

# Belgium and the Ottoman Empire

**'Transnationals' and Diplomacy in  
An Age of Global Capital**

Houssine Alloul  
University of Amsterdam

## **Introduction:** Locating Belgium in the Ottoman World, 1815/1830-1914

1. Western-Ottoman Relations in Historical Writing
2. The Belgian-Ottoman Nexus and Ways forward in the Scholarship
3. Collaboration and Interaction between State and Private Actors
4. Amicabilities in Diplomatic Milieus
5. Transnationals on the Fringes
6. 'Belgian' Capital Abroad: Contrasts and Contradictions
7. Ottoman 'state capitalists'

## **Conclusions**



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*İzmir.*



*Kade.*

**Horse-drawn cable car on the Quay of Izmir, ca. 1890.**

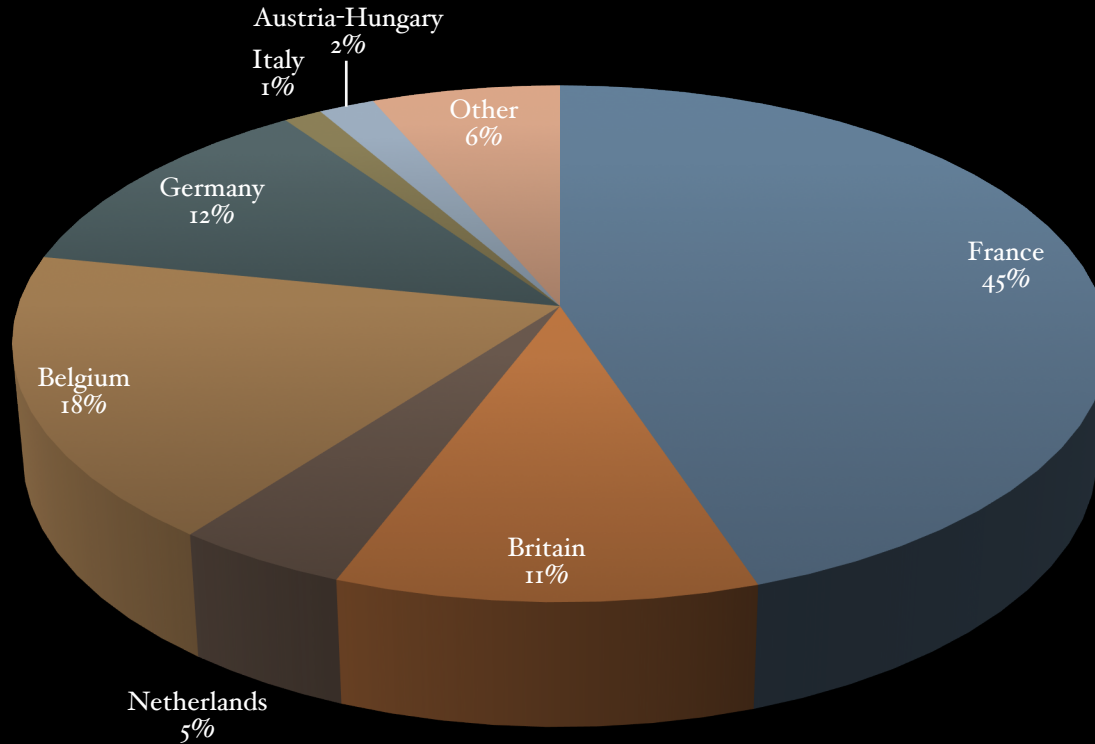
Source: Large format album, Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey.



**Gas lanterns on the Galata Bridge, constructed by the Belgian utility company "Gaz de Stamboul", ca. 1890.**

Source: Photo albums of Prince Philippe, Count of Flanders, Royal Palace Archive, Brussels.

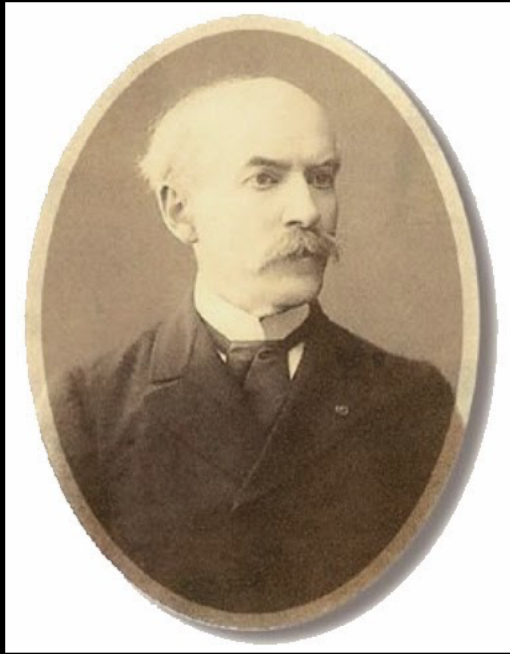
1898



**Nation-based segmentation of foreign holdings of the Ottoman sovereign debt by country in 1898.**

Sources: Thobie, "Intérêts belges", 214-5, 221; Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, 49.

