

**Managing Macedonia:
British Statecraft, Intervention, and
'Proto-peacekeeping' in Ottoman Macedonia,
1902-1905**

by

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Abstract

Political violence in Ottoman Macedonia in 1902-03 prompted the European powers to impose stronger reform measures on the Ottoman Empire. This study analyzes British policy toward Macedonia during the Balfour administration from 1902 to 1905 through a detailed examination of diplomacy, domestic politics, and events 'on the ground.' The main contention is that the British maintained a proactive and solution-oriented policy within the framework of the multilateral reform process. Importantly, they sought to calm the violence through the establishment of a prototypical peacekeeping force.

In many respects, the British approach to events in Macedonia was a successful exercise in crisis management. Preemptive measures to mitigate and prevent a crisis helped prepare the British government for the crises that occurred. When events escalated during the Ilinden Uprising in the summer of 1903, British officials were able to respond effectively and even opportunistically, using knowledge and pragmatism to navigate through the crisis. The British government positioned itself to recover from the crisis in the short term and play a more prominent role in the fledgling Müritzsteg Reform Program.

The British became convinced that the deployment of European military attachés or soldiers was the key to bringing peace to Ottoman Macedonia. Their ideas for this 'peacekeeping' force and a stronger reform mandate was influenced by previous interventions in the Ottoman Empire, local observations in Macedonia, and knowledge gleaned from imperial rule. Under the terms of the Müritzsteg Reform Program of 1903, a contingent of European officers deployed to train the Ottoman gendarmerie and undertake peacekeeping tasks. The relative success the British officers enjoyed convinced British officials to lobby for a more robust deployment and mandate. Although the Müritzsteg Reform Program was short-lived, it stands as an intriguing chapter in the conceptual history of peacekeeping, and suggests that early peacekeeping was the product of an imperial genealogy.

Keywords: Macedonia; Peacekeeping; Intervention; British Foreign Policy; Müritzsteg Reform Program; Ottoman Empire

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Introduction

Europe's latest war was fought in a Balkan backwater that today is largely unknown territory for even the most well-informed West Europeans. A century ago, by contrast, the British educated public was well informed on events in Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Serbia.¹

John Philips

The above quote is from the memoir of John Philips, a British correspondent who covered the 2001 conflict in the Republic of Macedonia. It may seem odd to think that Western Europeans knew more about the events in Southeastern Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century than at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but Philips' contrast could only be more poignant if he included Western European governments. Philips mentions the "breed of dashing, totally dedicated journalists" that traversed the Balkans in the Edwardian era. This cohort included men such as James David Brouchier, whose long sojourn in the region allowed him to gain the confidence of several regional political leaders and gave him the intimate understanding of the territory's culture and politics which can only be acquired over time.² Likewise, the British maintained more consulates in the region in 1903 than in 2001. These posts were staffed by several men who had been stationed for substantial parts of their careers in Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Some spoke the languages and demonstrated considerable energy in going beyond the walls of the consulates to conduct their own investigations and engage local political and community leaders. Although the importance the British placed in the security of the Ottoman Empire had diminished in late nineteenth century, the British still maintained long-standing financial, economic, and strategic interests in the Ottoman Empire. At the very least, they were

¹ John Philips, *Macedonia: Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 174.

² *Ibid.* Several journalists, activists, and adventures journeyed to Macedonia during the years of conflict and wrote memoirs of their experiences. Amongst the best known were H.N. Brailsford, Frederick Moore, Reginald Wyon, Mary Edith Durham,

willing to use diplomatic leverage to thwart intervention by Austria-Hungary or Russia, which might have brought one or both of these eastern powers to the shores of the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara.

In 1903 the three Ottoman vilayets (provinces) of Kosovo, Monastir, and Salonica comprised the territory that was becoming known to Europe as Macedonia.³ In August of 1903, a series of small crises culminated with the Ilinden Uprising by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), a predominately Slavic organization based in Ottoman Macedonia but with loose ties to Bulgaria. Centred in the western Vilayet of Monastir, the rebellion enjoyed a brief flurry of success before the rebels were overwhelmed by the Ottoman security forces. Stories of atrocities and fears of a humanitarian crisis forced the European powers to intervene diplomatically. Part of their solution was the creation of a prototypical ‘peacekeeping’⁴ force, which deployed to Macedonia in the spring of 1904. Confronted by an ongoing guerilla war fought by multiple factions, humanitarian emergencies, and authorities that often resented their presence, these early peacekeepers faced many of the same challenges which have confronted peacekeepers in the ‘asymmetrical’ environments of the post-Cold War era.

My thesis examines British policy toward the Macedonian crises of 1902-03 and the development of a prototypical peacekeeping operation. While studies by Radovich, Samardjiev, and Rodogno have examined the objectives of British diplomacy and the influences of pressure groups, my study researches the preemptive actions and statecraft the British employed to manage the crises, and the ‘peacekeeping’ measures which they advocated as part of a solution. As I will explain later in this introduction, the British statesmen and diplomats understood they were engaged in an information war for

³ Macedonia is referred to here as a geographical entity. This territory comprised of the three Ottoman vilayet (provinces) of Kosovo, Monastir, and Salonica. The three vilayets came to be called Macedonia in the nineteenth century. For a discussion of boundaries and the construction of national identity in Ottoman Macedonia, see: İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, “Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia,” in *Understanding Life in the Borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2010.), 160-188.

⁴ The term ‘peacekeeping’ came to be used to describe United Nations operations in the 1950s. It did not exist in 1902-05; hence I place it in quotations. For further explanation, see: Terry M. Mays, *Historical Dictionary of Multinational Peacekeeping* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 1.

the favour of public opinion, and they took measures to control the production of knowledge and shape the tone of the discourse on Macedonia. For the British, the establishment of a 'peacekeeping' presence in Macedonia was a well-informed objective which appeased public opinion at home and was diplomatically possible in international relations. Importantly, the British believed this multilateral 'peacekeeping' force could make a positive difference 'on the ground' in Macedonia. As I will demonstrate, there were some attitudes and influences at work in the creation and development of this force which suggest that this prototypical peacekeeping operation carried an imperial genealogy. Furthermore, this chapter of British foreign policy history provides some insight into the workings of the 'British World System,' and a modern state's approach to managing a crisis in an age of terrorism and mass communication.

My interest and motivation for undertaking this project has been shaped by the interventions in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East and elsewhere over the past two decades. Questions of intervention arose during conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Libya, and, at the time of writing, Syria. Questions of whether a given nation or the International Community should intervene or not and, if so, in what capacity have ignited fierce debates between polarized camps of realists, liberal interventionists, left-wing anti-interventionists, and right-wing neo-imperialists. Interventions can save lives but they can also take lives and produce agonizingly long commitments that can cost governments money and electoral support. It is small wonder one of the best-known books on the subject took its title from American secretary of state Warren Christopher who, in 1993, called the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina "a problem from hell."⁵ The accusations of weakness and lack of resolve by the International Community towards Bosnia produced some harsh criticisms. In analyzing the Major government's policy towards the Bosnia, Brendan Simms produced a scathing indictment, which he called Britain's "*Unfinest Hour*."⁶ The lack of resolve and unity and half measures the

⁵ Samantha Power, "*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*" (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 306. Christopher made the comments in the spring of 1993 when, as Power notes, the Clinton's administration's language regarding the Bosnian War "shifted from that of moral outrage to that of an amoral mess."

⁶ Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

International Community displayed during the 1990s produced comparisons to the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Having recently covered the wars in the Former Yugoslavia, the veteran correspondent Misha Glenny said of Mürzsteg: “The mission was half-baked, ill-conceived and poorly executed. It inaugurated a long tradition of bungled interventions.”⁷

However, with the forceful intervention in the Kosovo conflict in 1999, a sense emerged—in pro interventionist circles at least—that a more aggressive policy by nations under the NATO banner could produce favourable results. The rapid removal of the Taliban government in Afghanistan after the events of September 11, 2001 gave interventionists more confidence, and produced works by high profile public intellectuals such as Michael Ignatieff and Niall Ferguson, who argued that intervention could further a new era of benevolent imperialism which would build nations founded on democratic and economic liberalism.⁸ Nevertheless, since the mid 2000s, the pendulum has swung away from interventionism. The conflict in Iraq exacted a heavy human toll and NATO forces in Afghanistan became bogged down in a long war. Maintaining security and building democracy and economic prosperity in Southeastern Europe have become long-term projects. If financial reform and transparency initiatives can be included, the entire region can be said to be under the tutelage of European, American, and international organizations. Weariness and financial hardship have brought accusations of imperialism in from the radical fringes.

“Can Intervention Work?” This question is a title of a recent publication by two relatively young veterans of the nation building projects produced by the interventions in Afghanistan and Bosnia. In their conclusions are recommendations that would-be intervening forces and nation builders need to learn more about their target states and that they strive to leave a “light footprint” which does not necessitate building a country

⁷ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), 207.

⁸ Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2003); Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

up from its ashes.⁹ Perhaps in light of the shift away from aggressive interventionism, the more conservative approaches employed 110 years ago will come to be seen in a more favourable light. Like the contemporary United States, Great Britain in 1902-03 faced the uncomfortable reality that it was financially and militarily overstretched at a time of shifts in the global balance of power. While I do not expect my study to offer solutions, it is my hope that it will make some points which will give cause for critical comparisons and discussions of the questions which surround the always controversial issue of intervention.

This study examines the Balfour government's policies towards the crises and conflict in Ottoman Macedonia between 1902 and 1905. In seeking to establish a comprehensive understanding of the motivations, strategies, execution, and implications of British policy, several interrelated questions will be addressed. Why was the Macedonian Crisis of 1903-03 managed so much more successfully than the Bulgarian Crisis of 1876? How did an unpopular British government manage to gain a significant level of popular domestic support for its Macedonia policies? What were relations like between British officials on one side and journalists and pressure groups on the other and how did the British government use these relationships to its advantage? How successful were the British in building diplomatic support from the other European powers and from the Ottoman government for stronger multilateral reform policies? Of particular interest are questions surrounding the prominent role the British played in establishing the multilateral 'peacekeeping' force that was deployed to Macedonia in 1904 under the terms of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. What motivated the approach to this policy? What accounts for the success the British 'peacekeepers' enjoyed in their sector during 1904-05? Why did the British believe their ideas and initiatives would work both in and beyond Macedonia? And, more broadly, what does the Mürzsteg Reform Program tell us about the inherent nature of the concept and practice of 'peacekeeping'?

My contention is that Great Britain's policy towards the crises in Macedonia was anticipatory and solution oriented. Led by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and Foreign

⁹ Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), xix-xxvi. Stewart and Kanaus respectively call their theory on intervention: "passionate moderation" and "principled incrementalism."

Secretary Lord Lansdowne, the reigning conservative British statesmen did not wish to be drawn into a humanitarian intervention. However, they were not content to turn their backs on the events unfolding in Europe's southeast. The British were flexible and at times opportunistic in their approach, pushing the envelope on diplomatic intervention at times but never far enough to leave themselves isolated from the other European powers. Domestically, the conservative statesmen engaged critics such as the Scottish MP James Bryce and the outspoken Bishop of Hereford. They fostered relations with journalists and activists such as the dissident H.N. Brailsford and the famous archeologist Arthur Evans, who were amongst the leaders of the Balkan Committee, the pressure group which lobbied the loudest for the government to pursue a more active policy towards Macedonia. As events unfolded in the late summer of 1903, the British government came to an arrangement with the Balkan Committee which helped unite the majority of the government's critics and the liberal opposition behind the government's policy. The thread, which runs through British policy between 1902 and 1905, is the opinion that a uniformed presence of 'peacekeepers' from the European imperial powers was the key to lessening the violence in Ottoman Macedonia and calming regional tension in Southeastern Europe. The advocacy for 'peacekeepers' reflected British understanding of the context and the dynamics of the conflict in Macedonia. Furthermore, it was a course of action that was possible within European diplomatic circles and popular with public opinion in Britain.

To better understand Britain's approach to the 1902-03 crises in Ottoman Macedonia, it is helpful to utilize the lens of crisis management theory. Although there are several variations regarding the components for successfully managing a crisis, most of the literature on the subject identifies four stages, which can be summarized as: anticipation and preparation; damage control and isolation; resolution and follow through; post crisis evaluation and learning.

As outlined by Ian Mitroff, crisis management mechanisms must be created for "anticipating, sensing, reacting to, containing, learning from and redesigning effective organizational procedures for handling major crises."¹⁰ Crises are not normal, they are

¹⁰ Ian I Mitroff, *Managing Crises Before They Happen* (Saranac Lake, NY: AMACOM, 2005), 30.

man-made disasters that should be considered inevitable, and organizations must be capable of responding to them quickly.¹¹ Crises should be anticipated and acted upon quickly. Signal detection mechanisms should be created and operational. When a crisis occurs its effects must be contained.¹² Opportunity may arise through the resolution of a crisis, and one should be prepared to capitalize on chances that are presented.¹³ Finally, lessons must be learned for and existing systems and methods must be redesigned in anticipation of potential future crises.¹⁴

Great Britain's response to the events in Macedonia can be considered a quiet example of a well-managed crisis. Preemptive measures that had been taken to mitigate and prevent a crisis helped prepare the British government for the crises when they occurred. When events escalated during the Ilinden Uprising in the summer of 1903, British officials were able to respond effectively and even opportunistically, using knowledge and pragmatism to navigate through the crisis. The British government positioned itself to recover from the crisis in the short term and play a more prominent role in the fledging Mürzsteg Reform Program.

Led by the 'technician' Lord Lansdowne at home and the diligence ambassador Nicolas O'Connor in Constantinople, British statesmen and diplomats took a series of preemptive measures to limit the effects of a crisis in Macedonia. They were informed by their understanding of the 1876 Bulgarian Crisis, when the conservative government of Benjamin Disraeli had faced ridicule at home from William Gladstone, and then near war to block a Russian advance on Constantinople. They resolved that there would be no repetition of this history. The British knew they faced a revolutionary organization in IMRO that was determined to manufacture a crisis even if it meant provoking the

¹¹ Harvard Business School, *Harvard Business Essentials: Crisis Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), xvi.

¹² Mitroff, *Managing Crises Before They Happen*, 30.

¹³ Steven Fink, *Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable* (New York: BackinPrint.com, 2000), 1. Fink, whose 1986 study has proved very influential, notes that the concept of finding opportunity in crises has been embraced for centuries. The Chinese word for crisis "wei-ji" combines the words "danger" and "opportunity."

¹⁴ Mitroff, *Managing Crises Before They Happen*, 30. Though much of the literature on crisis management comes from business studies, several authors emphasize that crisis management theories and strategies are for "society." Many of the cases studies examined in these works were as much political crisis as they were business crises.

massacre of its civilian brethren. In anticipation of news of a massacre, the British acted pre-emptively, deploying additional consular officials and using diplomacy to urge the Bulgarian and Ottoman governments to enact reform and exercise restraint. The British diplomatic network on the ground also kept the government well informed of political developments and even the movements of some individual *agents provocateurs*, such as the prolific Boris Sarafov, who campaigned for Macedonian autonomy both as a bearded guerilla fighter and as a playboy diplomat in a smart European suit. This reservoir of documentation enabled the British government to use authoritative information when it responded to newspaper articles, questions in parliament, and even individual letter-writers. The government provided assuring messages that it was well appraised and in control of the situation. When necessary, the diplomats were ordered to investigate alleged atrocities and injustices.

Information was a vital tool of statecraft. In contrast to 1876, the British government positioned itself to be the most trusted source of information in Britain regarding Macedonia. As a result, most opposition members of parliament qualified their criticisms and looked to the government's 'Blue Books' for clarification. By mid 1903, the appeals of the revolutionaries for Macedonian autonomy were largely falling on deaf ears. Even the government's critics qualified their words on Macedonia by noting 'age-old hatreds' and describing the rebels with the same unflattering terms as they depicted the Ottomans. By the 1900s, European and Ottoman officials had been explaining inter-communal violence in the Ottoman Empire for several decades.¹⁵ To many observers in Britain, the conflict in Macedonia was just the latest episode of troublesome relations in the region known as the 'Near East.'

The Ilinden Uprising of August 1903 presented the British with their most serious challenge in the succession of crises that had begun in October 1902. The government was able to deflect initial criticisms from the Liberal opposition for drawing moral equivalences between the Ottomans and the rebels. However, pressure mounted from

¹⁵ See: Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Thomas Kuhn, *Empire, Islam, the Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Boston: Brill, 2011); Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

the Balkan Committee for the government to demand the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Macedonia and to appoint a European governor as numerous reports of atrocities by Muslim irregulars against Christian civilians emerged from Macedonia in the late summer. The news brought back memories of the 'Bulgarian Horrors' of 1876 and the Balkan Committee was quick to point out that British diplomacy had reinstated Ottoman rule in Macedonia through the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Under pressure from an expanding opposition—which included secular and religious organizations—the British government shifted away from arguments of moral equivalency between the rebels and the Ottoman security forces and moved to advocating for the victims of the violence. In doing so, they were careful to focus on the civilian suffering and to give no credence to the political objectives of the rebels. This strategy won over several of the government's strongest domestic critics, notably the Balkan Committee. The Balkan Committee received diplomatic support from the government to deliver aid to civilian victims during the autumn and winter months of 1903 through the auspices of the Macedonian Relief Fund, which was the Balkan Committee in all but name. By November, several of Lord Lansdowne's most vociferous critics were praising him for his initiatives to help the sufferers and bring reform to Macedonia.

In their diplomacy, the British had long advocated reform as the best means of stabilizing the Ottoman Empire. Through reform, they hoped to affect the Europeanization of the Ottoman security forces, introduce more financial reforms which would make the Ottoman Empire more amenable to international trade and investment, and make political and judicial reforms, which would further politicize sectarianism and nationality. The point the British began to focus upon during the crises of 1902-1903 was the reform of the Ottoman security forces. The British were not satisfied with the reforms of February 1903, which planned for only a handful of (neutral) Scandinavian and Belgian officers to be sent to Macedonia to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie. As the instability continued over the following months, British diplomats and statesmen contributed ideas for a multinational force, which would deploy to Macedonia under a stronger reform mandate. Most of the concepts they advocated were influenced by regional experience, local observations (recent and historical), and lessons learned from the administration of the British Empire.

The interventions in Ottoman Syria in 1861 and Crete in 1868 and 1898 influenced British thought as did the work of energetic military attachés, like Frances Maunsell, and diplomats on the ground, such as Sir Alfred Biliotti, who had acted to protect Muslim refugees in Crete. These men often acted beyond their diplomatic portfolios by investigating alleged atrocities, assessing local political and military developments, and voicing their complaints and advice to Ottoman officials, including the Ottoman inspector-general for Macedonia, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, who many of them came to know very well. Many of the suggested military training techniques and organizational methods advocated and used by the British reflected practices gleaned from the British Empire. These included the use of indirect power, building a rapport with the authorities and the population, and maintaining a visible presence, which they considered particularly important.¹⁶ The rapid elicitation of suggestions and the dexterity the British displayed in their diplomacy are indicative of a strategy which was expedited in the context of a crisis. As far as the British government was concerned, it produced a satisfactory result in establishing a multinational European presence, which eased regional tensions and provided the framework for stronger reforms.

While the terms of Müzzsteg Reform Program were not as ambitious as the British had hoped, they were credited with containing the conflict. What is more, the further expansion of the scope and geographical reach of the reforms was still considered possible. Importantly, the deployment of uniformed officers and the diplomatic assistance provided to aid workers appeased many domestic critics in Britain who—at least in the short term—applauded their government and reserved their criticism for the more conservative Great Powers (Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary) and the Ottoman Empire. In 1904-05, the British sector in the easterly Sancak of Drama was a zone of relative tranquility, and the British officers who patrolled the territory together with the newly recruited and trained gendarmes were lauded by the British foreign secretary for the “tranquilizing influence” they had on the local populations.¹⁷ By

¹⁶ The British officers deployed in Macedonia in 1904 immediately went far beyond their prescribed task to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie. Their energetic engagement with the authorities and the population suggests the influence of methods derived more from an imperial security force than a European army.

¹⁷ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/32.

supporting private aid operations, pushing for an expansion of the reforms, and with their officers ostensibly providing a stabilizing presence, the British government recovered quickly from the crisis. This came at a time when the British government was already facing a series of new foreign-policy challenges and was in a beleaguered political condition domestically.

The British response to the crises of 1902-1903 and the course of action towards Ottoman Macedonia from 1901 to 1905 did reflect strategic foreign-policy objectives. At a time of imperial overstretch, the pursuit of a multilateral intervention initiative in Macedonia was fiscally and strategically prudent. Fearing an engagement with their longstanding imperial rival Russia, and concerned about the growth of German influence on the Ottoman government at British expense, an expanded multilateral presence in the region was of potential benefit to British interests.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is a mistake to dismiss the British approach to Macedonia as being solely the product of cold-blooded realpolitik. Several British statesmen expressed private concerns for the welfare of the populations involved in the conflict, and these sentiments were not entirely limited to the Macedonian Christians.

As for its legacies, the British approach to Macedonia presents an intriguing case study in crisis management. The preemptive initiatives and the successful dovetailing of political strategy with public opinion represent an answer from British conservatives to the legacies of liberal interventionists like Lord Byron and William Gladstone. The Mürzsteg Reform Program has often been criticized as a half measure that failed to arrest the violence in Macedonia, but the intervention was successful in containing the conflict and a much-feared Ottoman-Bulgarian war was avoided. The creation and deployment of a multinational force of European officers reveals that some decidedly imperial impulses influenced this early chapter in the conceptual history of what has become known as peacekeeping. Finally, the opinions and worldviews behind the policies regarding finance, justice, humanitarian relief, and population management

¹⁸ The Russian-British imperial rivalry, known by some as the 'Great Game,' had stretched from the Dardanelles to the Pacific coast of North America. In the 1890s, Germany pursued closer relations with the Ottoman Empire, and the British grew concerned with the increasing presence of German military advisors and the strategic implications of the proposed Berlin-Baghdad Railway.

provide some intriguing parallels to Britain's approach to other crises and peacekeeping efforts in Europe's periphery in the twentieth century.

At its basis, this thesis is a work of diplomatic history. As one of the oldest disciplines of history in the western tradition dating back to the historians of Classical Greece, diplomatic history analyzes the foreign policy of a state or a combination of states. As noted by D.R. Woolf, diplomatic methodology demands a close reading of the documents, paying attention to the classification of documents with "rigorous attention to detail."¹⁹ Traditionally, diplomatic historians have focused their attention on official documents dealing with foreign relations. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, diplomatic historians primarily examined external relations of states (primacy of foreign politics). As discussed by Saho Matsumoto, the release of edited collections of diplomatic documents fuelled a burgeoning number of publications addressing topics related to the First and Second World Wars. It was the investigations of origins of the First World War that prompted a turn toward the examination of domestic politics (primacy of domestic politics) in the 1960s. The landmark work was the book *Griff nach der Weltmacht* by West German historian Fritz Fischer, who supported his thesis that Germany was primarily responsible for the war through the examination of domestic factors. Following the Fischer Controversy, the influence on foreign policy by factors such as economics, social movements, culture, military capacities, intelligence, media, propaganda and public opinion broadened the horizons of diplomatic history. In addition, diplomatic history was opened to the influence of the social sciences theories, which further prompted revisions of conventional interpretations. The discipline also began to shed its Eurocentric focus, attracting scholars who examined non-European nations.²⁰ Like political history, diplomatic history has been revitalized by being open to other schools of history and "the recent theoretical ferments within the historical profession."²¹

¹⁹ D.R. Woolf, "Paleography and Diplomatic," in *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing*, edited by D.R. Woolf (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1998), 688.

²⁰ Saho Matsumoto, "Diplomatic History/International Relations," in *The Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing Volume 1, A-L*, edited by Kelly Boyd (London, Ontario: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 314-315.

²¹ Susan Pedersen, "What is Political History Now?" in *What is History Now?* Edited by David Cannadine (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 40.

While the foundation of my dissertation is rooted in the traditions of the discipline, I emphasize that this is diplomatic history with a difference. This study is not limited strictly to official diplomatic correspondence, official acts, and legal documents. I have endeavoured to consult personal papers, memoirs, newspaper reports and editorials, pamphlets, and the rich and ever growing literature related to the topic from several disciplines, such as anthropology, cultural studies, and international relations. The employment of some critical theory assists in the scrutiny of British statecraft through examinations of discourse and the imperial imagination. Through a careful review of the diplomatic records, we see the meticulous editing and filtering of official papers that resulted in the production of the often very timely 'Blue Books' presented to parliament. We see how deeply aware the British government and the Foreign Office were of the power of public opinion and how they endeavoured to employ language and politics to produce favourable sentiments which could be used as tools of British policy. I have also sought out examinations of policies and techniques from the British Empire for comparative illustrations that offer further understanding of how the British viewed and approached the conflict in Macedonia, which suggests the history of intervention and 'peacekeeping' in Southeastern Europe began under the influence of some imperial methodologies. Combined with historiographical discussions and some counterfactual considerations, it is my hope that this broad range of sources aided by theoretical assistance in places can help provide not only a clearer picture of the strategy and execution of British policies toward Macedonia, but also a greater understanding of the motivations and implications of these policies and the people who designed and implemented them.

The approach I am taking combines narration and analysis to reconstruct and examine British policy towards Macedonia from 1902 to 1905. In studying the linear progression of events, my focus moves between three overlapping domains: the diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the other states; the domestic politics which arose in reaction to the news from Macedonia; and the situation on the ground in the Macedonian and Adrianople provinces (vilayets). In all three areas, the study is primarily document driven. The examination of diplomatic relations analyzes the diplomatic correspondence from the Foreign Office records with the assistance of some personal papers. The investigation of domestic reactions employs an eclectic range of

sources from Foreign Office files and private papers to the publications by pressure groups, notably the Balkan Committee, and the debates that raged in the editorial pages and in parliament. The diplomatic records offer the basis for the understanding of events on the ground in Macedonia. These records are complemented with newspaper reports and the memoirs of diplomats and journalists, such as James Bouchier of *The Times* and Reginald Wyon of *The Daily Mail*. With the aid of secondary literature, it is my hope that the combined study of these three domains will help us approach a more complete history of British policy towards Macedonia, and, more broadly, offer some further insight into British policy in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East.

The decision to restrict the study to the years 1902-1905 may seem curious owing to the fact that the Müritzsteg Reform Program extended from 1903 to 1908. My reasoning for this temporal limitation is to enable me to undertake a detailed examination of one British administration during the height of the crises in Ottoman Macedonia. This was when the Müritzsteg Reform Program and the 'peacekeeping' initiative were discussed and produced. The renewal of the Müritzsteg mandate in the autumn of 1905 also marked the end of the Balfour government. The Liberals under Campbell-Bannerman swept to electoral victory in early 1906. With Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary, the Liberals did not alter course significantly on Macedonia, opting initially to turn their attention to other matters before Grey revived many of Lansdowne's ideas in 1907-08. However, the Liberal administration did oversee a pronounced shift in British foreign policy as the cautious moves away from 'Splendid Isolationism' were accelerated with the pursuit of closer relations with France and Russia and the prevailing of anti-German sentiment both popularly and in Foreign Office circles.

The Balfour government pursued a distinct foreign policy, which stood in contrast to the Liberal administration that followed it. As pointed out by John Charmley, the Balfour government was not a mere lame duck coda to the dynasty of Lord Salisbury.²² The crises in Ottoman Macedonia were but one of the new realities that Britain faced in the wake of the South Africa war as the government moved carefully into a phase of

²² John Charmley, "Splendid Isolation to Finest Hour: Britain as a Global Power," in *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gaynor Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2005), 134.

post-isolation in its foreign policy. What is more, Balfour and Lansdowne were determined to avoid a repeat of the turmoil of the Bulgarian crises of 1876-78 and showed considerable appreciation for historical lessons. With Macedonia, the British faced a complex foreign policy challenge with potentially very serious ramifications. Indeed, I would argue that the reason the Macedonian Crises and the Müritz Reform Program stand today as relative historical footnotes in European history is testament to the fact that they were managed successfully. It is for these reasons that the Balfour government's policy towards Macedonia deserves the attention and scrutiny of a more in-depth scholarly study.

This thesis will contribute to the existing literature by offering a detailed examination of British policy toward Macedonia during the Balfour administration. Article length studies by scholars such as Radovich, Samardjiev, and Rodogno have provided valuable contributions to our understanding of British policy. This study seeks to push beyond the current literature to examine the motivations and statecraft behind British policy. The British efforts to preempt these crises will be explored, highlighting the use of language and rhetoric to shape public opinion and the careful production of collections of documents (the 'Blue Books') in order to present a favourable and authoritative record of the events in contradiction to the unfavourable press reports and the critical words from critics in parliament. I provide a thorough accounting of British diplomacy immediately before, during, and after the crises of 1902-03. Importantly, this study traces the development of British policies and initiatives with particular attention paid to reform and the deployment of 'peacekeepers.' While the Müritz Reform Program has been referenced as an early peacekeeping operation, this is the first study to undertake a detailed and nuanced analysis of British operations in Ottoman Macedonia. The domestic damage control by the British government during the height of the Ilinden Uprising in the late summer of 1903 receives necessary attention as we see how the government moved to address the gathering storm of public meetings and turned some of its strongest critics into loyal supporters. A sense of how the diplomats on the ground operated is provided, further illuminating how they interacted with fellow diplomats and Ottoman officials, and how the British forged mutually convenient de-facto partnerships with journalists and relief workers in Macedonia. This study examines the aid operation of the Macedonian Relief Fund and the first two years of the 'peacekeeping' operation on

the ground by British officers, offering explanations for the latter's apparent 'tranquillizing' influences on the parties involved in the conflict. It also traces the progression of the British advocacy for 'peacekeepers' and discusses the factors that influenced this policy. In addition, this study makes an important contribution by providing more context and background not only regarding the British policies, but with respect to the British officials and subjects who witnessed and recorded accounts of the events in Ottoman Macedonia, and how their reports influenced British policy in the search for a solution to the Macedonian crisis. The dispatches and memoirs of British diplomats, journalists, and aid workers have been frequently cited in academic and popular literature because they offer a rich source of archival and primary documentation on a very sensitive chapter in the history of the region. It is my hope that by providing more insight into British policy and giving background on the individuals who were present in the region at this time, those who consult these sources in the future will have reference to a source which will give them a greater sense of the context, policies, and background of the documents' authors.

After an introduction, review of the literature, and a discussion of sources, Chapter 1 provides a historical background up to the year 1902. Chapter 2 illuminates the preemptive measures taken by the British officials to forestall a pending crisis scenario many were predicting would break out in Macedonia in 1902 or early 1903. The memory of the 'Bulgarian Horrors' haunted the British government and they were determined that the calamity which befell the Disraeli government in 1876 would not be repeated. Chapter 3 examines the British response to the 1902 Gorna Dzhumajia Uprising and the subsequent Vienna Reform Program, from which we see a growing conviction within official British circles of the need for stronger reforms and the establishment of a 'peacekeeping' presence by uniformed officials from the European Powers. Chapter 4 shows the British confronting the crises in Macedonia during the spring of 1903 and articulating schemes regarding the proposed 'peacekeeping' force. This chapter also examines how British officials filtered information, confronted reporters, and articulated language in order to undermine calls for more forceful intervention. Chapter 5 undertakes a detailed thematic investigation of the British response to the Ilinden Uprising of August 1903, showing how, in many respects, the British managed the crisis in their favour. Through effective statecraft and some good

fortune, the British government became the champions of reform, receiving much of the credit for the more affirmative reforms that were imposed on the Ottoman Empire through the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Chapter 6 details the British role in the effort to bring humanitarian relief to Macedonia in the autumn and winter of 1903-4. The chapter also examines the British contributions to the implementation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program and assesses the relative success the British 'peacekeepers' enjoyed in their sector in 1904-05 with some considerations for the more ambitious British proposals which were not realized. Finally, Chapter 7 adds some final thoughts on the conceptualization and the implication of the intervention, the place of the Mürzsteg Reform Program in the history of peacekeeping, and some and considerations for future research. A final conclusion reviews the main findings of each chapter with some closing remarks about British policy.

Terminology

Some of the terminology used here requires prior explanation. Non-English language terms appear in italics and are accompanied in their first mention by a translation or explanation. The exceptions are frequently referenced words, such as the Ottoman political jurisdictions (*vilayet*, *sancak*, and *kaza*) which appear so often that they are presented in regular print. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to refer to cities, towns, and geographical features as they are referred to in the British documents. Notably, present-day Bitola is called *Monastir*; present-day Skopje is called *Uscub*; present-day Thessaloniki is called *Salonica*; present-day Plovdiv is *Philipopolis*; present-day Edirne is *Adrianople*; and present-day Istanbul is called *Constantinople*. I understand this presents some locations in the language of a neighbouring state, but I must emphasize that my choice to do so is because this is the way in which the given location is consistently referred to in the British documentation from the time period. The listed place names appear in several quotes and I think it would be disruptive to consistently insert brackets every time one of the given towns or cities appeared. With regards to certain names of persons and institutions, I have elected to use 'Ottoman government' instead of 'Porte,' although both are used in the British documents. The British documents often describe the Ottoman Empire as 'Turkey' or as 'the Turkish Empire.' This is misleading as the Ottoman Empire was a religiously diverse and

multinational state and many Ottoman subjects—loyal or otherwise—were not ethnically Turkish, although they were often described as such. Unless it appears within quotation marks, Turk' or 'Turkish' refers to ethnic Turks. Some Slavic names are spelt with the suffixes 'ov' or 'off.' In most cases, I have elected to use 'ov' (such as Sarafov) unless the name appears in quotations.²³ The terms 'Great Powers' and 'European Powers' are used interchangeably in reference to the six principal powers of Europe at the time: Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.

Religious and national identity was contested, sometimes ambiguous, and, in this period, undergoing a dynamic process of shifting. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, based in Constantinople, had held sway over the territory until 1870 with the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which began to attract converts. Most of the converts were Slavic-speakers.²⁴ However, some Slavic speakers remained loyal to the Patriarchate. In most cases, 'Patriarchists' would speak Greek as their first language, but not always. There were Slavic-speaking Patriarchists who could be counted as Greek according to their religion and Bulgarian or Serbian according to their first language. 'Exarchists' were almost always Slavic speakers, although not all would consider themselves to be Bulgarian by nationality. Ottoman Europe had been a contested zone for regional national interests as identity shifted from religion to nationality, and it was a point of the Mürzsteg Reform Program to clear up the confusing national issue. The British documents are fairly consistent in making references by nationality to Greeks, Turks, and Albanians. Slavs present more challenges as they are called Serbians, Bulgarians, or Macedonians. There are some indications to suggest the existence of a distinctly Macedonian identity, however, the evidence is rather fleeting. Some of the British consuls and correspondents used 'Bulgarian' and 'Macedonian' interchangeably.²⁵ In other cases, 'Macedonians' include all nationalities living in the geographical region. In consideration of these matters, I have elected to use the term 'Macedo-Bulgarian' to

²³ In the British documents, the Ottoman Government is usually referred to as 'the Porte,' although not exclusively. Likewise, most Slavic names with the 'ov' suffix are usually written with 'off' ending, although they sometimes appear with 'ov.'

²⁴ The Church of Greece was established in 1833 in Athens, but did not have jurisdiction beyond Greece's borders.

²⁵ In the case of some well-known political figures, whether they were Bulgarian or Macedonian depended on political circumstances.

refer to the Exarchist population in Macedonia which is alternatively called 'Bulgarian' and 'Macedonian' in the documents.²⁶

Finally, there is 'Macedonia' itself. Since the fourteenth century, much of southeastern Europe had been under the Ottoman rule. The three vilayets of Kosovo, Salonica, and Monastir were part of the Ottoman Europe. Collectively, the three vilayets came to be called Macedonia, a notion which was further legitimized during this period as the three vilayets were mapped and referenced as a single entity. In using the name 'Macedonia,' or 'Ottoman Macedonia' I wish to make it clear that I am referring to the three vilayets as a geographic and not a political entity.

Literature Review

The literature relevant to this dissertation encompasses several intersecting historiographies. The literature on the Müzsteg Reform Program and British policy towards Macedonia is limited, but such is not the case with the history of Macedonia and the 'Balkan' region. The historiography of the 'Eastern Question,' the causes of the First World War, British foreign policy, the British Foreign Office, and humanitarian intervention are also discussed here since each field is relevant to this study.

Much of the historiography regarding Macedonia produced in the twentieth century is decidedly nationalistic, as local and foreign historians have tried to legitimize the territorial claims of contemporary states with references to the past. Conflicting claims to the past are the product of more than a century of conflict over the status of Macedonia. Conflicting nationalist imaginations have gazed upon the territory with visions of maximized frontiers. While never a political entity under Ottoman rule, the three vilayets were referenced and mapped as a geographic whole and in time came to be seen by some as a political unit. (Slavic) Macedonian nationalists have seen these

²⁶ The designation 'Macedo-Bulgarian' is used by M. Şükrü Haniöğlu and Ryan Gingeras. See: M. Şükrü Haniöğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 244; Ryan Gingeras, "A Break in the Storm: Reconsidering Sectarian Violence in Ottoman Macedonia During the Young Turk Revolution" *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (Spring 2003): 1. Gingeras notes he uses the hyphenated term to refer to those who "professed an allegiance to the Bulgarian Patriarch."

maps as evidence of unredeemed regions of their country that are under Greek and Bulgarian occupation. Bulgarian nationalists have envisioned a return to the borders of the 1878 San Stefano Treaty. Greek nationalists have sought to legitimize the gains of the Balkan Wars by projecting the boundaries obtained in 1913 back into antiquity. Some Greek maps go further, including bands of territory north of the present-day Greek border.²⁷ The present-day Republic of Macedonia was at the centre of the medieval Serbian kingdom and was South Serbia during the inter-war period, giving Serbian nationalists cause for a claim to the south. The presence of large concentrations of Albanians in the west of the territory has made Albanian nationalists hanker for a slice of Macedonia.²⁸

Therefore, since at least the mid nineteenth century and most certainly since the division of the territory in 1913, differing cartographic visions of the geographic space that was once three Ottoman vilayets have produced markedly different national histories as historians have sought to legitimize present holdings and past claims to Ottoman Macedonia by buttressing their respective views with publications. Christ Anastasoff's *The Tragic Peninsula* and Stoyan Christowe's *Heroes and Assassins* are two of the better-known inter-war publications that are sympathetic to Bulgaria's quest to regain Macedonia.²⁹ The Second World War and the Greek Civil War may have cemented frontiers with the 'iron curtain' but the end of violent fighting did not bring any finality to the national questions or nationalist historiography. (Slavic) Macedonian nationalism was actively cultivated by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Historians from the Socialist Republic of Macedonia published works arguing that a uniquely Macedonian history and identity extended back into the Ottoman era and

²⁷ See: Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Identity since 1912* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997).

²⁸ For an examination of the power and use of maps, see: İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," in *Understanding Life in the Borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2010.), 160-188.

²⁹ Christ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula. A History of the Macedonian Movement for Independence since 1878* (St. Louis: Blackwell Wielandy Co., 1938); Stoyan Christowe, *Heroes and Assassins*, (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1935).

beyond.³⁰ Greek and Bulgarian historians resisted this.³¹ A steady accumulation of national histories has built up over the decades. In the words of historian Andrew Rossos:

For the most part these writings tend to be polemical, partisan, and of uneven quality. However, the great volume, the sheer vastness of this literature is a clear indication of the great significance that all of them, Great Powers as well as Balkan states, ascribed to the Macedonian question.³²

In presenting these nationally inclined studies, few historians have much to say about British policy or the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Wayne Vucinich's *Serbia Between East and West: The Events of 1903-1908* devotes a chapter to "The Macedonian Imbroglia" but does not expand much beyond Serbia's policies and interests in Macedonia, with little mention of Britain.³³ Merica MacDermott's hagiographic biographies of the revolutionaries Gotse Delchev and Yane Sandanski take a pro-Bulgarian perspective, and praise the sympathies of the British public while voicing

³⁰ See the publications of the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences (MANU) and the Institute for National History (INI).

³¹ For a critical examination of the national narratives, see: Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity & Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria & the Macedonian Question* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

³² Andrew Rossos, "The Macedonian Question and Instability in the Balkans," in *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkans Wars of the 1990s*, eds. Norman Naimark and Holly Case (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 140.

³³ Wayne S. Vucinich, *Serbia Between East and West: The Events of 1903-1908* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 79-80. Vucinich has relatively little to say about the formation and execution of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Discussions of Great Power policies primarily concern Austria-Hungary and Russia and how their policies affected Serbia. The only section devoted to Britain in the book concerns the British decision to withhold recognition of the new government after the coup in Belgrade in 1903. Also see: Michael Boro Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia, 1804-1912* (New York & London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 497-498. Though Serbia was riven by internal political divisions at this time, Petrovich notes that there was consensus on the policy of building Serbian interests in Macedonia through improved relations with the Ottoman government.

criticism towards the British government for its lack of support for the rebel cause.³⁴ Greek historian Evangelos Kofos published extensively on Macedonia, with particular attention to the fostering of “Macedonian nation” by the Yugoslav state, but his works provide only passing references to the Great Power intervention.³⁵ Douglas Dakin’s *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 1897-1913* takes a pro-Greek perspective and provides a rich source of material, thanks to the book’s use of Greek diplomatic documents regarding Greek operations within Ottoman Macedonia. While most of the book concerns the Greek activities, Dakin devotes some smaller chapters to diplomacy and reform, with a few sections addressing British policy.³⁶ Dakin also consulted British records and he published an article on the British sources in which he discusses the merits and biases of the sources and their authors and the politics of the Blue Books.³⁷ Like Dakin, Duncan Perry’s 1988 study of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization stands out for its detailed history of Macedonia before and during the reforms, but Perry pays relatively little attention to relations between the insurgents and the Europeans.³⁸ Utilizing an impressive bibliography of international primary sources,

³⁴ Mercia MacDermott, *Freedom or Death, The Life of Gotse Delchev* (London and West Nyack: The Journeyman Press, 1978), 1 and 381. The book begins with two quotes from Gotse Delchev and a poem in the *Daily News* from September 19, 1903, decrying Britain from doing the “Devil’s work,” and making the accusation: “Britain, your hands are red!” MacDermott’s credibility as a historian has been called into question. I have been cautioned by some historians that a citation of one of her books is tantamount to an act of academic sin. Also see: Mercia MacDermott, *For Freedom and Perfection, The Life of Yane Sandasnsky* (London: Journeyman Press Limited, 1988), 155-166.

