned European states. This article demonstrates that the Ottoman administration utilized its traditional policy of neutrality in European crises as a strategy to navigate these diplomatic incidents. Similar to the declaration of a republic in France after the Revolution (1792) and Napoleon's assumption of the title

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of Emperor (1804), during the Hundred Days Crisis, the Ottoman administration initially adopted a wait-and-see approach and then emphasized neutrality to avoid entanglement in intra-European conflicts. Drawing on Ottoman archival documents and biographical works on Pierre Ruffin, the capable chargé d'affaires of the French Embassy, the article argues that the Ottoman policy of neutrality aimed to achieve two objectives: (1) refraining from antagonizing Bonaparte by maintaining diplomatic contact with the existing staff of the French embassy, and (2) preventing any incidents that could jeopardize Ottoman relations with the anti-Bonapartist coalition. Both objectives appeared to be met thanks to the skillful diplomatic handling of the incidents.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, France, Napoleon Bonaparte, Hundred Days Crisis, Neutrality.

Öz

Bu çalışma 1815 yılında Napolyon Bonapart'ın Elbe Adası'ndan kaçışıyla başlayıp Waterloo Muharebesi'nden sonra imparatorluktan ikinci kez feragat etmesine kadar süren ve Yüz Gün Krizi olarak nitelendirilen dönemde Osmanlı idarecilerinin geleneksel tarafsızlık politikasını nasıl sürdürdüğünü incelemektedir. Osmanlılar bu dönemde, Bonapart karşıtı politikalarına destek isteyen müttefik devletler ile Bâbıâli'ye bir diplomatik temsilci göndererek Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun kendi imparatorluk ünvanını tanımasını talep eden Napolyon Bonapart arasında kalmışlardır. Dahası İstanbul'daki ve çevre vilayetlerdeki Bonapart yanlısı Fransız diplomatların, Bonapart'ın bayrağını diplomatik temsilciliklerin gönderine çekmek veya Bonapart'ın nişan ve sembollerini kıyafetlerinde ve diplomatik temsilcilik binalarında kullanmak gibi eylemleri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Fransız Sefareti arasında diğer Avrupa devletlerinin diplomatik temsilcilerinin de müdahil olduğu bir dizi diplomatik kriz çıkarmıştır. Bu makale Osmanlı idaresinin Avrupa devletleri arasındaki krizlerde tarafsız kalma geleneğini tüm bu diplomatik krizleri derinleşmeden atlatmak için etkili bir şekilde kullandığını göstermektedir. Fransız İhtilali'nden sonra Fransa'da cumhuriyet ilan edilmesi (1792) veya Bonapart'ın imparator ünvanını alması (1804) süreçlerinin yarattığı krizlere benzer olarak Yüz Gün Krizi'nde de Osmanlı idaresi önce bekle-gör politikası izlemiş ve ardından bu Avrupa içi krize dâhil olmamak için tarafsızlık politikasını sürdürmeye odaklanmıştır. Osmanlı arşiv belgelerinden ve Fransız Sefareti'nin becerikli maslahatgüzarı Pierre Ruffin üzerine yapılmış biyografik çalışmalardan hareketle, bu çalışma Osmanlıların tarafsızlık politikasının iki hedefi olduğunu göstermektedir: (1) Fransız sefaretinin mevcut memurları ile diplomatik

teması sürdürerek Bonapart'ı İmparatorluğa düşman etmemek, (2) diğer taraftan da Bonapart karşıtı koalisyonun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile ilişkilerini bozacak her türlü eylemi önlemeye çalışmak. Her iki hedefin de bu krizlerde etkin bir diplomatik çaba gösterilmesi ile elde edildiği gözlemlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Fransa, Napolyon Bonapart, Yüz Gün Krizi, Tarafsızlık.

Introduction

The Hundred Days crisis, marked by Napoleon Bonaparte's dramatic return from exile on Elba and his brief restoration to power in France in 1815, stands as a pivotal episode in European history, both as a moment of acute political volatility and as a symbolic closure to the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. This brief interregnum disrupted the careful diplomatic balancing act engineered by the Congress of Vienna, which had convened to reestablish stability after two decades of revolutionary upheaval and warfare. Napoleon's resurgence exposed the fragility of the newly drawn European order, compelling former adversaries to unite once more against a common threat and accelerating the final consolidation of the post-Napoleonic settlement. The swift mobilization of the Seventh Coalition, comprising Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, not only reasserted the principle of collective security but also prefigured later nineteenth-century diplomatic and military alliances aimed at preserving continental peace. Furthermore, the crisis highlighted the resilience of revolutionary nationalism and the enduring appeal of Napoleonic leadership, underscoring the limitations of Restoration monarchism in suppressing popular political sentiment. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo thus served not merely as a military turning point but as a foundational moment for the conservative international order epitomized by the Concert of Europe, which sought to maintain a balance of power and suppress revolutionary movements across the continent¹.

When all the prominent European decision-makers in Vienna, discussing the post-Napoleonic order on the continent, learned that the "formidable foe"² had escaped their grasp and reclaimed his former territories and imperial title, they

1 Munro Price, *Napoleon: The End of Glory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, pp. 251-255; Owen Connelly, *The Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1792-1815*, Routledge, London and New York 2006, pp. 201-205.

2 Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, p. 559.

grew very concerned about resuming the war they had fought for nearly twenty-five years. They were not alone. Anxious rulers were also located at the eastern edge of Europe, not far from Vienna. In Istanbul, the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II and his Porte were as distressed as the European monarchs.

The impact of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars on the Ottoman Empire is a well-studied subject. Ottoman-French diplomatic relations³, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt⁴, the Ottoman diplomatic corps serving in France, and the French diplomatic corps serving at the Porte, as well as attempts to preserve the balance of power,⁵ have been popular topics among those studying European and Ottoman diplomacy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, this article aims to uncover the Ottoman attitude towards Bonaparte's second ascension to the throne and the final phase of the Napoleonic Wars, which, to the author's knowledge, has not been previously studied. During this volatile period, the Ottoman Empire faced two primary challenges. First, it had to contend with the pressure from the Allied powers regarding the continuation of Ottoman neutrality, or even its participation in the alliance against Napoleon. Second, it had to face the pressure of Bonaparte, who had sent one of the most cunning Orientalists of his age, Pierre Amédée Jaubert, as ambassador to convince the Porte to recognize him as emperor. Hence, the Ottoman bureaucrats had to maintain a precarious neutrality that neither alienated Bonaparte entirely nor led the Allied powers to accuse the Porte of being sympathetic to his cause.

In doing so, the Porte needed to decline to receive Jaubert without provoking Bonaparte to maintain its neutral stance. At the same time, it had to navigate the demands of the diplomatic representatives of the Allied powers against the Bonapartist French diplomatic community, represented by the former royalist

3 İsmail Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali ve Türk-Fransız Diplomasi Münasebetleri (1789-1802)*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1999; Armand Gosu, "The Third Anti-Napoleonic Coalition and the Sublime Porte", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9/No. 1-2, 2003, pp. 199-237.

4 Enver Ziya Karal, *Fransa-Mısır ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, Milli Mecmua Basımevi, İstanbul 1938; Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*, Palgrave Macmillan, London and New York 2007.

5 J. C. Hurewitz, "The Europeanization of Ottoman Diplomacy: The Conversion from Unilateralism to Reciprocity in the Nineteenth Century", *Belleten*, Vol 25/No. 99, 1961, pp. 455-466; Geoffrey Bruun, "The Balance of Power During the Wars, 1793-1814", *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. 9, ed. C. W. Crawley, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1965, pp. 250-274; Fatih Yeşil, "Kozmopolit Bir Osmanlı'nın Napoléon Harpleri Sırasında Dış Politikaya Dair Gözlemleri", *Belgeler*, No. 43, 2024, pp. 79-230.

and now Bonapartist chargé d'affaires, Pierre Ruffin, who sought to pressure the Porte into recognizing Bonaparte as emperor and accepting Jaubert as his chargé d'affaires. Additionally, the Porte had to avoid any action that could disrupt Ottoman neutrality, including prohibiting the use of Bonapartist symbols widely employed by the Bonapartist French merchant and diplomatic community in Istanbul and other port cities of the Empire.

