

**NATIONALISM IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA AND
DISINTEGRATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,
1878-1913**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
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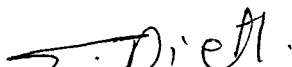


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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "NATIONALISM IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA AND DISINTEGRATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1878-1913", submitted by Mr. Ashok Dogra in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil.) of the University is, to the best of my knowledge, his own work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Who are the Turks? The Question of origin of Turks is still a topic of learned controversy. It is sometimes supposed that they are akin to the Arabs. This impression is due to the fact that a thousand years ago the ancestors of the present day Turks adopted Islam, the religion of the Arabs, at the same time adopting the Arabic alphabet, as being that of the language in which God revealed the Koran to the Prophet Muhammad. But in its basic structure the Turkish language is as different from Arabic as English is from Hindi or Chinese. It is likewise sometimes supposed that the Turks are related to the Finns and the Hungarians, because of the 19th century Ural-Altaiic theory, which claimed that the languages of all three peoples belonged to the same family. But most modern scholars are agreed that this is not so and that the resemblances among these languages arose from mutual borrowings. The only people from whom a Kinship with the Turks may plausibly be claimed are

the Mongols. Even here some scholars deny the antiquity of the relationship and ascribe it to comparatively recent times when the two peoples campaigned together. Thus the Golden Horde, which in the first half of the thirteenth century swept out of Central Asia to occupy much of Eastern Europe, included both Turks and Mongols in its ranks. Whatever may be the objection to the Mongol-Turkish kinship theory it cannot be denied that Turks had very close resemblance to the Mongols.

The Earliest Turks were a pastoral people of the steppes. The Orkhon Inscriptions, found in what is now outer Mongolia, show that they had a powerful state there in the seventh and eighth centuries of this era. After the fall of their Empire, i.e., by the end of 8th century, they migrated southwestward. Over the next two centuries an ever-growing number of them took service as mercenary soldiers with the rulers of the Arab Empire, the Caliphs of Baghdad, and gradually usurped their power. It was during this time that they became Muslims, like the Arabs among whom they were living. In 1055 A.D. Baghdad was seized by

the Turkish horde known as the Seljuks, named after a famous chief who was the ancestor of their ruling family. The Seljuks advanced westward into Asia Minor, then part of the territories of the Byzantine Emperor, whose seat was at Constantinople Istanbul. In 1071 the Byzantine armies suffered a heavy defeat in the East, at Manzikert (now Malazgirt), where the Emperor, Romanus IV Diogenes, fell prisoner to the Seljuk Sultan Alparslen. Within the next few years virtually the whole of Anatolia became a Seljuk province, with its capital at Nicaea (now Iznik).

By the end of 13th century Seljuk dynasty came to an end and their place was taken by Ottoman Turks, called after their leader Osman. In 1326 the Ottomans made their capital at Bursa. In 1365, one of the Sultans of this dynasty called Murad I shifted the capital to Adrianople (Edirne). It was from this place that year after year, was mounted a campaign against Christian Europe until in 1453 the last great Byzantine strong hold, i.e., Constantinople (Istanbul) fell to sultan Mehmed-II the conquerer. And at their great-

est extent, in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire included the whole of Balkan peninsula, the Crimea, Iraq and the western shores of Persian Gulf, Syria, Palestine, west and south Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria.

THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE EMPIRE

For any study dealing with Ottoman Empire, it is essential to understand the basic administrative structure of the Empire. The administrative structure of the Empire can be divided into (a) the Caliphate, (b) the Ulema, (c) the sublime Porte, (d) the millet system, (E) the Capitulations and the Devsirme.

THE CALIPHATE:

Caliph is the English form of the Arabic *Khalifa*, 'successor', the title assumed by the Prophet's devoted follower Abu Bakr, who succeeded Muhammad as Civil and Military Chief of the Muslim Community. He inherited also the Imamate, the privilege of leading the people in prayer. For practical purposes the Caliphate came to an end in 1258

A.D. when the Mongols under Hulagu sacked Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid dynasty. But for three centuries before that date the Caliphs had been for the most part puppets in the hands of their Turkish generals. In 1261 A.D., the Mamluke Sultan of Egypt, Baybars, who was also a Turk, installed a scion of the Abbasid house as Caliph in Cairo, in order to legitimize his own rule by appearing as the protector of the titular head of the Muslim community, the living symbol of the unity of the Faith. The shadow-Caliphs continued to grace Cairo until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. From that time on the Ottomans were the only dynasty who could have put up any serious claim to the Caliphate. None of the Sultans, however, made much play with the title. Finally Mustafa Kemal abolished the Caliphate, putting an end *de jure* to an institution which had been deprived of its power by other Turkish commanders 1,000 years before him.

THE ULEMA

This anglicized word represents the Turkish pronunciation of the Arabic *Ulema*, 'sage'. As a technical term, it

was applied collectively to the religious functionaries of every grade, who were the custodians, teachers, and interpreters of the sacred law. At the head of the hierarchy there formerly stood the *Kazasker*, the judge of the Army, but in 1840 Sultan Mehmed II curtailed the powers of the *Kazasker* by restricting his authority to the European provinces and appointed a second *Kazasker* to be chief of the Ulema in Asia. By the end of the sixteenth century the *Seyhulislem*, the chief mufti of the Empire, had become head of the hierarchy, above the two *Kazaskers*.

THE SUBLIME PORTE:

The term *Babiali*, 'High Gate', was originally applied to the house of the Sultan's chief minister, the Grand Vizier (*Sadrizam*), wherever it might be. In 1654 the name was transferred to the official residence which was then assigned to him, adjacent to the palace. It was here that administrative work of most departments of state was carried out. In the closing years of the Empire the building housed not only the Grand Vizierate but also the Ministries of the

interior and of the foreign affairs, as well as the offices of the Council of state and some smaller departments.

THE MILLET SYSTEM:

The *millet* system of Ottoman Empire clearly defies the assertion put forward by 19th century European writers that Sultans of Ottoman Empire were intolerant to the non-Muslim inhabitants of the Empire. In fact various religious communities (*millet*) were left under the supervision of their religious leaders, who were responsible to the government for their good behaviour, the settling of their disputes, and the collection of their taxes. The *millet* system worked well so far the central authority was strong. But once the central authority started declining the *millet* system proved disastrous to the Empire. This system in later days gave the opportunity to the European powers to intervene into the affair of Ottoman state in the name of protecting their co-religionist. Furthermore the situation became worse when the idea of nationalism started gaining ground among the various *Millet* of the Empire.

THE DEVSIRME:

The word means 'collecting' and the term applied to the compulsory recruitment of Christian boys for training and eventual employment in the civil and military service of the Empire, a practice which seems to have arisen in the reign of Murad I (1360-89). A highly selective code of rules was laid down for the guidance of recruiting officers. The Principle was that every recruit should be unspoilt raw material; consequently orphans who had to fend for themselves were not taken; nor boys who had spent sometime in the capital or the two former capitals, Bursa and Edirne. Jewish boys were exempt because most Jews were engaged in business also it was forbidden to take an only son. On arrival at Istanbul the boys were formally admitted into Islam. Here they were given military training before being admitted to the 'New Troops', *YENICERI*, anglicized as 'Jenissary'.

THE CAPITULATIONS:

In simple term capitulation meant the granting of freedom to the foreigners. The first capitulation were those granted by Suleman to the French in 1535. Subsequently the capitulations were granted to Austria and England in 1567 and 1592 respectively. Under the capitulations, foreigners were not subject to Turkish law. They paid no taxes their houses and business premises were inviolable, and they could be arrested or deported only by order of their own ambassadors. Disputes involving foreigners were settled by the consular court of the dependent, according to the law of his own land. However this system proved disastrous to the Empire for it gave the opportunity to the foreign powers to intervene into the affairs of the state.

Besides the above mentioned basic administrative structure of Ottoman Empire it is important to mention a few words about the concept of Nationalism because in the succeeding chapters of this study the role of nationalism in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire has been analysed.

Nationalism as a concept came into existence after the period of Reformation. Among the numerous characteristics of nationalism three are most important. The first is an awareness, among members of the community, of a natural homogeneity in language, culture (especially literature and music) and social customs. The second is a mass acceptance of the authority of a central organisation. The third is the people's awareness of its own unique identity.

Nationalism is fundamentally the expression of mass commitment above all other loyalties. During the period before the French Revolution, the inhabitants of most part of world had other bonds which were still very powerful. One was the local connection which comprised a variety of feudal obligations and loyalties which were left over from the middle ages. Another was a profound attachment to universal values which, as in the case of religion, entirely transcended the individual state. Thus the commitments of the people were like two separate beams of light, one stopping well short of the national frontier and the other overshooting it. The social and political upheaval caused

by French Revolution (1789) altered radically the individual's relationship with the state by uprooting a host of traditional local interests and swept away the remnants of feudalism leading to the decline of Empires.

The present study which deals with the disintegration of Ottoman Empire is divided into five chapters. The first which is Introduction mainly deals with the origin and Historical background of the Turks. This chapter also throws some light on the administrative component of the Ottoman Empire besides defining the concept of Nationalism in general terms.

The Chapter II deals with the nationalism in the Balkan peninsula. In order to understand the rise of nationalism in Balkan peninsula the chapter throws some light on the geographical location of the Balkan peninsula, through which once passed the most important trade route between East and West. This chapter also elaborates the racial composition of the region in question and the racial admixture which took place over a period of time. This chapter then pro-

ceeds to describe the advent of the Ottomans in the Balkan finally the chapter concludes with the factors responsible for growth of nationalism in the region under review.

The Chapter III, which runs under the heading Impact of Balkan Nationalism on Ottoman Empire mainly deals with the response of the people of Balkan peninsula to the idea of nationalism and consequently the reaction of the rulers of Ottoman Empire. For the convenience the developments in the various provinces of Balkan region have been dealt separately. In this chapter some light has also been thrown on the role of European powers specially their intervention into affair of Ottoman Empire as a result of social and political upheaval caused by the rising nationalism among the people of Balkan.

