

TURKISH INTELLECTUALS IN TRANSITION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS AND COLUMNS OF CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPER *TASVİR-İ EFKAR* ON THE 1940 GREEK RESISTANCE

TÜRK ENTELEKTÜELLERİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: MUHAFAZAKAR *TASVİR-İ EFKAR* GAZETESİ'NDE 1940 YUNAN DİRENİŞİ HAKKINDA YAYINLANAN YAZILAR ÜZERİNDEN BİR OKUMA

Zuhal MERT UZUNER

Marmara University

Faculty of Political Science

Department of Political Science and International Relations (English)

zmert@marmara.edu.tr

ORCID: 0000-0003-3387-2553

Received 1 November 2022 – Accepted 30 November 2022

Gönderim 1 Kasım 2022 – Kabul 30 Kasım 2022

Abstract: *In 1940, Italy's attempt to invade Greece received wide coverage in the Turkish press as well as in the world. In the process leading up to the Second World War, many attempts were made to protect the sovereignty of weaker and smaller countries, and the definitions of threat and friend were shaped in this direction by the Balkan countries. Turkish-Greek relations and Türkiye's perception of the developments in the Balkans have also been shaped by this framework. In this study, news and columns published by Tasvir-i Efkâr newspaper about the Greek resistance were examined on the eve of the Second World War to present a reflection of the war in the Turkish press. Tasvir-i Efkâr that could be defined as a conservative nationalist, was one of the most important representatives of the print media of the era and prominent names of the Turkish intellectual world had the opportunity to share their ideas regularly. Since the names that wrote articles in Tasvir-i Efkâr were intellectuals who witnessed and contributed to both the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic, their analysis of events shed light on the Turkish intellectuals' definition of self and others. This generation of intellectuals of the last period of the Ottoman Empire had different concerns and priorities in the modernization and nationalization process. Hence, this article aims to examine which references about the past these columnists continued to use while evaluating current developments by publishing the Tasvir newspaper, and what kind of traces these references had on the boundaries and content of the important intellectual transformation that affected this generation.*

Keywords: *Greek-Italian War, Turkish press, Tasvir-i Efkâr, Turkish intellectuals, transformation*

Öz: *1940 yılında İtalya'nın Yunanistan'ı işgal girişimi dünyada olduğu gibi Türk basınında da geniş yer bulmuştur. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na giden süreçte daha zayıf ve küçük ülkelerin egemenliklerini korumak adına pek çok girişim yapmış ve tehdit ve dost tanımları bu doğrultuda şekillenmiştir. Türk Yunan ilişkileri ve Türkiye'nin Balkanlardaki gelişmelere dair algısı da bu doğrultuda şekillenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, İkinci Dünya Savaşı arifesinde, Türk entelektüellerinin fikirlerini paylaşma fırsatı bulunduğu yazılı basın en önemli temsilcilerinden biri olan Tasvir-i Efkâr gazetesinde Yunan direnişine dair haberler ve köşe yazıları incelenmiştir. Muhafazakar milliyetçi olarak tanımlanabilecek bir gazetede olan Tasvir'de yazılar yazan isimler o dönem Türk toplumunda düşünce dünyasında hatırı sayılır isimler olup ve hem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemine hem de modern Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşuna tanıklık eden ve katkı sunan aydınlar olduklarından dünyada olan bitene dair açıklamaları dönemin Türk düşünce dünyasına ışık tutar niteliktedir. Jenerasyon olarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemine tanıklık eden ve düşünce dünyalarına o dönemin kaygı ve öncelikleri yerleşmiş bu isimler, bir yandan da modernleşme ve uluslaşma sürecinde de etkili olmuş, Türk millet ve modern Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne dünya siyasetinde yeni bir rol tanımlanmasında etkili olmuş isimlerdir. Bu çalışmada Tasvir gazetesini çıkararak grubun ve köşe yazarlarının güncel gelişmeleri değerlendirirken geçmişe dair hangi referansları kullanmaya devam ettikleri, bu*

referansların bu jenerasyonu etkileyen önemli düşünsel dönüşümün sınırları ve içeriğine dair ne tür izler barındırdığı incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yunan-İtalyan Savaşı, Türk basını, Tasvir-i Efkar, Türk aydınları, dönüştürme*

INTRODUCTION

The modern Turkish state is created on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The most important legacy is the way of thinking in ex-Ottoman lands, namely the mentality carried out by Ottoman intellectuals. Turkish intellectuals share and keep that mentality with a very specific feature: Continuing solidarity with the heritage Empire because of its Turkish character. This feature creates extra complexity within the transition of the mentality of Turkish intelligentsia. The transformation of the state from a multiethnic empire to a nation-state and the historical experiences of that generation on that way generate a complex mental map of the intellectuals of the modern Turkish state. The same generation has the experience to protect the imperial structure and to protect lands against the great powers for the right to exist during the independence war in between 1919 and 1922. Afterwards, these intellectuals created a modern Turkish national state. So, the mental map of those people who lived during those years of transition is interesting to follow the transition of the way of perceiving the world and defining a new role for the modern state. The First World War and the creation of a national state brought new perspectives in Türkiye towards the role of smaller or weaker states and the hegemony of great powers. As an example, to see that transition, Greek resistance against Italians is remarkable to follow in Turkish newspapers. Especially right-wing conservative *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper presents fascinating examples of intellectual tensions between being a citizen of a nation-state and an inheritor of a multiethnic empire. So, in this article, it is targeted to answer how conservative Turkish intellectuals evaluate Greek resistance against Italians in 1940 at the first phase of war and why. The discourses of the news and columns of the *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper are analyzed to present transformation of the perceptions of Turkish intellectuals about self-identity and others.

