

Some Considerations about the Ottoman Administration and Disintegrations in the Balkans in the 19th Century

19. Asırda Osmanlı Yönetimi ve Balkanlardaki Bölünmeler Hakkında Bazı Değerlendirmeler

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Abstract

The Ottoman administration of minorities which was sometime called "the millet system" had successfully been applied towards the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire for centuries before it became unsatisfactory to the non-Muslims in modern times. Growing insufficiency in the "millet system" was mainly caused by developing western civilization and big state interests. While the growing western civilization increasingly valued freedom in the line of human rights, equality before the law, individualism, liberty, and nationalism, the great state interests worked relentlessly to make good use of problems of weak states in their own political and economic benefits. Both of these inspired and helped minorities to revolt against the mother country. Being aware of the situation, the Ottomans, in order to gain loyalty of the minorities, reformed and introduced new political changes including degrees of the Tanzimat and Islahat and the first Ottoman constitution, Kanun-u Esasi. However, historical perceptions and motivations of the minorities and weak results of Ottoman reforms failed to stop disintegration of the Balkans. First autonomies granted to the minorities were enlarged in time, and finally turned to full independences with the help of the Big Powers. For the newly created states gaining freedom was not enough. They wanted more lands and more spaces either against each other or usually against the Ottoman Empire.

This paper will focus on the Ottoman way in ruling minorities, disintegration process and causes of minority uprisings in the Balkans. Relations of minorities to the Ottoman State, Big State politics in the region and handicaps of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans will be discussed.

Key Words: *the Ottoman State, the Balkans, the Turks, Minorities, Big Powers.*

Öz

Osmanlı yönetimi azınlıklara yönelik başarılı bir idarî tarzı asırlarca sürdürmüştür. Millet sistemi adı verilen azınlıklara yönelik yönetim anlayışı modern zamanlarda azınlıkları tatmin etmemeye başlamıştır. Bunda öncelikle gelişen batı medeniyeti ile güçlü büyük devlet çıkarları etkili olmuştur. Batı medeniyeti insan hakları, kanun önünde eşitlik, bireysellik, özgürlük ve milliyetçilik çizgisinde özgürlükçü bir gelişmeyi desteklerken, büyük devlet çıkarları güçsüz devletlerin içerisinde bulunduğu her durumu kendi ekonomik ve politik çıkarları için kullanmıştır. Bunun her ikisi de azınlıkların ayaklanması için birer ilham ve yardım sağlamıştır. Durumun farkında olan Osmanlılar azınlıkların sadakatini temin için yeni şartlara göre yönetimlerini değiştirmeye çabalamış ve bu amaçla Tanzimat ve Islahat Fermanları ile ilk Türk yazılı anayasası Kanun-i Esasî'yi ilan etmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte tarihten gelen anlayış ve güdülenmeler, yapılan reformların yeterli etkiyi gösterememesi Balkanlardaki ayrışımı

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durduramamıştır. İlk özerklikler zamanla genişletilmiş, genişleyen özerklikler büyük devletlerin desteği ile bağımsızlıklara dönüşmüştür. Bağımsızlığın kazanılması da yetmemiş, yeni bağımsız Balkan milletleri tek tek veya birlikte hareket ederek, birbirine karşı ve çoğunlukla da Osmanlı Devleti'ne karşı yeni istekler içerisinde olmuşlardır.

Bu çalışma Balkanlarda Osmanlı idaresi, ayrışma süreci ve azınlık ayaklanmaları üzerinde duracaktır. Azınlıkların Osmanlı ile ilişkileri, Büyük Devlet politikaları ve Osmanlı idaresinin Balkanlardaki çıkmazları tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Devleti, Balkanlar, Türkler, Azınlıklar, Büyük Devletler

Some Considerations about the Ottoman Administration and Disintegrations in the Balkans in the 19th Century

Introduction: Ottoman Administrative Practices towards the Non-Muslims

Having succeeded in establishing a great empire from a small principality (begdom) in the north-western Anatolia, bordering to the Byzantine Empire, in the beginning of 14th century, the Ottomans successfully read political, economic, military and social environment of the time. It was a time of disintegration in both Anatolia and the Balkans.¹ Absence of a strong centralized state caused peoples to expect one for security. The Ottoman growth in such divided environment had given local peoples some hope of belonging to a more secure environment, which was eventually called as *Pax Ottomanica*.²

The Ottomans were successful in establishing a state system in accordance with geographic, natural, historical, religious, demographic, social, cultural and economic environments. The Empire "was an enormous and intricate network of social subsystems... Not only did they differ, one from the other, but they often displayed important variations within themselves."³

The Muslim subjects in the Balkans initially were the Turkmens who were either forced or encouraged to settle in the Balkans. The number of the Turkmens settled in the Balkans was not less than 500.000.⁴ Yet, there were some more or less forceful conversions of Balkan indigenous peoples into Islam,⁵ despite absence of any well-defined plan to convert the non-Muslims after their "a lava flood" like victories. From time to time, a "never constant

- 1 YaşarYücel, "Balkanlarda Türk Yerleşmesi ve Sonuçları," *Bulgaristan'da Türk Varlığı I*, TTK, Ankara, 1987, p. 70.
- 2 Judy A. Hayden and Nabil I. Matar, *Through the Eyes of the Beholder: The Holy Land, 1517-1713*, Leiden, Boston, 2013, p. 4; İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı Barışı," *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 58 (Kasım-Aralık, 1999), p. 12-17; Kemal Karpat, "Balkanlar," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 5, p. 25-32.
- 3 Wayne S. Vucinich, "The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule," *Slavic Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1962), p. 597-616.
- 4 Yaşar Yücel, "Balkanlarda Türk Yerleşmesi ve Sonuçları," *Bulgaristan'da Türk Varlığı I*. TTK, Ankara, 1987, p. 71-75.
- 5 Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Ottoman Ruling Group and the Religions of its Subjects in the Early Modern Age: A Survey of Current Research," *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), p. 239-266.

nor systematic⁶ sort of harsh treatments of the locals could be seen. The Turks generally respected the indigenous peoples as long as their hard-won state was not threatened.