# The Helbigs from Liège



**Portrait of Charles Helbig Sr., undated.**

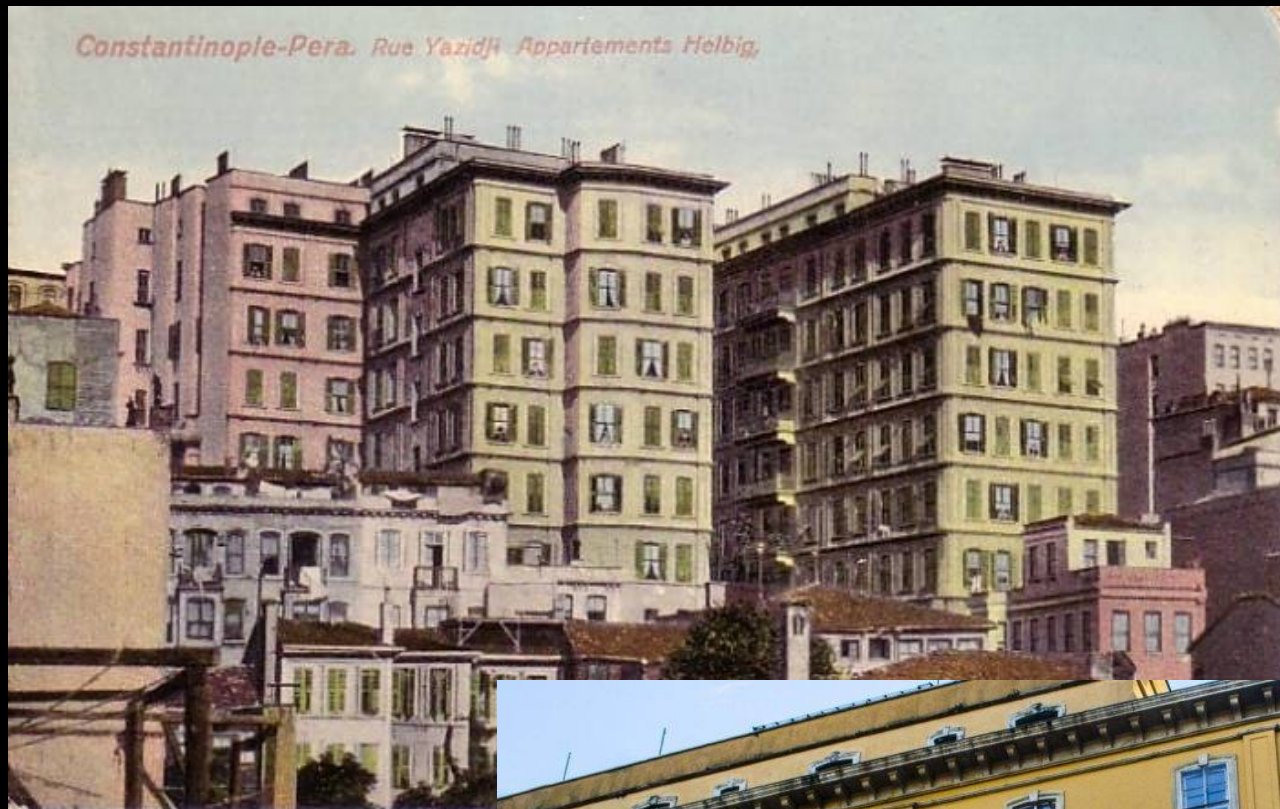
From Van den Reeck, Marc. *Belgium in the Ottoman Capital*, Istanbul: Consulate General, 2000.



**Caricature of "Matmazel Helbig", 1880s.**

From Öztuncay, Bahattin, ed. *Youssouf Bey: The Charged Portraits of Fin-de-Siècle Pera*. Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Foundation, 2016.