³⁵ Evangelos Kofos, “The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation,” *Balkan Studies* 27:1 (1986): 157. Kofos notes that the idea of Macedonian autonomy as “canvassed” by local actors and the European powers was “a roundabout approach to annexation.” Also see: Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964).

³⁶ Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1966).

³⁷ Douglas Dakin, “British Sources Concerning The Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 1901-1909,” *Balkan Studies*, 2:1 (1961): 71-84. Dakin notes that Greeks have considered the British consuls to have been biased against the Greek and that the British Blue Books were edited by pro-Bulgarian officials. Dakin’s article accounts for the biases of the British consuls, notably the two men who served as Consul-General in Salonica during these years: Alfred Biliotti and Robert Graves. Dakin argues that the British downplayed the Greek activities, but, though “somewhat heavy and prosaic,” the British documents are still a valuable source.

³⁸ Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movement 1893-1903* (N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988), 140-41. Perry utilizes the British Blue Books; most of his primary sources come from Bulgarian and Yugoslav archives.

Fikret Adanir's study of the Macedonian Struggle provides a detailed account of the economic and political factors that influenced the events and examines the events up to 1906. While Adanir quotes British document collections—similar to Perry—he has relatively little to say regarding British policy.³⁹

The 1990s brought change to the southern Balkans and intensified the national historical debates. The emergence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 opened a new chapter in regional politics that still awaits full resolution. The uncertainty of the times produced new questions about the contested past. The National Academy in Skopje has sought to legitimize a uniquely Macedonian genealogy dating back to antiquity. Notable is Blazhe Ristovski's *Macedonia and the Macedonian People*, one of the few works by Macedonian national historians to be translated into foreign languages and widely circulated.⁴⁰ Andrew Rossos has written pro-Macedonian articles and reviews and published the book *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History* as part of the series "Studies of Nationalities."⁴¹ Greek historians have countered what they consider to be the theft of the Hellenic heritage. Evangelos Kofos has deconstructed textbooks published in the Republic of Macedonia and studied the efforts to resolve the enduring controversy over Republic of Macedonia's official name.⁴² John Koliopoulos and Basil Gounaris have also been prominent in asserting the Greek perspective.⁴³ The differences in opinion and interpretation have produced acrimonious accusations and

³⁹ Fikret Adanir, *Die Makedonische Frage: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1908* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1979).

⁴⁰ Blazhe Ristovski, *Macedonia and the Macedonian People* (Vienna and Skopje: SIMAG Holding, 1999).

⁴¹ Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2008). The series concerns several of the smaller nations and nationalities in Eastern Europe and is edited by Wayne S. Vicinich.

⁴² See: Evangelos Kofos, *"The Vision of "Greater Macedonia": Remarks on FYROM's New School Textbooks* (Thessaloniki: Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, 1994); Evangelos Kofos, *Athens-Skopje: An Uneasy Symbiosis, 1995-2002* (Athens: ELIAMEP, 2005).

⁴³ See: John S. Koliopoulos *Plundered Loyalties: Axis Occupation and Civil Strife in Greek West Macedonia, 1941-1949* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999). Koliopoulos' earlier monograph addressed the late Ottoman era. See: John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandism and Irredentism in Modern Greece 1821-1912* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Gounaris has published several chapters and articles on the historiography of the Macedonian Question. For his examination of the Greek national struggle in the late Ottoman era, see: Basil Gounaris, "The Macedonian Struggle 1903-1912: Paving the Way for Liberation" in *Modern and Contemporary Macedonia Volume 1*, ed. Ioannis Koliopoulos and Ioannis Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: Paratritis Publishing House, 1993). This volume also contains chapters from Koliopoulos.

unflattering reviews.⁴⁴ Interestingly, one characteristic in this controversy has been to seek evidence for or against the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity in Western diplomatic documents.⁴⁵

The greatest impact on the historiography of Ottoman Macedonia since the early 1990s has been made by anthropologists, who have examined identity politics and have challenged national narratives with their findings. Jane Cowan and Loring Danforth were amongst the first and most highly profiled in this wave of anthropological studies during the 1990s.⁴⁶ The most well-known was Anastasia Karakasidou whose 1997 publication, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990*, challenged the Greek national narrative and emphasized the highly contested nature of identity in late Ottoman Macedonia. Karakasidou's work sparked a nationalist backlash in Greece. Keith Brown's *The Past in Question* discusses the politics and memories of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising and some of the challenges European reporters and 'peacekeeping' officers faced in their relationship with obstructionist Ottoman officials and the surveillance of the Ottoman bureaucracy.⁴⁷

Since the mid-1990s some historians have tried to navigate between and beyond national histories while attending to the points raised by anthropologists and political

⁴⁴ For example, see: Andrew Rossos, review of *Plundered Loyalties: Axis Occupation and Civil Strife in Greek West Macedonia, 1941-1949* by John S. Koliopoulos. *American Historical Review*, December 2000, 1832-1833.

⁴⁵ For an assertion of the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity, see: Andrew Rossos, "The British Foreign Office and Macedonian National Identity, 1918-1941" *Slavic Review*, 53, no 2 (1994), 381. While Rossos' article focuses on the Interwar period, he does refer to reports by British officials which present the Macedonians as a distinct national entity in the late Ottoman period. For a Greek source presenting evidence against the existence of a distinct Macedonian national entity, see: Basil C. Gounaris, "Introduction" in *The Events of 1903 in Macedonia as Presented in European Diplomatic Correspondence*, ed. Angelos A. Chotzidis, Basil C. Gounaris, Anna A. Panayotopoulou (Thessaloniki: Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, 1993).

⁴⁶ Jane Cowan, *Dance and the Body Politic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴⁷ Keith Brown, *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 61-63.

scientists.⁴⁸ Hugh Poulton contributed a helpful introduction to the history and politics of the fledgling Republic of Macedonia.⁴⁹ Nadine Lange-Akhund's analysis of the events in Ottoman Macedonia between 1893 and 1908 devotes significant attention to the Mürzsteg Reform Program by examining French and Austrian diplomatic documents.⁵⁰ Utilizing Greek and Bulgarian document collections, Vemund Aarbakke's *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia* studies the national contest for Macedonia.⁵¹ Several collections appeared around 2000 reviewing and examining the history and the re-emergence of the 'Macedonian Question.'⁵²

The influence of Anastatia Karakasidou and Maria Todorova is evident in studies since 2000 that have sought to present more of the 'history from below' and the complexities of politics and identity in Ottoman Macedonia. These studies challenge the assumption that most non-elites were passive actors and that the population(s) were on a 'natural' trajectory towards their inclusion in modern nation-states. Two of the best-known book length studies are Mark Mazower's reconstruction of metropolitan Salonica

⁴⁸ In an introduction of an issue of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* devoted to the study of Macedonia. Mark Mazower calls for interdisciplinary dialogue: "Anthropologists bring an attentiveness to the voice of the peasant; historians can offer an alternative to that kind of postmodern relativism that insists that any version of the past provides as valid "narrative" as any others; political scientists can point to the crucial role of political crisis, instability and, above all, war in shaping new identities." See: Mark Mazower, "Introduction to the Study of Macedonia," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 14:2 (1996): 5.

⁴⁹ Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?* (London: Hurst & Company, 1995).

⁵⁰ Nadine Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question 1893-1908 from Western Sources* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998).

⁵¹ Vemund Aarbakke, *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia, 1870-1913* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2003).

⁵² See: Maria Todorova (editor), *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 2004); Jane K. Cowan (editor), *The Politics of Identity and Difference* (Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000); James Pettifer (editor), *The New Macedonian Question* (London: MacMillan, 1999); Victor Roudmetof (editor), *The Macedonian Question: Culture, Historiography, Politics* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2000).

and Theodora Dragostinova's *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949*.⁵³

Historians of the Ottoman Empire have also challenged the national narratives and essentialist notions of identity as part of a generation of scholars who have studied the Ottoman Empire's periphery. Isa Blumi has explored the dynamics of empire's borderlands through studies of the centre's relationship with its imperial periphery.⁵⁴ More recently, his book *Reinstating the Ottomans* has offered a "counternarrative" to the "triumphalist history" of the western Balkan states.⁵⁵ He writes, "I propose that only by highlighting the fact that the peoples of the western Balkans navigated their complex worlds by using *different strategies and articulations of group solidarity at different times* can we possibly make sense of the region" (author's emphasis).⁵⁶ In a similar vein, İpek K. Yosmaoğlu has deconstructed the impact of authoritative maps in creating a physical reality of partition from the virtual reality of cartography.⁵⁷ Yosmaoğlu has also examined the 1903 Ottoman census in Macedonia and its effect in relation to the implementation of the Müzzsteg Reform Program.⁵⁸ Ryan Gingeras has explored the intricacies of ethnic violence during the Müzzsteg reforms with the support of British primary documents.⁵⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu's *Preparation for a Revolution* studies the connection between reforms and the origins of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which led to the

⁵³ Mark Mazower, *Salonica City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004); Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 9. Dragostinova maintains that national loyalties were fluid and identity was often a matter of opportunism: "Bilingualism, intermarriage, and national side-switching were normative behaviors of people who had found national identity irrelevant to their daily lives."

⁵⁴ Isa Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen, 1878-1918* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 2-3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁷ İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," in *Understanding Life in the Borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2010.), 160-188. Also see: İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Field of Dreams: Ethnographical Maps and the Ethne of Macedonia, 1842-1906," in *The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck (1878-1920)*, ed. David Shankland (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004), 269-298.

⁵⁸ İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: The 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no 1 (2006): 55-77.

⁵⁹ Ryan Gingeras, "A Break in the Strom: Reconsidering Sectarian Violence in Ottoman Macedonia During the Young Turk Revolution" *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 3, (Spring 2003): 1-17.

revolution of 1908. One of Hanioglu's points is that the imposition of the reforms and the presence of European officers in Ottoman Macedonia was a driving factor in motivating the CUP in its vow to revitalize the Ottoman Empire and throw out the representatives of the European powers.⁶⁰ Yosmaoglu has also considered the impact of the gendarmerie reform on the process of forming national identities in her examination of the provisioning of the Ottoman army in Macedonia.⁶¹

Although the study of Late Ottoman Macedonia has produced a plethora of publications, works which include more than a cursory mention of British policy towards Macedonia or the Mürzsteg Reform Program are the exception, not the rule. The same holds true in surveys of regional history. L.S. Stavrianos' seminal survey published in 1958 affords Mürzsteg two paragraphs, noting that it did nothing to break the deadlock of the Balkan states over the future of Macedonia and that it exacerbated the violence of the Macedonian Struggle in its stipulation for administration along ethnic lines.⁶² This theme of failure can be found in other surveys, such as those by Hupchick and Jelavich.⁶³ André Gerolymatos calls the reorganization of the Ottoman gendarmerie "essentially" history's first "peacekeeping" operation but states it did nothing to stabilize Macedonia.⁶⁴ In his 2006 book *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition*, John R. Lampe likens Mürzsteg to the 1995 Dayton Accord, a comparison which is not altogether damning but hardly flattering.⁶⁵

Ottoman Macedonia is attached to the 'Eastern Question' and the status of the Dardanelle Straits in the larger international relations and diplomatic histories of the

⁶⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 231-240.

⁶¹ İpek K. Yosmaoglu, "Marching on an Empty Stomach: Practical Aspects of Gendarmerie Reform in Ottoman Macedonia," in *Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean*, edited by Lornas Tanatar Baruh and Vangelis Kechriotis (Athens: Alpha Bank Historical Archives, 2010), 294.

⁶² L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 523.

⁶³ Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans: from Constantinople to Communism* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), 302; Barbra and Charles Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan States, 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 212-213.

⁶⁴ André Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Myth, Reality, and the Eternal Conflict* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2001), 194.

⁶⁵ John L. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the well-known surveys, such as A. J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Robert Massie's *Dreadnought*, and Henry Kissinger's *Diplomacy*, Macedonia is usually discussed whenever it involved an international crisis, notably in 1878 and in 1912-1914. Passing references to the crisis of 1903 and the Mürzsteg Reform Program are dismissive of any significance, making only short points about how Macedonia caused minor complications in Great Power relations. For instance, in three books on Great Power relations and diplomacy, Paul Kennedy has merely one sentence stating that the crisis of 1903 strained relations between France and Russia.⁶⁶ A.J.P. Taylor writes only that the efforts at reforms made the Great Powers jealous of one another.⁶⁷ Bridge and Bullen devote only a page to summarizing the Great Power relations respecting the Mürzsteg agreement.⁶⁸ Macedonia is not even in the index of Henry Kissinger's *Diplomacy*. Apparently, time has not made Macedonia more relevant. A discussion of Macedonia and the Mürzsteg Reforms would fit well into the grand studies of war, violence, and state published by Philip Bobbitt and Niall Ferguson. However, Bobbitt does not mention Macedonia.⁶⁹ Ferguson mentions Macedonia only briefly and Mürzsteg and the crisis of 1903 not at all.⁷⁰

As the focus of most of these works is the causes of the First World War, the lack of attention to Mürzsteg should not be all that surprising. The Boer War, the Baghdad

⁶⁶ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 267.

⁶⁷ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 449-450.

⁶⁸ F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European State System, 1814-1914* (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2005), 276. According to the authors, Mürzsteg blurred the lines of the alliance system by elevating the entente between Austria-Hungary and Russia into "active co-operation."

⁶⁹ See: Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 468. Bobbitt considers the 1992-95 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina to be a blow to the "collectivity of *nation-states*." He devotes a chapter to the War in Bosnia, in which he likens the international community's response to a well-known case of bystander apathy. See: Chapter 15: "The Kitty Genovese Incident and the War in Bosnia."

⁷⁰ Ferguson points out the volume titles of *The British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* offer a "clear narrative framework of the war's origins, extending over seventeen years." The fifth volume of the series is entitled: *The Near East: The Macedonian Problem and the Annexation of Bosnia, 1903-9*. See: Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 79. However, Ferguson takes issue with the idea that the war approached gradually. His study of the First World War, *The Pity of War*, also has little to say regarding Macedonia.

Railway, the Entente Cordiale, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Moroccan Crisis of 1905 have combined to overshadow the situation in Macedonia from 1903-1908. Unlike the situations in the Balkans in 1876-78 and 1912-1913, Macedonia in 1903-1908 did not produce a war or a showdown between Great Powers, except for its rather indirect influence on the Bosnian Crisis of 1908. The relative success of Great Power diplomacy in containing the conflict in Macedonia, coupled with its failure to stop the bloodshed seems to have relegated Macedonia's importance. Two exceptions of note are William L. Langer's *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, which stops just short of the 1903 Macedonian Crisis but devotes a chapter to an examination of Macedonia, Crete, and Armenia and provides an appraisal of Salisbury's Near East policy. Langer concludes that Salisbury's 1895 proposal of "a grand *coup*" to partition the Ottoman Empire might have altered the course of European history if it had been realized. Langer blames the "failure" on the negative reaction the idea received from the French, Austro-Hungarians and Germans.⁷¹ The other exception is volume I of Luigi Albertini's *The Origins of the War of 1914*, which accounts for German, Austro-Hungarian, and Italian geostrategic objectives in the Balkans during the reforms. Albertini's volumes grant sizeable attention to the Austro-Italian struggle in the Adriatic region, which extended to Macedonia during the Mürzsteg Reform Program.⁷² One can conclude that the events in Macedonia were considered more significant to historians who examined the roots of the First World War in the 1920s and 1930s than those who have studied the topic since 1945.

Works on British foreign policy for the period 1878 to 1914 usually tend to bypass Britain's role in the Mürzsteg Reform Program and Macedonia in general as largely inconsequential or of minor importance. As with the larger studies of the international relations of this period, the emphasis is usually on the better-known roots of the First World War. A. L. Kennedy's 1922 study of British diplomacy, *Old Diplomacy and New 1876-1922: From Salisbury to Lloyd George*, devotes a short chapter to Macedonia in

⁷¹ William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 209. The first edition of Langer's book was published in 1935. Langer is critical of Salisbury for not backing up some of his bold remarks and plans and of being a poor communicator. Still, he faults the continental powers, and particularly the suspicious master of the German Foreign Office, Friedrich Von Holstein, for not striking when "the iron was hot" in 1895.

⁷² Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953). Albertini's three volume history was first published in Italian in 1942-43.

which Foreign Secretary Lansdowne is praised for drafting the revised reform terms of September 1903, and for pressing for effective reform out of humanitarian concern.⁷³ Much of the post-Second World War historiography discusses the question of whether Britain's agreements with other powers were a continuation of isolationism or a commitment to the alliance system. In most of these studies, Macedonia and the Mürzsteg Reform Program appear only briefly and only in relation to Great Power relations, even in books focusing on British policy in the region. G. D. Clayton's main point about Britain's Near East policy in 1903 was London's "crisis of indecision" over who Britain's greatest enemy was—Russia or Germany.⁷⁴ George Monger's study of British foreign policy between 1900 and 1907 contains some insight into the diplomatic negotiations of 1903, but mostly in its relation to the colonial negotiations with France.⁷⁵

More recent examinations of British foreign policy attend a little more to Macedonia thanks in part to historians' increased interest in the influence of domestic politics and public opinion and the emergence of Macedonia in current affairs. Keith Robbins' collection of essays provides insight into the life and times of the Liberal foreign policy critic James Bryce and examines the limits of the influence of the press, pressure groups, and public opinion. Robbins notes the origins of the Balkan Committee and its attempt to influence British policy, and describes the changeable relationship the British officials had with journalists and other self-appointed experts who roamed the Balkans and sometimes behaved as though they were diplomats.⁷⁶ Martin Ceadel's study synthesizes the considerable literature on the British peace movement and examines its connection to foreign policy and international relations. Ceadel describes the pre-war peace movement as being suspicious of Britain's alliance entanglements, a concern that was not eased by Britain's alliance with Russia and the competition for influence in the

⁷³ A.L. Kennedy, *Old Diplomacy and New 1876-1922: From Salisbury to Lloyd George* (London: John Murray, 1922), 136.

⁷⁴ G.D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London: University of London Press, 1971), 192.

⁷⁵ George Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907* (London: Nelson, 1963), 137-8, 155-8.

⁷⁶ Keith Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomacy and War in Modern British History* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 143. Robbins focuses his attention on British liberals. Though the Balkan Committee came about during years of Unionist rule, Robbins has little to say about Lansdowne and Balfour. Bryce and Edward Grey receive considerable attention.

Balkans “where a British vital interest was hard to identify.”⁷⁷ A fresh perspective on Britain’s wider Middle East policy can be found in Roger Adelson’s *London and the Invention of the Middle East*. In reviewing the “architecture of power,” Adelson traces the influence of high finance, the power of Fleet Street, technology, and the effect of “personal idiosyncrasies and the complexities of political hierarchies” on foreign policy towards the Middle East.⁷⁸ Adelson devotes a chapter to the Balfour government, accounting for the influence of Balfour’s Committee of Imperial Defence and reviewing the “complexities” of Lansdowne’s diplomacy. He provides a sufficient summary of Lansdowne’s policy toward the Macedonian crises, noting the foreign secretary’s frustration with the Ottomans. However, Adelson stops short of delving deeper into the “complicated issues of Macedonia” and Lansdowne’s “complex roles” in navigating the conflicts.⁷⁹ In *Splendid Isolation?*, John Charmley provides a thorough and engaging reassessment of Britain’s pre-war foreign policy (1878-1914), arguing that the First World War should not be considered an inevitability. Nonetheless, the book contains only a single mention of the Mürzsteg Reform Program.⁸⁰

The relative dearth of studies on the Balfour government’s foreign policy is a point Charmley has repeatedly called attention to.⁸¹ In a 2005 chapter, Charmley lamented: “We lack a modern account of Lansdowne’s foreign policy; he has generally been treated either as the antechamber to Grey or the departure lounge to Salisbury.”⁸² Indeed, scholars of British foreign policy have a tendency to pass over the years of the Balfour government. Some mark Salisbury’s resignation at the conclusion of the Boer War in 1902 as an end point, or place their focus on the changes undertaken by Campbell-Bannerman’s liberals after they formed government in late 1905. Studies like

⁷⁷ Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). 168.

⁷⁸ Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 38; 21 footnote 15.

⁸⁰ John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), 289.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 279. Only one biography has been published on Lansdowne.

⁸² John Charmley, “Splendid Isolation to Finest Hour: Britain as a Global Power,” in *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gaynor Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2005), 134.

Aldeson's, which devotes a chapter to the Balfour government's foreign policy, are the exception. Macedonia and the Müritz reforms usually receive not more than some general comments. Even Aldeson has relatively little to say regarding Macedonia and the Müritz reforms. The judgment appears to be that the subject is either too complex or relatively inconsequential in relation to the better-known events that are remembered as part of the row of fallen dominos that led to the outbreak of war in 1914. More broadly, inquiries into the origins of the First World War came to dominate the historiography of British foreign policy. To return to Charmley: "Unconsciously, a teleology emerged and all roads lead to 1914."⁸³

The Balfour government has fared somewhat better in studies of the history of the British Foreign Office. The Lansdowne years were a time of great reform in the Foreign Office and marked a period of transition away from 'splendid isolation,' although the extent to which Lansdowne wished to tie (or realized he was tying) Britain to the continental alliance system is an enduring point of debate. The study of the Foreign Office was revolutionized by the approach of Donald Cameron Watt and the landmark work of Zara Steiner, who emphasized the importance of the personalities of these decision making elites, the structure they worked within, and the influence of the civil servants who made the institution function. Focusing on the years 1898 to 1914, Steiner presents Lansdowne as a determined and prudent reformer, who raised the minimum age of entry for incoming clerks, placed more emphasis on knowledge of foreign languages and modern history, and shifted many of the mundane tasks away from senior clerks, allowing them to focus on acquiring more regional expertise and giving them more voice in policy decisions. In delegating and insisting on more accountability, Lansdowne was angling for more well informed policies. Steiner calls Lansdowne a formidable negotiator, who was cautious but decisive when necessary.⁸⁴ According to Steiner, Lansdowne leaned heavily on Ambassador O'Connor during the Macedonian crisis of 1903.⁸⁵ Lansdowne was also strongly influenced by his experienced Permanent Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Thomas Sanderson. As described by Neilson and

⁸³ Ibid., 131.

⁸⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 47.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 147.

Otte in their study of the permanent undersecretaries, Sanderson abhorred “grand designs” regarding foreign policy, believing, like Salisbury, that a response to a given situation had to be carefully measured with due consideration of past and present context. “By its very nature, foreign policy was reactive.”⁸⁶ Sanderson also reportedly had “Whiggish sympathies” and had expressed sympathy for the plight of the Armenians and favoured a measure of multilateral intervention.⁸⁷

Prudence in foreign policy is a virtue John Charmley credits Lansdowne and other British conservatives with in his chapter reviewing work of British Foreign Secretaries from 1900 to 1950. Charmley asks what British foreign policy during this period might look like “if the triumphal lenses are laid aside.”⁸⁸ To Charmley, Lansdowne conducted foreign policy with patience and without doctrine. Like Salisbury, Lansdowne believed the view from Delhi and the needs of empire took precedence over the balance of the European continent. The alliance with Japan was a product of practicality, reached after talks for an accord with Russia and Germany had failed. Charmley suggests future studies may “reveal Lansdowne as something of a technician, trying to solve the problem than anything else.”⁸⁹ His words put Lansdowne’s five-year tenure in revered company:

Ironically, if one is looking for a ‘Finest Hour,’ it may well have come just before Grey came to the Foreign Office. The threat that Russia had posed to British interests from the Straits to the South China Sea, and which had dominated so much of British policy under Salisbury and Lansdowne was lifted in 1905.⁹⁰

Quite recently, T.G. Otte has endeavoured to bring into view the collective mentality of the Victorian-Edwardian Foreign Office in *The Foreign Office Mind*. This elusive entity, Otte argues, was based on the underlying principles, elite perceptions, and ‘unspoken assumptions,’ which combined to shape British foreign policy. Tracing the

⁸⁶ Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (New York & London: Routledge, 2009), 105.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 106-107. Sanderson’s sympathies did not extend to the Greek cause and he reportedly loathed philhellenism.

⁸⁸ John Charmley, “Splendid Isolation to Finest Hour,” 130.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

evolution of 'The Foreign Office Mind' over some 50 years, he presents examples of how key events and dilemmas were viewed. Otte returns to the challenges of the Near East on several occasions. Founded in tradition and elitism, 'The Foreign Office Mind' frowned upon the "atrocitarianism" generated by Gladstone and abhorred "public passions" intruding into "the orderly conduct of foreign affairs."⁹¹ Yet, Otte cautions that the British diplomats were not

insensitive to humanitarian concerns about the plight of oppressed Balkan or other Near Eastern minorities. They were no cold-eyed, hard-nosed, flint-hearted *Realpolitikers*. Their education and upbringing saw to that. The assumption that conventional norms of decency ought to be applied to the conduct of international politics underpinned British foreign policy thinking.⁹²

A case in point was the Armenian crisis in the autumn of 1895 when Ambassador Currie in Constantinople spoke in "apocalyptic" terms and called for the seizure of Smyrna to force the Ottoman government to accept reforms.⁹³ "The 'Foreign Office Mind' was strongly impressed by the moral cause for intervention."⁹⁴ By 1901, Otte argues that weariness had set in regarding the Balkans and most diplomats were very critical of the Austro-Russian reforms, with the fear of Russia seizing the Straits continuing to outweigh the danger posed by Germany.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, as with many sections of the book, the discussion is cut short and there is no mention of the British influence on the Müzzsteg Reform Program.

The Foreign Office Mind further reinforces the historiographical consensus that Lansdowne's tenure as Foreign Secretary marked a time of revolution in the Foreign Office and the Foreign Service.⁹⁶ Under Lansdowne's direction, reforms were implemented which expanded recruitment to a wider pool of candidates with emphasis on languages and modern history. Senior clerks were freed from more mundane tasks

⁹¹ T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 108.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 396.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 240.

and asked for their opinions.⁹⁷ In many respects, these reforms reflected Lansdowne's approach to foreign policy. He strove to understand issues thoroughly and sought the council of civil servants and diplomats. It was not foreign policy by committee, but Lansdowne certainly had more of a consensual approach to forming policy decisions than his predecessor.

As one might expect, the literature on the Mürzsteg Reform Program per se is limited. The only monograph is Stephen Sowards' 1989 work, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, a narrative study of Austrian diplomacy between 1903 and 1908, with some useful insight into Austria-Hungary's view of British policy.⁹⁸ *The Macedonian Question, 1893—1908* by Nadine Lange Akhund devotes some sixty pages to the creation and execution of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Using Austrian and French diplomatic sources, Lange-Akhund's book provides a very useful study of the reforms and the politics surrounding them, with some illustration of the effects and limitations of the reforms with respect to the local population. While indispensable to this study, Lange-Akhund and Sowards do not explore many of the intricacies of British policy.

Examinations of British policy regarding Macedonia and the Mürzsteg Reform Program are article-length and have come mostly from non-British scholars. M.B. Cooper's 1964 article, "British Policy in the Balkans, 1908-9," focuses on the termination of the reforms and the advantages the British tried to leverage from the agreement with Russia and the revolution in the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁹ Bulgarian historian Andrei Pantev produced a study of Britain's policy towards reform in the Ottoman Empire between 1895 and 1903. Utilizing French, Bulgarian, and British archival sources and some newspapers, Pantev discusses the diplomacy of the reforms and the difficulties Britain faced in advancing stronger reforms from Ottoman resistance and its subordinate position to Russia and Austria-Hungary.¹⁰⁰ Another Bulgarian historian, Bozhidar

⁹⁷ Ibid., 241-244.

⁹⁸ Steven W. Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1989), 90. According to Sowards, Austro-Hungarian statesmen considered British policy disruptive, calling it "naïve if not hypocritical."

⁹⁹ M.B. Cooper, "British Policy in the Balkans, 1908-09," *The Historical Journal*, Vol 7, No. 2. (1964): 258-279.

¹⁰⁰ Andrei Pantev, "England and the Reforms in European Turkey," *Istoricheski Pregled*, Vol 27, No. 6 (1971): 2-32.

Samardjiev, picks up where Pantev leaves off, continuing the broad examination of British policy between 1903 and 1908. Based primarily on collections of British documents and some personal papers, Samardjiev follows the diplomatic trail of Lansdowne and Ambassador O'Connor's efforts to leverage stronger reforms up to the revolution of 1908.¹⁰¹ The only study devoted exclusively to the Balfour government's policy toward Macedonia is an article by Frances A. Radovich from 1981.¹⁰² Radovich argues that Britain's reform policy was motivated by a mixture of strategic concerns and public pressure, and that the British favoured an autonomous Macedonia to remain in the Ottoman Empire. While taking some parliamentary debates into account, Radovich's sources are almost entirely diplomatic and private papers, and her focus is diplomacy and the decision-making of the British political executive. Samardjiev studies the concept of Macedonian autonomy and the role of public opinion in British policy in a 2002 article.¹⁰³ The article endeavours to get beyond the diplomacy by providing some insight into the various British personalities involved and the work of the Balkan Committee beyond lobbying the government. In pursuing autonomy, Samardjiev maintains that the British were moving to "undermine" the Austro-Russia alliance as early as 1904.¹⁰⁴

Finally, British policy towards Macedonia and the Mürzsteg reforms has come into the orbit of the burgeoning field of humanitarian intervention. The high profile interventions during the 1990s prompted scholars to look back to the nineteenth century for historical roots and precedents of the late twentieth century dilemmas. Intervention has a "complex and amorphous nature" and has proved difficult to consistently define.¹⁰⁵ In one of the first academic studies of the history of intervention, a volume edited by T.G. Otte and Andrew Dorman links concepts and cases from the nineteenth century through

¹⁰¹ Bojidar Samardjiev, "England and the Problem of Reform in Macedonia, 1903-1908," *Istoricheski Pregled*, Vol 40. No. 6 (1984): 24-43.

¹⁰² Francis A. Radovich, "Britain's Macedonian Reform Policy, 1903-1905," *The Historian*, 43. no 4 (1981): 494. Pantev's article does not appear in Radovich's footnotes, nor does Radovich's article make it into Samardjiev's references.

¹⁰³ Bojidar Samardjiev, "On the Role of Public Opinion in Great Britain Regarding the Reforms in European Turkey and the Idea of Autonomy of Macedonia (1903-1908)," *Etudes Balkaniques* 2, (2002): 15-30.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ T.G. Otte, "On Intervention: Some Introductory Remarks," in *Military Intervention: From Gunboat Diplomacy to Humanitarian Intervention*, eds. Andrew M. Dorman and T.G. Otte (Brookfield: Dartmouth Publishing, 1995), 4.

the Cold War and into the politics of contradiction of the United Nations era. The volume's emphasis is on military intervention. Otte's chapter, the only chapter on the nineteenth century, reviews the stages of international politics over the long nineteenth century with case studies of the Austro-Hungarian intervention in Naples (1820-21), the 1882 British intervention in Egypt, and the multilateral intervention in Venezuela in 1902-03.¹⁰⁶ Otte's focus is primarily on the political aspects and ramifications of these interventions. A much more humanitarian emphasis is taken by Samantha Power in her 2002 book: *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide*.¹⁰⁷ Though grounded in the 1990s, Power begins by looking back at the United States' indifference to the Armenian Genocide and the tireless work of Raphael Lemkin to expose Nazi crimes and see the United Nations adopt the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Building on his study of war tribunals, Gary J. Bass argues that humanitarian intervention "has a deep history, which is worth understanding both for its own sake and for the light it casts on current debates."¹⁰⁸ In an effort to dispel the notion that humanitarian intervention is merely veiled imperialism, Bass argues that foreign policy can be motivated by altruism and that states which practice freedom at home tend to promote freedom abroad.¹⁰⁹ He gives the example of Britain's campaign to abolish the trading of slaves as an example of a humanitarian initiative that went against Britain's economic and international relations interests.¹¹⁰ Bass provides engaging case studies of the interventions in Greece, Syria, and Bulgaria with concluding remarks on the Armenians and the politics and dynamics of humanitarian intervention. Macedonia and the Mürzsteg Reform Program are conspicuously absent from Bass' study. Expanding backward beyond the nineteenth century and beyond Europe is a volume edited by D.F.B. Trim and Brendan Simms:

¹⁰⁶ T.G. Otte, "Of Congresses and Gunboats: Military Intervention in the Nineteenth Century," in *Military Intervention: From Gunboat Diplomacy to Humanitarian Intervention*, eds. Andrew M. Dorman and T.G. Otte (Brookfield: Dartmouth Publishing, 1995), 19-52.

¹⁰⁷ Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002).

¹⁰⁸ Gary J. Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 5. Also see Bass' previous study: Gary J. Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

Humanitarian Intervention: A History.¹¹¹ The editors map the transformation of Christian values and the early modern state system into the concepts of modern humanitarianism, and the book provides a wealth of contributions ranging from the Ottoman Empire, to Africa, Latin American, and Cambodia. There is much less of the connective tissue linking past precedents to recent predicaments as in the works by Bass and Power. The cases presented are assessed more independently. We see that humanitarian intervention has a long history but common themes get lost somewhat in the diverse range of case studies.

A contributor to the Trim and Simms volume who has endeavoured to connect the nineteenth century interventions in the Ottoman Empire is historian Davide Rodogno. Drawing primarily on French and British sources, the chapter by Rodogno on Macedonia posits the question whether the Great Power intervention through the Mürzsteg Reform was truly a humanitarian intervention. The chapter covers the principle events of 1903-1908 with attention to the emergence of the transnational “Pro-Macedonia” lobby and explains that the revolutionaries failed to elicit sympathy due to their being perceived as aggressive and ruthless. In Rodogno’s assessment, the intervention was diplomatic and not humanitarian unless one sees the Great Power moves as delayed reactions.¹¹² A thoughtful and nuanced analysis of the merits and shortcoming of the reforms is also provided. Rodogno additionally, published his book, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914*, the same year as the Trim and Simms volume. The book’s chapter on Macedonia covers much of the same ground as the author’s contribution to the Trim and Simms volume with differing points of emphasis, notably there is more on the humanitarian outcomes of the intervention.¹¹³ More British primary sources are also utilized.

¹¹¹ D.F.B. Trim and Brendan Simms (editors), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹¹² Davide Rodogno, “The European powers’ intervention in Macedonia, 1903-1908: an instance of humanitarian intervention?” in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, editors. D.F.B. Trim and Brendan Simms (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 220.

¹¹³ Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914, The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 243-246.

Against Massacre is focused on the interventions in the Ottoman Empire and provides more case studies than Bass' *Freedom's Battle*. Rodogno discusses the questions, assumptions, and issues surrounding humanitarian intervention in the nineteenth century, including the contradiction of the European powers applying standards to the Ottoman Empire that they willfully ignored when it came to management of their own colonial domains.¹¹⁴ Connections are established between the case studies, and the very useful "intermezzo" chapter discusses the transformation of attitudes toward humanitarian intervention over the course of the nineteenth century, which led to the European Powers being much less inclined to partake in interventions at the end of the century. By the author's own admission, there is still much more to be studied regarding humanitarian intervention in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁵

In addition to demonstrating satisfactory erudition, I hope I have established here that there is room for a detailed study of Britain and its policy towards Ottoman Macedonia during the time of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. In relation to the existing literature, my dissertation seeks not to re-write the history of this topic but to fine tune a few points, fill in gaps, and provide a more complete picture of the British government's policy and management of its diplomacy, domestic affairs and the situation on the ground. Many questions need to be answered. How were the crises managed? How did the reforms originate? What were these 'complex roles' undertaken by Landowne as noted by Aldeson? What were Britain's 'unclear' interests in the Balkans as described by Ceadel? What did the 'Foreign Office Mind' contribute to the concept of 'peacekeeping'? There are some points, where I take issue with some of the arguments of Radovich, Samardjiev, and Rodogno, but these are relatively minor matters. Several aspects related to this chapter of British policy have not been properly examined, such as the preemptive efforts of 1902, the management of information and the use of careful rhetoric towards domestic audiences, the work of the British diplomats in the Balkans states and on the ground in Macedonia, the aid operation, and, notably, the development of the policy to deploy 'peacekeepers' on the ground and how the operation unfolded once the men were deployed. To use an anatomical metaphor, the existing literature on

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 62.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2-4.

the subject has provided a near complete skeleton. My goal here is to attach the missing limbs and digits, flesh out the body and bring it more to life.

Discussion of Archival and Primary Sources

The main archival source for this study has been the British National Archives at Kew, London. The National Archives are the official archive of the British government and house records, which date back over 1,000 years. Between 2003 and 2006 the Public Record Office, together with four other government archival bodies, were combined into the National Archives. British government records are usually released after 30 years unless deemed sensitive to security or national interests.¹¹⁶ The National Archives house all the reports and dispatched from the British consuls and embassies in the Ottoman Empire and Southeastern Europe and the outgoing papers from the Foreign Office, including Lansdowne's papers, produced during the years 1902-05. All of the records which survived have been long been available for reading.

Several select collections of these documents have been produced over the years, some of which have proved to be very helpful. Published in 1927, documents on the "Macedonian Problem" were included in Volume V of the series of collected British documents on the origins of the First World War.¹¹⁷ One of the editors of the series was the historian George Peabody Gooch who was, in 1903, a member of the Balkan Committee pressure group.¹¹⁸ Another series of collected documents was published in the United States in 1985, which drew on the confidential print of the Foreign Office. Series B of this collection concerns the Near and Middle East between 1858 and 1914

¹¹⁶ For more information, see the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/

¹¹⁷ G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (editors), *British Documents of the Origins of the War, 1898-1904, Volume V: The Near East, the Macedonian Problem, and the Annexation of Bosnia, 1903-1909* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1927).

¹¹⁸ The series was an official history and the decision to appoint Gooch as editor was controversial owing to Gooch's criticism of Edward Grey and his perceived pro-German revisionism. Nevertheless, it was thought that having Gooch as co-editor would balance out the influence of the conservative Harold Temperley. Both historians would struggle to have documents released for the volumes well in advance of the usual thirty year rule. For an examination of the politics surrounding the production and publication of this and other series of collected documents and acts of "historical engineering," see: Keith Wilson (editor), *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through two World Wars* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996).

and includes volume 19: *The Ottoman Empire, Nationalism, and Revolution*.¹¹⁹ This volume contains a series of summaries produced by the Foreign Office taken principally from the dispatches from the British embassy in Constantinople and some memos produced during the years of the Müritz Reform Program. It provides a useful overview of the British perspective of the events.

The first collections of documents regarding the events in Macedonia were published within months of the events in Macedonia. The 'Blue Books' were published for the British parliament and available for public review. As discussed in chapters four and five of this study, the 'Blue Books' were products of 'historical engineering,' containing carefully selected and edited documents which were chosen to cast favour on the British government and, to a certain extent, to counter sensational reports in the British press which favoured the rebels and advocated intervention. One volume of the 'Blue Books' (*Turkey No. 4*) played up the British influence on the reforms and was hastily published prior to the proclamation of the terms of the Müritz Reform Program. As the government was able to cast doubt upon the credibility of the press, many observers looked to the 'Blue Books' for the last word on what was happening in Macedonia. The despatches contained in these collections were frequently referenced and quoted in parliament and in the press. Some documents were procured with the 'Blue Books' in mind. Indeed, in places, one senses that certain dispatches were penned with consideration of their future inclusion in the 'Blue Books.'

More revealing selections of documents are the collections printed for the Foreign Office: *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South-Eastern Europe* (FO 421 series). Although sometimes counted as part of the 'Blue Books,' these collections were prepared for the Foreign Office and were usually published about 18 months after the date of the last dispatch contained in each volume. The majority of the documents relevant to the politics concerning Macedonia and British policy can be found in this series, with some volumes containing over 500 documents. The number of

¹¹⁹ David Gillard (editor), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I: From the Nineteenth Century to the First World War, Series B: The Near East and The Middle East, 1856-1914, Volume 19: The Ottoman Empire, Nationalism, and Revolution, 1885-1908* (Frederick Md: University Publications of America, 1984-1985).

volumes varies according to the activities in a given year—in 1902 two volumes were published, in 1903 there were four. Nevertheless, the FO 421 series is not a complete collection. Some documents are not included; some for lack of relevance while others were victims of censorship.

While these collections provide ample stores of British documents, there is no substitute for reading the original documents themselves. With five consuls in Macedonia, four in Bulgaria, a very active embassy in Constantinople, a roving military attaché, and embassies in Athens, Belgrade, and Bucharest, British diplomats produced a rich archive of well-informed and highly descriptive documentation of the events in Macedonia. No less active were the British embassies in the European capitals. While the handwriting of some officials presents challenges at times, the original documents contain notes and comments in margin by Foreign Office officials and tags which indicate to whom the document was copied to and whether it was to be included in a future collection. Furthermore, it is, obviously, potentially very revealing to check documents that were omitted from the collections.

As with any archival collection, there are some anomalies and idiosyncrasies that require discussion. The incoming files from the consuls and embassies are largely complete. Many dispatches from the consulates in Uscub and Monastir were reprinted as they moved up the chain to Salonica and then Constantinople before being sent to the Foreign Office. Urgent matters were often telegraphed first with a brief message and then followed by a larger dispatch in the diplomatic mail. The outgoing communication from the Foreign Office is not in all places complete. The Lansdowne Papers (FO 800) are available only on microfilm and some documents were apparently lost before the microfilms were produced. However, some of the missing dispatches appear in the FO 421 series. Further appreciation for the views of Lansdowne and the Permanent Undersecretary, Thomas Sanderson, can be gained by reading the comments and instructions they wrote on the incoming documents. Other files which help us gain insight into the views and workings of the Foreign Office are files marked "Turkey Various" in the FO 78 series. While not always systematically organized, some of these files are quite literally scrap books assembled by the Foreign Office. These files contain copies of some incoming and outgoing correspondence to the embassy in Constantinople, intelligence reports on certain individuals and organizations, exchanges with letter

writers, clippings of newspaper stories regarding the conflict in Macedonia, and posters and literature produced by the various pressure groups.¹²⁰ I have also consulted War Office and Cabinet Papers, which have yielded some additional insight regarding the larger strategic picture.