By relying on archival documents, particularly the reports authored by Jean Caradzea (the hospodar of Wallachia), Scarlat Callimachi (the hospodar of Moldavia), and Jean Mavroyeni (the Ottoman chargé d'affaires in Vienna), and considering Henri Dehérain's book entitled *Orientalistes et antiquaires: La vie de Pierre Ruffin, orientaliste et diplomate: 1742-1824*, which discusses the diplomatic activities of Ruffin based on his letters and other French archival documents,⁶ this article illustrates how the Porte worked to maintain the neutral stance it had established in the early nineteenth century. In doing so, it focuses on several crises that the Porte faced during the Hundred Days, related to the use of Bonapartist symbols by the French military and diplomatic corps in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the efforts of Ruffin and Jaubert to have the Porte recognize Napoleon's imperial title once again. In other words, observing the renewed hostilities with calculated caution, the Sublime Porte reaffirmed its longstanding policy of neutrality, choosing not to entangle itself in the internal affairs and power struggles of Christian Europe. This strategic restraint, rooted in pragmatism and a desire to safeguard territorial integrity amid external threats and internal fragility, highlights the Ottomans' nuanced understanding of European geopolitics.

An Ambivalent Balance: The Ottoman-French Relations during the Revolutionary Wars (1793-1815)

The French Revolution and the wars that followed between France and its opponents initially did not provoke much anxiety in the Ottoman Empire. Instead, the Ottomans felt relieved by the reduction of pressure from the Habsburg and Russian monarchies, with whom they had been at war since 1787. The treaties of Sistova (1791) and Jassy (1792) brought these conflicts to a close, allowing Sultan Selim III to concentrate on the reforms he had envisioned since his secluded days as a prince⁷.

6 Henri Dehérain, *Orientalistes et antiquaires: La vie de Pierre Ruffin, orientaliste et diplomate: 1742-1824*, Vol. 2, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris 1930.

7 J. Holland Rose, *The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era (1789-1815)*, Cambridge University Press,

On the other hand, isolated by European states, the new revolutionary government in France, which had abolished the monarchy and established a republican regime, sought to engage in diplomatic relations with the Porte. The French government dispatched a special envoy, Marie Louis Henri Descorches, to Istanbul in 1792, who attempted to persuade the Porte to recognize the new republican regime in France and, if possible, to establish an alliance between the two states. While the Ottomans refused to acknowledge the new regime before any other European government, they were indifferent toward the Republican French residents in Istanbul, permitting them to wear the tricolor cockade, the symbol of the revolution. Furthermore, Selim III, concerned about Russian intentions regarding the Straits, allowed French merchant ships to use Ottoman ports and even permitted their passage through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea. In other words, the Porte pursued diplomatic neutrality, refraining from interfering with the new regime in France⁸. Finally, after Prussia and the Netherlands recognized the revolutionary government in 1795, the Porte followed suit and established reciprocal diplomatic relations with France⁹.

The second significant incident that tested Ottoman neutrality and the policy of not interfering in intra-European crises was Napoleon's assumption of the title of Emperor in 1804. Bonaparte sought to have the Sultan recognize his imperial title; however, the Porte was hesitant due to pressure from Britain and Russia. In 1805, the Sultan renewed previous alliances with Britain and Russia. However, after Bonaparte's landslide victories against Austria and Russia at Ulm and Austerlitz, the Porte began to view France as a balancing actor against Russia, acknowledged Bonaparte as emperor, and assured him that the alliances renewed earlier that year were not directed against France¹⁰.

The Ottoman policy of neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars after 1805 was a necessity rather than a choice, as the Empire had to endure two bloody

Cambridge 1935, pp. 15-16.

8 Hüseyin Yılmaz, *İhtilal Diplomasisi ve Osmanlılar: 1809 Çanakkale Antlaşması*, Kitabevi Yayınları, İstanbul 2021, p. 29.

9 Pascal Firges, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire: Diplomacy, Political Culture and the Limiting of Universal Revolution, 1792-1798*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, pp. 80-81.

10 Aysel Yıldız, *Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution*, I. B. Tauris, London and New York 2017, pp. 107-108; Vernon J. Puryear, *Napoleon and the Dardanelles*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951, pp. 37-40; Azmi Süslü, "Osmanlı-Fransız Diplomatik İlişkileri, 1798-1807", *Belleten*, Vol. 47/No. 185, 1983, pp. 267-268.

periods of instability. In 1807, following a rebellion in Istanbul, Selim III was deposed by his nephew, Mustafa IV, whose reign was short-lived because Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, a powerful local notable from Rusçuk, intervened to restore the former Sultan. The assassination of Selim III due to palace intrigue enraged Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, who replaced Mustafa IV with Mahmud II in 1808. Meanwhile, Horace Sebastiani, Bonaparte's newly appointed ambassador, urged the Ottoman administration to declare war against Russia. Exhausted from domestic disturbances, the Ottoman troops retreated from the Danubian principalities, and further Russian advances could only be halted by Bonaparte's great march toward Russia. The Russians quickly signed the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, which neither satisfied Russia nor the Porte due to numerous unresolved issues regarding Serbian autonomy and the delineation of the eastern frontier between the two empires¹¹.

The next three years were relatively more comfortable for the Ottoman Empire. The miserable retreat of Bonaparte from Russia, his defeat at the Battle of Nations in 1813, the march of the Allied powers on Paris, his abdication, and exile on the island of Elba diverted the attention of all European states from the endless Ottoman-Russian conflict. However, one significant political actor sought to include the Ottomans in the restoration of the European state system. Prince Metternich, the Austrian chancellor, believed that a stronger Russia would pose a considerable threat to Austria. Therefore, to create a balance against Russia, France should not be punished too harshly, and the Ottoman Empire should not be excluded from the Concert of Europe. Consequently, he invited the Porte to participate in the Congress of Vienna. However, after lengthy debates, the Porte declined to join the Congress mainly due to fears of possible pressure from Tsar Alexander of Russia, intoxicated by victory, to persuade the Allied powers to resolve the contentious issues of the Treaty of Bucharest in favor of Russia¹². Although it did not officially participate in the debates, the Porte closely monitored the proceedings of the Congress. Spies from the Wallachian and Moldavian hospodars wrote detailed reports, which were promptly delivered to the Porte. Meanwhile, Mavroyeni, the Ottoman representative in Vienna, met with prominent figures of the Congress,

11 Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural-Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, pp. 12-14.

12 Ozan Özacı, *Dangerous Gifts: Imperialism, Security and Civil Wars in the Levant, 1798-1864*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 112-113.

such as Castlereagh, Talleyrand, and Metternich, to understand their intentions toward the Ottoman Empire¹³.

While observing the Congress, the Porte faced two conflicting concerns. First, it sought to maintain the Empire's territorial integrity and prevent any regulations, particularly those proposed by Russia, that could compromise it. Second, it aimed to uphold traditional Ottoman neutrality in European affairs by avoiding official participation in the Congress and refraining from joining any alliances among European powers. Consequently, the Porte had to navigate the challenging task of blocking any interference in the Empire's internal affairs through the Congress while staying out of the Congress system. This precarious position was further disrupted by the shocking news of Bonaparte's escape from Elba and the ensuing Hundred Days Crisis.