*Constantinople-Pera. Rue Yazidji Appartements Helbig,*







# ORIENT-EXPRESS



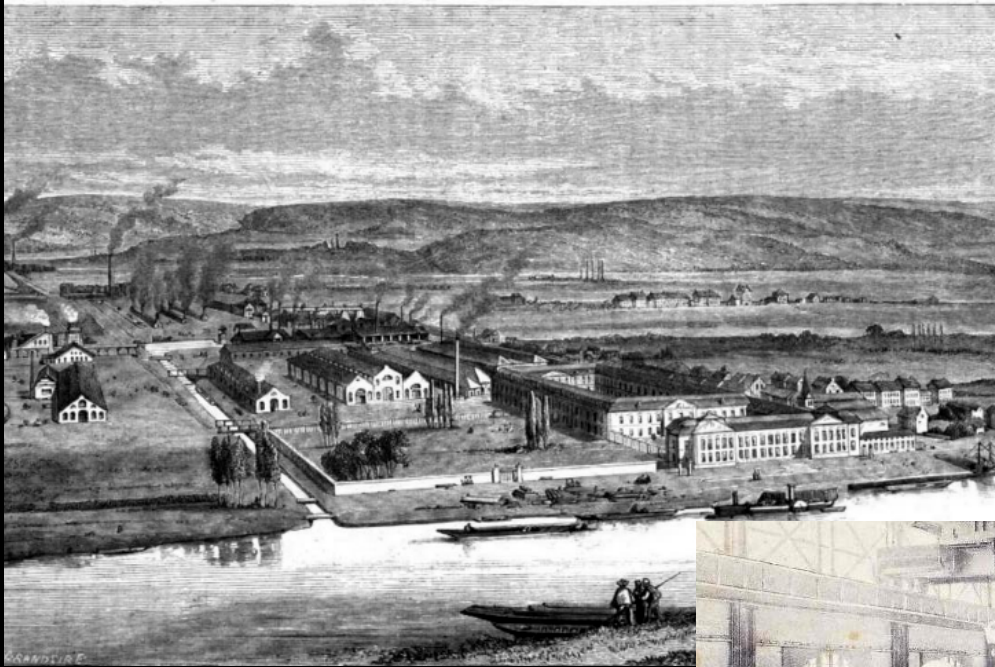
## PARIS - WIEN - KONSTANTINOPEL

Taglich	ab 650,-	Paris	ab 544,-	PARIS . . .	ab 6'50,-
PARIS	352,-	Strassburg	925,-	WIEN . . .	8'20,-
WIEN	530,-	Carlsruhe	752,-	BUKAREST	ab 4'11,-
Zweist. wochentlich	726,-	Stuttgart	554,-	BUKAREST	ab 4'03,-
PARIS	12'16,-	München	1'14,-	WIEN . . .	5' . . .
WIEN	820,-	Wien	5' . . .	PARIS . . .	ab 5'41,-
KONSTANTINOPEL	2'35,-	Budapest	1015,-		
Dreit. wochentlich	930,-	Belgrad	256,-		
PARIS	911,-	Sofia	323,-		
BUKAREST	ab 4' . . .	Konstantinopel	ab 720,-		

### BILLET VERKAUFS-STELLEN :

<b>PARIS</b> 3, Place de l'Opéra	<b>MÜNCHEN</b> Reichardt-Baumgarten-Gebäude, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	<b>WIEN</b> 15, Karntner Ring
<b>BUDAPEST</b> 11, Károlyi utca, Erdőház utca	<b>KONSTANTINOPEL</b> 17, Grande Rue de Pera	<b>LONDON</b> 122, Pall Mall, W. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
<b>BRUXELLES</b> Midi de Bruxelles	<b>BERLIN</b> 19, Unter den Linden	