In approaching the documents at the National Archives, I found it most practical to review the FO 421 series and then check the collected documents against the originals for additional comments or omitted text and to see if any of the documents which were omitted from the collections are of relevance. While time consuming, this method has yielded some revealing documents at particular junctures of the history and has allowed me to track some of the censorship efforts of the Foreign Office. Fifty years ago, Douglas Dakin wrote that he had yet to complete the “laborious task” of reviewing the collected British documents against the originals before publishing his article.¹²¹ This was fair considering Dakin’s focus was on Greek activities in Macedonia. However, as my study concerns British policy and is focused on a limited time period, I felt it was important to examine the records thoroughly. In doing so, I believe it has allowed me to make more empirical assessments of British policy.

While the majority of my primary source material is drawn from the National Archives, I have procured additional archival material from other archives and library collections. I have reviewed the papers of Arthur Balfour at the British Museum, which contain some very candid private exchanges between Balfour and Lansdowne. The collections of the Hansard parliamentary records provide verbatim documentation of the exchanges in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Parliament was the only forum where the government was consistently required to explain and defend its policy towards Macedonia, and the records capture the rhetorical strategies Balfour and Lansdowne employed and the employment of the Blue Books as the definitive record of the events in Macedonia. It was with considerable relief to the government that the 1903 sitting of parliament ended before the damning news emerged of the Ottoman reprisals during the Ilinden Uprising.

¹²⁰ The file for August-December 1903 is particularly interesting. See: FO 78/5289.

¹²¹ Douglas Dakin, “British Sources Concerning the Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 1901-1909,” *Balkan Studies*, 2:1 (1961): 71-84.

Newspapers and periodicals have been a valuable resource for this study. The longstanding correspondent of *The Times*, James Bouchier, was based in Sofia during the years of the Macedonian struggle. *The Times* and other newspapers also sent special correspondents into the Macedonia to cover the conflict. Most notable were Reginald Wyon of the *Daily Mail*, H.N. Brailsford of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Frederick Moore, who reported for the *New York Tribune* and the *Daily Express* and also contributed to *The Times*. Prominent newspaper stories were collected by the Foreign Office and some reporters became the subject of diplomacy when their work and actions attracted the attention of the Ottoman authorities, such as Wyon, who the Ottomans repeatedly tried to expel and the Orientalist E.J. Dillon, who penned such scathing criticisms of the Ottomans and of the British government that Lansdowne was moved to command his diplomats to investigate some of the stories Dillon published in the periodical *Contemporary Review*.

As a comprehensive study of all the press coverage of the Macedonian crises would be a full-length study unto itself, I have chosen to focus primarily on a few better-known periodicals which present differing perspectives. As his work attracted official investigations, E.J. Dillon's articles in *Contemporary Review* are the subject of section devoted to a case study. From the 'penny press', I have reviewed the visual representations presented in the *Illustrated London News*. *The Financial Times* and *The Economist* show how Macedonia was viewed by financial power brokers and what effect the conflict had on the financial markets. The two newspapers I have examined the most are *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. Both papers covered Macedonia extensively, both had well-informed correspondents who were present in the region, and both were written at a similar level. The two papers also stood in political and regional juxtaposition to each other and offer differing perspectives on most news stories. The conservative *Times* was considered the most influential paper in high political circles and its staff were frequent visitors to the Foreign Office. Critics and some foreign governments considered *The Times* to be the official mouth piece of the British government. Indeed, the timing and tone of some *Times* editorials referenced in this study would suggest the editors were influenced by the government executive, although it is also worth noting that some articles in *The Times* regarding Macedonia were criticized and investigated by the Foreign Office. On the other hand, *The Manchester*

Guardian made no pretensions about being anything other than the voice of Liberalism from the industrial midlands. Frequent contributor H.N. Brailsford was often critical of British policy and was amongst the leaders of the Balkan Committee pressure group which produced its own literature on the situation in Macedonia and helped coordinate public meetings around the British Isles.¹²² Used in combination, the perspective of the two papers offer strong indications of how much or how little support existed for British policies.

Further insight into the views and experiences of journalists can be found in the memoirs which several journalists published following their sojourns in Macedonia. Reginald Wyon published a weighty memoir not long after he departed from the Balkans.¹²³ Frederick Moore followed suit a few years later.¹²⁴ H.N. Brailsford combined his experiences with additional research in publishing the acclaimed *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* in early 1906.¹²⁵ The book remains a mainstay in studies of Ottoman Macedonia. Other memoirs produced by journalists who reported from Macedonia during 1902-1905 include Harry DeWindt's *Through Savage Europe*, John L.C. Booth's *Trouble in the Balkans*, John Foster Fraser's *Pictures from the Balkans*, and the anonymously authored *The Near East*.¹²⁶ Mary Edith Durham also recounted her encounters as an aid worker in *The Burden of the Balkans*, and some of the adventurers

¹²² The Balkan Committee, *The Macedonian Crisis: The Balkan Committee presents the following summary of the situation in the Near East* (London: The Balkan Committee, 1903). Prominent members of the Balkan Committee featured regularly in letters to the editor regarding Macedonia.

¹²³ Reginald Wyon, *The Balkans from Within* (London: James Finch & Co., 1904).

¹²⁴ Frederick Moore, *The Balkan Trail* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1906).

¹²⁵ H.N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1906). The biography by Leventhal discusses Brailsford's activism regarding Macedonia and the writing of the book. See: F.M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter: H.N. Brailsford and His World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 45-58.

¹²⁶ Harry DeWindt, *Through Savage Europe. The Narrative of a Journey through the Balkan States and European Russia* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1907); John L.C. Booth, *Trouble in the Balkans* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905.); John Foster Fraser, *Pictures of the Balkans* (London and Paris: Cassell, 1906); Anonymous, *The Near East. The Present Situation in Montenegro, Bosnia, Servia, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Macedonia* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co, 1907).

who embedded themselves with the rebel bands also wrote up their experiences.¹²⁷ A complement to this list is the memoir by Robert Graves, who served as consul-general in Salonica and advocated for many of the journalists who covered Macedonia.¹²⁸

Some journalists were moved to advocacy in joining pressure groups, speaking at public events and penning essays calling for the Britain and the Great Powers to adopt stronger policies towards Macedonia. Brailsford was a founding member of the Balkan Committee along with Charles and Noel Buxton, who visited Macedonia. Noel Buxton published a book of his own in 1907.¹²⁹ In France, the journalist activist Victor Bérard published his book *Pro Macedonia* in 1904.¹³⁰ The 'Pro-Macedonia' lobby became truly transnational. In 1905 the Italian historian Luigi Villari edited a volume of essays calling on Europe to take more responsibility for the conditions in Macedonia with contributions from Villari; Bérard; lawyer, writer, and long-time ex-patriot resident in Constantinople Edwin Pears; James Bourchier; Victoria Buxton; Frederick Moore; the British historian and member of parliament James Bryce; and Dr. Bogirade Tatarcheff of Sofia University among others.¹³¹

As an 'apple of discord' and a '*Volksmuseum*' of the peoples of Europe, Ottoman Macedonia became a subject of fascination for academics during the nineteenth century. Combined with the works of travel writers and journalists, academic studies had contributed to the accumulation of literature which cast the Balkans as being a "living museum" which either defied or lagged behind Western Europe in terms of evolutionary development.¹³² An influential work which was published in 1903 was *Macedonian*

¹²⁷ M. Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkan*. (London, Edinburgh, Dublin and New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1905). The best-known books by adventurers are: Alfred Greenwood Hale *My Life of Adventure* (London, New York and Toronto: Hodder and Stroughton, 1918); Albert Sonnischen, *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1909); Arthur D. Howden Smith, *Fighting the Turk in the Balkans An American's Adventures with the Macedonian Revolutionists* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908).

¹²⁸ Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East: Personal Memories, 1879-1929* (New York: AMS Press, 1975).

¹²⁹ Noel Buxton, *Europe and the Turks* (London: John Murray, 1907).

¹³⁰ Victor Bérard, *Pro-Macedonia* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1904).

¹³¹ Luigi Villari (editor), *The Balkan Question: The Present Condition of the Balkans and of European Responsibilities by Various Writers* (London: John Murray, 1905).

¹³² Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 128-30.

Folklore by George Abbott, a Cambridge-trained scholar and special correspondent. From his “harvest” of “fairy-lore” and “popular superstition” from rural peasant communities, Abbott presents Macedonia as a land where time is measured not by “the conventional calendar” but by the labours and festivals.¹³³ Life conforms to cycles of the seasons, the stages and milestones of human life, myths and legends rooted in classical antiquity, Christianity, and pagan reverence for the natural world. Abbot’s academic offering was also accompanied by a memoir of his time in Macedonia, in which he said of the mixed ethnic and religious composition: “Verily no country ever was in such sore need of a herald’s office, or of a lunatic asylum, as Macedonia.”¹³⁴ Although Abbott’s works were just the latest in a line of literature which espoused such sentiments, the timing of his publications and his academic background made him precisely the sort of expert British statesmen, politicians, journalists, and laypersons would have turned to gain more understanding of what was at issue regarding Macedonia. For this reason, his works merit special consideration.

These memoirs and academic works combine to provide a first draft in the historiography of British policy towards Macedonia and the events of 1902-1908. We see the views of the journalists refined and expanded as many were moved to impassioned essays of humanitarian or political advocacy. One also sees the continued growth of the unflattering discourse of Balkanisms, which crystallized during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and would shape the way in which the Western world saw Macedonia and the Balkans for decades to come. Nevertheless, these sources are indispensable to this study as they provide additional perspectives that can be used to cross reference against the official diplomatic sources and the stories published in the newspapers. When used in with the secondary literature, this combination of primary sources allows us to approach an empirical understanding of British policy towards Macedonia.

Finally, as with any historical project, there is the question of whether this study is needed at all. A critic could argue that the reason the topic has not received a book or dissertation-length examination is because it is not terribly significant and the existing article-length studies provide sufficient coverage. In addressing this, I would, again,

¹³³ G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 11.

¹³⁴ G.F. Abbott, *The Tale of Tour in Macedonia* (London: Edward Arnold, 1903), 81.

maintain that our knowledge and understanding of the topic is incomplete. As noted, historians have pointed to the foreign policy of the Balfour government as a neglected topic of research. Moreover, relative to other British foreign policy events from 1902-05 such as the entente negotiations with France, the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, and the Moroccan Crisis of 1905, the Macedonian crises have been overshadowed. This study will also contribute to the growing literature on the history of intervention, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping. It presents a case study of crisis management that did not end in war, which may be of interest to policy makers who continue to be confronted with crises and calls for intervention in the greater 'Near East' region. Furthermore, the Macedonian crises are of enduring interest to the people of Southeastern Europe, particularly in the Republic of Macedonia, where the rebels of the Ilinden Uprising are revered as heroes and the leaders as visionaries. Issues of language, territory, and identity remain unsettled, and many of these issues have roots that can be traced back to the early twentieth century and beyond in the eventful and often tragic history of a land called Macedonia.

Chapter 1.

The Road to *Fin de Siècle* Macedonia: National Movements, the Concert of Europe, and Great Britain (Historical Background)

Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Great Powers of Europe cast their gaze on Macedonia and the 'Near East' with growing trepidation. Many prominent statesmen remembered well how close Europe had come to a continental war—if not a world war—between the powers in 1878 due to events following local uprisings in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bulgarian lands of the Ottoman Empire. The 'Bulgarian Horrors' in the Balkan Mountains had created international media sensations and had led to Russian intervention on behalf of the Bulgarian rebels. Russian victory over the forces of the Ottoman Empire in 1877-78 had left the Russian army within striking distance of Constantinople. Great Britain sent naval forces into the Sea of Marmara, creating a tense standoff between the two powers, which saw jingoistic crowds take to the streets of London, and pushed Europe to the brink of war. Diplomacy did prevail in 1878. Under the brokerage of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the Treaty of Berlin was hammered out, granting an autonomous Bulgarian principality but reversing Bulgarian gains granted by the Russians in Macedonia in the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano.

The Treaty of Berlin set the stage for a multinational competition between the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece for control of Ottoman Macedonia. National ambitions and irredentist sentiments could be furthered by the terms of the Berlin treaty itself, which demanded the Ottoman Empire enact reforms to improve conditions for its Christian subjects. What is more, the events of 1875-78 had again proved how a well-reported massacre in a remote corner of the Balkans could bring about intervention by one or more of the Great Powers and set in motion events which

would redraw the map of Europe. By the turn of the century new groups of educated young people raised under the terms of the Treaty of Berlin had grown tired of Ottoman rule and the more peaceful methods of the propaganda war being fought through schools and religious centres. Some of the young men formed revolutionary organizations. These rebels recognized that violence could bring change. The Great Power statesmen and diplomats were also well aware of history and were on the lookout for signs of 'atrocities agitation.' The success of the next uprising in the Balkans would be contingent more on the sentiments and sympathies of the Great Power governments and their newspaper reading publics than on the fighting skill of the rebellious forces.

This chapter provides the historical background for this thesis. Great Britain's position towards Macedonia will be presented followed by a discussion of Macedonia and its geographical and political context in the latter nineteenth century. Information on the Macedonian organizations which instigated the uprisings of 1902 and 1903 will then be provided followed by a discussion of previous interventions in the 'Near East' by the Great Powers over the course of the nineteenth century. Background on the respective Great Power policies toward Macedonia then follows with a discussion of the policies of Great Britain under leadership of Lord Salisbury, who served as prime minister and foreign secretary for most of the late Victorian era. Some further discussion of British politics and British society is provided for contextualization of Great Britain's transforming position in the first years of the twentieth century as the country sought to securely position itself amid the escalating tensions of the European alliance system. Thumbnail sketches are given of the leading figures in the British government and the British diplomatic corps in the Ottoman Empire and Macedonia between 1902 and 1905. Finally, there is a discussion of Macedonia's place in the British worldview.

The British government in 1902 and 1903 did not wish to see complications arising in the Balkans. The country had expended significant resources to win the Boer War, and had successfully sought out an alliance with Japan to alleviate its overstretched capacities. Britain was involved with Germany in a plan to use naval power to coerce Venezuela to honour the South American nation's debts to European interests in 1902. With more imperial troops being needed to deploy with the Ethiopians and Italians against the forces of Mohammad Abdullah in Somalia, a Balkan calamity

was the last thing the Unionist government of Arthur Balfour wanted to attend to as it sought to strengthen Britain from its weakened post-war state.

The British Foreign Office had been kept well apprised of events in Macedonia through its network of consuls and informants. Disturbances by Albanians in the Vilayet of Kosovo were of little concern as the Albanians lacked the significant support of any of the other Great Powers. What the British and others feared was a potential repeat of 1876-77 when Ottoman suppression of an uprising by Bulgarians produced a wave of public sympathy, the intervention of Russian troops, and the redrawing of the map of south-eastern Europe. The upcoming celebration in Bulgaria of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Russian victory at Shipka Pass was making some observers nervous. The anticipated presence of the Russian Count Ignatiev at the events was another ominous sign. It was Ignatiev who had been Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1877 and had advocated for the Russian intervention. The British were also following the movements of Boris Sarafov, known as a famous agitator, who was touring around the continent, courting the European press with his message of "Macedonia for the Macedonians," which, as one diplomat remarked, he derived from the Monroe Doctrine.¹ Throughout 1902 Ottoman officials and diplomats issued repeated warnings to the powers of an impending guerilla incursion into Ottoman Macedonia from Bulgaria and appealed for representations to be made to the Bulgarian government to take forceful measures against the Macedonian organizations operating within the borders of the principality.

The British Foreign Office under the direction of Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne monitored events in Macedonia with concern, adopting a primarily cautious policy and remaining content to limit Britain's involvement to concerted diplomacy. Lansdowne and the Foreign Office did not lack reliable intelligence on Macedonia as a well-informed network of informants and diplomats posted throughout the region provided a wealth of information in the diplomatic dispatches. The British acted multilaterally, making representations to the Bulgarians for increased vigilance against the Macedonian organizations while appealing to the Ottomans to reform their security forces and exercise restraint against provocations. Reform was slow to materialize and

¹ Bonham to Lansdowne, September 24, 1902, FO 105/144/111.

by the autumn of 1902 the security situation in Macedonia had deteriorated. The political status quo in Macedonia was about to experience a series of challenges.

Macedonia: The Coveted Heart of the Balkans

At the crossroads of the southern Balkan Peninsula, the territory known as Macedonia has been a bridge between occident and orient, north and south. Once the heart of the empire of Alexander the Great, Macedonia was part of the Roman/Byzantine Empire until the Ottoman Empire conquered and incorporated the territory in the fourteenth century. Far from being a peripheral entity, Macedonia was an integral component of the Ottoman Empire, with Salonica rivaling Alexandria, Smyrna, and Beirut as a vibrant centre of commercial and administrative activity in the empire. The Ottomans did not call it “Macedonia.” As Yosmaoğlu reminds us, for the Ottomans, Macedonia “was part *Rumeli*, the European territories of the *Memâlik-i Mahrûse-e Şahâne*, or the protected imperial domains.”² When the Ottoman Empire lost most of its European territory in 1913, many Ottomans felt the empire had “lost its soul.”³ On the administrative level, the territory consisted of the “three vilayets” of Monastir, Kosovo and Salonica. The conceptualization of Macedonia as a distinct geographical and political space emerged in only in the mid-nineteenth century when European travelers and academics visiting regions resurrected the name from antiquity and Great Power diplomats began procuring and analyzing maps with respect to the emerging “Macedonian Question,” the latest eastern uncertainty to confront them.⁴ The Ottoman administration only began using “Macedonia” in their official correspondence when they were confronted by “Macedonian” revolutionary committees.⁵ Thus “Geographic Macedonia” came to be defined as the territory stretching from the mountain barriers of the Pindus and the Šar in the west, to the Rhodope Mountains and the Nestos River in

² Yosmaoğlu, “Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia,” 162.

³ Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks, and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London & New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 1.

⁴ Yosmaoğlu, “Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia,” 164-167.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 162. Ottoman historians have sought to challenge the notion that that the Ottoman Empire’s European territories were populated by Christians who had long yearned for independence. Yosmaoğlu’s chapter examines the manipulative power of maps and their use by competing elites in the struggle for Macedonia.

the east, with the border with Serbia to the north along the divide of the Vardar and Morava watersheds, and the southern boundary marked by Mt. Olympus and the shores of the Aegean Sea (See Appendix VI).⁶

Aside from some local peasant uprisings, life in the three vilayets was largely quiet and peaceful for most of the Ottoman era. Many Hasidic Jews migrated to Macedonia and the Ottoman Balkans to escape persecution in Western Europe. By contemporary standards, Ottoman society was tolerant with conversion to Islam limited and largely voluntary. However, the stability of the empire was challenged with the rise of nationalism and nation-states in the nineteenth century. European visitors wrote of the ethnic diversity of Macedonia with a mixture of fascination and concern. Soon this “veritable museum of all the Balkan peoples,” became known as a source of turbulence.⁷

The early nineteenth century saw revolts in Serbia and a revolution in what is now southern Greece. The Greek Revolution altered the order of the Ottoman Balkans. Since their military setbacks in 1683 at the gates of Vienna, the Ottomans had lost strips of territory to the European powers, but after the Napoleonic period they repeatedly faced the added challenge of insurrection from within. The Christian populations, which demographically dominated the Balkans, were producing new generations of leaders and intellectuals who aspired to the standards and ideals of the Christian states of Europe. This was the age of nationalism and the new leaders were determined to inspire their people to rise up against Ottoman rule. While Serbia became a vassal in 1815, the Greeks achieved outright independence thanks in part to the intervention of the Great Powers. Nationalism was set to upset the Ottoman order in the Balkans. In the decades

⁶ As maps are practical tools which help us orient ourselves with a given location, they have tremendous power in shaping the way we conceptualize a place. In the case of Macedonia, it is interesting to consider how authors present and define what Macedonia is or was. For the sake of comparison, Andrew Rossos presents maps of “Geographic Macedonia” (the three vilayets) at the beginning of his latest book and maintains these “geographic” boundaries in subsequent maps of different points in history. See: Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians*, 4-6. By contrast, the map in Selim Deringil’s latest book does include vilayet borders. See: Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2. Isa Blumi’s *Reinstating the Ottomans* begins with a map in which the only has borders are the Ottoman Empire’s frontiers with the European states; the vilayets are named but no boundaries are included. See: Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 1.

⁷ Ferdinand Schevill, *The Balkan Peninsula and the Near East. A History from the Earliest Time to the Present Day* (London: G. Bell, 1922), 432.

following Greek independence, agitators and academics began to circulate through Macedonia with messages of emancipation and visions of national glory.

The national movements benefited from the structure and institutions of the Ottoman Empire. The empire instituted its *millet* system which divided its subjects according to their religion and left the administration of non-Muslim subjects to the Christian religious authorities. In Macedonia, the Greek Patriarchate had exclusive authority over all the Christians in the nineteenth century, even though the majority of the population was Slavic speaking. Further east, Bulgarian patriots were opening Bulgarian language schools and lobbying for a Bulgarian Church. Their efforts paid off, and a Bulgarian Exarchate Church was granted by the Ottoman authorities in 1870. Thousands of parishioners rushed to have church services in their native tongues and sign their children up for Bulgarian language education. Events moved quickly. In 1876, Bulgarian rebels launched an uprising against Ottoman authority. Although the revolt was swiftly quashed, the sacrifices of the rebels and the reprisals against Bulgarian civilians by the Ottoman security forces and local Muslim militias shocked and appalled the public in the powerful Christian nations of Europe. In Great Britain, William Gladstone famously railed against the conservative government of Benjamin Disraeli for not intervening to halt the 'Bulgarian Horrors.'

The Bulgarian cause was not abandoned. Popular sympathy and outrage in Russia led to direct intervention by the Russian army which waged a successful, if costly, campaign against the Ottomans in 1877 and 1878. Having fought their way to the shores of the Sea of Marmara, the Russians drew up the Treaty of San Stefano on February 19, 1878. This created a large Bulgarian state, stretching along the Aegean Sea and encompassing almost all of Geographic Macedonia. This bold advance effectively created a large Russian client state which alarmed the British and the French, who had gone to war with Russia in the Crimea two decades previously to check southward Russian moves towards Constantinople and the Dardanelle Straits. The escalating crisis was averted by a full Congress of the Great Powers held in Berlin and presided over by host and 'honest broker' German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. The talks produced the Treaty of Berlin which humbled Russia by reducing the large Bulgarian state of the San Stefano treaty to a principality between the Balkan Mountains and the Danube River. Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia reverted back to Ottoman rule.

The Treaty of Berlin may have alleviated tensions between the Great Powers, but it had sown the seeds of revanchism in the 'rump' Bulgarian principality (henceforth Bulgaria)⁸ and set the stage for a multi-party competition. In the decades to follow, the cultural mosaic of Macedonia was to be progressively nationalized and bitterly contested.

The race for Macedonia after 1878 was waged from the pulpit and in the classroom. Teachers and holy men from Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia moved into Macedonia to spread their influence. In time, other parties joined the race for Macedonia, including the Romanians, Albanians, and the Ottomans themselves. This educational competition was principally between Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians for the coveted the Christian Orthodox populations, who could be claimed by all three parties on the basis of culture, ethnicity or language.⁹ Individuals, families and entire villages were known to change national allegiances to suit their needs. The competitions also featured a contest between Greeks and Romanians for the loyalty of the Vlach populations, and a struggle between Greeks, Albanians and Ottomans for the Albanian populations. Protestant missionaries rather unwittingly subsidized several national educational movements by advocating education in one's mother tongue. The Jews of Macedonia had an internal educational reformation during this period but do not appear to have proselytized outside of their faith, and did not aspire to transfer their loyalty to a nation other than the Ottoman Empire.

Macedonia's eventual conquest and division by the rival Balkans states during the Balkan Wars was not a historic inevitability. Far from being a colonial appendage, Macedonia remained an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and one of its key economic components. Furthermore, the events of the 1870s had seen a considerable migration of Slavic Muslim and Turkish populations into Macedonia from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria. Most Muslims and Jews and a number of Christians residents were content with or unwilling to resist Ottoman rule. Indeed the leadership of

⁸ Although it functioned very much as a state, Bulgaria formally remained a principality of the Ottoman Empire from 1878 until it declared its full independence in 1908.

⁹ For example, Bulgarians might claim a given Orthodox community on the basis of language spoken; Serbians could claim the same community was really Serbian if the inhabitants observed what they considered to be Serbian cultural customs; Greeks could argue that the community was Greek if the majority of its parishioners attendant a Orthodox church controlled by the (Greek) Patriarchate of Constantinople.

the emergent Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) was careful to state in its 1897 statutes that it strove for autonomy for the three vilayets, with no mention of intent to alter the mosaic of constituent communities in the territory.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the upstart revolutionaries were determined to alter the status quo and the Ottomans were equally determined to uphold it.

The Ottoman Empire at 1900

The Ottoman Empire was a good deal stronger at the end of the nineteenth century than it had been at the century's beginning. Loss of territory and revenue had left the empire in a weakened position by 1800, leading to increased power for regional rulers (*ayans*) like Ali Pasha of Yannina and Mohammad Ali of Egypt, as well as internal separatist movements as evidenced in Serbia and Greece. The Ottoman Empire was reputedly branded the 'Sick man of Europe' by Tzar Nicholas I on account of its steady loss of territory. Yet by mid century, the Ottoman Empire had undergone significant revitalization. Reforms decreed in the mid nineteenth century (*Tanzimat* period) were designed to make the Ottoman Empire more competitive, just, and integrated; to some extent they succeeded. The *Gulhane Hatt-I Serifi* edict of 1839 was a declaration that promised better governance based on improved taxation, equal justice for all and on security of one's own life and property.¹¹ Importantly, through the *Gulhane Hatt-I Serifi*, the sultan made a public declaration that he would respect the rule of law.¹² In effect, the *Tanzimat* Reforms were a victory for the bureaucracy of the Ottoman government over the divine right of the sultan in the palace. It was the administrators who took the lead in drawing up the reforms. There were hopes the reforms could improve relations between the peoples of the empire. The *Hatti-Humayun* edict of 1856 decreed the protection of the rights of all citizens regardless of religion. This edict was directed at the Orthodox *millet* with the hope of undermining Christian discontent and, in particular, the Bulgarian

¹⁰ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 65.

¹¹ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Volume I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 283.

¹² Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 1998), 45.

national movement.¹³ The liberal administrator and future Grand Vizer Midhat Pasha proposed to merge Turkish and Bulgarian schools to pre-empt Bulgarian nationalism. However, the Bulgarians emphatically rejected the idea, and the decree displeased many Muslims in the empire.¹⁴

The *Tanzimat* era also saw a continuation in improvements in the internal security and the defence capabilities, which made the Ottoman Empire a minor imperial power. Prussian officers were brought in to improve the army as were British officers to make the Ottoman navy more effective. Despite some setbacks to the forces of Muhammad Ali, the Ottomans were successful in re-establishing an imperial presence in Yeman next to the British in the 1830s. While the Ottomans still needed assistance to defend against a power like Russia, as was evident in the Crimean War, their forces were more than a match for rebellious elements within the empire and smaller powers. The Treaty of Paris, which followed the Crimean War in 1856, granted the Ottoman Empire a seat at the Concert of Europe, giving the empire added legitimacy. During the conflicts of 1875-78, the Ottoman forces further acquitted themselves by handily defeating Serbia forces in the field and exacting a heavy toll on the victorious Russians in the 1877-78 war.

After a brief, two year period of constitutionalism, Sultan Abdülhamîd II took over as sultan after a coup d'état in 1878. Although the new sultan suspended the Ottoman constitution and inaugurated thirty years of authoritarianism, reforms continued, notably in the military and the security forces.¹⁵ Following the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826, a series of reforms led to the establishment of a ministry of police in 1870 and police stations (*karakols*) in 1880. By 1901, a civilian police force separate from the military had been established, at least in parts of the empire.¹⁶ 1879 marked the creation

¹³ Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, 386. The Orthodox millet was to be reorganized to reflect “the progress and enlightenment of the times.”

¹⁴ Mercia MacDermott, *A History of Bulgaria 1393-1885* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1962), 301; Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861: The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 27.

¹⁵ As the Ottoman police, army, and gendarmerie often worked in combined efforts in the counterinsurgency operations described in this study, I have elected to use “Ottoman security forces” as a blanket term.

¹⁶ Glen Swanson, “The Ottoman Police,” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 7, No. 1 / 2 (1972): 253.

of the Ottoman Gendarmerie (*Jandarma Daire-i Merkeziyesi*).¹⁷ In accordance with European reforms imposed in the wake of the 1878 Berlin treaty, the gendarmerie was developed into a security force tasked with patrolling and policing the countryside. The gendarmerie was the force that would first come in contact with guerilla formations, and the Great Powers had hopes that a reformed gendarmerie could make a significant difference in establishing security in the turbulent regions of the empire. Following the Armenian Massacres in the mid 1890s, attempts were made to bring Christians into the ranks of the gendarmerie, but Christian volunteers were hard to come by. Under Great Power direction, they would try again in Macedonia. The attention and tutelage directed towards the gendarmerie by the European caused resentment in the army, although these sentiments existed prior to the arrival of the European officers in 1904.¹⁸

An important consideration in understanding the European views towards reform is the ways the Europeans viewed and understood the Ottoman military. They saw the gendarmerie as a new formation with an important mandate, and they hoped to shape and 'professionalize' it to their preference. As will be demonstrated, the Great Powers' opinions of the Ottoman military were, at best, mixed. The British considered regular soldiers (Nizams) to be relatively reliable and professional. However, due to limited finances and manpower, the Ottomans had to rely on reserve (Redif) or auxiliary (Ilave) forces when it was deemed necessary, such as in Macedonia in 1903. These men were often untrained, poorly paid, and poorly provisioned, making them prone to committing abuses. Even worse were the dreaded Bashi-Bazouks¹⁹ (empty heads), which had the reputation for being little more than undisciplined mobs with more of an appetite for looting and pillaging than for fighting.²⁰ The British repeatedly urged the Ottomans to disband these auxiliary forces and use only Nizam troops in counterinsurgency operations. The British also had particular views of what sort of men made the best soldiers. They were impressed with the Anatolian Turk Nizams they observed in

¹⁷ Ibid., 255.

¹⁸ Yosmaoğlu, "Marching on an Empty Stomach," 288-289.

¹⁹ 'Nizam,' 'Redif,' 'Ilave,' and 'Bashi-Bazouk' appear frequently in the British documents, so I have chosen not to italicize them.

²⁰ Askan argues that this reputation is undeserved, pointing out that the Bashi-Bazouks performed courageously in combat and their commanders frequently let them loose in the territories they were deployed in or passing through in lieu of proper compensation. See: Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1770-1870: An Empire Besieged* (London: Longman Books, 2007), 457.

Macedonia, but wary of local Muslims and Albanians, which dominated the ranks of the auxiliary and irregular forces. The British and the other European powers believed that with right sort of men and correct training the gendarmerie could be an effective professional force.²¹

However, a problem which confronted all reform efforts was finances. By the turn of the century, the Ottoman Empire had accumulated a significant debt burden, and its debt payments were being collected by the European-controlled Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA).²² Finances were an ongoing concern and a source of tension between European governments and creditors and Ottomans who resented Europeans meddling in the empire's financial affairs. In any case, lack of funds would affect the performance of the Ottoman security forces in Macedonia, and would be a contentious issue in the application of the reforms.

Despite enduring European concerns and financial challenges, by the turn of the century, the Ottoman Empire had proven itself capable of protecting its domains. The Ottoman Empire could field an army of one million men. Ottoman victory in the 1897 war with Greece was only mitigated by the intervention of Great Power diplomacy. The Great Powers might have their own designs on what some saw as the inevitable demise of the 'Sickman of Europe,' but the Ottoman Empire could also be a convenient ally. A fact Imperial Germany latched onto in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, far from being in an inevitable state of 'decline' the Ottoman Empire had strengthened itself and found itself in a condition similar to some of the other monarchies of Europe. As discussed by

²¹ Biliotti to O'Connor, December 1, 1902, FO 195/2133/207. This was not the first time the British had attempted to mold an Ottoman force made up of particular elements of the empire. During the Crimean War, the British General Beatson tried to fashion a cavalry force out of Bashi-Bazouks recruited from the Caucasus and the Balkans. Despite "exemplary" British discipline, the experiment failed miserably. Askan attributes Beatson's overconfidence to romantic European notions of and the general's experiences in India, where he had made a "fine body" of troops out of "undisciplined tribesmen." See: Askan, *Ottoman Wars*, 457. Half a century later, they would be making similar assumptions based, at least partly, on race.

²² For a recent study on the Ottoman Public Debt and Europe, see: Murat Birdal, *Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt, Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010).

Selim Deringil, the same changes that took place in European states and societies in the latter nineteenth century also took place in the Ottoman Empire.²³

Nevertheless, while the Ottoman Empire had recovered its strength by the turn of the century, it faced increasing unrest in the three European vilayets known collectively as Macedonia. Through the 1880s and 1890s, the competition between the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian interests intensified as the Christian competitors lobbied for the favour of the Ottoman authorities to build more churches and schools. New generations of young people graduated from these schools and became teachers, spreading their respective national messages, and waiting for deliverance. While the fortunes of the competing parties fluctuated, the party which had succeeded the most in spreading its message was the Bulgarians. This was due in large part to the policy of 'peaceful penetration' pursued by Stephen Stambolov, the Bulgarian prime minister. Stambolov gained an advantage over the Greeks by successfully appealing to the Ottomans for more churches and schools, thereby enabling the Bulgarian Exarchate to greatly extend its presence. Even after his death at the hands of assassins impatient with the slow pace of change, Stambolov's peaceful penetration policy remained in effect and the Bulgarians continued to further their influence. However, the peaceful penetration policy became a victim of its own success. From within the ranks of the native born teachers in the Bulgarian Exarchate schools emerged the group which would put Macedonia back in the international spotlight—the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO).

The Macedonian Committees

IMRO, the organization that was to become the stated nemesis of peace in Europe, was a product of the Berlin Treaty and the schools of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Children born to Slav families in Macedonia around 1870 were raised in the legacy of the events of 1876-78. As children, this generation experienced the joy of liberation and the disappointment of renewed Ottoman authority in 1878. During their formative years, they experienced the repression of Ottoman officials who favoured the Greeks. Some, like future revolutionary Boris Sarafov, watched their own family members deported to Asia

²³ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 8.

Minor for promoting Bulgarian education.²⁴ For families that could manage it, the remaining schools of the Bulgarian Exarchate's system offered some hope for their children. Knowledge and experience combined to create discontentment. Exarchate classrooms served as forums for bitter teachers to impress students and explain the politics of the situation. Exarchate gymnasiums (secondary schools) became hotbeds of revolutionary thought as agitation and inquiry enlivened a variety of schemes of how this emergent generation could rise up against Ottoman domination.²⁵

Newfound sensibilities and limited career prospects only deepened the resentment of Ottoman authority for school graduates. Many proceeded to the Bulgaria to pursue further education or a military career. Future IMRO leaders Gotse Delchev and Boris Sarafov both enrolled in the Bulgarian Military Academy in Sofia.²⁶ However, under the watchful eye of Bulgarian premier Stephen Stambolov's police, many felt shunned by the Bulgarian establishment. What is more, they were impatient with the Stambolov's policy of peaceful penetration for recovering Macedonia. Frustrated, many of the early members of IMRO cut short their programs in Bulgaria and returned to Macedonia to teach in the Exarchate's school system.

IMRO was born following a conversation between like-minded individuals during the evening *corso* on the streets of Salonica on November 1, 1893. Shortly thereafter, IMRO was founded by teachers Dame Gruev, Andon Dimitrov, Ivan Hadzhinikolov, Petur Poparsov, Hristo Batandzhiev, and Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, the medical doctor at Salonica's Exarchate gymnasium.²⁷ The group believed they could agitate successfully to win over the sympathies of the Slavs of Ottoman Macedonia and train bandits and peasant farmers into a revolutionary guerilla force. The founders of IMRO resolved to petition for the application of Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty with the goal of political autonomy for Macedonia. IMRO adopted many of the codes and practices of Vasil

²⁴ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula*, 57. In 1885, a young Sarafov watched his father and grandfather led in chains through the streets of Salonica and set into exile in Asia Minor. The two men had been active in the Exarchate schools.

²⁵ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 28; Nadine Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 35. Established in 1880, the famous Bulgarian gymnasium Thessaloniki became the cradle of the future Macedonian revolutionary movement, graduating several of IMRO's future leaders and serving as a source of employment for future members and a meeting place for the organization.

²⁶ MacDermott, *Freedom or Death*, 74.

²⁷ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 37-38. At the time, Tatarchev was treating Gruev for eczema.

Levski and the Bulgarian teacher revolutionaries of the 1870s. Like the Greek and Bulgarian rebel groups before them, IMRO used the slogan 'Freedom or Death' and created a Masonic ritual for recruits, which required them to swear an oath over a bible crossed with a dagger and pistol.²⁸ In 1894, IMRO began expanding its influence by recruiting teachers and other intellectuals throughout Macedonia, making liberal use of the networks of the Bulgarian Exarchate's school system, which the leaders considered would be the key to their success. Over the next decade, IMRO members would be promoted to head teacher positions, giving them influence not only in classrooms, but entire schools and even some districts. Their authority was such that they were able to affect which teachers the Exarchate hired. The duo of Dame Gruev and Gotse Delchev attained legendary status from their work to turn the Štip school district into an IMRO stronghold. Students were reportedly schooled in revolutionary discipline, and an underground smuggling network was established with connections to Bulgaria, which brought in literature, correspondence and, importantly, weapons to cache for the future planned uprising.²⁹ Within two years of its inception, IMRO had become a political force in Macedonia. While the Ottoman authorities were rather slow to realize the threat IMRO represented, the organization was getting plenty of attention within the Bulgaria.

To some observers in the Bulgarian military establishment, the teachers of IMRO were hopeless amateurs, who had no realistic chance of success. They did not believe peasants could possibly be molded into an effective fighting force and that the only way to liberate Macedonia was to raise an army of at least 20,000 soldiers in Bulgaria and invade.³⁰ In 1895, the Supreme Macedonian Committee (SMC) was formed in Sofia, made up of many Macedon-Bulgarians resident in Bulgaria with shadowy connections to the Bulgarian military establishment. The SMC and IMRO pledged cooperation from the start and there were several individuals who belonged to both organizations. Indeed, British observers often could not delineate between the two and made blanket references to the 'Macedonian Committee' or 'Macedonian Committees.' However, there were differences which became apparent after the inception of the SMC. The military leaders of the SMC advocated an aggressive approach and dismissed the long term

²⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

²⁹ MacDermott, *Freedom or Death*, 103.

³⁰ Laura Beth Sherman, *Fires on the Mountain: The Macedonian Revolutionary Movement and the Kidnapping of Ellen Stone* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1980), 12.

planning of IMRO. In what would be a preview of the 1902 Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising, a small band of SMC fighters under the command of the charismatic Boris Sarafov crossed over the frontier from Bulgarian and briefly held the town of Melnik in 1895. They were quickly driven away by the Ottoman security forces, leaving the people of Melnik to suffer the consequences and IMRO to restrain its activities.³¹ During a subsequent meeting between Gotce Delechev of IMRO and SMC leader General Danail Nikolaev, IMRO was offered much needed material support in return for recognition of the SMC's authority over IMRO. The meeting ended acrimoniously with Delchev remarking that IMRO did not need any help.³² IMRO also faced mounting opposition from the Bulgarian Exarchate, which was becoming perturbed with the aggressive tactics of its teachers in Macedonia. In 1897, Exarch Joseph I denounced IMRO as an atheist organization and tried to arrest IMRO's influence on Exarchate teaching appointments.³³ Acting on the fearful sentiment of some business leaders in Macedonia, a Bulgarian born teacher, Ivan Garvanov, founded the Revolutionary Brotherhood to defend the Exarchate's influence in its own school system.³⁴

However, by 1900, relations between IMRO, the SMC, and the Revolutionary Brotherhood had improved markedly. Boris Sarafov had assumed leadership of the SMC in 1899 and had done much to build bridges with the Macedonia-based organization led by some of his old schoolmates. SMC mediation had also led to the Revolutionary Brotherhood being absorbed by IMRO.³⁵ The harmony was not to last. Within a year Sarafov had run afoul of the military men of the SMC after ordering the assassination of a Romanian journalist.³⁶ A coup removed Sarafov as leader, passing power to former Bulgarian General Ivan Tsonchev. The new SMC leader demanded IMRO's subordination and when he did not receive it, he had several members of IMRO's leadership arrested and the organization's activities in the Bulgaria curtailed. The Tsonchev coup in mid-1901 coincided with a crackdown on IMRO by the Ottoman authorities in Macedonia, which led to most of the organization's Central Committee

³¹ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 49-51.

³² *Ibid.*, 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁶ Christ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula*, 60.

being arrested. Executive control of IMRO fell to former Revolutionary Brotherhood leader Ivan Garvanov.³⁷ Most of IMRO's leadership found themselves in prison or in hiding by the autumn of 1902. For those that remained active, drastic steps were necessary.