“The Tyrant” Returned: The Repercussions of Bonaparte's Escape from Elba in the Ottoman Empire

The first Ottoman diplomatic representatives to learn about Bonaparte's escape from Elba were Lambro Varvessi, the Ottoman consul in Messina, and Jean Mavroyeni, the Ottoman chargé d'affaires in Vienna. In a dispatch written on 8 March that arrived at the Porte three weeks later, Varvessi reported that he interviewed the captain of a Genoese merchant ship departing from Livorno, who informed him about the former Emperor's departure from the island. The consul suggested that Bonaparte could either choose to go to Naples to ally with Joachim Murat, the King of Naples and his sister's husband, or set sail for Marseilles to incite a rebellion against the Bourbons¹⁴.

Mavroyeni received the shocking news on the same day as Varvessi, but similarly, his dispatch reached the Porte at the end of March. In more detail than the consul, Mavroyeni informed the Porte about who accompanied Bonaparte on this quest, who was left behind, and how the news of his escape reached the Habsburg capital. However, Bonaparte's whereabouts and intentions remained vague¹⁵.

13 Özavcı, *ibid*, pp. 114-118.

14 Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of State Archives Ottoman Archives (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi BOA), Imperial Edicts/Hatt-ı Hümayûn (HAT), 1274/49431, 17 R 1230 / 29 March 1815.

15 BOA, HAT, 1274/49432, 17 R 1230/29 March 1815.

Sultan Mahmud II and the Porte learned of this shocking incident not from the dispatches of Varvessi and Mavroyeni but rather from the hospodars of Wallachia and Moldavia, whose reports reached the Porte ten days earlier than those from the consul and the chargé d'affaires. Caradgea noted that Bonaparte had taken advantage of the temporary absence of the British representative on the island, Colonel Neil Campbell. Although the Wallachian hospodar could not precisely determine the purpose and potential destination of the former Emperor, he wrote that Bonaparte might land on Italian or French shores or even the shores of the American continent¹⁶. Callimachi's dispatch arrived at the Porte two days later, stating that this shocking news had been heard in Vienna and upset all the Congress participants¹⁷.

Caradgea's next dispatch similarly revealed rising anxiety in Vienna. He informed the Porte that the Habsburgs had increased their troop numbers in Italy. Likewise, Tsar Alexander, feeling anxious and regretful about having offered Bonaparte exile on Elba, called his troops back from passing through Poland. Caradgea also argued that since Bonaparte had numerous supporters in the French army, his landing on French shores might trigger a severe uprising.¹⁸ Callimachi, on the other hand, described Bonaparte's advance from Golfe Juan, where he had set foot in France, to Grasse almost step by step. According to him, Napoleon escaped from Elba because the payments promised him in the Treaty of Fontainebleau¹⁹ had not been paid properly, and, having been informed of alleged assassination attempts, he decided to die on the battlefield instead of being killed on this small island²⁰.

Mavroyeni and Caradgea continued to inform the Porte of Bonaparte's advance into French territory and the repercussions of his venture in Vienna. In a dispatch that arrived at the Porte on 30 March, Mavroyeni wrote that all negotiations in the Congress had been canceled, and except for Bonaparte's march towards Paris,

16 BOA, HAT, 1274/49474, 7 R 1230/19 March 1815.

17 BOA, HAT, 1273/49393, 9 R 1230/21 March 1815.

18 BOA, HAT, 1273/49394, 11 R 1230/23 March 1815.

19 Under Article 11 of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, an annual payment of 2 million francs was promised to Napoleon; however, King Louis XVIII refused to pay this amount, confiscated Napoleon's property in France, and he was left with a little pension on the island of Elba. This violation of the Treaty of Fontainebleau was one of the reasons why Napoleon decided to reclaim his throne. For more information, see Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994, p. 548.

20 BOA, HAT, 1280/49603, 12 R 1230/24 March 1815.

nothing had been discussed²¹. Sultan Mahmud II's note on this dispatch was quite interesting: He praised Bonaparte as a man of calculation by noting that "[...] Napoleon's reason and sagacity cannot be denied. Without a force guaranteeing victory, he would not land in Europe²²". Caradzea, on the other hand, detailed the preparations in Vienna. Accordingly, the Allied powers were assembling their troops and agreed to renew the alliance signed at Chaumont a year ago. Moreover, the representatives of the Allied powers would remain in the Habsburg capital until the "Napoleon affair" was settled²³.

On 8 April, an intriguing dispatch from Mavroyeni reached the Porte. He had met with Metternich, who argued that Bonaparte could not hope for much because the French nation was against him, and the Allied powers were ready to help the Bourbon dynasty. Moreover, Metternich had two demands from the Porte. First, the Porte should issue a declaration stipulating that the Ottoman Empire was against Bonaparte, and second, it should not communicate by any means with him. The Sultan's note on this dispatch reflected his disappointment with Metternich's pedantic tone: "When Bonaparte was at the zenith of his power, our Sublime State did not incline towards him. Why would we now?"²⁴ The Sultan implied that the Porte would pursue the traditional policy of neutrality and would not support Bonaparte's venture.

The next day, another dispatch from Caradzea informed the Sultan that Bonaparte had finally entered Paris, declared himself emperor, and that the people of Paris embraced him without dissent. The Sultan's anxiety regarding the pressure of the Allied powers on the Porte increased. He recognized that the Allied powers would likely drag the Ottoman Empire into this European quarrel; however, the Porte needed to maintain its neutral stance²⁵.

Another concern was the re-mobilization of the Russian army. The Sultan wrote on a dispatch from Callimachi that the Russians might demand certain concessions from the Ottoman Empire, recalling the territorial dispute between the two empires over the Eastern Anatolian borders after the Treaty of Bucharest²⁶. Therefore, he

21 BOA, HAT, 1275/49486, 18 R 1230/30 March 1815.

22 BOA, HAT, 1275/49486, 18 R 1230/30 March 1815.

23 BOA, HAT, 1272/49279, 25 R 1230/6 April 1815.

24 BOA, HAT, 1273/49398, 27 R 1230/8 April 1815.

25 BOA, HAT, 1277/49543, 28 R 1230/9 April 1815.

26 BOA, HAT, 1275/49511, 11 Ca 1230/21 April 1815. During the negotiations of the Treaty of

feared Russian military pressure to redraw the Ottoman-Russian border in the East in favor of Russia.

As the Porte and the Sultan grew increasingly anxious regarding the pressure from the Allied powers towards the end of April, a dispatch from Mavroyeni further alarmed them. In a private meeting, Metternich informed Mavroyeni that the Allied powers would formally demand that the Porte align its policies with those of the Allied powers against Bonaparte. Metternich labeled Bonaparte “a tyrant” who had established a government “with some military men composed of irascible and violent people like a mad dog [...] similar to the disorder of the Janissaries that had once been observed in Istanbul²⁷”.

Metternich also implied that the Allied powers did not approve of the presence of an Ottoman chargé d'affaires in Paris while all their diplomatic representatives had left the French capital. He reiterated that although Bonaparte might attempt to communicate with the Porte via the Ottoman chargé d'affaires, the Porte should not communicate with “the tyrant²⁸”. For Metternich, “[i]t would not be proper [for the Porte] to say it wanted to remain neutral towards France because France now has no [legitimate] government. A tyrant has already emerged to derange the French territories and European realms. Communicating and entering into a relationship with such a tyrant is unnecessary²⁹”.

Meanwhile, the Austrian minister plenipotentiary in Istanbul, Ignaz von Stürmer, delivered a dispatch to the Porte echoing Metternich's opinions. After reminding them of the declaration by the Allied powers, which stipulated that they were united not against the French people but against Bonaparte, Stürmer demanded that the Porte strengthen its alignment with the Allied powers. His tone was even intimidating when he wrote that choosing an alternative path would have consequences for the Porte; therefore, it should refrain from acting against this united cause³⁰.