# Belgium as an economic world power




**Etablissement Cockerill, Seraing (Belgique)**  
Atelier des Locomotives

J. F. H. 627 — Reproduction interdite.

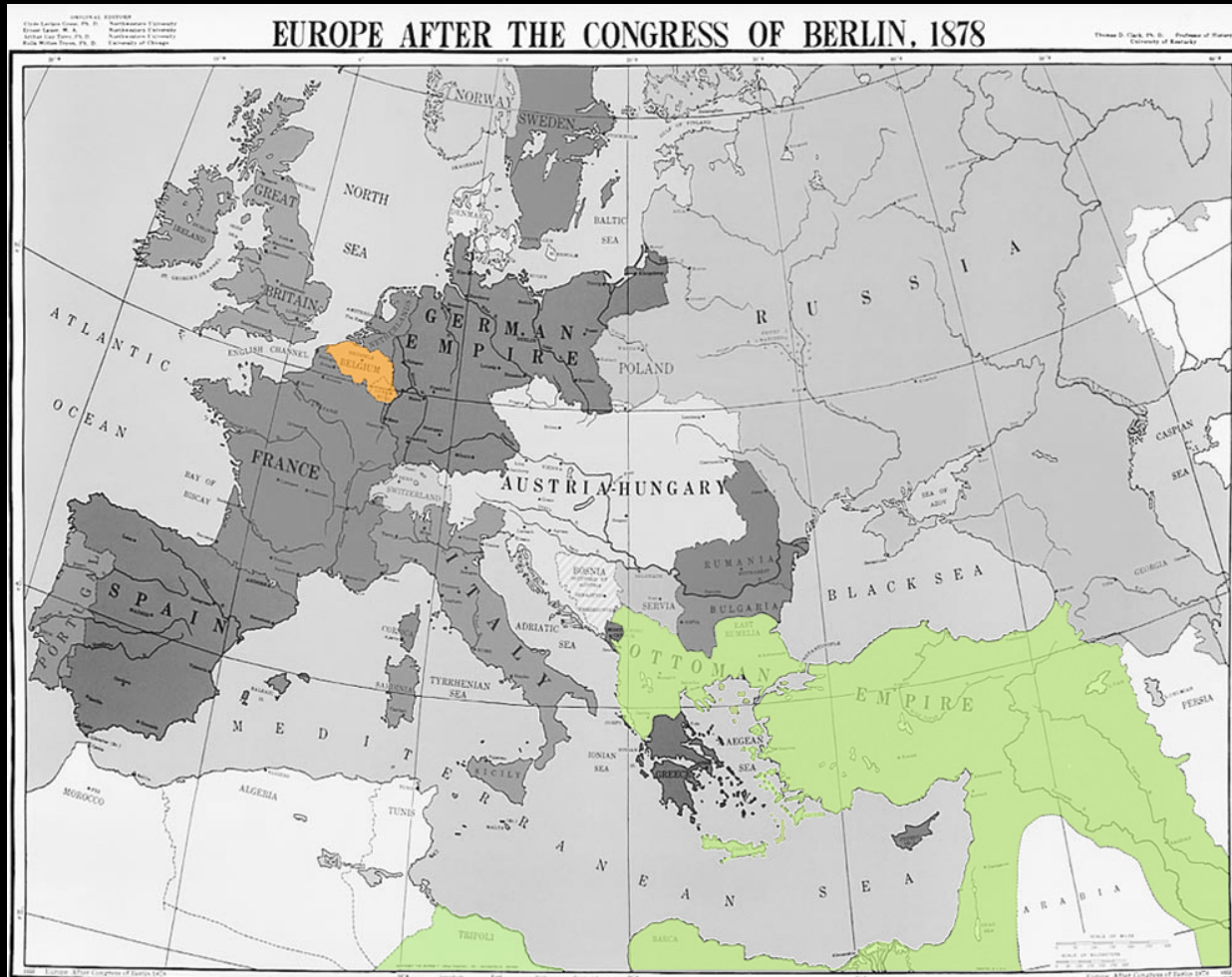


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## **Conclusions**

# 1. Western-Ottoman Relations in Historical Writing



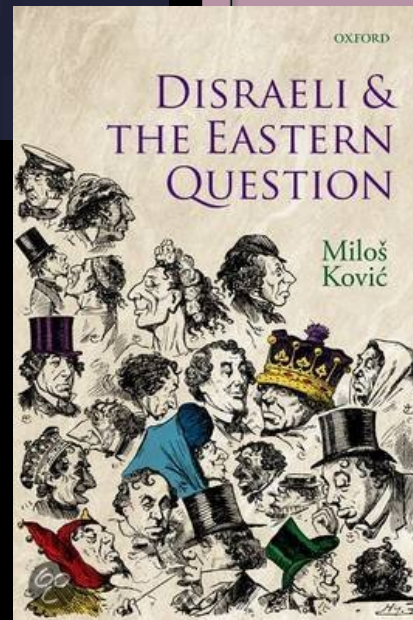
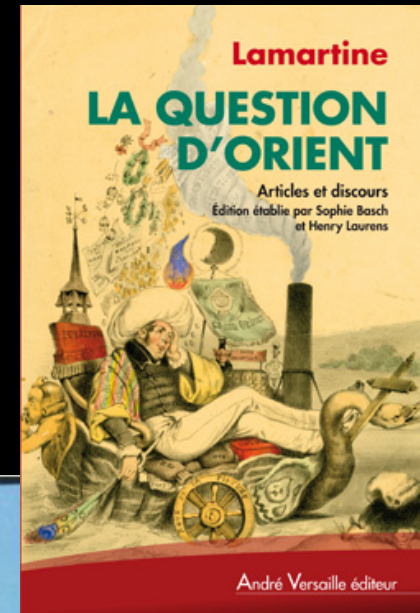
# The Eastern Question, 1774-1923