1. TURKISH INTELLECTUALS AND JOURNALISM

Intellectuals have a very prominent and special role in a political community. With their writings, they create the value set of society and that is most of the time result of the preferences of the political order of the country. “Painting the words and appealing to the eyes enabled people to create press with an enthusiasm for colour and embodying ideas” (Gerçek, 2002: 31). By the 15th century, rising demands to know and technological advancement together with political transformations enabled the rising numbers of pressed books. Dissemination of ideas has positive and negative aspects for any political order.

Turkish history of the press has many examples of this hesitation about a free press and its probable role. By 1729, Ahmed the Third, promoted intellectual services for people by promoting translations from foreign languages and incising the existing number of books in libraries from different sciences in the Ottoman Empire (Gerçek, 2002: 40-41). Journalism and newspapers came later than the efforts to publish books. Newspapers of the era had generally an ideological orientation or a political target. Most of the time the articles were published weekly and the articles of the journalists had analyzed the happenings in politics from a specific point of view. The first signs of

journalism in the Empire emerged with the publication of the newspaper of the Embassy of France, *La Gazette de Constantinople* which targeted propaganda of the ideas of the French Revolution (Gerçek, 2002: 101). Later, it was obvious that ideological discussions and especially nationalism became the dominant frame of the analysis of the journalists. The French language was the *lingua franca* of that era and, the discussions on the happenings especially in the Ottoman lands were the hottest topics of the newspaper columns written mostly by European journalists. The first Turkish newspaper may be considered *Takvimi Vekayi* (1831) that is the official newspaper of the Empire. By its 81st issue, it started to be published in the Turkish language. However, as the beginning of journalism in Türkiye is with the weekly newspaper *Tercuman-ı Ahval* published by Agah Efendi between 1860 and 1876.

In the history of Turkish press, Şinasi has been considered as a very prominent figure. In the first issue of Şinasi's *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper in 1862, he wrote about freedom of speech and he argued that people have rights as well as duties and the expression of ideas is one of them. He underlined that writing for the interests of the motherland is an important part of rights. Limits of the freedom of expression has been an important issue especially in the last quarter of the Empire. By 1864, press regulations in Ottoman Empire brought limits and several measures to the Turkish press. After the first punishment of closing the *Mecmua-i Havadis*, the newspaper wrote that they are not equally free to publish harmful articles as the newspapers published in Greek or Armenian languages (Kabacalı, 1999: 18). This comment argues that newspapers of those days in Turkish language were more censored than the newspapers of those days published in other languages.

In the 1867 Press Regulation (*Kararname-i Ali*) the government explains the reason for the bringing regulation of the press for a limited time period and it states that some of the newspapers provoke conflict among people of the Empire by publishing fake news. It is evaluated by Ebuzziya Tefvik as a kind of palsy for the press and he says that “after all these limitations to express your thoughts, what can be expected from having the ability to think” (Kabacalı, 1999: 21). It is possible to find out more writings of the journalists of those days about censorship.

Especially propagating an idea through mass communication means has been considered as dangerous for the age of public opinion. Because of their specific mission to connect intellectual life and the public, journalists shall be considered an integral part of intellectual life (McDevitt, 2020). Intellectuals who dealt with mental works started to be emerged by the 1870s and they concentrate on non-practical and nonmaterial advantages through having a critical mind (Bodin, 2000: 9). Discussions of intellectuals on politics without any reference to the practical interests of a specific society are mostly defined as a type of traitorship by many political authorities. Dissemination mechanisms of these ideas have also the potential to be dangerous as the producers of the ideas.

In this frame, Turkish intellectuals were also considered marginal foreigners from time to time. That is related to the idea of ideational penetration of foreign actors. Turkish political and social life has been under the influence of western intellectual and ideological trends. Demands for reforms and reorganization of the state apparatus have been discussed by different generations of Turkish intellectuals. These intellectuals had some political enthusiasm which promoted radical revolutionary ideas to transform society.

As Chomsky argues that “usually the population is pacifist, just like they were during the First World War” (Chomsky, 1997: 23). It is right for the Turkish society of

those days. A low level of literacy, centralized state authority and low level of political participation created an adventurous group of people who have supremacy over the intellectual life of Türkiye. So, the political trends have stayed under influence of these groups of intellectuals who may find columns in newspapers. Therefore, how they evaluate the happenings in their columns had been an important variable to analyze the intellectual transition of Turkish intellectual life.

Turkish intellectuals in the latest periods of the Ottoman Empire had a priority to save the state and they were very active in the process of creation of the modern Turkish state in 1923. On the one aspect, they were a citizen of an empire, on the other aspect they were the revolutionist radical transformative group of Turkish society through nationalism and modern thoughts. Turkish intellectuals carried an important role to identify who we are. So, journalism and journalists as a part of a huge public relations industry have the potential to control the public mind in relation to political trends and prerequisites (Chomsky, 1997: 15).

2. NEWSPAPER *TASVIR-I EFKAR* AND THE TURKISH PRESS IN THE 1940s

Tasvir-i Efkar is a very important brand name in the history of the Turkish press. The meaning of *Tasvir-i Efkar* is the description/ delineation of opinion, which presents the anticipated role of newspapers in the creation of social facts from actual happenings. Throughout Turkish press history, the *Tasvir-i Efkar* name was used in different periods. The first appearance of the name in the Turkish press was by Şinasi in 1862. He is a brand name as a Turkish journalist and a prominent intellectual of the Tanzimat period. What is studied in this paper is the second *Tasvir-i Efkar*, which started to be published in 1910 by a conservative journalist Ebuzziya Tevfik. In 1940, the owner of the newspaper was Velid Ebuzziya, who is the son of Ebuzziya Tevfik. This family kept their conservative tendency according to the necessities or priorities of the time and politics in Türkiye. That means more religiosity-originated conservatism that somehow criticizes modern nationalist discourses transformed and changed throughout time. It is possible to see the reflection of a right-wing perspective of the 1930s in writings in the newspaper during 1940, the focus of the research (Interview with Alpay Kabacalı in Istanbul held by Zuhal Mert, in November 2006.) Therefore, against leftist ideas, *Tasvir-i Efkar* could support right-wing thoughts and authoritarian models of government.