Through time, it was some opportunities provided by the Ottomans to the Muslim subjects in taxing and administrative retinue,⁷ an unending strife between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, persuasion of Turkish *derişes* played some roles in converting locals to Islam. Bosnian Christians who belonged to some distinct sect such as Bogomil and who were recorded as *kristiyan* in Ottoman records were mostly accepted Islam.⁸

Unlike “the cultural field”, the Balkan peasants improved economically during the initial period of Turkish rule.⁹ It was the Ottoman allocation of “minimal” lands to the peasants’ private use as orchards or vineyards that made them “the ready acquiescence of the peasantry to Ottoman rule when it was first introduced into the Balkans.”¹⁰ “They were less abused, paid lower feudal taxes, and as a result of the centralized Ottoman rule had somewhat greater security.”¹¹

Establishing a law-abided state and doing things in the line of legitimacy, the Ottomans were careful in observing laws that had two sources: Islamic and Customary.¹² In this, they acted lawfully since “law” meant acting reasonable instated of emotional.¹³ The minorities who had lost their political power and became *reyayas* (subjects—congregates) of the Ottomans had gained strong enough liberties in performing their economic, social, cultural and religious lives within the state.

Since the Ottomans had generally been in the Hanifi School of Sunni tradition, they applied Islamic laws formulated and verbalized by the Hanifi School. Along with Turkishness and Islamic character of their ruling abilities, they were influenced by those states and cultures they had shared same

6 M. A. Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey: An Account of the Religious, Political, Social, and Commercial Condition of the Ottoman Empire, Part I: Turkey and the Turks, Part II: the Raiahs*, Translated from the French by Lady Easthope, John Murray, London, 1856, p. 12.

7 EmelTopçu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Fatih Dönemi Kamu Yönetimi*, Ocak Yayınları, Ankara, 1993, p. 4.

8 Faroqhi, “The Ottoman Ruling Group and the Religions of its Subjects in the Early Modern Age: A Survey of Current Research,” p. 239-266.

9 Kemal Karpat, “Balkanlar,” *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 5, p. 25-32.

10 Peter F. Sugar, “Major changes in the Life of the Slav Peasantry under Ottoman Rule, *Int. J. Middle East Studies*, 9 (1978), p. 297-305.

11 Vucinich, “The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule,” p. 601.

12 Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1993, p. 23-24; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XIV-XVII. Yüzyillarda Osmanlılarda Devlet Teşkilatı ve Sosyal Yapı*, Türk Tarihi Kurumu, Ankara, 1996, p. 2, 7.

13 Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *İktimai Doktrinler Tarihi*, Yenidevir Basımevi, 1941, İstanbul, p. 27.

spaces and experiences in time. In such cultures, the East Roman Empire¹⁴ took the first place while the Chinese, Iranian and Arabic traditions were worth mentioning. Furthermore, they established their big state in large places that had carried spirits of major world cultures, civilizations and religions coming down from the oldest human experiences.

The Turkish Customary laws valued equality to all subjects without making any distinction among the ruled; true laws that had to be in favor of general public; tolerance to differences in culture, religion and ethnicity; and public needs that valued working for general public goods.¹⁵

Islamic tradition treated the non-Muslims as *zimmis*. The word *zimmi* would be “debt”, “due”, “protection” and “agreement”.¹⁶ Arabic word “dhimmis” would mean both “protected” and “guilty”.¹⁷ According to Maliki and Hanifi schools’ interpretations, all non-Muslims considered as *zimmis* and eligible to pay *cizye* tax for protection while Shafis and Hanbalis considered only the Jews and Christians (the people of book) as *zimmis* and suitable for *cizye* payment for protection under the Islamic government.¹⁸ Yet religious principles had not always been applied to actual cases in practice since political, military and emotional forces varied from time to time and from place to place.

Besides paying some taxes, the minorities were subjected to some restrictions including wearing different color of cloths, riding horse, carrying gun, building new churches or temples. These restrictions were applied efficiently in places closer to government centers.¹⁹ The poll tax paid by the non-Muslims saved them serving in the army.²⁰ A document from the 13th century shows