The events of 1901 led IMRO to commit an action which would put the organization and its cause in the headlines of the international press. Desperate to raise badly needed funds, a group of IMRO men led by Yane Sandanski kidnapped the American Protestant missionary Ellen Stone and her assistant Katerina Tsilka. The kidnapping was something of comedy of errors as the kidnapers, clumsily disguised as Ottoman soldiers, had intended to abduct the head of the American mission, Dr. House, who had been unable to make the trip. The kidnapers soon learned that Miss Tsilka was pregnant. The hostage drama of an American citizen and her assistant with a new born baby being shuttled around the Pirin Mountains through the dead of winter was a media sensation and a nuisance for the diplomats involved, moving United States President Theodore Roosevelt to consider dispatching the American fleet to help get the hostages freed.³⁸ Such pressure was exerted upon the Bulgaria that some SMC bands were sent after the kidnapers. After five months of commotion, the ransom was paid, giving IMRO the financial means to obtain rifles and ammunition. The organization received further positive publicity as Stone and Tsilka went on speaking tours of the United States, where they recounted their ordeal with sympathetic words for their captors and spoke of the need for Macedonia to be liberated from Ottoman rule.³⁹

By 1902, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization had established itself as social and political force in Ottoman Macedonia and had garnered international notoriety. IMRO had a complex relationship with Bulgaria and the SMC, which was beneficial at certain times and detrimental at others. The escalation in kidnappings, robberies, and guerilla attacks initiated by the organizations brought increased attention to Macedonia, causing the Great Powers to apply diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire to implement reforms and on Bulgaria to clamp down on the activities of the

³⁷ Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 98.

³⁸ Teresa Carpenter, *The Miss Stone Affair: America's First Modern Hostage Crisis* (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 34.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

Macedonian organizations within its borders. The Bulgarian authorities had limited enthusiasm for this task. Nevertheless, the measures they took were strong enough to make the SMC's goal of raising an invasion force in excess of 20,000 within Bulgarian borders impossible. In Macedonia, IMRO was reaching a critical mass with its appeal and capabilities. The long anticipated uprising would have to take place within the next few years. With 60,000 Ottoman troops deployed in Macedonia, the odds of military success for IMRO were slim. Success would ultimately be contingent on the sympathy of people in the European capitals and whether or not one or more of the powers would be compelled to intervene on behalf of the rebel cause, or, more likely, on behalf of the Christian victims the anticipated reprisals. Those who gave the command to commence the uprisings of 1902 and 1903 were plainly aware of this. The SMC only mustered a few hundred fighters for the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising, and IMRO only fielded a force of about 30,000 the following year. The Macedonia Committees were banking on Great Power intervention to help them realize their political goals. It was a risky gamble, but a gamble that had paid off for other nations in the past.

A Concert of Interventions, 1815-1914

The age of Napoleon left Europe in ruins. The final defeat of the French army after Napoleon's final hundred days saw France under allied occupation. As the powers met in Vienna to discuss and deliberate on the fate of the Europe, there was a desire in some quarters to thoroughly punish France, notably from Prussia.⁴⁰ While punishment would be meted out to Bonapartists, France itself would be spared and restored. The Congress of Vienna established a post Napoleonic order based on a balance of power between the Great Powers of Europe: Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia. The premise of this order was that no power could upset the balance without incurring punishment from the other powers, which would act to restore the balance. This balance was maintained through the Concert of Europe, the loose association of the Great Powers, which would convene to settle disputes. It was, in the words of one of its most notable historians, "A World Restored," returning the old pre-Napoleonic order of

⁴⁰ Gary Jonathan Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 56.

monarchies with more concrete international mechanisms to maintain the peace.⁴¹ The kings may have returned but they had lost their divine right. International relations would be governed by rule of law.

The Congress of Vienna preceded one of the longest periods of relative peace in Europe. Importantly, the post-Vienna concert system enshrined the inviolability of national boundaries. Acts of territorial aggression were to be answered by the combined intervention of the other Great Powers. The map of Europe could not easily be redrawn. However, the Ottoman Empire was not party to the peace agreement and its territory was not within the jurisdiction of the concert. Russia had lobbied for the exclusion.⁴² Thus Russia, or any other Great Power, could wage war and take territory from the Ottoman Empire without recriminations from the Concert. With the Ottoman Empire unable to match the military might of the Great Powers, it became a tempting target, and was further weakened by national movements within its borders. Many of these emerging nations happened to be in the same place some of the Great Powers had fixated upon—the Balkans.

The 'Eastern Question' would emerge as one of the first challenges to the Concert system and it would contribute to the Concert's undoing almost a century after Metternich, Talleyrand, Castlereagh, Alexander I, and Hardenberg concluded proceedings at Vienna. The Concert had already survived turbulence in Spain and Naples when it was shaken by the suicide of Castlereagh, one of its chief architects, and the opening of the Greek Revolution in the Peloponnese. While the Great Powers quietly approved of the Ottoman efforts to crush the uprising, public opinion in Western Europe was captivated by the image of the descendents of the Classical Greece fighting for their freedom from Ottoman rule. Led by celebrities such as the poet Lord Byron, the Philhellenes lobbied their governments to intervene on the side of the rebels, and some, including Byron, took up arms alongside the rebels. The new British Foreign Secretary, George Canning, was far more sympathetic to the aspirations of nations living within empires which were not their own. Buoyed by public opinion, Canning upset the Concert's conservatives by pursuing intervention in Greece. Canning found willing

⁴¹ See: Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964).

⁴² Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe: International Politics, 1890-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 5.

partners in France and Russia and in 1827 a fleet of allied warships was dispatched to monitor the situation on the Peloponnese. Thanks in part to its ambiguous instructions, the allied fleet engaged and destroyed the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Navarino. This decisive victory was a turning point for the revolutionary struggle. French troops helped the Greeks clear the Peloponnese and secure victory.

In 1830 the Greek Kingdom was born under close Great Power tutelage. The new kingdom was ruled by the Bavarian Othon I with the help of an international contingent of troops to insure stability. Despite their position of weakness, Greek nationalists dreamt of irredentist visions of incorporating all the territory in the regions where Greek populations resided.⁴³ This became a phenomenon across the Balkans as upstart national movements underwent intellectual renaissances throughout the nineteenth century and strove to follow the lead the Greeks and spread their influence and work toward revolt and independence. Thanks to Russian support, the Danubian Principalities were granted autonomy in 1832, further cutting into the Ottoman Empire's hold on the European continent, which had stretched from the gates of Vienna to the steppes of southern Russia in the late seventeenth century. But the empire did not implode. Territorial losses helped galvanize reformers within the Ottoman Empire. Following the *Tanzimat* Reforms of 1839 the empire strengthened itself through the remainder of the nineteenth century, incorporating a number of reforms for the purpose of resisting further territorial losses. This development actually suited most of the Great Powers who worried about the potential vacuum that might open up with the empire's collapse or what its sudden conquest by a Great Power would mean to Near Eastern stability and the balance of power.

Maintaining the Ottoman Empire or at least taking its territory away gradually was an unwritten point of agreement between the Great Powers. Russia had reversed many of the Ottoman gains north of the Black Sea and possessed its northern shores with a view to the Caucasus in the east and the Danube region in the west. The Russian Czar Alexander I had decided that it was better to allow the Ottoman Empire to collapse on its

⁴³ This was known as the '*Megali Idea*'. This ideal 'Greater Greece' was to range from the Ionian Sea to the Black Sea, including Crete and Western Asia Minor. Other nations also coveted their own dreams of uniting all scattered populations and realizing the borders of historical empires and kingdoms.

own than to engage too actively in its destruction. Russia had paternal sympathy for the Orthodox populations of the Balkans and had helped secure capitulations on their behalf. The flip side of this for Russia was that the Balkans figured prominently in the imagination of the Russian people. The idea of liberating more Orthodox peoples from Ottoman rule appealed to the Russians. The historic connections to the region through the Cyrillic script and the Orthodox Christian religion, which had come to Russia from the Byzantine Empire, also contributed to this sense of a historic mission for Russia towards the Balkans. As much as Russians dreamt of seeing their Czar march triumphantly in and claiming the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople (*Czarigrad*), obtaining the city would also be of tremendous strategic significance as it would grant Russia a warm water port and control of the Dardanelle Straits, allowing Russia unfettered access to the Eastern Mediterranean for its navy and merchant marine.

Russia was not the only power with designs on the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had borne at least an equal brunt of the Ottoman Empire's advance into Europe, and, like Russia, looked to roll back the Ottomans in the Balkans. The prospect of obtaining the port of Salonica appealed to the Austro-Hungarians, who, unlike the other powers, had no overseas empire or continental land mass for its imperialist ambitions. For the Austro-Hungarians, the Balkans was the object of their imperial quest, putting them on a potential collision course with the dreams and designs of Russia, a prospect generations of statesmen came to dread. Vienna's designs on the Balkans would also bring them into conflict later in the century with Italy, which sought to increase its influence in the Adriatic region. France was interested less in the Balkan Peninsula than in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. There was a provocative edge to the French involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean that can be at least partly understood as attempts to shake France from the limitations that had been bestowed upon it in 1815. France did involve itself in the Greek War of Independence and Napoleon III's insistence that the Ottomans hand the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem over to Catholic monks in 1853 helped set off the Crimean War of 1854-1856. France exerted considerable cultural influence on the Ottoman Empire, and the French accumulated substantial commercial and financial interests in the Ottoman Empire by the turn of the century.

Great Britain's interests were tied to its rich colonial empire, principally India. The importance of trade connections to India led some to speak of the Mediterranean Sea as a British lake. The main threat to these connections and to India itself was perceived to come from Russia, with its growing population and expanding empire stretching south and east. Checking the Russian advance became central to British foreign policy and politicians like Lord Palmerston practically made a career out of it. Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire served as buffer zones against southward expansions by Russia, making British support for Persia and the Ottoman Empire a relatively cost-effective means of securing British interests. The further the Russians were from India and the British passage to it the better. The prospect of Russian ships passing through the Dardanelle Straits was considered by men like Palmerston to be a catastrophic scenario for the British Empire. As such, keeping the straits closed to naval vessels became a corner stone of British policy in the nineteenth century. It was British insistence that enshrined the neutrality of the Dardanelles in the Straits Convention of 1841.

The Balkans and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century faced pressure from within and without. The internal politics of reform and reaction, the national movements of the empire's Christians, and the desires and fears of the Great Powers combined to concoct a multitude of possibilities for a major confrontation. Scarcely a decade passed without a crisis developing in the region. A few years after the establishment of the Greek state, Egyptian forces under Mohammad Ali marched on Constantinople. It was only intervention by Russian forces in 1833 that prevented Sultan Mahmud II from being overthrown. The Egyptians remained in Syria and Lebanon for a decade until Ottoman troops, backed by the guns of British and Austrian naval support, evicted the Egyptians in 1841.

As the century progressed, the Ottoman Empire continued to draw the attention of the Concert of Europe. The enduring problem was the fact that the Ottoman Empire was not party to the congress system and thus its territory could be targeted for political and military adventures by the Great Powers. Napoleon III's Jerusalem gestures of 1853

elicited retaliations by Russia.⁴⁴ The Russians took action by insisting on more rights for the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, occupying the Danubian Principalities and destroying the Ottoman fleet at Sinope. Napoleon III called for the defense of the Ottoman Empire to prevent the Russians from seizing Constantinople and taking control of the Dardanelle Straits. He found a sympathetic ally in Great Britain's Lord Palmerston, who rallied public opinion to produce a state of war with Russia and the dispatch of a naval task force to the Crimea.

The Franco-Ottoman-British alliance did emerge victorious in the Crimean War but at a high cost and for limited gains. Palmerston had suggested the war could be a chance to cripple and dismember the Russian Empire. Russia held together, but the human and material toll of the war was significant, surpassing the losses of the allies and producing internal social and political challenges, which limited expansionist ambitions for the near future. It is important to note that the Crimean War had several 'modern' characteristics. Advances in military technology produced devastating carnage on the battlefield and all the news was reported back by telegraph. The modern war correspondent was born in Crimea. William Howard Russell of *The Times* became famous for his reporting, giving politicians and diplomats cause to be wary of press reports, which could influence policies more than diplomatic dispatches.⁴⁵

If the Peace of Paris of 1856 did not mark the end of the Concert of Europe, the institution had surely been weakened. Austrian neutrality had kept the war from becoming a continental conflict and had insured the war remained geographically limited to the Crimean peninsula and the northern Black Sea, but Austria's stance was bitterly resented by Russia. The Holy Alliance between fell apart, and the Austro-Russian Balkan rivalry intensified.⁴⁶ In the treaty, Russia abandoned Bessarabia and Kars, and was allowed no naval presence in the Black Sea. The Czar was additionally required to renounce his claims as protector of the Ottoman Empire's Christians. Furthermore, in

⁴⁴ Napoleon III demanded that Catholic monks be given priority in access to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ For Russell's memoir of the Crimean War, see: William Howard Russell, *The Great War with Russia* (London: Routledge, 1895).

⁴⁶ The Holy Alliance was an agreement between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. The alliance had come about largely on the initiative of Russian Czar Alexander I to provide additional binding between the conservative Christian empires in their international affairs.

order to minimize the risks to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan's territory was put within the jurisdiction of the international system. The Straits Convention had been upheld along with the Ottoman Empire in convincing fashion, but at a cost. Great Power relations became decidedly more antagonistic and competitive as governments grew more authoritarian.

France was again at the forefront of another crisis and intervention in Mount Lebanon in 1860. An outbreak of sectarian violence led to the slaughter of some 15,000 Maronites and Greek Orthodox Christians at the hands of Druze militias followed by the killing of Christians in Damascus. There were public outcries in Western European countries, especially in France, where there was a longstanding patronage of the Maronites. Never one to ignore popular national feelings, Napoleon III sent French troops into Beirut to protect the Christians. Again, a provocative move in the Ottoman Empire by a Great Power made the other powers suspicious.

In October of 1860 Ottoman foreign minister Faud Pasha began a series of meetings with Great Power representatives in Beirut to work out a lasting political settlement. In the spring of 1861 they produced the *Règlement* for the reorganization of Mount Lebanon. With their troops garrisoned on Mount Lebanon, the French had intended to give the Maronites favour in the settlement, but British pressure led to a compromise agreement of sixteen articles which enshrined a balanced yet flexible sectarianism administration for Mount Lebanon. Under the terms of the *Règlement*, a Christian governor was to be appointed on a three year term by the Ottoman government. While the Ottomans maintained ultimate control over criminal law, civil procedures and governance were left to the governor and local subordinates.⁴⁷ At the local level, the territory was divided into six districts under local governors presiding over cantons led by sheikhs. As much as possible, districts and cantons were drawn along sectarian lines.⁴⁸ General governance down to policing was to be done along sectarian lines. Sectarianism, which had hitherto been of less importance in the politics and

⁴⁷ John P. Spagnolo, *France & Ottoman Lebanon 1861-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), 41-42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

everyday life on Mount Lebanon, became paramount.⁴⁹ The significance of the *Règlement* was that it produced a lasting peace and became point of reference for the Great Powers when they considered implementing future political reforms in the Ottoman Empire, including Macedonia.

While Mount Lebanon was stabilized for a long peace, there was decidedly less peace in Europe itself. Ambitious to reassert the French nation, Napoleon III's attention moved from the Levant to his nation's southeast frontier with the annexation of Nice and Savoy with plebiscites to give it all an air of democratic legitimacy. The French adventure continued with military victories over Austrian forces and the unification of Italy. Austria's weakening was seized upon by a leader who would far outdo Napoleon III. Having snubbed the Concert of Europe by taking the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein forcibly from Denmark in 1864, Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck forced Austria into war through a series of political manoeuvres in 1866. Prussia won an overwhelming victory, becoming the preeminent German state. Through further political wrangling and diplomatic slights of hand, Bismarck tricked Napoleon III into a deceleration of war in 1870. As in the war against Austria, the armies of the North German Confederation won a decisive victory over France. Like 1856 and unlike 1815, the peace was punitive, with Alsace and Lorraine being taken from France. Bonded in the blood of war, the various German states and free cities fell under Prussian dominance in the German Empire. Unlike 1856, the map of Europe had been altered, as had the order of Europe.

British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli famously commented that the German Revolution of 1870-1 would be more significant than the French Revolution of 1789.⁵⁰ The provocative and bold moves made by Bismarck from Schleswig-Holstein to the crowning achievement of a German empire in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles would have been unthinkable in the heyday of Metternich. However, as much as Bismarck had operated with disregard for the conventions of the Vienna system, following his triumph he sought stability through overlapping alliances. What Bismarck dreaded and could not control was the sort of national movements which sought the irredentist dreams he had realized with Germany and the upstart revolutionaries who would aspire to his brand of

⁴⁹ For the lasting peace in Lebanon see Engin Deniz Akarli, *The Long Peace, Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 134.

diplomatic and political manoeuvring without his acumen. Bismarck was especially concerned about the Balkans. In 1873 he oversaw the creation of the Three Emperors League between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. This league united the three emperors against republican France. In addition, by keeping Austria-Hungary and Russia in an agreement with Germany, Bismarck hoped to mitigate any conflicts between the two that might arise over their incompatible Balkan aspirations. Bismarck had much less control over the indigenous national movements in the Balkans. As he said once, there was: "No need to get entangled in the lusts of Balkan sheep stealers."⁵¹ This dread of the potential major repercussions arising from a minor Balkan conflict proved to be well-founded.

The years 1875 and 1876 gave credence to Bismarck's apprehensions. Rebels in the Ottoman territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the central lands of contemporary Bulgaria had risen in revolt. Montenegro and Serbia came in on the side of the rebels in Bosnia at the behest of local Russian agents. Under the leadership of Benjamin Disraeli, Great Britain, the other Great Power with strategic interests in the Balkans, maintained the policy that Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests in the Balkans were incompatible. This was very nearly a monumental miscalculation. The Austro-Russian agreement was basically contingent on Serb and Montenegrin victory in 1876. When the Ottoman forces prevailed, relations became stained. Disraeli's other miscalculation was to ignore the significance of public opinion as the Ottomans put down the revolt in Bulgaria. Disraeli, like Bismarck, looked upon the Balkans and the Eastern Question entirely in geo-political terms. His rival in British politics, William Gladstone, the grand old man of British liberalism, appealed to the British public for action to end the 'Bulgarian Horrors.'

Britain did not intervene, but the events in the Balkans heightened Pan-Slav sentiments in Russia and Czar Alexander II sent his army across the Danube in 1877. Austria-Hungary did not take action to stop the Russians and despite a spirited defense by the Ottomans in the Balkan Mountains, the war ended with Russia troops on the shores of the Sea of Marmara. The Russians applied the aforementioned Treaty of San Stefano, which Disraeli could not accept. Bismarck averted a showdown by offering to

⁵¹ Ibid.

be the 'Honest Broker' of new treaty talks. The concert convened at Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck's direction. Like the Treaty of Paris two decades earlier, the Berlin negotiations were a victory for the British. Greater Bulgaria was substantially reduced to a rump principality still technically part of the Ottoman Empire. Austria-Hungary undertook an administrative occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia was granted independence. No great Pan Slav state emerged and Russian gains were blunted. However, as pleasing the arrangement was to Disraeli, the Treaty of Berlin left overlapping irredentist national claims between the populations of the Balkans, a resentful Russia, and an ambitious Austria-Hungary with designs on annexing Bosnia and using the Sancak territory as a "sally port" to the corridor to the Aegean.⁵²

The Berlin Treaty also left an international legal legacy. Article XXIII of the treaty would be often quoted and referenced in the ensuing decades to remind the Great Powers of their legal obligation to improve conditions in Macedonia. The article stipulated that the Ottoman government was to apply the Organic Law of 1868 to the Island of Crete and adapt similar laws to the local requirements of the empire's European territory. Special commissions comprised of the 'native element' of the given territories were to establish the details of the laws, which would then be submitted to the Ottoman authorities, who would finalize the laws in consultation with a European Commission.

Article XXIII was problematic from its inception. To begin with, Macedonia was not Crete. The 1868 Organic Law of Crete had designed a new administration for Crete based on religion. The Muslim governor-general would have a Christian and a Muslim advisor and each provincial governor would have an assessor who was of the other religion. All government documentation was to be in both Turkish and Greek. Effectively, the Organic Law gave the Christians more of a role in the governing of the island, while respecting religious and national differences.⁵³ Macedonia had multiple religions and nationalities which overlapped territorially. Many of the Christians of Macedonia could be claimed by more than one community; identity could be fluid and was contested. What is

⁵² Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914, Volume I: European Relations from the Congress of Berlin to the Eve of the Sarajevo Murder* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 19.

⁵³ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 136.

more, there was little impetus to apply Article XXIII. Some attempts were made to draft new laws, but these efforts did not come to fruition and there was little pressure from the powers to follow through. The limited efforts of the European Commission came to naught.⁵⁴ The lack of implementation of Article XXIII would be repeatedly decried by advocates for reform in Macedonia and would become a rallying cry and a propaganda tool for organizations seeking to bring the Great Powers to exert more pressure to bear on the Ottoman Empire to improve conditions in Macedonia.

The Treaty of Berlin temporarily stabilized the Ottoman Empire, but it left a multitude of national and diplomatic questions, which would be the subject of national dreams and the targets of an assortment of *agents provocateurs*. The Balkans and the 'Eastern Question' continued to vex the Great Powers. As the principles of the Concert of Europe faded and the rivalries and ambitions of Balkan nationalities and Great Power states grew, the likelihood of a conflict in the Balkans escalating into an international crisis increased. Austria-Hungary and Germany signed a Dual Alliance in 1879, which Bismarck carefully mitigated by maintaining the Three Emperors League which was renewed in 1881. Russia's attention was again turned to the Far East and Britain got into a humbling war in Afghanistan in 1879-80 in its attempt to preempt any Russian move toward the Kyber Pass. Ever conscious of its links to India, Britain occupied Egypt in 1882 and would soon find itself in a difficult struggle against the Mahadi of the Sudan. France turned its attention to Africa by annexing Tunis, and the scramble was on. Agreements were made through the concert in 1885 granting Germany colonial stakes in Africa and divided most of the continent between the European colonizers. A similar arrangement was made a decade later regarding the Far East.

The Concert of Europe was stretching to resolve disputes far beyond the borders of Europe and operating in a context of imbalance that undermined its primary principle. German unification and the growth in Germany industry and natality threw off the traditional balance as Germany became a greater power. Italian unification created another, albeit a minor, power to make an even six in Europe. Austria-Hungary strained to maintain internal balance between Austrians, Magyars, and Slavs while trying to assert itself southward. Russia's steady industrialization and modernization provoked

⁵⁴ Sherman, *Fires on the Mountain*, 4.

concerns amongst other powers that the Czar's empire would develop a modern industry and military to complement its high population. For Britain and France the 1880s were times of increasing unease. Their rivalry continued from the English Channel to the seven seas, but they both faced the prospect of their declining power as Germany reached its potential and Russia endeavoured to modernize and expand. Without the regulating assurance of the concert, alliances and agreements between states multiplied. Austria-Hungary and Germany were joined by Italy in the Triple Alliance of 1883. England sought some assurance with the Mediterranean agreements with Italy and Austria-Hungary in 1887, but these were arrangements to uphold international conventions, notably the straits convention. France trumped Great Britain by signing a military pact with Russia in 1894, dividing the continent into two alliance blocks with Great Britain holding the balance of power. The Balkans remained Europe's wildcard.

The arrangement of the Great Powers in the 1890s was precisely what Otto von Bismarck feared. He had been ushered out of office in 1890 after the ascension of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Wheedling a more aggressive national policy and surrounded with more like minded or subordinate statesmen, the Kaiser let the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia lapse, strengthened ties to Austria-Hungary, and inaugurated an ambitious policy of *Weltpolitik* to make Germany the preeminent global power on land and sea. In his retirement, Bismarck deplored the course Germany was taking and lamented before his death in 1898 that a future European-wide conflagration "will start in the East."⁵⁵ Europe had reached its proverbial powder keg state, which a spark from the Balkan periphery could ignite.

National movements and international interests kept the Balkans chronically at the forefront of Great Power attention. The ambitious Bulgarian leader Stephan Stambolov, dubbed 'the Bulgarian Bismarck,' induced the unification of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia in 1885, much to the displeasure of the Russians, who still maintained a strong presence in the principality. Stambolov further thwarted the Russians by arranging for the Germanic prince Ferdinand of Sax Colburg to take the Bulgarian throne. Serbia was unable to take advantage of the situation as the Bulgarian army

⁵⁵ Robert Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991), 855.

routed the Serbs in 1885 and only threats of intervention from Austria-Hungary stopped the Bulgarians short of Belgrade. The remained Ottoman holdings in Europe became the subject of more speculation and consternation. The key fissure was Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests in the Balkans, which overlapped in Macedonia, the Sancak, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. At a perpetual state of impasse, the two powers signed an agreement in 1897, in which they consented to put the Balkans 'on ice' and cooperate in maintaining the status quo in the Near East. Events in Macedonia over the ensuing decade would challenge this Austro-Russian detente and contribute to the eventual deterioration of relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg over Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908.

The 'Eastern Question' extended far beyond the Balkan Peninsula. In the mid 1890s uprisings in Eastern Anatolia by the Armenians brought about punitive responses by Kurdish and Turkish militias and the Ottoman authorities. The news of massacres and public lynching was vivid and horrific, but the Great Power governments proved unable or unwilling to intervene. This did not stop other Christian populations from attempting to rise up against Ottoman authorities. In 1897 the Greeks in Crete revolted against Ottoman authority in their search for union with Greece. Not unreasonably, King George of Greece pointed to Schleswig-Holstein, Cyprus, and Bosnia-Herzegovina and asked why Crete could not likewise be annexed by Greece.⁵⁶ The revolt on Crete led to a state of war between the Ottoman Empire and the Greek Kingdom. Although the Ottoman army was winning and marching on Athens, the Great Powers intervened diplomatically, sending the Ottomans back to their borders and putting Crete under international administration until Prince George of Greece took over in late 1898 as governor of the autonomous state of Crete. Despite their rivalries, the Great Powers showed they were capable of multilateral intervention to achieve a desired objective. They proved this again in a more violent fashion in China in 1900-1901, and in a somewhat more restrained fashion in an Anglo-German naval blockade against Venezuela in 1902.

The Macedonian uprisings of 1902 and 1903 followed Cretan success and Armenian failure. Without support from a Great Power or even a Balkan power, the rebels were doomed to the fate of the Armenians. However, the Great Power presence

⁵⁶ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 195.

in Macedonia increased and an international gendarmerie was tasked with overseeing the measures of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, although unlike Crete, the Ottoman Empire retained ultimate authority. The Great Powers maintained official solidarity in Ottoman Macedonia but relations were fraught with complications and suspicions. Although no wider war developed, there was no peace in Macedonia as guerilla warfare persisted and the population's immiseration continued. Great Power relations were seriously strained in 1905 at the other end of the Mediterranean in Morocco. Germany had been seeking to divide the seemingly fragile entente signed in 1904 between Great Britain and France. But the Kaiser's actions and statements only strengthened the Anglo-French relations. Under Liberal governance from December 1905, Britain moved closer to France and, partly through cooperation in Macedonia, into an entente with Russia in 1907.

In 1908 the Balkans were again at the centre of the world's attention as the revolution led by the Committee of Union and Progress pushed Sultan Abdülhamîd from power, compelling Austria-Hungary to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Great Power presence in Ottoman Macedonia was terminated as constitutionalism swept the empire. Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina ended what was left of the Austro-Russian Balkan agreement. The Russians, seeking to restore pride after defeat in the Far East and near revolution at home, increasingly turned their attention towards the Balkans into an alliance with Serbia, placing Russia on a collision course with the Balkan ambitions of an Austro-Hungarian empire Germany was less able or willing to restrain.

In this era of alliances, arms races and pressing Balkan Questions, the Concert of Europe was proving less able to resolve disputes let alone ensure security as states put their trust in alliance partnerships. A crisis in the Balkans became a near annual event, as crises in 1909 and 1911 preceded the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, which took Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire and divided it between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria. The Sarajevo assassination of 1914 was just one in a long line of Balkan crises. Responses by the Great Powers to these crises ranged from war to utter indifference to varying degrees of intervention.

Why the Great Powers responded in a given way to a crisis can only be partly explained by alliances and agreements. Responses were additionally influenced by factors such as the nature of the events on the ground, the amount of interest by the

press and the general public, the orientation of the governments at the time, and the manner, experience, and values of the statesmen and diplomats involved. In 1914 the assassination of an Austrian archduke led to a crisis in the Balkans which escalated to a world war. In 1876 the actions of a few Bulgarian patriots produced massive intervention by Russia and a stand-off between Great Powers that could have produced a much larger conflict. In 1903 a revolt by rebels in Ottoman Macedonia garnered some sympathy from the outside world, but not the sort of multilateral intervention that would have created autonomy or a unilateral intervention that might have led to a wider war. It is necessary to examine not just the various alliances and international relations of the day, but to investigate domestic politics, media, public opinion, and the personalities involved in order to ascertain why 1903 produced a conservative reform package and not forceful intervention or war. It is for this reason for which is it worth examining the power which was most vocal and instrumental pushing for stronger reforms—Great Britain.

Great Britain in the Age of Salisbury: Isolation, Intervention, Transforming Society, and the Fourth Estate

The Concert of Europe and the nineteenth century were both good to Great Britain. With continental Europe relatively stable, the British turned their attention to the wider world, expanding their empire to vast and extremely profitable proportions. This empire which gave Britain its wealth and power was why the island nation had such a large stake in the Eastern Question. India was the jewel of the imperial crown, making trade links between the British ports and those of the Indian subcontinent of vital importance. Some competition came from France and as the century went on Germany came to be seen as more of a threat, but Britain's primary concern was with Russia. The rivalry with Russia became such a cornerstone of foreign policy that it became part of the British national identity. The 'Great Game,' as it became known, stretched from the Bosphorus to the Alaska Panhandle. For Britain it meant keeping Russia as far away from India as possible. This was why Britain pressed for the 1841 Straits Convention, went to war in the Crimea, and why Disraeli took a firm stand at the Berlin negotiations of 1878. Not only was Disraeli anxious to check the Russian advances toward the Dardanelle

Straits, he had been growing concerned at steady Russian encroachment in Central Asia. Interestingly, one of the primary motives behind Russia's march into Central Asia was to apply pressure on Britain in Afghanistan for the sake of decreasing the likelihood of British ships entering the Black Sea and shelling Russian ports. So went the 'Great Game.'

The Concert of Europe was designed to allow the states of Europe to function collectively without the need for alliances. Britain for the most part shunned alliances or agreements that might bind it to a potential conflict. The fact that Britain entered into such agreements over conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean underscores the importance of the region to British interests. It was a multinational force which intervened to secure Greek victory in 1829. Britain also joined with France and Sardinia to aid the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War of 1854-56. Having secured a favourable peace in 1856, Britain could retire to isolationism, but as the century progressed, this would prove to be a harder policy to maintain.

Palmerston had maintained a hard line on the subject of the Dardanelle Straits, and the British statesmen who governed after him maintained the policy. While Gladstone had been a passionate Russophile during the 'Bulgarian Horrors' of 1876, once in office in the early 1880s, he adhered to traditional policy of maintaining the Ottoman and Persian empires as buffers against Russia. The 1880s did not see much improvement in Anglo-Russian relations. British troops were on the march in Egypt, the Sudan, and Afghanistan in the first half of the decade with the government considering sending the navy into the Black Sea in 1885. Developing events in Bulgaria were to present another challenge and an opportunity for the British in the region.

'Splendid Isolation' was coined by Lord Salisbury to describe Britain's foreign policy in the late nineteenth century. Prime Minister for four terms totaling thirteen years, the Third Marquess of Salisbury came from a family of prominent civil servants whose service to the crown dated back to the Elizabethan days. Salisbury had assumed the post of foreign secretary in 1878 after the incumbent, Lord Derby, had resigned over the Treaty of San Stefano. When Disraeli left office in 1880, Salisbury took over as leader of the Conservative party, becoming prime minister after defeating Gladstone's Liberals in 1886. In addition to the premiership, Salisbury assumed the office of the foreign secretary, giving him profound influence in government and foreign affairs for the better

part of the next fifteen years. The anti-Russian sentiments of the Bulgarian monarch, Alexander Battenberg and Prime Minister Stephen Stambolov were something Salisbury considered he could turn to Britain's advantage. In a reversal of the objectives Britain had pursued in 1878, Salisbury backed the Bulgarian Anschluss with Eastern Rumelia much to the displeasure of the Russians. This was an advantageous policy provided Bulgaria remained under the rule of Russophobes, which it did under the 'Bulgarian Bismarck' Stephen Stambolov. The Bulgarian prime minister duly secured the Germanic monarch Ferdinand of Sax Colberg to the Bulgarian throne as his police took measures against Russophile and Panslav elements in the country.

For any newfound delight he found in Bulgarian nationalism, Salisbury's primary concern was that Russia might forcibly intervene in Bulgaria and march on to Constantinople. Unsure of Britain's ability to unilaterally counteract such a move, he entered into talks with Italy and Austria-Hungary. These negotiations produced the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887. The first agreement of March 1887 was for mutual support in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea between the three powers. The second agreement, signed in December of the same year, very much at British insistence, explicitly called for coordinated action against Russia should it invade Bulgaria or Asia Minor. The Mediterranean Agreements were not alliances designed to alter the balance of power. They were defensive pacts for the purpose of preserving the status quo in the region. Salisbury would have likely included the Ottoman Empire as party to the agreements if some members of his cabinet had not expressed strong disapproval over Ottoman inclusion.⁵⁷ The Mediterranean Agreements were the closest Britain came to a binding alliance in the nineteenth century. The agreements had the support of German Chancellor Bismarck and discussions between Germany and Great Britain were to intensify in the coming decade as Salisbury began to rethink policy and strategy on the containment of Russia regarding the Balkans and the straits.

Three years of tension surrounding Bulgaria dissipated in 1888 when Russia turned its attention to the Far East, but another crisis was not long in coming. In 1894 a revolt by Armenians in the Sasun region of Anatolia was put down ruthlessly, leading to

⁵⁷ G.D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London: University of London Press, 1971), 182.

ongoing political violence and reprisal massacres. A European Commission of Inquiry was formed and presented reform proposals, which Sultan Abdülhamîd disregarded.⁵⁸ On August 26, 1896, Armenian revolutionaries seized the Ottoman bank in the wealthy Galata district of Constantinople. Although the Armenians only held the bank for a few hours against the Ottoman security forces, the events brought international attention to the Armenian cause. The subsequent reprisals left 6,000 Armenians in the capital dead and aroused international disgust and condemnation against the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁹ Public opinion in Britain favoured action against the Ottoman Empire, but what action could be taken? Salisbury considered making a naval demonstration against the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottoman defenses in the Dardanelle Straits had been improved and the British Admiralty informed Salisbury it did not think the Straits could be forced. As was customary in British policy, Salisbury searched to bring multilateral pressure to bear. He found Austro-Hungarian and Italian support for British intervention proposals, but no favour from France or Russia. Though sympathetic to the plight of the Christian Armenians, the Russians were not willing to act in concert with their British rivals. The Armenians were left on their own.

The fact that Salisbury had even approached the Russians about bilateral intervention represented a shift in the British policy, which had hitherto been very hard-lined regarding Russia and the Straits. Salisbury met with Czar Nicolas II in September of 1896 during a visit to Balmoral Castle to discuss bringing pressure to depose Abdülhamîd.⁶⁰ Although the talks failed to get results, they were further evidence that Salisbury was reconsidering British options in the region as the Mediterranean Agreements lapsed over Austria-Hungary's insistence on defending the Ottoman Empire. In 1897, with Sultan Abdülhamîd increasingly unreceptive to British diplomacy, Salisbury concluded that the Ottoman Empire was destined to collapse in the face of Russian pressure. He reasoned that Russian occupation of Constantinople was inevitable and the Russians would directly or indirectly control much of the existing Ottoman holdings in the Balkans and Asia Minor. Rather than aggressively counteract

⁵⁸ Marriott, *The Eastern Question*, 353.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 257.

this Russian destiny, Salisbury decided it was best to be accepted. British resources could be deployed in strength to Cyprus, Egypt, and the passage to India.⁶¹

Britain, again splendidly isolated, looked to multilateral solutions in the international area as the century turned. An insurrection in Crete led to Ottoman victory over Greece, but supervised independence for Crete under a multinational force, which included British participation. The Great Powers also proved they could coordinate successfully in China by crushing the Boxer rebellion in 1901. An Anglo-German naval force was brought to bear against Venezuela in 1902, and a combined British and Italian force was deployed to Somalia to fight Islamist rebels. Considering these precedents, the Mürzsteg Reform measures of 1903 were a logical continuation of multilateral initiatives made in response to international crises.

However, successful Great Power multilateralism depended upon consensus and common enemies such as upstart Chinese rebels. Lopping off an island like Crete was less likely to cause friction between the Great Powers than Macedonia, where the population was as mixed as the outside interests. Disagreement had stalled intervention to aid the Armenians. While Russia declined British offers to help intervene, Germany and Austria-Hungary refused to condemn the Ottoman Empire over the massacres. Germany was increasingly a new player in the Ottoman Empire. The Kaiser had visited in 1888 and 1898, declaring himself as champion of Muslims upon his second visit, which, included stops in Damascus and Jerusalem.⁶² The extension of German funded railway links stretching from Berlin to the Persian Gulf aroused some concern in the British Foreign Office and had newspaper editors sounding alarm bells as German trade and industry became stronger and ambitious naval plans were implemented to give Germany a sea force that could be an able counterpart to its mighty army. As a new century opened there were questions about the prudence of following Salisbury's splendid balancing act as the continental alliances hardened and Britain presided over an increasingly overstretched and vulnerable empire.

⁶¹ C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean 1886-1896* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 115.

⁶² Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898-1904* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 14.

The 'Natural Alliance' for Great Britain was said to be with Germany. The close royal ties and common enemies seemed to make an Anglo-German arrangement a sensible solution. Bismarck had hoped the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887 would bring Britain into a quadruple alliance, but repeated initiatives did not produce results. Germany's naval build up, its increased presence in the Ottoman Empire, and the antics of the Kaiser are all cited as reasons for the failure to reach accord, however, part of the failure can be attributed to disagreement on the nature of such an agreement. Germany wished for a binding alliance while Britain, in true Salisbury fashion, sought only a defensive agreement in the nature of the Mediterranean Agreements. The Germans believed the British needed them and they could afford to wait until Britain relented. In some respects, they were right.

In the words of Piers Brendon, the Boer War of 1899—1902 was “the greatest catastrophe to overtake the [British] Empire since the loss of the American colonies.”⁶³ The conflict was severely taxing on Britain, necessitating a large deployment of troops and consuming considerable financial resources. Some 7,000 British soldiers were killed in action with an additional 16,000 dying of disease. Thousands of civilians died in concentration camps deemed necessary to defeat the Boer guerillas. The conflict in South Africa left Britain in a vulnerable state of imperial overstretch and in need of more diplomatic security if not alliance partners. The priority was to consolidate the British Empire. It was not a time for humanitarian adventures. Under the direction of the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, Britain reached an alliance agreement with Japan in 1902. This took pressure off the British naval concerns in the sensitive Far East where Russia and Japan were in a showdown over Manchuria and Korea. Still, most German statesmen believed the colonial rivalry with France and the great gamesmanship with Russia would inevitably lead Britain to enter into a favourable alliance with Germany. With the resignation of Salisbury in 1902, the Unionist government under Salisbury's nephew Arthur Balfour found itself at a crossroads with its foreign policy. France and Russia were the traditional threats, but concern over Germany was growing. Russia was a menace to India, but Germany was a threat to the British Isles. Some statesmen and diplomats were angered but what they called German arrogance and they did not wish to

⁶³ Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 220.

see Britain as a junior partner in an alliance. Great Britain was at a critical moment in its foreign policy.

British society itself had undergone profound change by the end of the nineteenth century. Technological changes continued to impress and impact daily life. Railways, telegraphs, and steam ships brought the world to Britain and Britain to the world. Increased levels of literacy and the extension of the franchise meant public opinion mattered evermore in politics. Some called for Britain to use its might to extend liberal values beyond its borders and to support designs for international institutions to enact international law. These sentiments gained strength when international events put human suffering in the public eye.

The 'Eastern Question' took centre stage in Britain during the Bulgarian uprising of 1876. William Gladstone's championing of the Bulgarians touched a chord in British society as he highlighted the abuses of the Muslims against the Christians of Bulgaria. Even peace groups in Britain opposed to war advocated for intervention to aid the suffering of fellow Christians in Southeastern Europe.⁶⁴ This 'crusading' spirit was a feature of a part of the British peace movement that called for the use of war to impose reforms. If mixed with reactionary jingoism, it was a potent political force that politicians were often wary of or keen to exploit to their own advantage.

Although the 'Eastern Question' faded from prominence in Britain after 1878, there was an enduring sentiment that Britain had failed its fellow Christians. Those with this sense of 'Galdstonian' guilt pointed to the Ottoman Empire's failure to enact the reform standards stipulated in Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty during the Armenian Crises of 1894 and 1896. Article XXIII featured repeatedly in calls for intervention and reform for Ottoman Macedonia.

Indeed, there was an international increase in faith in rule of law, even if the basis for legal consensus was being destroyed. Following the Boer War there were calls

⁶⁴ Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 63. These 'crusaders' considered that peace in times such as during the Bulgarian horrors was immoral. Traditionally anti-war proponents could become pro-war.

for a war crimes tribunal.⁶⁵ Some believed that war could be outlawed and disputes settled through a United States of Europe. Growth in the peace movement at the turn of the century coincided with more calls for the rights of minorities, women, and the working classes in Edwardian England. In light of such liberal, if not radical, sentiments, the oppressive actions of illiberal states were seen as repugnant, and there were questions as to whether Britain should have close ties to such states. Yet there were most certainly popular reservations about taking military action against these states, especially unilaterally. With the establishment of the continental alliance system, the prospect of facing down Russia or Austria-Hungary in the Balkans meant potentially being drawn into a larger conflict with their respective alliance partners. Conflict with a guerilla army in South Africa had proved costly enough. As was articulated at the 1899 Hague Conference, a popular hope existed that war could be banned. The British public that the Armenian and Macedonian revolutionary organizations appealed to around the turn of the twentieth century was more suspicious of being manipulated and not nearly as jingoistic as it had been in the 1820s and the 1870s. Times and attitudes had changed, though the rebel agitators had not taken sufficient notice.⁶⁶

Statesmen and diplomats were not immune from these sentiments. Some, like Gladstone, developed very real sympathies for the causes of subjugated populations in foreign lands. Always a factor in British public life, public opinion had become all the more powerful by the turn of the century, and those in government were wise to respect it if not make use of it. Salisbury had suffered the wrath of public opinion over his handling of the Armenian Crisis in 1895, but he used it to his advantage at times, too. He reportedly loved to tell ambassadors that he could not commit to an alliance if public opinion was not favourable.⁶⁷ British politicians and civil servants had learned the lessons of 1876 and they were getting more adept at manipulating the public mood to suit policy. It was a skill that would serve them well in the coming decades.