Most prominent journalists of the first decades of Republican Türkiye wrote in *Tasvir-i Efkar*. It is regarded as an important school of journalism. For example, Yunus Nadi, founder of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper is experienced in *Tasvir-i Efkar*. Nadi is a more modern nationalist and sympathetic to European mentality when he is compared with Velid Ebuzziya. So, the profiles of the writers have differences in important nuances.

In 1940, a small tag in all issues of the newspaper gives T. Ebuzziya as the owner of the newspaper, Cihat Baban as Production Manager, the address of the printing house and Velid Ebuzziya as the Chief Columnist of the newspaper. Velid Ebuzziya had every day a column to write his point of view. In addition, he might be the author of some text signed as “*Tasvir-i Efkar*”. Other writers of *Tasvir* could be seen from its own list published on 20 October 1940 as; Muharrem Feyzi Togay, Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu with political articles, General Ali İhsan Sabis with Military Critics, Peyami Safa with Literature and Culture, Server Bedii with National Novel, Celaleddin Ezine with Theatre and Critics, Besim Atalay with Language Critics; Prof. H Ziya, Prof. H. Crozat and Dr

Haşim Adasal with Sociology and Law; Mükremin Halil, Süheyl Ünver and S. Nafiz Tansu with Historical Analysis; Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar with Poem and Life; Kandemir with Interviews. With this list of writers, it frequently argues that “*Tasvir-i Efkâr* has the richest community of writers among all Turkish newspapers” on its front page as it is on the 20th of October 1940. Moreover, Ziyad Ebuzziya (nephew of Velid Ebuzziya) started to write in *Tasvir-i Efkâr* in 1940.

Velid Ebuzziya was a well-educated journalist. He had studied in Paris and he was open to innovations in the newspapers. Alpay Kabacalı argues that he was one of the most important figures of Turkish journalism after Şinasi (Kabacalı, 2000: 67-68). However, he was also considered as a conservative by some of the journalists of the day. Especially, Zekeriya Sertel argues that he had liked to touch some religious feelings of society in the newspapers (Sertel, 1968:25). During the abolition of the caliphate, Velid Ebuzziya criticized the Ankara government.

On the other hand, his newspaper has been a free address to write for columnists. Sertel writes, “he was the one who gave the spirit of the newspaper” (Sertel, 1968:25). During the *İttihat Terakki* period, he let Yunus Nadi write as he wishes even though he does not agree. That attitude was a kind of neutrality and must be underlined because the owners’ and editors’ profile has been predominant in the general publication policy of Turkish newspapers since the beginning according to Aysun Köktener. Most of the time, the owners of the newspapers were also editors (Köktener, 2004: 26).

Peyami Safa was another important columnist of the newspaper. From time to time, he was using a pen name, Server Bedii (Köktener, 2004: 28). His articles were located on the first page of the newspaper under various titles, for example, *İşaretler- Signs*. Moreover, he wrote many articles in other newspapers and periodicals of the era, such as *Cumhuriyet*. Columnists and writers of that era had their own readers and wherever the writer goes, readers were following him and continued to read him. Therefore, together with changes in writers, readers could change their favorite newspapers, too (Köktener, 2004: 26). Safa was famous with his deep sympathy for Germany. Nadir Nadi explains his sympathy with a short memory. Even though Peyami Safa did not know German at all, he was extremely influenced by Hitler’s speech in style when he was listening to him (Nadi, 1979: 48-49).

Another important columnist was Ali İhsan Sabis. According to Niyazi Berkes, Ali İhsan Sabis together with another communist Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir Erkilet in *Tasvir-i Efkâr* were retired Turanist generals of the Turkish army (Berkes, 1997: 175). Berkes argues that these retired generals were inheritors of Pan-Turkist Turanist Enver Paşa, who is considered responsible for the engagement of Türkiye in World War I on the side of Germany with a faith accompli (Berkes, 1997: 175). These generals continued to support Germany during World War II, too, in *Tasvir-i Efkâr*. Berkes argues that these people could be in contact with Germany in the case of German-dominated European politics (Berkes, 1997: 175). It is possible to follow the German sympathizer tendency of Ali İhsan Sabis from his writings on the third page of *Tasvir-i Efkâr* under the title of “*Asker Gözüyle Harp Vaziyeti - Situation of War from the Perspective of Soldier*”.

Sympathy for Turkism could be followed by advertisements in some books or journals. On the up-left corner, during the period between September-December 1940, it was possible to see many unscheduled advertisements, which could be proof of the intellectual connection of *Tasvir-i Efkâr* with other Turkist-Turanist or German sympathizer press. For example, on 1 November 1940, there was an advertisement for R. Oğuz Türkkan’s book, *Türklüğe Giriş - Introduction to Turkishness*. The

advertisement describes the book as “every Turk should have this study, which mentions the dignity of Turkish genealogy at its home”.

3. ITALIAN INVASION OF GREECE AND TÜRKİYE’S OFFICIAL REACTION

Mussolini’s Italy has been a threat targeting Mediterranean states in the 1930s. Especially, Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Türkiye were targets in the speeches of Mussolini. Hence, Britain and France signed an agreement in October 1935 to defend their regional colonial concerns. They had to offer a kind of protection for Mediterranean states to make them agree to put the sanction against Italy.

Türkiye was clearly against the Italian invasions in Ethiopia and acted together with the League of Nations about the package of the embargo against Italy in 1935 although Italy was one of the prominent countries, with which Türkiye had a high level of economic activity (Uzgel, 2001: 296). In fact, Italy was described as one of the most important western states to which Türkiye referred so much when it designed its policies toward Western Europe (Uzgel, 2001: 293). Italy was important in the national security estimations because of its military existence in the Dodecanese in the Aegean Sea. Turkish leaders were defining Italian existence in those islands as “gun targets on the heart of Türkiye” (Uzgel, 2001: 296). Türkiye came closer to anti-revisionist European states under the leadership of Britain and France despite the existence of severe discussions in domestic politics against it. Otherwise, Türkiye had to face any possible aggression from Axis powers alone.