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- 14 M. F. Köprülü, *Bizans Müesseselerinin Osmanlı Müesseselerine Tesiri*, Akçağ, Ankara, 2004, p. 198.
- 15 Mehmet Saray, *The Principles of Turkish Administration and Their Impact on the Lives of Non-Muslim Peoples: the Armenians as a Case Study*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2003, Ankara, p. 3-6.
- 16 Mustafa Fayda, “Zimmi”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 44, p. 433-434.
- 17 Saeed Akhtar and Ata ur Rahman, “A Critique of Reobert Spencer’s Views Regarding Dhimmis and Jizya,” *Al-Idah*, 29 (December 2014), p. 107-117.
- 18 Ahmet Yaman, “Zimmi” *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 44, p. 434-438; M. Macit Kenanoğlu, “Zimmi”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 44, p. 438-439; Abdelbari Chabou, “Treatment of Religious Minorities under the Ottoman Millet System,” *A Master Thesis*, Al-Akhawayn University, 2016, p. 27-33; Mithat Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı Tarih Lüğati*, Enderun Kitapevi, İstanbul, 1986, p. 134. According to Sertoğlu, the *zimmis* were obliged to pay some special taxes: *kharach-ı ruus* (*cizye*—a poll tax) and *kharach-ı arazi* (tithe).
- 19 Clote Cahen, “Zimmi,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, cilt 13, M. E. B., Eskişehir, 1997, p. 566; Philip Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World’s Desire, 1453–1924*, John Murray, London, 1995., p. 9.
- 20 Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, Robert Carter and Brothers, New York, 1878, p. 21-22. According to Hamlin, wars, military services and other harsh duties imposed solely on the Turks had made a great destruction on the Muslims. Since the non-muslims were not accepted into military ranks, they were kept away from destructive effects of the military service. While their number was doubled, the Muslim population stayed as stationary. He thought that “Irresistible forces would change eventually the balance of power without foreign interference” within the Empire in favor of non-Muslims.

that one of the major revenues of the state was coming from the poll tax.²¹ The Ottomans collected this tax from non-Muslim able men alone. Women and children were exempt from this tax. Amount of this tax was determined by the non-Muslim men's richness. The rich, the mid-rich and the poor paid 4, 2 and 1 golds respectively. This tax was repealed in 1856 when *Islahat Ferman* was proclaimed.²² In its place, the non-Muslims were to serve in the army or pay *bedel-i askeri*.

The Ottoman rulers were primarily concerned with the Muslim peoples. They were considered as heads of the Muslim community. They did not directly involved in minority affairs. The sultans did not see any wrong to give rights to religious heads of minorities as they had enjoyed during the Byzantium.²³ "Each religious group was organized into a self-contained and autonomous community called 'millet' and each community was allowed to maintain its own traditions."²⁴ Each non-Muslim "millet became an integral part of the empire's administrative system and functioned as a veritable department in the Ottoman government."²⁵

The *millet bashies* had great powers over their flocks. They had rights to handle religious affairs as well as temporal ones. They were a well-known and high ranking state servant to perform official jobs.²⁶ Even though the Ottomans appointed religious leaders to their millets, and provided them great deal of autonomy as far as economic, social, cultural and judicial businesses were concerned, they kept strict control of minority affairs.²⁷

There were three *millet bashis* until the mid-19th century. These were Gregorian Armenian and Greek patriarchs and Jewish Big Rabbi. In the 1830's, a Catholic patriarch and in the 1840's a Protestant patriarch were appointed as a result of conversions to these creeds.

21 O. Turan, "L'Islamisation dans la Turquie du Moyen Age," *Studia Islamica*, 10 (1959), p. 137-152.

22 Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı Tarih Lügati*, p. 67.

23 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Türkler," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, volume 12/2, M. E. B., Eskişehir, 1997, p. 266-267; Philip Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924*, John Murray, London, 1995, p. 10; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, cilt 2, p. 153, 158-159. . According to Kafesoğlu, starting with the Seldjuks, the Turks made changes in the Islamic administration. Before them, the Califs were considered as the head of both state and religion. The Seldjuks, on the other hand, showed respect to the Abbasid Califs, but considered themselves as the real rulers who were believed to have been granted "kut" (sacred rights) to rule over subject peoples and handle worldly affairs.

24 Ömer Turan, *The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria (1878-1908)*, TTK, Ankara: 1998, s. 21-23; Hugh Poulton, "The Muslim Experience in the Balkan States, 1919-1991," *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 28, no.1, 2000, p. 46

25 Dennis P. Hupchick, "Orthodoxy and Bulgarian Ethnic Awareness under Ottoman Rule, 1396-1762," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 21/2 (1993), p. 75-93.

26 Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, Robert Carter and Brothers, New York, 1878, p. 24.

27 William L. Cleveland, *A History of Modern Middle East*, Westview Pres, Oxford, 1994, p. 49.

In general, in the heydays of the Empire, the Ottoman subjects, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliations, respected the monarch as unbiased potentate. Impartial Turkish sultans were seen as “*al-sultan al âdil*” (righteous sultan) by their subjects since they respected rights of every community in their realm.²⁸ Subject peoples of the Sultan were generally happy with his handling of state affairs and respectful to him.²⁹ The *zimmies* (*millet*s in the Ottoman context) were well-to-do communities as far as their economic power was concerned. A letter sent by a rabbi from Istanbul to his brother in Europe praised Ottoman ruling practices that involved great tolerance and autonomy to the minorities.³⁰

Countless Ottoman documents that fill the archives show that the Ottoman Turks succeeded in creating an elaborate bureaucratic system that handled things in great care. These archival documents reveal that the Ottomans recorded towns, peoples, villages, places and others in detail to run the state effectively.³¹ Their efficient rule over some of the most problematic regions including the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans and important seaways such as the Bosphorus, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea has been admired greatly. These places have also been centers of main civilizations and great religions. Many European politicians, including Lord J. Russell, and foreign visitors of the Ottoman Empire, believed that among the whole subjects, the Turks were the only nation who had power and capability of ruling the vast empire.³²