The Chapter IV, 'the Disintegration of Ottoman Empire' mainly answers the question such as: How the various provinces of Balkan region got separated from the Ottoman Empire? What was the effect of separation of the provinces from Ottoman Empire? This chapter also throws some light on

the question such as what was the role of European powers vis-a-vis the disintegration of Ottoman Empire? Further the chapter elaborates the interests of the European powers in the regions which were under Ottoman Empire.

The Chapter V, which is Conclusion, sums up the role of Balkan Nationalism in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Here the analysis has been made between the uprising in the Balkan peninsula against the established authority of Sultans and the role of European powers in such uprisings.

CHAPTER 2

RISE OF NATIONALISM IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA

The Balkan is the land around the Eastern Mediterranean it is bounded on the west by the Adriatic sea and the island of Crete, to its north lies the River Danube, and to its the east lies Asian Minor and Mesopotamia. The word "BALKAN" means mountain in Turkish.¹ Precisely the description applies only to the land to the south of great divide formed by the Shar mountains and the Balkan range. Therefore the southern Slav provinces and the whole of Rumania is not included into it. Until the establishment of the Ottoman Empire the region thus defined formed the nerve-Centre of the worlds' commerce. From time immemorial the trade between the East and the West has been carried through the routes across this region. Once the region came under the rule of Ottoman Turks, the western world found itself faced with three alternatives: to forego the profits and conven-

1. Marion I., Newbiggin Geographical Aspects of Balkan Problems, London, 1915, p.9.

ience of its trade with the East; or to expel the Ottomans from the 'nodal-points'; or to discover a new route to the East with the continuity of which the Ottomans could not interfere.² The Europeans preferred the last alternative. This led to the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco-de-Gama in 1498 and the discovery of new route to East. Similarly Columbus setting path on a similar quest a few years earlier had found West Indies; Cabot from England explored the Coast of North America. In a nutshell the discovery of new routes and new world was primarily due to the advent of the Ottomans in the Balkan and the consequent blocking of the old trade routes. The opening of the new route to the East Indies, together with the discovery of America and West Indies, had a profound and far-reaching influence upon the world polity, specially the European polity. The centre of gravity, commercial, political, and intellectual, rapidly shifted from the south-east to the North-West Europe. Thus the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan

2. Murray, William Smith; "Making of the Balkan states", London, 1910, p.22.

peninsula constitutes one of the decisive events in world history. In order to understand the rise of nationalism in the Balkans and its impact on the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire it is important to know about the origin and composition of the peoples who inhabit this region. The position of the Balkan Peninsula and the structure of its land always invited outside invasion. Waves of people came by land from West, North and East, by sea from West, South, and East. The region was thus flooded with people since the beginning of the recorded time. Some waves retreated, leaving little effect; others temporarily left a deep impression which was effaced or modified by a succeeding wave; still others made a lasting mark.³ This succession of human waves produced a mixture of peoples of quite extraordinary complexity and interest. All the peoples inhabiting this region were invaders and were repeatedly invaded. In widely varying degrees each was moulded by the previous settlers and later attackers. Thus the ethnic structure of the region

3. Marion I.; *Newbegin Geographical Aspects of Balkan Problems*, New Begin, London, 1915, p.22.

was created by a long and complex process of stratification.

One of the great races of the Balkan Peninsula were the Illyrians.

Archaeologists associate the Illyrians with what they call the Hallstett culture, after a place in Austria where extensive remains were found.⁴ Illyrians carried this culture south east into what is now Yugoslavia, where they gave their name to the whole Eastern Adriatic littoral as far south as Durazzo, and inland to the Morava. The Illyrians resisted both Greek penetration and Roman conquest. When finally absorbed into the Roman Empire they proved valuable to the state. For many centuries the best Troops of the Roman Armies were supplied by Illyria.

Just as Illyrians served and ruled Rome and Byzantium, so the Albanians, their probable descendants served and ruled the Ottoman Empire. For centuries they supplied the most reliable troops to the Turkish armies. The Koprulus, an Albanian family, provided no fewer than four Grand Vizi-

4. Ibid., p.24.

ers to the Turkish Sultans in the seventeenth century. Mehmet Ali, an Albanian, rose through the ranks of the Turkish army in the early Nineteenth Century to become Ottoman Governor and then independent ruler of Egypt.

Another important race in the Balkan peninsula were the Thracians. At the time when the Illyrians were moving into the Balkans, the Thracians already were living in the entire region north of the Aegean Sea (to the Danube and even beyond) and East of the Morava to the Black sea coast, where the Greeks had important commercial settlements.⁵ Towards the Northern Part of Thrace lived a branch of the Thracians called Getae, and still further north across the Danube in Transylvania and the Eastern Carpathians were their close relatives, the Dacians.

Among the other important peoples inhabiting the Balkans were Romanians and the Balkan Vlachs. Just as the modern Albanians appeared to be the descendents of the Illyr-

5. Ibid., p.42.

ians, so the Rumanians and the Balkan Vlachs appeared to be Romanized Dacians.⁶ In addition to these Latin speaking Rumanians there lived widely scattered groups of people. Their Dialect varied, but all were close to modern Romanian. These people were called Vlachs. They were also found in northern Greece and Macedonia. Other Vlach groups existed in the Balkan mountains in northern Bulgaria, in the Istrian peninsula, in Dalmatia, and in the corner of Yugoslavia across the border from Romania at the Iron Gates of the Danube, where they were called Vlashi.

North of the Carpathians and East of the Vistula, stretching East to the Dnieper, lies the area where scholars think, the Indo-European speaking Slavs had their original home. "The name itself is something of a mystery, perhaps derived from a root meaning speech or word, but more likely from the name of a place whose whereabouts we no longer

6. Ibid., p.30.

know."⁷ From this original home, the slavs began slowly to disperse West, East and South during the first century A.D. And from the southward migration have come, the slavs of the Balkans which include Slovenes, Serbs and Croats.

ADVENT OF THE OTTOMANS IN THE BALKAN

In the second half of the fourteenth century the Ottoman Turks transferred their military activities and successes from Asia Minor to southeastern Europe. They crossed the straits in force in 1360, and in the following year they captured Andrianople (now Edirne) and made it their capital. In 1387 they conquered Salonica (now Selanik). Two years later in the Battle of Kossovo they defeated the Yugoslavs. With Kossovo ended the importance, but not altogether the interest of medieval Serbia.⁸ In 1393 they decisively defeated the Bulgarians. In the meantime they were seizing islands in the Aegean and fighting the Venetians in the

7. Oscar Halecki, Border Land of the Western Civilization London, 1952, p.13.

8. Sir Charles Eliot, Turkey in Europe, London, 1965 p.40.

Greek peninsula. At the end of the fourteenth century the Ottoman Turks dominated the entire Balkan peninsula except Constantinople (Istanbul) and a few other posts still held by Greeks or Itallians.

In desperation the Byzantine Emperors begged aid of western Europe, and in alarm the popes preached new Crusades and asked all Christians to go to the assistance of the Greeks. Some Christian princes did lead armies against the Turks; the Kings of Poland and Hungry repeatedly tried to stem the tide of Turkish conquest; and the Venetians, with their commercial interests in the Near East at Stake, turned crusaders and fought against the Turks. But despite all this the Turks were successful and repeatedly defeated their opponents.

In 1453, after elaborate preparations, Mohammed II, the ablest and greatest of the Ottoman Sultans, with an army of about 150,000 men, laid sieg to Constantinople (Istanbul). The city was defended by a Christian army of about 8,000 men of whom half were Greek and the other half comprised detach-



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ments sent by the pope and by the city states of Venice and Genoa. The battle continued for few months till Constantine XI, the last of the Greeco-Roman Emperors perished. The transfer of Constantinople from the rule of the Emperor Constantine XI to that of Sultan Muhammed II was a great step which transformed the Near East. The fall of Constantinople(Istanbul) was a great victory for the Turks and a great loss to the Christendom. Its possession carried prestige. For Constantinople was viewed by both Christians and Moslems as one of the greatest and strongest cities in the world. Also since Christians had held it from the time of the first Constantine in the fourth century A.D. to the days of the last Constantine, i.e., Constantine XI, in the fifteenth century, so the Moslems were determined to possess it Bernard Lewis summarises the event thus, "In 1453 Constantinople, the capital of the decaying Byzantine Empire, was captured, and the last bastion of independent Christianity in the Balkans overthrown."⁹ Mohammed-II (1451-1481) succeeded in doing what the preceding Byzantine Emperors had

9. Bernad Lewis, Turkey Today, London, 1940, p.11.

failed to do.¹⁰ He not only ruled in Constantinople but he brought together within his Empire many territories which had been lost to the Byzantine Empire. He reunited the whole of Asia Minor and the Entire Balkan peninsula. For almost a century after the death of Mohammed-II the Ottoman Empire grew rapidly and flourished mightily. One of the Sultans - Selim-I (1512-1520) - conquered Syria and Egypt. But it was Sultan Suleiman-II (1520-1566) who extended his dominions in Europe. He, with the main force of the Moslem world behind him, turned anew against Christendom. In 1521, Suleiman captured Belgrade and crossed the Danube. In 1526 he defeated the King of Hungry in the Battle of Mohacs and occupied Budapest. He next turned his attention to Austria which had tried to help Hungary. A siege to Vienna was laid in 1529. Though he could not take Vienna, he compelled the Holy Roman Emperor to agree to a partition of Hungary, the smaller portion going to Austria and the larger portion passing to the Ottoman Empire and becoming a Turkish prov-

10. William Miller, The Ottoman Empire and its Successors: 1801-1936, Cambridge: 1936, p.42.

ince. Thereafter the Holy Roman Emperor, and the King of Poland too, made repeated and protracted attempts to drive the Turks out of Hungary and Rumania but almost invariably they met defeat at the hands of Suleiman. Thus almost whole of the Balkan Peninsula came under Turkish rule by the first quarter of sixteenth century.

The Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth century was similar to the earlier Byzantine Empire not only in Territorial extent but also in political institution.¹¹ It was not a national state any more than the old Roman Empire had been. It was a military political union, under the Turkish leadership of diverse peoples. Only in Asia did the Turks constitute a large proportion of the total population and even there sizeable minorities of Armenians, Kurds and Greeks persisted. In Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine and across northern Africa the Turks were in minority. In southeastern Europe the conquered nationalities remained - Greks, Yugo-

11. W.M. Gewehr (ed.) rev., History of the Balkan Peninsula, London, 1940, p.12.

slavia (Serbs), Bulgarians, Albanians, Romanians, and Hungarians (Magyars).

Politically the of Ottoman Empire was an autocratic state.¹² The Sultan was head alike of temporal and spiritual affairs. In theory his word was supreme, he made and enforced laws; he appointed the local governors and army officers; he declared war and concluded peace. In practice, the Sultan was often influenced by his army, harem; local agents and tax-gatherers. As a matter of fact, the Turks were not intolerant, they did not force conversion to Islam. As soon as the Sultan Mohammed II had captured Constantinople in 1453, he issued the famous Edict of toleration, according religious freedom to the Greek orthodox Christians and constituting them a special nation (*millet*) under their own patriarch and with their own laws and law courts. Other Sultans created similar millets for the Armenian Christians, the Catholic Christians and the Jews. In this way, the

12. J.W. Allen, History of Political Thought in 16th Century, London, 1938, p.22.

Sultan was able to hold the Patriarch and other heads of millets personally responsible for the good behaviour of the subject Christians. At the same time the privileges accorded to several millets kept alive the spirit of nationality among the conquered peoples and served to emphasize the heterogeneous character of the Ottoman Empire. In this context it is important to note that the rule of Mohammed II was also advantageous to Greek commerce; for the abolition of the privileges accorded to the foreigners by the Byzantine Emperors and the indifference of the Turks to mercantile pursuits left the Christian subjects of the Porte in favourable position.¹³ Besides all this the Sultans entered into treaties with Christian states, granting to their citizens permission of pilgrimage to the holy land and the right to live under their own laws and to maintain their own law courts while they were residing in the Ottoman Empire.

Till the first quarter of 19th century all went well with Ottoman Empire as far as its territorial extent was

13. Sir Charles Eliot, n.8, London, 1965, pp.274-275.

concerned. But the ferment of ideas caused by the French Revolution and the political unrest which followed on the conquests of Napoleon, produced important consequences in whole of Europe.¹⁴ But the rise of nationalism in Balkan peninsula took more time than in the rest of Europe the reason for this was that Balkan peninsula lagged behind Western and Central Europe in many respects. For centuries its social structure and political practices had been more Asiatic than European.¹⁵ Its religion, whether Islam among the Ottoman Turks or orthodox Christianity among Balkan peoples, differed from both the Catholic and Protestant Christianity of central and western Europe and was much less independent of state control than these. In the nineteenth century, moreover, the newer mechanized industry penetrated very slowly into eastern Europe and prior to 1870, produced no social effects there as it did elsewhere in Europe. The Blakan peninsula was still marked by relativley small middle

14. W.M. Gewehr, Rise of Nationalism in the Balkan, London, 1917, p.82.

15. Ibid., p.93.

class, whether of intellectuals or of businessmen, and by a wide social chasm between nobles and officials, on the one hand, and a vast mass of ignorant peasants, on the other.

Apart from the French Revolution there were other factors which led to the rise of nationalism in Balkan peninsula most important of them being the revival of language of literature in the region. The lead in this direction was taken by Greek writers. Of all the Greek writers, two had definite political importance Rhigas (1753-1798) and Coraes (1748-1833). Both of them lived abroad. Rhigas was the author of some popular and spirited national songs which provided inspiration to the following generation. Rhigas also laid the foundation of the society from which was developed the celebrated *Hertaireia* which played important role in the Greek war of Independence. Coraes lived chiefly in Paris and published several political works. He also edited the Hellenic Library of ancient Greek authors, and worked on a Greek-French Lexicon. Thus these two authors gave great fillip to the rise of nationalism among Greek masses of Ottoman Empire.

Similarly the revival of vernacular literature took place in Bulgaria the fillip in this direction was given by Paysi, a monk of Mount Athos.¹⁶ He wrote a work called the History of Bulgaria. Another name connected with the revival of literature in Bulgaria was Venelin, a Russian, who had travelled in the Balkan peninsula and published a book entitled Old and New Bulgaria. Venelin's book inspired the founding in 1845 of a school at Gabrovo where a person named Aprilov taught in Bulgarian and disseminated the novel idea that education was not necessarily an exclusively Greek product Venelin's educational movement was the real precursor and cause of the national awakening in Bulgaria.¹⁷

In connection with the revival of slavonic language it is important to note that Servian, a pure slavonic language includes Bosnian, Montenegrin and Croatian languages. Thus Servian speaking population included old Serbia with the

16. Ibid., p.120.

17. Ibid., p.121.

Sanjak of Novi Bazar, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The credit of reviving the slavonic language goes to Servian writers, particularly poets who flourished at Ragusa, and wrote many epics and dramas which show signs of Italian models.¹⁸ The most patriotic writer of slovanic language was Vuk Karajich (1787-1864). He was successful in producing a linguistic revolution and made his countrymen adopt the spoken language for literary purposes. He translated the new testament into the popular language and hence strengthened the native language. Another important name connected with the revival of slavonic language was Slakovick. About the middle of 19th century he collected and arranged the ballads of the native land and published them. These ballads were full of nationalist spirit.

In case of Albanians and Vlachs native literature was almost non-existent. Though effort was made to revive the native literature but the result seems to be not very successful. Thus in case of Albanians and Vlachs the revival

18. Sir Charles Eliot, n.14, London, 1965, p.342.

of vernacular and literature played less important role in nationalism as compared to the other people of the Balkan peninsula. On the whole growth of vernacular and literature played an important role in rise of nationalism in Balkan peninsula. Because the idea of equality, liberty and fraternity generated by French Revolution were disseminated among the masses in Balkan peninsula through the vernacular language.

Another important factor which led to growth of nationalism in the Balkan peninsula was the encourage given by the neighbouring countries to the natives of Balkan peninsula to overthrow the Ottoman rule. It may be noted in this context that such encouragements given to the people of Balkan peninsula had a selfish motive behind it. The Russians who were next door to the Balkans assisted the Slavs subjects of Turkey due to the fact that Russia had the ambition to control the Black sea and straits so that she might command the passage to the mediterranean. This desire of Russian expansion stimulated the other European states to intervene

in thhe Balkan peninsula.¹⁹ This is known as the Eastern Question in world history. The Russian intervention was facilitated by the fact that Russia was bound to the Balkan peoples with the ties of religion and race and the Czar's claimed the right of protecting them. The Czars' sympathy ran in the same direction as their ambition, and beneath their benevolent intention there was the transparent design of securing the much-desired access to the Mediterranean.²⁰ Suspicion about Russian designs upon Turkey was the keynote of the British policy. British ministers began to see in the Russian aggrandisement a serious menace to British interests in the East.²¹ They feared that the establishment of Russian control over Constantinople(Istanbul) would greatly weaken British hold upon India. Hence they watched with keen suspicion every Russian movement which threatened to interfere with the gateway to Asia. As a result throughout the nineteenth century England stood forth as the

19. R.B. Mowat, Europe and Overseas, London, 1950, p.228.

20. Ibid., p.230.

21. W.G. Wirthwein, British and the Balkan Crisis, 1875-1878, 1935, p.48.

champion of Turkey against Russian Aggression. British Policy aimed at checking the Russian advance by preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. However England was successful in holding Russia in check but she could not prevent the dismemberment of the the Ottoman Empire. It is ironical that while posing as the champion of the integrity of Turkey, England managed to take a valuable share of Turkish spoils as Ottoman Empire started disintegrating.

To sum up the spread of nationalistic ideas in the Balkan peninsula gathered momentum after 1832 partly because of the success of the Greeks and Serbs in winning their freedom from the Ottoman Empire and partly because of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire. The spread of nationalism also owed a good deal to the revival of vernacular and literature. The role of outside powers with whatever motive, can not be underestimated in this regard particularly Great Britain and Russia. It is interesting to note that both Greece and Serbia after winning their independence, aspired to become bigger and thus laboured to infuse all

Greeks and Serbs with a desire for complete national freedom and unity. Also the Romanians started thinking in terms of distinctive Latin nationality with a glorious ancient history and a rosy future. Similar was the case with the Bulgarians. It was only the Turks and their fellow-Moslem Albanians and Arabs who were still unaffected by nationalism.²² As a result the Turks who had been hitherto tolerant of their Christian subjects restored to harsh methods to hold the Christian and their subversive nationalism in check. This further intensified nationalism among the Balkan peoples.

22. W.M. Geherhr, Rise of Nationalism in the Balkan, London, 1917, p.243.

CHAPTER 3

IMPACT OF BALKAN NATIONALISM ON THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Though it were serbs who first rose in revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1804, yet it was Greece which first got its independence. The Greeks occupied, on the whole, a superior position among the Christian subjects of the Sultan. Many Greeks were merchants and traders controlling a large part of the industrial and commercial activity of the Ottoman Empire, and enjoyed a practical monopoly of those offices in church and state to which the Christians were eligible. In other words, there was an educated middle class among the Greeks. And as remarked by Sir Edwin Pears "It was among the educated middle class that national revival had begun in the time of French Revolution." One of the pioneers of the Greek nationalism was Adamantios Korais. He was the son of a merchant of Smyrna (Izmir) and had spent his youth as his father's agent at Amsterdam in the Netherlands and then studied medicine in France. It was in France that he became familiar with the philosophy of Western

Europe. In France he witnessed the patriotic achievements of the French revolutionaries. "If nationalism was good for the French," Korais thought, "it must be good for the Greeks, and for years he devoted himself to patriotic propaganda among his fellow countrymen.¹ He propagated his ideas through the books he wrote. He took the spoken Greek of his day to propagate his ideas and made it the literary language of modern Greece."²

The cultural nationalism of Korais was reinforced by the political nationalism of another middle-class Greek, Constantine Rhigas. He was successively secretary to the Sultan's Greek governor in Rumania and interpreter for the French consulate at Bucharest. As the interpreter for the French consulate he acquired a knowledge of French revolutionary principles. He founded secret societies and clandestine newspapers to work for Greek independence. As he

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1. Sir Edwin Pears, Destruction of Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by Turks, London, 1903, p.35.
 2. S.G. Chaconas, Korais, a study in Greek Nationalism, Paris, 1942, p.140.

was setting out to enlist aid in France for Greek uprising he was caught by the Austrian government and handed over to the Turks. Very soon he was shot dead and with this ended the first phase of Greek nationalism.

