

SEVTAP DEMİRCİ

**BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION
TOWARDS
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
DURING THE TWO CRISES**



**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (1908-1909)
THE BALKAN WARS (1912-1913)**



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sevtap DEMİRCİ

PREFACE 2

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE DURING THE TWO CRISES



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (1908-1909)
THE BALKAN WARS (1912-1913)

CONCLUSION 57

BIBLIOGRAPHY 75

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PREFACE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The purpose of this dissertation has been to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of British public opinion towards Turkey during the First World War. The period 1908-14 was selected for study because it was the basic ground for all subsequent events.

PREFACE 7

INTRODUCTION 11

PART I: THE BOSNIAN CRISIS, 1908-1909 17

- The Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Action Speaks Louder than Words 17
- Reactions to the Crisis. 21
- Talks With Regard to International Conference 25
- The Reasons for British Sympathy 26

PART II: THE BALKAN WARS, 1912-1913 35

- Prelude to the Crisis 35
- The British Position and Public Opinion 39
- Armistice, Negotiations and the London Treaty 45
- The Recovery of Adrianople and British Opinion 50
- The Reasons for the Policy Change 53

CONCLUSION 57

BIBLIOGRAPHY 59

Two problems: the Foreign Office Department also conducted a good score of information for analyzing official opinion and seeing whether there is any discrepancy between the two.

As a major source to opinion studies, newspapers due to the fact that they were read more widely than tracts and magazines at least till the middle of the twentieth century cannot be ignored. The fact is, foreign affairs came to public attention just at the time when newspapers had successfully absorbed all news and all subjects, so the press itself became one of the most important components in the public machinery for foreign affairs. From this point of

Howard, Barry N. *The Frontiers of Turkey: A Diplomatic History 1913-1923*. New York: 1966, p. 19.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

0942 AS 70

PREFACE 7

INTRODUCTION 11

PART I: THE BALKAN CRISIS 1912-1913

The Background of the Balkan Crisis 11

The Balkan League 15

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 19

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 23

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 27

PART II: THE BALKAN CRISIS 1913-1914

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 27

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 31

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 35

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 39

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 43

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 47

The Balkan League and the Balkan Crisis 51

CONCLUSION 57

BIBLIOGRAPHY 63



PREFACE

The purpose of this dissertation has been to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of British public opinion towards Turkey before the First World War. The period 1908-14 was selected for study because it was a time when highly significant and controversial issues put Turkey on the defensive and made it a battle ground for all interested parties.

From two different aspects this period is an interesting subject of study. Firstly, it was a new era in the Empire's long history, in which the Young Turk revolution took place resulting in the restoration of the constitution and brought Abdülhamid's reign to an end. Secondly, this was the period in which Turkish rule in Europe virtually ended. Europe witnessed the desperate attempts of the Young Turks to arrest the further disintegration of the Empire. The attacks of Austria (1908), Italy (1911) and finally the Balkan States (1912-3) on Turkey's territorial integrity were the major difficulties faced by the new constitutional regime.

In this study an attempt has been made to examine British public opinion during the two prominent international crises: Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908-9) and the Balkan Wars (1912-3). The reason why these two crises have been chosen for the study lies in the fact that the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the "first definite important step leading to the partition of Turkey"¹ and the last step was the Balkan Wars which finally led to the virtual disappearance of Turkish rule in Europe.

Public opinion has been interpreted through the editorials, articles and news in the press, and the writings of people who took a close interest in Turkey and Balkan affairs. Thus the study is primarily based on the press, and two periodicals; the Foreign Office documents also constitute a good source of information for analysing official opinion and seeing whether there is any divergency between the two.

As a major source in opinion studies, newspapers due to the fact that they were read more widely than books and magazines at least till the middle of the twentieth century cannot be ignored. The fact is, foreign affairs came to public attention just at the time when newspapers had successfully absorbed all areas and all subjects, so the press itself became one of the most important components in the public audience for foreign affairs. From this point of

¹Howard, Harry N., *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History 1913-1923*. New York, 1966, p. 19.

view, greater press responsiveness to foreign policy developments and problems of foreign affairs, even in the form of specialised inside-page coverage of them, would inherently enlarge the scope of interaction within the governments and its foreign policy public.¹

The press is regarded both as forum for the free exchange of opinion on topics of common interest and as the leader and moulder of opinion on these same topics. As it presents and suggests courses of action to its public within the fields of human behaviour on which it reports, so the news is considered more or less as the material of which opinions are formed. These opinions operate within the limits of the term 'the general will',² and from that point we come to a new term 'public opinion'. As Qualter pointed out "public opinion is one of those words which everyone understands clearly and uses freely until an attempt is made to define it or to set its limits".³ It is a concept that has been defined⁴ in many ways by various writers each seeking to highlight one or more aspects of it. The literature on discovering and measuring public opinion is extensive since it became increasingly important in politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In its simplest term public opinion is what the general populace thinks at a given time. Since public opinion is supposed to be the prime mover in democracies it is considered that: "what grammar is to language, public opinion is to politics."⁵ To show the importance of public opinion it might be useful to give a simple and striking saying: "You can fool everybody sometime, you can fool somebody every time but you cannot fool everybody every time."⁶

Several theories in political science led to the prediction of a match between a democratic government's action and public opinion. Although there is general agreement about the role public opinion probably plays, it is not our purpose to analyse whether public opinion shapes policy, that is, whether the policy maker is guided by public sentiment or vice-versa.

¹Cohen, Bernard C., *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton, 1963, p. 262.

²Dafoe, John W., "Public Opinion as a Factor in Government" *Public Opinion and World Politics*. (Ed.) Quincy, Wright", Chicago, 1933, p. 8.

³Qualter, Terence H., *Opinion Control in the Democracies*. London, 1985, p. 1.

⁴The Dictionary of Political Science defines public opinion "the formed predominant attitude of the (large) group concerned with a given issue". *Dictionary of Political Science*. ed. by Dunner, Joseph, London, 1964, p.435.

For various definitions of public opinion see; Qualter, *Opinion Control in the Democracies*, pp. 1-29.

⁵Paul, S. N., *Public Opinion and British Rule*. Delhi, 1979. p. xiii

⁶Stern-Rubarth, Edgar, "The Holly Mission of Journalism", *Public Opinion and World Politics*. Wright, p. 151.

The evolution of British newspapers into a direct means of reaching the mass of the people really only got under way in the decades between 1880 and 1900.¹ Within the area we are concerned with the publicity given to politics and foreign affairs was increased tremendously and "the metropolitan papers" because of their superior resources, dominated the publication of news and opinion on foreign affairs.² Thus the press played an important role in influencing public opinion. As a most influential mechanism constituting a valuable channel of communication, it is especially important when we take into account the fact that the time in which the techniques of transport and the media of mass-communication facilities were limited and that the British read more newspapers than any other people on earth. In this sense the press should be seen as a significant part of the public audience for foreign policy. Three major newspapers and two journals have been examined in this work: two serious newspapers, *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* and a popular one, *The Daily Mail*. Naturally serious newspapers devote more space, both news and editorials to domestic and foreign politics, because one of their main aims is to present a coherent and consecutive commentary on the major events of the world.

The Times (1785-), independent, conservative³. As a serious London newspaper it influenced public opinion more through its editorials than through its news column. Because of its completeness and authority *The Times'* foreign news service was held in higher regard than that of any other paper.⁴ By common consent it comes first in the listing of the British Press. It can easily be said that this newspaper has become a British Institution and "the voice of *The Times* and that of the Cabinet are indistinguishable"⁵. And its status is recognized as a national forum to which the leading figures express their views by sending letters.⁶

The Manchester Guardian (1821-), independent, liberal.⁷ In its field it was almost as well known as the *The Times* is in its field. Among provincial papers, *The Manchester Guardian* was "pre-eminent both in respect to its political influence and the ability with which it was edited ... (and) its position in the front rank of British journalism was largely attributable to the character and personality of one man, C. P. Scott, the editor

¹Scarborough, Harold E., "The British Press", *Foreign Affairs*, XXII, April 1934, p. 509.

²Hale, O. James, *Publicity and Diplomacy; With Special Reference to England and Germany, 1890-1914*. New York, 1940, p. 40.

³Butler, David & Gareth, *British Political Facts, 1900-85*. 6th ed., London, 1986, p. 485.

⁴Hale, *Publicity and Diplomacy*, p. 20.

⁵Scarborough, "The British Press", p. 514.

⁶Hale, *Publicity and Diplomacy*, p. 20.

⁷Butler, *British Political Facts*, p. 484.

and the principal owner."¹ Scott's position in the Liberal Party and his connections with key figures together with his conception of journalism made *The Manchester Guardian* more important for its views than for its news.

The Daily Mail (1896-), independent, right-wing, conservative.² It was undoubtedly influential by being a pioneer of its type of journalism. Its politics were largely compressed into slogans and this along with its easily-grasped arguments made it popular among the average lower middle-class reader. The coverage of the news was subordinated to a write up in sensational form.

The Contemporary Review, a liberal monthly journal.

The Quarterly Review, a conservative quarterly journal.

Lastly, it was relevant to use the ample material existing in the "British Documents on the Origins of War" to analyse the interactions between public and official policy. It became obvious from the content analysis that more often than not public opinion was synonymous with the official policy.

¹Hale, *Publicity and Diplomacy*, p. 30.

²Butler, *British Political Facts*, p. 482.

INTRODUCTION

Balkan History can be examined either from the national or international angle. The first method concerns the rise and development of several nations and their relations with each other, and the second consists of their relations with the outside world. According to this second method each unit becomes a mere pawn in the vast diplomatic game which has come to be described as the Eastern Question. Although the Eastern Question was first raised in the 19th century it goes back many centuries;¹ and naturally, the Balkans have always been a formidable and vital part of it. The Balkans were historically always an unstable area of friction and conquest, thus posing two basic questions: Why so much internal friction and fragmentation and why such a continuous history of foreign occupation? The answers lie in the complex interplay of geography and history, a situation in which the Turkish Empire played a key role because of its long occupation of the Balkans from the 14th century into the first decades of the twentieth. In this period Balkan nationalism was born; in it the present Balkan states grew into their present territories and developed their present unfulfilled territorial ambitions.²

Not only the Balkan nations but also the Great Powers took an interest in the Balkans depending on their own interests. In the middle of the 19th century the question was whether Turkey will be partitioned and how? Since the Congress of Berlin a new idea slowly ripened, an idea which no one did more to encourage than Gladstone, and which may be summed up in the phrase, "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples"³. In the words of M. René Pinon: For Russia and even Austria-Hungary the Ottoman Empire was an obstacle to a march towards the Aegean or the Persian Gulf. In the hands of England it was a barrier erected between the route to India and the Muscovite. For Germany it is the necessary ally, the collaborator without whom she could neither acquire nor hold the common outlets of the East and the routes of Asia.⁴

¹"In the Middle ages it took the form of Crusades: and both then and later, its very essence has consisted in the perennial rivalry between Empire and Asia, between the Western and Eastern outlook on life." Seton-Watson, R.W., *Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*. London, 1917, pp. 86-7.

²Kostanic, Huey L., "The Geopolitics of the Balkans" *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the 18th Century*. Jelavich, Charles & Barbara (eds). Los Angeles, 1963, pp. 1-2.

³Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p.126.

⁴*Ibid.*, p.127.

Unable to defend herself against the European States, the Ottoman Empire was forced to adopt a policy of balancing the influence of the Great Powers by playing off one against the other. The success of Abdulhamid's policy caused delay in the partition process. In the 19th century this was to prove a losing battle. The Empire was compelled to grant concession after concession both commercial and political to Europe. During the years of the Balkan Crisis, the Ottoman Empire was the main issue occupying many columns in newspapers and relevant journals. The political, strategic, and economic importance of the Empire was a great temptation for the Great Powers to favour its dissolution and to get as much of it as possible. To secure this, reforms were used as a political weapon. This view is confirmed by Sir Edward Grey: "We shall do all in our power to encourage them as long as they do well and we shall not embarrass them by demands of our own; just as we used our influence when the Turkish Government was bad, to press reforms from outside, so now if reforms are being developed from inside we shall use all our influence to prevent their being interfered with from outside"¹

In Dillon's words, "Turkey has for generations been the powder magazine of Europe," and the Balkan Peninsula has been one of the major areas in which diplomatic efforts as well as military forces on the part of the Great Powers have been focused. He puts the position of Turkey and her relations with the Powers as follows "As Turkey contains such important strategic points as the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, the route to India, it is natural that the Powers interested in these should have regarded the sufferings of Turkish Christians as an excellent pretext for interfering in the affairs of the Empire or fostering connivance at massacres for concessions of a commercial or economic nature. But one noteworthy trait has marked the policy of European Powers towards Turkey from the very outset, its self-contradictory character. On the one hand, they one and all proclaim the doctrine of Turkey's integrity and independence; while, on the other hand they intervene continually, and at times even annex or amputate a province. But whatever else they did, they have not ceased to regard the existence of the Ottoman Empire as an essential condition of the balance of European Power ever since the French King, Francis I., brought Turkey into the life of Europe and it stil is this today."²

In another article Dillon touches upon the same topic and proposes not to press the fact too rigorously and points out: "But one cannot ignore the fact that the Foreign Policy of certain Powers, or, at any rate, that branch of

¹Grey to Lowther, August 23, 1908, 208. in: *British Documents on the Origins of the War (BD), 1898-1914., V, the Near East: the Macedonian Problem and the Annexation of Bosnia 1903-9.* Gooch, G.P., & Temperley, Harold (eds.), London, 1928.

²Dillon, E.J., "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, Sep.1908, vol. 94, p. 382.

it which deals with the Near East, was based entirely on the assumption that the dissolution of Turkey was nigh, and that a certain minimal share of the spoils when the time came for parcelling them out, would be allotted as a fair meed for the line of action which they had followed."¹

Not only the Great Powers' policy but also various nationalities and religious differences among these nationalities were big threat to the unity of the Empire and this became a danger as soon as these factors had time to develop. The Armenians in Eastern Anatolia and the Christians in Macedonia, by causing unrest in the eastern part and the Balkan provinces of the Empire, provided a marvellous opportunity to the Powers to accelerate the dissolution process: Macedonia was not only the cockpit of competing Balkan nationalities, it had been for years a favourite arena for the international rivalries of the Great European Powers.²

With regard to the internal dynamics of the Empire, the years 1900-1918 proved to be a new era in Ottoman history, the era in which the Young Turk revolution took place (July 23, 1908), resulting in the introduction of a Constitution and bringing to an end the long years of Abdulhamid's regime. Few single events in the whole history of the Near Eastern Question have caused a greater sensation or evoked more general or generous enthusiasm than the Turkish Revolution of 1908.³ The Young Turks believed in regeneration of the Empire through the adoption of a parliamentary mechanism and the modernisation of the army. The movement was dedicated to reforming the ramshackle Ottoman administration before the Empire collapsed and was divided among the Great Powers. In this period, which has been called the second constitutional period, the gates of the Ottoman Empire which for centuries had remained as an iron curtain against the Western World were now genuinely opened wide to Europe.⁴

The Constitution had been advertised so much as a general panacea⁵ that everyone assumed the recall of the Parliament would immediately solve all the problems that had crept in during the era of autocracy, including the terrorism of the minority national groups and their demands for autonomy and

¹Dillon, E.J., "The Reforming Turk" *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 210, January, 1909, p. 243.

