Abstract

The Bachelor Thesis deals with the phenomenon of public opinion and its impact on the political situation in the Second French Empire, specifically during the years 1866–1870. The aim of this thesis is to answer the question whether the public opinion played any role in the declaration of the Franco-Prussian War, as it was claimed by the Emperor Napoleon III and also by other members of the government upon surrender. In a broader context, the thesis proposes that it was during the period of the Second Empire when public opinion has become a new political factor. The first two chapters present the changes that took place during the reign of Napoleon III, as well as their impact on the society. They also define the concepts of public and public opinion and describe the system which was used to monitor the state of public opinion during the examined period. The key part of the thesis is the third chapter, which deals with concrete cases in which the public opinion clearly influenced the Emperor and his decisions. Those cases were the introduction of the military reform, the outbreak of the economic crisis, Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish throne and the publication of the Ems dispatch.

Keywords

France, Public Opinion, Impact of Public Opinion on Politics, Napoleon III, Franco-Prussian War