⁶⁵ Gary Jonathan Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

⁶⁶ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 171-172. In general I concur with this point by Rodogno. However, governments and political leaders could have a say in shaping public opinion and, as evidenced by the initial popularity of the Boer War, there was enough jingoism in the country to marginalize cynics and pacifists under the right circumstances.

⁶⁷ Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe*, 74.

The wild card in any foreign policy crisis was the press. A large enough press sensation could whip up sufficient jingoism to sweep aside government damage control measures or any newfound popular pacifism. By the turn of the century, the British press was living up to its billing as the 'Fourth Estate' with some 172 newspapers being published daily. Britain had no system of newspaper licensing or censorship and fiscal constraints had been lifted in the mid nineteenth century, allowing for a "rapid and untidy" expansion of newspapers.⁶⁸ The long-time editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, William Thomas Stead, called newspapers which serviced metropolitan London the king's councillors.⁶⁹ Papers like the *Daily Telegraph* and Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette* practiced the 'new journalism' which emerged in the 1880s. Righteously, Stead wished to reproduce the "ideal of God" in the newspaper. According to Alan J. Lee, "He wanted the press to act as an extra-parliamentary pressure group of enlightened journalists interpreting the will of the people."⁷⁰ Stead preached the word of nonconformist morality, but he did so with sensationalism.⁷¹ This was part of the style of new journalism. Style mattered; it was most important to present life as it was, use interviews, and publish what has become known as "human interest" stories with flowery language. Articles were shorter, headlines were bigger, illustrations were provided, and papers were cheap.⁷² In Lee's words, "The relationship between paper and reader was thus being changed from the ideal one of a tutorial and intellectual nature, to one of a market character."⁷³

The man who took new journalism to new levels was Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe) who started the *Daily Mail* in 1896. Northcliffe was not only a capable owner and manager, he understood journalism and, most importantly, he understood newspaper readers. His papers presented a wide variety of stories beside news,

⁶⁸ Keith Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomacy and War in Modern British History*, 85-6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 88. Stead established a ranking table for the 21 dailies. Stead placed the *The Times* and the *Westminster Gazette* at the top of the table and the *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Express*, and *Daily Mail* near the bottom since they made circulation and advertising paramount.

⁷⁰ Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 118.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 119-129.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 121.

including sport, leisure, transport, new technology, fashion, and entertainment.⁷⁴ In time, strict 300 word limits were placed on *Daily Mail* articles.⁷⁵ Northcliffe saw great value in sensational material. Stories which brought forth the abnormal or the unexplained were frequently featured, as were crime stories.⁷⁶ War and foreign news stories were also pursued by Northcliffe's papers. Utilizing the expanding web of telegraph wires, he sent forth waves of correspondents that approached the numbers of *The Times* and Reuters.⁷⁷ As shown by Chandrika Kaul, the *Daily Mail's* coverage of the 1896-97 famine in India depicted tragedy and exoticism. Emotional language and appeals for aid raised thousands of pounds, yet the descriptions were mixed with depictions of religious mysticism and Muslim "fanaticism," which obstructed aid work.⁷⁸ Northcliffe and Stead both developed campaign journalism which could foster the "*social crusade*" for social justice issues, the "*jingo crusade*" usually regarding security issues, or, Northcliffe's specialty, the "*stunt*," which usually approached issues of minor importance with a high degree of entertainment.⁷⁹ The British press had demonstrated its power to galvanize public opinion to influence foreign policy in the past, but by the turn of the century it had new techniques to work with and a larger audience of literate votes to connect with. With financial forces exacting more influence in a very crowded market and sensationalism and crusades having become tricks of the new journalistic trade, the potential existed for a press campaign to develop very quickly. Indeed, the Miss Stone Affair had been an international press sensation in which some newspapers had tried to take an active role

⁷⁴ Jean Chalaby, "Northcliffe: Proprietor as Journalist," in *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, ed. Peter Catteral et.al (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 31.

⁷⁵ Henry Wickham Stead, *The Press* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1938), 30. Writing in the shadow of the gathering storm clouds of the Second World War, Stead argues that the condensed articles were "jerky" in that they "responded to an almost pathological condition of the public mind." Stead sees this condition as being symptomatic of modern societies, in which people had degraded attention spans and had lost the ability to think for themselves.

⁷⁶ Chalaby, "Northcliffe: Proprietor as Journalist," 34.

⁷⁷ Chandrika Kaul, "Popular Press and Empire: Northcliffe, India and the *Daily Mail*, 1896-1922," in *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, ed. Peter Catteral et.al (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 49.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55. Kaul argues that the emotional language used in the stories describing the famine marked "a new departure with important implications for the future, prefiguring newspaper coverage of subsequent humanitarian crisis throughout the twentieth century."

⁷⁹ Chalaby, "Northcliffe: Proprietor as Journalist," 36.

in raising money for the ransom and aiding the negotiations.⁸⁰ It should come as no surprise that the journalist whose articles and actions provoked the strongest backlash from the Ottoman authorities was the *Daily Mail's* correspondent, Reginald Wyon.

By in large, the British press at the turn of century was decidedly nationalistic and took great pride in the British Empire. Liberal editors decried decline of the liberal press and the liberal historian G.M. Trevelyan lamented that “the Phillistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant (sc. The printing press), and have learnt to work their miracles through its power.”⁸¹ Stories on the trials, welfare, and defence of the empire sold papers. The pro-labour journal the *Leader* grumbled in 1898 that the working class took more interest in the British victory at Omdurman than in the plight of striking Welsh coal miners.⁸² When war broke out in South Africa in 1899, journalists scrambled to catch the sailings to Cape Town, fearful that the war might be over before they arrived. Journalists such as Bennet Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph* and a young Winston Churchill who wrote for *The Morning Post* reported the exploits of the British army with unquestioning reverence. As pointed out by John Simpson, “The idea that war was an integral part of the great national adventure of the British people is inescapable in the writings of most of the leading journalists who reported from South Africa in the early stages of the crisis.”⁸³ Once the Boer armies had been defeated in the field, most of the well-known correspondents were pulled from the field. As a result, atrocities committed by British soldiers and the tragic consequences of the concentration camps set up by the British army, were glossed over or unreported. In Simpson’s words, “The correspondents in

⁸⁰ Carpenter, *The Miss Stone Affair*, 170-174. Samuel McClure, the founder and owner of *McClure's Magazine* (a monthly American magazine), latched onto the Stone story and offered 1,000 lira towards the ransom if Miss Stone agreed to write her story for the magazine after her release. McClure was politely kept away from the negotiations, but still vowed to beat any competitor’s bid for the exclusive rights to Miss Stone’s story. *McClure's Magazine* was known for featuring “humanly sympathetic storytelling” in investigative articles exposing matters corruption, criminal conspiracies and worker exploitation. *Everybody's* and *Collier's* were other American magazines which published similar stories. See: Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 122.

⁸¹ Quoted in Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, 1.

⁸² Kaul, “Popular Press and Empire,” 46.

⁸³ John Simpson, *Unreliable Sources: How the 20th Century Was Reported* (London: Macmillan, 2010), 11.

South Africa who could have stopped all this failed to do so. It remains one of the worse lapses of decent, honorable journalism in the entire twentieth century.”⁸⁴

In his discussion of the reporting of the Boer War, Simpson does show that there were publications and journalists who did swim against the current of imperial jingoism. There was a clear juxtaposition between the support granted to the government by the *Daily Mail* and *The Times* and the critical stance taken by *The Manchester Guardian*. It was during Arthur Balfour’s tenure as prime minister that Alfred Harmsworth was knighted Lord Northcliffe.⁸⁵ In Simpson’s view, the support for the war given by the *Daily Mail* was exceeded only by *The Times*, which helped insure that the bulk of the press would toe the hawkish line.⁸⁶ By contrast, *The Manchester Guardian* sent an outspoken non-imperialist to cover the war in J.B. Atkins. The editor, Charles Prestwich Scott, abhorred the nationalism and hateful jingoism being stirred up by papers like the *Daily Mail*. He asked Atkins to be “the voice of calmness, accuracy, and truth, at a time when the British press in general had been hijacked by lies and pro-war hysteria.”⁸⁷ It was Scott who coined the phrase “concentration camps.” The reporting by *The Manchester Guardian* was called Boer propaganda and failed to move the government and the army to take measures to alleviate the suffering and high mortality rates in the camp. Ultimately, it took the group of British women who formed the Fawcett Commission which toured South Africa to shame the British authorities into taking action.⁸⁸

The editorial battle lines drawn during the Boer War between *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* would be evident in the coverage of Macedonia. *The Times* would largely follow the government line. News from the government was sometimes accompanied by favourable editorials, which suggests *The Times* was very likely privy to information from government sources. As mentioned by Robbins, representatives of *The Times* frequently visited the Foreign Office. While it may be a stretch to call the paper

⁸⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁵ Colin Seymour-Ure, “Northcliffe’s Legacy,” in *Northcliffe’s Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, ed. Peter Catteral et.al (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 2000), 9.

⁸⁶ John Simpson, *Unreliable Sources: How the 20th Century was Reported* (London: Macmillan, 2010), 13.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 42-44. The commission was headed by Millicent Fawcett, the leader of the British suffragettes.

the government's mouthpiece, *The Times* was certainly "*sui generis*."⁸⁹ By comparison, *The Manchester Guardian* was a political and geographic outsider. The government considered *The Manchester Guardian* and its reporters to be hostile. Scott, who was also a Liberal member of parliament, came under vicious criticism from the Conservative Party during the 1900 election campaign.⁹⁰ During the years of crisis in Macedonia, Scott had one of Britain's leading Balkan experts in H.N. Brailsford as a special correspondent and a leader writer.⁹¹ Brailsford was one of the founding members of the Balkan Committee, a pressure group which would demand a stronger government policy towards Macedonia. The group's membership included a few high profile members with links to *The Manchester Guardian*.⁹²

The Unionist Government

The Unionist government of 1900-1905 was the last in the run of Conservative administrations that had dominated British politics for most of the Victorian era. Led by Robert Cecil (Lord Salisbury) the Unionists secured the first mandate of the twentieth century, although it was to be the end of an era in British politics and foreign policy. The Unionist government had come about after attempts by William Gladstone's Liberals to institute Home Rule for Ireland in 1885. Liberal Unionists led by Joseph Chamberlain supported Salisbury's Conservatives to defeat the shortly-lived Liberal government in 1886. This allowed the Conservatives to continue to govern under the Unionist banner, with a few concessions on progressive social policies. Thanks in part to the support of Liberal Unionists, Lord Salisbury went on to serve as prime minister and foreign secretary for three terms between 1878 and the election of September 1900. Salisbury had himself become a living institution in British politics, along with Queen Victoria who had reigned for 63 years, as long as most living Britons could remember. These two stalwart pillars in British public life would not see much of the new century. Queen

⁸⁹ Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomats and War in Modern British History*, 139.

⁹⁰ Simpson, *Unreliable Sources*, 7.

⁹¹ David Ayerst, *Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (London: Collins, 1971), 59.

⁹² The archaeologist Sir Arthur J. Evans was also a member of the Balkan Committee. Though known for leading the excavation of the Minoan palace of Knossos on Crete, Evans had covered the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1877, and returned to the region over the years to report for *The Manchester Guardian*. See: Ayerst, *Guardian*, 191-196.

Victoria died in January of 1901, a few months after the election, and Salisbury passed away in August of 1903, having relinquished the prime minister's office to his nephew, Arthur Balfour.

Nicknamed the 'Kaki government' the Unionists took full advantage of the fever of the Boer War to secure their re-election. Joseph Chamberlain led the way in the early autumn campaign, questioning the patriotism of the liberal opposition and revealing sympathetic letters to Boer leaders by some Liberal candidates. In Birmingham, the staunch Liberal Lloyd George was very nearly lynched by a hostile mob. The Liberals' campaign under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman floundered, and the party did not even field a full slate of candidates.

With victory secure in October of 1900, Salisbury assembled a cabinet dubbed by the oppositions the 'Hotel Cecil,' further cementing the expression 'And Bob's your Uncle' into popular English speech. Blood relations and cronyism accounted for the awarding of several cabinet postings, including three of Salisbury's other nephews and his son-in-law. The opposition decried the appointments as nepotism and tabled a motion of censure but to no avail. Salisbury dispensed with some of the burdens of office by appointing the Fifth Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord Lansdowne, as foreign secretary. Salisbury's eldest son, Lord Cranborne, was promoted to under-secretary at the Foreign Office.⁹³ With his health failing in mid 1902, Salisbury passed the reigns of the premier's office to his nephew, Arthur Balfour, who had already taken on considerable responsibility during the Boer War.⁹⁴ Already the subject of considerable press criticism, the lame duck administration under Balfour came under increased security and was famously ridiculed by a group of satirists under the pseudonym "Caroline Lewis" in a parody of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* entitled *Carla in Blunderland* and *Lost in Blunderland*. In spite of weakening from within the Unionist ranks and mounting political pressure from the opposition, Balfour labored on with the business of governance, waiting in hope that the Liberals would falter, and convinced that the opposition was not equipped to negotiate the delicate intricacies of foreign policy.

⁹³ R. J. Q. Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee* (London: John Murray, 2007), 166. The nephews were Arthur Balfour as Leader of the House of Commons, Gerald Balfour as President of the Board of Trade, and Evelyn Cecil as parliamentary secretary.

⁹⁴ Balfour made minor changes to the cabinet, but it remained mostly intact.

The final Unionist mandate was period of transition in British history. The first years of the 'Kaki' government were dominated by the Boer War. Peace in South Africa was finally in print in May 1902; and the new era was further marked by transition with the coronation of Edward VII on August 9, 1902 and Arthur's Balfour swearing in as prime minister on July 12. With the war concluded and a new political order in place, attention turned to domestic politics. The ascendance of Balfour itself raised some eyebrows as it appeared to some that the priorities and loyalties of the 'Hotel Cecil' had passed over more qualified candidates. Joseph Chamberlain, who as colonial secretary had been the most famous and outspoken member of the government during the Boer War and the 1900 election, was considered a more deserving choice. As was Spence Compton Cavendish, the Duke of Devonshire, who had turned down Queen Victoria's offer of the Prime Minister's office in 1880, 1886, and 1887. However, both Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire were Liberal Unionists. Balfour was not only family, he was a blue-blooded Tory. The transfer of the prime minister's office was effectively a family bequeathing from uncle to nephew.

Any resentment Joseph Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire bore towards the younger Arthur Balfour for being passed over for prime minister was compounded by disagreements over domestic politics. The foremost issue which divided the Unionist ranks was trade. Chamberlain advocated for a policy of 'Imperial Preference,' which would favour trade within the empire as opposed to free trade. Despite some initial approval, the Unionist cabinet turned against Chamberlain's bill when he visited South Africa in early 1903. Many of the Conservatives were from traditional Tory families who had long favoured free trade and did not trust the 'radical' reputation of the colonial secretary. Fearful of having his party split, Balfour pushed for a "free trade-protectionist compromise." This strategy kept the centre of the party together but led to the resignation of the Duke of Devonshire, a 'blue-blooded' free trader if there ever was one, in October of 1903. For the opposite reason, Chamberlain resigned his cabinet post.⁹⁵ At the height of the Macedonian crisis of 1903, the British government was faced with a cabinet crisis.

⁹⁵ David Brooks, *The Age of Upheaval: Edwardian Politics, 1899-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 59-61.

Balfour survived the cabinet departures and proceeded to govern in spite of growing unpopularity. The Education Act of 1902 abolished school boards and gave more funding to Church of England schools, forcing many Catholics and Non-Conformists to bitterly send their children to be instructed in Anglican pedagogy. A scandal in the army, unclear economic policies, and accusations of arrogance further eroded the Unionist government's popularity and the cost was evident in by-election defeats. The specter of the South African conflict continued to haunt the government. The fact that it had taken a massive deployment of manpower from Britain and its colonies and a considerable financial investment to bring a force of farmers' sons to heel was a blow to imperial pride. Though on a much smaller scale, the setbacks experienced by the British commanded local proxies in Somalia in 1903 were a reminder of the setbacks of the 'Bloody Week' of 1899. Critical reports presented in 1904 on Britain's lack of war readiness in 1899 brought further blows to the government, and the decision to import Chinese workers into South Africa to work in the mines was seen merely as means of gaining a cheap source of labour for the mining companies. The move undermined the moral superiority many Britons felt they had held in the Boer War. Hurt by internal dissent and facing escalating voter antipathy, the Balfour government stubbornly carried on to the end of its mandate, which ended in a Liberal landslide in the election of 1906 that cost Balfour his own seat. Foreign policy, as least in part, can explain the Unionist government's obstinacy. Balfour believed the foreign policy situation was too delicate to be relinquished to the inexperienced opposition. The Unionists continued to govern, hoping that the Liberals would falter or events would turn the public mood in their favour. These desired events never materialized.

For all its divisions and domestic unpopularity, there is some merit to the Balfour government's attitude when considering foreign policy. The 1902 alliance with Japan enabled Britain to relieve itself of commitments in the Far East at a time when the British Empire was strategically and financially overstretched. Similarly, the Entente Cordiale of 1904 with France was essentially a colonial settlement, which further enabled the British to reduce imperial commitments. Although the significance of these agreements remains a matter of historical debate, the alliance with Japan only stipulated that one party would come to the other party's aid if it were attacked by two powers. Thought it had implications for the balance of power, Lansdowne maintained that the Entente Cordiale was in fact no more than the colonial agreement its text stated. The Unionists did not

make a binding commitment to the defense of France and talks with Germany continued. Britain still had its hands free when it came to the affairs of continental Europe.

Balfour, Lansdowne and their diplomats also proved they were able to deal with international crises. Caution and the use of multilateralism and international mechanisms kept Britain out of compromising commitments, as well as the sort of standoffs which could create irrepressible waves of jingoism. Heeding calls to act against Venezuela for its defaults on debts and assaults against British nationals, Lansdowne took time to move cautiously. Britain joined with Germany and later Italy to dispatch a naval task force to coerce the government of Cipriano Castro, but not before minimizing any potential complications that could arise with the United States. Similarly, Italian and Ethiopian support was enlisted for action in Somalia in 1903. In the autumn of 1904, British civilian fishing vessels were fired upon off Dogger Bank in the North Sea by the Russian Baltic Fleet during its passage to its armageddon at Fushima at the guns of the Japanese fleet. The incident left two British fisherman dead and six wounded and the British public clamoring for revenge. But diplomacy deescalated the immediate crisis and the grievances against Russia were settled through a third party international commission set up in accordance with the Hague Convention of 1899. The British response to events in Macedonia was to push for more reforms and do so within a multilateral framework with the consent of the Concert of Europe. Their approach of applying diplomatic leverage without ruling out the possibility of military coercion was entirely consistent with response to other foreign crises.

Who were the men who engineered these policies? The events and decisions regarding Britain's response to Macedonia will be examined thoroughly in the upcoming chapters, but it is useful to provide biographical thumbnail sketches on the key decision makers in the British government and the British diplomatic department to give thorough contextualization for what transpired from 1902 to 1905.

Lord Salisbury

In 1900 Robert Cecil, the Third Marquess of Salisbury, won his fourth term in which he served as prime minister of Great Britain. Since entering the House of Lords in 1868, Lord Salisbury had risen quickly in the administration of Benjamin Disraeli and within a decade had secured himself at the unopposed leader of a near dynasty of

conservative rule. Service to the crown ran in the family. Salisbury's family traced its record back to the reign of Elizabeth I. Ability and tireless diligence drove Salisbury's career forward. During the crisis of 1878, he replaced Lord Derby as Foreign Secretary and it was Salisbury himself who penned the ultimatum to Russia that the Treaty of San Stefano was unacceptable to Britain. At Salisbury's insistence, British warships sailed to the Sea of Marmara to confront the Russians, and at the Berlin talks in 1878, it was Salisbury who did most of the diplomatic work for his ailing superior, Disraeli, who he quietly disliked. When Disraeli passed away in 1881, Salisbury was peerless. Salisbury led the conservatives for the next two decades, winning four elections and governing as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary with the complete confidence of the Queen. With the turning of the tide in the Boer War in Britain's favour, Salisbury was swept to power again at the age of seventy. Though his sense of duty remained intact, his health was failing him. Accepting his fourth tenure as prime minister, he stopped his run as Foreign Secretary at three, yielding the post to Lord Lansdowne in 1900. Arthur Balfour took over as prime minister a year before Salisbury's death.

The Eastern Crisis of 1878 had been a defining moment in Salisbury's career. His hard line against the San Stefano Treaty had been instrumental in giving Britain a diplomatic victory at Berlin. In confronting Russia in the Near East, Salisbury was upholding the same British policy that had taken the country to war against the Tsar's forces in 1854. In the two decades following the Berlin treaty, Salisbury's stance on the Near East began to alter. Britain's occupation and de facto rule of Egypt from 1882 onwards lessened the need to uphold the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire for the sake of British trade routes to India. In 1885, Salisbury lent diplomatic support to Bulgaria's annexation of Eastern Rumelia. While this apparently undid some of Salisbury's own work at Berlin, backing the Bulgarians still was an affront to Russia due to internal politics in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian government of Stefan Stambolov wished to make the principality more independent from Russia. A few years later in 1895, Salisbury discussed the possibility of a multilateral intervention by the Great Powers in the Ottoman Empire to halt the massacres of Armenians. However, no agreement was forthcoming. Salisbury admitted that Britain could influence little beyond the edge of the seas. Within two decades of the signing of the Berlin treaty, Salisbury had quietly gone from an ardent defender of Constantinople and the Straits to a point where he was prepared to surrender the Dardanelles in the face of Russian might and his disgust with

Ottoman atrocities against Christians. Salisbury called the defence of the Ottoman capital “an antiquated standpoint.”⁹⁶ The Imperial Defence Committee’s conclusions only confirmed his views. With control of the Suez, Cyprus, Malta, and Gibraltar, Britain’s position in the Mediterranean was still strong. Nevertheless, while Salisbury was not prepared to send Britain to war to keep the Russians out of the Straits, he would have certainly have used every diplomatic means available to stop a southward thrust by Britain’s ‘Great Game’ rival from becoming a *fait accompli*.

Arthur James Balfour

Arthur James Balfour was an eminent politician and diplomat for over fifty years. Orphaned at age five, he had the fortune of having his uncle, the future prime minister Lord Salisbury, as a longstanding mentor and father figure in his life. Following his education, the young Balfour went on a grand tour, which took him to the various coastal jewels of the empire he so loved and would promote and defend. Balfour first served as parliamentary private secretary to his ‘Uncle Bob,’ a position which soon took him to the 1878 Congress of Berlin. With a secure constituency in East Manchester, Balfour moved up in the Conservative party caucus, becoming Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1887. Many thought Balfour too inexperienced for the political rigors and potential physical dangers which came with the office, but Balfour proved himself to be decisive and strong in the face of protest, and did not shun from countering violence with violence, earning him the nickname ‘Bloody Balfour.’ Balfour next served as house leader and was given increased influence in foreign policy as his uncle’s health waned around the turn of the century. When Balfour took over as prime minister in July of 1902 he faced cabinet difficulties and foreign policy challenges. Believing there was much foreign policy work to be done, Balfour delayed calling an election, garnering increasing unpopularity which cost the Unionists dearly at the polls in 1906.⁹⁷ He remained highly regarded in governing circles, becoming foreign secretary under Lloyd George in 1917. The declaration made in his name that year remains perhaps his most well-known legacy.

⁹⁶ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 259.

⁹⁷ James Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thought of a Conservative Statesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127. The election loss also cost Balfour his own seat.

Balfour continued as foreign secretary during the 1919 Paris peace talks, and he held prominent governing roles during the 1920s, including Lord President of the Cabinet between 1925 and 1928, before his death in 1930.

In many respects, Balfour is deserving of the title philosopher statesman. During his tenure, he authored several books on philosophy and numerous articles. He did not share his uncle's assessment that the foreign policies of states were essentially dictated by economic motivations. Balfour was inclined to take more holistic approaches. His views could even be metaphysical at times. He did not consider the British people to be the cleverest people in Europe, but he remarked that they were the most reasonable.⁹⁸ Balfour was an enthusiastic promoter and ardent defender of the British Empire. He believed that Christian Altruism set the Europeans apart from the other peoples of the world, yet he did not consider it Britain's responsibility to engage in any sort of civilizing mission. He did not believe all men were created equal and was something of a relativist. He did not think the non-white peoples of the empire could be compelled to embrace British values and governing systems. Balfour did not think favourably of racial mixing or what is now known as multiculturalism. Races and cultures were best kept segregated; he did not favour integration. He considered the white colonies of Canada, Newfoundland and New Zealand to be the empire's greatest achievements and sought closer ties with the United States, a people with whom he felt the British shared so many commonalities.

Balfour's views of the world are evident in his considerations of British foreign policy. He favoured the more racially homogeneous redrawings of the maps of Europe and the Middle East in the years following the First World War. He was not inclined to entangle Britain in power politics of continental Europe but understood 'Splendid Isolation' was untenable. Balfour considered the dual alliance of France and Russia to be the greatest threat to Britain and gave his approval to Joseph Chamberlain's efforts to come to some arrangement with the Triple Alliance headed by Germany. He remained a Germanophile during his tenure as prime minister, maintaining even after the commencement of the First World War that the 1904 Entente Cordiale was strictly a colonial agreement and not an alliance against Germany.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 27.

With the regards to the 'Near East' Balfour had his opinions but was foremost a pragmatist. He did not think favourably of the Ottoman Empire or Islam, maintaining that 'Oriental' races did not belong in Europe. He stated that he would not mind going to war with the Ottoman Empire, considering it doomed.⁹⁹ He did not hold a much higher view of the Balkan Christians, but believed that the Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Romanians could improve themselves once they were freed from Ottoman rule. Balfour attributed the Balkan troubles with the region's racial heterogeneity.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, he did not wish to see the Balkans fall under Russian control, a view which necessitated if not the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire then a "peaceful contraction" of it, which limited Russian gains as much as possible.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Balfour was not willing to play on the jingoism of 1878. The Committee of Imperial Defence, of which Balfour was a member, considered the defence of Constantinople untenable if faced with a Russian attack. Like Salisbury before him, he was content to let the Russians have the Ottoman capital if they so wished, reasoning to his colleagues that the Russians would be too tied down consolidating their gains and dealing with Turkish resistance to pose a realistic threat to British interests in the Suez. Ottoman territory from the Levant to the Balkans could serve as a buffer against Russian encroachment of Britain's vital interests further south. Balfour held similar views towards Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. It was not strictly necessary that these buffer territories remain under British control or influence in as much as they be hostile to Russian takeover.¹⁰² This was a much more expedient and cost effective policy of protecting British interests in the Middle East, India and China than sending British redcoats to die in costly campaigns as they had done in Crimea and Afghanistan. Balfour surely applied these sentiments to Macedonia. Reform in Macedonia did afford Great Britain the chance to further its influence in a strategic region of the Ottoman buffer through the multilateralism of the Concert of Europe. Officially, the British position on the Ottoman Empire and Macedonia was status quo plus reform,' but they were prepared to take advantage of any favourable changes 'on the ground' at they saw fit.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰² Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, 32-33; Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, 191-192.

Lord Lansdowne

William Henry Fitzmaurice, the Fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, was appointed as Foreign Secretary in Lord Salisbury's cabinet following the 1900 Unionist election victory. His paternal family was well established as Lords of county Kerry in Ireland, masters of some 120,000 acres of land. His mother had some diplomatic lineage, being the granddaughter of the French diplomat Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord. His association with Arthur Balfour began in school at Eton, where the younger Balfour fagged for Lansdowne. On the recommendation of his teachers, Lansdowne was removed from Eton and sent to Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied Classics. Despite some disappointing exam results, his tutor thought highly of him and urged him not to settle for a "second class life."¹⁰³ With the sudden death of his father in 1866, Lansdowne inherited the title and riches of the family estate. Privilege earned Lansdowne an invitation to the House of Lords in 1868 as a Junior Lord of the Treasury.¹⁰⁴ Following family tradition, Lansdowne served as a Liberal, under the direction of the famous Liberals Lord Granville and William Gladstone.

However, Lansdowne's conservatism deepened as he gained more experience with politics. He resigned from Gladstone's government over the Irish Land Question in 1880 and left Britain to become Governor General of Canada from 1883 to 1888. Lansdowne continued to build experience in foreign fields by serving as Viceroy to India from 1888 to 1894. He returned to Britain and his estates, declining the offer of ambassador to Russia before accepting the offer of Secretary of War in the Unionist government of his former nemesis, Lord Salisbury. In his new post, Lansdowne was confronted with escalating tensions in South Africa, conflicts in the Sudan, and domestic reluctance to increase military expenditures. Military success over the Mahdists in the Sudan and diplomatic victory over the French in the Fashoda Crisis of 1898 preceded more trying circumstances a year later in the Boer War. Lansdowne had overcome political resistance to have much-needed Indian troops deployed to South Africa.¹⁰⁵ During the 'Bloody Week' of December, 1899, he acted to dismiss the British

¹⁰³ Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (MacMillan and Co., Ltd), 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

commander in South Africa, General Buller, after the general's self confidence had been badly shaken following a string of humiliating defeats, which had brought about a chorus of jeers from the other powers.¹⁰⁶ British fortunes in South Africa improved in 1900 with the relief of besieged British garrisons and the capture of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Although she had been displeased with what she saw as unnecessary civilian meddling in military affairs, the Queen was sufficiently pleased with Lansdowne to approve Salisbury's recommendation that he be made Foreign Secretary following the Unionist electoral victory in October of 1900.

As Foreign Secretary, Lansdowne directed some significant changes in British Foreign policy in a period of transition for the British Empire. Recognizing the need to change course after the long period of 'Splendid Isolationism,' Lansdowne orchestrated the alliance with Japan in 1902 and followed up on the King's initiatives with France by successfully negotiating the Entente Cordiale in 1904. Lansdowne faced further diplomatic challenges during the Russo-Japanese war, notably the Dogger Bank incident. Unlike some outspoken members of the Liberal party and the Foreign Office, Lansdowne was not a Germanophobe. Like Balfour, he belonged to a German-Britain friendship society. Following Liberal victory in 1906, Lansdowne led the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords. He returned to government briefly during the First World War as a minister without a portfolio, and made a well-publicized appeal for peace in 1917.¹⁰⁷

A cautious realist when it came to foreign policy, Lansdowne had a meticulous attention to detail his old school chum from Eton lacked. Balfour once remarked of Lansdowne: "I shouldn't call him clever [but] he was better than competent."¹⁰⁸ Such a description gives an indication why Balfour and Lansdowne worked well together. While Balfour liked to philosophize and was impatient with details, Lansdowne was meticulous, patient, and practical. He edited dispatches precisely with a red pen, at times in a rather condescending manner. He made his decisions carefully and deliberately, preferring to act in concert with other powers when possible. His views towards Macedonia and the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 168. Sultan Abdülhamîd offered to loan the British troops.

¹⁰⁷ There may have been some personal consideration for this as Lansdowne lost his only son in the war.

¹⁰⁸ Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, 13.

Near East were similar to those of Balfour. While he may not have particularly cared much for the Ottoman Empire privately, the status quo plus reform was more favourable to him than the uncertainty of change. He once stated preference for a Christian governor for Macedonia, but he also remarked of his frustrations with the Christians of Macedonia and voiced sympathy for the Ottoman soldiers in the field.¹⁰⁹ The Macedonian Question was in the family. Lansdowne's own brother, Edmond Fitzmaurice, had served on the Berlin treaty's European Commission in the early 1880s and was sympathetic to the Macedonian cause, later lending his name to the Macedonian Relief Fund. Although he was unquestionably a loyal civil servant and patriot, Lansdowne seems a more thoughtful and nuanced personality than he is often portrayed. Compared to his peers, relatively little has been written about Lansdowne.

King Edward VII

Edward VII ascended to the British throne following the 63 year reign of his mother, Queen Victoria. Given few responsibilities during his years as Prince of Wales, Edward had a reputation for enjoying the physical and carnal pleasures of life to the fullest, which included a love affair with all things French. It was not until he turned 50 that his mother allowed him to be privy to affairs of cabinet. During his ten year reign as king, Edward made a point of invigorating all facets of the monarchy, from redecorating royal residences to giving grand ceremonies and speeches. His style enabled him to connect well with his subjects. Such was his popularity that an era bears his namesake, despite less than a ten year reign.

Edward VII was active in British foreign policy, and was not shy in giving his advice to his ministers. Known as the 'Uncle of Europe,' he had blood connections to many of the royal house of Europe, notably his nephew, the Kaiser of Germany, and his cousin, Prince Ferdinand, the Crown Prince of Bulgaria. With such long associations came strong opinions of foreign regents and governments, sometimes bringing him into conflict with the Foreign Office. Edward is credited for initiating the diplomacy that created the 1904 Entente Cordiale with France after he put on a personal charm

¹⁰⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 18, 1803, FO 800/143.

offensive during a high profile trip to Republican Paris in 1903. Edward also lent his support to the 1907 entente to Russia as well as reforms to Britain's military forces, which helped ensure the country was better prepared for war in 1914.

The King's diplomacy and his opinions on British foreign policy were not always in concert with his ministers. Balfour in particular is said to have resented the King for the credit the Francophile sovereign received for the Entente with France. Balfour and Lansdowne had a more positive opinion of Germany than the King. The relationship between senior ministers and monarch was strained at times. Edward committed a faux pas in 1901 during a meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm by showing his nephew a secret memorandum Lansdowne had prepared for him on German foreign policy.¹¹⁰ The King was also at odds with Balfour and Lansdowne over affairs in Macedonia. Edward sympathized with the plight of the Macedonian Christians and argued for a more robust response by Britain to the crisis of 1903. Lansdowne and Balfour resisted the King's advice. It was not the first or the last time they would clash over policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The King had previously quarreling with his prime minister and foreign secretary over the appointment of a new Ottoman ambassador in 1902, and his urging for a more assertive role by Britain in Macedonia continued into the first mandate of the Müzzsteg Reform Program.

The Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service

In the words of Zara Steiner, the British Foreign Office was an aristocratic "citadel of privilege." Recruits to the Foreign Office were overwhelmingly graduates of half a dozen public schools, and university graduates that went elsewhere other than Oxford or Cambridge were a rarity. During Salisbury's tenure, getting the opportunity to take the entrance examinations to be a clerk required one's family to be known by the Foreign Secretary's or his secretary:

¹¹⁰ Simon Heffer, *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of King Edward VII* (London: Weildfeld & Nicolson, 1998), 134.

If the Foreign Office was a small, self-contained establishment, its tone and ethos were created by the caste from which it recruited its staff. All the clichés about the Foreign Office were true; it was indeed the stronghold of the aristocracy and everything was done to preserve its clannish character and clannish structure.¹¹¹

While lower level posts were open to some degree to the middle classes, diplomatic posting were almost exclusively the domain of aristocrats. British ambassadors in the period of study here had almost all been knighted, and the diplomatic circles they moved in left them surrounded with persons of similar backgrounds. Salaries were so low that most ambassadors were expected to make use of their private income to keep up social appearances. The profession was elitist to its core.

The functioning of the British Foreign Office and its embassies was highly structured and hierarchical. Work at the Foreign Office for clerks was a ceaseless routine of bureaucratic functions which involved ciphering and deciphering, copying, and indexing documents and dispatches. A bureaucracy of clerks worked under three assistant undersecretaries, the permanent undersecretary, and the foreign secretary himself. Incoming communication, depending on its importance, was registered and sent to the foreign secretary or to the relevant under secretary, who would decide to whom it should be circulated. In addition to the foreign secretary, the monarch and select members of cabinet were privy to diplomatic correspondence. Which documents were released to the other members of the government was a matter of discretion. On a smaller scale, the bureaucratic process was similar at the embassies and consuls, with vice-consuls and secretaries spending most of their days doing paper work.

The number of documents read and produced by various Foreign Secretaries varied. Salisbury preferred his work in the Foreign Office to his responsibilities as prime minister and worked tirelessly in his office and home, reviewing and creating vast quantities of correspondence as he had less trust in the abilities of his subordinates.¹¹² Salisbury was diligent about keeping his cabinet informed. He did have a trusted inner circle to whom he circulated select dispatches. This group consisted of the Duke of

¹¹¹ Steiner, *The Foreign Office*, 16.

¹¹² Massie, *Dreadnought*, 202.

Devonshire, Joseph Chamberlain, Arthur Balfour, and Lord George Hamilton. With Salisbury's health failing in latter 1890s, Balfour took on increased responsibilities toward foreign affairs. While possessing exemplary analytical skills, Balfour did not have nearly as much patience for paperwork as his ailing uncle. But Balfour was a good deal more concerned about Britain's position in the world, a view he shared with Lord Lansdowne. The appointment of Lansdowne as Foreign Secretary in 1900 marked a shift in new directions not just in policy but in the running of the Foreign Office.

During his five year tenure as Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne reformed the Foreign Office. After some deliberation and resistance, the changes began to be implemented in 1905. Lansdowne wished to see the clerks' ability at least match their pedigree and raised the minimum age of application to the Foreign Office to 22, giving more preference to university-educated candidates. A selection board brought in to oversee the hiring of Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service candidates did enable some capable men from middle class backgrounds to get a chance to compete with the sons of the upper classes.¹¹³ A new registry system improved the distribution and organization of the Foreign Office and gave more responsibility and initiative to low level clerks. Junior clerks not only sorted papers, they were able to make comments and recommendations before sending them on to senior clerks of the given department, who preformed another level of review before the papers were sent on to the relevant under-secretary. The under-secretaries had the authority to take action themselves or forward the matter to the permanent under-secretary, who could do likewise before he went to the foreign secretary. The registry reforms delegated more responsibility to the more competent subordinates in the Foreign Office. By the time a given dispatch was viewed by the foreign secretary, it had been reviewed and commented upon by multiple levels of subordinates who contributed their research and area expertise to the subject matter and added any relevant past documentation related to the issue. Salisbury's days attending to diplomatic communication with minimal assistance were at an end by the time Edward Grey, Lansdowne's successor, became Foreign Secretary.¹¹⁴ However, more delegation of responsibility also gave more power to the clerks and under-

¹¹³ Steiner, *The Foreign Office*, 19.

¹¹⁴ The diplomatic records bear the mark of these reforms. From 1906, the dispatches from British embassies were all put under the file number 371.

secretaries in the Foreign Office, a group which would have increased influence on the course of British foreign policy in the Edwardian era.

The Lansdowne era initiated the end of Salisbury's 'Splendid Isolation' as Britain's search for allies led to its investment in the continental alliance system. The alliances Great Britain joined were a result in no small part to power struggles within the Foreign Office. Even during the Boer War, Salisbury had downplayed perceived threats to Great Britain. While prepared to consider agreements with other powers, he was less willing to consider alliances, particularly ones with binding military agreements. Salisbury's final permanent under-secretary in the Foreign Office, Thomas Sanderson, was a long serving member of the institution who had shared Salisbury's view that Britain should keep a 'free hand' when it came to Europe.¹¹⁵ Balfour and Lansdowne considered Britain's isolation to be untenable. Balfour had no illusions about Britain's position having served on the Committee on Imperial Defence and having periodically taken on his uncle's foreign responsibilities. Lansdowne's tenure as Secretary of War (1895-1900) had convinced him that Britain was unlikely to prevail in a war against the Dual Alliance. Closer ties to other powers were needed for the security of the empire, but it was by no means a certainty that the Triple Entente would take shape the way it did.¹¹⁶

Between 1899 and 1907, Britain shifted from the possibility of an agreement with the German-led Quadruple Alliance to the actuality of a Triple Entente with France and Russia. With close royal blood ties and mutual enemies, a partnership between Britain and Germany seemed like a natural choice. Salisbury himself approved Joseph Chamberlain's efforts to find accord with Germany, and Balfour and Lansdowne were very much open to negotiation with Europe's emerging superpower. Who else was capable of aiding Britain against a possible attack by Russia on Britain's interests stretching across the breadth of Asia? However, a growing faction of the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service were coming to loath Germany. Assistant under-secretary Frank Bertie led this group. Whatever misgivings he had about Germany were exacerbated by Germany's refusal to help Britain take measures to reverse Russia's occupation of Manchuria in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. To the displeasure of his

¹¹⁵ Neilson and Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs*, 105.

¹¹⁶ Charmley, "Splendid Isolation to Finest Hour," 134-135.

immediate superior, Under-secretary Thomas Sanderson, Bertie concluded that German interests were not compatible with British interests in Europe and elsewhere. By 1902, Bertie had managed to get himself promoted to the post of ambassador to Italy. He also succeeded to get one of his most like-minded contemporaries, Charles Hardinge, promoted ahead of many more long-serving candidates to the position of first secretary under Sir Charles Scott in St. Petersburg. By the end of Lansdowne's tenure in December of 1905, Bertie had moved on to become ambassador to France. Hardinge continued to ascend the promotional ladder. From St. Petersburg he moved on to replace Bertie as assistant under-secretary before returning to Russia as ambassador in 1904. In 1905 he again returned to the Foreign Office to replace Thomas Sanderson as permanent under-secretary just in time for the coming of the younger and inexperienced Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary.¹¹⁷

Though perfectly competent and capable, Bertie and Hardinge had risen with profound speed to very influential positions. These appointments did not all happen with Lansdowne's unqualified approval. To Bertie's annoyance, Lansdowne had continued talks with Germany and had resisted some of the requests for targeted promotion of 'Bertie's Boys.'¹¹⁸ But Bertie had an important ally, the King. Edward VII had initiated the talks that led to the 1904 Entente with France. As monarch, he had the final say on diplomatic appointments. Hardinge and Bertie made positive impressions and were rewarded accordingly. Lansdowne's five years heading the Foreign Office were not only a time of transition, they were years in which a power struggle of influence took place, which had a historic impact on the balance of power in Europe. It is worth considering these diplomatic schisms and scuffles within the ranks of the British Foreign Office and its diplomats when examining policy towards the Ottoman Empire and Macedonia.