Bucharest, the Russians insisted on controlling the region between Anakra and Kemhal in the vicinity of the Ottoman-Russian border in Eastern Anatolia. However, Sultan Mahmud II resisted this demand. Therefore, this issue was left unresolved at the Treaty, but continued to disturb Ottoman-Russian relations further afterwards. For further information, see Fehmi İsmail, “Bükreş Andlaşmasının Müzakeresi 1811-1812,” *Belleten*, Vol. 46/No. 181, 1982, pp. 73-120.

27 BOA, HAT, 1194/46920, 17 Ca 1230/27 April 1815.

28 BOA, HAT, 1194/46920, 17 Ca 1230/27 April 1815.

29 BOA, HAT, 1194/46920, 17 Ca 1230/27 April 1815.

30 BOA, HAT, 958/41114, 19 Ca 1230/29 April 1815.

The same day, Mavroyeni's dispatch reached the Porte, quoting some of Bonaparte's declarations protesting the Allied occupation of France, and declaring his intention to save the French people from an "indecent dynasty" that had become a puppet of the Allied powers. The Sultan penned an interesting note on this dispatch: "If Bonaparte could attract the ordinary people as he had attracted the military on his side, his presence in power would endure. However, if he could not attract ordinary people on his side, he could not endure [as emperor]³¹". This note shows that even the Ottoman monarch recognized the importance of popular support for a leader; in other words, the classical idea of Ottoman absolute sovereignty, which required no acknowledgment of public backing, was challenged, and the Sultan himself admitted that the support of ordinary people was crucial for the survival of an imperial regime. Sultan Mahmud II would later seek popular support in 1826 when he called on the people of Istanbul to stand with him against the Janissary corps during the events leading to the abolition of this military institution³².

While closely observing Bonaparte's venture, the Sultan and the Porte faced Allied pressure not to communicate with Bonaparte and to align Ottoman foreign policy with the policies of the Allied powers. On one hand, the Sultan was surprised by Bonaparte's swift and nearly undisputed return to power; on the other hand, he was worried about the potential resumption of war in Europe that could draw his Empire into this turbulent situation. The only way for the Sultan to avoid war or to mitigate potential Allied pressure was to adhere to the traditional policy of neutrality. However, maintaining neutrality was quite challenging due to Bonaparte's intentions toward the Porte and the activities of the Bonapartist French diplomatic community in the Ottoman capital.

Bonapartists in Istanbul: Diplomatic Crises of "the Hundred Days" in the Ottoman Capital

On 26 March 1815, six days after Bonaparte entered Paris, unaware of this shocking incident, Pierre Ruffin, the French chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, was reading a dispatch from Marquis de Jaucourt, a minister of state for Louis XVIII, dated 17 February, to the personnel of the French embassy at the ambassadorial compound known as the Palais de France. The Minister praised the peace and

31 BOA, HAT, 1272/49335, 19 Ca 1230/29 April 1815.

32 For further information on the abolition of the Janissary corps with the support of people of Istanbul, see Shaw and Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

calm in France, and the King's popularity in the army and with the people. After reading this dispatch, Ruffin wrote, "The halls of the Palais [de France] resounded with cheers of *Vive le Roi!*"³³ While these cheers were echoing, Bonaparte had already returned to power as emperor.

Although Louis XVIII appointed the Marquis de Rivière as ambassador to the Porte in November 1814, the new ambassador could not depart due to his serious illness. Ruffin was instructed to handle all diplomatic relations with the Porte in his absence, maintain friendly relations with other European diplomats in the Ottoman capital, and protect the privileges of French subjects in the Levant. "You generally have more to conserve than to act," said the instructions, urging him to keep a low profile³⁴. When the ambassador finally recovered and awaited a proper vessel to take him to Istanbul, his departure was abruptly canceled due to Bonaparte's escape from Elba. Ruffin had to set aside the previous instructions and was forced to act instead of conserve.

Two weeks after the royalist demonstration at the Palais de France, this time, Ruffin read a dispatch from Talleyrand, Louis XVIII's Foreign Minister, informing the French community in Istanbul about Bonaparte's escape from Elba and his advance towards Paris, yet assuring them that his attempt to reign would be bound to fail since the Allied powers had already outlawed him. Despite this shocking news, the French diplomats at the Palais de France still shouted, "*Vive le Roi!*"³⁵.

However, the mood started to shift. The next dispatch from Talleyrand was more urgent, instructing Ruffin not to send his correspondence to Paris anymore since the King and his government had relocated from Paris to Lille. Additionally, Ruffin was not to receive any orders, instructions, or envoys from the Bonapartist government. Talleyrand noted that the crews of ships flying Bonaparte's flag would only be viewed as rebels by the Allied powers, and he was confident that the Porte would also regard them as rebels. He directed Ruffin to ask that the Porte not accept any such ships or individuals recognizing Bonaparte as emperor³⁶. In another dispatch, Talleyrand wanted Ruffin to ensure the Porte's compliance with the Allied position against Bonaparte, meaning that the Porte should not admit

33 Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

34 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 110.

35 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 111.

36 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 112.

Napoleon's agents, nor communicate with him directly or indirectly, and finally nor allow his flag to be received in the seas and ports of the Ottoman Empire³⁷.

Meanwhile, Ruffin began receiving dispatches from the Bonapartist government as well. On 30 March, the Foreign Minister of Bonaparte, Caulaincourt, sent a dispatch underlining how peaceful the transformation from royal to imperial administration was. "[The King] left French soil without putting up the slightest resistance," he wrote, "so much so that not a single shot was fired or a drop of blood shed in their defense". Then, he ordered Ruffin to declare loyalty to the Emperor: "You must immediately, Monsieur, take the tricolor cockade and have it taken by the French near you. The duties entrusted to you by the royal government have ended, and I shall immediately take orders from His Majesty the Emperor to accredit a new legation³⁸". Ruffin was caught in between and now had to deal with severe diplomatic crises arising from Bonapartist activities in the Ottoman capital.

The First Diplomatic Crisis: The Tricolor Flag in the French Naval Squadron and the French Consulate-General in Izmir

While Ruffin was receiving dispatches from Talleyrand instructing him to urge the Porte not to accept any ships flying Bonaparte's tricolor flag, Baron de Saizieu, commander of the French naval division of the Levant, dropped anchor at Izmir and ordered the warships under his command to display the tricolor flag. Raymond Fourcade, the manager of the French Consulate-General in Izmir, also hoisted the tricolor flag atop the consular mansion³⁹. This was the first diplomatic crisis that placed the Porte in a precarious position with respect to the Allied powers, whose diplomatic representatives promptly protested the incident. In response to a dispatch from Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Rauf Paşa, the Sultan wrote that, considering the current policy of neutrality, the French consul-general in Izmir should be instructed to remove the tricolor flag; otherwise, the military and judicial authorities of the city would take it down⁴⁰.

Although Ruffin's allegiance to the Bourbons began to waver with the King's flight to Lille and Bonaparte's rise as emperor without resistance, his initial policy was to allow the Porte to believe he remained loyal to the Bourbons. Accordingly, through his

37 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 113.

38 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 114.

39 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 115.

40 BOA, HAT, 1183/46697, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

dragoman Frangini, Ruffin informed Reisülküttab Mehmed Seyyid Efendi that he and his ancestors had been loyal to the Bourbons and that he was the King's representative, not Bonaparte's. Reis Efendi replied that he expected Ruffin to demonstrate his loyalty to the King by preventing the French naval squadron and consulate-general in Izmir from displaying the tricolor flag and imperial decorations. Such an act of defiance would jeopardize Ottoman neutrality; therefore, he wanted Ruffin to write a dispatch instructing the Bonapartists in Izmir to cease their rebellious actions⁴¹.