Turkish political historian Fahir Armaoğlu defines the post-1935 era in Turkish foreign policy as the era of cooperation of the Turkish Republic with Europeans for the protection of peace (Armaoğlu, 1994: 340-341). Türkiye as a Balkan country disliked the domination of any foreign power in the Balkans. The dislike of the Turkish ruling elite about imperial demands was closely related to the memories of the late eras of the Ottoman Empire that was fighting against the imperialist policies of foreign great powers. Italy was one of the imperialist powers during the First World War. After the creation of the modern Turkish state, Türkiye followed Italian revisionism in the 1920s with profound apprehension. Expansionist threats against Italy in the Balkans started with the Corfu incident and events in Albania. Therefore, Türkiye opened an Embassy in Tirana and a consulate in Valona in 1925 to follow Italian plans in the Balkans and, especially, in Albania, (Uzgel, 2001: 293).

What is more, there was an effort to increase the propaganda of Axis powers in Türkiye. However, Türkiye was not an appropriate country for the escalation of revisionist thinking because of several reasons. First, Türkiye has broken the strains of the Sevres Agreement with that of the Lausanne Agreement in 1923. In the following years, unresolved issues about Antakya and Turkish straits in the Lausanne Treaty were successfully solved for Türkiye through international negotiations. Although rising sympathy in Türkiye for Germany because it started to “break the chains of the Versailles Agreement” after 1933, Turkish intellectuals were careful. That sympathy was the result of the historical experiences of both nations in World War I. Correlation with the Turkish independence war against the determined destiny by the other states could be defined as the reason for the sympathy. According to Oral Sander and Şükrü Esmer, until the 1939 invasion of a non-German populated country, Czechoslovakia, Türkiye kept sympathy to Germany according to the principle of “one nation, one state” (Sander & Esmer, 1989: 137). Because of the republican dislike of revisionism, Turkish

officials considered the British and French governments more appropriate allies for the realization of that target. In addition, Türkiye had a target to be Westernized and the definition of the West was much closer to the democratic front.

On the other hand, racist and fascist political language was also used in Turkish politics on a pragmatic base during the 1930s. Turkish politics was much more party-centred and therefore, activities of ideological groupings, such as *Türk Ocağı - Turkish Heart* were limited, and their arguments were much more constrained within Turkish borders. They found a very limited place to speak about their opinions in the congress of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) - Republican Peoples Party* in 1927. Then in 1931, all branches of *Türk Ocağı* were closed, and instead of them, *Halk Evleri - People's Houses* was constructed under the ruling political party, CHP. The creation of *Halk Evleri* under the tight control of the Party was a similar application to the fascist organization of state despite they were designed for the promotion of modernization of society on the direction of Republican reforms. There were some authoritarian characteristics of the regime of Türkiye in those years. Therefore, in American politics, the “Milli Şef - National Chief” era of Türkiye under the leadership of İsmet İnönü (1938-1945) was considered in the same category as Spain of Franco (Berkes, 1997: 163). However, it was difficult to put the Turkish regime into the category of Italian fascism.

Despite the existing domestic political features, Britain was in search of cooperation with the Turks. However, they both knew that Turkish military capacity was not enough to be helpful to any ally. Türkiye was in the category of non-belligerent states that were still out of the war but was not an ally of Germany. So, non-belligerent states are considered on the side of the Entente. Additionally, Türkiye has done the Triple Alliance Agreement with France and Britain on 19 October 1939, (Koçak, 2003: 271). It was a result of increasing worries of Türkiye after the Italian occupation of Albania on 7 April 1939. In another word, rising tension in the Mediterranean basin and in the Balkans promoted the declaration of common perspectives of Türkiye and Britain about world affairs on 12 May 1939. On 23 June 1939, Türkiye and France had done a similar declaration, too (Koçak, 2003: 250, 253). That togetherness of Türkiye with Entente powers on the western front became more important with the changing tendencies of the Soviets in the same days. Türkiye was in dialogue with the Soviets since the beginning of the war.

Türkiye’s worries increased more after the Italian offence against Greece. Italy hit the Greek cruiser *Elli*, on the 15th of August 1940 and it sunk around the island of Tinos, with the reasoning of the existence of British naval forces in the Greek sea (Vakalopoulos, 2004: 413). Italy argued that the *Elli* and other Greek ships carry military equipment to British forces (Istoria tou..., 1980: 409). On the 28th of October 1940, Italy gave Greece an ultimatum accusing Greece to authorize British warships to use its waters and fostering espionage activities on the Albanian border. Türkiye officially notify Bulgaria of any probable attempt to cross the border of Greece in Thrace and Macedonia and stated that if it happens “Türkiye will not stay quiescent” against Bulgaria. According to Fahir Armaoğlu, the Turkish statement deter Bulgaria from any aggression against Greece, at least for a while. Moreover, Türkiye gave an *aide-memoire* to Italy that stated, Türkiye will involve in the war against Italy, if Italy invades Thessaloniki and if Bulgaria attacks Greece (Koçak, 2003: 316).

Frank G. Weber explains the Turkish position as given below (Weber, 1985: 60):

“İnönü’s government...made a distinction between Axis aggression against Yugoslavia and against Bulgaria as part of the Greek campaign. If the Germans were to invade Yugoslavia to support another Italian drive against Greece, Turks indicated that they would do nothing, even though Ankara and Belgrade had been allied in the Balkan Pact since 1934. But, if the Germans penetrated Bulgaria, Türkiye’s immediate neighbour, the İnönü government declared itself perfectly able and ready to fight. At the same time, the Turks raised their old demands for territorial compensation in the Dodecanese islands, Bulgarian Thrace, and Albania. They even evinced a new interest in controlling the Greek port of Salonika, which since they control the Straits, would have given the Turks the predominant position in the Aegean Sea. Ambassador Knatchbull-Hugessen’s advice was “to press the Salonika argument very hard” in order to bring Türkiye into the war against Italy, but Under Secretariat Alexander Cadogan thought Salonika was a too high price to pay”.