²Marriot, J.A.R. *The Eastern Question: A Historical Study in European Diplomacy*. Oxford, 1918, p. 413

³Ibid., p. 433.

⁴Tunaya, T.Z., *Hürriyetin İlanı, İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasi Hayatına Bakış*. İstanbul, 1959, p. 71.

⁵The words, "Constitution", "Liberty", "Equality" mean to the ignorant mass something good though they could not say what; to same they signify general licence. The workmen on a newspaper few days ago demanded a large increase of wages. "But, why?" asked the owner. "Because there is a Constitution". Pears, Edwin, "The Turkish Revolution" in *The Contemporary Review*, September 1908, vol. 94, p. 298.

separation from the Empire.¹ Thus the year 1908 marked the opening of a new phase of development for the political communities of Europe which was to drag on till the First World War.²

The Constitution and the new Regime in Turkey were warmly welcomed in Britain and secured the support and the sympathy of both the public and the Government. Even more pleasing from the British point of view was the fact that the Young Turks turned to Britain for advice and assistance, and the Germans, committed as they had been to the Sultan, lost their influence at Constantinople.³ Both Hardinge and Grey hoped to see a restoration of the British position in Turkey. Soon after many articles in favour of Turkey appeared in newspapers and leading political journals. The Foreign Office took the same line as the public and applauded the Constitutional regime. To quote Sir Gerard Lowther and Sir Edward Grey:

The movement received the applause of all parties and sympathetic assurances were given on all sides to the Young Turks and the new Government here. Macedonian reform was no longer to be pressed upon an unwilling Turkish Government; that reform it was hoped would come from within. The general argument was to the effect that sympathy has always been existed between the people of Great Britain and the population of Turkey and that our grievances were against the Turkish Government only.⁴

As regards Turkey herself, our course is clear: We must be ready to help the better elements to wait upon events, and give sympathy and encouragement when required to the reform movement.⁵

But Grey had a dilemma: although he was pleased with the new regime in Turkey after having experienced all the troublesome years of the Abdulhamid regime, he was nevertheless afraid of the possibility of similar movements arising in India and Egypt "If Turkey really establishes a Constitution and keeps it on its feet, and becomes strong herself, the consequences will reach further than any of us can yet foresee. The effect in

¹ Shaw, J. Stanford & Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Vol II: *Reform Revolution and Republic; The Rise of Modern Turkey*. Cambridge, 1977, p. 273.

²The early decades of the 19th century saw the upsurge of nationalist movements in the Balkans aimed at wresting eventual independence from the Ottoman Empire or at gaining greater ethnic recognition with attendant political religious and economic privileges from the Sublime Porte. Since these objectives were both raised upon ethnic distinction, intensified effort was focused upon criteria for ethnic identification and upon geographic distribution of ethnic groups in the Balkans; associated with this was the sharpened interest of the rest of Europe in the "Eastern Question". See Kostanic, "The Geopolitics of the Balkans" *The Balkans in Transition*, p. 11.

³Lowe, C.J., & Dockrill, M.L., *The Mirage of Power; British Foreign Policy 1902-14*. Vol I, London, 1972, p. 81.

⁴Lowther, Extract from annual report for Turkey for the year 1908, February 17, 1909, *BD*, V, 198.

⁵Grey to Lowther, July 31, 1908, *BD*, V, 204.

Egypt will be tremendous, and will make itself felt in India ... If Turkey now establishes a parliament and improves her Government the demand for a Constitution in Egypt will gain great force, and our power of resisting the demand will be very much diminished. If when there is a Turkish Constitution in good working order and things are going well in Turkey, we are engaged in suppressing by force and shooting a rising in Egypt of people who demand a Constitution too, the position will be very awkward".¹

For some writers the Young Turk policy of unifying all the heterogeneous elements was a mistake. In their analysis "The old Turkey always maintained towards the rival nationalities, of which the population of the Empire is made up, the attitude of a passive onlooker. Their internecine struggle did not seem to concern it directly ... Young Turkey has inaugurated a new policy-a policy of unification of all the heterogeneous elements into one people. What nature has divided, man cannot unite."² The Young Turks were criticised "They read too much political theory and not enough history."³ As Bülent Tanör rightly points out in his book, the Young Turks had failed to secure the unity of the Empire's different subjects; "It was only Turks who greeted the idea of Ottomanism with the greatest energy; the foreign subjects however did not give up their national demands; moreover, due to the proclamation of the constitution, they took advantage of the liberal atmosphere and accelerated their activities in this matter."⁴

But not long after the Revolution foreign complications began to appear one after the other. The prospect of democracy in the Empire was destroyed by the greed of the Powers and the Empire's neighbours who proved to be as hungry for democratic, constitutional Young Turk territory as they had been for that of the despotic Abdulhamid.⁵ Thus, in the period 1900-14 two particularly serious crises which involved Turkey and the European Great Powers occurred: the first of these was the prolonged crisis following the annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina (Bosna Hersek) by the Habsburg Empire in 1908 and the second was the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in 1912 following the Italo-Turkish war of 1911 which will be examined in following chapters.

¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

² Abbot, G. F., "The Near-Eastern Crisis", *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 210, April 1909, p. 688.

³ Cunningham, Allan., *The Wrong Horse?, A Study of Anglo-Turkish Relations Before the First World War*. St Antony's Papers no. 17, Oxford, 1965, p. 64.

⁴ Tanör, Bülent, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Anayasal Gelişmeler*. İstanbul, 1982, p. 118.

⁵ See Shaw Stanford & Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, p. 276.

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THE BOSNIAN CRISIS, 1908-1909

THE ANNEXATION OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:

Action Speaks Louder Than Words:

Bosnia-Herzegovina, situated in the west of the Balkan peninsula, played an important part in the foreign policy of the Great Powers due to its political, ethnic, economic, and strategic roles. The occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina which came into effect with the Berlin Treaty¹ in 1878 caused a full blown international crisis when it was annexed by Austria in 1908. The Habsburg Monarchy saw possession of the control of Bosnia-Herzegovina as absolutely essential: not only did the control of the provinces provide a military strategic hinterland to Dalmatia, but the spread of Serbian influence could be better curbed. The Monarchy had also devoted considerable attention to the area and had contributed to its material prosperity.²

But, politically there was great discontent under the surface, especially among the Serbs.³ The situation was not at all different for the Muslim population: the links of the chain binding Bosnia to her suzerain (the Ottoman Empire) were rusty but unbroken, and a major part of the population had close ties with Constantinople and with Islam. Just before the annexation, the situation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was discussed in a Belgrade journal, "Politika", pointing out how much the public opinion of Europe was against Austrian rule and that Austria would finally be obliged to bestow some kind

¹In accordance with the Berlin Treaty — a revision of San Stephano that came into existence after the Turco-Russian war of 1878 — which the Ottomans were forced to sign, Bosnia-Herzegovina, though under Ottoman sovereignty would be occupied by Austrian troops and administered by Austrian civil servants for an indeterminate time, in keeping with regulations to be drawn up in subsequent negotiations between the powers.

²Jelavich, Charles & Barbara, *A History of East Central Europe; Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920*. Washington, 1977, p. 215.

³Austrian rule had never been popular in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serb nationalists were bitterly resentful of the apparent riveting of the Habsburg yoke on their kinsmen across the frontier and the blow this represented to hopes for a great South Slav state. "Here", reported Forgach, the Austrian minister at Belgrade, on 3 April 1909, "all think of revenge which is only to be carried out with the help of the Russians. See; Anderson, M.S., *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*. New York, 1966, p. 286.

Dr. Dillon, when he took a trip through the occupied provinces met the Serbian Orthodox Archbishop of Serajevo who sang the praises of the Austrians. But the Bishop wanted to see him alone and despite all the efforts of Austrian official, Mr. Dillon secretly laid his plans and met the Bishop in the bazaar. "What I wanted to say to you," The Bishop remarked "is this. Pay no attention to what I told you about the Austrians yesterday. Politically they crush us. We yearn to be with our own people. Please tell this to Mr. Gladstone, and give him my kind regards. Ask him to help us." Dillon, "The Near Eastern Crisis", *The Contemporary Review*, Nov. 1908, vol. 94, p. 527.



of autonomy on the nationalities of the occupied provinces who were still formally subjects of the Sultan. The journal complained: "During the thirty years occupation Austria has accomplished nothing for the political training and development of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that[sic] the conditions of political life here today are no better than in Turkey"¹

It was made clear in another Belgrade publication that in all Europe only one region is still governed arbitrarily "by an enlightened bureaucracy", Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that there is no justification for keeping these populations in leading strings. In Bosnia, too, the same complaints were heard, and a desire had been expressed by some of the prominent citizens to see their country reannexed to the Ottoman Empire.²

The outbreak of the Young Turk Revolution in July 1908 caused both Austria-Hungary and Russia to review their immediate needs in the Balkans. The European, as distinct from merely Ottoman or Near Eastern, significance of the Turkish Revolution lay in the opportunity it seemed to provide for Austria-Hungary to strengthen her position in the Balkans by annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina. Throughout the decade before 1914 Austrian policy was the most dangerous element in the whole tangle of Balkan politics.³

With continuing weakness and progressive decline the Empire could collapse any moment; therefore: while there was still time, Austria had to put her plan into action. The Foreign Ministers of Austria and Russia met at Buchlau in September, 1908, and agreed that Austria would annex Bosnia-Herzegovina in return for an undertaking that she would not oppose a change in the Straits regulations.⁴ That meeting led to bitter controversy⁵ and a serious crisis later on. On October 5th 1908, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, September, 1908, vol. 94, p. 383.

²*Ibid.*, 384.

³Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p.278.

⁴Although no official record was kept of the Buchlau meeting it is reasonable to assume that this was the main purpose of the meeting. "All that is known is ... that the Russian Government had, in the person of M. Isvolsky, intimated their 'concurrence' with the annexation, and this Embassy has received confidential but unimpeachable information that Baron d'Aehrenthal wrote to M. Isvolsky that 'in consequence of a conversation at Buchlau, and in consequence of his agreement,' Austria-Hungary was about to announce her intention to annex the two provinces .

... He had assumed, and had perhaps some historical justification for assuming that if he could procure untrammelled egress for her ships of war through the Straits he would have accomplished an act which would have been universally applauded.

... M. Isvolsky, on the other hand, maintained that the conversation was in substance an academical one, affecting an eventuality which might occur in the distant future, and that he had given Baron d' Aehrenthal clearly to understand that it was a question of general European interest. He further intimated that he did not express his concurrence with the project, but had merely stated Russia would not consider it as a *casus belli* and would not oppose it." "The Buchlau Interview" Extract from Annual Report for Russia for the Year 1908, *BD*, Vol. V, 270.

⁵Because they did not set an exact date for annexation of the two provinces ... Isvolsky assumed that nothing would be done immediately; he therefore began a leisurely tour of European capitals in order to obtain the consent of the Powers to changes in the Straits regulations. Meanwhile Aehrenthal was making the necessary arrangements for the annexation. Stavrianos, L.S., *The Balkans, 1815-1914*. New York, 1963, p. 109.

The Austrians were convinced that this was the right thing to do on the ground that the new regime was having problems trying to stand on its own feet and that there was little it could do to oppose it. After talking with Isvolsky "Baron d'Aehrenthal knew that there was such utter disorganisation in the Turkish administration and Army that resistance would be out of the question"¹

Baron d'Aehrenthal was convinced that the Porte might argue, bargain, protest but not go to war, because everyone who has common sense agreed what a blow a war would be to the Constitution. In Aehrenthal's opinion, Austria had done what she had to do; after all these provinces were already lost to the Ottoman Empire. Count Mensdorff justified the action by saying that, "Austria had been obliged to take over Bosnia-Herzegovina, as otherwise Bosnia-Herzegovina would have demanded to send representatives to the Turkish Parliament ... " and "Austria had given back the Sandjak which Turkey never expected to recover. Turkey had really not lost anything"². Grey's answer to this was reflected in his criticism: "One partner had done something without consulting the other partner about it, because he knew that the other partner would object to it; then, having done it, the first partner turned to the other and said, "Please do not mind after all."³

In the London convention of 1871 Austria had herself declared that no action could be taken without the consent of all the signatories. The alteration she made was avowedly for her own advantage alone and by disregarding the sanctity of treaties she put European peace in jeopardy. Soon after this action the attitude of the public towards the annexation was reflected in the British Press.

There is evidence that the war spirit is rising in Turkey; it would be astonishing if [sic] were not. If the pack of hungry claimants is allowed to grow indefinitely and Europe is to do nothing except tacitly cover them with her mantle, it will become a hard task for even the most cool-headed of the Young Turks to believe that the honour and the interest of their country are safe in the hands of the powers.⁴

It was not surprising therefore to see the sharp antagonism that marked relations between Britain and Austria in the months following the annexation. The British Government and Press were accused of provoking trouble in Turkey and the Balkans by the Viennese press; and the outcome of this was to arouse anti-British feelings in Vienna.

¹Bertie to Grey, October 4, 1908, *BD*, V, 293.

²Grey to Goschen, October 26, 1908, *BD*, V, 407.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*The Manchester Guardian*, Leading Article (L.A.) "The Near East" October 9, 1908, p. 6.

The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the beginning of October had the effect of striking what might well have proved to be a deadly blow at the party of reform in Turkey. It was the old story of an ambitious Christian Power, fearing lest a reformed Turkey might become a strong Turkey, deliberately obstructing her path of progress.¹ The actions of Austria and Bulgaria did immense harm to the Young Turk movement; its leaders had come to power determined to save the Empire, but within less than three months they had lost important European territories.