The next phase of Greek nationalism started in 1814 when in Russian City of Odessa, was founded a Greek revolutionary society, the *Hetairia Philike*, which resembled the revolutionary Carbonari in Italy. This revolutionary society soon enrolled thousands of members. In 1821 Prince Alexander Ypsilanti, the President of the *Hetairia Philike*, entered the Rumanian provinces of the Ottoman Empire calling for a national Greek revolt. But the disturbance in the Rumanian Provinces of the Ottoman Empire was quickly suppressed by the Turkish Troops. However, this was not the end of Greek revol; it was only a premature beginning. Hardly was Ypsilanti overpowered in Rumania when a popular uprising occurred in the Greek peninsula, i.e. Morea and in the Greek islands of the Aegean. This uprising assumed formidable proportions. The Greeks began the war with a

wholesale massacre of the Turks and other acts of revolting cruelty. The evil example thus set up was too faithfully followed by the Turks. According to Sir Edwin Pears "The war thus developed into one of mutual extermination, and was conducted on both sides with the utmost ferocity and blood-curdling atrocities."³ For the first six years (1821-1827) the powers, i.e. European Powers did not intervene and Greeks were left to themselves. But by 1827 there came a change in the situation which made foreign intervention inevitable. The Sultan had called upon his vassal, Mehemet Ali of Egypt, to come to his help. Ibrahim, the son of Mehemet Ali, landed in the Morea and swept everything before him. The fall of Missolonghi in 1828, followed by the capture of Athens next year broke the backbone of Greek resistance.⁴ Fortunately for Greeks wave of sympathy spread through Europe for people with rich cultural heritage. Moreover the European powers feared that Russia might take

3. Sir Edwin Pears, Destruction of Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by Turks, London, 1903, p.365.

4. Ibid., p.370.

isolated action. To prevent independent action on the part of Russia, Great Britain induced France and Russia to combine with her in forcing an armistice on the Porte and compel her to accept the joint mediation of powers. A joint note was accordingly despatched to Turkey but the Sultan refused to accede to the proposals of armistice. Thereupon the allied fleets of France and England completely destroyed the Turkish fleet at Navarino. The victory encouraged the Greeks and eventually secured their liberation. Apart from all this the advantages of joint intervention were reaped by Russia alone. This was primarily due to the fact that there was a change in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in England which resulted in England's withdrawal from any further participation in the Greek question and thus allowing Russia a free hand. On her own Russia declared war against Turkey and forced her to come to terms. By the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) Turkey recognised the independence of Greece and granted partial autonomy to Serbia and likewise to Rumanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. By this treaty the Sultan also surrendered claims on Georgia and other

Provinces of the Caucasus to Russia; and recognized the exclusive jurisdiction of Russia Consuls over Russian traders in Turkey. Thus the Treaty of Adrianople was a treaty of first rate importance in the history of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.⁵ The treaty was followed by an international conference in London (1832). This conference fixed the Greek frontier and Prince Otto of Bavaria became the first constitutional King of Greece. Thus the Greek victory was the first victory of rising nationalism in the Balkan peninsula. Not only did the Greeks win their freedom but also set an example before other people of Balkan peninsula to fight for their independence. The idea started circulating throughout the Balkan peninsula that if Greeks can unite and fight for their independence then why not other people of Balkan do the same thing. As a result a chain reaction set in which was beyond the capacity of Ottoman Sultans to control.

Before viewing the impact of rising nationalism in

5. C.J.H. Hayes, Modern Europe to 1870, New York, 1953, p.637.

other provinces of Balkan peninsula it is worth mentioning the brief developments in Egypt which were directly connected with Greek independence. Mehmet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt thought of taking advantage of the weakness of Turkey which was revealed by the war of Greek independence. The events in Greece revealed the , military, naval, and political, weakness of the Ottoman Empire. If Greece, an integral part of his European dominions, could so easily be detached from the sceptre of the Sultan, why not other parts of the Empire, connected with Constantinople by a looser tie?"⁶

Mehemet Ali had rendered valuable services to the Sultan against the Greek, and was rewarded the governorship of the island of Crete. Able and ambitious, he considered the reward as quite inadequate. So in 1831 he proceeded to tear Syria from his overlord. His soldiers carried everything before them and threatened to march upon Constantinople. The Sultan appealed to the powers, but no response

6. J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question an Historical Study in European Diplomacy, London, 1918, p.226.

came from any of them except from Russia which was willing to give help. However unwelcome the Russian help might be, the Sultan like drowning man clutching at a serpent, had to accept it.⁷ But the pouring of Russian troops into Turkish dominions made the western powers uneasy and so England, France and Austria put pressure upon Turkey to buy off the hostility of Mehemet Ali by the cession of Syria, thus making the Russian help unnecessary. But Russia was determined to have its price which resulted in the Treaty of Hunkar Iskelesi (1833) by which Turkey agreed to give Russian warships free passage through the straits, and to close the Dardanelles in time of war to all ships of war except those of Russia. The Black Sea thus became a Russian lake and Russia virtually secured a protectorate over Turkey. The treaty was the high watermark of Russian influence at Constantinople.⁸

This treaty was a big problem to the European power and

7. William Miller, The Ottoman Empire and its Successors, 1801-1927, London, 1928, pp.232-233.

8. Ibid., p.240.

as such they were in search of an opportunity whereby this treaty could be abrogated. Such an opportunity came when the Sultan was beaten for the second time in his premature attempts to recover Syria from his Egyptian vassal. This resulted in the convention of London (July, 1841) concluded between England, Russia, Austria, Prussia and France. Though the Porte recovered Syria, Crete and Arabia by this treaty, yet Mehemet Ali was confirmed in the hereditary *Pashalik* of Egypt under the suzerainty of the Sultan. The country which Mehmet Ali had recreated became, subject to the payment of an annual tribute to the Porte, completely autonomous in an administrative and economic sense. Mehmet Ali was at liberty to conclude commercial, financial, and administrative convention with foreign powers; he could vary the terms of the capitulations raise loans and set up any domestic institution which seemed good to him. Thus the Pasha of Egypt became almost independent. However, by the Treaty of London (1841), the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which was threatened with dissolution by the ambition of Mehemet Ali, was preserved. But the revolt of Mehemet

Ali was another step in the direction of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Though the revolt in Egypt was not the outcome of nationalism, nevertheless it was connected with the nationalism in Greece. Mehemet Ali had tried to take the advantage of creating an independent principality for himself after the defeat of Ottoman Sultan at the hands of Greeks.

For ten years after the convention of London there was repose in the Turkish Empire but this quite was disturbed by the outbreak of a quarrel between the Latin and the Greek Monks over the custody of the Holy places in Jerusalem. Though the quarrel was apparently trivial, it led to startling development which opened a new chapter in the history of Ottoman Empire.

Turkey had, by an old treaty, conceded to France the right to protect the Latin Monks in her dominions, and these monks were also given special privileges including the guardianship of the Holy places. But during the pre-occupation of France in the time of Revolution, the Greek

monks had gradually encroached upon the rights of the Latin monks. In the dispute that followed, Napoleon-III revived the claim of France and demanded full restoration of the rights of the Latin Monks. On the other hand Czar Nicholas-I championed the cause of the Greek monks. The Porte at first conceded the demands of Napoleon but the Czar insisted upon the withdrawal of the concession. Driven between the two powers the Porte attempted a compromise which, however, failed.⁹ As a matter of fact neither France nor Russia wanted to compromise. Both Napoleon and Nicholas had ulterior objects in view, which they wanted to attain under the cover of struggle over the Holy places. "The controversy with France over the Holy places had stimulated the ambitions of Czar Nicholas-I. He believed Turkey to be the 'sick man of Europe' and was firmly persuaded of the impending dissolution of the Turkish Empire."¹⁰ Russia had even proposed the division of Turkey between itself and England.

9. J. Boulingers, France and Russia over Latin and Greek Monks, Paris, 1912, p.330.

10. Ibid., p.341.

However the proposal was not acceptable to England for she believed in the regeneration of Turkey, and her policy was to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a check upon Russian aggression.

Nicholas I, however, was bent upon a aggressive policy. This conduct of Russia caused panic among European powers and the whole question assumed a general European importance. England, France, Austria and Prussia put forward their proposal in what was called the *VIENNA NOTE*, which was presented both to Turkey and Russia. The note confirmed the Treaties of Kainardji (Kaynarca) and Adrianople and asserted the need of protecting the Christian subjects of the Porte. "Russia accepted the note as she interpreted it as protection by the Czar while Turkey at the instigation of the British ambassador, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, interpreted it as protection by the Porte."¹¹

Since both the parties interpreted the *VIENNA NOTE* in

11. C.J.H. Hayes, Modern Europe to 1870, New York, 1953, p.714.

their own way it was inevitable that peace thus established could not last very long. Soon the VIENNA NOTE was rejected by Turkey and she attacked Russia. Thereupon the Russia Black Sea fleet retaliated by completely destroying the Turkish fleet at Sinop. The massacre of Sinop as this event was called, inflamed popular opinion in England.¹² And as a result both France and England sent a joint ultimatum to Russia demanding the evacuation of the principalities occupied her. As Russia refused to comply with the demand, France and England signed a treaty of alliance with Turkey and declared war upon Russia in 1854. Next year the Allies were reinforced by troops from Sardinia-Piedmont whose King joined the war in the hope of securing the friendship of a great power, specially France. The Allies inflicted one defeat after another on Russia and finally peace came by the Treaty of Paris (1856). By this treaty Crimean war came to an end.