A few days later, Frangini visited Reis Efendi again and stated that Ruffin was hesitant to send a written dispatch to Izmir, as he was unsure how to proceed if Bonaparte demanded his allegiance. Reis Efendi claimed that Ruffin could not serve both the King and Bonaparte simultaneously. Consequently, Ruffin had continued using the seal of Louis XVIII to seal his correspondence with the Porte, and the French ships arriving in Istanbul were flying the Bourbon flag. If Ruffin had chosen to side with Bonaparte, this would have disrupted Ottoman neutrality and violated his diplomatic duties. Reis Efendi told Frangini:

Bonaparte withdrew from and renounced the emperorship, assuring the European states. Subsequently, Louis XVIII was crowned King of France and recognized by all European states. The Glorious Sultanate acknowledged Louis XVIII as king and Ruffin as chargé d'affaires. This recognition was significant as it solidified the Ottoman Empire's position in the European power dynamics [...] Currently, to maintain its neutrality, the Sublime State would not permit any change of flags or decorations in imperial territories until the conclusion of the [Bonaparte] affair due to its friendship and peace with the French⁴².

Hence, Reis Efendi reminded Frangini of the fundamentals of European international law regarding recognition as a source of legitimacy. Still, he was cautious enough to declare that the Porte would recognize Bonaparte as emperor and Ruffin as his chargé d'affaires only after Bonaparte had been recognized by the entire French nation and all European states. However, since this recognition had not been evident, he added, "The Glorious Sultanate would not recognize, for now, any envoy and flag but the ones from the Bourbon dynasty to preserve her neutrality and friendship⁴³".

41 BOA, HAT, 1183/46697, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

42 BOA, HAT, 1183/46697, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

43 BOA, HAT, 1183/46697, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

Ruffin's hesitations reached a peak. On one hand, he was appointed chargé d'affaires by the King and declared himself his loyal servant to the Porte. On the other hand, the King fled and sought refuge in a foreign country, while Bonaparte resumed his role as emperor without the slightest opposition. Finally, in the early days of May 1815, his hesitations began to fade. He stopped responding to Talleyrand's letters and refused to join the ambassadors of the Allied powers who were urging the Porte to align its policies with them⁴⁴.

A letter from Ruffin to Antoine François Andreossi, the former ambassador to the Porte from 1812 to 1814, dated 1 May, expressed both his hesitations and his admiration for the Emperor:

Driven by my heart's impulse and the example of all the French, should the lack of direct superior orders stop me? It would have been so easy for the Foreign Ministry to give me the authorization I need to make the necessary notifications to the Porte to replace our triumphant eagles on the portal [of the Palais de France], the portrait of our august Emperor in the throne room, and the national tricolor on all our ships, which he has made invincible. Please, Monseigneur, come to the aid of his more than seventy-year-old servant, or he will die of grief and succumb to his pain⁴⁵.

When considered alongside Caulaincourt's earlier dispatch, this letter revealed that Ruffin was not very satisfied with the appointment of a new legation at the Porte, of which Caulaincourt had informed him. Instead, he sought authorization from the Foreign Ministry to reaffirm his role as chargé d'affaires at the Porte. His extremely positive comments about Bonaparte, his implications regarding what his policy could be if the imperial government authorized him, and his emphasis on the delicacy of his position as an appointee by the King while supporting the Emperor indicated that there was no need for a new legation, only an authorization from the imperial government. Though he was enthusiastic, Bonaparte had other plans for diplomatic representation at the Porte.

⁴⁴ Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

⁴⁵ Dehérain, *ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

Second Diplomatic Crisis: Appointment of Pierre Amédée Jaubert as the New Chargé d’Affaires to the Porte and the Tricolor Cockade Incident in Istanbul

While Ruffin was striving to convince the Bonapartist government of his merit, Bonaparte had already decided to send one of his confidants and an old friend of Ruffin, Pierre Amédée Jaubert, to the Porte as the new chargé d’affaires. Aware of a potential rivalry between Jaubert and Ruffin, Caulaincourt advised Jaubert in his instructions to seek Ruffin’s support: “Mr. Jaubert may avoid major difficulties by immediately establishing a relationship with Mr. Ruffin, who is highly regarded for his good behavior and long stay in Turkey. It is presumed that Mr. Ruffin, who has often given proof of his devotion, will not delay embracing his fatherland’s cause when he is informed of all that has happened in France since His Majesty’s return⁴⁶”.

Caulaincourt informed the Ottoman chargé d’affaires in Paris, Panayotaki Argyropoulo, about Jaubert’s appointment on 22 April. After emphasizing that Bonaparte’s rule in France was solid, the Foreign Minister noted that the Emperor wanted to preserve peace and friendship with the Ottoman Empire. He said “Since you are a loyal servant of the Sublime State, I do not doubt that you will inform me about the true situation by denouncing the false rumors that have already been spread during all these incidents⁴⁷”.

Panayotaki’s response to Caulaincourt’s words demonstrated empathy and respect for the French people. He also referenced the long-standing friendship between the Ottoman Empire and France, expressing the Porte’s sincere feelings toward the French populace. He spoke quite positively about the new regime: “Moreover, as revealed by the documents reflecting daily developments, other dispatches, and the manners and attitudes of the common people, such a ruler chosen by the consent and determination of the entire French nation would successfully acquire previous glory and power. I hope the Sublime State will be delighted and content when she witnesses this [success]⁴⁸”.

Panayotaki reiterated his positive feelings about Bonaparte to the Porte as well. He wrote that the Emperor worked tirelessly with his ministers day and night to

46 Dehérain, *ibid*, p. 117.

47 BOA, HAT, 833/37577, 3 B 1230/11 June 1815.

48 BOA, HAT, 833/37577, 3 B 1230/11 June 1815.

strengthen his rule and reform the governance of France. He added that if the European states declared war against France, such a declaration would be seen as a declaration against the French people, not the Emperor himself. Therefore, he argued that the Allied powers would choose peace over war. Finally, he emphasized that the newly-appointed Jaubert was “a learned and skilled man with whom the Porte would be delighted to have an audience⁴⁹”.

On 9 May, Jaubert embarked on the schooner *l'Antilope* at Toulon. Although he intended to continue his voyage in secrecy and make a sudden appearance in Istanbul to confront the Porte with a *fait accompli* and compel it to recognize him, the news of his journey had already reached the Porte. The Ottoman authorities stopped him at the Dardanelles and compelled him to continue his journey overland. Nevertheless, after crossing the Gallipoli Peninsula on foot, he was able to board a boat and continued to sail to Istanbul⁵⁰.

While Jaubert was approaching Istanbul, the French diplomatic and merchant community of the city was already in disarray. The Bonapartist *jeunes de langue*⁵¹ openly revealed their support for the Emperor after a ball at the British embassy on 5 June. A royalist young diplomat at the French embassy, Guillaume Barbié du Bocage, wrote to his father about this shocking incident. Accordingly, the Bonapartist staff of the French embassy attended the ball without wearing the white cockade representing the Bourbon dynasty. After the ball, they wandered around Pera, where diplomatic premises and European merchant communities were located, wearing Bonapartist symbols, such as hats mounted with tricolor cockades⁵².

49 BOA, HAT, 833/37577, 3 B 1230/11 June 1815.

50 Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

51 “*Jeunes de langue*” (*Dil oğlanları*) was a group of youngsters brought to the Porte by European ambassadors for the purpose of learning Turkish and other Oriental languages to better serve in European embassies. Schools were established first in the Venetian Embassy in 1551 and then in the French Embassy in 1669. Later, other European countries followed suit. These young interpreters not only worked as translators for their respective embassies but also would later become eminent Orientalists, contributing to the study of Oriental literatures and languages in Europe. For more information, see Frédéric Hitzel, “L’école des jeunes de langues d’Istanbul: Un modèle d’apprentissage des langues orientales”, *Langues et langages du commerce en Méditerranée et en Europe à l’époque moderne*, ed. Gilbert Buti, Michèle Janin-Thivos and Olivier Raveux, Presses universitaires de Provence, Aix-en-Provence 2013, pp. 23-31.