There could be no shadow of a doubt that the annexation was a product of cooperation between Austria and Bulgaria. Shortly after the proclamation of Bulgarian independence² came the annexation. It was clear that the whole affair was a preconcerted arrangement between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. The action of these states put the Young Turks in a perilous dilemma as Dr. Dillon accurately noted: "If they acquiesced in the breach of the treaty obligations and did nothing to enforce respect for them, they laid themselves open to a charge of unpatriotic inaction. On the other hand, if they went to war with Bulgaria they would probably be defeated at first, because they had disbanded their best men and had no means of mobilising as quickly as Bulgaria, and this would have been even worse than blameworthy indifference".³

Turkey did not have much power to resist; there was no army available for a campaign, no fleet and worst of all, no money; she was passing through a crisis and any kind of armed conflict with any Power might have proved fatal for the new regime. Cornered in this way there was not much she could do.

The annexation was followed by the Bulgarian declaration of independence and by Greece taking advantage of the Great Powers' evacuation of Crete in order to annex it. In all these cases Ottoman protests to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, who were supposedly bound to guarantee its provision, met with no response, and the Porte was finally compelled to solve the crisis on its own. On the other hand, the Austrian and Bulgarian actions had caused an international crisis and reopened the Eastern Question.⁴

¹Knight, E.F., *The Awakening of Turkey, A History of the Turkish Revolution*. London, 1909, 261.

²By the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the Big Bulgaria envisioned by Russia at San Stefano was broken into three parts: autonomous Bulgaria extending from Danube to the Balkan mountains remained under Ottoman suzerainty with a Christian prince and administrators, but paying annual tribute to the Sultan. The remaining portions of Bulgaria were divided into two sections. The area called Eastern Rumelia remained under the Sultan's rule with direct Ottoman political and military control but a special administrative system. The third area was Macedonia which returned to direct Ottoman rule with promise for reforms.

³Dillon, "The Near Eastern Crisis", *The Contemporary Review*, November 1908, vol. 94, p. 515.

⁴See: Jelavich, *A History of East Central Europe*, p. 215.

Thus, the Powers' involvement certainly heightened the tension and finally resulted in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

REACTIONS TO THE CRISIS

The Turkish Government received the Austro-Hungarian note with lively protests declaring that they could not recognise the annexation and calling attention to the fact that according to the Austrian declaration of 1878, the occupation was to be considered provisional.

Although Germany, having regard to the valued relationship with her ally, was determined to stand by Austria-Hungary, she had to take into account her own very important material interest in Turkey. The attitude of the Italians was less clear-cut. Despite the fact that Tittoni, the Italian Foreign Minister, was in favour of the view that no change in the status-quo should be made by Austria without a previous understanding with Germany, Italy and Russia, he abandoned the idea of opposing the annexation provided that Austria would not interfere in Italian interests in Albania and Montenegro, and so he refused publicly to condemn the action.¹

As far as Russia was concerned the annexation caused great indignation with regard to her Slavonic interests. Although Austria had claimed that she had the consent of Russia in return for supporting the modification of the Straits Settlement in favour of Russia, this was later denied by the Russians, and Charykov called it "exaggeration". The stormy popular reaction against the sacrifice of Slav territory to the Habsburg once more came to the surface when Isvolsky's report was received in St Petersburg. Stolypin, the Prime Minister, opposed Isvolsky's policy by saying "Russia should not give her consent to the annexation of a Slavonic land by a German state whatever political advantages this might bring to Russia."²

The most violent reaction to the annexation came from Serbs who regarded Bosnia-Herzegovina as their irredenta. By losing access to the Adriatic, the Serbian economy would also be hurt. So long as the provinces were still under the sovereignty of the weak Ottoman Empire, there was hope

¹But this situation put him in a dilemma. Because public opinion in Italy was greatly excited by the annexation and if he admitted that he had known of the annexation in advance he would be held privy to the plot; if he had not known it then he could be charged with incompetence. To escape from this dilemma he eagerly espoused the suggestion of a conference declaring it to be the only solution. See: Schmitt, Bernadotte E., *The Annexation of Bosnia 1908-9*. Cambridge, 1937, p. 44.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.



that someday they would join Serbia. As an integral part of the Dual Monarchy they now seemed lost.¹

The Austrian action was most unwelcome to the British Government and the public because the Young Turks had completely changed the picture which was predominant in the Abdulhamid era. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this attitude. But it was confirmed by British interests as well as emotions. British policy can be best summed up in Heller's words: "The uniqueness of Britain's policy towards the Ottoman Empire does not lie solely in the gradual deterioration of relations, which is not an infrequent diplomatic occurrence. The significant factor was the bifurcated nature of Britain's aims. Britain advocated that the Ottoman Empire be reformed from within, a clear case of foreign intervention in another country's internal affairs; simultaneously however she claimed to defend its independence and integrity"².

On this particular crisis, public opinion was in agreement with the Government's policy. At the beginning public opinion reflected in the Press, bearing in mind Turkey's Islamic character, seemed rather sceptical about new developments, and the possibility of a constitutional Government in an Islamic state did not seem very likely. But it was at the same time sympathetic towards the Constitutional regime. This judgement can easily be seen in leading articles in *The Times*:

... Sir E. Grey rightly told the House of Commons on Monday that it was too soon to pronounce a definite and considered opinion. We venture to say that nowhere is the new movement already regarded with deeper sympathy or warmer approval than in England. If English public opinion has been slow to express herself the reason is that the revolution of the Turkish system has been so swift, so overwhelming and so unexpected that its earlier symptoms were not fully realised³ ... :

.... The only possible policy for the Powers at this juncture is that of watchful and benevolent non-intervention every nation in Europe will join in acclaiming the Young Turks if they really help forward the regeneration, but they must not expect too much enthusiasm among the onlookers

.... They have great and unprecedented opportunity and judgement must be suspended until we see what use they make of it.....

The Young Turks have many advantages not possessed by the Turkish liberals of thirty years ago. Their future rests largely with themselves; But they have still to show that they deserve the confidence of Europe ...⁴

¹Jelavich, *A History of East Central Europe*. p. 16.

²Heller, Joseph, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908-14*. London, 1983. p. 1.

³*The Times*. L.A., "The New Era in Turkey", July 31, 1908. p. 13.

⁴*The Times*. L.A., "The Situation in Turkey" July 27, 1908, p. 11.

This policy is found reflected in Sir E. Grey's speech:

A few months ago if I had been asked to sum up the relations of ourselves and other European countries with the Turkish Government, I, think I should have summed them up accurately in the world "Despair" within the last few months there has been one of the most wonderful and beneficial changes ever seen in history

.... We continue to be patient and sustained if the new regime in Turkey is confronted with internal difficulties (hear, hear). But the moral, I would draw from the action of public opinion in this country is that public opinion in the country is stirred not by racial animosity but ideas and by causes. We never were anti-Turkish in the sense of having racial animosity. We were against Turkish Government while it was bad, but between us and the people there was not, and there never has been any barrier (hear, hear).¹

The same line can be seen in another speech by Sir Edward Grey, the main portion of which was devoted to explaining the position of the Government regarding the Balkan Question:

During the last three months there has been a most remarkable change in the attitude of the people of this country to the Turkish Government. For a generation past our relations with the Government of Turkey have been those of constant friction and remonstrance, but they have been changed from friction and remonstrance to very deep sympathy

Hatred, strife and oppression have been swept away and, they have been replaced by fair play, peace and good will-which is the surest guarantee of peace more sure than any treaty, or any constitution, or anything else (cheers). Well, never in history, I think, has there been a change more sudden and so beneficial

..... Now I am sure I speak not only my own feelings but the feeling of the whole of this country, when I say that, when we contemplated the change which has been produced in Turkey in the last few months by the new regime it was our desire and our hope that nothing should be done outside Turkey which would in any way disturb the work of reform in hand.²

¹*The Times*. "Sir E. Grey on Foreign Affairs". November 20, 1908. (The speech was given at the Londenborough Theatre, Scarborough).

On the other hand the Turkish Press was looking, with great admiration, at England with its long constitutional tradition; and saw it as "the protectress of civilisation" *Sabah*.

İkdam's editor Ahmet Cevdet in his telegram to the Prime Minister, Asquith, sent the warm thanks of all Ottomans to the British Government for its great benevolence towards them and its valuable support of the constitutional Ottoman Government, and he concluded his message as follows: "Long live the British Nation." See *The Manchester Guardian* for Turkish Press comments .. 12 October 1908, p. 11.

The Sultan too, remarked about the attitude of the government's approach and the attitude of the public. "The English Press", he remarked, "were more reliable in their news and more sober in their comments both as regards Turkey and himself than a great part of the continental Press which teemed with invention and distortions of fact concerning the internal situation." See: Lowther to E. Grey, November 13, 1908, *BD*, 203.

²*The Times*. "The Change in Turkey" October 8, 1908. p. 10

As regards Bulgarian independence and the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey had full confidence in Britain that she would not allow Turkey to disintegrate and to be treated in an unjust way. At a meeting with the Turkish Ambassador, Grey gave Britain's assurance on this matter:

We cannot admit the rights of any Power to alter an international Treaty without the consent of the other parties to it: that[sic] we shall therefore refuse to recognise what has been done the views of the other Powers are known especially of Turkey, who is more concerned than anyone else.¹

He also advised Turkey not to go to war but get compensation:

The independence of Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia were no material loss to Turkey, though injurious from the point of view of sentiment and prestige; if Turkey protested and eventually asked for compensation we should support any proposals which seemed fair considerations for her.²

But, that was not what the Porte asked for.

General feeling in the Government about the action of Austria, was not so much against the annexation but against its timing. Sir Charles Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at his interview with Count Mensdorff gave a clear account of the above mentioned fact: "It is not so much the proclamation of annexation which we should fear but its consequences. We felt alarm and are still anxious as to whether Bulgaria intends to proclaim her independence since were she to do so, it is not unlikely that other Powers, both small and great might ask for compensation—always at the expense of Turkey. This would create a most dangerous development in the Balkan Peninsula, of which nobody could foresee the consequences. It was to be feared that the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be likely to encourage the Bulgarians in this sense, and, from that point of view I thought it would be very much better if this action upon which the Austrian Government seem to have decided, could have been postponed for at least a couple of months, until the present crisis in the Balkan Peninsula had subsided."³

¹Grey to Lowther, October 5, 1908, *BD*, V, 296.

²*Ibid.*

³Memorandum respecting an interview between Hardinge and Mensdorff, October 3, 1908, *BD*, V, 287.

TALKS WITH REGARD TO AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

To come to a peaceful conclusion an international conference was suggested by France and Russia; Russia was hoping for a favourable consideration of the Straits Settlement. No discussion of Balkan problem areas would be complete without reference to the Russian demands for greater control of the Turkish Straits. The Porte was suspicious of Russia's plan to make the conference conditional on the fact that "The riverain states of the Black Sea should have exclusive freedom of passage of the Dardanelles. And the Porte heavily relied on Britain to see that the issue was not brought into the conference. Although Grey was prepared to support the Russian demand,¹ the Cabinet, fearing a public outcry, at first overruled him.² In a memorandum of October 14, he said "His Majesty's Government agrees that the opening of the Straits is fair and reasonable, and in principle they will not oppose it .. (but it) is not one for which public opinion in England is prepared or which it could be induced to accept".³ There was "a good deal of the old equivocal approach here."⁴

All peace moves were welcome to the British because "Hardinge feared that if the Turks were beaten, the British Navy would have to defend Constantinople. Worse still, if Serbia were attacked, the Russians would intervene and the Anglo-Russian Entente severely [sic] strained."⁵ He was pretty sure that the Cabinet would never sanction involvement in a Balkan Crisis.

The dispute between Austria and Turkey dragged on throughout the winter, and also Serbia with the support of Russia gave Austria a hard time over the compensation issue for the Serbs. But the international situation at that time was not favourable to Russia. Despite the fact that Britain provided diplomatic support to Russia in her attitude, Grey made it clear that if Russia

¹Grey, as he afterwards admitted in his Memoirs, had long foreseen that if Great Britain and Russia were to remain on friendly terms the British Government would have to abandon the policy of continually blocking the access of Russia to the sea. But, he felt that no worse moment could have been chosen for such a demand when the Turks had been infuriated by their treatment by Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. Graves, Philip, *Briton and Turk*. London, 1941, p. 117.

²Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*. p. 82.

³Memorandum by Grey, October 14, 1908, *BD*, V, 377.

⁴The conditional, noncommittal half-promises of 1909 still left the British free to drive a hard bargain, or even to refuse a bargain if Russian behaviour in Persia, or the state of British Public opinion, made one inadvisable. The British stand was entirely political now; there were no strategic (i.e. Admiralty) objections. To be awkward over a Straits revision was a useful political weapon, not lightly to be abandoned. Insistence on respect for British public opinion was also a convenient, though in this case genuine, reason for delay; but the Russians never took such insistence seriously and merely saw it as a triviale debating tactic. Clayton, G.D., *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli*. London, 1971, p. 208.

⁵Steiner, Zara, "The Foreign Office under Sir E. Grey 1905-1914." in *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey (BFPG)* Ed. by F.H. Hinsley, Cambridge, 1977, p. 31.

got involved in a war in Europe with Austria, who would certainly have the support of Germany, it was impossible for him to ask the Cabinet to consider such a contingency or to come to any decision about it. The Italians were, in fact, in favour of a conference, but since they had also declared they were against making territorial concessions to Serbia and Montenegro, it was unrealistic to expect they would support Russia. As far as France was concerned she had come to an agreement with Germany to submit the "Casablanca incident" to arbitration so there was not much hope of France supporting Russia either. Thus Russia could not insist on a conference any more. The idea of an international conference was abandoned and the Crisis was finally settled on the basis of negotiations between Constantinople and Vienna on February 26, 1909. In return for acceptance of the changes, the Porte received financial compensation and the return of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar to its full control, but that was not what she had hoped for.

THE REASONS FOR BRITISH SYMPATHY

British policy in the Balkans in the years before the wars, and as was repeated frequently by Grey to the other Powers, to the British public and to the Turks themselves, had been undoubtedly to preserve the Ottoman Empire intact, as far as was possible, at least from external threats, for this was in Britain's own interests.¹

Despite the fact that "the independence of Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia were recognised as developments which sooner or later were inevitable, and ... can do us no harm considered in themselves", the indignation of the British was genuine.²

There are various reasons why British sympathy, if not necessarily support, had been given to the Ottoman Empire either by the Government or public opinion. The newspapers, while promising Turkey full sympathy particularly admonished her to keep the peace in her own and in the general European interest. The Government's policy was clearly based on strategic, commercial and international balance of power considerations. The geographical as well as the political stability of the area had a formidable effect on British thinking.