12. Ibid., p.715.

RESULTS OF THE CRIMEAN WAR:

Following were the results of Crimean war as established by Peace of Paris (1856):

- (1) Russia had to abandon all claims to a protectorate over orthodox Christian subjects of Turkey.
- (2) Russia was kept back from the Danube by the cession of Bessarabia to Moldavia, and from the Black Sea which was neutralised. Moreover the creation of two autonomous states, i.e., Wallachia and Moldavia, placed a barrier between Russia and Turkey and thus prevented the former from pursuing a policy of aggrandisement.

As far as Turkey was concerned, it was the greatest gainer by the Crimean war. She obtained a new lease of life under the joint protection of the powers, her territorial integrity was guaranteed and she was admitted as a member of the concert of Europe from which she had been previously excluded. She thus got a fine chance to set her house in

order and to develop into a respectable power. Looked at from these point of view the peace of Paris offered a satisfactory solution to the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

As the time proceeded things went contrary to the assumption. At the Treaty of Paris European statesmanship had failed to recognise that the Turkish Empire in Europe was doomed. The powers, specially England, sought to bolster up what was evidently on the road of destruction, and so their attempts were reduced to a succession of barren expedients. The nineteenth century ideal of nationality had touched the Balkan Peninsula and the Christian nations under Turkish rule became restive under its inspiration.¹³ The result was that in spite of the ostensible protection of the European concert the Ottoman Empire began to break up.

Serbia:

Serbia first rose in against the Ottoman Empire in 1804 and in 1805 the revolt was suppressed. But the spirit of

13. W.M. Gewehr, Rise of Nationalism in the Balkans, London, 1931, p.248.

nationalism which had taken its roots in Serbia could not be suppressed even when Serbs were unsuccessful in their initial attempt to win the freedom. Karageorge, the nationalist leader of Serbia, who had organised the revolt against Ottoman Sultan (1804) was driven out of Serbia in 1812. But the spirit of nationalist revolution which he implanted was deeply embedded in the Serbs to be exorcised by Ottoman decrees or Ottoman arms.¹⁴ In 1815 Milos Obrenovic, another leader who had served under Karageorge, headed a new revolt and by 1829 Serbia won the status of an autonomous principality under the suzerainty of the Sultan. This was only the first step along the path of national regeneration. An immense task still awaited the Serbian people. They had, in the first place to remake Serbia in a territorial sense. The Serbia of 1830 included a very small portion of her ancient territory. The Turks were still in possession not only of Bosnia and Herzegovina but of the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar and the district of northern Macedonia known as old

14. Ibid.

Serbia. To reunite with herself these territories was the minimum of Serbian aspirations.

Apart from the perpetual squabbles between the turbulent peasantry and their elected rulers, and between the rival chiefs there is only one event, in the period after the attainment of autonomy (1829), which is worth mentioning as far as independence of Serbia from Ottoman rule is concerned. This is the event of 1867 which witnessed the completion of another stage on the long and toilsome journey towards national independence.¹⁵

Till 1867 Serbia was subject to the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan and was really under the protectorship of Russia. The Sultan possessed a tangible symbol of authority in the continued military occupation of the fortresses. Even after the Crimean war the garrison was not removed. In 1867 Serbia aided by Austria and England secured the evacuation of her fortresses by the Turkish garrison. The inde-

15. J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy, London, 1918, p.316.

pendence was now virtually achieved, but the nominal suzerainty of the Sultan was not actually extinguished until the Turkish Empire had been broken by the Balkan insurrection of 1875 and the Russian war. Serbia finally won her complete independence by the Treaty of Berlin (1878).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGVINA:

The Slav inhabitants of Herzegovina rose in revolt against Ottoman Sultan in 1875. This revolt quickly spread to the other Slav states in the Ottoman Empire subsequently leading to the intervention of European Powers in the Balkan peninsula. No doubt the uprising was inflamed by unbearable nature of the fiscal burdens imposed upon the peasantry by Turkish officials and native land landowners. But the primary cause of the uprising was the rising spirit of nationality among the masses ever since the Crimean war missionaries of the New Gospel of Pan-Slavism - mostly Russian - had been engaged in an increasing propaganda among the peoples of their own faith and their own blood.¹⁶

16. Ibid.

It was in July 1875 that the peasants of Herzegovina refused to pay their taxes or to perform their accustomed labour services. On being defeated by Turkish forces sympathizers flocked to their assistance from Serbia, Dalmatia and Montenegro. This ultimately resulted in the intervention of powers ostensibly with an attempt to mediate between the Ottoman government and its rebellious subjects. Accordingly, the sovereigns of Germany, Russia and Austria met together and on December 1875 the Austrian Chancellor, Count Andrassy, issued from Buda-Pesth the Note which bears his name. This note contained certain terms and conditions which Ottoman Sultan was asked to obey in order to restore peace. But the European powers had to give up the proposed intervention because of the restless attitude of the insurgents. It was not until the treaty of Berlin (1878) that Bosnia and Herzegovina were almost detached from Ottoman Empire and put under the administration of Austria.

MONTENEGRO:

This tiny principality inhabited by Serbs of purest blood had come under Turkish rule during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was a part of Scutari province of Turkish Empire. During eighteenth century the people of the region came forward as champions of the Slav nationality. They received cordial encouragement from Russia in their war of freedom against Ottoman Sultan as a result the principality of Montenegro attained partial freedom in 1852 by waging war against Ottoman Sultan. In this war of freedom the people of this region were also assisted by Austria. It was again in 1876 that this principality rose in revolt against Ottoman rule and finally won complete independence from Ottoman Empire. As with the other region of Balkan peninsula it was rising nationalism which won them freedom. According to J.A.R. Marriott, "Nowhere in the Balkans did the flame of Slave nationality, frequently revived by contests with Turks, burn more pure, and the intervention of the little principality in 1876 was therefore according to

expectation."¹⁷ And finally by the Treaty of Berlin Montenegro won her complete independence.

BULGARIA:

The nationalist uprising was not confined to the Slavs. It spread to Bulgaria, which of all Balkan provinces had been most completely absorbed into the Ottoman system. In Bulgaria as in Bosnia many of the nobles embraced Islam, but the mass of the people adhered to their own creed. The Turks did not interfere with the exercise of orthodox rites, nor with the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Orthodox priests. Some of the towns were permitted to retain their municipal privileges; a considerable measure of autonomy was conceded to the Province at large; and the natives were allowed free use of their own language. Here, as elsewhere, the condition of the subject people deteriorated as the rule of the Ottoman Government became enfeebled. The Bulgarians suffered much from the passage of the Ottoman armies as they marched north against the Austrians. Faced with all these

17. Ibid., pp.326-327.

problems and refreshed by the rising tide of nationalism the Bulgarians began to look towards Russia for protection. In the words of W.E. Gladstone, "The spirit which was moving the pure Slavs of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina was not leaving the Bulgar Slavs untouched."¹⁸

The Bulgarians, more even than the Serbs, were roused to a remembrance of their ancient greatness by the tramp of foreign soldiers in the peninsula. Thus the march of the Russian upon Adrionople in 1828 naturally caused considerable excitement. Even among the phlegmatic peasants of Bulgaria; the presence of the allied armies at Varna in 1854 evoked emotions of a different but hardly less exciting character. At least these were signs of impending changes.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it was not until May 1876, that the name of Bulgaria first become familiar on the lips of men. On 1st May 1876 some Bulgarian Christians imitating

18. W.E. Gladstone, Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East, London, 1880, p.44.

19. Ibid., p.48.

the peasants of Herzegovina, defied the orders of the Turkish officials, and put one hundred of them to death. The Porte, already engaged in war with Serbia and Montenegro, was terrified. But the Turkish army rose to the occasion and gave a crushing defeat to the Bulgarian rebels. As soon as the rebellion was crushed the exaggerated news of Turkish atrocities over Bulgarian Christians started circulating throughout Europe. And this made the intervention of power easy who were ever ready to take the advantage of disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

European Powers and the Ottoman Empire: Over Balkan Issue

As noted earlier, Serbia and Montenegro had already declared war on the Porte in June 1876. This led to the complicated problem. The Serbian army though assisted by Russia could not achieve much against Turkish army. And in August 1876 Prince Milan of Serbia, acting on a hint from England, asked for the mediation of the powers. England thereupon, urged the Sultan to come to terms with Serbia and

Montenegro, lest a worse thing should befall him.²⁰ Since the terms imposed by England were an infringement upon the sovereignty of Sultan, he refused to accept the proposal and in return formulated his terms and intimated that if powers approved then he would order immediate suspension of hostilities. But Serbia was not prepared to accept any thing less than an armistice, and after six weeks suspension, hostilities recommenced. Thereupon England again put forward the following proposals:

- (1) The status quo in Serbia and Montenegro;
- (2) Local or administrative autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- (3) Guarantees against maladministration in Bulgaria, and a comprehensive scheme of reforms, all to be embodied in a protocol concluded between the Porte and the powers.²¹

20. Ferdinand Schevill, History of the Balkan Peninsula, rev. ed. by W.M. Gewehr, London, 1933, p.286.

21. Ibid., p.301.

However, these proposals were not acceptable to Russia and she gave ultimatum to Ottoman Sultan stating that if an armistice were not concluded with Serbia within forty-eight hours then it would be considered as an act of aggression by Turkey. The powers visualised the gravity of situation and immediately called for a conference of the powers at Constantinople but all in vein. Turkey unwilling to wage war against Russia proposed certain reforms for the provinces in question.