52 Frédéric Hitzel. “L’institution des jeunes de langue de Constantinople au début du XIXe siècle”, *De Samarcande à Istanbul : étapes orientales*, ed. Véronique Schiltz, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2015, p. 265.

The reaction to this incident was immediate. The Russian minister plenipotentiary at the Porte, Andrey Italinsky, sent a dispatch to the Chief Dragoman of the Porte, Iakovos Argyropoulo, complaining that the French *jeunes de langue* wearing tricolor cockades had begun to wander not only through the streets of Pera but also along Divanyolu, the main avenue leading to the Imperial Palace, the Imperial Shipyards, and the Sublime Porte. According to him, this was an act of defiance against the Allied powers and the Ottoman Empire, as these youngsters were officials of the Bourbon dynasty, not “the tyrant.” He added that Bonaparte adopted a treacherous attitude to govern his people while his supporters at the Porte mimicked him by “deceiving and corrupting ordinary people”. Italinsky demanded that the Porte not tolerate such inappropriate behavior, as the Ottoman Empire and the Allied powers shared a common interest in resisting Bonaparte and restoring the Bourbon dynasty⁵³.

Italinsky also expressed concern over Jaubert approaching the capital. He feared that Jaubert might attempt to pass through Ottoman territories while displaying Bonapartist symbols, a rebellious act that the Porte would not tolerate⁵⁴.

The Sultan’s response to this dispatch showed his firm stance against this *fait accompli*:

Previously, it was officially announced that Bonaparte’s flag, decoration, and envoy would not be accepted. Given that our Sublime State was well known to all others for its firm stance on previously promised issues, there was no need for such a demand [from Italinsky]. It suffices to inform [Italinsky] that chargé d’affaires Ruffin has been notified that the French nation is not permitted to display Bonaparte’s decoration⁵⁵.

The tricolor demonstration by the *jeunes de langue* placed Ruffin in a precarious position. He did not approve of such demonstrations, yet his sympathy for the imperial regime grew stronger with each passing day. His shaky allegiance to the Bourbons would face a more serious test when, four days after this incident, at six o’clock in the evening on 9 June, Jaubert arrived in Istanbul and appeared at the front gate of the Palais de France⁵⁶.

53 BOA, HAT, 1182/46684, 1 B 1230/9 June 1815.

54 BOA, HAT, 1182/46684, 1 B 1230/9 June 1815.

55 BOA, HAT, 1182/46684, 1 B 1230/9 June 1815.

56 Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

A few hours before Jaubert's arrival, Ruffin was reading a dispatch from the British ambassador to the Porte, Sir Robert Liston, urging him not to receive Jaubert at the Palais de France and "to dismiss him even as an agent of the usurper, the enemy of the King of France and the whole of Europe"⁵⁷. Although Ruffin replied to the ambassador that he would not receive Jaubert, he welcomed his old friend warmly upon arriving at the Palais de France. Moreover, the next day, he sent Frangini, the dragoman of the French embassy, to Reis Efendi's mansion to notify Reis Efendi of Jaubert's arrival.

Frangini informed Reis Efendi that Jaubert had been appointed chargé d'affaires to the Porte, had brought Bonaparte's letter of credentials, and was seeking an audience with him. Reis Efendi's response was unequivocal: Since Napoleon had abdicated the throne, the Porte would not receive Jaubert, and the use of Bonapartist flags and decorations would be prohibited. Furthermore, Reis Efendi emphasized that Louis XVIII had been crowned with the approval of the European states, and the Porte had already recognized him as the King of France. Therefore, the Porte could neither acknowledge Bonaparte as Emperor nor welcome his envoy and letter. He added that the Porte intended to maintain its neutrality and friendship with France⁵⁸. This answer also demonstrated how the Ottoman diplomatic corps had recognized and respected European international law regarding recognition and legitimacy.

Additionally, Reis Efendi once again warned Ruffin to prevent the French community living in the Empire from wearing the tricolor cockade. If Ruffin failed to do so, the Porte would take necessary precautions by force while placing the responsibility for its actions on the chargé d'affaires. Frangini, on the other hand, insisted on the reception of Jaubert. He reminded the Porte of the previous Ottoman recognition of Bonaparte as emperor, following the acknowledgment by some European states, and advised the Porte to recognize his claim to the emperorship, this time before the other European states, which would be more beneficial for Ottoman-French relations. Reis Efendi's response was no different; he reiterated that the Porte would neither recognize Bonaparte as emperor nor allow his flag and decoration. Frangini did not relent and offered Reis Efendi a private audience with Jaubert. Reis Efendi's reply once again reflected the legal stance of the Ottoman Empire:

⁵⁷ Dehérain, *ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵⁸ BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

All [our] expressions are official and clear. If the Porte did not receive him, the office of Reis Efendi would not receive him either. The Porte does not opt for clandestine conversations or methods other than official ones. For twenty-five years, the Glorious Sultanate has suffered from unnecessary troubles, including disputes between France and European states, and has been plagued by these issues. It would preserve and attest its neutrality to avoid suffering again by opting for these three points [i.e., (1) non-recognition of Bonaparte as emperor, (2) his flag, and (3) decoration]. Even if our masters were informed [about your proposals], there is no doubt that they would not accept them, and they would give the same answer⁵⁹.

When the Sultan read Frangini's proposals and Reis Efendi's response, he appreciated the latter for his bold stance. He ordered Reis Efendi not to provide an alternative response to the French proposals if Frangini reiterated his demands⁶⁰.

Despite clear orders from the Porte, Ruffin still did not prohibit the tricolor cockade. The Grand Vizier accused Frangini of adopting a provocative attitude and Ruffin of complying with Frangini's provocations. A dispatch from the Grand Vizier to the Sultan noted that other diplomatic representatives were rather disturbed by this nonchalance. The Prussian embassy's dragoman complained that the embassy's French gatekeepers continued to wear the tricolor cockade⁶¹. The Grand Vizier informed the Sultan that he would give orders to the head of the Imperial Arsenal (*tersane emini*), the artillery commander (*topçubaşı*), the chief of the royal guards (*bostancıbaşı*), and the voivode of Galata (*Galata voyvodası*). Consequently, their men could demand that the Frenchmen wandering in the streets and marketplaces with tricolor cockades remove them. If the Frenchmen did not comply, the Ottoman officials would tear these cockades off⁶².

Third Diplomatic Crisis: The Bonapartist Flag and Decorations at the Gates of the Palais de France

Ruffin and Jaubert should have taken the Porte's clear stance seriously; however, Ruffin's next move was to declare his allegiance to the imperial regime openly. On 13 June, he wrote to Caulaincourt and begged him "[t]o kindly lay at the feet of the throne of His Imperial Majesty the just tribute of my respectful gratitude for

59 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

60 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

61 BOA, HAT, 1183/46699, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

62 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

the expressions of kindness which he has allowed to emanate from it on her old and good servant and which have spread joy and consolation in my soul⁶³”.

That same night, he replaced the fleur-de-lys with the imperial eagles on the portal of the Palais de France, signifying his shifting allegiance from the Bourbon dynasty to Bonaparte. The following day, on 14 June, he invited embassy officials and *jeunes de langue* to pledge their allegiance to the Emperor. With the exception of Mathieu Deval, the first secretary-interpreter of the embassy, and Navon, one of the *jeunes de langue*, everyone complied with this invitation⁶⁴.