In T. G. Otte's words, the Foreign Office was a "knowledge-based organization."¹¹⁹ The amount of documentation produced during the Macedonian crises certainly attests well to this. But more than producing volumes of paper, the common education British officials and diplomats enjoyed instilled within them a strong moral

¹¹⁷ Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind*, 244-256

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

code and prepared them to solve problems.¹²⁰ Britain's senior diplomats in the Ottoman Empire were accomplished professionals for whom the Foreign Secretary had a great deal of respect. Prudent and cautious in his approach to foreign policy in general, Lansdowne relied on the advice of his senior diplomats in the Ottoman Empire. He thought highly enough of them to allow them some leeway to exercise their own initiative. In Constantinople, Sir Nicholas O'Connor had been the ambassador since 1898. With forty years of experience the diplomatic services with stops in the United States, China, Russia, and several European capitals including Sofia, O'Connor brought experience to a position he performed with considerable energy and competence. O'Connor was a firm believer that stronger reforms were needed to pacify Macedonia, and Lansdowne accepted much of O'Connor's advice. He also gave O'Connor more freedom to take initiative than most ambassadors.

In Egypt, the British Consul-General in Cairo, Lord Cromer, had effectively ruled Egypt since British had occupied it in 1882. A haughty imperialist in his own right, Cromer believed he had not only stabilized Egypt but fostered a prosperous economy and harmonious relations between Egypt's ethnic and religious communities. If Lansdowne gave considerable latitude to O'Connor, he largely left Cromer to his own devices, literally referring to him as the 'Lord' of Egypt.

The other prominent British consulate in the Ottoman Empire was in Salonica, where Sir Alfred Biliotti served as consul-general from July 1899 until July of 1903. A Levantine Catholic, Biliotti was raised on the island of Rhodes. A polyglot with interests in diplomacy and archeology, he was a local recruit of the British Foreign Service and was posted throughout the region during his career. Biliotti arrived at the consulate in Salonica following a posting in strife-riven Crete. He was accused by some of having pro-Greek views.¹²¹ Just prior to the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, Biliotti retired and was succeeded by Robert Windham Graves, a fellow veteran of the British diplomatic service in the Near East, who had also succeeded Biliotti in Crete. Graves was one of the few

¹²⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹²¹ David Barchard, "The Fearless and Self-Reliant Servant. The Life and Career of Sir Alfred Biliotti (1833-1915), an Italian Levantine in British Service," *Studi Miceni ed Egeo-Anatolici* 48 (2006), 50. Barchard reasons that accusations against Biliotti's for being pro-Greek likely arose from his using local Greeks to gather intelligence in Crete and in Macedonia.

diplomats posted in the Ottoman Empire during the events in Macedonia who wrote a memoir, in which he recounted his disappointment with the level of censorship by the Foreign Office of several reports of atrocities by the Ottoman security forces and local Muslim militias.¹²²

Elsewhere in Macedonia, the British maintained consulates in Uscub, Monastir, Serres, and Drama. British consuls were present in Sofia, Philipopolis, Ruse, and Varna in Bulgaria.¹²³ The British were also served by Lieutenant Colonel F. R. Maunsell, the senior British military attaché to the Ottoman Empire, who energetically toured the three vilayets and the Vilayet of Adrianople extensively during the period of study. Between their consular officials and their contacts and informants (which included missionaries and aid workers), the British maintained a web of contacts who kept them informed of events in Macedonia. Indeed, the British presence on the ground in Macedonia during the troubled years of 1902-1908 was greater than it was a century later when instability and conflict again befell the region.

Macedonia and the British Empire: The Real and the Imagined

Ultimately, what did Macedonia mean to Britain and its empire? How important was it? Macedonia had never physically been part of the British Empire. While a source of some agricultural wealth, it did not contain the sort of natural riches the British already had under their possession in the rest of the empire. For the British, the priority was to keep other powers (namely Russia) away from Macedonia and the diminishing holdings of the Ottoman Empire. It had long been a strategic priority for the British to protect their imperial trade interests in the Mediterranean Sea. It was for this very reason that the British had pushed for the 1841 Straits Agreement. It was why the British had gone to war against Russia in the Crimea in 1854, and why they were ready to go to war again in 1878. It is possible that a European war fought in 1878 may have included a

¹²²Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East, Personal Memories 1879-1929* (New York: AMS Press, 1975).

¹²³ The British hired locals at smaller posts to fill in as consuls when the resident consul was absent. Several of these men had Greek names.

Macedonian theatre. Austria-Hungary's and Russia's interests and imperial ambitions ran south to Macedonia. However, at the Aegean Sea, they ran into the 'Blue Water Empire' of Great Britain.

Nevertheless, as previously discussed, the strategic importance of the Dardanelle Straits had diminished for the British by the turn of the century. Britain's acquisition of Cyprus in 1878 and its intervention and ongoing presence in Egypt since 1882 had made the Straits less of concern. It is questionable whether any of the British governments after the mid 1890s would have gone to war alone against Austria-Hungary or Russia over control of Macedonia, Constantinople, or even the Dardanelle Straits. The British were still prepared to use diplomacy and might well have fought such a war if they had allies, but Salisbury and his successors felt more secure in their Mediterranean holdings with a line of communication and defence through Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, and Egypt.

Britain still maintained economic and financial interests in the Ottoman Empire, and Macedonia was a vital part of the Ottoman economy. British support for the Ottoman Empire's war with Egypt in 1838 had come with a free trade agreement. With Russian and American exports crippled by wars in the mid nineteenth century, commercial exchange with the Ottoman Empire proved to be very lucrative.¹²⁴ However, the economic recovery of Russia and the United States in the 1870s hurt Ottoman exports and increased the Ottoman Empire's debt. From the mid 1870s, British trading and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire began to weaken. British investors became hesitant about putting their money in the Ottoman Empire, and recurrent news reports of atrocities being committed against Christians did nothing to encourage investment.¹²⁵ The establishment of the OPDA in 1881 helped the British and the other European creditor countries effectively collect their debts. Indeed, the OPDA made investments of its own and gave confidence to foreign speculators.¹²⁶ The Ottoman Empire did not become the "progressive and self-supporting satellite bound to Britain by 'natural' ties of finance and commerce" the British had envisioned in the mid-nineteenth

¹²⁴ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (London: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001), 342-43.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 345.

¹²⁶ Birdal, *Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt*, 2.

century.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, there was still something to be gained for the British strategically and economically by maintaining the Ottoman Empire.

In purely strategic terms, Macedonia was at best a peripheral concern for Great Britain. But there was more to the relationship between the world's greatest empire and this region of Ottoman Europe than financial, economic, and strategic interests. Where Macedonia mattered more was in the British imagination. Macedonia was part of the Classical and Christian canon that most educated Britons knew well. As such, Macedonia had a place in the history of what many considered a uniquely (Western) European civilization. Macedonia contained the ruins of the Athenian colony of Amphipolis and was the home of Alexander the Great. This classical connection resonated with educated Britons, many of whom made 'Grand Tours' to the region and returned to Britain with classical relics.¹²⁸ Macedonia also had its place in Christian history as the location where the Apostle St. Paul had brought Christianity to Europe. It was the birthplace of several Byzantine emperors, including Justinian. These classical and Christian connections contributed to feelings of sympathy for the Christians of Macedonia.

By virtue of its classical namesake, Macedonia was also connected to Modern Greece. Britain had maintained influence in Modern Greece since the time of the kingdom's inception. Britain's relationship to Modern Greece was often that of a patron. At times British conduct toward Greece bordered on the colonial.¹²⁹ The Ionian Islands had been a British protectorate from 1815 to 1864. The decline in British influence in the Ottoman Empire from the 1870s coincided with a rise in "a certain synergy in and British and Hellenic expansiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean." Some Greeks maintained that Hellenism was a perfect weapon for the British to use against panslavism.¹³⁰ Although the British were not enthusiastic about promoting Hellenism and the dream of a Greater Greece, their enduring presence in the country furthered connections which

¹²⁷ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 345.

¹²⁸ Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1759-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010), 215.

¹²⁹ Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9-11.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

ranged from the strategic to the emotional.¹³¹ According to Robert Holland, the British became so “entrenched” in the Mediterranean that their presence became “a world of its own.”¹³²

While Macedonia was situated at the northern end of this classical, Mediterranean world, it was also an integral part of a ‘Balkan’ world that was being actively imagined into existence at the turn of the century. The Balkans were seen as an impoverished and violent region. Brigand and guerilla activity in Macedonia did more to enhance these images.¹³³ Macedonia gained increased attention from British writers in the 1890s, but as the Macedonians were not considered a separate people, there was a tendency for British observers to take the side of one of the competing nationalities.¹³⁴ Michail and Markotich both point to the Ilinden Uprising in 1903 as the event which brought Macedonia into the limelight.¹³⁵ According to Michail, the events led some Britons to call for more British involvement in Macedonia (and in the Balkans in general), while others saw only confusion and wanted Britain to disengage from any potential Balkan entanglements.¹³⁶ For either camp, the Balkans produced images of potentially threatening entities. The question was whether Britain should confront this threat—a question of intervention.

Through the progression of the nineteenth century, the notion of the Balkans as being an inherently threatening entity gained traction, drawing more attention from Great Power politicians and diplomats and manifesting itself in the popular media. Jimmie Cain

¹³¹ Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 3. Holland begins his book the anecdote of a British diplomat who felt “a strong surge of emotion” as his ship passed between the islands of Zante and Cephalonia. It was 1864 and the diplomat was tasked with handing the islands over to Greece.

¹³² *Ibid.* 5.

¹³³ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 14-15.

¹³⁴ Jovan Zametica, “The Macedonian Question among British Contemporaries: Serbophiles, and Bulgarophiles (1897-1923),” in *Europe and the Eastern Question (1878-1923): Political and Civilizational Challenges*, Editor-in-Chief Slaventko Terzić (Belgrade: Historical Institute of the Serbian Academy, 2001), 322-323.

¹³⁵ Eugene Michail, *The British and the Balkans: Forming Images of Foreign Lands, 1900-1950* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 6; Slobodan Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans, 1902-1906* (Paris: Dialogue, 2000), 52-53. Both authors also point to the 1903 Serbian regicide as the other 1903 event which put the Balkans in the headlines.

¹³⁶ Michail, *The British and the Balkans*, 8.

argues that the Victorian mind was haunted by notions of sickly invaders from the east threatening the British Empire. In discussing this sentiment during the Crimean War, Cain includes a *Punch* cartoon from 1853 which allegorically depicts Britain and France as medical doctors thoughtfully considering the malady of the Ottoman Sultan while a grim reaper resembling the Russian czar floats above the ill sultan's bed. Cain points out that this eastern grim reaper also has bat wings, "recalling Dracula's association with mists, bats, and death."¹³⁷ Cain links the prevailing Russophobia in nineteenth century Britain to the novels *Dracula* and *Lady of the Shroud* by Bram Stoker. He is not the only one to use the works of Stoker as means of understanding Britain's, if not Western Europe's, attitude towards its southeast.

Similarly, Vesna Goldsworthy connects the growth in the popularity of the Victorian Gothic novel with this heightened interest in the Balkans, which provides a setting that is both exotic and familiar. In pointing out how Stoker portrayed Dracula as an evil satanic power, Goldsworthy makes a correlation between literature and diplomacy regarding the Balkans and specifically Macedonia. In her words:

Dracula must not simply be killed but completely destroyed by the united representatives of the West—an Englishman [Jonathan Harker], a Dutchman, [Abraham Van Helsing] and an American [Quincy Morris]...Their mission to restore order in the Balkans represents a (subconscious) fictional expression of the attempts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to impose peace on the peninsula. A few years after the publication of *Dracula* the great powers sought to bury the problem of Macedonia with the so-called Mürzsteg agreement.¹³⁸

Goldsworthy maintains that that the novels such as Stoker's *Dracula* and *Lady of the Shroud* and Anthony Hope's *Sophy of Kravonia* can tell us much about how *Fin de Siècle* 'Europe' viewed and understood 'the Balkans.'¹³⁹ If the efforts by Great Britain to

¹³⁷ Jimmie E. Cain Jr., *Bram Stoker and Russophobia, Evidence of the British Fear of Russian in Dracula and The Lady of the Shroud* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006), 25.

¹³⁸ Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 84-85. Goldsworthy also notes that Dracula is studying the English in his own attempt to 'know' them and thus 'colonize' them.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10. Goldsworthy maintains that the fictitious depictions by Hope and Stoker "have been infinitely more influential in shaping the way the Balkans are seen in the West than have any number of scholarly or well-travelled authors."

preempt 'atrocities agitation' in Macedonia in the year 1902 are any indication, Stoker's works may provide some indication of an informed belief that an untoward event in Ottoman Macedonia could have vast consequences for the peace of Europe and the health of Great Britain and its empire.

These literary connections may help explain the perception of terrorist threats posed by the ostensibly ruthless agitators and the image of an Ottoman Empire that was either sick or vengeful and always unstable. As these potential dangers could destroy not only the peace but European civilization, there was a need on the part of the powers to be vigilant and push for effective reforms and try to preempt any actions by organizations such as IMRO, which might provoke events reminiscent of the 1876 'Bulgarian Horrors.'

In conclusion, while Macedonia was of limited importance to British strategic and economic interests at the turn of the century, it had acquired more importance in the British imagination. By virtue of its name, its historical connections, and its geographical location, Macedonia resonated with the British. It was a borderland on the edge of Europe, but what happened in Macedonia *could* matter to Britons. By the turn of the twentieth century, Macedonia had acquired—as one historian put it almost 100 years later—"the power to excite."¹⁴⁰ It was about to do so.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Mazower, "Introduction to the Study of Macedonia," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 14(1996): 229.

Chapter 2. Preemptive Ounces

The approach of spring brings with it the usual rumours of danger to peace in the South-east of Europe.¹

G. B. Bonham, British Ambassador to Serbia

Introduction

The year 1902 brought change to British foreign policy. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, would take Britain out of its 'Splendid Isolation' by signing an alliance with Japan. This agreement allowed the British to divert resources from the Pacific as the costs of the concluding Boer War were absorbed. Britain was looking to remove itself from some of its costly foreign involvements. The country was in no condition to become involved in an international crisis, least of all in the Balkans, where overlapping Great Power interests made a conflict between two or more powers more likely. The lessons of 1876-78 were very much on the minds of officials in the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service. Whatever misgivings some high ranking British officials had about the Ottoman Empire, these men knew full well that 1902 was not the right time for a conflict that might again alter the boundaries of Europe. Status Quo plus reform would remain the British policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The other powers had similar policies. The 1897 accord between Austria-Hungary and Russia to keep the Balkans 'on ice' was holding. Relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg were relatively harmonious, and Russia's attention had shifted decidedly to the Far East. All the powers were in agreement on the need to be vigilant against 'atrocities agitation' in the Balkans. Agents Provocateur in Macedonia and Armenia could induce a massacre that could create a sensation in the press. It was therefore necessary for the powers to take preemptive measures to insure that the scale of any reprisals against any Ottoman

¹ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), March 12, 1902, FO 105/143/34.

Christian populations was minimized. Furthermore, it was necessary to mitigate and limit the impact of any potentially inflammatory messages emanating from the Balkans.

This chapter upholds that Great Britain was diplomatically active in trying to preempt conflict in Ottoman Macedonia and limit the ramifications of any negative public reports emanating from the territory. These preemptive measures were motivated by an understanding of history as well as the politics of the times. The British collaborated multilaterally with the other Great Powers in sharing intelligence and making joint diplomatic representations to the Ottoman government and the governments of the Balkan states to try and preempt possible crises. In addition, the British liberally issued their own advice in their attempts to influence the Ottomans, Bulgarians, and others to pursue reform, restraint, and vigilance to diminish the effect of atrocities agitation in Macedonia, if it could not be pre-empted entirely. The British also tried to monitor the movements of key figures in the SMC and IMRO and, when possible, tried to dissuade these organizations from undertaking provocative actions. The British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service—including the Foreign Secretary himself—engaged with journalists and critics in investigating alleged humanitarian abuses and dispelling sensationalist reports. Evidence in this chapter will show that these ‘preemptive ounces’ were employed in the months prior to the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising; they would be intensified following it.

The struggle for Macedonia had as much to do with perception and propaganda as it did with bombs and bullets. Due in part to the preemptive measures of the British and the other Great Powers, the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising launched by the SMC in the autumn of 1902 would be a public relations as well as a military failure. The SMC would be unable to elicit much support for its cause in Macedonia or in the Great Power capitals as the liberating intervention its leaders had dreamt of did not materialize.

A New Year

By 1902, the potentiality of Macedonia as the next flash point in the Eastern Question was very well known. News articles regularly spelt out the tragic historical concoctions of Great Power rivalries, Ottoman misrule, and local national movements. As one correspondent penned in 1901:

In fact, the relations between the Balkan states are much the same as those between the great powers of Europe, and agreement between them is equally difficult, while the principle of the balance of power is as likely to be invoked in the one case as in the other to check growing ambitious on the part of any one of the group.²

Macedonia and the Balkans had become known as an intractable problem. The difficulty of political agreement was compounded by the apparently chronic degree of danger in the peninsula, particularly in Macedonia. An article in the periodical *Current Literature* from February of 1902 described endemic banditry in the region: "In a country where poverty is the sole safeguard against plunder the brigand is the only hero, and he is the only dandy...The romantic young envy him; the elders at least recognize in him a familiar burden. He is popular."³ The article recounted instances where Balkan bandits had taken European hostages, and provided information on hostage taking practices and current ransom rates.⁴

Since the Treaty of Berlin, Macedonia had acquired a reputation of chronic instability. Perceptions of instability were so strong that violence was expected. The activities of IMRO just added to what many considered to be a natural phenomenon endemic to the region:

A rising in Macedonia is, like inundations in Central Europe, suggestive of Spring and the thawing of the Winter's snows. It is contemporaneous too with the awakening of hopes in souls which have nought else to feed upon and which, having subsisted throughout summer, hibernate until the buds shoot anew. People are therefore accustomed to those periodic revolts which are regulated by the calendar and die away with the vegetation.⁵

Visions of violent Balkan biorhythms and their potential to affect regional stability if not the very peace of Europe kept Macedonia in the news headlines and made it an ongoing concern for politicians and diplomats. As critics domestic and foreign repeatedly pointed out, the unrealized terms of the Berlin treaty shouldered the Great Powers, and

² Edwin A. Start, "The Rivalry of Nations: World Politics of Today," *The Chautauquan*, January 1901, 385.

³ "Brigands of Macedonia," *Current Literature*, February, 1902, 144.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ E. J. Dillon, *The Contemporary Review* 82, July 1, 1902, 741.

Great Britain in particular, with a share of the responsibility for Macedonia's instability. In both a real and imagined sense, Macedonia had become relevant to the interests of the British Empire. A violent uprising in the Ottoman territory would garner considerable public attention; a fact the British government could not ignore.

Whether or not Macedonia would live up to the prognostications of spring was up to the executives of IMRO and the SMC. By 1902 the organizations had developed to the point where they were in position to launch an uprising if they so wished. Ultimately, the Great Powers could not stop a decision by the rebels to rise up. What they could do was to take steps to undermine the potential success of an uprising. This was precisely the policy Britain employed towards Macedonia in 1902. The British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service did not sit idly by. They monitored the situation, collecting intelligence and using diplomacy to better prepare the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria to not only thwart the military goals of the rebels, but, more importantly, to mitigate the political fallout of the anticipated uprising while further discrediting the rebels.

By January of 1902, Macedonia had been the recipient of ongoing international attention for several months due to the ongoing drama of the 'Miss Stone Affair.' On September 3, 1901, members of IMRO had kidnapped Ellen Stone, an American missionary and her pregnant assistant Katerina Tsilka and hustled them around the Pirin Mountains from hideout to hideout with Ottoman troops in pursuit. In a desperate search to procure funds, IMRO created a public relations coup by kidnapping an American hostage, setting a standard for twentieth century revolutionary movements. American envoys scrambled to make contact with the captors, while President Theodore Roosevelt threatened to send the U.S. navy to the rescue the hostages. IMRO curtailed its other activities in order to focus its resources on procuring the much-needed ransom money.

The British had some involvement with the hostage negotiations. In December of 1901, Alfred Biliotti, the British Consul-General in Salonica, informed the American negotiators that one of his sources had reported that one of the hostage takers was possibly willing to betray his fellow kidnappers in exchange for a monetary sum and passage out of the Balkans. The Americans met with Biliotti's source and gave him American stationery for Miss Stone to give them proof that she was still alive. Biliotti's man left Salonica with 200 Turkish Lira from the Americans for expenses and never

returned.⁶ Nevertheless, within the first weeks of the 1902, proof of Miss Stone's life was established and the terms of the delivery of the ransom were being worked out.⁷ In March, Stone, Tsilka and her newborn baby girl were set free after the ransom of \$ 63,000 (USD) was paid in gold.⁸ The hostages were freed on February 23, 1902 and taken to Salonica, where they were visited by throngs of adoring well-wishers, including sailors from five British warships that had dropped anchor in the harbour.⁹ The freed hostages were not terribly cooperative with the Ottoman authorities as they proved evasive in the face of police questioning.¹⁰ Stone and Tsilka had bonded with their captors, despite initial threats to kill them and the baby in cold blood. They travelled to the United States to recount their ordeals and trumpet the cause of their captors to packed halls of listeners, providing an unexpected propaganda boost for IMRO.

Assessments and Appeals, Spring 1902

Although the Miss Stone Affair ended peacefully, the payment of a rich ransom to IMRO gave the organization more financial resources for its planned uprising, furthering the likelihood of mass violence in the unstable territory. British reports from Macedonia in early 1902 reflect this. Monthly reports summarizing the information from consular dispatches were written by Mr. Young, the third secretary of the British embassy in Constantinople. Young's summary for January 1902 reported tension between Serbs and Albanians in the Vilayet of Kosovo, and of the Vilayet of Monastir being in a state of ongoing insecurity with multiple political murders, including the killing of three women who had denounced the murderer of a Macedo-Bulgarian informer. A source described as "An Englishman, resident for many years in the frontier district" reported from the Stip area that the Ottoman authorities had been arming the local Turkish peasants. According to the sources, Christians around Stip could

6 Teresa Carpenter, *The Miss Stone Affair* (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 102.

7 O'Connor to Lansdowne, January 29, 1902, FO 78/5189/40.

8 Carpenter, *The Miss Stone Affair*, 164.

9 "Miss Stone's Release," *The Times*, March 18, 1902, 11.

10 Ibid.

offer little resistance except in a few mountain monasteries and hamlet. He thinks, however, that the Christians are sufficiently desperate to face or even court a massacre as a drastic but sure remedy and the Moslems, aware of this view, are resolved that as few as possible shall be left to benefit.¹¹

There was no shortage of such assessments, which presented mutually antagonistic Christians and Muslims as being equally culpable for any future massacres.

Young's February report informed of increased IMRO activity and countermeasures by the Ottoman security forces. Most of the reported actions were taking place in the Monastir vilayet, where Greeks and "Grecomans" (Greek-speaking or Greek sympathizing Slavs) were being targeted by IMRO. The attacks mentioned in the first part of the report appear highly localized and targeted. In one case, a Grecoman accused of being a police informant had been shot to death at a wedding; in another a Grecoman schoolmaster had been "hewed in pieces" by four young men on the orders of local IMRO committee. A local Turkish Bey had also been assassinated. In response, the police apprehended some of the killers and conducted searches for weapons. The report noted that the bands operating in the southern regions of the vilayet were primarily brigands engaged in attacking Greek villages on a temporary basis. In the north, where fewer Greeks resided, the bands consisted more of propagandists who were fighting with limited success in guerilla actions against Ottoman forces. The report also contained the twelve articles of the "Project for Macedonian Autonomy" as produced by the Second Macedonian Congress in 1895. Young noted that the aim of the congress was to produce an autonomous region akin to Eastern Rumeilia, excluding much of 'Old Serbia' (present day Kosovo), Epirus, and the Pomack dominated Rhodope region to the east. Thus the population of this envisioned entity would be majority Macedo-

¹¹O'Connor to Lansdowne, January 29, 1902, FO 78/5189/40.

Bulgarian.¹² Young additionally pointed out that the twelve articles were taken from the internationally sanctioned Constitution of Eastern Rumelia, which, combined with Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty constituted “a cleverly engineered claim to foreign support.”¹³

A strategic assessment was produced by the British military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell. Providing a listing of the strength and capabilities of the Ottoman forces in the vilayets of Macedonia and Thrace, Maunsell reported the Ottomans having 92,600 men at their disposal along with 222 guns, more than enough to crush even a well-coordinated uprising by the SMC and IMRO. Even if Bulgaria entered on the side of the rebels, the combined forces would be unlikely to hold out once Ottoman troops began to arrive from Anatolia. However, Maunsell did point out that guerillas would be able to exact significant damage by using the terrain to their advantage, and that with Bulgarian help they would be capable of taking and holding a section of the Salonica-Constantinople railroad that ran through Thrace and eastern Macedonia. Such a move could, Maunsell reasoned, enable Bulgaria to “win a commanding position whence she could demand intervention from the European Powers to regulate matters in her favour in Macedonia.” Maunsell also noted the potential danger of the Ottomans’ use of local llave battalions from districts that would be occupied by the rebels. If they found out their home had fallen into enemy possession, the men in the llave battalions would be likely to “indulge in savage reprisals.”¹⁴

Ambassador O’Conor also provided his analysis of the reports and the prevailing conditions in Macedonia. The ambassador stated that he did not consider a general uprising to be imminent, while acknowledging the prevalence of political violence and the

¹² The “Project for Macedonian Autonomy” set out the physical boundaries of the envisioned autonomous region and contained articles pertaining to administration, civil rights, civil service, language, education, police, and finance. The document called for a Special Commission to oversee its implementation and contained a final article advocating its application to the Vilayet of Adrianople. The Macedonian Congress had been conceived as an umbrella organization to encourage the SMC and its other main rival within Bulgaria, the Fraternal Union, to enter into more cooperation. The Second Macedonian Congress had been held in December of 1895, and had invited all ‘Macedonian’ organizations in Bulgaria and Romania to attend. As it was based in the Ottoman Empire, IMRO did not attend and refused to recognize those elected by the Second Congress, but there were attempts by the SMC to include IMRO in the months following the Second Congress. See: Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 44-51.

¹³ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), March 5, 1902, FO 78/5189/99; Report by Mr. Young on Events in Macedonia during February 1902, March 5, 1902, FO 78/5189/99.

¹⁴ Maunsell to O’Conor, March 7, 1902, FO 195 2128/2.

Ottoman government's loss of "authority and prestige" not only in Macedonia but in Albania. Despite the deteriorating situation, O'Connor doubted an uprising would get far or even be attempted owing to the strength of Ottoman intelligence and the lack of a Great Power willing to back the rebels.¹⁵ O'Connor had received no shortage of additional intelligence on Macedonia in early 1902. For example, in late February a source he described as a "confidential channel" informed him that an uprising was imminent and dates had been set.¹⁶

In addition to confidential channels and diplomatic reports, the British were receiving warnings from the Ottomans themselves. On March 17 the Grand Vizier informed O'Connor that the Ottoman government was not prepared to leave it up to the "restraining influence" of Russia and Austria-Hungary to prevail on the Bulgarian government for the sake of peace in Macedonia. The Ottomans believed the Bulgarian state was aiding, if not masterminding and coordinating, plans for an uprising in Macedonia. While this may well have been a way of diplomatically inviting the British to take more interest in Macedonia, the Grand Vizier stated on no uncertain terms that the Ottomans had deployed 60,000 to Macedonia and were prepared to take the necessary measures to uphold peace and Ottoman sovereignty in the three vilayets.¹⁷

The Ottomans were also taking their case directly to the British Foreign Secretary. On March 15, the Ottoman ambassador in London, Anthopoulos Pasha, read a telegram to British Foreign Secretary Lansdowne which described violent provocations in Macedonia and called on the Great Powers to make representations to Sofia for the purpose of making it clear to the Bulgarians that these actions would not elicit any sympathy from the powers.¹⁸ On April 9, Lansdowne informed O'Connor that Anthopoulos Pasha had spoken to him "with great earnestness" about Ottoman concerns regarding what he considered blatant Bulgarian complicity in preparations for an uprising in Macedonia. The Ottoman ambassador tried to impress upon Lansdowne the public relations difficulties the Ottomans faced since methods of moderation towards Bulgaria and the Macedonian Committees had failed and military countermeasures would lead to

¹⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), March 5, 1902, FO 78/5189/99.

¹⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), February 24, 1902, FO 78/5189/83.

¹⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 19, 1902, FO 78/5190/99.

¹⁸ Lansdowne to O'Connor, March 15, 1902, FO 421/193/129.

prejudiced reactions against the Ottoman government. As he had in March, Anthopoulos Pasha requested that Britain and the other powers make diplomatic representations to Bulgaria.¹⁹ Lansdowne was under pressure to take action on Macedonia. In the characteristically cautious fashion he was known for, the Foreign Secretary would seek agreement from the other powers to act in concert. He also wanted more information on the situation in Macedonia.

Lord Lansdowne had grown concerned enough about the situation in Macedonia to try to procure more direct, reliable information. In early March, Lansdowne sent a request to the War Office to allow Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell to take leave of his duties in the Ottoman capital in order to tour Macedonia and visit Sofia.²⁰ The War Office promptly granted the Foreign Secretary's request and Maunsell toured Macedonia in March.²¹ Maunsell had experience in the Ottoman Empire and Lansdowne thought highly of his abilities. A year earlier, Lansdowne had sanctioned Maunsell to leave his post at Van in Eastern Anatolia for nine months to take employment in Britain's Intelligence Division to prepare detailed maps from his surveys and edit his reports.²²

Maunsell toured Macedonia in March and early April of 1902, submitting a report on the ninth of April. The report confirmed Maunsell's previous strategic assessments while providing additional detailed intelligence. He substantiated that the insurgents had been most active in the Monastir and Prelip areas with two lines of communications connecting these rebel concentrations to the frontier of Bulgaria, one via Stip and the other via Strumica. If coordinated with support from Bulgaria, Maunsell suggested this "wedge of difficult country" across central Macedonia would be strategically advantageous in the event of an uprising as the terrain was very favourable to guerilla warfare. He likened the difficulties the Ottomans were facing in defending long lines of railway against guerilla bands to the recent British experience in South Africa.

The report contained further assessments of the rebels and the Ottoman security forces. Maunsell reported that some of the bands had "a kind of uniform with a cap-

¹⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, April 9, 1902, FO 421/193/201.

²⁰ Foreign Office to War Office, March 5, 1902, FO 78/5211.

²¹ Fleetwood-Wilson to Sanderson, March 6, 1902, FO 78/5211.

²² Foreign Office to Intelligence Division, Jan 10, 1901, FO 78/5141.

badge 'liberty or death'" and that they were in possession of dynamite supplies suitable for destroying bridges, and supplies of Gras and Martini rifles, which had been sold to them by the Greeks from stocks used in the 1897 war. Maunsell noted that a Turkish staff officer considered the situation in Macedonia to be similar to the time prior to the 1897 war in that guerilla bands were trying to provoke Muslims into "some extreme action to precipitate a war." The mobilized Ottomans Ilave battalions were described as ready and enthusiastic with the Turkish and Pomak units being capable while the discipline level of the Albanian troops was a cause for concern. Maunsell concluded that the Ottomans were prepared to "defend their hold on Macedonia against all comers." In spite of the advantage of the terrain, he reckoned the bands would be completely destroyed unless Bulgaria intervened. While he noted that the latest rumoured start date for the uprising was Greek Easter, he maintained that the uprising would not take place unless the bands knew for certain they would have armed support from Bulgaria.²³

Maunsell's April report provides accurate details and a well-reasoned assessment of the volatile situation in Macedonia. As the report stated, in strictly military terms, an uprising by the rebels without at least minimal Bulgarian support had no chance of success. Nevertheless, preparations for the uprising continued. Although he viewed what was very likely an IMRO cap, it does not appear that Maunsell came into direct contact with any members of IMRO or the SMC during his journey. He reported some direct information that was obtained from Ottoman officers, indicating he undertook the tour under Ottoman escort. More detailed information on the political dynamics of the Macedonians Committees and their relationship with Bulgaria had to come from other sources.

In 1902, Bulgaria was in a delicate position regarding Macedonia. It could influence events in the three vilayets, but the competing political elements in the principality were not united their objectives and tactics toward Macedonia. Moreover, the Bulgarian government was coming under increasing international pressure to restrain its ambitions in Macedonia and take action against the Macedo-Bulgarian organizations operating within its borders. Such measures were difficult due to the considerable popular sympathy for IMRO and the SMC in Bulgaria and, in the case of the latter

²³ Maunsell to O'Connor, April 9, 1902, FO 195/2128/22.

organization, the connections to the Bulgarian monarchy and military. The situation of Bulgaria vis-à-vis Macedonia was not unlike that which Jordan faced with the Palestine Liberation Organization after 1967 or what Pakistan faced with radical Islamist organizations and the Afghan Taliban after 2001. Bulgaria's governing politicians faced personal risk if they elected to heed diplomatic requests to take action against the Macedonian Committees. Former Prime Minister Stephan Stambolov had paid with his life for opposing the wishes of the Macedonian lobby in 1895. On January 6, of 1902, the Bulgarian Minister of Public Instruction, Kančov, was assassinated by a Macedonian schoolteacher, who committed suicide after killing the minister. The disgruntled schoolteacher was reportedly motivated by fact that he had not been granted teaching position of his liking.²⁴ Nevertheless, the killing served as a reminder of the political volatility which the situation in Macedonia exacted on neighbouring Bulgaria. As noted by the British vice-consul, Mr. Elliot, the minister was "out of sympathy" with the Macedonian Committees and the murder was met with open approval by Macedo-Bulgarians in Bulgarian and thinly veiled approval in the leading Bulgarian newspapers:

This fact, as well as the commission of the crime itself, shows the reality of the danger arising from the continued immigration from Macedonia into Bulgaria, which successive Ministers have lamented. The danger increases daily in proportion to the difficulty found by the immigrants in obtaining a livelihood.²⁵

The British were aware of the delicate situation in Bulgaria. The complexities of the principality's internal politics were coupled with financial difficulties, which had the Bulgarians in ongoing negotiations with Russia for a badly needed loan. It was the rejection of a proposed loan contract by the Bulgarian Sobranie in December 1901 which observers anticipated would prompt Prince Ferdinand to dissolve the Sobranie and hold elections. Instead Prime Minister Karavelov resigned and a new cabinet was announced to be led by Stoyan Danev, the serving minister of foreign affairs and leader of the Progressive Liberal Party. The new prime minister went to the electorate to seek a new mandate and the governing party was returned with a majority on March 2, 1902. Danev continued as prime minister and foreign minister. Elliot described the election results as a disappointment to "those who have the good of the country at heart" and indicated the

²⁴ "Personal," *Illustrated London News*, February 15, 1902, 234.

²⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, February 11, 1902, FO 78/5217/12.

government may have used intimidation tactics during the campaign.²⁶ The new government had to face the financial situation immediately while dealing with pressure from the Ottomans and Greeks and the Great Powers to take more effective actions against the Macedonian Committees. Elliot expressed his understanding of the Bulgarian government's difficulty in dealing with the Macedonian Committees, noting in mid-March that the government had "shown every desire to discourage movements in Macedonia."²⁷ A month later, Elliot reported that he had addressed the acting Bulgarian foreign minister over Bulgarian concerns regarding a communication by the Ottoman government with the following statement:

I believed the Bulgarian Government to be sincere in the desire to prevent disorders in Macedonia, so far as lay in their power, but I was not so sure that the orders they gave to this effect were carried out by their subordinates, of whose want of discipline, I regretted to say, I had long experience.²⁸

The Miss Stone Affair had very clearly shown the limits of the Bulgarian authorities to control the Macedonian organizations. Prominent members of the SMC were former members of the Bulgarian military, notably General Tsconhev and Colonel Iankov. Several leading members of IMRO, including Gotse Delchev and Boris Sarafov, had Bulgarian military training. The churches and schools of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Macedonia had been heavily infiltrated by the Macedonian committees. Furthermore, Bulgaria maintained a number of commercial offices in Macedonia, which were repudiated by the Ottomans to be advancing more political than commercial interests.²⁹ The fact was that Bulgarian irredentism towards Macedonia remained. It would be political—if not physical—suicide for a Bulgarian politician to deny Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia. Bulgaria had also built up a formidable army by the turn of the century, and there was a general expectation that the Bulgarians would eventually go to war with the Ottoman Empire to attempt to secure more territory and realize their outright

²⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 4, 1902, FO 78/5217/18.

²⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 15, 1902, FO 78/5220/3.

²⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 12, 1902, FO 78/5217/53. The Ottoman statement, which the Bulgarian minister described as "menacing in its tone", was purported to have been published in the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*.

²⁹ Maunsell to O'Connor, April 9, 1902, FO 195/2128/22. In this report, Maunsell indicates that the Ottomans believed that the Bulgarian commercial agent in Salonica, Mr. Shapov, and his staff were actively aiding "the Committee."

independence. Like the SMC and IMRO, the Bulgarian government believed that the Great Powers, ultimately, would not stand by and allow the Ottoman Empire to crush a Christian, European state. These sentiments were clearly grasped by Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell in his report from April 9, 1902:

The Bulgarian Government apparently does what it can to check the bands, and its action is quite correct; but the nation is ambitious and vain and, roused by some reprisal, real or imaginary, on the part of the Turks, might rush into precipitate action. They have spent enormous sums on their army in proportion to revenue. They work extremely hard at military training, and have attained considerable perfection, and thus may be tempted to try the temper of the sword they have sharpened. They are also tempted to plunge, by the knowledge that even if they fail, Europe will interfere to save them, as she saved Greece.³⁰

Although military conflict between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire had not materialized, the war of words for the favour of the Great Powers was well established. As evidenced in the reports by Maunsell and the visits of the Ottoman ambassador to the British Foreign Secretary, the Ottomans repeatedly accused the Bulgarians of conspiring with IMRO and the SMC and called upon the Great Powers to apply diplomatic pressure on Sofia. Bulgarian Prime Minister Danev was often defensive in reaction to accusations of Bulgarian intrigue in Macedonia in meetings with the British vice-consul in Sofia. For example, in a lengthy dispatch on March 15, Elliot reported that Danev denied rumours that Bulgarian reserve forces were being mobilized and defended the level of vigilance of the Bulgarian security presence on the western border with Macedonia. He maintained that no bands had crossed, and that most of the rebel activity in Macedonia was taking place in the west, far from the Bulgarian border.³¹ The battle for Great Power favour would continue.

The Ottoman cause in Macedonia was receiving some support from Greece in early 1902. Since the early 1890s, the Greeks had been steadily losing ground in Macedonia in the propaganda war for the hearts, minds, and tongues of the Christian population. The Greeks had enjoyed less Ottoman favour since the latter 1880s, and a superiority complex towards the Slavs had led to a degree of complacency amongst the Greeks. In addition, the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople and the Greek government

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 15, 1902, FO 78/5217/24.

in Athens had lacked a coordinated strategy in their efforts to propagate loyalty in Macedonia, which was one of many territories the Greeks coveted in the region.³² The defeats of 1897 also curtailed Greek initiatives in Macedonia. In 1902 the Greeks did not have an equivalent of IMRO and were squarely on the defensive. In particular, the Greeks were losing ground steadily in the villages of the Vilayet of Monastir. In short term, the Greek strategy was to try to strengthen their holding in population centres like Monastir and Kastoria, appeal to the Great Powers for assistance, and ally themselves with the Ottoman authorities to counteract the advances of IMRO, the SMC, and Bulgarian interests in Macedonia.

The first months of 1902 saw a diplomatic push by the Greek government for the protection of Greeks in the Monastir vilayet. In early January, Ambassador Egerton in Athens reported a request by the Greek government for the British to pass along more information on the situation in Monastir.³³ Two weeks later, Lansdowne informed Egerton that the Greek Charge d' Affairs in London had expressed concern regarding violence against Greeks in the Monastir vilayet. Continuing Greek requests for British assistance prompted Ambassador O'Connor to request that the British government consider opening a consulate in Monastir. O'Connor reasoned that a British consular presence could have a pacifying effect:

The question of appointing another Vice-Consul to Monastir is another matter. There is no doubt that his presence is apt to restrain to some extent Turkish officials who are over zealous or inclined to treat the Christians in an unfair manner, but the same remark would apply to almost any other town in the Ottoman Empire with a mixed population.³⁴

In a conversation with Egerton in mid March, Eugene Eugeniades, the Hellenic Consul-General in Salonica, spoke highly of the Ottoman regular forces, stating to the ambassador that "the discipline of the regular troops can be relied on."³⁵ While the

³² Evangelos Kofos, "Dilemmas and Orientations of Greek Policy in Macedonia: 1878-1886," in *Macedonia Past and Present*, Edited by Dimitri Iakavidis (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1992), 135-136.

³³ Egerton to Lansdowne, January 1, 1902, FO 32/476/2.

³⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, January 26, 1902, FO 78/5189/27. O'Connor noted that he did not want the Greeks to think that the appointment of a vice-consul to Monastir had come about from their lobbying.

³⁵ Egerton to Lansdowne, March 22, 1902, FO 32/736/36. Eugeniades also spoke highly of the British Consul-General in Salonica, Albert Biliotti.