by M. S. Anderson

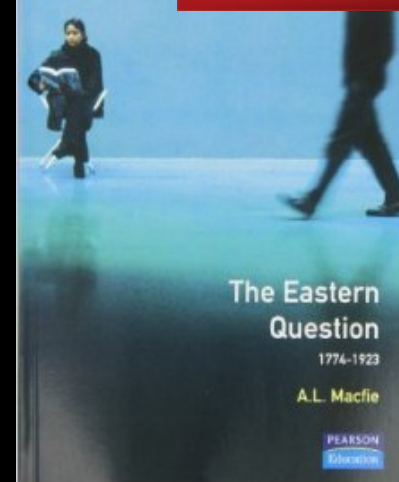
St. Martin

Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht:  
Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage  
1871-1914 (German Edition)

Schollgen, Gregor



not the actual book cover






**The Ottoman Empire as "Sick Man" surrounded by the concerned Great Powers.**

Etching by Félicien Rops in the Brussels satirical weekly *Uylenspiegel*.

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**“Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre (Herstal).  
Atelier de la fabrication de canons de fusils”, ca. 1900.**

Source:

[http://www.wittert.ulg.ac.be/expo/19e/album/fn\\_atelier.html](http://www.wittert.ulg.ac.be/expo/19e/album/fn_atelier.html)






**Boghos Bey Dadian [Dadyan] (d. 1863)**  
Director of the Imperial ammunitions factory

## 2. The Belgian-Ottoman Nexus and Ways forward in the Scholarship

Aims of the project:

- Economic diplomacy
- ‘Transnational’ perspectives
- State and non-state agents as *social* actors
- ‘Transnational classes’

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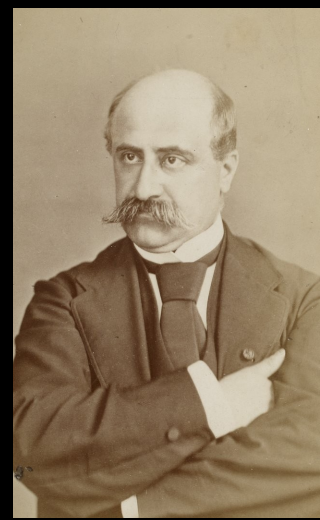
## **Conclusions**

### 3. Collaboration and Interaction between State and Private Actors

State aid to Belgian firms and investment banks:

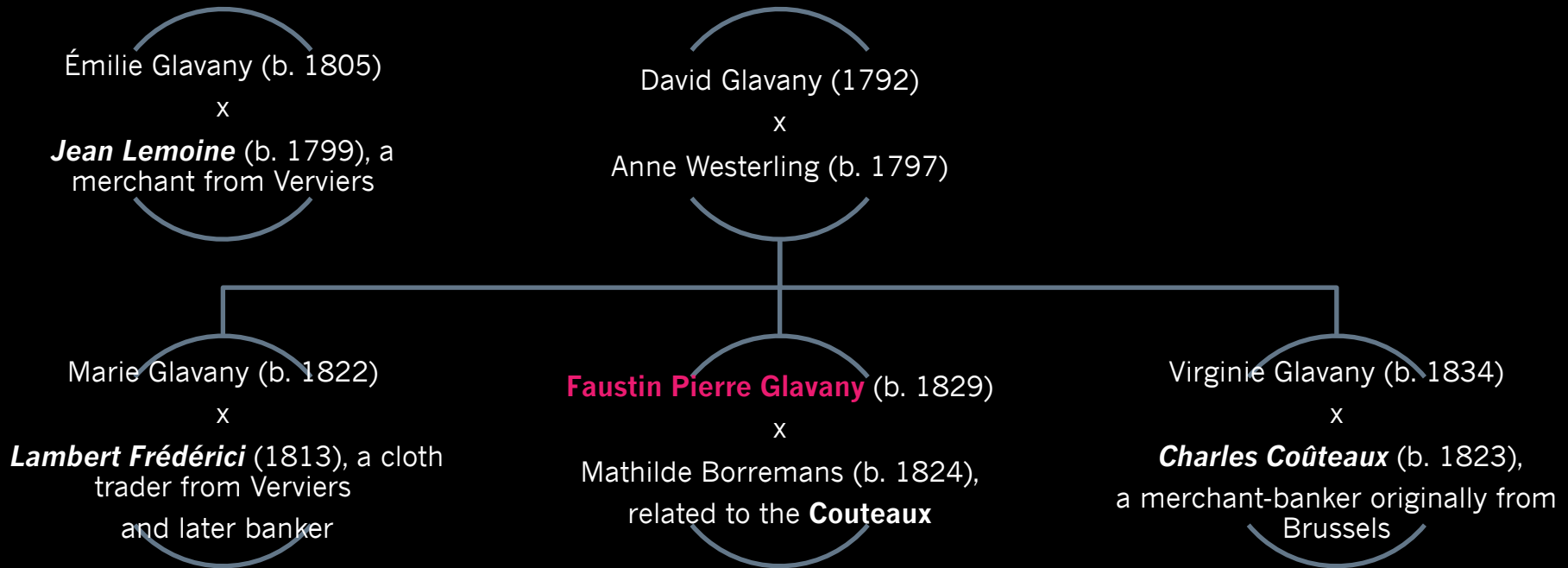
- Networking
- Intelligence

# Diplomats and the spectacle of capital

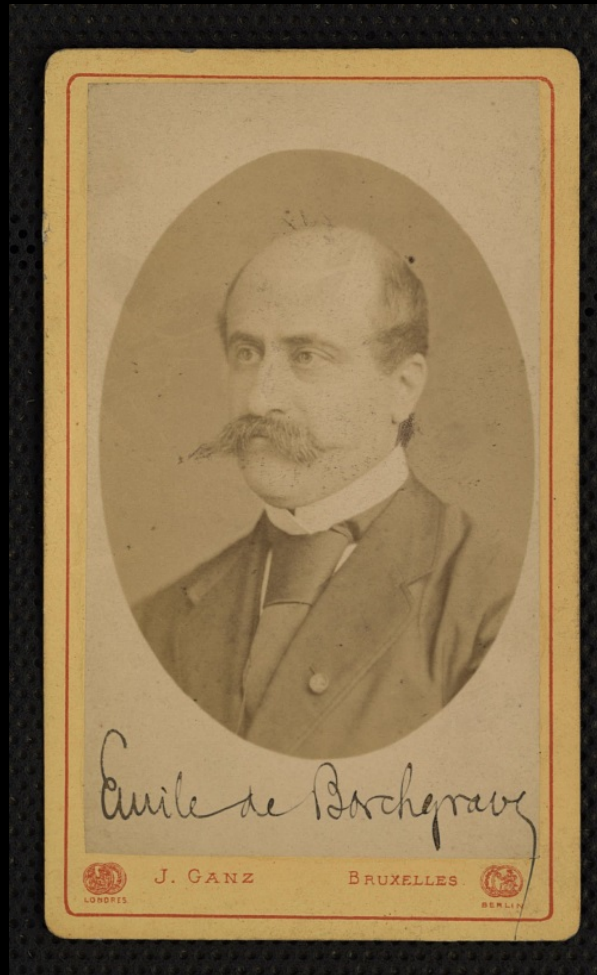


Faustin Glavany  
(d. 1879 in Brussels)

# The Glavany family



# Diplomats and the spectacle of capital



**Émile de Borchgrave**

Belgian minister plenipotentiary in  
Istanbul (1884—1891)





# Diplomats and the spectacle of capital

*“Give him the reception you reserved for my other nephew [Georges] Nagelmackers and I am convinced that he will return enraptured by the Orient and by you.”*

Léopold Orban to de Borchgrave, 6  
January [1891]

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## 4. Amicabilities in Diplomatic Milieus



**Stefanaki Karatodori Efendi** (“Étienne Carathéodory”)

Ottoman minister plenipotentiary in Brussels between 1875 and 1900.



**Paul de Favereau**

Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1896 and 1907.



**Auguste Goffinet**

Private secretary of Leopold II.



**Léon Bérardi**

Editor in chief of the internationally renowned *L'Indépendance belge*.



**A Belgian diplomat and some of his (Ottoman) colleagues, ca. 1880)**

Source: Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels, *Papiers de Borchgrave*.