What was inside the walls of the Palais de France might not have immediately drawn the Porte’s attention; however, the representatives of the Allied powers warned the Porte about the changing flags and decorations at the embassy building’s portal. The dragoman of the British embassy stated that the British ambassador and the ambassadors of other Allied powers were very disappointed. They wanted the Porte to preserve its dignity by not allowing such disrespectful behavior. They argued that “since he [Ruffin] had hung Bonaparte’s flag, the ambassadors could not communicate with or interview him. Currently, he cannot remain in Istanbul and maintain contact with the government of the Sublime State. Preservation of the governance and glory of the Sublime State is imperative⁶⁵”.

Such a big talk was disturbing for the Grand Vizier. He argued that Ruffin’s attitude was unacceptable. “Yet”, he added, “those states preparing to resist France still showed their reactions with words, not actions”. Thus, he argued it was unfair to demand that the Porte retaliate against the French diplomatic community.

Meanwhile, Jaubert and Ruffin resorted to diplomatic tricks and a *fait accompli* to persuade the Porte to accept the symbolic changes at the embassy gates. After the Porte rejected Jaubert’s appointment, Frangini sent an envoy to the Chief Dragoman’s mansion late that evening with a letter sealed by Jaubert⁶⁶. Argyropoulo returned the letter without opening it, believing it would signify his recognition of Jaubert as the new *chargé d’affaires*⁶⁷.

63 Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

64 Dehérain, *ibid.*, p. 119.

65 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

66 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

67 BOA, HAT, 1183/46698, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

Thus, the Porte was quite cautious, and the Grand Vizier recognized the delicacy of the situation. While the ministers of the Allied powers insisted that the Porte remove the Bonapartist flags and decorations, the Porte was reluctant to use force against a diplomatic premise. The Grand Vizier contended that Frangini and Ruffin were loyal to Bonaparte; they both incited rebellion and disrupted the French community in Istanbul. Furthermore, according to him, Ruffin wanted to be relieved of his duties as chargé d'affaires upon the arrival of Jaubert and to declare his support for Bonaparte openly. Three sanctions were planned against the French embassy: (1) forcibly lowering the Bonapartist symbols from the premises' door, (2) dispersing the guards stationed at the premises, and (3) delaying Ruffin's request for an audience until the orders from the government were carried out. Yet, before implementing these sanctions, the Grand Vizier provided the French diplomatic representatives with one last opportunity. Instead of Frangini, royalist Mathieu Deval was invited to the Porte this time. The Grand Vizier described him as a man of honor and good deeds, serving in Istanbul for thirty years, encompassing both the reigns of Bonaparte and Louis XVIII⁶⁸.

As an ardent royalist, Deval had not liked Ruffin for his quick change of loyalties. Jaubert's admission to the Palais de France had been the final straw for him. The day after Jaubert's arrival, Deval wrote a letter to Talleyrand concerning the friendship between Jaubert and Ruffin and kept the Minister informed afterward⁶⁹.

Thus, the Grand Vizier's trust in Deval was not unfounded. Following the Grand Vizier's orders, Deval met with Argyropoulo at his mansion. The Chief Dragoman informed him that, although Ruffin had previously pledged his loyalty to Louis XVIII, after Jaubert's arrival, "both Ruffin and Dragoman Frangini disrespectfully dared to disobey the customs of the state" and "started to despise the government of the Sublime State". He then warned Deval that the Porte would remove the Bonapartist symbols from the doors of the Palais de France and disperse the guards (*yasakçı*)⁷⁰ at the gates. Since Deval was known for his good deeds toward the Porte and the French community in Istanbul, he should caution

68 BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

69 Dehérain, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

70 "Yasakçı" was a concept used synonymously with or before the use of the concept of "kavas". They were the guardians and gatekeepers of the foreign embassies in Istanbul, and they were elected from the Janissary corps. The *yasakçı* guards of the French embassy were from the 60th regiment of the Janissary corps. For further information, see Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol. 3, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 1971, p. 606.

Ruffin to comply with the government's orders. Otherwise, Argyropoulo added, the Ottoman security authorities would intervene, and all responsibility would fall on Ruffin and Frangini. His final words were: "After all this respectful and honorable behavior, the Sublime State will not accept this humiliation between states. It will execute whatever is required. Ruffin and Frangini do not serve and support Bonaparte in this way; rather, they act against his interests and choose indignity. If Napoleon had known their actions, there is no doubt he would not have consented, and he would have disapproved and reprimanded them⁷¹".

Deval replied that he had warned Ruffin for condoning the Bonapartists in the embassy. According to him, Ruffin possessed a volatile nature and a tendency to switch loyalty between the King and the Emperor. Influenced by Frangini and some young French *jeunes de langue* in the embassy, and finally seduced by Jaubert, Ruffin gathered the entire personnel of the Palais de France and made them swear allegiance to Bonaparte, even claiming that the Porte had given its consent and permission to recognize Bonaparte as emperor. Deval was also invited to declare loyalty to Bonaparte; however, he did not accept this invitation as he had sworn allegiance to King Louis XVIII⁷².

Deval argued that even if he had informed Ruffin of the Porte's orders, Ruffin would not have acted accordingly. He added that the Porte had already been quite patient and tolerant of Ruffin and his associates' contemptuous and disrespectful behavior. No state would permit such an incident to occur. Furthermore, Ruffin and other Bonapartists in the embassy misled the French community in Istanbul. Had the French community known that the Porte did not approve of his policies, they would not have recognized Bonaparte as emperor. According to Deval, not all French people in the capital were Bonapartists; many French merchants had removed their tricolor cockades⁷³.

Deval had a solution for this diplomatic impasse. He suggested to Argyropoulo that the Grand Vizier should invite Ruffin and Frangini to his mansion and inform them that both had previously declared their loyalty to the King. Furthermore, according to Deval, the Grand Vizier should instruct Ruffin and Frangini to change the flag and remove the Bonapartist symbols within two hours. If they

71 BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

72 BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

73 BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

refused to comply with these demands, the Ottoman officials could intervene and lower the Bonapartist flag and symbols from the embassy gates. However, Deval cautioned that another problem could arise after this intervention. If Ruffin and Frangini were to tell the Grand Vizier that they no longer remained loyal to the King but instead swore allegiance to Bonaparte, the Porte would have to order them to leave the capital immediately, which would lead to an even more severe diplomatic crisis. Still, Deval urged the Porte to take immediate action against the Bonapartists, arguing that the honor of the Ottoman Empire was paramount. If the Porte declared Ruffin *persona non grata*, then the leading French merchants in Istanbul would appoint a new chargé d'affaires, allowing the Porte to demonstrate respect and sincerity to the French nation by recognizing this new representative. Ultimately, after stating all this, Deval expressed that he no longer felt safe from any harm posed by Ruffin, Jaubert, and Frangini and wished to seek the protection of the Porte⁷⁴.

When the Grand Vizier relayed the interview between Deval and Argyropoulo, the Sultan chose Deval's rigid solution. He ordered the Grand Vizier to send an envoy to Ruffin, instructing him to remove the Bonapartist flag and decorations within two hours. Once the two-hour deadline had passed, the head of the Imperial Arsenal, the artillery commander, and the chief of the royal guards would issue orders banning tricolor cockades and dispatch enough security forces to take down the flag and decorations and disperse the guards⁷⁵.

Finally, the moment had arrived. The patrol force, assembled mainly by the head of the Imperial Arsenal, approached the gates of the Palais de France at dusk on 15 June. They climbed ladders, removed the flag and coat of arms, and placed them at the entrance of the Palais de France. The French gathered in the embassy courtyard carried the flag, shouting, "Vive l'Empereur! Vivent les Français!" The following day, the six guards of the Palais de France received orders to leave their posts. The Porte was finally able to execute the Sultan's commands.