¹Kent, Marian (ed.), *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*. London, 1984, p. 85.

²Sweet, D.W., "The Bosnian Crisis" *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*. Ed., by F.H. Hinsley, Cambridge, 1977, p. 178.

First of all, the Near East concerned Britain because of the proximity of Turkey to her sea routes through the Mediterranean. The Eastern Mediterranean with the Balkans was a key area in British foreign policy. Through it passed the sea routes that linked Britain to India and her Far Eastern Colonies¹ which were vital to British interests.

Secondly, due to the rivalry with Germany in Europe the Foreign Office, mindful of Germany's links with the old Turkey could not fail to reason that a parliamentary Turkey must stand closer to Britain than Germany. Moreover, there was no doubt about the fact that Germany would stand by Austria-Hungary and "her support of the Dual Monarchy might well mean the gift of a blank cheque to future Austrian enterprises in the Balkans"² which might easily produce undesired consequences.

Thirdly, Britain did not like the idea of increasing Russian influence in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. By the same token she put pressure on the Powers to change the terms of San Stefano. Britain looked upon Russian control of Constantinople as a real danger, and with more reason regarded with disfavour the clauses which seemed to secure to Russia complete control of the new Bulgarian administration.³

As Bertie reminded Grey: "The Question of the Straits might seriously affect the position of the Government in England if they accepted to consider it in Conference without the knowledge of the public and without an understanding with Turkey as to any concessions to be made to Russia."⁴

In the Turco-Bulgarian dispute about compensation the fact that Russia's offer of a solution implied involvement and made the British worry about Russian influence in the matter. How the British Public felt about increasing Russian influence can be seen in the following quotation from a leading article:

If the Russian solution is adopted, Russia gains a very considerable political advantage at a very slight outlay. She separates Bulgaria from Austria and she gets a strong influence over Bulgaria owing to the financial obligation, in which Bulgaria will have entered with regard to her...⁵

Although the British public felt that way, it was important for British policy to consolidate good relations with Russia, especially with regard to her Middle Eastern policy which had been inaugurated in 1907; but at the same

¹Telford, Judith, *British Foreign Policy*. London, 1978, p. 5.

²Graves, *Britain and Turk*. p. 116.

³Seton-Watson, *Rise of Nationality*. p. 108.

⁴Bertie to Grey, October 7, 1908, *BD*, V, 333.

⁵*The Manchester Guardian*. L.A., "Russia and the Near East" February 3, 1909. p. 6.

time, re-establishing good relations with Turkey, which might otherwise become a kind of German dependency, was also important. Thus Britain's support of Turkey was often irreconcilable with Russian interests resulting in conflicting attitudes towards the Turkish revolution which raised a delicate problem for British diplomacy; Britain was not prepared to sacrifice either of her newly found allies.¹

Fourthly, the Cyprus Convention² (June 4, 1878) had a profound effect on British policy towards the Ottoman Empire. After San Stefano, the Russians were in a position in Eastern Anatolia to make a subsequent advance to the Mediterranean or to the Persian Gulf, which was the real threat to British interests. It was also in Britain's interests to diminish Russian influence and to guarantee the integrity of the remaining Ottoman possessions in Anatolia. The result was Disraeli's proposal for the British occupation of Cyprus. Although the Sultan was reluctant to accept the proposal there was nothing he could do in the face of the British threat to leave San Stefano as it was. Thus, with regard to the Cyprus issue, the British Press and the Foreign Office quite often came under severe attack from the other Powers for not taking a strong line towards the Empire.

Another reason for pursuing a moderate policy was the fear of causing unrest among the Muslim population in India. England had a vast Muslim population in her dominions and public opinion was influenced by the sentimental appeals of Indian Muslims in favour of their Turkish co-religionists. This became rather obvious in the Press during the Balkan Wars and various news items appeared stating the financial help as well as the moral support given to the Ottomans by the Muslims of India. Mensdorff wrote to Aehrenthal on October 3: "All England is now intensely Turcophile," and he informed him a month later that "the desire to support Turkey and preserve the sympathy of the Muslim world, which they had regained and which was more important than any allies for the British Empire, might persuade the British Government to abandon their traditional policy".³ This factor restrained Britain from taking a firm line but it did not move her to take positive action on behalf of the Empire.

Another way of evincing sympathy for the Empire lay via the fact that Britain had found it difficult to put pressure upon the old regime to introduce reforms for Christian subjects, as these might well have been considered the Ottomans' own internal affair. Consequently, she had pursued a hostile policy

¹Cooper, M. B., "British Policy in the Balkans 1908-9" in *The Historical Journal*, Vol VII, 1964, p. 260.

²For more information see: Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*. p. 190

³Graves, *Britain and Turk*, p. 116.

towards the old Ottoman Empire and condemned it to death by giving both direct and indirect encouragement to the Balkan States. However, immediately after Young Turks came to power, this policy was revised and moderated in the expectation of reforms that would be introduced. This changed attitude towards the new regime was reflected in the Press leading to the appearance of some pro-Turkish articles:

... The Young Turks have all alone foreseen and foretold that any sincere effort to reform the Ottoman Empire from within would be the signal for some treacherous blow from without. They know their own history and the history of their Great neighbours. More than a year ago a correspondent signing himself "GALATA" explained with great clearness how the fear of Europe weighed upon them. "They know", he wrote, "that before they could carry through any reforms worth mentioning they would have to pass through a period of weakness and rightly or wrongly they are afraid that their enemies would take advantage of it, to attack them when they were least able to defend themselves" They remembered "GALATA" then told us, that Turkey has attempted on three occasions to accomplish such a reform, and that on each occasion a Christian Power seized the opportune movement to fall upon her ...¹

The British were also aware of the danger of tampering with the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin and felt that they had been tricked. Apart from annoyance at having been deceived, the threat caused by the annexation to the new regime and the danger of a return to the old tyranny which had created difficulties for Britain, led her to take a more favourable attitude towards the Empire. Goschen's words when he was asked by Baron Call, of the Austria-Hungarian Foreign Ministry, why he had described the annexation as a great mistake, "expressed the view of the public" in four words: "Principle, precedent, moment, procedure".²

Economic reasons also gave a clear basis for the general policy. Just before the Young Turk Revolution G.H. Fitzmaurice, was describing Britain's trade relations with Turkey as follows: " During the last few years our policy, if I may so call it, in Turkey has been, and for some time to come will be, to attempt the impossible task of furthering our commercial interests while pursuing a course (in Macedonia, Armenia, Turco-Persian Boundary etc.) which the Sultan interprets as being pre-eminently hostile in aim and tendency. These two lines are diametrically opposed and consequently incompatible with one another."³

¹*The Times*. L.A., "The Eastern Crisis" October 8, 1908, p. 9.

²Graves, *Briton and Turk*. p. 115

³Fitzmaurice to Tyrrell, April 12, 1908, *BD*, Y, 196.

The British Government was determined from the outset not to lose the opportunity, which was presented by the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908, of replacing German commercial hegemony at Constantinople with an Anglo-French hegemony.¹ Grey hoped that a consolidated Turkish regime would give British capital more openings - although he did insist that British firms should not impose onerous conditions.²

The Turkish people not content with protesting diplomatically, took to expressing their resentment by the simple but effective process of organising a general boycott of Austrian goods. The idea of expressing moral condemnation by a boycott had a profoundly negative effect on the Austrian economy,³ and there came the opportunity for British merchants to get a bigger share of Turkish trade. An Englishman in Turkey presented the situation as follows:

Those who have travelled recently through the affected country, as I have done, know however that English merchants and manufacturers have shown themselves almost utterly indifferent to the situation and have done practically nothing to conquer this waiting market. The Russians have hastened to replace Austrian sugar with their own and the Germans are feverishly active in the cheap fancy good market a large item in the Austrian import trade to Turkey. But, the British have been supine in utilising the openings that present themselves. The resident English merchants are occupied exclusively in exportation and the import trade has been allowed to fall into the hands of foreigners. There has always been a preference for English goods among the Turks, but since the era of liberty they have been clamouring for them.⁴

Lastly, considerations of honour, interest, and prudence, defence of the Public Law of Europe and the maintenance of European peace were equally strong incentives to be moderate in her policy but the chief motive in Grey's policy remained what it had always been: "just as we used all our influence, when Turkish Government was bad to press reforms from outside so now if reforms are being developed from inside we shall use all our influence to prevent their being interfered with from outside".⁵ On July 27, a statement made by the Foreign Secretary gives a very clear account of the British attitude: "The delicate point will presently be Russia - we cannot revert to the old policy of Lord Beaconsfield, we have now to be pro-Turkish without

¹Sweet, "The Bosnian Crisis." in *BFPG.*, p. 178.

²Grey to Lowther, August 23, 1908, *BD*, Y, 208.

³Due to anti-British feeling in Vienna, Grey was accused of favouring the Turkish boycott of Austrian goods. But the boycott movement was originally organised by the customs-house porters. Grey, neither fostered nor actively encouraged the boycott. But, he recognised the value of it as 'a potential diplomatic lever' to prise concession out of Vienna and sympathised with it as such. Cooper, "British Policy in the Balkans," p. 271.

⁴*Daily Mail*. "The Change for English Merchants" December 8 1908, p. 6.

⁵Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, September 1908, vol.1.94, p. 382.

giving rise to any suspicions that we are anti-Russian, neither would it now be possible to maintain the tradition of intervention in the Ottoman Empire"¹

One thing is quite clear, the Young Turk Movement had always looked to England with great admiration and sympathy as the typical land of freedom and tried to establish good and friendly relations which had not existed for years. Public opinion as well as Government circles in Britain shared the idea of mutual peaceful, amicable relations. The feeling was that the new regime in Turkey had been badly treated and deserved consideration. In spite of the official statements and public opinion which kept making comments in favour of the Ottoman Empire, no vigorous efforts were made to secure the integrity of the Empire, supposedly guaranteed by the Berlin Treaty. England's objection to Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was not really against the annexation itself, but the fact that it was a violation of an international treaty. That can easily be seen in the Prime Minister's speech:

The existing territorial arrangements of the Turkish Empire are the result of solemn reciprocal engagements between the Great Powers of Europe which are embodied in the Treaty of Berlin. It is worth recalling that by a protocol of January 1871, attached to the Treaty of London that year to which Austria-Hungary was a party, it is expressly provided that no Power can break its treaty engagement or modify their relations except by friendly agreement and with the assent of the contracting parties.²

The Daily Mail in its leading article made the following comment which was in the same vein as that of the Prime Minister, and called Austrian action mischievous on the ground of

Tearing up by one Power of an international treaty without any reference to the signatories. What Europe had collectively done only Europe could collectively undo and it was the great mistake for one of the foremost continental powers to take any step tending to discredit and weaken the sanctity of Treaties.³

Austria has torn up the Treaty of Berlin and announce her intention of establishing a "dominium" over the Turkish provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This act of aggression following on the Bulgarian occupation of the railway and the declaration of Bulgarian independence has produced a grave situation⁴

¹Heller, *British Policy*, p. 11

²*Daily Mail*, Mr. Asquith's speech at Leven. 8 October 1908, p. 5.

³*Daily Mail*, L.A., "Austria's Defence", January 2, 1909, p. 4.

⁴*Daily Mail*, L.A., "Still Some Hope of Peace", October 6, 1908, p. 4.

Nor did *The Manchester Guardian's* comment differ much from that of *The Daily Mail*:

They have disturbed the moral as well as the legal equilibrium of the Balkans and all the cupidities are afoot. As Mr. Asquith said last night, 'What has been so precipitately done must inevitably lead to further questions being raised by other powers whose interests are concerned in the Near East.'¹

But public opinion was convinced that the Ottomans had already lost these provinces, when through the Treaty of Berlin they came under occupation by Austria, and it was not likely that they would be returned to the Empire. It was common belief that Turkey's prestige was destroyed by the actions taken by these Christian States, and that compensation would make amends.

It is not from the material injury done her that Turkey suffers; It is from the injury of the new government which divided irregular action of Bulgaria and Austria has caused.²

... The Turks are a proud and martial race who for centuries have dominated vast territories and given proof of amazing vitality. Their pride had been touched to the quick and their confidence in the good faith of their professed friends has been rudely shaken. Yet they have displayed a moderation and a wisdom that must astonish everybody who has the slightest acquaintance with their character and history.³

In conclusion, as far as Britain-Ottoman relations were concerned, the situation was as follows: To deal with this severe blow to the prestige of the new regime Turkey inevitably looked to England to help to rectify these violations of the Treaty of Berlin. "While Grey ruled out the use of force as a means of exerting pressure on Austria and Bulgaria, he recognised that Britain must try to secure for Turkey some financial compensation from the two Powers."⁴ Although both Governments' policy and public opinion towards the Ottoman Empire during the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis were rather sympathetic, Britain failed to fulfil her commitment to protect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which had been laid down in the Berlin Treaty, and Grey steered a course which led to pecuniary compensation for Turkey. The Press viewed with some satisfaction the 2.500.000 (Turkish Pounds) and called it "a pretty handsome bargain."⁵

¹*The Manchester Guardian*, L.A., "Balkan Crisis", October 8, 1908, p. 6.

²*The Times*, L.A., "The Eastern Crisis", October 8, 1908, p. 9.

³*Daily Mail*, L.A., "Europe and the Pursuit of Peace", October 7, 1908, p. 6.

⁴Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, p. 82.

⁵*The Manchester Guardian*, January 31, 1909.

On the Turkish side the Grand Vizier expressed his discontent: "Turkey could no more count upon guarantees of treaties after her recent experience and the value of European sympathy was problematical, if she was compelled to accept these *faits accomplis*."¹

It is clear in retrospect that the Bosnian crisis had most unfortunate consequences in the Balkans. No words are needed to emphasize that it was the violation of an international Treaty and the Powers eventually accepted that the twenty-fifth article of this Treaty would be torn up.