Although the Turkish government rejected the British proposal on the 21st of August for sending Turkish troops to Greece, the Turkish government announced the “vital importance of security of Greece for Türkiye” in the Grand National Assembly (Cihan, 1993: 11).

Under the leadership of General Papagos, Greek resistance had been successful. Just after the completion of the mobilization process of the Greek army, the Greek counterattack started on the 14th of November against Italian forces and the Greeks moved ahead into Albanian lands until the end of November (Svolopoulos, 2005: 281). After the 9th of December, the success of the Greek resistance was announced in the Greek newspapers. Metaxas was tried to be shown not as a dictator, but as “Mr Yannis”, “Uncle Yannis” or “Father of the victory” (Istoria tou Ellinikou..., 1980: 425). On the 20th of December 1940, Mussolini asked for German intervention into Thrace through Bulgaria.

4. TURKISH INTELLECTUALS’ PERCEPTION OF THE GREEK-ITALIAN WAR IN *TASVIR-I EFKAR* NEWSPAPER

The Turkish press has been an intellectual sphere for the dissemination of ideas about domestic and international happenings. The intellectuals in the 1930s and 40s were belonging to an interim generation in between Ottoman Empire and the modern Turkish state and therefore they had experienced both forms of identities in different periods of their lives. They went through a series of wars, the dissolution of the empire and the creation of a modern national state in Türkiye. Throughout the whole abovementioned period, they were in close contact with the European intellectual life and familiar with several ideologies. So, the analysis of the Greek-Italian war in newspapers was depending on their background and their intellectual features evolved under the influence of their experiences. However, their characteristics of being interim generation have been the most impressive side to present transformation of a generation according to the changing conditions, priorities, and necessities of the time in and for a country.

4.1. Evolution of War and the Threat Perceptions against Türkiye

Inter war years were a transformative era of Turkish journalism and intellectual life. Radical transformations and vehement discussions were still under governmental control. Especially practical worries of the governments in interwar years were related to threat perception deriving from the forthcoming war and rising fascism and Nazi ideology. Columns were mostly about the new political developments in world politics

based on the ideological orientation of the newspapers. In these writings, practical discussions about Turkish foreign policy were merged with intellectual theoretical priorities.

ARTICLE OF THE DAY: “GREECE DEFEATS NOT ONLY ENEMY BUT ALSO AGGRESSION SPIRIT OF EUROPE” by *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25th of November 1940, p.1 column.1.

“This view that I have seen is full of events, which are enjoyable to watch. No one has the right to be wrong about the content of the event. Nobody thought that the war on the Greek-Albania front that started after midnight would be blitzkrieg, but today was not imagined. It was supposed that Italians might progress into Greece even more slowly....

However, today the world sees with admiration that ...development of war became different. ... In fact, if those successes are analyzed in the context of totalistic states, it is possible to see that they take very serious responsibility for them. ...

This small nation gave a very important lesson to other nations that fell very easily against offensive....

However, it is not enough only to be admired and applauded, the success of the Greeks; also, it is necessary to use that chance. ...to defeat the enemy by supporting the Greeks more. An increase of help is vital for the war of democracy...

...another important matter is that Germans may not be silent about the destruction of their allies. ... it is very necessary to wait for German help to Italians. Germans behaved with the same motive to help their allies in the First World War... the difference in this war, her beaten ally is Italy, not Austria. ... In those years, Bulgaria was not sure whether to participate in war. She waited until German moved. As it happened in the past, Bulgaria is again waiting for Germany's offence in order to be engaged in war.

Against that probability, only Greek victory in Albania would be a blocking factor. Before the Germans start to do surprise offences, Greece may solve the problem of Italy in Albania. If it could be done, the direction of the war may change so much. That is why it is very necessary to utilize this chance that is created by Greek victory... ”

All the columnists and editorial board presented their thoughts to adapt to the new trend in world politics. Columns were occupied mostly by the efforts to prove the “rightful” position of Türkiye from a realistic approach. Changing world order is evolved in the writings of Peyami Safa as it is quoted below:

SIGNS: “NEW ORDER AND TÜRKİYE” by Peyami Safa, 23rd of October 1940, p.1 column.6-7.

According to an argument of the Italian News Agency from Bulgaria, Türkiye and Greece did not understand yet that the old world was fell down and the new one was born.

Is the new order an uprising against the system of Versailles? From that point of view, a nation that makes the Independence War, after 19 years does not have any lesson to take from others, especially from Bulgaria. Turks have been the first to bayonet a settlement like Versailles. Our neighbour Bulgaria crawls into that rebellion.

Is the new order a rebellion against capitalist and imperialist world economies? ...Türkiye trusted her labour, not her non-existent gold.

Does the new order mean national unity that is strengthened by coming together around a leader, national chief, and a single party? Türkiye was before that system much before Bulgaria, even Italy.

Is the new order a rebellion against the international exploitation of nations? All the political and military history of new Türkiye is exactly this rebellion.

However, if the new order is directing the sheep nations with the sticks of the shepherd nations by pushing first to plains, then to a sheepfold and then to butchery, we say good luck to our neighbours Bulgarians. We are not among that herd, and we have a tool which is much more durable and stronger than that stick: Our bayonet!