The Ottoman way of ruling minorities have greatly been discussed by historians. Most historians cherished Ottoman handling of non-Muslim affairs. Some, especially among orientalist, have been critical of the Ottoman rule over the minorities. Main problem in differences of this evaluation comes from emotional forces backed by religious, ethnic and cultural biases. Historians have to be as impartial as possible while treating historical events. Writing scholarly essays and articles on similar subjects is necessary in time to stay afresh in scientific developments. Furthermore, the main and even only cause of the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire has been widely accused of the development of nationalism in the modern times. However this evaluation had some value in itself, real causes of disintegration have to

28 Kafesoğlu, “Türkler,” p. 267.

29 Mansel, *ibid.*, p. 12.

30 Mansel, *ibid.*, p. 15.

31 Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Cary, NC, USA, 2004, p. 118.

32 Bilal N. Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, volume 1, TTK, Ankara, 1989, p. 38; Warrington W. Smyth, *A Year with the Turks or Sketches of Travel in the European and Asiatic Dominions of the Sultan*, Redfield, New York, 1854, 233; Ami Boué, *La Turquie de l'Europe*, Paris, 1840, p. 132.

be sought elsewhere including historical minds, modernity's expectations and the Empire's internal and external political milieu, which this article intends to explore.

Minority Risings and Disintegrations in the Balkans in the 19th Century

In the mid-19th century, the Ottoman Balkans had some 8.000.000 population and an area of 238.000 square miles.³³ 2.000.000 of this population were the Muslims.³⁴ According to Uzer, the Ottoman Balkans had 8.700.000 peoples in 1877.³⁵ An Ottoman geographer, Ali Tevfik, put the numbers as 326.000 square meter area and 10.000.000 peoples.³⁶ After losing large lands to both big states and minorities the Ottoman lands in the Balkans were greatly shrank. Toward the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman Balkans had an area of 62.744 square miles and a population of 5.711.000.³⁷

The nineteenth century was a mostly chaotic century for the Ottomans. "One school of prejudice" insisted that the Turk was "the finest gentleman in the world" who had been "always the victim and not the oppressor" of the Christian peoples by whose side he lived and whose territories he invaded with the best of motives and with the minimum of slaughter. "The other school of prejudice" credited the Turk "with the most abominable cruelty, treachery and lust and would hear no good of him."³⁸ Despite some favorable approaches to the Turkish rule in the Balkans, most foreigners and orientalisists had varying degrees of hatred and prejudices towards the Turks. One of the most prejudiced persons was E. Gladstone who had served several times in premier office in England.

As for causes of the unrest held by the non-Muslim Balkan peoples against the Muslim Ottomans there had religious, political, historical, social, ethnical and cultural drives. Minority traders who had connections with outsiders and who had many agents in foreign countries were the most ardent supporters of separatist ideas.³⁹ Students who went to European countries for study returned as revolutionaries. Large groups of foreign agents, mostly from Russia, agitated the minorities against the Empire. Ottoman local civil and military servants caused some stirs among the minorities because of their harsh and undesirable undertakings.

33 W. Miller, "Europe and the Ottoman Power before the Nineteenth Century," *English Historical Review*, 16 (1901), p. 462-463.

34 *İstatistik-i Umumi*, (title page missing), p. 5-6.

35 Tahsin Uzer, *Makedonya Eşkıyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1987, p. 116. Uzer claimed that of the 8.700.000 population, the Muslims made 4.000.000; the Muslims Albanians were 1.250.000; the Christian Albanians had 1.000.000; the Bulgarians made 1.150.000; the Greeks were 550.000; the Ulahs had 400.000; and the Jews were 350.000.

36 Ali Tevfik, *Memalik-i Osmaniye Coğrafyası*, Kasbâr Matbaası, İstanbul, 1318 (1902), p. 4-5.

37 Miller, "Europe and the Ottoman Power before the Nineteenth Century," p. 463.

38 Frank Fox, *The Balkan Peninsula*, A & C Black, London, 1915, p. 19.

39 Kemal H. Karpat, *Osmanlı'da Değişim, Modernleşme ve Uluslaşma*, çeviren Dilek Özdemir, İmge Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2006, p. 16-20.

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Historians generally and simply put “nationalism” as the most important reason for minority uprisings against the Ottoman Empire. According to this, the nationalism that became a fashionable word after the French Revolution of 1789, which did not really aim to reach a nationalist target in its start but a recovery from monarchy, class distinction and authoritarian rules for an equal, free and independent communal life, was responsible in minority risings around the world. The reasons for Balkan revolts would be hidden in history, social and cultural environment and religious and ethnical structures of the region. One reason was laid in historical consciousness of the locals. The Balkan peoples who had not had long time independent states of their own but had been ruled by outsiders including the Romans and the Ottomans always looked after freedom. They came to exaggerate their “successes” in establishing “big states” in the past. They created almost mythical notions of having had “great” states sometimes in the past. Thus, they created in their minds “greater Serbia,” “greater Bulgaria” and “greater Greece” before they found real answers to ethnic diversities, the Ottoman legitimate rule and the realities of the time.