As far as international relations were concerned the Central Powers undoubtedly won a notable diplomatic victory against the Triple Entente. It ended the period of cooperation between the Dual Monarchy and Russia which had begun in 1897 and for some years had preserved a measure of balance in the Balkans, and 'changed the focus of European politics and for the first time brought Britain clearly to the centre of the things' by causing the British Foreign Office 'to adopt a firmer attitude towards the preservation of the Ententes'.²

Although the crisis passed without recourse to war, the result of this incident was deeply humiliating for Russia. With strong German support, the Habsburg Empire had forced the Russian government to retreat.³

In spite of cooperation the two Powers engaged in what proved to be a mortal struggle for influence in the Balkan Peninsula. Russia was now increasingly involved in the Balkans by considerations of prestige and strategy, by Pan Slav sentiment and even by economic interests.⁴ The outcome of this was the Balkan League which was founded in 1912 with energetic Russian support and the League and the Balkan Wars may be said to stem directly from the crisis over Bosnia-Herzegovina. On October 2, 1912, when the Balkan Wars were about to begin, Count Berchtold, the Austrian Foreign Minister, who succeeded Aehrenthal, wrote "we delude ourselves if we do not face the fact that our procedure in annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina gave the first impetus to the Balkan League".⁵

Thus were the 'cracks papered over', and Europe emerged from a most serious international crisis.⁶

¹Lowther to Grey, October 15, 1908, *BD*, V, 382.

²Langhorne, Richard, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe, International Politics 1890-1914*. London, 1981, p. 99.

³See Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, p. 84.

⁴Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p. 286.

⁵Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, p. 112.

⁶Marriot, *The Eastern Question*, p. 432.

THE BALKAN WARS, 1912-1913

PRELUDE TO THE CRISIS

No other area in the Balkans has been the subject of so much dispute and the cause of so much bloodshed than Macedonia. To a very considerable degree, Balkan diplomacy since 1878 has revolved around the explosive question of how Macedonia should be divided among the three neighbouring countries, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia.¹ As important as the strategic and economic considerations in explaining the struggle for Macedonia was the ethnic complexity of the area which gave the all neighbouring countries a basis for their aspirations and claims.

The Austrian annexation of Bosnia ended the cooperation between Austria and Russia and also stimulated aggressive desires of the Balkan states to gain territory if not compensation from the Ottoman Empire. The Italian attack on Tripoli convinced the Balkan states that their rivalries in Macedonia had to be subordinated to take advantage of the Ottoman preoccupation across the Mediterranean. The national movements made steady progress, usually with the support of one or of all the European governments. The British view of the Macedonia problem was that the Turks ought to be compelled to govern the region fairly and that, if they failed to do so, the Balkan nationalists ought to be allowed to realise their ambitions. The Gladstonian (even Salisburian) principle of support for liberal nationalism in the Turkish Empire, which had earlier shown itself in relation to Bulgarians and Armenians had at last become the open policy of the British government. (though not yet for all Turkey's Asian and African provinces).² Although the Balkan revolts were commenced by the Balkan people, the Great Powers made the financial decision over the establishment of the new states, their boundaries, and their forms of government. The European leaders were far from altruistic in their actions. Their own interests and the maintenance of the balance of power came first. Both the Ottoman Empire and the new Balkan states were to be subjected to the same policies and treatment that the Powers employed in their other imperial adventures.³

¹Stavrianos, L. S., *The Balkans Since 1453*. New York, 1953, p. 517.

²Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 210.

³Jelavich, *A History of Central Europe*, p. 25.

Overlapping interests, dramatic contrasts seemingly irreconcilable aims, trains of frontier incidents,¹ causing disorder and unrest in Macedonia, economic stagnation produced by the Italian War, internal (Italian attack discredited the C.D.P. and intensified the internal crisis) and external (i.e. Albanian revolt) difficulties, causing delay in putting the reforms into execution were among the reasons which accelerated the activities of the Balkan states against the Empire. The political negotiations conducted in the most profound secrecy, pointed in the same direction and were designed to one end: territorial annexation and the expulsion of the Turks from Europe;² however they claimed they were fighting for security and justice to their compatriots. Paget informed Grey about the matter: "In the partition of Turkey in Europe which is to follow, Serbia is to take the Sanjak, Old Serbia, and port of Medua on the Adriatic; Montenegro is to have Scutari, the surrounding territory, and a strip of Littoral; Greece receives Epirus, Thessaly, and the rest goes to Bulgaria. The four States are to enter into offensive and defensive alliances for fifty years. I could not ascertain from whom the Austrian Minister had this information, but he assured me that his informant was absolutely reliable and it came from an official source."³ A few days later he confirmed the information: "Eventual division of Turkey is practically correct."⁴

Even the Porte's announcement⁵ of October 6 that it resolved to put in force the Project of Law drawn up in 1880 and thus to carry out the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin did not stop them declaring war against Turkey. Elliot asked the Greek Prime Minister "Whether tension had been relieved by the offer of Turkey to apply reforms proposed by the Commission of 1880". The answer was "Those reforms were now out of date".⁶ The Foreign Minister Gabriel Noradunghian was fully convinced about the fact that the Allies were after territorial annexation and said: "We shall now see whether Bulgaria is sincere in stating that reforms in Macedonia are the object of her agitation or

¹Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, January 1913, vol. 103, p. 110.

²"The task before the Allies was equally clear. Their ulterior aim, though at first concealed by vague diplomatic assurances, was unquestionably the expulsion of the Turks from Europe. This could only be effected as the result of the decisive and the crushing defeat, and for various reasons this demanded great rapidity of action. Every day gained increased the chances of the Allies, since it lessened the danger of European intervention and reduced the time available for the Turks for bringing up reinforcement from Asia Minor." Seton Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 179.

³Paget to Grey, October 27, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II [Balkan Wars the League and Turkey], 67.

⁴Paget to Grey, November 1, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 86.

⁵*The Daily Mail*, "Reforms by Turkey", October 7, 1912, p.9., also see: Lowther to Grey, October 15, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 33. and; *The Manchester Guardian* "Powers and the Balkans", October 7, 1912, p. 9., and; *The Times*, October 8, 1912, p. 7.

⁶Elliot to Grey, October 8, 1912, *BD*, IX, part I [Balkan Wars-Prelude Tripoli War], 798.

whether that is only a pretext for cloaking her desire for territorial expansion at the expense of Turkey".¹

Although a note² was addressed by the Powers to the four Balkan states, strongly deprecating any hostile action, pledging themselves to enforce the Treaty of Berlin and adding the warning that no change in the territorial status-quo would be tolerated in the event of war, the state of imminent war between Turkey and the Balkan states had already been reached.

The attitude of the Great Powers towards the growing crisis in the Near East had for some time past been compounded of despairing *laissez faire* and ill-concealed cynicism.³ The answer to the question of why the Powers had failed to prevent the crisis which, they were well aware, was approaching, was given by Dillon:

Diplomacy pricked its ears, for war seemed inevitable unless the Powers intervened. This they were willing to do if words would suffice, but they shrank from action, because no plan of action would have had their unanimous approval, owing to their own conflicting aims and mutual distrust. They could not take sides with Turkey against the Balkan Nations which they themselves had created. They had to admit the right of the Macedonians and their protectors to protest against the injustice of the Ottoman Government, although in these protests they discerned condemnations of their own connivance with Turkey. On the other hand, they felt unable to champion the cause of the Balkan peoples, because the upshot of their action might be to banish the Turks from Europe, to raise the Oriental question in its most dangerous aspect, and to bring about a European war. So they waited, watched, and did almost nothing.⁴

Whatever the reason, France, Germany, England and Russia saw in the declaration of the status-quo chiefly a means of keeping Austria from advancing. If Turkey won, the Balkan States would lose no territory, while on the other hand everyone was aware of the unwritten principle that Christian land once freed from Turkey should not be returned to Ottoman domination.⁵ In reality, the whole purpose of their diplomacy was to avoid a European war, not to avoid a Balkan war. Of course, it was hoped that the declaration of the status-quo might restrain the Balkan States, but no one expected that it would.

On the eve of war the situation was described by Grey in the House of Commons: "A very critical state of affairs exists which gives rise to grave

¹*The Daily Mail*, "Reforms by Turkey", October 7, 1912, p. 9.

²Bertie to Grey, September 22, 1912, *BD*, IX, part I, 734.

³Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 162; see also Ahmad, Feroz., "The Late Ottoman Empire" in *The Great Powers and The End of the Ottoman Empire*; ed. by Marian, Kent, London, 1984, p.15.

⁴Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, November 1912, vol. 102, p. 718.

⁵Helmreich, Ernst C., *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-3*. Cambridge, 1938, p. 131.

apprehension".¹ He outlined the difficulties that the Powers were dealing with: Turkey ought to grant effective reforms; on the other hand her territorial position in the European provinces was not to be disturbed. By October 8 Montenegro started the war by moving into northern Albania as well as into the sanjak of Novi Pazar, by playing as Dillon put it "the part of Picador at a bull fight."² Thus hostilities which had been going on for years came to the surface. The article in *The Daily Mail* gave a clear account of the belligerents' position:

We will grant reforms, say the Turks; we will put in force the pledges of 1880 which are in the spirit of Art. 23 of the Treaty of Berlin". But the Balkan states hold that these pledges are sure to be illusory. They have no belief in Turkish "reforms"; they want a guarantee, and the only guarantee worth anything is the virtual autonomy of Macedonia which they now propose to exact at the point of the bayonet. Thus the contentions of the two parties, as Sir Edward Grey intimated, are extremely hard to reconcile.³

Aubrey Herbert (M.P., who spent many years in Turkey and studied the Near Eastern Question) expressed his thought in *The Daily Mail*:

In my opinion, the promise of reforms by Turkey in Albania and Macedonia was made in good faith, but I do not think that the Balkan States want to see those reforms carried out, for if those reforms were carried into effect, the member of the Balkan League would no longer look for the acquisition of territory for which they have so long hoped.⁴

The declaration of war was welcomed by the Turkish Press and immediately after that many articles began to appear in the newspapers in favour of war⁵. This was also confirmed by Lowther: "Popular feeling in favour of war is being roused and demonstrations being organised, the press is united in advice to sink party differences against a common enemy, its tone being distinctly warlike".⁶ The Turkish Minister of War Kamil Paşa expressed

¹*The Daily Mail*, "The British Position", October 8, 1912, p. 7.

²Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, November 1912, vol. 102, p. 721.

³*The Daily Mail*, "The British Position", October 8, 1912, p. 8.

⁴*The Daily Mail*, "Mr. Aubrey Herbert's Report", October 9, 1912, p. 8.

⁵*The Tanin*, "Thank goodness, the period of hesitation, nervousness, despair, and disquietude has at least disappeared, and the effervescence produced among the Ottoman Public in consequence of the decision to apply the schemes of reforms of 1880 is now assuaged."

The İkdam, "Forward, Ottomans! Embrace your fire arms, forget your differences. You have but one objective, namely the fatherland and victory."

The Tanzimat, "The greatest fete for Ottomans is war. This fete began yesterday. We are convinced that all Ottomans will fulfil their patriotic duty with dignity." quoted in *The Manchester Guardian*, "Turkish Welcome to War.", October 10, 1912, p. 10.

⁶Lowther to Grey, October 4, 1912, *BD*, IX, part I, 776.

his disappointment at Britain for not being able to stop the war, but on the other hand still kept hoping that England would stand by the Turks:

We regret that England who has been unwavering in her friendship for us, has been unable to prevent the beginning of hostilities which unhappily must mean shedding much blood in an ill-defined quarrel... England's professed friendship for Turkey : may shortly be put to a severe test ...

I hope that England will be true to her splendid past and stand by us unflinchingly in the approaching hour of national peril.¹

But this was not the case. England did not respond to the Porte's profession of friendship and the Porte did not get the British support it had expected. Grey's reluctance to put pressure on Turkey before the outbreak of war had raised hopes at the Porte which were soon to be disappointed.

THE BRITISH POSITION AND PUBLIC OPINION:

During the period in which the Balkan League² was negotiated British policy maintained an attitude of reserve and watchfulness. The idea behind this was to avoid any kind of conflict which was likely to arise between Austria and Russia and might have led to a general war in Europe. This fact was quite often reflected in the correspondence: "The continual unrest in Macedonia is a permanent source of anxiety to Austria-Hungary, and it opens the door to all manner of complications between this country and Russia."³ "We feel that in view of their great and direct interest in the Balkans, cooperation between

¹*The Manchester Guardian*, "Appeals to England", October 21, 1912, p. 9.

²The Balkan League consisted of four Balkan states. The first alliance was between Serbia and Bulgaria (March 13, 1912) the Greco-Bulgarian alliance followed (May 29, 1912), and four months later Montenegro signed an agreement with Bulgaria (September 27, 1912) which Serbia soon joined (October 6, 1912). The League did not materialise until four years after the Bosnian Crisis due to the ever-present Macedonian problem. A strong stimulus to Balkan unity was provided by the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War in September 1911, which encouraged the Balkan states to conclude a secret alliance in the hope of being able to take advantage of Turkey's preoccupation. The League was largely the handiwork of Russian diplomacy and it was encouraged by Russia (see also Jelavich, *History of East Central Europe*, p.216.) with the hope that it would be a protection against Austrian designs in the Balkans, but the main purpose was different as Cartwright clearly put: "It was a League created for purposes of "destruction" and not for those of "construction". The Balkan League was brought about for one purpose: - the breaking up of the Turkish Empire in Europe and it was only to deceive Russia that she was led to believe that it was intended as a League of protection against Austrian designs in the Balkans More than once the late Servian Premier, Dr. Milavanowitch told me, that when the convenient moment seemed to be approaching for attacking Turkey, the Balkan States would rapidly combine together for that purpose, however much they might dislike each other and however opposed their ambitions might be." Cartwright to Nicholson, November 22, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 256. For the history of the Balkan League see Bax-Ironside to Grey, January 6, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 461. For the establishment of the Balkan League see also: *The Times*, "A Chapter of Secret History", June 4, 1913, p. 9.

³Cartwright to Nicholson, October 10, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 15.

Russia and Austria is essential to secure the preservation of peace."¹ The press adopted a similar attitude:

Our attitude must be that of vigilant but impartial observers, allowing neither our sympathy with the Balkan peoples, nor our fellow-feeling for the Turks, nor our horror at excesses which may be committed on either side, to wrap our judgement or make us forget the supreme necessity of preserving peace among the European Powers.²

We look for no radical alteration in the map of Europe, no fundamental dislocation of its component parts.³

The Balkan quarrel is not our quarrel. It had to come at some time or other ... We have always known that there must come a day when diplomacy would fail, and now that the day has dawned, we must, so far as in us lies, look to it that it does not involve the whole Continent.⁴

If anything in human affairs can be said to be inevitable, it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the Turk would have to fight to retain his hold on the remains of his Empire in Europe. The struggle might have been postponed; it could not have been obviated.⁵

On the one hand sympathy for the Balkan States and a flexible policy towards Russia (on the ground that it enabled them to exercise a more free-hand policy in the Middle East), on the other hand desire to avoid offending Turkey (fear of Muslim uprising in India⁶ and Baghdad Railway-Persian Gulf negotiations) were the characteristics of the British policy in the beginning of the War.