But Russia determined to take advantage of the uprising in the provinces did not agree to the proposed reforms and declared war against Turkey in August 1877.²² In fact Russia wanted to regain the position in the Black Sea denied to it in 1856. Russia assisted by Rumanian army was not able to gain much success. Fortunately for Russia, Serbia, for the second time declared war upon Porte in December 1877. The Russians, meanwhile, were pushing the Turks back towards Constantinople (Istanbul); they occupied Sofia in

22. Ibid., p.310.

January and Adrianople the same month. The Russian success demoralised the Porte and the war ended by the Treaty of San Stefano. As per the terms of San Stenfano

- (1) Montenegro was to be enlarged by the acquisition of some strips of Bosnia and the Adriatic port of Antivari and it was to be recognized definitely as independent of the Porte;
- (2) Serbia was to acquire the districts of Nish and Mitrovitza and like Montenegro was to be recognized as independent of the Porte;
- (3) The reforms recommended to the Porte at the conference of Constantinople were to be immediately introduced into Bosnia and Herzegovina and to be executed under the joint control of Russia and Austria;
- (4) The fortresses on the Danube were to be razed; reforms were to be granted to the Armenians; Russia was to acquire, in lieu of the greater part of the money indemnity which she claimed, Batoum, Kars, and other territory in Asia.

(5) The most striking feature of the treaty was the creation of a greater Bulgaria, which was to be constituted an autonomous tributary principality with a Christian government and a national militia, and was to extend from the Danube to the Aegean.²³

Thus the Ottoman Empire in Europe was practically annihilated with regard to the Treaty of San Stefano. The language of Lord Beaconsfield was emphatic. He stated: "It abolishes the dominion of the Ottoman Empire in Europe; it creates a large state which under the name of Bulgaria is inhabited by many races not Bulgarian... all the European dominions of the Porte are... put under the administration of Russia... the effect of all the stipulation combined will be to make the Black Sea as much a Russian lake as the Caspian."²⁴ Whatever the intention of Lord Beaconsfield

23. William Miller, The Ottoman Empire and its Successors, 1801-1927, London, 1928, p.300.

24. A.L. Cross, Great Britain and Ottoman Empire, London, 1929, p.481.

while passing the above mentioned statement but one thing is clear and that was the uneasiness of England over Russian advantage. Great Britain never wanted that Russia should have upper hand in the Balkan affair for this was detriment to the interests of Great Britain.

Apart from the dispute between England and Russia there was a great deal of resentment between Greece, Serbia and Rumania for they were kept out from peace negotiations at San Stefano. Moreover the treaty of San Stefano was a deviation from those of 1856 and 1871, and as such required the assent of the signatory powers. The great pressure put by the European, specially England forced the Tsar to accept the invitation to a Congress at Berlin.

TREATY OF BERLIN, 1878:

The Congress met in Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck's presidency. It drew up the treaty of Berlin by which the following arrangements were made:

- (1) Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania were declared

independent of Turkey.

- (2) The 'Big Bulgaria' of the treaty of San Stefano was divided into two parts; one part was made a self-governing principality, subject to the payment of an annual tribute to the Sultan, while the other part (southern part) was constituted as the province of East Roumelia with an independent administration under a Christian governor but under Turkish suzerainty. A considerable portion of the Macedonian territories, which was formerly included in the Big Bulgaria, was again restored to Turkey;
- (3) Austria was allowed to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina which nominally remained dependent on Turkey;
- (4) Russia received Bessarabia and a number of territories in Asia Minor;
- (5) England, by a separate treaty with Turkey, secured the control of Cyprus.

REMARKS ON THE TREATY OF BERLIN

By the treaty of Paris the powers had guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Berlin on the other hand decreed its dismemberment. Three of the Balkan states - Serbia, Rumania and Montenegro - were declared entirely independent of Turkey, while a new state, Bulgaria, was called into existence and was made nominally subject to the Porte. Besides, two of the guarantors of the Turkish integrity, Great Britain and Austria, helped themselves to large portions of the Turkish spoils. The Treaty of Berlin was thus an ironical commentary on the good faith of the powers who affected so much solicitude for Turkish integrity. Regarding the treaty of San Stefano Lord Beaconsfield had stated that "It abolishes the dominion of the Ottoman Empire in Europe."²⁵ But contrary to this statement Great Britain did nothing in the interest of justice and abrogated only those clauses of the Treaty which were determinant to its interests. Thus treaty of Berlin

25. Ibid.

simply sought to harmonise the conflicting interests of England, Austria and Russia by a policy of balance and compromise. And practically did nothing to save the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

Thus in Europe where the Turkish territory once extended to 230,000 square miles, with a population of nearly twenty millions now reached only the total of 66,000 square miles of area and four millions of population. It lost nearly three-fourths of its land, and about the same proportion of its people.

CHAPTER 4

DISINTEGRATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The treaty of Paris had guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. And during the two decades following the Treaty of Paris, the Europeans were busy with their own struggles, wars of unification and things like that.¹ This should have given the Ottomans, some respite, but it was not so. The ideals of the French Revolution and the emergence of the national states in Western Europe had aroused similar feelings among the subject peoples of the Balkans. Serbs wanted independence. Greeks desired more territory, Bosnia and Herzegovina were seething with revolt, and there were uprisings in Rumania.

Constant uprising in Balkan peninsula against the Ottoman Sultan was the most important feature of the region for two decades after the treaty of Paris. The European

1. David Harris, A Diplomatic History of Balkan Crisis, London, 1940, p.321.

powers who were ever ready to take share of the spoils of Ottoman Empire not only compelled the Ottoman rulers to concede the demands of the rebels but also assisted and encouraged the rebels in the name of religion, race and ethnicity. The period of turmoil ended in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck's presidency. The Treaty of Berlin decreed the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. This treaty almost brought to an end the Ottoman domination in Europe. In other words the Treaty of Berlin meant the end of 'Turkey in Europe' as the term had been understood by geographers.² By this treaty three Balkan states - Serbia, Rumania and Montenegro - were declared entirely independent of Turkey, while a new state, Bulgaria, was called into existence and was made nominally subject to the Porte. Besides two of the guarantors of the Turkish integrity, Great Britain and Austria, helped themselves to large portion of the Turkish spoils.

2. J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question an Historical Study in European Diplomacy, London, 1918, p.347.

As a matter of fact the history of the Balkans after the Treaty of Berlin is a tale of the successive violations of the Berlin settlement and of the international complications which resulted therefrom.³ The Balkan nations snapped their fingers at the treaty. Nor were the powers very keen upon the observance of terms of the treaty, while one of them (Austria) openly flouted it. The powers had their own rival ambitions in the Balkans so that they could not follow any agreed policy in grappling with the Eastern question. Hence the Balkan region continued to be storm-centre of Europe, and the net result of all this was that it brought European Turkey almost to the point of extinction.

After the Treaty of Berlin the freed Balkan nations instead of being contented with their freedom, wished to add to their realms those people of their nationality who still remained under Turkish rule. As their claims often overlapped, the Balkan region provided a spectacle of increasing unrest, frequent wars and growing ambitions. Added to this

3. E.L. Wirthwein, The Balkan Crisis, New York, 1935, p.8.

Turkey was touched by the prevailing national spirit and made a serious attempt at revival. But the movement never had a chance of success. As a result the Balkan states and the European powers took advantage of the opportunity provided by the Young Turk revolution to aggrandise themselves at the expense of Turkey and to embroil her in international complication.⁴

Before attempting to explain the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire it is important to mention in brief the developments which took place in the Balkan peninsula between 1878 to 1913. It was Bulgaria which first challenged the Berlin settlement. The separation between Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia as effected at the Congress of Berlin, was an arbitrary and artificial one as it corresponded to no racial divisions. The separation was done because the powers feared that a big Bulgaria, brought into existence by Russia (Treaty of San Stefano 1877) would not be in their interest. As a result the people of Eastern Roumelia ef-

4. David Harris, A Diplomatic History of Balkan Crisis, London, 1940, p.410.

fects in 1885 a bloodless revolution and proclaimed their political union with their kinsmen of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian King, Prince Alexander of Battenburg responded to the call of people of Eastern Roumelia and declared himself Prince of United Bulgaria.⁵ The bigger Bulgaria threatened the balance of power in Balkan; resulting in Serbian attack on Bulgaria in November 1885. War ended with the signing of Treaty at Bucharest (March 3, 1886). This treaty restored the status quo between Bulgaria and Serbia and immediately after the treaty there was a conference of powers at Constantinople (Istanbul). Here, as per the will of Great Britain, Sultan Abdul Hamid formally recognized the union of the two Bulgarias.⁶ And after the Young Turk revolution Bulgaria declared its complete independence from Turkey thus ending the nominal control of Turkey over Bulgaria which was in operation since the treaty of Berlin.

5. Major A. Von Huhn, The Struggle of the Bulgarians for National Independence, London, 1926, p.51.

6. J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question An Historical Studies in European Diplomacy, London, 1918, p.358.