The Balkans had been “a crossroads between East and West for thousands and thousands of years.” It was not “the kind of a place a people should have chosen for their habitat if they cared for their peaceful development. A perpetual ferment—that was the daily life of the Balkans.”⁴⁰ A word “Balkanization” came to be recognized as new term “in the social sciences vocabulary as a metaphor for diversity at best, social and political instability for the most part, and genocidal war at worst.”⁴¹

Big minority revolts started with the Serbs who took arms against the Ottomans in 1804. The next minority group that revolted was the Greeks whose bloody uprising took place in 1820 in modern day Romania and in 1821 in Morea. The last large minority uprising was the Bulgarian revolt of 1876, which initially took place in Phillippolis and Pazardjik. It started as massacring of Muslim villagers as it was the case with the revolt of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1875. The Ottomans responded with powerful force against the insurgents. Their method to suppress the revolt was harsh for many Europeans who strongly criticized the Ottomans. Many westerners considered the Turks as savages. Especially Lord Gladstone who was the head of the Liberal Party in Great Britain accused of the Ottomans killing some “60.000” Bulgarians.⁴²

40 Vera Moutafchieva, *Bulgaria's Past*, Press, Sofia, 1969, p. 7.

41 Clemens Hoffmann, “The Balkanization of Ottoman Rule: Premodern Origins of the Modern International System in Southeastern Europe,” *Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, vol. 43(4), p. 373-396.

42 Kemal H. Karpat, “I. Meşrutiyet Dönemine Abdülhamit'in Saltanatı (1876-1909)”, *Türkler*, (2002), p. 874.

However, the Bulgarian militants who were trained and armed by Russian agents massacred and killed some 300 Turkish villagers in the early days of the revolt. Then fightings between Bulgarian bandits and Ottoman forces continued for months. In the process of suppressing the revolt, some 2.100 insurgents would have been killed. Among perished peoples there would have been some civilians.⁴³

Desire to take Istanbul had been one of the most important drive in Russian expansionist policies.⁴⁴ They wanted to make good use of political, economical and military interests in Balkans. They organized the Tersane Conference in Istanbul in 1876. The Agreement reached in Istanbul was not accepted by the Ottomans, especially Mithat Pasha and the "nationalists." Upon failure in Istanbul, the westerners met in London to propose a new agreement which was somewhat milder than the Istanbul Agreement. However, the Ottomans rejected the London protocol, too. Upon this the Russians declared war on the Ottomans in April 1877. The Russian aim was to establish a puppet Bulgarian state whose borders would have reached to the Aegean Sea via Salonica. During the war the Russians, together with their militarized Bulgarians, attacked the Muslim villages in Bulgaria. According to some British sources, the Russians killed some 300.000 Muslims in Tuna Province and in Rumelia. They also forced 1.000.000 Muslims to leave their ages-old homes and lands,⁴⁵ which was one of the tragedies of humanity history ever recorded.

The Balkans never became as it had been after the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, which was signed in place of the Treaty of Ayastafanos. With this treaty, the Ottomans lost larger part of their soils in the Balkans to newly established Bulgarian Princedom, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as to Greece. She was left with some territories namely Albania, Macedonia which was covering Salonica, Monastir and Uskup and the Eastern Rumelia on reform and special conditions. In order to monitor and control reforms in Macedonia, a Balkan Committee was established. This committee played an important role in the rule of the region.⁴⁶ One Ottoman statesman criticized Big Powers in their reform demands since these demands tied hands of the Ottomans to make desired development steps.⁴⁷ Bosnia-Herzegovina was left under the military control of the Austria-Hungarian Empire.

43 Karpat, "I. Meşrutiyet Dönemi ve Abdülhamit'in Saltanatı (1876-1909)", p. 873-874.

44 Svetozar Tonjoroff, "Russia's Struggle for an Outlet," *North American Review*, 201 (January/June 1915), p. 530-531.

45 Karpat, "I. Meşrutiyet Dönemi ve Abdülhamit'in Saltanatı (1876-1909)", p. 878.

46 *Memoires of John Westlake*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1914, p. 110-111. According to Westlake, the Balkan Committee used its legitimate rights to act in the Balkans since it gained these rights from the Berlin Treaty of 1878.

47 Talat Paşa, *Hatıralar*, Bolayır Yayınları, İstanbul, 1958 p. 9.

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The Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-1878 cost the Ottomans to lose two fifth of her soils and one fifth of their population whose half was the Muslims.⁴⁸ Prior to the war, there were 1.120.000 Turks and 1.130.000 Bulgarians living on lands stretching from the Danube to the Balkan Mountains. In the same place some 70% of lands belonged to the Turks. The Panislawists, both the Bulgarians and the Russians, killed some 450.000 of the Turks and the other 1.500.000 Turks were forced to leave their lands. Even after the war, the Bulgarians made constant raids against the Turks to evacuate their homes.⁴⁹ Some migrated Turks were settled in Macedonia. The Ottoman government constructed quarters, villages and towns for these immigrants.⁵⁰

The Ottoman officials claimed that the Balkan Reform Committee established after the Berlin Treaty for performing reforms in Macedonia created 133 new and modern judicial courts in European style in different towns of the region. Some 400 lawyers who had graduated from Istanbul Law School with doctoral degree served in these courts. For intellectual development of the region, 800 new schools were opened. Agriculture and trade were supported by the state, new roads were constructed and 300 bridges were erected in Macedonia. Agricultural Bank was helping the farmers in the region to buy tools and develop their produces.⁵¹ Public servants who were sent to serve in services in Macedonia were carefully chosen among skilled persons to work effectively.⁵² Despite all Ottoman efforts to bring peace and tranquility in the Balkans, new problems created by the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 which continued to paralyze things in the region. Separatist ideas, terrorist organizations, foreign intrigues, fights between militants and the Ottoman army, minority uprisings and all sorts of quarrels continued until the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913.