¹Grey to Bertie, October 6, 1912, BD, IX, part I, 780. For more information about the foundations of British Foreign Policy see: Joll, James. (ed.), *Britain and Europe; Pitt to Churchill, 1793-1940*. London, 1950, p. 212.

²*The Times*, L.A., "War Began in the Balkans", October 9, 1912, p. 7

³Anonymous, "The Crisis in the Near East" *The Quarterly Review*, January 1913, vol. 218, p. 297.

⁴*The Times*, "The Demands of the League", October 14, 1912, p. 7

⁵*The Times*, L.A., "War Began in the Balkans", October 9, 1912, p. 7

⁶The reaction of Indian Muslims to the British policy was reflected in the Press on several occasions. As a prominent official of the All-India Moslem League put correctly: "The sympathy of Indian Muslims with Turkey is particularly active because of the close religious association." *The Manchester Guardian*, "Indian Sympathy with the Turks", October 9 1912, p.8. This observation was based on the fact that Indian Muslims were Sunnis and they acknowledged the Sultan as their Khalif. An Indian Muslim justified the above observation: "It is hardly realised here that fully one-fourth of the vast population of the British Empire, amounting to not less than one hundred millions, profess the same faith as the Turks; that their most cherished feelings are involved in the maintenance of the prestige and power of the Sultan, whom 90 percent regard as their Khalif" *The Times*, "Moslems and the War", October 24, 1912, p. 5.

The *Manchester Guardian* went on to give a clear account of the general feeling among the Indian Muslims. "The loyalty of the Moslem to the British Government is being severely strained owing to the feeling that we are not sufficiently active in defending Turkey from an unwarranted attack ... It is a common opinion among Moslems that the Balkan States are being used as the cat's-paw of more powerful interests, and that they will reap nothing but disillusionment from this crusade." *The Manchester Guardian*, "Indian Sympathy with the Turks", October 9, 1912, p. 8.

As to British public opinion, it was quite sensitive about Russia¹ and as the Foreign Office rightly thought it would not allow them to be on Russia's side in a possible Austro-Russian conflict. By the vigorous and successful campaign of the Balkan Committee², public opinion in its anti-Turkish mood was obviously not in favour of the Ottoman Empire either. The sudden victories of the Balkan League had taken Europe completely by surprise and the effect on public opinion in the West was heightened still further by the cordial cooperation of the four Allies.³ The victory was celebrated in the British newspapers and journals. *The Manchester Guardian* commented as follows:

Nothing succeeds like success. The astounding victories of the Balkan States, especially the masterly and irresistible advance of the Bulgarians upon Constantinople, have won the admiration of all Englishmen. even those of us who a short month ago put our money on the wrong horse are now willing to lose it without a sigh almost.⁴

¹"The position of England at the present moment is one of extreme delicacy. An influential section of the British public is avowedly antagonistic to Russia, and always ready to assert, not without reasons that the interests of Great Britain and Russia in the Middle East, if not elsewhere, are in reality irreconcilable. "The Crisis in the Near East" *The Quarterly Review*, January 1913, vol. 215, p. 297. See also Johnston, H. H., "The Final Solution of the Eastern Question." *Nineteenth Century and After*, March, 1913, vol. 73, p. 541.

²The Balkan Committee was largely responsible for generating this feeling. Important sections of the public were infected with a crusading spirit. The conflict was put before the public 'the war as a Crusade' by the Bulgarian King: "The struggle between the Cross and the Crescent has begun." were the opening words in the war manifesto of the Balkan States. This Crusade spirit was articulated in a Church service in Bulgaria and described by William Maxwell: "The solemn and the simple service was a dedication of the nation to a Crusade and the blessing of the Cross in the war against the Crescent." *The Daily Mail*, "A New Crusade", October 19, 1912, p. 5.

The Cross and the Crescent were not only images of different creeds and not only objects of religious worship, but also historical reminiscences with which much hatred is associated. The Balkan Committee were in agreement with four Balkan States to make a holy war of the struggle, putting cross against crescent in inciting the hostilities.

As Noel Buxton, chairman of the Balkan Committee, put it: "Europe must admit the extreme provocation they have endured for many years past, both from a knowledge of the sufferings of their co-nationalists across their borders and also from the presence in their midst of large numbers of refugees fleeing from intolerable conditions. It is impossible to withhold sympathy from their determination to secure by force of arms and at their own peril those effective guarantees for law and order which the Turks have refused and the Powers have failed to enforce In the accomplishment of these ends Great Britain is bound in honour to take a leading part. Her responsibility for the present conditions of affairs is the greatest because of her share in the Treaty of Berlin. The motives of her policy and action will be the least open to suspicion, because she has no territorial or other material advantage to gain. Her reputation as the champion of the weak and oppressed, her honour as a civilised Christian nation, and the long tradition associated with the names of Canning, of Gladstone, and of the late Lord Salisbury" *The Manchester Guardian*, "The Responsibility of England", October 30, 1912, p. 10.

³Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 174; see: Graves, *Briton and Turk*, p. 43; and also Johnston, "The Final Solution of the Eastern Question." *Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 73, p. 542.

⁴*The Manchester Guardian*, [letter from a reader] "England and the Balkan War", November 20, 1912, p. 11

The Quarterly Review wrote similarly:

The Balkan Allies are to be congratulated determination which they have shown and on the results achieved through their ungrudging sacrifices on behalf Christian co-nationalists in European Turkey ...¹

The Times discussed the matter on two occasions during the November:

The position of Great Britain is completely disinterested.

The whole country is imbued with the conviction that the Allies have won amazing successes, and that they are entitled, not only to formulate their own terms, but to receive the due fruits of their endeavours. They are in process of settling a problem which has puzzled and distressed the statesmen of Europe for many generations.²

The sword has decided, and the Turks can never again fill the great place they have held in Europe for over five hundred years. They are driven back to their final narrow corner, and another phase in the ebb and flow of conflict between East and West has been brought almost to completion.³

Another good example came from Dillon writing in *The Contemporary Review*:

The Christian States and peoples of the Balkans are struggling for their political development and growth, and are fired by the racial religious, and class hatred stored up during centuries of thraldom under the Turkish yoke. Turkey is fighting not, for her dignity or her possessions, but for very existence, and with the fanaticism of Islam heightened by the hatred of masters for their presumptuous and rebellious slaves. That is the real meaning of the war The Turks are responsible, not only for centuries of misrule in the past but also for continuing it under the flag of Parliamentary Government in the present ... and it is hard to blame the Christians who pay no heed to their promises unless accompanied by guarantees.⁴

A foreign representative in Sarajevo expressed his view: "It is the beginning of the end." The outbreak of Bosnia-Herzegovina has proved, indeed, to be "the beginning of the end" of Ottoman dominion in Europe. From that moment onwards the chain of events is unbroken."⁵

Despite the general anti-Turkish feeling *The Times* on one or two occasions took a gentler line and gave a less biased account of the conflict:

¹"The Crisis in the Near East" *The Quarterly Review*, January 1913, vol. 218, p. 298.

²*The Times*, "Still Advancing", November 6, 1912, p. 9.

³*The Times*, L.A., "The Verdict of the Sword", November 2, 1912, p. 7.

⁴Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, November 1912, vol. 102, p. 729.

⁵Evans, Arthur J., "The Drama of the Balkans and its Closing Scenes.", *The Contemporary Review*, December 1912, vol. 102, p. 766.

It is not fair, when the antagonists are clenched, to measure too minutely the degree to which the condition of Macedonia has been responsible for the outbreak of war. Every war is the product of mixed motives, like every human action; no one can look back upon the story of Macedonia during the last few years otherwise than with dismay ... Freedom in the Near East has produced a wider diffusion of happiness and prosperity, but it never promised peace. There are too many ancient scores to settle. From the moment that the Balkan peoples gained their local independence and handled substantial revenues and created efficient armies, the war we are witnessing became certain. The Macedonian difficulty simply accelerated its advent ... It is probably nearer the truth to say that whatever had been done in Macedonia, the Balkan problem would never have been solved without further bloodshed.¹

By early November the Turkish armies had suffered a series of shattering defeats at the hand of the Allies, and had been driven out of Macedonia. The bulk of their forces fell back on Constantinople, although a few garrisons held out in Adrianople. The Allied victories were greeted with considerable enthusiasm in England.² Public opinion, together with the successive Balkan victories shaped official policy on future territorial settlement. At the beginning of the war, despite the unanimous declaration of the Powers that there would be no territorial change, whatever the result of the war, they recalled after the victories of the Allies, an old principle that European territory once recovered from Turkey would never be allowed to revert to her³:

The swift advance of the victorious Bulgarian Armies to a point within easy reach of Constantinople itself has, if report speaks correctly, already led Turkey to invoke the intervention of the Powers. The time has therefore come for the British Nation to declare its policy. It cannot tolerate for one moment any action on its Government's part which would rob the Balkan peoples of the fruits of their stupendous sacrifices. It recognizes that the statusquo is dead and buried. It realises that it would be a colossal blunder to attempt the restoration of Turkish rule, which is now perishing in fire and massacre, in the territories that the valour of the Balkan States has liberated from the servitude of centuries ... Europe will act wisely if it accepts frankly the principle that the Balkan peoples must be permitted to work out their own salvation and to dispose of the territories which they have won.⁴

¹*The Times*, L.A., "War Declared", October 18, 1912, p. 7.

²Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, p. 107.

³As Davis pointed out "The Powers, even Turkophile Germany dared not take on themselves the odium of handing lands inhabited mostly by Christians back to Moslem bandage. Davis, William S., *A Short Story of the Near East*. London, 1923, p. 371.

⁴*The Daily Mail*, L.A., "A New Chapter", November 2, 1912, p. 4.

The Contemporary Review gave a clear account about the new situation in the Balkans by justifying *The Daily Mail's* comment:

The astonishing campaign which in three weeks has swept the Turks from Macedonia to Thrace, has placed Europe before a new situation; and her statesmen have hastened to admit the bankruptcy of the status-quo, and to affirm their beliefs in the principle, "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples." With unexpected and laudable unanimity, the Great Powers appear to have reconciled themselves to the consequences which this principle involves, and to raise no objection to the allies retaining the first fruits of conquest, and adjusting among themselves their respective frontiers.¹

The Foreign Office was determined that no official partiality should be displayed towards the Balkan States, since this might antagonise the Muslim subjects of the British Empire. Nor did the British want to drive the Turks into total dependence on Germany.² On the other hand to deprive the Balkan Allies of the territory they had conquered was out of the question. Asquith explained British policy in the light of the above mentioned facts as follows: "We, here in this country have no direct interest in the ultimate redistribution of Balkan territories." "In due course", said *The Times*, "the British view will be made known, but there is no eagerness to go crusading."³ Grey too, made it clear that Britain had not sufficient political interest to interfere with the result of the war apart from the future of Constantinople⁴, on the other hand he stated that "public opinion here would not join in turning the Balkan States

¹Seton-Watson R W., "Austria-Hungary as a Balkan Power", *The Contemporary Review*, December 1912, vol. 102., p. 801.

²Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, p. 107.

³*The Times*, "The Powers and the War", November 11, 1912, p. 9.

⁴As far as the Straits themselves were concerned British policy since the midnineteenth century had been to maintain the status-quo unless it were altered for all the Powers. This policy was reaffirmed in October 1908 and maintained throughout the following years up to the First World War. See: Kent, Marian, "Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire." *The Great Powers and The End of the Ottoman Empire*; ed. by Marian, Kent, London, 1984, p. 184. Public felt exactly the same and was anxious about the fate of Istanbul; "What Constantinople means to Europe? Constantinople means dominion of the world (Napoleon)" *The Daily Mail*, October 20, 1912, p. 9.

"The news shows, as we said yesterday that the British Foreign Office may have to do some very quick thinking. Another Turkish defeat, such as seems imminent and inevitable, means that Constantinople will change its master. What is to be the British Policy in such a case? Napoleon said that he was always prepared for any contingency in battle, because it was his habit before his engagement to ask himself what answer he should make to every possible move. We do not want to be taken unprepared or to be surprised into rash action. We shall not be taken by surprise if we have duly considered and weighed the possibilities. But there is no time to be lost." *The Daily Mail*, L.A., "Cut Off", October 29, 1912, p. 6. See: Anonymous, ii British Policy in the Near East", *The Quarterly Review*, April, 1913, vol. 218, p. 576 and also: "The Crisis in the Near East", *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1913, vol. 218, p. 294.

In the early months of the crisis considerable anxiety prevailed in London on account of the fact that Britain and Russia envisaged a different future for Istanbul. It was obvious, once the Bulgarians captured Istanbul and in the event of their withdrawal that Russia would be the only occupant, about which the British were not pleased at all. The British suggestion was 'internationalisation' but undoubtedly Russia was not enthusiastic about accepting this. In the end the Bulgarians failed to take Istanbul and the crisis was over.

by force out of what they proved able to conquer unaided."¹ and again on the same day " British public opinion would not be a party to an attempt to turn the Balkan States by force out of territory which they actually conquered by their own arms, and we had not sufficient political interest to insist upon interfering in the results of the war."²

Various articles published in the press justified Asquith and Grey:

We rejoice that Mr. Asquith has so explicitly affirmed the victors are not to be robbed of the fruits which cost them so dear.³

We must not allow our traditional sympathies and friendship for the Turks and also our admiration for their unquestionable bravery, to blind us to the fact that they are Orientals and swayed by Oriental feelings. They can therefore never be relied upon to follow out any definite line of policy as the Christian Balkan States can be, and hence Turkey is quite useless to Great Britain so far as her Near Eastern policy is concerned. Consequently it is undoubtedly to the mutual advantage of England and France to throw in their lot with the Balkan States at this supreme moment, and to ensure at the conclusion of hostilities, that they are not robbed of the fruits of their toil in the hour of victory.⁴

In an article published in *The Contemporary Review*, Turkey was blamed for the war:

Persecutions, untrustworthy assurances and worthless promises were the strands of which Turkish misrule was twisted. Turkey has always been young enough to sin, never old enough to repent and make amends.⁵

ARMISTICE, NEGOTIATIONS, AND THE LONDON TREATY

At the beginning of November 1912, the Porte appealed to the Great Powers on the ground that it would welcome assistance in bringing about a suspension of hostilities, but the request met with a very unfavourable reception and Britain was not inclined to act more quickly than the other Powers either.⁶ *The Times* twice during November considered the successful

¹Grey to Bertie, October 28, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 69.