This crisis created an unusual situation. France now had two chargés d'affaires in Istanbul, yet neither could represent their state. Jaubert was not recognized as chargé d'affaires from the very beginning. On the other hand, Ruffin fell from grace due to his reluctance to refuse Jaubert and prohibit the French community

⁷⁴ BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

⁷⁵ BOA, HAT, 1183/46695, 29 Z 1230/2 December 1815.

from wearing the tricolor cockade. Hence, Deval emerged as the only candidate to represent the French community. Relying on a group of royalist French merchants and the ministers of the Allied powers in Istanbul, he left the Palais de France and began residing at the Russian embassy⁷⁶.

Following Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo in June 1815 and the news of his surrender reached Istanbul in late August, Deval sought recognition from the French merchant community as the "manager of ambassadorial affairs." However, the restored King Louis XVIII reinstated the Marquis de Rivière, who could not travel to Istanbul due to Bonaparte's actions. On 19 September, Ruffin received a letter from Talleyrand informing him that he had been removed from office and ordered to return to France. Another letter from Talleyrand, dated 20 September, was sent to Deval, reinstating him as the first secretary of the Embassy with the responsibility of managing ambassadorial affairs until the new ambassador arrived. Talleyrand's commendation of Deval likely made him quite pleased: "The frank and loyal conduct that you have maintained amid the serious circumstances in which you have been placed completely justifies the confidence that His Majesty's Government has always placed in you. I have placed before the King's eyes this series of testimonies of your fidelity, and it is pleasant for me to have to inform you that His Majesty was very satisfied with your conduct⁷⁷".

On 22 October, Ruffin reconciled with Deval and left him the keys to his office. Five days later, the Porte recognized Deval as the French chargé d'affaires. He promptly had the King's arms reestablished on the exterior gate of the Palais de France with a grand ceremony. However, no embassy official or *jeune de langue* except Navon attended the event. Ruffin's former collaborators did not abandon him after his disgrace⁷⁸.

Conclusion

Despite their hostile or friendly engagements with European states during the Napoleonic Wars, the Ottomans sought to maintain a policy of neutrality to avoid entanglement in European conflicts. Once these wars concluded, European policymakers gathered in Vienna to establish the post-Napoleonic order. However, the Ottomans declined to join the Congress of Vienna, fearing they would be

⁷⁶ Dehérain, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁷⁷ Dehérain, *ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

⁷⁸ Dehérain, *ibid.*, p. 126.

entangled in political arrangements proposed by their traditional enemies, especially Russia.

This neutral stance was severely tested in the spring and summer of 1815, when Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France as Emperor. On one hand, the renewed alliance in Vienna sought to sever the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic relations with "the tyrant" and, if possible, align with the European powers, which claimed to be acting to restore the Bourbon monarchy. On the other hand, while focusing on military preparations against the European alliance, Bonaparte did not forget the Ottoman Empire altogether. He sent a new chargé d'affaires to Istanbul to convince the Porte to recognize him as emperor and to prevent it from joining his adversaries. The Porte balanced on a sharp diplomatic knife's edge. It neither wanted to alienate the Allied powers nor Bonapartist France, and thus preferred to adhere to the traditional policy of neutrality. Yet, while the European capitals were occupied with military preparations and diplomatic negotiations to strengthen existing alliances, the Ottoman capital was embroiled in three major diplomatic crises: (1) the display of Bonapartist flags on the vessels of the French Levant squadron and the French consulate in Izmir, (2) pro-Bonaparte demonstrations in the Ottoman capital by the Bonapartist diplomats from the French embassy, and (3) hanging the Bonapartist flag and decorations at the gates of the French embassy. The Porte recognized all three incidents as violations of Ottoman neutrality. The Chief Dragoman of the Porte, the Reis Efendi, and the Grand Vizier attempted to relieve the pressure from the Allied powers by summoning the French diplomatic representatives to order them to put an end to these rebellious demonstrations.

The Ottoman response to these diplomatic crises demonstrated that maintaining the status quo and pursuing neutrality were key elements of Ottoman foreign policy during the Hundred Days. Weary of domestic and external disturbances, Sultan Mahmud II sought to avoid involvement in this European dispute and tried to stay as uninvolved as possible. In doing so, he and his Porte appealed to international law to reject Bonaparte's imperial claims, envoys, flag, and decorations. They particularly aligned with the diplomatic and legal stance of the Allied powers in rejecting Bonaparte's claims. Secondly, Mahmud II's notes on the dispatches illustrated how the Ottoman Sultan monitored the French Revolution, the Revolutionary Wars, and the post-Napoleonic order. His assertion that Bonaparte could only succeed if he garnered popular support demonstrated his understanding that traditional modes of

governance, based on hereditary or divine rights, had their limits. Furthermore, the Sultan and the Porte were aware of the diplomatic tricks employed by experienced diplomats like Frangini and Ruffin, and they easily countered them. As a result, Ottoman diplomacy appeared to be quite Europeanized in terms of its institutional structure and diplomatic principles.

Ultimately, the Porte did not hesitate to implement relatively harsh measures, such as intervening in diplomatic matters to remove symbols that could jeopardize Ottoman neutrality. Although Bonaparte's venture initially excited the Ottoman diplomatic circles (i.e., the positive attitude of the Ottoman chargé d'affaires in Paris toward Bonaparte), the Porte soon demonstrated a strong preference for recognizing Louis XVIII as the legitimate ruler of France. Sultan Mahmud II's efforts to avoid antagonizing Bonaparte until his final defeat, along with his support for the legitimacy of Louis XVIII, illustrated the Sultan's pro-French stance. France was not only viewed as a potential ally against Russia in the future but also as a significant trade partner of the Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. In summary, the Ottoman response to the Hundred Days Crisis is significant for revealing how the Ottoman Empire perceived the post-Napoleonic order and how the Allied powers regarded the Ottoman Empire as a participant in this new power dynamic.

In sum, Sultan Mahmud II viewed the shifting balance of power in Europe with a mix of caution and calculated detachment. As Napoleon's previous campaigns redrew borders and destabilized long-standing alliances, Mahmud II perceived European politics not as a sphere for active Ottoman engagement but as a perilous theater where any misstep could hasten imperial decline. For the Sultan, the Empire's territorial integrity—already under pressure from internal dissent and external encroachments—could not withstand the consequences of aligning with or against any of the great powers. He thus regarded Ottoman neutrality not as passivity but as a strategic imperative rooted in prudence. By avoiding direct involvement in European conflicts, Mahmud II aimed to protect the Empire from becoming a battleground or pawn in foreign rivalries. This stance also allowed the Sultan to maintain a degree of autonomy in foreign affairs, navigating the interests of Britain, France, Russia, and Austria without being wholly subsumed by any one of them. Ultimately, Mahmud II's neutralist policy underscored a broader shift in Ottoman diplomacy: a defensive orientation geared toward survival in an increasingly Eurocentric international order, where non-intervention seemed the wisest course for a state struggling to assert its sovereignty.

Review

This article has been reviewed by at least two reviewers using a double blind peer review model. A similarity check was performed to confirm that it was free of plagiarism.

Ethical Statement

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were complied with during the preparation of this study and all the works referred are mentioned in the bibliography.

Complaints

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Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT) were used in the preparation of this article solely for language editing, proofreading, and checking the clarity and grammatical accuracy of the English text. No artificial intelligence tool was used for formulating the research question, developing the argument, conducting the archival analysis, interpreting the sources, or producing the scholarly content of the article. The author assumes full responsibility for the content, arguments, interpretations, and conclusions presented in the article.

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Değerlendirme

Bu makale en az iki hakem tarafından çift taraflı kör hakemlik modeliyle incelendi. Benzerlik taraması yapılarak intihal içermediği teyit edildi.

Etik Beyan

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.

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