Probable manoeuvres of the warring actors were evaluated in the main columns of Turkish newspapers. *Tasvir-i Efkar*'s main column evaluated the beginning of the war

from the perspective of an anti-axis country that demands the right to exist despite its weaker position. This may be considered as a kind of sympathy deriving from a fear of probable aggression against Türkiye. For Turkish intellectuals, the Axis offences against the people of the Balkans were unacceptable and unjust. It is possible to argue that these bloody ambitions of the Axis remind columnists the Turks' position during the Turkish independence war. As a young republic, Türkiye has chosen to belong to the West in official discourse and therefore, the aggression is criticized also from the perspective of Western civilization in the main article of *Tasvir-i Efkar* and given below:

ARTICLE OF THE DAY: "ITALIAN-GREEK WAR" by *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 30 October 1940, p.1 column.1.

"Although it was estimated that Italy would attack Greece, launch to that aggression is a tragedy that will create great hate all around the world. For many months, Italians have been creating many problems against Greece although there was no concrete reason for that tension. ... However, Greece did not want to exaggerate all the events and she kept her patience. ... In fact, in the last few days, it was almost sure that axis powers were in demand to apply some plans in the Balkans, too. ... there is the danger of the emergence of many activities as a product of shuttle diplomacy among Axis powers that continued for a long time. (p.1)

The first stage of this plan that is in the application now together with the aggression against Greece was the invasion of Romania. ... it is the tradition of the Axis power to apply all the plans quickly according to the current needs. In fact, there is no other terrible picture in which a Prime Minister of a country is waked around three after midnight with a piece of paper that offers a choice between different ways of death. This picture is ... very bloodcurdling.

Who could imagine that civilization would be so silent in the middle of the twentieth century? Did inheritors of... both the German and Roman civilizations... which are the roots of today's western civilization... agree on extirpating all the essence and methods of Western civilization? ... today wars are declared at the midnight and many innocent people are murdered without a reason when they are sleeping.

... General Metaxas studied in Germany, and he is a very prominent, experienced and powerful general. If he rejects the ultimatum of Italian, and he rejects Italian demands, he would be sure about his ability to defend his country against Italy. ... Turks are the saddest nation about this terrible aggression against Greece as the neighbour of Greece.

... plans of Axis power... will conclude with a great disappointment." (p.3)

Probable manoeuvres of the actors have been discussed in many columns written by retired generals in *Tasvir-i Efkar*. The geopolitical analysis of Turkish generals reflects their prior analysis of the big actors. In the columns, all the war fronts are explained in connection.

POLITICAL SITUATION "BALKAN WAR AND YUGOSLAVIA" by Muharrem Feyzi Togay, 30 October 1940, p.3 column.4

"Because of the geographical position of Greece which covers an important area of the Mediterranean Britain would surely help Greece. Therefore, the war will not be a war between a small country and a big state and big states will start to fight here as it happened in Egypt."

4.2. Democracy is not the Priority, but the Anti-imperialism

The columns of *Tasvir-i Efkar* did not criticize authoritative regimes by referring to democratic deficits. It is possible to argue that from a realistic perspective, they did criticize mostly the aims of the hegemonic powers in the international system and revisionism. Especially, the anti-imperialist standpoint shall be analyzed as a very important pillar of the analysis of Turkish journalists in this era. It is coherent because they were writing similar columns during the independence war of Türkiye against colonialist and imperialist tendencies in world politics. What happened towards World

War II was mostly assessed like what happened before to Turks after World War I. Empathy towards the Balkan nations suffering under the offences of fascist greater powers was related to their own experiences.

This approach is interesting because the same memories of the independence war between 1919-1922 were related to the Greek army that invaded Anatolia together with many powerful allies. Therefore, what was happening now could be possibly seen from a revanchist and negative nationalist rhetoric. However, memories of the independence war were underlining the key characteristic of the war as against imperialistic great powers, and not so much underlined as a war against the Greek army. That was also related to the Turkish narrative about the loss of the Balkans with the destructive projects of all the major powers of Europe (Bora, 1995: 102).

Additionally, Turko-Greek War during the Turkish Independence War had been referred to in columns to analyze the current leader profile of Greece during World War II. Greek “National Chief” Metaxas is described in columns and news as the person who was against the adventurism of the Greek government in 1919. General Papagos was also referred to as an honourable soldier. For a specific example it is possible to refer to the explanation given under the photograph of Metaxas and General Papagos on the 7th of December 1940:

General Papagos is a well-known person in Türkiye. He was together with Atatürk during the Thrace Maneuvers and ... his value was appreciated by our Eternal Chief. In the picture, it is possible to see General Metaxas, who is also a very valuable high military officer and a prominent figure in Greek victory today.

Prominent journalist of *Tasvir-i Efkar*, Peyami Safa, has also written an important comment about Metaxas. In his sentences, he is described as an honourable soldier with an honourable target as Turks had once, defending his homeland.

GLANCES: “GENERAL METAXAS” by Peyami Safa, 27 November 1940, p.1 column. 6-7.

...Metaxas, who had got his military education in Germany, Potsdam War Collage, has been called by Germans “Moltke the Junior”. It is not difficult to understand why such a high military officer gave such a proper answer for an independent nation without hesitation ...against the ultimatum of Italy- and even from Italy! The strange thing is how Italy could not know the leader of its neighbour.

4.3. Ideological Lenses Defined the Frames

The ideological tendency of the newspaper is very important to understand the content and frame of the news and column analysis. *Tasvir-i Efkar* refers to the heroism and ethical supremacy of the leaders of the Greek government and the Greek army’s glory. It shall be considered as the reflection of a right-wing conservative standpoint because the left-wing *Tan* newspaper was presenting the emerging victory as the victory of the ordinary Greek people. In this direction, they had chosen photos. While *Tasvir-i Efkar* was publishing photos of the Greek army members, Metaxas and Papagos, *Tan* newspaper was publishing a soldier kissing his daughter before he leaves them for going to the war front.