²Grey to Goschen, October 28, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 70.

³*The Times*, L.A., "The Powers and the War", November 11, 1912, p. 9.

⁴*The Daily Mail*, (letter to the editor), "What Will Happen Next", October 29, 1912, p. 6.

⁵Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, December 1912, vol. 102, p. 867.

⁶Grey wrote: "The Austrian Ambassador informs me that Count Berchtold shares my view that as long as war with Turkey lasts actions of the Allies can be looked upon as war operations and that he does not intend to interfere with them." Grey to Cartwright, November 13, 1912, *BD*, part II, 193.

defence of the Chatalja Line which was a few miles outside Istanbul would prolong the war:

If Turkey in an hour of greater tribulation, is reluctant to abandon her last fighting chance, she can expect no helping hand from Europe; and the degree of assistance she eventually receives will depend in any case very much upon the restraint she is able to exercise over the disturbed populace and embittered soldiery of Constantinople."¹

Turks have lost, but they can still show the world that they have not lost the capacity to accept an inexorable situation with manly resignation. They cannot hope to retrieve their disasters, but they can retain a dominating position in and around the city which is the fairest jewel of their dominions. Further useless slaughter will be universally regarded with abhorrence, and if the Turks seek more bloodshed before making their inevitable submission they may have to pay the price of complete expulsion from Europe²

The Manchester Guardian echoed these opinions:

If the Powers are tempted to intervene it will not be to save her but to help themselves. Between Turkey and the Powers there can be no useful alliance ... Turkey must be prepared for very great losses of territory ... by prolonging the war. Her future as a member of a Balkan Federation need not be an inglorious one; on other terms she has no future at all in Europe.³

Thus the general feeling predicted the complete abolition of Turkish role in Europe. On the one hand sympathy towards their co-religionists, on the other the lack of any threat to direct British interests gave birth to the policy of disinterestedness:

Our interest is still the same- absolute undeviating neutrality ...
If we were involved in war, it would not be for any British interests.⁴

After the direct negotiations which began in November 24 and concluded with an armistice in December 3, a great deal of pressure was put on Turkey by Britain to recognize the newly emerged situation: "I and my French and Russian colleagues have been intimating to the Turkish Government the expediency of recognizing fact and being reasonable and moderate in matter of peace terms, with a view to early settlement and afterwards establishing sound relations with the Balkan neighbours."⁵

¹*The Times*, L.A., "Conditions of Armistice", November 5, 1912, p. 9.

²*The Times*, L.A., "The Pause in the Conflict", November 21, 1912, p. 7

³*The Manchester Guardian*, L.A., "The Chances of Peace", November 5, 1912, p. 8.

⁴*The Manchester Guardian*, L.A., "The Danger of a Larger War", November 26, 1912, p. 8.

⁵Lowther to Grey, December 11, 1912, *BD*, IX, part II, 369.

The centre of interest was now transferred, however, from the Balkans to London. Ten days after the conclusion of the armistice, delegates from the belligerent states met in London and peace negotiations began on December 16, with Grey acting as a mediator. The Balkan States demanded full Ottoman cession of all its European possessions and the Aegean Islands. The Powers decision on the conflict was not encouraging for the Ottomans either: the outcome of the Ambassadorial Conference of the six Great Powers was to send a note to Turkey reminding her that a prolongation of the war would jeopardise her possession of Constantinople and perhaps even of the Asiatic provinces. In any case she would need the moral and material support of the Powers to eradicate the ravages of war and consolidate her remaining territories. This support could only be guaranteed if the Porte accepted the advice of the Powers to cede Adrianople and leave the settlement of the future of the Aegean Islands to Europe. The Porte could not simply reject the Powers' offer straightaway, since it had asked for foreign intervention previously so it accepted the proposal, but with the proviso that Adrianople remain in the Empire. The main obstacle to peace was the question of Adrianople. On the future frontier of Turkey in Thrace the British attitude was unfavourable to Turkey and the necessity of making substantial territorial sacrifices including the cession of Adrianople, was constantly expressed:

As long as the Turks were not open to any compromise about Adrianople, they had nothing to expect from the Powers except pressure to give way; but if they would bring the discussion at the peace negotiation on to the "terrain" of some compromise about the town, the Powers might then be willing to exercise their influence with Bulgaria to overcome difficulties.¹

The Turkish counter argument, still believing in British sympathy although it had already been withdrawn with regard to the conflict, was put by the Turkish Peace Delegates in London:

This war, which Turkey did her best to prevent, was begun on the fallacious pretext of rescuing the Christians in Macedonia. Now the war is being resumed because Bulgaria, after having asked for immense territories inhabited by Mussulmans, insists on the cession of a Mussulman town, the second capital of the Empire. We leave it to the eminently just and logical sense of the British people to draw their own conclusions as to the real aim of the war. We only add that we are happy to know that British public opinion is beginning to recognize the iniquity of the demands of the Allies and of the harm they are doing by their unyielding attitude to the cause of peace².

¹Grey to Cartwright, January 4, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 451.

²*The Manchester Guardian*, "A Turkish Statement", February 3, 1913, p. 7. 60.

The importance of Adrianople derived from two different factors; the first factor was sentimental¹, it was the second capital city of the Empire with the biggest muslim population, and the first seat of the Sultans' in Europe. The second was strategic: the position of Istanbul with the Dardanelles and Gallipoli would always be at the mercy of Bulgarians if Adrianople was in their hands. Turkey's insistence not to give away Adrianople caused the unfavourable climate of public opinion towards Turkey to continue:

They have neither the armies nor the resources to win back what they have lost. The defence of Adrianople of Skutari, of Yania have splendidly saved the honour of their arms. The Turks, like all Easterns, know that it is vain to kick against the pricks. To do so in this case, can but aggravate their sufferings and their losses without according them any prospect of reversing the fortunes of the war²

They are in favour, it is said, of fighting for Adrianople to the bitter end. If so, they are about to risk the vey existence of the Ottoman Empire on a single throw of the dice³.

The Aegean Islands as well as Adrianople was another conflicting issue. Grey adopted the Balkan Committee's contention that, on ethnic grounds, the cession of these islands to Greece was unavoidable: "My difficulty is the practical one that the Islands with a Greek population cannot be kept Turkish except by force and that it is undesirable for either Turkey or the Powers to use force."⁴ At the same time the suggestion of pressure upon Turkey in the form of a naval demonstration met with reluctance on the British side on the ground that it was impractical and the belligerents' concern: "My own view was it should for the present be left again to the States immediately concerned to settle their divergencies amongst themselves whether peacefully or by force of arms, if our collective 'demarche' had no effect, and that the desire of all the Great Powers to preserve peace should guarantee that Europe, even if hostilities were renewed between the Balkan Powers, should not be implicated in the war." Britain also turned down Sazonov's suggestion that the Powers exercise pressure on Constantinople. Grey refused the suggestion on the ground that separate action would split the Concert.⁵

¹"The grounds on which Turkey ... claim Adrianople ... are in the last analysis sentimental, and therefore beyond the reach of argument. To the Osmanli, this place is not merely the strategical key to Constantinople. It is, above all else, the sacred city round which cluster the most glorious memories of their gallant race." Dillon, E J., "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, February 1913, vol. 103, p. 264.

²*The Times*, L.A., "The Turks and the Allies", January 16, 1913, p. 7.

³Dillon, "Foreign Affairs.", *The Contemporary Review*, February 1913, vol. 103, p. 266.

⁴Grey to Goschen, January 23, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 546.

⁵Grey to Goschen, January 15, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 511.

Meanwhile some articles started to appear in the newspapers about Turkey's tendency to accept the Powers' advice but the language used, expectedly enough, was not friendly:¹

The sacrifice which Turkey makes is undoubtedly great, though it saves her from being completely turned out of Europe. But, the sacrifice was inevitable, and to have resisted it would have been to risk even expulsion, "bag and baggage," to use Mr. Gladstone's phrase.²

The Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P.) however began to fear that Kamil Paşa (Grand Vizier) was going to give away the sacred city of Adrianople to get peace. On January 23, 1913, it organised "Raid on the Sublime Porte" and Mahmut Şevket Paşa became Grand Vizier. But Kamil Paşa's dismissal made the conference delegates in London very suspicious that the Porte might break the truce. Yet Turkey's intention was to insist on the retention of Adrianople and Eastern Thrace but to keep the London Conference going, the Bulgarians, however, refused the Turkish proposal and the London Conference broke up. On February 3, the Allies having failed to secure Turkish agreement to the complete evacuation of Adrianople, resumed hostilities. In Turkey's view "It (her proposal) did not constitute a basis for a peace which the Allies could accept, but it did constitute an admissible basis for further negotiations."³

The situation in the Balkans remained tense throughout the spring, when Mahmut Şevket's Government declined the proposal made by the Powers to Kamil Paşa, the hostilities were resumed. Although Chatalja was held, war went against Turkey and Adrianople fell. The Porte again defeated in the second round of hostilities with the Allies, had to renew its request to the Powers for mediation. After the armistice which was signed on April 5, negotiations started again between the belligerents in London and concluded with the Treaty of London (May 30, 1913). The settlement confirmed the loss by Turkey of all European territory, and in accordance with the Treaty the Line

¹"The political influence exerted by Russia in the Balkans has reflected the importance of this area to Russia's security. South Eastern Europe borders on Russia has played the key role in the balance of powers between Russia and rival Great Powers. This region also lies across Russia's land route to the Turkish straits, which for more than a century was one of the vital channels of Russia's commerce ... It was not until the 19th century when the export of grain from southern Russia increased until it constituted from a third to a half of all Russian exports, that Russian concern regarding the straits became a major motivating factor." Black, Cyril E., "Russia and the Modernisation of the Balkans", *The Balkans in Transition, Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the 18th Century*, ed. by Jelavich, Charles & Barbara, California, 1963, pp. 147-9.

Whatever sympathy Sazonov entertained for the aspirations of the Balkan States he was totally opposed to the domination of Constantinople and the Straits by Bulgaria or indeed by any other foreign power.

²*The Daily Mail*, L.A., "A Lasting Peace", January 23, 1913, p. 6.

³*The Times*, L.A., "The Verge of War", February 3, 1913, p. 7.

from Enos (Aegean) to Midia (Black Sea) was established as the new Ottoman boundary, with Thrace and Adrianople in enemy hands. The Porte surrendered all rights in Crete and left the settlement of the Aegean Islands and the Albanian boundaries to the Powers.

During this period Britain was very much involved with the Albanian problem and focused her attention on preventing the frontier question from producing a European dispute. Thus the negotiations between the belligerents and final peace settlement became a secondary sort of interest. However, on no account had she altered her policy, which was also shared by the public, of persuading the Turks to cut themselves off from Europe. Meanwhile, in accordance with her interests she was anxious about Turkey's chance of surviving as a viable power in Asia: "We have no designs in Asia Minor. All that we desire is maintenance of a satisfactory "status-quo" which will secure the Persian Gulf and its littoral against disturbance."¹ Thus she opposed the Allies demand which was supported by Russia for a war indemnity: As Grey said: "This[war indemnity] does not seem equitable in addition to the very large territorial concessions demanded. But, apart from this I do not see how Turkey will be able to pay an indemnity, and to impose this burden upon her will make her financial reorganisation on a sound basis impossible ... Financial collapse of Turkey will be to the disadvantage of all the Powers, and I should like to discourage the idea of indemnity."² This idea was strongly supported by the public too:

They [Powers] have already gone far to help the Allies to expand territorially, they have made the overthrow of Turkey easy for them; but they feel irresistibly tempted to draw the line at such heroic self-abnegation as that which approval of the war indemnity would entail ... But, whatever befalls the Turkish Government during the war, it will be the duty of the Powers to see that the guardian of Constantinople and the Straits, and the administrator of the provinces of Asia Minor is not handicapped from the outset by financial obligations which it cannot meet.³

THE RECOVERY OF ADRIANOPLE, AND BRITISH OPINION

The war with the Balkan States was not yet finished however, because disputes among the Allies over the division of spoils soon altered the balance. The problem was, in fact, intensified by the sudden collapse of the Ottoman

¹Grey to Rodd, January 13, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 503.

²Grey to Bertie, January 21, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 534.

³Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, May 1913, vol. 103, pp. 423-6.



Empire and the unexpected success achieved by each of the Allies. No sooner had the peace been concluded than the Allies were at war with each other on account of their inability to agree upon a peaceful division of the spoils. The quarrel between the Allies put the Turks on their feet again and gave them the opportunity to reoccupy Adrianople to the dismay of Europe. The general feeling in government circles and the public was once more strongly anti-Turkish. This threatening attitude can easily be seen in Asquith's and Grey's speeches: "Turkey has now risked everything by her violent action and we cannot be expected to protect her from the consequences of it."¹ "She must be prepared for the opening up of questions which it is no means in her interest to bring into debate."²

The Press took the same line:

She is running the great and obvious risk which the Prime Minister recently indicated by reoccupying the territory which she has abandoned To get the Turks out of Adrianople is the most immediate problem for Europe ... We cannot doubt that the Powers will exercise strong pressure upon the Porte to secure it. If the Turks are wise, they will consent to it without delay and without haggling.³

The good dispositions of Europe towards her, the friendliness of this country, the desire to help in her future development were all conditional upon her observance of her word. If she insists upon breaking that, she is opening up a new and perilous chapter in her history—a chapter of which none can see the end⁴

It was not surprising to see the antagonism in Noel Buxton's lines:

The record of Turkish rule in Europe is one not only of demoralisation, retardation, and cruelty but of menace to European peace and ruin to Turkey herself. A continuance of the sovereignty of the Sultan can only bring about a renewal of past experiences ... The attempts to make the question one of prejudice against Musulmans is absurd ... When they attempt to rule men of other religions they know only one way of doing so—that is, by the brute force on which their first triumphs were won and on which the maintenance of their power has hitherto been incompetently based.⁵

The Daily Mail's comment on the Turks for not recalling their troops from Adrianople was far from complimentary:

¹Grey to Marling, July 26, 1913, *BD*, IX, part II, 1183.

²*The Manchester Guardian*, "The Concert and the Balkans", July 24, 1913, p. 6; see also *The Daily Mail*, "Warning to Turkey", July 27, 1913, p. 7.