General impression in Europe in the eve of the 20th century towards the Ottoman Empire was not in favor of the Ottomans. The European press and public view were against the Ottomans and were expecting to see the Ottoman power fading soon in the Balkans. The European press was publishing articles written in quite biased tone towards the Turkish Empire.⁵³

Statistical data for numbers of peoples lived in the Ottoman Empire came from different sources. Almost all sources including western, minority

48 Stanford J. Shaw ve Ezelkural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, cilt 2, E Yayınları, İstanbul, 1983, p. 239

49 Bilal N. Şimşir, "Bulgaristan Türklerine Göç Sorunu," *Bulgaristan'da Türk Varlığı I*, TTK, Ankara, 1987, p. 48-49; Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri, 1877-1890*, Ankara: TTK, p. 5-19.

50 Yusuf Sarıncay, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Makedonya*, BOA Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 2005, p. 25, 30.

51 *The New York Times*, 16 August 1903.

52 Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by Its Press*, Longmans, Green, New York, 1914, p. 83-84.

53 Allan McLaughlin, "The Storm Center in the Balkans," *The Popular Science Monthly*, volume LXIV (December 1903), p. 173.

and local estimates had great deal of discrepancies and mistakes. However, the Ottoman official statistics was the most reliable despite some shortcomings including inefficient count of women living in the Empire.⁵⁴ In 1912, the Ottoman Europe was made of several provinces including Istanbul, Rumelia, Albania, and Macedonia. Macedonia had some 800.000 Muslim populations.⁵⁵ According to the Ottoman statistics, Macedonia had 2.384.000 peoples whose 1.012.000 (42% of the whole population) were the Turks.⁵⁶ For political purposes, all Balkan nations claimed different statistical data for the population of Macedonia as shown in the following table.⁵⁷

Population of Macedonia claimed by main contenders of the region.				
	<i>Bulgarian Statistics</i>	<i>Serbian Statistics</i>	<i>Greek Statistics</i>	<i>The Ottoman Statistics</i>
The Turks	499.000	231.000	634.000	1.112.000
Bulgarians	1.181.000	57.000	332.000	774.000
Greeks	229.000	201.000	653.000	514.000
Serbs	1.000	2.048.000	---	---

Total population of the region was estimated to 6.130.000. Meanwhile, other Balkan states had different sizes of populations. In this respect, Bulgaria had 4.329.000, Greece had 2.632.000, Serbia had 2.910.000, Montenegro had 25.000 and Romania had 7.070.000 population.⁵⁸

All Balkan nations were prone to irredentist and aggressive international policies either against each other or against the Ottomans. Because of its weakness, the Ottoman Empire was considered as an easy prey to both the new Balkan states and the Big States' interests. One of the reasons of the Balkans wars was "hateful and primitive" aggressiveness of the Balkan nations against all others.⁵⁹ With the help of the Big Powers, the Balkans were disintegrated into "national" parts. Yet, "this process of disintegration is understood to be in accordance with establishment of modern sovereignty in the form of an 'arrogation of the means of violence by multiple sovereigns and the concomitant establishment of bounded territoriality."⁶⁰

In the formation of the Balkan League, the Serbs made the first step. They signed an "aggressive" agreement with the Bulgarians against the Ot-

54 K. H. Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu, 1830-1914*, çeviren, Bahar Tırnakçı, Timtaş, İstanbul, 2010, p. 14-15.

55 Jacob G. Schurman, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913*, 1916, p. 38-39.

56 Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire*, Arnold, London, 2001, p. 58.

57 McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire*, p. 59; Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu*, p. 30.

58 Jacob G. Schurman, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913*, 1916, p. 39-41.

59 Schurman, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913*, 1916, p. 13-21.

60 Hoffmann, "The Balkanization of Ottoman Rule: Premodern Origins of the Modern International System in Southeastern Europe," p. 375.

toman Empire in March 1912. According to the agreement, they planned to make joint-raids against the Ottoman territories. If they won the war, they were going to share the spoil. The Next step came with an agreement reached between the Bulgarians and the Greeks in May 1912. Again both sides agreed to support each other in case of war with the Ottomans and gain new lands from the Turkish territories. The Greek leader, Venizelos, who was a Creatan militant aimed to take part in any war against the Turks and the Balkan nations since he thought it was in the best interest of Greece not to lose track of Megalo Idea whose eventual target was to revive the Byzantium. Furthermore, the Balkan states were sure that they were going to be saved by the Big Powers, especially Russia, in case the war with the Ottoman Turks went wrong. Without a doubt, almost all Big Powers were in favor of Balkan nations and were looking after both their and local peoples' interests even though their policies were not just and impartial. In a sense, interests and autonomies of the Balkan nations had gained for them by the Big Powers, which entailed the Big Powers to do what they had been doing. The Ottomans whose lands had been viewed as trophies by the Big Powers felt isolated and weak against demands made by both the minorities and the Big Powers. Ottoman weaknesses to establish an effective rule in the Balkans, aggressive policies of local states and big state interests made the Balkans a boiling witch-pan.