Greeks were pleased with some of the diplomatic efforts of the Great Powers, they continued to voice their concern to the British about Macedonia. In late April, the Greeks expressed regret at the reduction of Ottoman measures against the rebels, and indicated they were suspicious of the French and the Russians for being sympathetic to the rebels.³⁶

To the north, Serbia had its own designs on Macedonia, but it received much less attention than Bulgaria. Members of IMRO were active in Serbia but it was not considered a staging ground for incursions into Macedonia. In early April the Ottoman Ambassador informed the British Foreign Secretary of an alleged concentration of Serbian troops along the border with Macedonia and asked for the British government's assistance in investigating the matter. Lansdowne immediately made inquiries with O'Connor in Constantinople and Ambassador Bonham in Belgrade. Bonham's response dismissed the accusations of military preparations as a misunderstanding of standard Serbian military procedures. He noted that the Ottomans considered the Serbian government to be "friendly" but were concerned that the Serbs were not doing enough to stop insurgents from transiting from Macedonia into Serbia.³⁷ The principle issue for Serbia regarding Macedonia in the spring of 1902 was the appointment of a new bishop for Uscub. Thanks to Greek and Ottoman support, the new bishop was to be a Serbian, Metropolitan Firmilian. The Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian Exarchate objected, lobbying for a member of the Exarchate Church to get the appointment. The issue resonated strongly enough in Serbia to bring students out into the streets of Belgrade to protest.³⁸ Not surprisingly, it was Russian diplomacy that helped solve the issue.

As 1902 progressed, concerns over the situation in Macedonia began to increase in circulation in the Great Power capitals. As in Januarys past, the new year brought with it remarks about the possibility of an uprising in the spring. Yet, there was no initial concern that an uprising in 1902 was any more likely than previous years. None of the powers had any interest in seeing an uprising come to fruition. Crucially, the two powers with the largest interests in the Balkans were holding fast on their agreement of *détente* in the Balkans. As British ambassador Francis Richard Plunkett reported from Vienna in

³⁶ Egerton to Lansdowne, April 23, 1902, FO 32/736/45.

³⁷ Bonham to Lansdowne, April 5, 1902, FO 105/145/2.

³⁸ Bonham to Lansdowne, April 21, 1902, FO 105/143/57.

January of 1902, relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia had even gotten stronger. The Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand, was to visit Russia in February. As long as the two eastern monarchies acted in concert in the Balkans, Plunkett reasoned, relations between them would be fine, and there would be little chance of any rebellion succeeding.³⁹

A month later, the messages coming out of Vienna had changed. In a meeting with Count Lützow of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Department, Ambassador Plunkett remarked that the count “hoped that this was only the annual spring revival of the rumours of trouble to break out in the Balkans when the snow melts.” However, Lützow informed Plunkett that Russian and Austro-Hungarian sources had intelligence of an uprising in Macedonia set to commence in mid-March.⁴⁰ Lützow also said the uprising might coincide with an uprising in Armenia. In early March, Lützow told Plunkett he considered the situation in the Balkans to be more “disquieting” than usual.⁴¹ The British Ambassador to Paris also reported that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Théophile Delcassé, was concerned about Macedonia.⁴² Appeals by the Greek government provoked some additional alarm and a flurry of communication between the powers regarding a coordinated response.

The difficulty the Great Powers faced in formulating coordinated responses towards events in Macedonia was to become a recurrent theme as the Ottomans, Bulgarians, Greeks, and to some extent the Serbs all made appeals for Great Power favour. Concerted actions were further hindered by the often rapid pace at which events in the Balkans capitals and on the ground in Macedonia moved. It appears the Russians were content to let the Austro-Hungarians take the lead on Balkans affairs. Very little came out of Italy except for reaction to the Greek appeals. The German government had nothing to say regarding the volatile situation in Macedonia, giving rise to French concerns that the Germans would support the Sultan in resisting diplomatic pressure by the other great powers.⁴³ By April the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count

³⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, January 22, 1902, FO 7/1322/28

⁴⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 26, 1902, FO 7/1322/60.

⁴¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 2, 1902, FO 7/1322/28

⁴² Monson to Lansdowne, March 5, 1902, FO 27/3582/14.

⁴³ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), March 27, 1902, FO 7/1322/88.

Gołuchowski, was downplaying the danger of the situation in Macedonia and expressing confidence in the professionalism of the Ottoman security forces, the sincerity of the Bulgarian government, and the steadiness of Austria-Hungary's agreement with Russia.⁴⁴ However, at least one British diplomat in the region was questioning of Goluchowski's assumptions and voicing a lack of confidence in the long term stability of Austro-Russian relations and the prospects for peace in Macedonia and the Balkans. In a confidential dispatch dated April 7, 1902, Elliot articulated his scepticism:

The Agreement between Austria and Russia for the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans is no doubt effective at present, but is based upon such different principles that it cannot be counted on as a permanent factor in the situation. Austria is influenced by a genuine apprehension of disturbances which can cause her nothing but inconvenience, and perhaps also by a traditional want of sympathy with the victims of autocratic misgovernment. Russia has no fundamental objection to revolutionary movements within the Turkish Empire, but insists on the outbreak being timed so as to suit her convenience and redound to her advantage.⁴⁵

Indeed, the only real mistake of the Macedonian revolutionaries made in their quest for autonomy, if not independence, in 1902-1903 was that their timing was inconvenient both for their Slavic kin in Russia and their fellow Christians in Great Britain.

As the drama of the Miss Stone Affair seemed to indicate, there was a strong possibility that 1902 could be the year the proverbial predictions of a springtime uprising in Macedonia actually materialized. Early dismissals of an uprising gave way to concrete concerns as intelligence reports circulated of an uprising in March or April. Although this uprising did not occur, the steady level of political violence and the volume of warnings emanating from Macedonia caused enough concern amongst the Great Powers that there was agreement that, at the very least, some diplomatic measures needed to be applied to calm the situation in Macedonia. If the seemingly inevitable uprising could not be discouraged, its scale and impact could at least be contained and minimized.

⁴⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), April 10, 1902, FO 7/1323/98.

⁴⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), April 7, 1902, FO 78/5217/44.

Restraining and Reforming the Ottomans and Bulgarians

The relative peace Europe had enjoyed for so many decades in what has been termed 'the long nineteenth century' was a credit to the agreement of the Great Powers to pursue multilateralism through the Concert of Europe. Although the adventurous schemes of individual states and the development of alliances had undermined the power of the concert since its inception in 1815, most Great Power statesmen tried to find concert with the other powers most of the time. Britain's isolation and its weakened state at the end of the Boer War made the multilateral diplomacy of the concert an appealing means of confronting a potential crisis in Macedonia. Russia and Austria-Hungary usually took the lead in Great Power diplomatic initiatives in the Balkans. With their 1897 agreement in hand, Russia and Austria-Hungary assumed joint responsibility for the stability of the Balkans, and Britain, for the most part, was comfortable to follow. However, as time progressed, the British increasingly felt the Austro-Hungarians and Russians were not being robust enough in their approach to Macedonia and they took steps to increase their influence in diplomacy and the implementation of reform.

For Lansdowne and the British, a cautious multilateralism was the first option. Having considerable trust in Ambassador O'Connor in Constantinople, Lansdowne at times told O'Connor to consult with his fellow Great Power ambassadors on an issue and proceed with their consensus in concert to address the Ottoman government. For example, in early January of 1902, Lansdowne received a letter from Council of Foreign Bondholders asking the British government to urge the Bulgarian government to make overdue debt payments. Lansdowne authorized Elliot to make representations on the matter to the Bulgarian government but only on the condition that he join other powers in doing so.⁴⁶ This cautious, multilateral approach was again employed when the Greeks made repeated appeals for help in Macedonia from the Great Powers in late January and February. Amidst reports of increasing instability and warnings of an uprising, Lansdowne acted on Greek requests by sending a dispatch to his ambassadors in Paris,

⁴⁶ Lansdowne to Elliot, January 10, 1902, FO 421/193/23. The Bulgarian government was obliged to make payments on the shares of the Ottoman Public Debt that Bulgaria had inherited from the Ottoman Empire after the incorporation of Eastern Rumelia in 1885. However, the Council of Foreign Bondholders claimed that the Bulgarians had not made any payments since February of 1900. See: Council of Foreign Bondholders to Foreign Office, January 7, 1902, FO 78/5211.

Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Berlin asking whether the respective governments had received similar requests from the Greek government.⁴⁷ Curiously, only the British embassy in Vienna reported to have received communication from the Greek government.⁴⁸ The German government stated it was hesitant to make joint representations.⁴⁹ However, the powers that mattered most in the Balkans (Russia and Austria-Hungary) were already preparing to take action based on the “disquieting rumours” emanating from Macedonia.⁵⁰

Lansdowne was happy to follow the Austro-Russian lead. In conversation with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Count Deym, on March 12, he stated that the Austro-Hungarian had access to reliable information on events in Macedonia and that the British “would be inclined to follow their lead.” He suggested that the Great Power ambassadors in Constantinople should also meet to consult on the matter and that any action taken by the powers “should be of the most cautious and tactful kind.”⁵¹ The Austro-Hungarian and the Russians did not care whether the British joined them in making representations or not. On March 15, Elliot telegraphed Lansdowne that the Russian agent in Sofia had already made a representation to the Bulgarian government and the Austro-Hungarian agent was about to do likewise. Elliot concluded that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians had agreed to make representations prior to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador’s meeting with Lansdowne. Elliot also informed the Foreign Secretary that the Bulgarians had already taken measures against the Macedonian organizations and that he considered representations to be unnecessary.⁵² On the day Count Deym met with Lansdowne, Ambassador Egerton wrote from Athens that Greek Prime Minister Alexandros Zaimis was delighted that Austria-Hungary and Russia were making representations, particularly the Russians since they could influence the actions of the Balkan Slavs.⁵³ For the Austro-Hungarians and Russians, it was only necessary that the British and the other powers not interfere with their policies

⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Monson, February 28, 1902, FO 421/193/88.

⁴⁸ Lansdowne to Egerton, March 6, 1902, FO 421/193/111.

⁴⁹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, March 1, 1902, FO 64/1553/18.

⁵⁰ Scott to Lansdowne, March 1, 1902, FO 65/1664/18.

⁵¹ Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 12, 1902, FO 421/193/122.

⁵² Elliot to Lansdowne, March 15, 1902, FO 78/5220/3.

⁵³ Egerton to Lansdowne, March 12, 1902, FO 32/736/32.

in the Balkans. They wished to maintain their 1897 agreement and not to have it compromised by another power. They wanted the Balkans to themselves.⁵⁴

Austro-Russian diplomacy in the Balkans could be very effective, and is likely why any tangible plans behind the rumours of an uprising in early 1902 were effectively quashed. Russia could exert pressure on the Slavic states of Serbia and Bulgaria. Serbia presented so little cause for concern in 1902 that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians did not consider it worthwhile to make representations to Belgrade. They did make their point to a Bulgarian government, which could not afford to ignore them. While the government of Stephan Stambolov had distanced Bulgaria from Russia, the government of Stoyan Danev was not in a position to freely pursue an independent foreign policy. Danev did not have any sign of support from any of the other powers and Bulgaria was in dire need of a financial loan from Russia. In early April, not long after his party's election, the Bulgarian prime minister made an official visit to St. Petersburg accompanied by Bakhmetieff, the Russian Vice-Consul in Sofia. British Ambassador Scott reported that Bakhmetieff had made sure Danev had received an audience with the Czar before handing him over to the influential finance minister, Count Sergei Witte. Scott described the main business of the visit to be Bulgaria's "financial embarrassments." However, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff also intended to tell Danev that the Bulgarian government would incur "serious responsibility" for "any relaxation of its efforts to control and check the agitation of the Macedonian Committees."⁵⁵ Although Lansdowne expressed some reservations to his ambassadors about the need to make representations to the Bulgarian government, he felt it necessary to join the other powers in doing so.⁵⁶ He telegraphed Elliot with instructions to join the representatives of the other powers in making representations to Bulgaria on April 12.⁵⁷

While the Bulgarians were publically expressing their frustration at being admonished over the Macedonian Committees, they were under additional Russian pressure regarding the appointment of a new Orthodox Bishop for Uscub in the north of Macedonia. The propaganda war for Macedonia, waged over the previous decades, had

⁵⁴ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 21.

⁵⁵ Scott to Lansdowne, April 2, 1902, FO 65/1641/114.

⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, April 9, 1902, FO 421/193/200.

⁵⁷ Lansdowne to Elliot, April 12, 1902, FO 421/193/204.

been fought in schools and churches. Whoever controlled the most schools and churches could command the most influence. Hence, the national loyalty of the next bishop in a larger centre like Uscub could have a significant bearing on the contest for Uscub and the Vilayet of Kosovo. The Slavic population of Uscub was claimed by both Serbia and Bulgaria. Since the Bulgarians had recently been making more headway in the race for Macedonia, the Serbs had effectively allied themselves with the Greeks. The choice was between either a Bulgarian bishop of the Bulgarian Exarchate, or a Serbian bishop in the employment of the Greek Patriarchate.

The decision lay in the hands of the Sultan and the Ottoman government. Not wishing to add to the number of grievances and potential flashpoints in Macedonia, the Ottomans had delayed issuing a decree (*berat*) proclaiming a new bishop for a year by April of 1902. The Russians lobbied the Ottomans strongly to appoint the Serbian Metropolitan Firmilian as bishop and to delay no further, arguing that appointing a Bulgarian bishop was tantamount to yielding to the not only the Exarchate but the Bulgarian government and the Macedonian Committees. The Austro-Hungarians and the other powers were content not to interfere.⁵⁸ The issue led to protest demonstrations in Serbia and Bulgaria, and by June the Greeks had changed from backing the appointment of a Serb to desiring a Greek to be the next Bishop of Uscub. A plan to have the consecration of Firmilian in Salonica was met by outrage and threats of mass protest and civil disruption by the city's Greek community, despite a direct order from the Greek Patriarchate.⁵⁹ The Russians persisted, even offering to have the bishop's consecration take place under Russian religious auspices on Mt. Athos.⁶⁰ In June the desired *berat* was issued with an acceptable location for the consecration being found at a monastery near Alexandroupolis in Thrace. Even then, three Greek bishops had to be

⁵⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 7, 1902, FO 78/5217/45.

⁵⁹ Shipley to O'Connor, June 12, 1902, FO 195/2133/102; De Bunsen to O'Connor, June 18, 1902, FO 78/5191/285.

⁶⁰ Shipley to O'Connor, June 12, 1902, FO 195/2133/102.

sent from the Patriarch in Constantinople to perform the services.⁶¹ Bishop Firmilian did arrive in Uscub in mid July and assumed his duties as bishop, despite being initially locked out of his own church in a show of protest by the Greek and Vlach communities.⁶²

As the above instances illustrate, the Great Powers could influence events in Macedonia, especially if they acted in solidarity. The Ottoman, Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian governments were watched closely by the diplomats of the Great Powers. Through diplomacy, these governments could be persuaded to apply pressure on the various commercial, ecclesiastical, security, and political organizations that operated under their control—or at least their influence—in Macedonia. The problem, as several diplomats pointed out, was that the actions of some of these organizations were beyond the ultimate control of the governments to which they were connected. The most poignant example was the Bulgarian government and IMRO. While IMRO had connections to Bulgaria, it did not take orders from the Bulgarian government or Prince Ferdinand. The leaders of IMRO were almost all natives of Ottoman Macedonia. Some had received education and military training in Bulgaria. All of those who taught did so in the schools of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Most of IMRO's supplies from literature to weapons came across the Bulgarian frontier. Yet, the organization did not openly espouse exclusive Bulgarian loyalties. Its claims to Macedonian autonomy could be construed as a political cover for an agenda of Bulgarian irredentism, but several of its prominent members had not enjoyed a positive relationship with Bulgaria or the SMC. 1901 and 1902 had seen more differences develop between the two Macedonian Committees, notably during the Miss Stone Affair when the IMRO kidnappers were at times pursued by members of the SMC. The kidnapping was clear evidence for all who paid attention that IMRO could act completely independently. Indeed, if IMRO members

⁶¹ DeBunsen to Lansdowne, July 1, 1902, FO 78/5192/304. According to De Bunsen, holding the services in a Russian monastery on Mt. Athos became impossible due to the reluctance of bishops from the neighbouring Greek monasteries to participate. De Bunsen comments that he finds the decision by the Russians to back Serbian interests in Macedonia against Bulgaria's "interesting" considering the recent bestowing of honors on Prince Ferdinand by the Russians at St. Petersburg. De Bunsen considers the move part of a Russian policy to weaken the Greek character of the Orthodox Church outside of Russia to Russia's favour, noting the Russian support for a Syrian as Patriarch of Antioch. He speculates that the Russians might desire to weaken the Bulgarian Exarchate, which would prompt its complete or partial absorption into the Greek Patriarchate, thereby further weakening the Greek church by placing a Bulgarian element in its midst.

⁶² Fontana to Shipley, July 9, 1902, FO 294/25/31.

could execute a successful high-profile kidnapping and avoid being killed or captured by the Bulgarian and the Ottoman security forces while most of its brain trust was under arrest, the organization certainly had the means to launch an uprising similar to or greater than the Bulgarian Uprising of 1876.

British Influence and Influencing the British

IMRO's ability to launch an uprising that would provoke atrocities was of obvious concern to all the Great Powers. Although the connection to the Macedonian Slavs was stronger with Russia through Orthodoxy and Slavism, the British too had connections through Christianity and Pan-European sentiments. Furthermore, as discussed by Gary Bass, there was the sense of moral responsibility in Britain connected to the liberal ethos of the country.⁶³ Many felt Britain had a responsibility to help the weak and the oppressed of the world as the foremost proponents of the rights of man. This sentiment had moved Britain to abolish slavery in 1833. This moral sentiment led some to lobby that Britain should assume the role of the world's policeman, a role they considered the autocracies of continental Europe morally unfit of fulfilling. Such feelings, coupled with the high level of press freedom in Britain, made it all the more likely that a well-publicized atrocity in the Balkans might create such a political groundswell in Britain that the government would be compelled to act. The fact that the victims in Macedonia were likely to be fair skinned European Christians being killed at the hands of Muslims, made it all the more likely that Macedonia could very well produce a scenario like that of Greece in the 1820s, the Lebanon in 1860-1, or Bulgaria in 1876-8. The British leaders did not have to look far for these moral impulses. As evidenced in the biographical sketches in Chapter One, these were sentiments many of the leaders held themselves.

In order for such a scenario to be avoided, the British had to preempt what can be termed the 'Massacre Formula' (Massacre + Media = Intervention). That is, a massacre will attract calls for intervention if it receives sufficient sympathetic media coverage. This is precisely what journalists had done in cases such as the Chios Massacre of 1822, and what William Gladstone had articulated in his publication of the

⁶³ Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 6-8.

'Bulgarian Horrors' of 1876. As will be demonstrated later, the British sought to influence journalists and editors to make well-informed and balanced assessments of any alleged atrocities they reported and, when considered necessary, they controlled information flowing out of Macedonia. Nevertheless, the best way to quiet cries for intervention was to preempt the actions which would elicit a massacre in the first place, or, at the very least, limit the scale of the bloodshed. To do this, the British lobbied the Ottoman government to take measures to reform and restrain its security forces; pressured the Bulgarian government to be as vigilant as possible in guarding against provocations by IMRO and the SMC; and made efforts to monitor the activities of key members of IMRO and the SMC and dissuade the two organizations whenever possible from launching an uprising by assuring them that outside support would not be forthcoming. Many of the British efforts were made in concert with the other Great Powers. However, Britain at times made additional diplomatic efforts, especially in calls for Ottoman reform.

Most Great Power politicians and diplomats had a fairly dim view of the Ottoman Empire and those who governed and represented it. This sentiment was strongest towards junior and mid-level diplomats and administrators. For example, Elliot, the British vice-consul in Sofia, dismissed some of the information being reported by the Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia as sensationalist, attributing it to the competition between rival Ottoman diplomats posted to Bulgaria to try to outdo one another in supplying troubling information and assessments to their superiors.⁶⁴ If not childish, Elliot certainly considered their professionalism to be substandard. As noted by Sowards, only the senior Ottoman diplomats and politicians in Constantinople were trusted not to "substitute self-interest for accuracy and candor in their reports and dealings."⁶⁵ The two senior officials who had the respect of the Great Power diplomats in 1902 were the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Ahmed Tevfik Pasha, and the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Said Pasha. Both were in frequent contact with the Sultan. Ahmed Tevfik Pasha was an ethnic Albanian who had served previously as ambassador to Russia and Austria-Hungary. Known for his unflappably cool demeanor, he was considered highly knowledgeable but would not oppose the Sultan on any issue. However, Said Pasha, an

⁶⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 16, 1902, FO 78/5218/78.

⁶⁵ Sowards, *Austria's Macedonian Reform Policy*, 18.

Anatolian Turk, would oppose his sovereign, although the British considered his politics to be too “retrograde.”⁶⁶

The Great Power ambassadors resident at Constantinople were extremely capably and highly qualified. They were led by the Austrian Baron Calice, who represented not only his country but the collective resolve of the Concert of Europe to the Ottoman government. By 1902, Calice had held his position for twenty-two years and was highly respected for his knowledge and his diplomatic abilities. Russia was represented by Zinoviev, a scrupulous and cautious man who lacked the tendency of adventurous risk taking some Russian diplomats were known for. Zinoviev and Calice were ideal conservative counterparts to maintain the Austro-Russian agreement in the Balkans and pursue the agenda of reform in the Ottoman Empire slowly and cautiously. It was a policy that led them to be at odds at times with the British push for more effective reform under their ambassador, Nicholas O’Conor. The other main player in Constantinople was Adolf Baron Marschall, a former public prosecutor from Baden, who served as German ambassador. Marschall had the confidence of the Sultan and advanced German interests, which were at times at odds with the other powers, even those of Germany’s closest ally Austria-Hungary.⁶⁷ Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany had the most influence in the Ottoman capital. The other powers would struggle to have more influence on the reform process.

By early March of 1902, reports from Salonica by the veteran British Consul General Alfred Biliotti were giving credence to the alarmist cries from the Greek government. Biliotti’s sources were informing him that the rumours of an anticipated uprising were actually politically calculated acts of intended massacre.

I have just received information from a source which I consider reliable to the effect that the Macedonian Committee intend, within the next two months, to cause a certain number of Mussulmans to be massacred in different parts with a view to promote retaliation on their part, and compel Europe to intervene in European Turkey.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 16-17

⁶⁸ Biliotti to Lansdowne, February 28, 1902, FO 421/193/87.

Two days later, Biliotti reported that the Muslims in the Monastir vilayet were “exasperated” and warned that a massacre of Muslims will be met with retaliation “on a scale hitherto unknown.... [T]he retaliation will not attain Bulgarians only. Under these circumstances all Christians live in terror.”⁶⁹

These and other reports of immanent violence did prompt Austria-Hungary and Russia to take the lead in making representations to the Bulgarians and Ottomans. Preferring to work with the consensus of the other powers, the British moved more slowly to make formal representations, but they did not hesitate to warn the Ottoman government of the consequences of a retaliatory massacre and urged expedient reform of the Ottoman security forces. Ambassador O’Conor apparently required no prompting from London to issue warnings to the Ottoman government. In his dispatch accompanying Mr. Young’s report on events in Macedonia for February 1902, O’Conor confirmed to Lansdowne: “I have lost no opportunity of impressing upon the Ministers the vital importance of not allowing the repression of crime and disorder to leave the legal path and degenerate into massacre.”⁷⁰ A day later, Lansdowne expressed similar sentiment in a telegram to Ambassador Egerton in Athens regarding the Austro-Hungarian and Russian governments use of “firm language of warning and advice” and representations to the Balkan States and the Ottoman Empire.

It will be necessary to deal cautiously with this matter, for it would be extremely unfortunate if the Turkish Government should have recourse to excessively severe measure of repression. The effect of such measures might be to provoke the disturbances of which we are all anxious to avoid the possibility.⁷¹

The Ottoman Government and the Sultan were far from the being the unenlightened despots many in the Great Power nations considered them to be. They were very conscious of the importance of how their image was perceived abroad and were cognizant of the implications of the trap the revolutionaries were planning to lure them into. After receiving O’Conor’s advice on March 3, the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Said Pasha, responded by reporting that he had already telegraphed the Valis of Adrianople, Salonica, Monastir, and Kosovo, “instructing them to maintain order in their districts in a

⁶⁹ Biliotti to Lansdowne, March 2, 1902, FO 421/193/96.

⁷⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), March 5, 1902, FO 78/5190/115.

⁷¹ Lansdowne to Egerton, March 6, 1902, FO 421/193/111.

legal and proper way, and not to allow the Turkish population to take the law into their own hands and make reprisals on the Bulgarian agitators.”⁷² On March 14, the Ottoman Ambassador to London, Anthopoulos Pasha, informed Lansdowne that the Ottoman government had information the “Revolutionary Committees in Macedonia” had plans to “provoke massacres with the object of raising discussions in the Bulgarian Sobranje and causing the Bulgarian Government to appeal to the European Powers.”⁷³ Lansdowne informed O’Conor that he had replied that he was glad the Ottomans were

alive to the danger which existed, and had taken precautions for the preservation of order in the disturbed parts. I trusted that in the event of trouble occurring and repressive measures becoming necessary, the Turkish Government would take great care to avoid indiscriminate or excessive severity, which would enlist sympathy in Europe against the Turkish authorities and on the side of the sufferers.⁷⁴

Ottoman diplomacy was gaining some favour with Lansdowne by April. On April 9 he wrote to O’Conor in Constantinople describing the “great earnestness” with which the Ottoman ambassador had spoken to him regarding the infiltration of brigands into Ottoman territory from Bulgaria, and the lack of effective measures being taken by the Bulgarian government to counter the anti-Ottoman activities taking place within the borders of the principality. Anthopoulos Pasha pleaded the Ottoman Empire’s case, stating that his government had acted in moderation “in accordance with the Powers,” but that these measures would “be to no avail so long as Bulgaria continues to persist in her present attitude.” The ambassador finished by lamenting that the Ottomans would “suffer prejudice on account of the military measures they were obliged to take.”⁷⁵ While Lansdowne did tell the ambassador that he considered it beyond the Bulgarian government’s ability to control the Macedonian Committees, Anthopoulos Pasha appears to have made a favourable impression on the British Foreign Secretary. On April 12 Lansdowne authorized Elliot in Sofia to join in the making of multilateral representations to the Bulgarian government.⁷⁶

⁷² O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 5, 1902, FO 78/5189/99.

⁷³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, March 15, 1902, FO 421/193/129.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Lansdowne to O’Conor, April 9, 1902, FO 421/193/201.

⁷⁶ Lansdowne to O’Conor, April 12, 1902, FO 421/193/204.

O'Connor, too, was expressing satisfaction with the Ottoman efforts to circumvent the attempts of the Macedonian Committees to agitate through massacre. In a report dated April 8 (received in London on April 14) he stated that the conditions in Macedonia had improved and gave credit to the Grand Vizier for the instructions issued to the Valis of Macedonia and Adrianople in March. The Grand Vizier provided O'Connor with a copy of the instructions, a document the British ambassador called "admirable." O'Connor noted that that if it were "faithfully executed by the Valis it can hardly fail to prevent crime and massacre and acts of cruelty towards the inoffensive population, whatever may be the conduct of the insurgent bands."⁷⁷ The text of the Grand Vizier's instructions was included in O'Connor's report and is as follows:

You are aware that the real objective of Bulgaria is to unite with those of the same race in Macedonia, and to attempt to destroy the Mussulman and Greek elements. So long as the forces of Turkey put a stop to and destroy the actions of the Revolutionary Committees in a lawful manner, the Powers will not protect Bulgaria nor interfere with Turkey in the execution of her special duties. Hence the Bulgarian Committees have adopted other means for attaining their end. This consists in irritating the Mussulman population and forcing them to reprisals, and so cause a massacre. Should such a massacre take place public opinion in Europe will be much excited, and if there are any protectors of the Bulgarians, they will come forward, and this may bring about concerted action by the Powers, and thus lead to deplorable consequences for Turkey. In a word: First, whenever bands appear you must allow them no time to spread and extend their action, but at once destroy them and stop their violence. Secondly, this must be done with the aid of regular troops and regular police, and on no account whatever must any member of the public be employed in it. Thirdly, as to the chief aim of the Revolutionists to stir up the Mussulmans to vengeance by injuring them and driving them to extremity, if such should happen the Mussulmans must show the patience and fortitude which distinguishes them, and sufferers must not seek revenge themselves, but obtain it by means of the overwhelming force and just legal measures of the State. This must in the present juncture be the guide of officials and all loyal people. If these principles be followed it will be clear who is a rebel and a traitor and what are the rights of the State, and will also prevent all foreign intervention and its baneful consequences. Otherwise the question may become grave. To you is instructed the task of receiving these orders in the proper spirit, and seeing that they are carried out in your jurisdiction.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 8, 1902, FO 78/5190/169.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

In presenting these instructions to the British Ambassador, the Grand Vizier provided a documented demonstration that the Ottomans understood precisely the potential political ramifications of a reprisal massacre of Christians in Macedonia. What is more, these instructions to the Valis of the troubled vilayets gave O'Connor evidence that the Grand Vizier and the Ottoman government had heeded the advice of the British and the Great Powers by making it clear in writing that responses against the actions of the revolutionary bands must be done within the law and conducted by regular police and soldiers. The release of these instructions could only help the Ottomans in the ongoing public relations battle, which would ultimately help determine whether the Great Powers would intervene after the anticipated uprising. The instructions also make it clear that the Ottomans considered the revolutionary organizations to be Bulgarian in their national orientation ("Bulgarian Committees") and that guerrilla activity in Macedonia ultimately came at the behest of Sofia. This is a message consistent with other Ottoman communication, including the aforementioned conversation between Lansdowne and Anthopoulos Pasha.⁷⁹ The Ottomans were gaining some favour with the British. Interestingly, it was only a day later that Maunsell submitted his report from his tour of Macedonia in which he likened the Ottoman experience in Macedonia to the British experience in South Africa.⁸⁰

The Bulgarian government was frustrated by Ottoman accusations of complicity with the Macedonian Committees in creating instability in Macedonia. In a meeting with Maunsell in Philipopolis in early April, the British vice-consul reported that the Bulgarian monarch, Prince Ferdinand "spoke pointedly" about the situation in Macedonia and told the British military attaché the Bulgarians were "doing all in their power to contribute to the preservation of peace, and it was annoying to be constantly worried by representations and admonitions from M. Zinivieff, the Russian ambassador at Constantinople."⁸¹ Furthermore, Ferdinand added that he was worried about the treatment of Bulgarian inmates at the prison in Monastir, a point that the British vice-consul in Philipopolis noted was consistent with Maunsell's impressions.⁸² Similar

⁷⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, April 9, 1902, FO 421/193/201.

⁸⁰ Maunsell to O'Connor, April 9, 1902, FO 195/2128/10.

⁸¹ McGregor to Elliot (confidential), April 7, 1902, FO 78/5217/51.

⁸² Ibid.

sentiment was expressed to Elliot on the evening of April 11 by the Bulgarian Minister of Interior and acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Ludshankov, who said he could not understand the motives of the Ottoman government for accusing the Bulgarian government of promoting disorders in Macedonia “while in reality it was doing its utmost to prevent them.”⁸³ Following Lansdowne’s instructions to join in concerted representations to the Bulgarian government, Elliot wrote from Sofia that he considered the Bulgarian government to be sincere in its attempts to discourage agitation. The problem was that not all the government’s subordinates obeyed their orders. The Bulgarians promoted this assessment. Unlike the Ottomans, who called the revolutionary committees ‘Bulgarian’ and stated they were operating under the direction of Sofia, the Bulgarian government made reference to some of its disruptive subjects as “Macedonians.”⁸⁴

Despite the acrimonious accusations and counter accusations continued between the Ottomans and the Bulgarians, the British attempted to employ their diplomatic resources to arbitrate some of the outstanding issues between the two governments. An example of this from the spring of 1902 was Elliot’s investigation into Ottoman accusations that the Bulgarians were distributing arms from their depot in Kushtendil near the border with Macedonia, presumably for one or both of the Macedonian Committees.⁸⁵ Elliot had already begun to investigate this matter before news of the Ottoman accusation arrived from London on April 21. Responding to a letter from Elliot on April 12, the British vice-consul in the Danube River port of Rustchuk (Ruse) reported that officials at the town’s Romanian consulate witnessed the loading of four carts of rifles from the offices of the Macedonian Committee for transport to Sofia. The Vice Consul added that additional loads of arms were being collected in other cities in the north-east of the principality; suggesting that that destination of the weapons was Macedonia. At a local gathering for the SMC, the outspoken Colonel Iankov reportedly

⁸³ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 12, 1902, FO 78/5217/53.

⁸⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 15, 1902, FO 78/5217/54.

⁸⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 18, 1902, FO 78/5217/58.

stated that the organization was in possession of 19,800 rifles of various makes.⁸⁶ Elliot acted on the information, informing Ludshankov of the transportation of rifles. After initially expressing his surprise as the news, Ludshankov confirmed a day later that the shipment of rifles was on route to Sofia and that some of the rifles had been sold by the Bulgarian government in 1897. However, while the government could seize cartridges and explosives, it could not legally seize the rifles. He did inform Elliot that the government had taken the step of banning the sale of arms in the sensitive prefectures which bordered the Ottoman Empire: Sofia, Philipopolis and Kushtendil.⁸⁷ Ludshankov called the Ottoman ambassador's accusations of arms smuggling "mendacious," and "groundless," stating that the "Carnicaset" model which they have been accused of distributing was not used by the Bulgarian army, and that a band killed by the Ottoman security forces was found to have Gras rifles, a model not used by the Bulgarian army but in fact used by the Greek army.⁸⁸ A formal telegraphic communiqué issued by the Bulgarians stated that the Bulgarian government had been taking necessary measures to curtail guerilla activity and stabilize the border and that it had warned the SMC in Sofia that the government was prepared to dissolve it if necessary.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Vice Consul Dalziel to Elliot, April 12, 1902, FO 78/5217/54. Vice-Consul Dalziel noted that local Bulgarians explained the transfer of the rifles as a "purely commercial" transaction. The local Austrian vice-consul's theory was that the rifles were bought from the Romanian government, something the Romanians denied. Dalziel stated he had "no doubt of the fact" that the rifles were previously distributed in Macedonia in 1900 and 1901 before being collected for safekeeping in Bulgaria.

⁸⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 12, 1902, FO 78/5217/53.

⁸⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 18, 1902, FO 78/5217/58.

⁸⁹ Ibid. The text of the communiqué is as follows: "Mendacious and designing reports of the activity of the Macedonian Committee and its relations with the Bulgarian Government have lately been circulated from Turkish sources with great assiduity. Thus, for example, it has been announced that a number of rifles of the 'Carnicaset' model have been distributed to the Macedonians out of the depots of arms, although rifles of that model do not exist in Bulgaria. Another report states that a band which was shot down by the Turks was armed with Gras rifles, although it well known that not Bulgaria, but Greece, is armed with those weapons. The groundlessness of these assertions is best shown by the following facts: The pursuit and arrest of those agents of the Macedonian Committee who have been guilty of improper proceedings; the warning address by the Government to the Supreme Macedonian Committee in Sofia that it will be dissolved if it lays itself open to suspicion of such proceedings; the prohibition of the sale of arms in all places adjoining the Turkish frontier; the confiscation of a great number of arms in district of Sophia by the Mayor of the capital. In the face of these facts it requires great audacity still to assert that the Bulgarian Government distributes rifles from its depots to the Macedonian bands."

A few days after the issuing of the communiqué, Elliot discussed its contents with Ludshankov. Elliot informed the minister that while it was fine to argue that the rifles used by the Bulgarian army had not surfaced in Macedonia, British records from Uscub contained a report that a guerilla band, which was defeated by the Ottoman security forces near Palanka (across the border from Kushtendil), was armed with Mannlicher rifles, a brand used by the Bulgarian army. Ludshankov promised to investigate the possibility that the rifles might have come from government depots, but suggested that the rouge former head of the Macedonian Committee, Boris Sarafov, might have bought 2,000 rifles from the Mannlicher factory in Steyer, Austria. Ludshankov also assured Elliot that the government was sincere about taking action against the SMC and that its leaders were under surveillance and that the rifles transported from Ruse had been “closed and sealed” in their destination store on a legal pretext. Furthermore, the Bulgarian government issued another communiqué instructing the Bulgarian Commercial Agents in Macedonia to urge the “Bulgarians” in Macedonia to “remain quiet,” while instructing its diplomatic representatives to impress upon the Great Powers that these efforts will be for naught if the situation in Macedonia does not improve.⁹⁰ Like its Ottoman rival, the Bulgarian government was presenting itself as the more responsible party and blaming the other side for not doing enough to diffuse the tension in Macedonia.

Elliot’s investigations and diplomacy provide an example how the British were willing to be active as a third party in attempting to resolve a contentious issue such as the alleged illegal distribution of rifles. By using the resources of the British consulates and their networks in Ottoman Macedonia and Bulgaria, Elliot was able to obtain information on the issue and use it to help deescalate a dispute that had the potential to escalate into a crisis. Although it is not clear whether the Bulgarian government’s communiqué to the Bulgarian Commercial Agents stemmed from Elliot’s disclosure of the guerilla band armed with Mannlicher rifles, the British could certainly take some satisfaction with the issuing and the timing of the communiqué. It is possible that Elliot and the British applied some leverage to prompt the Bulgarians to issue the communiqué. On April 30, the Foreign Office issued a memorandum to the Ottoman ambassador in response to the allegations leveled by the Ottomans earlier in the month.

⁹⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 21, 1902, FO 78/5217/59.

The memorandum reiterates the “facts” provided by the Bulgarians regarding the rifles and the measures being taken by the Bulgarians against the committees, and it includes mention of the conversation between Elliot and Ludshankov, where the Bulgarian minister assured the British that his government would indeed carry out its threat to dissolve the SMC. The instructions to the Bulgarian Commercial Agents are also provided. Effectively, the memorandum validated most of the Bulgarian responses to the Ottoman ambassador’s accusations. It did not mention the information of the band defeated near Palanka carrying Mannlicher rifles.⁹¹

Amidst the growing crescendo of violence emanating from Ottoman Macedonia in the spring and summer of 1902, a high-stakes diplomatic war of accusations and counter accusations was taking place between the Ottoman and Bulgarian governments. Both were intent on proving that the balance of responsibility for the instability in Macedonia was the fault of the other party. As the example of the alleged distribution of rifles illustrates, the British were willing to utilize their resources to investigate grievances in the hope of preventing accusations from escalating into a crisis. While the Ottomans continued to lobby for the Bulgarian government to formally disband the Macedonian Committees, British assessments were more in accordance with the Bulgarian claim that the activities of the Macedonian Committees were beyond the Bulgarian government’s control. What is more, the British understood the politically sensitive nature of the Macedonian issue with Bulgaria. If the Bulgarian government were to conduct a mass crackdown against the committees, it could turn out to be an act of political suicide. The British pressured the Bulgarian government to remain vigilant and restrain provocations by the Macedonian Committees to the best of its abilities.

Ultimately, the concern the British had with the Bulgarian government was the same concern it had with the Ottoman government—they did not believe either government was in complete control of its respective subordinates. Not all the political entities operating in Macedonia—rebel guerilla bands or Ottoman militias respectively—could be controlled by lobbying high level officials in Sofia and Constantinople to directly

⁹¹ The fact that the band was defeated on Ottoman territory would indicate the Ottomans had missed or misplaced the information that the rifles were Mannichers. It is also possible they knew very well of this fact and elected to mention it at the time, although evidence of such a ‘smoking gun’ would have made the Ottoman accusation much more credible and would have been aided the Ottoman ongoing image and propagand war from Great Power favour.

restrain their underlings in Macedonia. The British pressured the Bulgarians to be vigilant, assist in investigations, and coerce the Macedonian Committees directly when possible. Regarding the Ottomans, the key issue was reform. If the Ottoman government's officials and security personnel were not up to the task of following the instructions for restraint issued from Constantinople, the British felt they should be replaced with more capable men. This was to be a stance the British would strongly and consistently advocate, and one which brought them into some conflict with the two powers which had the largest interests in the Balkans—Russia and Austria-Hungary.

By early March there was some agreement by the majority of the Great Powers that representations to the Ottoman Empire for restraint needed to be coupled with new demands for reform of the Ottoman administration to help undermine the anticipated 'atrocities agitation.' On March 5, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Count Goluchowski, called on his ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Baron Calice, to consult with Russian ambassador Zinoviev about measures the two powers could take to preempt disaster in Macedonia. A program of "Conservative reform" was to be outlined by Calice and Zinoviev to improve the Ottoman administration. Importantly, the Austro-Hungarians and Russians agreed that it would be their project exclusively, and not include any of the other four Great Powers. They were slow to commence drafting reforms owing to some political opposition to the idea in Russia due to Russian sympathy for the Bulgarians and the need to convince the Czar that the idea was sound. Calice set about trying to sell the senior Ottoman officials on the need for reform. The Czar eventually gave his consent on June 25 and plans were made to draft specific proposals in the summer.⁹²

On March 5, 1902, the same day Count Goluchowski ordered Baron Calice to begin consultations with Zinoviev, Ambassador O'Connor wrote to Lansdowne with a series of his own warnings and gloomy assessments regarding Macedonia, which accompanied the report on events in Macedonia by Mr. Young. O'Connor concluded his dispatch with the following remarks on the possibilities for reform:

If there were hopes of inducing the Ottoman Government to improve its administration and of persuading the Sultan to appoint capable and active

⁹² Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 19-20.

Governors and Sub-Governors instead of the inefficient and timid men who are now named, mainly at the instance of some friend at the Palace, the outlook would still be fairly hopeful; but I fear there is little chance of any radical change in the system of government which has prevailed for so long and which has been so long expected.⁹³

Regarding his fellow ambassadors, O'Connor noted that Zinoviev was very concerned about the situation. Baron Calice, who had only arrived back in the capital a day previously, informed O'Connor that he had been asked by his government for his assessment of the situation, apparently declining to mention that his orders were to meet with Zinoviev. O'Connor mentioned that the French and Italian ambassadors had no view on the matter, and that the German ambassador was "as usual" downplaying the danger.⁹⁴

While the Great Powers were relatively quick to make concerted representations and give advice respecting the stability of Macedonia, lobbying the Ottoman Empire to make internal reforms under Great Power direction would be much more of a challenge. Actively courting the favour of the Ottomans, the Germans took little interest in the issue. The Russians, Austro-Hungarians, and British wanted change, but O'Connor and the British would find themselves on the outside looking in and dissatisfied with the scale and pace of proposed reforms.