³*The Times*, L.A., "Peace in the Balkans", August 7, 1913, p. 7.

⁴*The Times*, "The Concert and the Balkans", July 23, 1913, p. 9.

⁵*The Times*, "The Turks and Adrianople", August 14, 1913, p. 5.

Turkey in this case is an obstinate as the Irishman's pig.¹

Britain was aggravated not because Adrianople was of a great concern to them, but because it was regarded as something of an insult to Britain on the ground that it was a breach of a Treaty which was concluded with her active participation. Although Grey was inclined to take a firmer line, he preferred for various reasons not to do so. Among his reasons were fear of Indian Muslim indignation² the reluctance of the Triple Alliance to take joint action, and the strong possibility of Russian intervention which will led to the question of Istanbul and Asiatic Turkey being reopened³, and finally the risk to the Baghdad Railway-Persian Gulf negotiations⁴ which were in process. What he could do was to refuse to give financial help to Turkey, but this was hampered by the French due to their vast financial and economic interest in Turkey:

The only alternative seemed to be continuous pressure and refusal on every opportunity of all support and help to the Turkish Government until they accepted the Enos-Midia line. The French Ambassador observed to me that the Turkish Government would not be very frightened by the refusal of

¹*The Daily Mail*, "The Madness of Turkey", August 20, 1913, p. 5.

²*The Manchester Guardian* reported general discontent about the fate of Adrianople: "Meetings are being held in all parts of the country at which resolutions are being passed declaring that Indian Moslems will view with the deepest disappointment and resentment any attempt by Great Britain to force the Turks to leave Adrianople." *The Manchester Guardian*, "Moslems Alarm in India." July 30 1913, p. 6.

³Because between 1912-4 the relations between England and Russia were more strained than at any time since 1907. The two countries were squabbling about the future of Persia and Russia complained that she was receiving little British support in South-Eastern Europe. But the fact was that the dissolution of Asiatic Turkey would be dangerous for Britain's imperial and European position. The public too was very anxious about Russian intention on Istanbul and Asiatic Turkey: "For if the problem of Asiatic Turkey became acute, the Powers would be brought face to face with each other, and the danger of a European conflict would become imminent. Turkey must, therefore, retain enough territory to enable her to defend Constantinople and the Straits, and for Asia she must have the money requisite to introduce administrative and other reforms, without which good government, and therefore international tranquillity, is impossible. Therefore she must not be crippled financially by the terms of peace." Dillon, "Foreign Affairs", *The Contemporary Review*, May 1913, vol.103, p.422.

"Constantinople and the coveted provinces of Asia Minor have been left utterly unprotected by the Turks. The least move by Russia will find Turkey helpless, with all her army in Thrace, and a great enemy at her back. But the madness of Turkey has yet to find its limits. The difficulty for Europe is that the questions of the future of Constantinople and Asia Minor and of the control of the Dardanelles may well be raised again. On these points the Powers hold divergent views. Turkey sinning but unprotected, and without a friend hold out the strongest provocation to Russia, and if Russia acts the consequences are incalculable." *The Daily Mail*, "The Madness of Turkey", August 20, 1913, p. 5.

⁴The Baghdad Railway negotiations with Turkey were quite close to a settlement in July 1912 when Grey decided "to abandon his efforts to secure a majority of shares for the Triple Entente in the Gulf section on the line ... provided that Britain's commercial interests in Mesopotamia were protected, Grey now decided that he was indifferent as to who built the Baghdad-Basra line ... and offered to withdraw his demand for British participation in the railway provided that no attempt would be made to extend it to the Gulf without prior agreement with England." Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, p. 131. Negotiations were carried out and by the end of August 1913, England had secured the bulk of her demands.

financial help. They knew that they could not allow a Turkish financial collapse."¹

As it can easily be seen Adrianople caused great irritation between the two sides. Thus this was a sign of the deterioration in the new chapter of Anglo-Turkish relations. The policy and the general feeling of the public towards Turkey can be described as unfriendly and unfavourable.²

THE REASONS FOR THE POLICY CHANGE

There were various reasons why the relations between the Foreign Office and Porte deteriorated. British policy and public opinion in general were less favourable towards the Porte and more pro-Balkan.

First of all, during the Italo-Turkish war which broke out in September 1911, the Foreign Office favoured a policy of strict neutrality in order not to alienate Italy and to avoid any conflict with Russia. As it was seen earlier, to avoid a general conflagration in the Balkans was Grey's primary concern. Not surprisingly, he turned down the Porte's appeal for alliance but did not completely slam the doors in Ottoman's face. After Balkan War I, the Porte appealed again but Grey remained unmoved. In June 1913, the subject of an Anglo-Turkish alliance was reopened by Tevfik Paşa who restated his proposal of October 1911 but no one gave serious consideration. Mallet considered the alliance 'impractical': "It would merely unite 'all Europe' against Britain and be a 'source of weakness and danger 'to both countries. The Triple Alliance might regard it as a 'challenge' on the part of the Triple Entente, and it would particularly arouse German 'jealousy'."³

Secondly, the Baghdad Railroad question; from the very opening of hostilities the security of vested capital and economic concessions within the Empire caused great concern among the Powers (France with its great stake in Ottoman bonds, Germany, deeply involved in the Baghdad Railway and ect.). Britain was no exception to this picture. She was strictly determined to adhere to the policy of defending British interest in Mesopotamia. Both Britain's proposal regarding the distribution of the railway shares and the demand for

¹Grey to Cartwright, July 21, 1913, BD, IX, part II, 1165.

²"The Allies succeeded beyond their wildest hopes and their triumphant valour earned for them the unstinted admiration of Europe" *The Times*, "The Story of the Balkan League", June 16, 1913, p. 9.

"The struggle against the Turks excited general sympathy because it was planned and undertaken for a noble ideal, and because, for the sake of that ideal, the Balkan peoples and their governments sacrificed particularist ambitions and prejudice which had been deemed to be irreconcilable." *The Times*, L.A., "After the Alliance", June 3, 1913, p. 9.

³Heller, *British Policy*, p. 80.



submission to British interests in the Gulf, was rejected by the Porte on the ground that the shares of the Baghdad Railway ought to be distributed equally amongst the parties concerned. Then Britain changed her position¹ in the following way: No branch lines were to be built beyond Basra without her consent and El Katr and Koweit with the exclusive right to control Gulf waters should come under British influence. Relations were strained, in the end Britain obtained all she wanted and secured her interests in the region by taking advantage of the Porte's rather isolated position.

Thirdly, the Balkan Committee had an important effect in influencing the public and to a certain extent policy in an anti-Turkish direction. Buxton was against the idea of supporting Turkey for the sake of pacifying Indian Muslims and expressed his view in the Press by quoting from William White "Our policy in Europe cannot be dictated by Asiatic considerations."

He pointed out: "Our responsibility for the state of Macedonia, therefore, for its amelioration, is in any case direct and final." He severely criticised some officials who took opposite view:

It is only ignorance of history which identifies pro-Turkism with Conservatism. Do these critics who wish to pursue a pro-Turkish policy agree with Lord Salisbury's comparison of that policy with backing the wrong horse, or do they not? Are they ignorant of the fact that within seven years of the San Stefano incident England became the friend of Bulgaria? This is an incident all too little known. When Eastern Rumelia declared its Union with Bulgaria a majority of the Powers were ready to invite Turkey to reoccupy it. Lord Salisbury set himself to defeat the project and by his unaided and spirited efforts preserved the united Bulgarian State. It is he who stands out as the most effective friend of a Balkan nation.²

Fourthly, the disorder and unrest in Macedonia was another issue which affected the public opinion. The position of the Christian population was described "intolerable" by Mallet and constant pressure was put on the Porte to extend the reforms which had already given to the Albanians to the Christians of Macedonia. Undoubtedly the public could not remain indifferent towards their co-religionists.

Fifthly, this pro-Balkan sentiment became more pronounced as more attention was paid to the Armenians in the Empire. In the course of the Balkan Wars the Armenians moved into a prominent position in British policy. The Foreign Office in general, found itself nearer to the point of view

¹In the negotiations towards a settlement priority was given to the Persian Gulf. "Nevertheless, Britain not only kept a watchful eye on her interests in Mesopotamian navigation and irrigation, but also cultivated a growing interest of the oil-fields of the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets." Heller, *British Policy*, p. 90.

²*The Times*, "Attitude of the Balkan Committee.", October 24, 1912, p. 5

of the Friends of Armenia, and admitted that nothing could be done for the Armenians as long as the Porte possessed executive power; foreign control was "no doubt" the only solution.¹ Asquith in July 1913 made it clear that Britain's support for Turkey very much depended on the Porte's treatment of Armenians: "We may add that an undertaking to help Turkey in Asia was not reasonable unless there was some intention to deal with the Armenians."² The Press took the same line:

Our policy would rather be to press on the question of reforms in Armenia and to take proper guarantees for their execution ... which will save the reputation of the Concert and incidentally do some good to humanity. Armenia could supply it. We have in any case a right and a duty to do whatever is possible for the Armenians.³

Finally, Russia's policy had a considerable impact on British thinking. Thus the maintenance of Anglo-Russian alignment and any prospective support for Turkey were mutually exclusive. Since the Anglo-Russian convention (despite strong public opposition) along with the Anglo-French Entente was a corner stone of British Policy. "Were these understandings to be in any way weakened we should find ourselves in a most awkward international position." Mallet wrote.

Consequently, although she guaranteed that no changes in the status-quo and the disintegration of Empire would be allowed, she failed to fulfil her commitment once more and tolerated Turkey's dissolution in Europe. Finally the crisis was concluded by the Treaty of Bucharest of August 10. The boundaries were established by a series of separate treaties signed with Bulgaria (September 29, 1913), Serbia (November 14, 1913), and Greece (March 14, 1914). With the exception of Bulgarian territories on the Aegean which went to Greece after World War I, the boundaries thus established in Thrace in Macedonia have held to present day. To bring the changes produced in Balkans by the wars of 1912 and 1913 into a general historical perspective, the picture was not all encouraging for the Ottomans. The goal of the Balkan national revolutionary movement had been attained: the Ottoman Empire had been virtually expelled from the peninsula and the Balkan states reached a new milestone on their steady development. Thus the Macedonian Question came to an end. Bulgaria had been enlarged by thirty percent, Albania was independent, Greece and Montenegro had experienced comparable gains. Serbia's territory had been increased by eighty-two percent. Only the Ottomans

¹Heller, *British Policy*, p. 84.

²*The Manchester Guardian*, "The Concert and the Balkans", July 24, 1913, p. 6

³*The Manchester Guardian*, L.A., "The Question of Adrianople", August 23, 1913, p. 8.

had really suffered, losing eighty-three percent of their land and sixty-nine percent of their population in Europe.¹ Long before the partners of 1912 undertook their war, it was clearly indicated by the progress of events that the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans which had long been shaking was about to reach its final stage. The Balkan States were to play the catalysing role in the long-standing process.

¹ Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 298.

CONCLUSION

Balkan history had for the last two centuries been dominated by two central factors; the first was the long struggle of the Balkan people against Ottoman rule resulting (with the rise of national feeling) in armed struggle and the second was the perpetual interference of the Great Powers in Balkan affairs in their own interest.

The events of the nineteenth century were to show that nationalism, though long latent and seemingly extinct, was capable of a truly volcanic eruption. It was the new factor which was destined to transform the Eastern Question so radically. As far as the Balkans or in other words the Near East was concerned, the solution of the problem was summed up on the basis of the famous catchphrase "The Balkans for the Balkan People".

By the beginning of the twentieth century the Great Powers had considerable interests in the Ottoman Empire, political, economic, and strategic which had been acquired in the course of the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century. Since each power had its particular concern in the Empire, the rivalry and tension between them due to the immense conflict of interests kept the Eastern Question constantly on the agenda of international politics.

No discussion of the Balkan problem would be complete without reference to the Berlin Treaty, a milestone in both European and Balkan history. The Treaty provided a classical example of the dissatisfaction resulting from the newly created territorial divisions. No less significant was the role of Balkan ethnic complexity and the economic and strategic value of the Balkans as was stated above. For Europe it marked the disintegration of the newly formed *Three Emperors League* of Germany, Austria and Russia. This, in turn meant the renewal and intensification of Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans. It also meant the re-emergence of Britain as an active force in European affairs. For the Balkan people the Berlin Treaty meant not peace but rather the frustration of national aspirations and future wars.

The impact of the Balkans on general European diplomacy was so significant that it dragged the European Powers to the brink of conflict on several occasions. In the Bosnian crisis Europe was confronted with an Austrian *fait accompli*, leading to the beginning of Turkey's dismemberment with the loss of two provinces and ending the cooperation between Austria and Russia. In the Balkan Wars we once more witnessed the Great Powers'

efforts to regain control of Balkan affairs and the Balkan States' determination to hang on to the fruits of their victories. The more striking cosmopolitan effect of war was the fact that it transferred the Eastern Question from South-Eastern Europe to Asia Minor.

As far as British public opinion was concerned no profound divergence of opinion to the objectives of the government's policy were found. Those objectives were defined in the phrase, "the protection of the British rights and interests"¹. Certain assumptions were common to all shades of opinion in the country; the security of Great Britain and the Empire must be maintained against all possible enemies. The sympathy which was given to the new Young Turk regime during the Austrian annexation did not lead Britain to modify its attitude on a number of questions of practical importance to the Young Turks as the time passed. During the Balkan Wars Britain saw her position more clearly, and her brief sympathy for Turkey reverted to an anti-Turkish attitude. After all, Britain's primary interests were in the Middle East not in the Balkans: she had commercial interests in Asiatic Turkey particularly in Mesopotamia and wanted to maintain her paramount influence in the Persian Gulf: since her interests in the Ottoman Empire in the final decades of its existence were concentrated primarily in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, the preservation of Turkey's territorial integrity in Europe was of secondary concern to her. Her determination not to come into conflict with other powers, especially with Russia over Turkey proved to be as strong a factor as ever in her policy. So she tolerated Turkey's dissolution in Europe.

In these two crises, unsuccessful attempts by Turkey to secure British support for her territorial integrity and Britain's failure to respond, strained relations between the two; this had, a profound effect on Turkey's foreign policy considerations and resulted in the separation of their ways in the eve of the Great War.

¹Nicolson, Harold, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, January 1937, vol.1, p. 55.

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SEVTAP DEMİRCİ

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION
TOWARDS
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
DURING THE TWO CRISES



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (1908-1909)
THE BALKAN WARS (1912-1913)