Rare photographic portrait of **Halil Bey** (later Halil Şerif Pasha) pictured reclining and smoking a nargile, 1860.



Studio portrait of **Jules Greindl** in plain dress, 1869, by Abdullah Frères, Istanbul.



**Sévastie Fotiadi and Léon Verhaeghe, Beijing, 1889.**

Photograph of a Belgian diplomat and his Ottoman Greek spouse, seated in a kiosk of the garden of the Royal Legation in Beijing, with their dog and two unidentified men.

## 5. 'Transnationals' on the Fringes of the Diplomatic World

### **Jules Delecourt-Wincqz**

- “Ingénieur de la Compagnie de recherches de mines Ingénieur-Conseil de la Compagnie Internationale de recherches de mines et d'entreprises de sondage”
- “Conseiller provincial du Brabant”



## 5. 'Transnationals' on the Fringes

*“While delivering this letter... [sic] I stumbled upon an old comrade from Liège University, H[is] E[excellency] Noury Bey, Secretary of H[is] I[mperial] M[ajesty] and high commissioner of the Ottoman government at the Regie des tabacs and the Public Debt [Administration] who had studied in our country when I was a student representative in Liège. Noury Bey immediately had all his old friends from Liège called for. One was now the minister for public works, another director general of the mining committee and the fourth [sic] first chamberlain of the Sultan. I had once housed all four of them in our phalansterian home in Liège.”*

Jules Delecourt-Wincqz to Paul Hymans, 23 February 1920

## 5. 'Transnationals' on the Fringes



**Menâpirzâde Nuri Bey (1844-1906)**  
“Reji Komiseri”

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## 5. 'Belgian' Capital Abroad: Contrasts and Contradictions

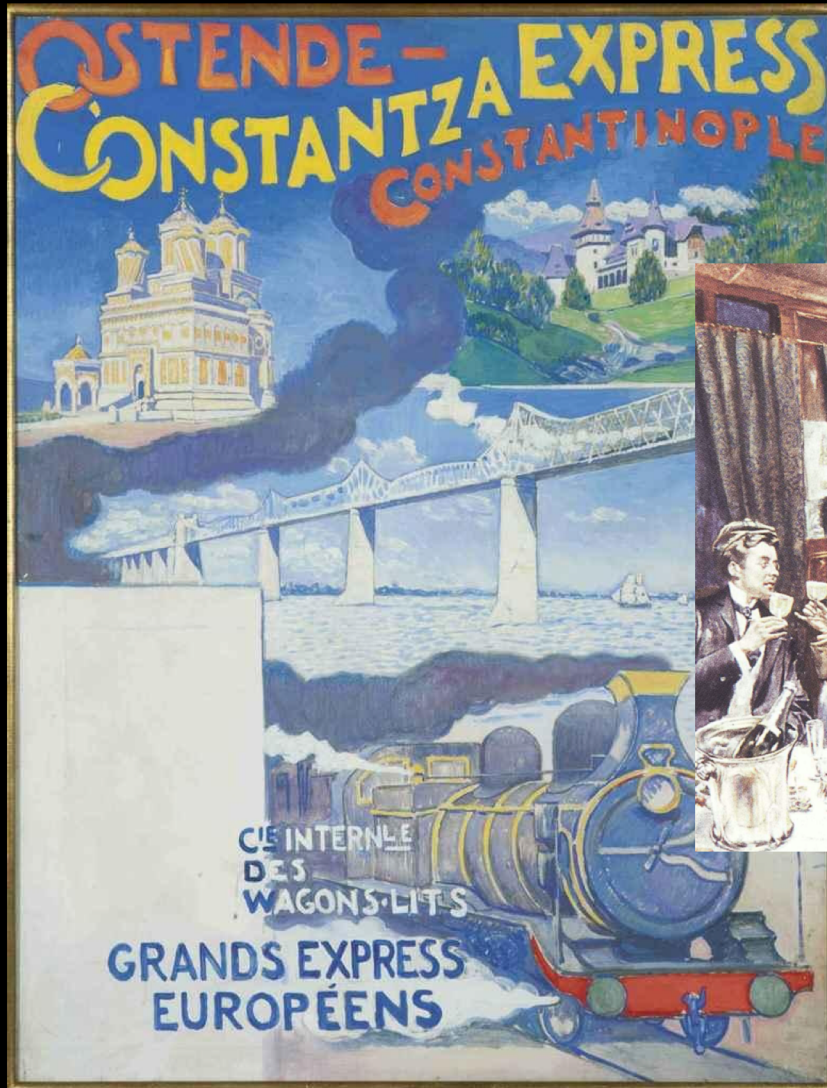
*“While our company is Ottoman, it is nonetheless true that the head office is elsewhere [...]. When operating concessions which deal directly with the public, you must never remind people that we are foreign. In [the] future, [...] do not mention ‘Brussels’, say ‘Administration’ or ‘Board of Directors’.”*

Compagnie Mutuelle des Tramways (Brussels) to its subsidiary Tramways de Salonique.