Reforms that were implemented by the Ottomans under the supervision of the Big States in the aftermath of the Berlin Treaty of 1878 in Macedonia did not meet the minority expectations. Starting in 1893 many revolutionary organizations were established in the region. Among these organizations, the Internal Organization chose "Macedonia for the Macedonians" as its slogan. As these organizations started terrorist acts, the Ottoman army fought to eradicate terrorists. In these confrontations, some "100 villages were burned, 8.000 houses were destroyed and 60.000 villagers lost their homes." The Big States intervened in these developments.⁶¹ Macedonian question grew because of insurgents (komitacis) sent by recently established Balkan states. The Balkans increasingly became a source of conflict between Russia and the Austria-Hungarian Empire,⁶² which will be one of the main reasons of the Great War of 1914-1918.

Military victories of the Balkan states against the Ottomans after the First Balkan War amazed the world. This amazement came from failure of a notion that instead of the Big States, the small Balkan nations were succeeded in throwing the Turks out of the Balkans.⁶³ It was long-chaotic character of the

61 Jacob G. Schurman, *The Balkan Wars, 1912—1913*, 1916, p. 40-44.

62 Halil İnalçık, *Kuruluş ve İmparatorluk Sürecinde Osmanlı: Devlet, Kanun, Diplomasi*, İstanbul, 2011, p. 26.

63 Schurman, *The Balkan Wars, 1912—1913*, 1916, p. 3-4.

regions, which created by both ever-ending demands of both locals and Big States, that had created frustrations among the Turks. Terrorist organizations of Macedonia played an important role in impairing the Ottoman rule in the region and overthrowing it from the place. Most of the *komitacis* who belonged to the Internal Macedonian Organization greatly helped the armies of the Balkan nations in the Balkan Wars.⁶⁴

The power that held the Ottoman subjects intact was the state itself. The state presented in the name of the Sultan and got its power from military and official state servants who were considered as *kuls* (slaves) of the Sultan. It was Machiavelli who discovered in the 16th century that the Ottoman Empire was held together because all the state servants were “slaves” of the Sultan. These “slaves”, either in military or in civil posts, contributed to the power of the state. Machiavelli also claimed that if military might of the empire was defeated, there was no power left to resist the invaders.⁶⁵ This theory had been proven many times since the Empire hardly had regained the lands she lost. It was not only the non-Muslim subjects, but the Muslim subjects in the northern Africa, and Arabian Peninsula were not showing any serious struggle to bring back the Ottoman past after they had been parted from the Empire. Thus, it was mostly military power of the Empire that ruled, protected and run the state. When military was not strong enough to perform its crucial jobs, the Empire failed to keep her lands together.

In disintegration of the Empire, absence of patriotism among its subjects, save the Turks, played important role. Even though the Ottomans tried to create a conscientious and loyal society to the State by working on an “Ottoman nation” among all its subjects, for this they issued important degrees—The *Tanzimat* in 1839 and *Islahat* in 1856—and the first Constitution in 1876, they failed to have loyalties of all segments of the Ottoman society. Especially the minorities doggedly kept their own distinct way of customs and social aspects. Among the subject peoples, none but the Turks really paid any serious attention to the integrity of the Empire.

In order for the multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities and nations to live together in a state, common sets of values had been needed. These values would be a religion and religious institutions, laws, economic ties, moral codes, geographic necessities, cultural affinities, languages, kinships, political rights and historical destinies. The Ottomans had not succeeded in creating a common set of values to the whole subjects of the Empire. Their common values would be the Sultan who represented the state and the

64 C. Parlitcheff, *Le Régime Serbe et La Lutte Révolutionnaireen Macédonine*, Sofia, 1917, p. 6-7.

65 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by Luigi Ricci, Oxford University Press, London, (n.d),p. 15.

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military might that not only protected the state but also ran the state. Once the military was defeated by outsiders, the lands and subject peoples in it was lost forever.

Ottomans reforms had been reacted by many including minority leaders who had mostly been religious men and who did not want to give up their old powers in their own communities, large Muslim communities who had difficulty in seeing the non-Muslims as equals to them, foreign powers, especially Russia, which did not desire to see the Ottoman “sicknesses” to be cured since they earnestly waited to see the Ottoman Empire torn into pieces to get their share of the loot. Furthermore, the Ottoman reforms were stayed on papers and they had hardly been utilized as desired. Neither the large segment of government officials, nor the subject peoples had enough efforts and knowledge to appreciate fully of these reforms. In addition, the minorities had not stopped demanding new privileges. None of the reforms short of the full independence from the state would have satisfied the non-Muslims who were constantly agitated by the Big Powers, especially by Russia, against the Empire. Under such situation, it was hard for the Ottomans to create a modern sense of citizenship for the whole subject peoples.

Creating imaginary or real “questions” was a fashionable way for the Big Powers to intervene in outside territories. They produced many such questions for the Ottoman Empire. The most important of these questions first termed by Alexander I in 1815 was the Eastern Question which made the whole Empire as a question in the eyes of the Big Powers. Besides the Eastern Question, they created new questions including the Egypt question, the Lebanon question, the Balkan question, the holy places question, the Armenian question, the Macedonian question. In all these questions, they expected the Ottomans to make changes in accordance with their demands. By this way, the Ottomans lost their own way of ruling their state. The foreigners intervened in almost all sorts of internal and external affairs of the state.