The next important event in the Balkan peninsula contributing to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was the Cretean question. The Cretean Question solely arose as a result of desire of Greece to extend its territories. Greece had high hopes of obtaining a rectification of her frontier at the Congress of Berlin. But as nothing was done in that direction the Greeks threatened war with Turkey. The powers, however, held her in check as they were not inclined to tolerate another Balkan war. But in 1881 the Sultan was persuaded by the British Government to cede Thessaly and a portion of Epirus to Greece. Greece, still not satisfied, wanted to annex Crete to its kingdom. Crete was actually the last of the territorial acquisition of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. It was surrendered by the Republic of Venice to the Ottoman Sultan in 1669. But due to growing nationalism in Balkan peninsula, to which Crete was no exception, there grew resentment against the overlordship of Ottoman Empire and from the beginning of 19th century down to the virtual union of Crete with Greek Kingdom in October 1912 there were perpetual revolts in Crete against

Turkey. There were no less than fourteen insurrections in Crete against Turkey between 1830 and 1912.⁷ The first serious uprising of the Cretans took place in 1866. During this uprising the islanders (Cretans) formed a General Assembly, declared their independence from the Ottoman Empire and proclaimed their union with Greece. However, the uprising was suppressed by the Turks; but the rising tide of nationalism could not be suppressed. It was this feeling of nationalism, i.e. the feeling of Cretans that they were a part of Hellenic (Greek) Kingdom, of which Greece took full advantage and assisted Cretans in every possible manner. In 1896 the flame of rebellion flared up worse than ever and the revolutionaries in Crete headed by Venizelos proclaimed their union with Greece for the second time. Greece, yielding to the popular enthusiasm, sent an expedition to help the Cretan insurgents. Thereupon Turkey declared war upon Greece, easily defeated her, and compelled her to abandon the project of annexing Crete and to cede a portion of

7. R.W. Seton Watson, The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans, London, 1917, p.71.

Thessaly (which was taken by Greece from Turkey in 1881). After long negotiations among powers it was decided that Crete should be an autonomous state under Turkish suzerainty. This island was placed under an international commission of four powers with Prince George, a son of the King of Greece, as governor. It was not until after the Balkan war of 1912 in which Turkey was smitten hip and thigh that they permitted the union of Crete with Greece in 1913.⁸

Another important province in Balkan peninsula over which Turkey had its authority left after the Treaty of Berlin was Macedonia. This province comprised people belonging to all races of Balkan peninsula. According to R.W. Watson, "Macedonia was no man's land or rather it was an all men's land. It was residuum of the Balkans. Moslems, Jews, Albanians, Bulgars, Serbs, Kutzovlachs, and Greeks were found scattered throughout."⁹ The fact that almost all races inhabiting the Balkan peninsula were found in the

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p.102.

province of Macedonia made all provinces of Balkan peninsula to lay their claims over Province of Macedonia. Added to this there were other factors due to which the various provinces of Balkan peninsula laid their claim over Macedonia important among them being political and strategic.

The Greek's claim to Macedonia rested partly upon Byzantine part and partly upon the possibility of Byzantine future.¹⁰ The most serious competitor of Greece over the possession of Macedonia was Bulgaria. Bulgaria wanted to emancipate Macedonia from Turkish domination because it thought that, Macedonia, as an autonomous principality under a Christian governor, might become a powerful independent state and the nucleus of a Balkan federation. On the other hand Serbia claimed the Province of Macedonia on the grounds that before the conquest of Balkan peninsula by Ottoman Empire Macedonia formed the part of Serbia. Thus the claim of Serbia over Macedonia was historical one.

There were two other provinces which claimed their

10. Ibid., p.115.

right over Macedonia and these were Albania and Rumania. Their claims mainly rested on racial grounds, i.e. some of the people of Macedonia province had racial affinity with the people of Albania and Rumania.

But Macedonia was not only the cockpit of competing Balkan nationalities it was for years the favorite arena for the international rivalries of the great European powers.¹¹ The two powers which were mainly anxious to add Macedonia to their Empire were Russia and Austria and the other European powers admitted validity of their claims. It may be noted in this context that while the provinces of Balkan peninsula which laid their claim over Macedonia had some right to do so though their claims could not be justified. But in case of Russia and Austria it was their imperialistic desire which prompted them to add Macedonia to their respective Empire.

Thus the Macedonian question was a very complicated

11. Ibid., p.130.

issue in the Balkan peninsula during last decade of 19th century. Not only the states of Balkan peninsula wanted to bring it under their control but the European powers specially Russia and Austria were also anxious to annex it. As a result the four Balkan states, namely, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, forgetting their differences formed a league to take joint action against the Ottoman Empire. The four allied states launched attacks upon Turkey on four sides and within a short time Ottoman Empire was reduced to Constantinople (Istanbul). Overwhelmed by disaster on all sides Turkey appealed to the powers who imposed an armistice and called for a peace conference in London.¹² But this armistice was shortlived as the Balkan nations again attacked Turkey and the war was brought to a close in 1913 by the Treaty of London. By this Treaty Turkey lost everything except Constantinople (Istanbul) with just enough territory in Thrace to hold it safe.¹³

12. David Harris, A Diplomatic History of Balkan Crisis, London, 1940, p.410.

13. Ibid., p.420.

By the terms of same treaty Turkey had to cede Crete to Greece. Another important feature of the treaty as far as the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was concerned, was the creation of Albania as an autonomous state. The Treaty of London could not bring peace to the Balkan crisis and the Balkan league which was formed against Turkey soon broke up over the division of spoils, specially the partition of Macedonia. All this led to second Balkan war in 1913, Greece, Rumania and Serbia on one side and Bulgaria on other side. Turkey joined the allies in the hope of recovering some of the territories she had lost. Attacked on all sides Bulgaria was beaten badly and compelled to sue for peace. By the Treaty of Bucharest (1913) Bulgaria was forced to make concessions on all sides and as far as Turkey was concerned it recovered Adrianople and part of Thrace which it had lost during the first Balkan war. Territorially the final outcome of the two Balkan wars was the practical extinction of Turkish Empire in Europe and the enlargement

of the Christian Kingdoms in the Balkan peninsula.¹⁴ Before the wars Turkey's European population was estimated at 6,130,200 and her area 65,350 square miles. Of the population she lost 4,239,200 and was left with only 10,882 square miles of territory.¹⁵ Thus by 1913 Turkish empire had come to an end as far as her territorial extent in Europe was concerned.

European Powers and the Ottoman Empire

The signs of weakening of the Ottoman Empire at once drew the attention of its powerful neighbours. These powers in the past had tried hard by means of religious war, the crusades, to drive away the Ottomans who belonged to a different religion. But their effort had failed. Later, the Ottomans had waged continual war upon them and had succeeded in preserving their supremacy for several centuries. And now when the Empire became weak the European powers

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14. J.G. Schurman, The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, London, 1926, p.139.
 15. J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question, An Historical Study in European Diplomacy, London, 1918, p.466.

wanted to take full advantage because the Ottoman Empire held key to all important trade routes, and was in itself an appetizing joint from which every Great Power hoped to carve the best slice for itself.¹⁶ This desire of great western powers brought about rivalries and alliances, grouping and regroupings, a whole series of actions which constitute one of the most exciting chapters in the history of modern times and are collectively known as the "Eastern Question".

The powers involved in the Eastern Question played a game with the differences in culture and religion between Ottoman Moslems and the Christians. Their policy was to use Christian groups as trumps in their political gambles in the East. Lord Selisbury's famous sentence condemning the pro-Turkish policy of the English Government, "we have backed the wrong horse,"¹⁷ is a glaring example of the gambling spirit of the Western Powers in those days.

16. David Harris, A Diplomatic History of Balkan Crisis, London, 1940, p.513.

17. Ibid., p.520.

The nearest country, and one which in a way had suffered most from Ottoman supremacy, was Austria. From the moment when Ottoman decline began Austria had begun to assume an aggressive attitude. But when, toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, another power, Russia, began to poach on what she regarded as her own preserves, Austria adopted a double policy. She attacked Turkey whenever there was a possibility of getting something for herself, but whenever Russia seemed in a position to get something out of Turkey, she helped the latter. Until 1908 the main theatre in which the drama of the Eastern Question was played was the Balkans; after that date it became Anatolia. But the conflict between Russia and Austria over the Eastern Question was confined solely to the Balkans.

The second territorial neighbour of the Ottoman State was Russia. She was engaged in a series of aggressive wars against Ottoman Empire, but there was one legitimate cause for her desire to attack and drive out the Ottomans. She was barred from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, mainly by the position of the Ottoman Empire and the refusal of

Turkey to come to an understanding with her on this vital point led to the estrangement between the two.¹⁸ Thus the freedom of the seas loomed as an inevitable issue in all the Russo-Turkish conflicts. With this background of grievance Russia found plenty of other pretexts for attacking Turkey. She was naturally interested in the fate of that large number of Slavs within the Ottoman State who looked upto her as their racial protector. She stood for an older, more deeply rooted, but impossible political idea, that of the Greek orthodox church which was to restore the Byzantine Empire. As the Greek church was the second and intermediate state between the Slavs and the Ottoman state, this was perhaps an easy course. It was Peter the great who first formulated the desire to expel the Turk from Europe and reestablish the Byzantine Empire. Catherine-II followed in his footsteps; she too dreamed of the restoration of the Byzantine Empire in Constantinople. She even decided that her nephew, Constantine Pavlovich, should occupy the throne.

18. Ibid., p.531.

The French role in the Eastern Question has been that of a traditional friend of the Ottoman state. France could not cope with Hapsburg supremacy in Europe by herself, and she either had to ask the powerful Sultans of the day to assist her in her conflicts with Austria, or to incite the Sultan himself to wage constant wars and humiliate the Hapsburgs. Her second interest in Turkey was economic. She was the first to obtain economic concessions and the French ships had the monopoly of trade in Turkish ports. But France also aspired to the role of protector of the Christians in the East. Turkey had by an old treaty, conceded to France the right to protect the Latin monks in her dominions, and these monks were also given special privileges including the guardianship of the Holy places.¹⁹ The role of France as protector of the Christians in the East was a constant source of rivalries between Russia and France. In the first phase of Eastern Question, France's territorial ambitions in Turkey were indirect; she occupied Egypt

19. George Eversley, Turkish Empire, its Growth and Decay, London, 1947, p.110.

through rivalry with Great Britain, for when her claim to India had been usurped by the British. She still hoped to control the route through Egypt to India.

The most important European power which played important role in the disintegration of Ottoman Empire was Great Britain. Her interest, until the nineteenth century, in the Ottoman Empire was mainly economic. Great Britain held a dominant position in the councils of the powers who gathered together to decide whether Turkey should be dismembered or retained. Thus in brief from the seventeenth century until the end of nineteenth the Great Powers of Europe constantly discussed the methods of disposing of Ottoman Empire.