Despite the existing Entente-supporting tendency, it is possible to see a level of sympathy to and influence of fascistic and racist thinking in *Tasvir-i Efkar*. Süha Sakıp’s articles, such as “Decisions of the Jews” on the 6th of October, about the Jewish community in Türkiye about their choice to speak Turkish present an important example

of that tendency. It is also possible to see many caricatures containing anti-Jewish sentiments. In another word, despite Sūha Sakıp's discourse to underline the freedom and independence of Greece as it happens in many newspapers by giving support to the "democratic front", increasing racism was obvious in Turkish intellectual life because of German ideological propagates. Sakıp writes about Greece and the Balkans as they are smaller countries, but they have moral superiority because they defend their homes.

The Right-wing, nationalist position of *Tasvir-i Efkâr* shall be evaluated also in connection with its anti-Soviet, anti-communist perspective. Soviets' policies were presented as a continuity of Russian imperial mentality that considered all other smaller states less important. In the editorial of *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, the Soviet approach to the invasion of Germany in Romania is presented against Soviet supporter cycles of Türkiye on the 12th of October.

ARTICLE OF THE DAY: "DIFFICULT STATUS OF SOVIETS ABOUT INVASION IN ROMANIA" by *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 12th of October, p.1, column.1, p. 3, column 4.

"...Russian newspapers had written that Germans sent to Romania only some military advisers and sample battalions. This is the proof of the tendency of Russians to consider and to present invasion in Romania small."

4.4. Revisiting the Ottoman Past and the Meaning of the Balkans

Tasvir-i Efkâr followed the war by publishing maps and many military analyses. In all these analyses, especially retired military generals were referring to details of the region deriving from the Ottoman existence in that region once.

In addition to the abovementioned reference to Ottoman existence in the Balkans, it is possible to see also the self-image of Turkish intellectuals in their analysis. Columns do not have any sign of seeing themselves as an imperialistic power in the Balkans. Contrary, they see Turks as a part of the Balkans. They do not feel separate from the Balkan cities and land. They consider themselves still a part of Balkans - *Balkanli*. (e.i. **Encyclopedia of Tasvir:** "History of Korçë that was formed by Turks", 26 December 1940, p. 5 column. 6-7 and **Encyclopedia of Tasvir:** "City of Tepelenë and Ali Pasha of Tepelenë", p. 3 column. 6-7).

Turkish intellectuals considered the loss of the Balkans as an unfair development and there is still the memory of Thessaloniki, the intellectual capital of the Balkans. What happened in the Balkans is also explained by Turkish intellectuals as the result of colonialist and imperialistic policies of great powers. Therefore, it is possible to argue that they had still a feeling of solidarity and sympathy with the Balkan people who are believed as suffering under these imperialist powers.

On the other hand, the discourses of the writings underline the new rule of the international order: Equality and the right to self-determination of smaller nations. So, it is connected with the reactive characteristics of Turkish nationalism. It is internalized as a dominant modern ideology, but it was the only alternative to choose. On the one hand, they recognize the right to self-determination, on the other hand, they have a sad memory of losing the Balkans.

POLITICAL THINKINGS: "HELLO TO GREEK NATION" by Galip Kemali on 6 October 1940, p.3 columns.4-5.

"Attack of Italy to Greece...is a version of the story of wolf and lamb. ... Greece proves her political maturity by giving a hand to Türkiye, which has seen the direction of development in the source of discord and fire, the Balkans.

Therefore, we wish them success in their fights for existence. I know Mr. Metaxas since 1911 very well. He is a prominent general...He stopped Greece...to attack in Çanakkale together with Britain in 1915...

...our policy is very clear: if our close and distant neighbors do not touch us, we will keep our friendly relations...In fact, if they touch us because of wrong calculations, the entire world will see new heroic epics.”

Another attractive aspect of this tendency was the recognition of the Muslim communities of the Balkans. Nationalism is merged with old social bases, and the *millet system* of the Ottomans is still very influential. It is not only an ideational problem, but it was also possible to see the discussions about Balkan immigration in the Grand National assembly on those days. *Tasvir* was reflecting that in many different columns.

Albanians were also referred to as a brotherly and brave nation against Italians. This perspective shall be evaluated together with the Albanian image in Turkish history as warring people in the Ottoman army.

“ALBANIANS RUN TO THE MOUNTAIN AND THEY FIGHT AGAINST ITALIAN BATALILIONS – THERE ARE DEADS AND CASUALTIES FROM THE BOTH SIDES”, 29 October 1940, p.1 column. 5.

“According to the news coming from Belgrade, Albanian patriotic people run to the mountains of Albania. They make propagation against Italians. Italian battalion does not let them and as a result of happened armed conflict, there are many injured and dead of both conflicting sides.”

4.5. Resentment against the West

Tasvi-ri Efkar columns and news frequently referred to advanced technological developments and the civilization of the West, but not always positive. As an example, the following columns from the 31st of October 1940 can be given. Arguments in the writings of Safa given below can be read as a hidden reference to the lost empire of the Turks, the Ottoman Empire.

PROBLEMS: “IS EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION COLLAPSING?” by Peyami Safa, p.3 columns.2-3.

“Term “collapsing” is not right to use for civilizations...in history, there is no civilization that collapsed and disappeared forever...after so many years, ancient Greek has got esteem surprisingly and... that brought the renaissance.

...in the history of reforms, ... it is possible to see bridges that connect old to new ones. Renaissance was an example of that and all the renaissances will be like this.”

It is also possible to read a kind of resembling of small nations in the case of Greek resistance against the relatively powerful one. In the following arguments of Feyzi Togay, the Balkans and the African resistance against the trends of European politics is given.

POLITICAL SITUATION: “WARS OF THE BALKANS AND AFRICA” by Muharrem Feyzi Togay , p.3, column.1.

“...All the world is at the side of Greece. Because Greece was so careful in order to keep her neutrality and peace until now....Axis powers want to put all the European and African states into their...system. France went into that system without hesitation after the defeat of France. However, others like the example of tiny Greece will not approach to do this.”