**Georges Nagelmackers  
(1845-1905)**

Founder of the Co. Internationale  
des Wagons-lits, the 'Orient  
Express' & Pera Palas in Istanbul.





Poster by Belgian painter Théo van Rysselberghe for the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits, 1896.

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## 7. Ottoman 'State Capitalists' (or, High officialdom and Foreign Capital)



اورمان و معادن و زراعت ناظری دولتو سلیم ملحمه پاشا حضرتلری

S. E. Sélim pacha Melhamé

*Ministre de l'agriculture et des mines et forêts  
nouvellement promu Vézir*





Salonika [Selanik] in 1911



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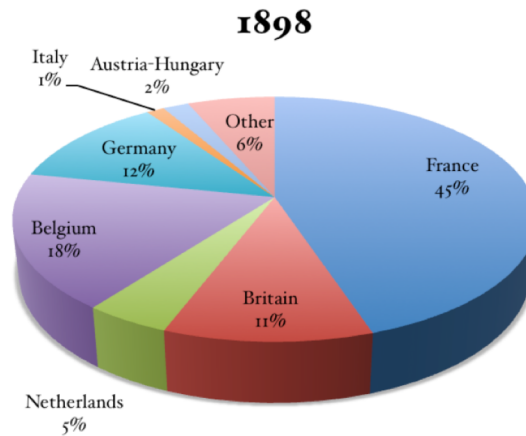
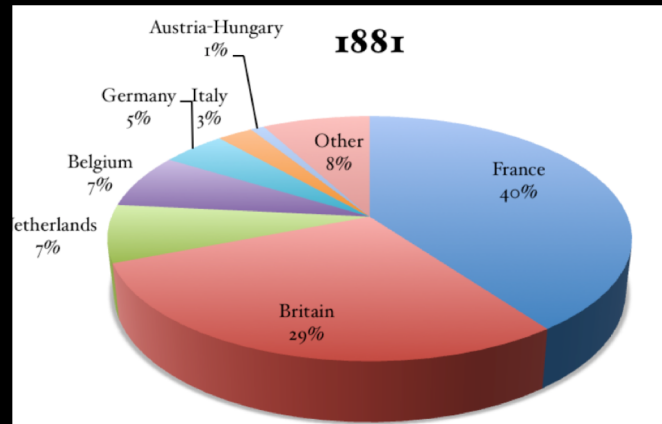
Houssine Alloul  
University of Amsterdam

<b>Zones</b>	<b>Total</b>
Russia	734
Italy, Spain, Portugal	525
Latin-America	441
France, Germany, Netherlands, Luxemburg	391
Central and South Eastern Europe	206
Other European contries	7
Northern America	133
Near and Middle East	95
Far East	56
Maghreb	38
Africa (Congo)	36
Australia	3
Unspecified	246
<i>TOTAL</i>	2911

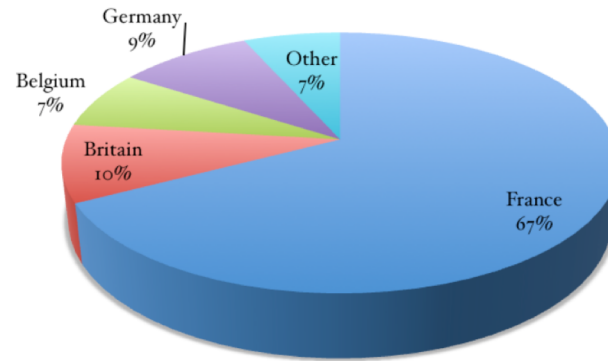
**Figure 4.4** Nominal capital of Belgian public corporations abroad at the time of their foundation (in millions of Belgian francs, round figures), 1874-1913.

Source: Table taken from Dumoulin, "Het ontluiken van de twintigste eeuw," 716.

Note that I have reproduced the geographical categories as they appeared in the original table, with the exception of 'Neighboring countries', which I substituted for the names of the states concerned.



**1904**



**1913**