Nationalism and Disintegration of the Empire

The most significant trend of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was towards the new conception of nationalism. It had come into life with the reformation and received a fresh impulse through French Revolution. It brought in its train ideas of equality, political unity, and

independence.²⁰ The new conception of nationalism found ready ground among all the Christians of Balkan peninsula who were nearer to the source of this new ideal and caused unrest among them. The Ottoman rulers were unable to realize the psychological causes of this unrest. The reason for this was mainly due to the fact that the Turks as a ruling class were occupied with wars and general business of government. Besides this, like all imperialists, they had a superiority complex or a kind of blindness to the causes of any change which might be taking place among the subject races. All this led to weakening of empire.

On the whole the Western thought influenced the Ottoman Empire by two sets of political ideas: democracy and nationalism. The Ottoman Turks took to democracy and the Christians embraced nationalism. Once the Christians of Ottoman Empire were influenced by nationalism it became difficult to democratize them, that is, to turn them into Ottoman citizens. Though the reforms of Tanzimat (1839-

20. R.W. Seton Watson, The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans, London, 1917, p.140.

1876) accorded to all the Christians equal rights with Moslems in political life without taking away old privileges enjoyed by them, and opened schools to unite the Christians and Moslems, still the impact of western nationalism on the Christians proved stronger. Wherever the Christians were in a majority, a new Christian state came into being on Turkish lands, whose first action in most cases was to massacre any minority living among them, so that such a minority was unable to claim autonomous government. Thus the Greek state came into being in 1832 and in 1878 the Sultan was forced to recognise the complete independence of Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro. He also had to give full autonomy to Bulgaria and partial autonomy to Eastern Rume-
lia. However none of these states was satisfied with the settlement of 1878 and what each had gained only heightened its ambition to draw to itself fellow nationals who were left under Ottoman rule.²¹ This was ultimately achieved by

21. W.N. Medlicott, Congress of Berlin and after, a Diplo-
matic History of the near Eastern Settlement, London,
1938, p.92.

1913 leading to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Thus 1878 to 1913 was a period of frequent wars which Turkey had to wage against the Balkan nations, which once formed part of the Ottoman Empire. And due to the interference of external powers the Turks lost one after another territory to their rivals. And in this way by the time of World War I, Turkey had lost practically all its European holdings and its control over the fertile crescent and North Africa was only nominal.²²

22. Yahya Armajani and Thomas M. Ricks, Middle East Past and Present, New Jersey (America), 1970, p.165.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Ottoman Empire reached the zenith of its power in the sixteenth century. From sixteenth until the end of eighteenth century it maintained its past glory by struggling hard against internal dissenting forces and external interference. But by the beginning of nineteenth century the mighty Ottoman structure started showing signs of weakness. The decline of Ottoman Empire was becoming evident because of the changes in outside world. Some of the subject races, especially the semi self-governing ones within the Empire, were very keenly affected by the changes in the West. The Balkan people who were mainly Christians were influenced a lot by the revolution of thought taking place in Europe. The idea which most influenced these people was nationalism. Western nationalism had come into life with the Reformation and had received a fresh impulse through the French Revolution. It brought in its train ideals of equality, political unity and independence and it signalled the

doom of Empires to which the Ottoman Empire was no exception.

Once the people of Balkan provinces became familiar with the concept of Nationalism they started showing resentment against their overlord. The resentment led to various rebellions against the established authority of Ottoman Sultans. These rebellions, which became widespread with the passage of time, gave the opportunity to European powers to intervene in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Earlier, these powers had tried hard to expel the Ottomans from the Balkan region but had failed in realising their ambition. These powers had their own vested interests in the regions which were under Ottoman rule. It was Napoleon who turned Europe's gaze towards the East. His attempt to seize Egypt and Syria, together with his oft repeated insistence that Constantinople meant the Empire of the world, helped to familiarise European statesmen with the importance of the area under Ottoman rule. Moreover the Balkan region was the nerve-centre of the world's commerce. From time immemorial the trade between the East and West was carried through this

region. Once the region came under the rule of Turks, the Western world found it difficult to carry on trade as profitably as they did earlier. In order to overcome this problem new routes to the East were discovered. Though the new trade routes (through sea) were discovered, the European powers did not give up their ambition to obtain the old trade routes. This led to a number of wars between European powers and Ottoman Empire. The European powers tried hard to oust the Turks but failed on all occasion. During the 19th century when Ottoman Empire showed weakness, the European powers were able to defeat the Turks mainly in collusion with subject people who were influenced by the idea of nationalism. Besides the common interest of obtaining the old trade route the European powers had other individual interest in the region. Of all the European powers it was Russia which was constantly involved in conflict with Ottoman Empire. The Russians were next door to the Balkans, and belonged to the same Slav race, and were members of the same orthodox Greek church to which most of the Christian subjects of Balkan belonged. Therefore, Russia was interested

in the fate of the large number of Balkan people within Ottoman Empire, who looked up to her as their protector. But beneath this benevolent intention of Russia there was the transparent design of securing the much-desired access to the Mediterranean. Russian policy in the Balkan had two aims, viz. to dismember Turkey and to seize Constantinople as the prize; and if that would prove impossible, to dominate her by forcing upon the Sultan a number of unequal treaties which would keep Turkey in a state of vassalage under Russian overlordship. It was with this aim that Russia repeatedly attacked Ottoman Empire.

Besides Russia, Great Britain and Austria had their own interests in the Balkan. For Austria Balkan region was important because she was almost landlocked country with only a short coastline at the head of the Adriatic sea. Thus she was badly placed for sea-borne traffic. Hence economically it was essential that she should have a secret outlet to the sea, and for this she required to expand in the direction of the ports, so it was in her interest to

annex some of the Balkan region, specially the region around the River Danube.

Similarly Great Britain besides having Economic interests in Balkan region like other imperialist powers feared the Russian control over Constantinople. Because this would have threatened the British hold over India. Hence Great Britain watched with keen suspicion every Russian movement which threatened to interfere in the Gateway to Asia. It was basically due to this reason that Great Britain always pretended as the protector of Ottoman Empire.

The causes of the decline of the Ottoman Empire are still a topic of academic controversy. Some put the blame on the opening up of the Americas, which is said to have ruined the Ottoman Economy by introduction of cheap silver. But this certainly was not the sole cause of disintegration of the Empire. For Ottoman Sultans had many ways of meeting their deficits. They depreciated currency, expropriated the wealth of their richer subjects and borrowed from moneylenders.

In context of disintegration of Ottoman Empire some critics also point out that it was intolerant policies of Ottoman Sultans towards their Christian subjects, which made these subjects to revolt against their overlord and at the same time invite the European intervention to protect their co-religionist. At the outset it must be mentioned that the Ottoman rule was never intolerant and secondly the real cause of European intervention was not the protection of Christian subjects from atrocities of Turks, which they claimed, but their intervention was due to their vested interest in the region of Balkan peninsula. As far as the position of Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire was concerned it was as good as in other European states. They had the same religious, social and economic freedom as other subjects of Empire had. The Ottoman Sultans had granted concessions, later known as capitulations to the French in 1535, Austrians in 1567 and English in 1592. Under the capitulations, foreigners were not subject to Turkish law; they paid no taxes; their houses and business premises were inviolable, and they could be arrested or deported only by

the order of their own non-ambassadors. Disputes involving foreigners were settled by the consular court of the defendant, according to the law of his own land. The fact that the capitulation had been originally granted by a Turkey at the zenith of her power, as a gesture of good will, indicates the level of toleration of Ottoman Sultan.

The various religious communities (*millet*) among the subject peoples suffered no interference and were left under the supervision of their religious leaders, who were responsible to the government for their good behaviour, the settling of their disputes and the collection of their taxes. Thus the Ecumenical Patriarch was recognized as head of the *Millet-i-Rum*, the community of the Greeks, and the Armenians were declared a *millet* under a Patriarch of their own. Moreover, the *Tanzimat reforms* (1839) had given the Christian subjects the right to share Turkish privileges without taking away those which they already possessed and did not share with the Turks. Added to this the Christians of Ottoman Empire did not serve in the army. And since the

Ottoman Empire had constant wars, the Turkish section of the community was constantly absent on the battlefield. This gave the Christian subjects great opportunities in the field of economic commerce and education. Thus it becomes amply clear that the Christians under Ottoman rule not only had absolute communal freedom but were also placed at an advantageous position.

Other reasons given for the decline of Ottoman Empire by various scholars include the granting of capitulations to the European powers. For such a grant made the foreign intervention inevitable in the affairs of Ottoman Empire. Others have put forward the view that it was rise of Russia as a great power and its desire to expand at the cost of Ottoman Empire which led to the disintegration of Ottoman Empire. It is further argued that Russia in her determination to press south used all the methods of intrigue and incitement to revolt among the Christian subjects of the Sultan. Though the truth of these statements cannot be denied but they alone were not responsible for the disintegration of Ottoman Empire. On the basis of facts mentioned

in the previous chapters it becomes evident that the rise of nationalism in Balkan peninsula was an important contributory factor in the disintegration of Ottoman Empire. Though *Tanzimat* opened schools to unite the Christians and the Moslems, still the impact of western nationalism among the Christians proved stronger. Wherever they were in a majority, a new Christian state sprang into being on Turkish lands. However during late 19th and early 20th century the Young Turkish generation tried hard for the Union of Elements and did much to melt the harsh barriers that had arisen between the races and religions. But their effort could not find a logical culmination mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the external powers and secondly certain small Christian states imbued with a fanatical and narrow nationalism, exerted a continual influence upon the Christians of their own race and religion who were still Ottoman subjects, which went far toward hampering effectual union. Moreover, the primary education supplied to the Christians by their churches was of a nature to inflame them with hatred against all Turks, and to prompt them to undermine

and destroy the ideal of union within a single state.

On the whole it can be concluded that the rise of nationalism among the people of Balkan peninsula, of which European powers concerned in the Eastern Question took advantage of by using the Christian groups as trumps in their political gambles in the East, was mainly responsible for dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

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