CONCLUSION

Turkish intelligentsia had utilized newspapers by the 1870s for the dissemination of their ideas. Despite the efforts of the governments to control the press with severe restrictions and harsh censorship policies, the Turkish press continued to be an important platform for intellectual discussions in the interwar years. The practical worries and hopes of the journalists were reflected in the pages of the newspapers together with the official priorities of the government. Journalists as the leading intellectuals of the era were a part of an interim generation who were born as a citizen of a multiethnic empire in a vast geography, and they transformed into an intellectual of a territorially smaller nation-state. In this transformation process, Turkish intellectuals were not passive; on the contrary, they played a crucial role in the construction of the new set of values and roles of the modern state and society. In this frame, the writings of this interim generation about World War II reflected their bitter experiences, and images about themselves and others change throughout time.

In this article, it is discussed that old and new forms of life and priorities of the different eras of Turkish political history left deep signs and it is still possible to see the impact of the previous experiences on contemporary evaluations of Turkish intellectuals. The case of the conservative *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper presents many important examples of the continuation of the mentality of an empire as well as the efforts to analyze the happenings on the requirements of the new world order with dominant security worries and threat perceptions.

On the eve of World War II, practical worries dominated the frame of intellectuals' discussions in the newspapers instead of an indifferent critical approach. The Italian invasion of Greece was considered in connection with the imperialist ambitions of the great powers in the Mediterranean and the Balkans that remind the Turkish independence war and the efforts of the Turkish nation to survive. So, columns and news carry signs of the Ottoman past and the independence war against imperialism. That creates sometimes a sense of hesitation in analyses of columnists against the Western powers. On the other hand, modern Türkiye's ideological position can be seen as a part of Western civilization that is idealized on several norms identified in international order after World War I. The definition of the region Balkans and the actors' priorities are related to both the past and current threat perceptions. It is possible to argue that the Greek resistance represented a heroic act against fascism and imperialism threatening the right to exist of smaller nation-states for Turkish intellectuals. They analyzed current happenings from a security worries perspective but by referring the past experiences. Greek image is drawn differently than the image during World War I. Reflection of the Greek resistance on newspapers' pages proves that intellectuals' evaluations esteem contemporary modern requirements and are free from the revanchism about the past. The social conducts of the era were also proof of this argument because, during World War II, Greeks of islands had tight economic conduct with the Anatolian coast.

Columns and news not only present images deriving from the past but also present important features for further developments in Turkish politics. As a right-wing newspaper, Turkish nationalism and Ottoman heritage are reflected in the writings of *Tasvir* during World War II. Hesitations about the Soviets were observable in writings. The democratic front has been supported but what is understood from democracy was related to being against fascism and Nazis. Anti-imperialism was much more central for the columnists. The polarization of Turkish politics after World War II found roots in the definition of warring sides and ideological bases in the newspapers. So, on the one side journalism continued to play a key role to control the public mind in relation to

political trends and prerequisites of the era, on the other side the key references of the columns present the experiences of generations that defines their considerations about the world.

REFERENCES

- Armaoglu, Fahir (1994), *Yirminci Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi I 1914-1980 (Political History of Twentieth Century I 1914-1980)*, Ankara: Is Bankası Yay.
- Berkes, Niyazi (1997), *Unutulan Yıllar (Forgotten Years)*, İstanbul: İletisim.
- Bodin (2000), *Aydınlar*, Ankara: Gündoğan.
- Bora, Tanıl “Turkish National Identity, Turkish Nationalism and The Balkan Problem”, in G.G. Özdoğan & Kemali Saybaşılı (Ed.), *Balkans A Mirror of New International Order*, İstanbul: Eren, 1995, p. 101-120.
- Chomsky, Naom (1997), *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, Mishawaka: Seven Stories.
- Cihan, Ali Rıza (Ed.) (1993), *İsmet İnönü'nün TBMM'deki Konuşmaları 1920-1973, Vol II (1939-1960)*, Ankara: TBMM Basımevi.
- Gerçek, Selim Nüzhet (2002), *Türk Matbuatı*, İstanbul: Gezgın.
- Interview with Alpay Kabacalı in İstanbul realized by Zuhal Mert, in November 2006.
- Kabacalı, Alpay (1999), *Türk Basınında Demokrasi*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı.
- Kabacalı, Alpay (2000), *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türkiye'de Matbaa, Basın ve Yayın*, İstanbul: Literatür.
- Koçak, Cemil (2003), *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi 1938-1945 (National Chief Era in Turkey 1938-1945)*, İstanbul: İletişim.
- Köktener, Aysun (2004), *Cogito: Bir Gazetenin Tarihi – Cumhuriyet (Cogito: History of a Newspaper – Cumhuriyet)*, İstanbul: YKY.
- McDevitt, Michel (2020), “Journalism and Intellect: A Vexed Relationship”, *Where Ideas Go to Die: The Fate of Intellect in American Journalism*, Oxford: Oxford.
- Nadi, Nadir (1979), *Perde Aralığından (From the Interval of Curtain)*, İstanbul: Çağdas.
- Sertel, Zekeriya (1968), *Hatırladıklarım 1905-1950*, İstanbul: Yayılcık Matbaası.
- Uzgel, İlhan (2001), “İtalya'yla İlişkiler” (Relations with Italy”), in *Türk Dış Politikası cilt I: 1919-1980 (Turkish Foreign Policy vol.I: 1919-1980)*, edited by Baskın Oran, İstanbul: İletişim, 2001.
- Weber, Frank G. (1985), *The Evasive Natural, Germany, Britain and the Quest for a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War*, Missouri: University of Missouri Press.
- Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous*, Vol. IE, Athens, Vraveio Akadimias, 1980.
- Vakalopoulos, Apostolos E. (2004), *Nea Elliniki Istoria 1204 – 1985*, Thessaloniki: Vaniias.
- Svolopoulos, Konstantininos (2005), *I Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki 1900-1945*, Athens, Estias.