Both regional developments and events and international developments and events would have contributed to the making history of the world in varying degrees. Since it was a time of disintegrations for classical multi-religious and multi-ethnic empires, the Ottoman Empire could not escape its time’s necessities. In the end of the nineteenth century and in the first quarters of the twentieth century three classical empires namely the Austria-Hungary, the Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empires experienced similar fates. All three of them struggled against internal uprisings and external demands. The Austria-Hungary and Russia were strong and were considered as two of the Big Powers in the world. Because of their powerful positions, they kept their lands intact and even enlarged till the end of the First World War. The Ottoman Empire on the other hand faced grave dangers of disintegrations and internal

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conflicts because of her weaknesses in military, economy and technology.

It was not an inescapable fate for classical empires to collapse. If so, the United States would have had difficulties. But, even though she comprised many different nationalities the United States of America did not experience danger of disintegration in the sense of nationalist revolts. The key to integrity of multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities was modern ideas in social, administrative and cultural values. Some of these ideas were democracy, secularism, human rights, and equality before law and individualism. The Ottomans were conscious of the value of these principles. They decreed the *Tanzimat* (1839) and the *Islahat* (1856) and the first Constitution in 1876. If the line of democratization were continued, it would have been possible for the Ottomans to create a common citizenship for its whole subjects and kept her territories intact. However, Sultan Abdülhamit the Second closed the assembly and put the constitution on shelf in 1878. He ruled the Empire with an iron grip keeping track of everything and with so many restrictions and prohibitions in intellectual, political and cultural milieus. Abdülhamit II's harsh rule created a suitable environment for secret organizations of both minority and majority groups. Minority organizations demanded separations by using every method including terrorism while majority groups struggled for regime change.

Inauguration of the second constitutional monarchy by the Committee of Union in 1908 created a hope for all to live together in a vast empire. Yet, several reasons including harsh administrative methods applied by the Committee of Union, unending demands of minorities and fierce rivalries among Big Powers for gaining spheres of influences and new lands from the Ottoman territories made it impossible to keep peaceful and hopeful empire to stay longer. All hungry interest groups and awkward administrative practices of the Committee of Union hastened the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

After the 1880's, the world was experienced a dynamic and aggressive expansions of the Big powers, which was called the "new imperialism". Almost all Big Powers relentlessly struggled with each other to gain more lands or sphere of influences in every parts of the Globe. The Austria-Hungarian Empire whose western, southern and northern sides were blocked by strong states namely Germany, Italy and Russia, found it an easy way in the Balkans to expand her lands. Her Balkan policy disturbed Russia whose aim had been to spread her influence in the region.⁶⁶ Other Big Powers were also interested in the Balkan affairs since they knew that the Balkans had been an important battle ground for bitter rivalries among themselves. None of these Big Powers was really concerned with the Ottoman interests other than their own.

66 Fahir Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasî Tarihi, 1914-1980*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Ankara, 1991, p. 19-21.

“Pans” that left its mark on the 19th century world history greatly affected the Ottoman Empire. Pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, pan-Italian, pan-Ottomanism, pan-Islamism and such ideas created their own international policies. In this respect, the Ottoman minorities were considered as kin to outside big religious or ethnic organizations. The Russian played important role by giving strong emphasis to pan-Slavism which aimed to unite the Slavic nations under the big brotherhood of Russia. In this way, “pans” were helped many states to have strong places in world politics, lands and diplomacy. Multi-ethnic and religious character of the Balkans made it difficult for the Ottoman rule to block foreign intrigues, especially intrigues that were coming from Russia.

In short, the Ottomans had succeeded in ruling multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities in some of the most troubled regions of the world for centuries in the middle ages and in the early modern times. Their administrative practices kept minorities as socially, culturally and religiously intact. In the modern times, on the other hand, rapidly changing social, political, cultural and scientific environment created new sets of values in state administrations. Individualism, equality, nationalism, human rights, liberty, universal judicial system and religious freedom increasingly became important in communities and states. In these developments, the enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789 played crucial roles. New values forced small and large states to adapt them in varying degrees to escape social unrests and minority revolts. The Ottomans tried to change their internal customary traditions in the line of new developments in the nineteenth century. Reformist sultans including Sultan Selim III, Sultan Mahmut II, Sultan Abdülmecit, Sultan Abdülaziz and even Sultan Abdülhamit II and the Committee of Unity and Progress reformed administrative structures to give rights for the minorities in particular and for the whole subjects in general to have equal citizens within the Empire. Reforms that made the Empire constitutional monarchy and that provided more equal rights to the minorities were not able to meet the whole expectations of both minorities and the Big States. Never ending demands of the minorities and growing interests of big states, as well as poorly handling of reforms by the Ottomans, made all efforts to keep the state running incomplete. The minorities were not satisfied by rights granted by the Empire. They demanded full freedom. Even when they gained their full freedom, they did not stop intriguing against the Turkish Empire to gain more lands. The Big States, too, had no boundaries for their increasing interests in either gaining new territories or sphere of influences. Because of her weaknesses, the Turkish Empire could not compete with demands of minorities and hungry appetite of the Big States.

Under such unfavorable situations, the Ottomans needed enough man power, intellectual capacity, money and scientific knowledge to keep the Em-

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pire intact. They struggled to have them, but failed to have them enough. In the end, some politically wrong decisions, character of the time and unconquered problems brought the empire to its death. Upon its ashes, the Modern Turkish Republic rose under the leadership of one of the 20th Century's most venerated statesmen, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

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