O'Connor persisted, monitoring the situation in Macedonia, reporting back to Lansdowne and the Foreign Office, and lobbying the Ottomans to make proactive reforms and to remain vigilant regarding atrocities agitation. As with the precautions against retaliatory massacres, when it came to the issue of reform the Ottomans told the British what they wanted to hear and showed they were willing to take some advice on the subject. Following Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell's March 22 report on the Ottomans' decision to call out the allegedly untrained and undisciplined auxiliary Ilave battalions in anticipation of an uprising, O'Connor told the Grand Vizier Mehmed Said Pasha that he was concerned that the Ilave troops would "not be under proper military control", making it more likely they would commit precisely the sort of massacre the revolutionaries were

⁹³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 5, 1902, FO 78/5189/99.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

trying to draw them into.⁹⁵ The Grand Vizier insisted that the men were under strict instructions from the Valis to conduct themselves appropriately. Moreover, in a move that spoke directly to O'Connor's specific fears, he added that the government had decided to replace the existing Vali of the Salonica vilayet as they considered him unfit to cope with the difficulties being created by the Macedonian Committees. The new Vali was to be Hassan Fehmi Pasha, who was described as

an officer of great intelligence and energy, and experience, whose appointment would inspire confidence among the law-abiding portion of the population, whether Christian or Mussulman, and at the same time deter the revolutionists from pushing matters to extreme lengths.⁹⁶

The British Consul-General in Salonica expressed regret over the move, describing outgoing Vali, Tevfik Bey, as "an honest, intelligent, and well-disposed official," who was willing to investigate the actions of his own subordinates, "a fact which was recognized by the Bulgarians."⁹⁷ On the other hand, Vice Consul Biliotti also reported that the newly appointed state prosecutor, Hakki Bey—fresh from experience in his native Crete—was performing his job so competently and expediently that even the Macedo-Bulgarians were impressed. In the same dispatch, Biliotti also commented on another point which was to haunt the reform process—money. He maintained that even if the guerilla bands of the Macedonian Committees disappeared, the appeal of their message would not diminish unless "the permanent injustice, corruption, and maladministration, arising chiefly from the state of the finances" was addressed. "Without touching on other reforms, the regular payment of the official salaries, police, and gendarmes' pay, &c., would do away with more than two-thirds of the present abuses."⁹⁸ As the advocates of reform were to find repeatedly in the coming months and years, effective reform was challenged by a chronic lack of financing.

The Russians and Austro-Hungarians were still in the process of formulating reforms when the Ottomans embarked on a reform process of their own. Just days after Zinoviev left Constantinople for St. Petersburg in June, the Sultan formed a special

⁹⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 25, 1902, FO 78/5190/139.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Summary of Reports from His Majesty's Consuls in European Turkey, April 22, 1902, FO 78/5191/190.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

commission to report on the state of Ottoman administration in Macedonia. The commission reported back a week later and on July 15 the Sultan issued an imperial decree which called for the creation of more courts and schools in Macedonia and called for Ottoman officials to undertake more efforts to promote local businesses and see to it that those employed by the state be paid regularly. The decree did not contain reforms to the police structure or the duties of the Valis.⁹⁹ A “Technical Commission” was to be sent to the Macedonian and Albanian vilayets to assess the situation further in the coming months. To the Great Powers, the Ottoman reform measures of July 1902 were a partial measure. While happy to see some progress, the Ottoman reforms did not even meet the conservative expectations of the Austro-Hungarians. What is more, the timing of the creation of the original commission and the imperial decree of July 15 took place while with the Russian ambassador was on leave in Russia. This left Calice having to reassure the Russians that Austria-Hungary was not undermining their role in the reform process. He called the reforms a first step, and assured the Russians that the two powers would consult with one another regarding future measures.¹⁰⁰

Not privy to the Austro-Russian discussions, news surrounding the reforms was rather late to reach the British. Like Zinoviev, O’Conor was on leave when the announcements were made in the early summer. In his place, De Bunsen reported in a confidential dispatch that Calice had been watching Macedonian events “with anxious anticipation” and that he was not surprised to learn the Austro-Hungarians and Russians had begun to press the Ottoman government on the issue of reform. The British had learned of the Austro-Russian initiatives from the Ottoman government, which had “trashed out” the aforementioned reforms. Writing on July 23, De Bunsen mentioned that Calice had later verified the events, and noted he had been informed of the dispatch of the Ottoman Technical Commission to the provinces.¹⁰¹

By issuing reforms of their own, the Ottoman government effectively took away some of the impetus of the Great Powers. By adding more courts and promising to do more to ensure the regularity of the imperial payroll, the Ottomans addressed some of the key concerns which had been pointed out by British officials in the spring.

⁹⁹ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰¹ DeBunsen to Lansdowne (confidential), July 23, 1902, FO 78/5192/334.

Nevertheless, while there was no uprising in the summer of 1902, the reforms did little or nothing to arrest the level of political violence in Macedonia. The Macedonian Committees continued to bring weapons into Macedonia and reports of ambushes, skirmishes, kidnappings, targeted assassinations, and “blackmail tours” continued through the summer. The monthly report for July 1902 tells of “strenuous efforts” by the Ottomans in the Monastir Vilayet to disarm the population with the promise of an amnesty. However, as the pointed out by the British Consul in Uscub, this program could leave many villages (presumably Christian Slav) in the border areas vulnerable to attack by Albanian bands. So apparently tenuous was the Ottoman control in the west of the Monastir vilayet in places like Struga and Ohrid that “Albanian freebooters, Turkish Aghas, and Greek informers” had organized the “Counter-Committee” of Ohrid to help resist activities of the Macedonian Committees. The problem was that such counter committees were beyond Ottoman control and prone to committing the same terror and violence they were formed to resist.¹⁰² In early August, the Vali of Monastir sent Ottoman troops to intercept a band of Albanians from the Debar region who were reportedly on their way to raid a Macedo-Bulgarian village. Half the Albanian band was killed, leaving the consul to comment that the “absence of wounded and prisoners seems to imply a want of confidence in the capability of the Turkish jails to retain Albanian convicts.”¹⁰³ Similar measures were taken by the the Vali of Kosovo in mid August against a rogue Albanian village.¹⁰⁴ Reports of the Ottoman authorities’ struggle to control some Albanian bands were coupled in British reports with some abusive tactics by the Ottoman security forces, such as in a report from the village of Patele, where Ottomans soldiers forced civilians to march in front of them as they approached houses where guerillas had barricaded themselves. The consuls in Salonica also received complaints from a deputation of peasants who complained of the imposition of having to quarter Ottoman

¹⁰² Monthly Report of Events in Macedonia for July 1902, July 30, 1902, FO 78/5192/355. The Albanians were described as being “even more brutal and much less discriminating than the Bulgars.”

¹⁰³ Monthly Report of Events in Macedonia for August 1902, September 10, 1902, FO 78/5192/402.

¹⁰⁴ Shipley to Biliotti, August 21, 1902, FO 294/25/38. The Ottomans had been compelled to act against the Albanian village of Pirani near Prizren after the “Albanian as well as the Christian population” of Prizren had made continual representations to the Vali of Kosovo. According to Shipley, the Ottomans had deployed a “strong force” of soldiers with artillery to bombard the village, destroying the kula and killing 42 Albanians. The remaining male population of the village was transported to Prizren.

troops in the field.¹⁰⁵ While some of the measures of the Valis received praise from the consuls, the reports contain no evidence that the July reforms were having any positive effect. The Ottomans still lacked badly needed financial and administrative resources. With rival national and political organizations increasingly taking aim at one another, the Ottomans were struggling to maintain a peacekeeping presence on their own territory.

As the summer progressed, British frustration with the pace of Ottoman reform mounted. In a dispatch dated August 11, De Bunsen reported that “[l]ittle if any” progress had been made. Calice informed him that the Ottoman Special Commission’s special report had recommended that more powers should be given to the Valis and that the gendarmerie should be reformed due to its being made up of irregulars. The Sultan had resisted these recommendations. Nevertheless, Calice reportedly still thought that “some good had been done by directing the attention of the Ottoman government to the dangers of the present situation.”¹⁰⁶ International press reports circulating that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians were making “fresh” representations to the Ottoman government to expedite the reform process were confirmed to be false.¹⁰⁷ The Ottoman Technical Commission designated to study and report on Macedonia was still being constituted at the end of August when new rumours were circulating of an autumn uprising.¹⁰⁸ O’Conor returned to Constantinople in September, but he had little more to report than his frustration with the Ottoman reform process. Regarding the three recommendations handed down by the Ottoman Special Commission in July, O’Conor could only report that the first recommendation had been acted upon. Otherwise, he only confirmed De Bunsen’s previous report that the recommendations to give more power to the Valis and to reform the gendarmerie had been ignored. O’Conor expressed his frustration in the final paragraph of the dispatch:

In general the vague and unmethodical character of the document gives no great promise of improvement. Such development of Public Works,

¹⁰⁵ Monthly Report of Events in Macedonia for August 1902, September 10, 1902, FO 78/5192/402.

¹⁰⁶ DeBunsen to Lansdowne (confidential), August 11, 1902, FO 78/5192/367.

¹⁰⁷ Scott to Lansdowne, August 7, 1902, FO 65/1642/262. Scott was told by the Austrian Charge d’ Affaires in St. Petersburg that news reports were likely based on the record of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians making representations to the Ottomans regarding the treatment of the Ottoman Christians in the past.

¹⁰⁸ DeBunsen to Lansdowne, August 26, 1902, FO 78/5192/381.

Public Instruction, and even of the Judiciary, as it contemplates is impossible or at best illusionary until law and order be secured by the sufficient and regular payment of troops and official and by the investment of competent Valis with adequate powers. It is to be feared that the only object of the measure is to serve as a sop to foreign critics of the present condition of Macedonia.”¹⁰⁹

Other foreign consuls reached similar conclusions. The Ottomans may have pleased the Great Powers by telling them what they wanted to hear regarding massacre prevention and reform through the spring and summer of 1902, but little had been done to defeat the Macedonian Committees or to undermine their appeal. The slow pace of the Ottomans to enact reforms had led Ambassador O’Conor to conclude that the Ottoman were acting disingenuously towards the very issue (reform) that the Great Powers considered urgent and vital in order to give the Ottoman government more credibility amongst its own subjects. The Macedonian Committees were still in no position to defeat the Ottoman security forces militarily without outside assistance, but they certainly had the potential to launch an uprising large enough to get the world’s attention and initiate the very “atrocities agitation” the diplomats so feared.

Monitoring the Macedonian Committees: IMRO, the SMC, and Boris Sarafov

It was one thing for Great Britain and the Great Powers to diplomatically lobby sovereign states; exerting influence on shadowy revolutionary organizations was quite another matter. To some degree, the ‘Macedonian Committees’ could be reached through the Bulgarian state and at times British officials did come into contact with members of the committees. Still, direct contact was infrequent. The British did endeavor to gather intelligence on the committees and monitor the movements of the leadership. Like the other Great Powers, they directed much of their focus to Boris Sarafov, a man whose international profile exceeded his political influence.

The politics of the SMC the IMRO can appear to be a maze of collusion, betrayal and fratricide. At times the two organizations worked in unison, at other times they shot at each other. Political fissures within both organizations further added to the complexity.

¹⁰⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 21, 1902, FO 78/5193/412.

It is not surprising that many British diplomats frequently used the blanket term 'Macedonian Committees.' The SMC was established after IMRO with close ties to the Bulgarian crown and the military. The SMC wanted Macedonia to follow the path of Eastern Rumeila and enter into union with Bulgaria. Most of its leaders were active or former Bulgarian military officers. IMRO had been formed in Macedonia, primarily by teachers. Although these educators worked for the Bulgarian Exarchate and maintained connections with Bulgaria, their stated goal was autonomy for Macedonia.

Whether IMRO ultimately wished to see Macedonia realize independence or whether they felt autonomy was the most prudent path to union with Bulgaria is still a debated matter. Also in question is whether IMRO's members considered themselves to ultimately be of Bulgarian nationality or a uniquely Macedonian nationality. Deciphering the national allegiances of those who plotted to rebellion against Ottoman authority is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is useful to note that political relations between the SMC and IMRO were dynamic. Even when the organizations were at loggerheads, individuals did move between the organizations. If taken at face value, British diplomatic documents provide ample evidence to support claims that IMRO was uniquely Macedonian or Bulgarian. Anyone making such claims must contextualize the document they are citing. It is not the intension of this study to make any national claims.

Under the presidency of Boris Sarafov from 1899-1901, the SMC had enjoyed excellent relations with IMRO. Senior members of IMRO had been allowed to participate in SMC meetings. However, demands by the SMC to have Bulgarian military officers appointed as advisors to IMRO's regional committees were resisted by IMRO. The ascendancy of General Ivan Tsonchev in the SMC began to put the accord between the two organizations under pressure. A career officer and friend of Prince Ferdinand, Tsonchev was convinced the teachers of IMRO and their peasant followers could not succeed against the Ottomans without covert Bulgarian military support, which could be supplied by the SMC. Tsonchev's growing influence made IMRO nervous. IMRO's executive increasingly quarreled with the SMC as it did not aspire to the SMC's goal of unifying Macedonia with Bulgaria and it did not wish to surrender control of the popular support they had built up in Macedonia. While Gotse Delchev and Gerorgi Petrov, the IMRO leaders in closest touch with the SMC, were at times courted by Tsonchev and Sarafov, Perry notes that the SMC also planned to assassinate the two men. Amidst the

escalating rhetoric between the two organizations, Boris Sarafov ordered the assassination of the Macedonian-born Romanian journalist Stefan Mihaileanu in Bucharest in 1900. As Mihaileanu had been exposing IMRO's activities, Sarafov may have ordered the killing as a good will gesture towards his old schoolmates in IMRO, but the move almost led to war between Romania and Bulgaria. In March of 1901 Sarafov was arrested by the Bulgarian police. Although he was acquitted and set free in August, his incarceration enabled Tsonchev to effectively take control of the SMC and induce Sarafov's resignation.¹¹⁰ While Stoyan Mihailovski was confirmed as president of the SMC during the Ninth Macedonian Congress in August of 1901, he was squarely under Tsonchev's influence. Sarafov's ousting pushed him into the fold of IMRO, whose leadership decided that Sarafov could best be put to use as a travelling promoter and fund raiser for IMRO, a decision which would see Sarafov garner more attention from the Great Powers.

Crackdowns by the Ottoman and the Bulgarians created more fissures between the two organizations. The discovery of a hectograph machine and lists of IMRO members in Salonika in early 1901 led to the arrest of 188 people connected with IMRO by the Ottoman authorities. The Bulgarian government ordered all Bulgarian military personnel to cease having contact with the SMC and closed the "rifle clubs" which were serving as training grounds for prospective SMC operatives. IMRO reacted to the mass arrests by decentralizing, which allowed its regional committees to act independently, decreasing the likelihood that they would be influenced by any overtures from the SMC, if they heard from them at all. The desperate need for funds motivated the regional IMRO leaders Yane Sandanski and Hristo Chernopev to organize the Miss Stone kidnapping in the autumn of 1901. In a move indicative of the deterioration of relations between the two organizations, Tsonchev sent the famous SMC guerilla leader Doncho Zlatev and his band to the Pirin Mountains to attempt to rescue the hostages.

By 1902 IMRO and the SMC were actively competing with each other for influence in Macedonia. SMC bands were operating primarily in eastern Macedonia, trying to undermine IMRO's authority by recruiting IMRO members, and arguing that only they could liberate Macedonia from Ottoman rule. Both organizations planned for an

¹¹⁰ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 88-89.

uprising but disagreed over the timing of the event. The SMC wanted to launch an uprising in 1902 while IMRO wished to play for more time to amass more resources and train more men to fight. Neither organization shrunk from advocating the 'atrocities agitation' the Great Powers sought to preempt, but IMRO was rather less callous as its leaders wished to give the uprising a greater chance to succeed.

The Tenth Macedonian Congress of August 1902 cemented the differences between IMRO and the SMC. Delchev was invited to attend on behalf of IMRO but declined, accusing the SMC of being a greater threat to IMRO than the Ottomans. The Tenth Congress saw the development of another fissure as moderates who advocated a non-violent approach clashed with Tsonchev, who argued that the time for the uprising had come and announced he was prepared to lead men across the border. Despite the establishment of a parallel congress by the dissidents led by Boris Sarafov, Tsonchev prevailed. Things were set in motion for an uprising in the autumn, which, if it went according to plan, would undermine IMRO and bring its followers to the SMC banner while setting in motion events which would compel the Great Powers to intervene.

The British were much more aware and better informed about the activities of the SMC than IMRO. With SMC and IMRO guerilla bands often operating in the same regions of Macedonia, it was evidently difficult at times to discern the allegiance of a given band, especially if information was obtained through informants who may have had motives of their own. For example, on March 4, 1902, Vice-Consul Elliot wrote to the Foreign Secretary to dispute Biliotti's information that the "Macedonian Committee" intended to "cause the massacre of Turks" in the near future. Rightly or wrongly, Elliot pointed out that atrocities agitation was the policy of Sarafov or the "local organization" (IMRO) but was not the policy of Mikhailosvki and Tsonchev, the leaders of the SMC at the time.¹¹¹ Three reports from the British consuls at Drama, Monastir and Uscub between March 19-25 reported activities of "Bulgarian" bands. While the names of the some of the band leaders were provided, the reports did not indicate whether the bands were SMC or IMRO.¹¹² Blanket terminology and lack of detail in these and other British

¹¹¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 4, 1902, FO 78/5217/19.

¹¹² Biliotti to O'Connor, March 22, 1902, FO 195/2133/36; Fontana to Biliotti, March 19, 1902, FO 294/25/12; Pissurica to Biliotti, March 3, 1902, FO 78/5189/142.

dispatches from Macedonia illustrate the lack of clarity and difficulty the British faced in getting detailed intelligence on the activities of the two organizations, particularly IMRO.

In Sofia, Elliot had a good grasp of the SMC's activities thanks to its connections to the Bulgarian elite and the fact that the organization operated openly within the principality. At times Elliot conversed with General Tsonchev, and he was quite aware of the movements of some of higher profile members of the SMC. Everyone knew of the ubiquitous Boris Sarafov. The guerilla band leader Doncho Zlatkov was frequently coming and going from Macedonia. Colonel Iankov was a high profile promoter of the SMC cause, who gave numerous speeches around the principality much to the annoyance of the Ottomans. Like his counterparts in the other Great Power consuls, Elliot was well aware of the considerable sympathy for the organizations within Bulgaria. The Bulgarian government's capacity to act against the SMC was limited, and due to the differences between the SMC and IMRO in 1902; the government had little or no influence with IMRO.

In addition to maintaining pressure on the Bulgarian government to be vigilant, the British made it very clear that the Macedonian organizations would receive no support from Britain in the event of an uprising. Usually, the British issued their warnings indirectly through informants, intermediaries and the press, but, at times, British diplomats did come into direct contact with members of the SMC and IMRO.

One such meeting came in mid June of 1902 when Elliot met for a long conversation with General Tsonchev after being invited by the general to discuss "some details of capital importance concerning the situation in Macedonia." Calling the situation in Macedonia "intolerable" and making reference to Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin, Tsonchev urged Britain and the powers to press for Macedonian autonomy as a means of avoiding an uprising. The general stated that the SMC opposed violence but that it could not control the actions of individual bands in Macedonia and should not be responsible for their actions. Should an uprising occur, he warned, "even those who had deprecated it beforehand would join in it heart and soul." He then asked Elliot what the attitude of the powers would be if such an uprising were to take place. Elliot's reply was unequivocal: "I replied that there was no doubt about it: they would not interfere, but

would leave the Turkish Government at liberty to repress it.”¹¹³ Elliot then pressed Tsonchev on the activities and allegiances on Doncho, noting that the guerilla leader was fighting both the Ottomans and IMRO in Macedonia. Tsonchev maintained Doncho was “a free-lance” who did as he wished. Elliot continued by saying there was no harm in the committee conveying their thoughts in a memo to the Great Powers, but that he did not think it would have much effect, or even be answered. He told Tsonchev if the SMC wanted to show its good faith, it should assist the Bulgarian government in bringing to justice those who had committed crimes in the name of the Macedonian cause, such as the men involved in the Miss Stone kidnapping. Tsonchev replied that they would like to assist the government in the pursuit of justice but he believed the guilty parties were all currently in Macedonia and thus there was little they could do. The conversation concluded with Elliot asking the general if he really thought autonomy would work owing to the fact that there were so many different national and religious elements in Macedonia. Tsonchev answered that autonomy might not be perfect, but it would be an improvement. The people were desperate and would even welcome “a foreign occupation—English or Austrian—to relieve them from Turkish misgovernment.”¹¹⁴

The “capital importance” of the conversation for Tsonchev was to assess the British reaction to the uprising the SMC was planning for the autumn. Far from urging passive restraint, it was the SMC—not IMRO—that was seeking to initiate violence. While SMC guerilla leaders like Doncho had a degree of autonomy in their day to day operations, they were subordinate to Tsonchev and would not launch an uprising without the consent of Tsonchev, Mihailovski, and the other members of the SMC executive. Tsonchev probably knew that Elliot was well aware this fact. Nevertheless, for the sake of political shrewdness, the general distanced himself and the SMC from any responsibility for past crimes or future violence by arguing the ongoing state of “Turkish misgovernment” had created a politically volatile situation in Macedonia that was beyond the control of the SMC. A statement that was partly true due to the SMC having no influence over IMRO at the time.

¹¹³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), June 21, 1902, FO 78/5218/83.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

For his part, Elliot had made it bluntly clear that the British would not interfere and he recorded a detailed conversation with the man who was actively plotting what would become known as the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising of 1902. He concluded that Tsonchev's wish to meet with was an act of political reconnaissance:

I came away from the interview with the impression that perhaps the real motive for General Tsontcheff's desire to see me was to ascertain my opinion as to what Europe would do in the event of an outbreak in Macedonia. The idea that the Powers will intervene in favour of the Macedonians as soon as the insurrection breaks out is not uncommon, and I thought that my positive assurance that Turkey would be left a free hand to deal with it produced an effect on the General.¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, Elliot made a final reflection in the report with respect to his years of experience in the region in which he maintained that autonomy for Macedonia may be the only solution and admitted, with some disappointment, that this autonomy might only be reached by violence:

I am fully aware of the difficulties in the way of the creation of an autonomous province, but I still think that it is the only solution of the Macedonian question which will put an end to the perpetual danger of a disturbance of the peace. It is distressing to be obliged to admit to one's-self that the Macedonians are right in their conclusion that this solution will never be reached except through insurrection and bloodshed.¹¹⁶

The conversation with Tsonchev coupled with new rumours of an uprising prompted Elliot to reserve more criticism for the Bulgarian government in the coming months. When an article appeared in the SMC's newspaper *Reformi* in mid July calling "patriots on both sides of the border" to unite for a general insurrection, Elliot took his concerns immediately to the Bulgarian Foreign Office and stated that "something more than a warning was required" in response to such a blatantly inflammatory article.¹¹⁷ Elliot also expressed his displeasure over the Bulgarian government's handling of Colonel Iankov. For several months Iankov had been making patriotic speeches regarding Macedonia on behalf of the SMC around Bulgaria. The Ottomans had repeatedly complained about his conduct and had appealed to the Great Power representatives to pressure the Bulgarian government to restrain Iankov. The Bulgarian

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 16, 1902, FO 78/5218/97.

government had maintained that as long as the Colonel's speeches were made in private premises, they could not take any further action other than to monitor his movements. Iankov was reportedly briefly arrested and released, but, on July 15, Elliot confirmed that the Colonel had crossed the border into Macedonia with a large band.¹¹⁸ This added yet another destabilizing element into Macedonia. Elliot voiced his displeasure to the Bulgarian Foreign Office over their bungling of Iankov, stating that "the responsibility of the Government was gravely involved" in the Colonel's escape.¹¹⁹ This was sharp language for a diplomat, accusing another government of incompetence if not complicity over the activities of a revolutionary organization and the escape into another sovereign nation of a high profile agent provocateur. Elliot reiterated his concerns to the Bulgarian Prime Minister three days later.¹²⁰ Lansdowne later sent a message expressing his approval for Elliot's language towards the Bulgarians.¹²¹

With evidence mounting of a SMC uprising in Macedonia, the British kept up pressure on the Bulgarian government over the summer of 1902. They were able to keep track of the movements of Iankov's band as it moved across Macedonia. After the divisive Tenth Macedonian Congress, the Bulgarian government arrested and detained Tsonchev following the arrest of a SMC band at the village of Dubnitsa near the western border. The Bulgarian authorities also raided the offices of the SMC and seized its archive.¹²² However, within three weeks Tsonchev had slipped away from his detainment in the town of Drenovo. In his dispatch Mr. Marling noted the escape was "not surprising" considering Drenovo was Tsonchev's hometown, where he had a number of friends and he was only under a sort of house arrest which only required him to report the local police once or twice a day.¹²³ Like Elliot, Marling sympathized with the delicate situation of the Bulgarian government vis-à-vis the SMC and the sympathy it garnered within the

¹¹⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 14, 1902, FO 78/5218/96.

¹¹⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 16, 1902, FO 78/5218/97.

¹²⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 19, 1902, FO 78/5218/102. Prime Minister Danev replied to Elliot that it would be more effective to sow dissent in the Macedonian Committee than to suppress it. He stated he did not believe that "moderate men" like Tsonchev and Mikhailovski could be genuinely advocating insurrection and was convinced that insurrection in Macedonia could not take place without the consent of the Bulgarian government.

¹²¹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, July 25, 1902, FO 421/194/33.

¹²² Marling to Lansdowne, September 3, 1902, FO 78/5218/119. The raid was not a total success as some secret papers were said to be missing.

¹²³ Marling to Lansdowne, September 22, 1902, FO 78/5218/132.

principality. Still, the relative reluctance of the government to thoroughly crackdown on the SMC and the sloppiness it exhibited towards surveillance and incarceration of the committee's members led the British into speculation that the Bulgarian government was colluding to some degree with the SMC.¹²⁴

To some extent, the Bulgarians may have been protecting Tsonchev, Iankov and other members of the SMC, but they did little to shelter the man whose name had become synonymous with the Macedonian cause—Boris Sarafov. Like many of the founders of IMRO, Sarafov hailed from Macedonia, being born in the town of Nevrokop in 1872 and raised during the years when the Ottomans favoured Greek activities. His own family had been persecuted by the Ottomans and he likely harboured bitter memories during his years in the Bulgarian schools. As with other future IMRO leaders, Sarafov furthered his education within the borders of Bulgaria, but he was much more of a worldly and cavalier figure than the rather pious schoolteachers who built IMRO up from its grassroots.¹²⁵ Sarafov was an early member of the SMC and led a band of men into Macedonia in 1895 to briefly seize the town of Melnik. Through the late 1890s, Sarafov toured Europe under a number of aliases and in disguises in an ongoing effort to procure funding from sympathetic donors. Sarafov claimed to have secured 16,000 Turkish lira from an Englishman.¹²⁶ He also approached the American embassy in St. Petersburg in 1897 with the offer of a force of Macedonian mercenaries to fight in the Spanish American War in return for the promise of arms.¹²⁷ As Keith Brown points out, “Sarafov appears now, as he did to contemporary observers, as an elusive character, constantly full of surprises.”¹²⁸

By living the life of a celebrity revolutionary Sarafov was resented by some of his contemporaries. His allegiances apparently shifted quite often. After being forced to resign his presidency of the SMC in 1901, Sarafov worked with IMRO, who sent him off

¹²⁴ Marling to Lansdowne, August 27, 1902, FO 78/5218/117. At the time of the Tenth Macedonian Congress Marling noted that the SMC was likely to be receiving “tutelage” from the Bulgarian government due an acute need for funding.

¹²⁵ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 62-63.

¹²⁶ Anastasoff, *The Tragic Peninsula*, 60 n6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹²⁸ Keith Brown, “Villains and Symbolic Pollution in the Narratives of Nations: The Case of Boris Sarafov,” in *Nation Memories and National Identities in the Balkans*, ed. Maria Todorova (London: Hurst and Company, 2002), 246.

to do what he did best—fundraise and propagate for Macedonian autonomy. While IMRO boycotted the Tenth Macedonian Congress in August of 1902, Sarafov did attend, and he and his followers then formed a breakaway faction. Sarafov's prominence rose in IMRO through 1902 and 1903 and he was one of the commanders of IMRO's forces during the Ilinden Uprising. Yet his decision after the Ilinden Uprising to advocate closer cooperation with Bulgaria has earned him the distinction of a Benedict Arnold figure in the annals of the history of the Republic of Macedonia. In Bulgaria his reputation has not fared much better. His home town now bears the name of his IMRO contemporary, Gotce Delchev. Yet in 1902, no other member of IMRO or the SMC attracted as much attention from the international press and the corps diplomatic of the Great Powers as Boris Sarafov. The British were no exception.

To the contemporary reader, Sarafov in 1902 appears like an Edwardian Osama Bin Laden of the Balkans. High profile appearances in Great Power capitals, heading guerilla operations, and his implication in the murder of the Romanian journalist Stefan Mihaileanu had made him a living symbol of everything that was dangerous about Macedonia and the Balkans. Many assumed, incorrectly, that Sarafov had masterminded the Miss Stone kidnapping, including the American diplomats who conducted the negotiations.¹²⁹ When Elliot corrected Biliotti over the details of a reported plan by the "Macedonian Committee" to massacre ethnic Turks in March of 1902, he stated that it was Sarafov, not the SMC leaders Tsonchev and Mikhailovski, who was likely responsible for the alleged plot.¹³⁰ With the political ability to enlist foreign support and the military credentials to lead troops in the field, and a reputation of ruthlessness, Sarafov quite literally became the default for any accusation of atrocities agitation or terrorism connected with the Macedonian Committees.

As part of their preemptive measures, the British made efforts to track the movements of the region's chief agent provocateur. They kept track of Sarafov as much as they could, often consulting with other governments on his whereabouts. Sarafov's image and reputation for being prolific comes through both in the frequency and the style in which he is mentioned in the British records. In late February of 1902, Biliotti reported

¹²⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, February 26, 1902, FO 78/5217/17.

¹³⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 4, 1902, FO 78/5217/19.

that the “great Chief Sarafoff” was organizing forces for “his project” in four parts of southern Macedonia.¹³¹ Sarafov was also reported by the Austro-Hungarians to have “passed a couple of days” in Belgrade around the same time.¹³² Elliot also received word from a Bulgarian diplomat in Belgrade that Sarafov had been in the Serbian capital around the same time and that he had been endeavoring to set up a Macedonian organization there before leaving the city on the west-bound Orient express.¹³³ A week later, British information on Sarafov’s presence in Macedonia was dismissed by Bulgarian Prime Minister Danev and the Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia, Ali Ferrouh Bey, who said Sarafov had been in Belgrade before going on to Europe.¹³⁴ This was one of the few instances where the Bulgarians and Ottomans agreed. Just three days later, Danev stated that Sarafov was overrated and was only making terror threats to keep his name in the press. Elliot was surprised and disputed the point with the Bulgarian Prime Minister. Elliot’s assessment was seconded by Ali Ferrouh Bey.¹³⁵

The Ottomans appear to have been happy to supply intelligence to the Great Powers (accurate or not) on Sarafov and play up his power and influence. For example, in late March of 1902 the Ottoman representative in Philipopolis informed the local British representative that Sarafov was reportedly in the Bulgarian city to attend a meeting of the local Macedonian society. Sarafov was not present at the meeting and the Bulgarians claimed he was in Geneva.¹³⁶ A few weeks earlier, the Ottomans informed the British that Sarafov had been in Belgrade for two or three days for a meeting with an official from the Serbian foreign ministry.¹³⁷ Not surprisingly, the

¹³¹ Biliotti to Lansdowne, February 28, 1902, FO 421/193/87. The locations places mentioned are Strumica, “two centres in the Salonica area,” and the Prelip area.

¹³² Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), March 2, 1902, FO 7/1322/66.

¹³³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 4, 1902, FO 78/5217/19.

¹³⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 12, 1902, FO 78/5217/21.

¹³⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 15, 1902, FO 78/5217/24.

¹³⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 25, 1902, FO 78/5217/3421. The same report also contains information from the Imperial Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia that Sarafov’s agents “undoubtedly” had derived money from the Miss Stone ransom.

¹³⁷ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), March 13, 1902, FO 105/143/ 37.

Ottomans had placed a 1,000 lira bounty on Sarafov's head, double that of the more powerful and influential Gotce Delchev.¹³⁸

Within less than a six week span between late February and early April 1902, British diplomatic dispatches reported Sarafov to have been meeting with anarchists in Switzerland, Serbian officials in Belgrade, holding at least one rally in Bulgaria, and organizing for an uprising in at least four parts of Macedonia. This would be an ambitious schedule even for a contemporary revolutionary with the benefits of high speed rail and air travel. Considering the speed of early twentieth century communications and the fact that Sarafov was himself at constant risk of arrest or assassination, such an itinerary was impossible. Although some of the reports turned out to be false and sensational, they illustrate how Sarafov had become a larger than life figure in the politics of Macedonia. Furthermore, this documentation also shows that Sarafov had become a convenient scapegoat for both the Ottomans and the Bulgarians, who could position themselves against Sarafov to curry Great Power favour.

The Ottomans used the threat of Sarafov to emphasize their need to prepare for bloody countermeasures. Indeed, the Ottoman ambassador to Serbia, Fetay Pasha, boasted the Ottoman Fifth Army was "quite able to annihilate" Sarafov's bands. A remark that prompted Ambassador Bonham to caution Fetay Pasha on using such strong language and the possible implication of such measures.¹³⁹ Although the Bulgarians did issue correctives on Sarafov's whereabouts and activities, it suited them to play the Sarafov card when they wished. During his trip to Russia in March of 1902, Bulgarian Prime Minister Danev informed his hosts that Sarafov had been discredited by the SMC. When Elliot confronted the acting Bulgarian Foreign Minister about a guerilla band in Macedonia being found with Mannlicher rifles on April 19, 1902, the minister admitted the possibility that the guns may have been "abstracted" from government supplies, but added that there was a rumour circulating that Sarafov or "someone on his behalf" had procured the rifles in a factory direct sale in Austria-Hungary.¹⁴⁰ This explanation could

¹³⁸ Summary of Events in Macedonia and Albania during March 1902, April 2, 1902, FO 78/5190/155.

¹³⁹ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), March 13, 1902, FO 105/143/ 37. Bonham to Lansdowne, March 13, 1902. Bonham notes that Fetay Pasha used the French term "aneantissement" (destruction/devastation).

¹⁴⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 21, 1902, FO 78/5217/59.

be corroborated by the reports of Sarafov's presence in Central Europe some weeks previously. Upon being informed by the British of an alleged plot by Sarafov to assassinate either Prince Ferdinand or Mikhailovski in mid May of 1902, Danev initially rejected the claim that Sarafov was in Macedonia at the time, but said the report could not be discounted since IMRO was capable of orchestrating an assassination with or without the expertise of Sarafov.¹⁴¹ Even Tsonchev vilified Sarafov to his own advantage, explaining to Elliot that Sarafov had "succeeded in saddling the Committee with responsibility for acts of which it was wholly innocent, and which its members sincerely deplored."¹⁴² For the SMC and the Bulgarian government, it was convenient to have the British delineate between their reportedly more peaceful methods for bringing Macedonia into the Bulgarian fold "while the school of Sarafoff aim at the same end by means of assassination and terror."¹⁴³

The British were not the only Great Power to become convinced that Sarafov was a dangerous character who was most likely to trigger the dreaded uprising. In conversation with Count Lützow at the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in mid-August, Ralph Milbanke of the British embassy in Vienna discussed the intrigues of a Mr. Kastoria, an Albanian who was seeking Austro-Hungarian support for an autonomous Albania within the Ottoman Empire. Lützow described Kastoria as a well-mannered "pretender," who was unlikely to be taken seriously. The Austrian count's only concern was the fact that Kastoria had met with Boris Sarafov, but added their meeting had not produced any results as Sarafov was "too bloodthirsty" for the Albanian and had "laughed outright" at the mention of pacifist methods. In continued discussion of Sarafov, Lützow describes Sarafov as potentially "troublesome" and "bent on mischief," stating that it was likely Sarafov would "attempt some coup in Macedonia in the hope of thereby forcing the Powers to intervene."¹⁴⁴ In late August, Marling wrote from Sofia that a band of armed "Macedonians" had conspicuously left Sofia to hike into Macedonia. They were intercepted and disarmed by the Bulgarians and marched back to Sofia for incarceration. Marling notes that the French and Austro-Hungarian agents believed that the highly

¹⁴¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 17, 1902, FO 78/5218/70.

¹⁴² Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), June 21, 1902, FO 78/5218/83.

¹⁴³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), April 27, 1902, FO 78/5217/44.

¹⁴⁴ Milbanke to O'Connor (confidential), August 13, 1902, FO 7/1324/208.

conspicuous action had been orchestrated by Boris Sarafov to send a message to the Ottomans; an assertion denied by the Bulgarians.¹⁴⁵

Despite the weakening of his power and influence, British diplomats continued to watch for Sarafov and report on his movements. The Tenth Macedonian Congress of August 1902 resulted in Sarafov and his followers breaking away from the dominant faction of the congress led by the SMC and Tsonchev. Despite this apparent distancing from organization closest to the Bulgarian government, Marling still suspected that the new breakaway “Sarafoffist faction” could still be receiving assistance from the Bulgarian government.¹⁴⁶ The new committee did set up its own office and newspaper, which is all the more interesting considering Sarafov was also working with IMRO at the same time. In a dispatch dated September 10, Marling reported he was informed that Sarafov believed that the enthusiasm for revolution was not strong enough in the rural regions of Macedonia and that he had abandoned the cause of armed uprising for the time being.¹⁴⁷ Prime Minister Danev was unconcerned about Sarafov by mid September, dismissing him as “a mere windbag.”¹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, reports of an uprising were intensifying. In London, the Greek and Ottoman ambassadors had made new appeals to Lansdowne for action.¹⁴⁹ Lansdowne telegraphed O’Conor and Marling for their input.¹⁵⁰ Despite assurances to the contrary from the Bulgarian government, the rumoured uprising appeared to be more the work of the SMC than that of the “Sarafoffists” or IMRO. Boris Sarafov next appeared when he and his mistress were briefly arrested on their arrival in the city of Nis in Serbia on September 19.¹⁵¹ Sarafov claimed to have left Bulgaria for fear of being arrested. Announcing his intention to transit on to Paris, he was released but kept under police surveillance for the duration of his visit. Bonham referred to a Russian source which claimed Sarafov’s flight from Bulgaria was proof of Sofia’s anxiousness to avoid

¹⁴⁵ Marling to Lansdowne, August 27, 1902, FO 78/5218/114.

¹⁴⁶ Marling to Lansdowne, August 27, 1902, FO 78/5218/117.

¹⁴⁷ Marling to Lansdowne, September 10, 1902, FO 78/5218/123.

¹⁴⁸ Marling to Lansdowne, September 17, 1902, FO 78/5218/127.

¹⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Marling, September 10, 1902, FO 421/194/79; Lansdowne to Marling, September 12, 1902, FO 421/194/80.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Bonham to Lansdowne, September 19, 1902, FO 105/145/7.

disturbances in Macedonia. Bonham noted Sarafov's new goal was "Macedonia for the Macedonians," which had made his stay in Bulgaria impossible. Although Sarafov was leaving the Balkans, Bonham reported that Sarafov intended to agitate for Macedonian autonomy during his travels, and that there was a possibility that Sarafov might visit England, where "the influence by the Bulgarian atrocities agitation has not been forgotten." Furthermore, the ambassador warned that Sarafov would likely try to make contact with a Serbian man by the name of Lazarovich, who was residing in London and carrying out propaganda for the cause of Macedonian and Albanian autonomy.¹⁵² Although he was leaving the Balkans, Bonham believed Sarafov still posed a threat. Perhaps even more of a threat since Sarafov was on his way to agitate in the midst of the British capital. The news prompted Lansdowne to instruct the Home Office to gather information on the activities of Macedonian agitators in London, about which they knew nothing at the time.¹⁵³

The Ottomans continued to exploit Sarafov's reputation. At the end of September the Ottoman Charge d'Affaires in London informed Lansdowne that Sarafov had been found carrying incriminating documents from the Bulgarian Minister of War upon his arrest in Nish.¹⁵⁴ Discussing the matter amidst the latest news from the Gorna Dzhumajia Uprising some two weeks later, Ambassador Bonham noted with a hint of irony that insurgents fighting in the uprising in fact "belonged to the Committee of Tontcheff and not that of Boris Sarafoff."¹⁵⁵

Ultimately, the British and Great Powers overestimated the power, influence, and intent of Boris Sarafov in 1902. Despite reports of the schism, there does not seem to be a full comprehension of just how far apart IMRO and Sarafov had drifted from the SMC. At the very least, the British likely assumed IMRO and any of those in the "Sarafoffist faction" would join with the SMC fighters when uprising did come in October of 1902. This was something Tsonchev and the SMC were banking on, but it did not happen.

¹⁵² Bonham to Lansdowne, September 24, 1902, FO 105/144/111. According to Bonham, Lazarevitch had procured his own newspaper called "The Review of Eastern Europe," which he circulated at his own expense.

¹⁵³ Foreign Office to Home Office, September 29, 1902, FO 78/5212.

¹⁵⁴ Hamid Bey to Lansdowne, September 29, 1902, FO 421/194/128. The message from Charge d'Affaires calls Sarafov the Chief of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee.

¹⁵⁵ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), October 17, 1902, FO 105/144/121.

Accurate information and assessments of the activities and internal politics of revolutionary organizations were made more difficult still by the spread of misinformation. The Ottomans and the Balkan governments and the revolutionary organizations themselves were very willing to do what they had to in order to gain the favour of the various Great Power states. Indeed, the future of political causes and national borders could depend on it. Boris Sarafov himself knew the importance of playing to Great Power sensibilities and was well aware of his own celebrity. In an interview in the Austrian newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* published in late August, Sarafov played to the Monroe Doctrine of self determination by proclaiming his policy to agitate for Macedonians in Macedonia. He then subtly appealed to the shared responsibility and common Christianity of the Great Powers by stating that

None of the Macedonian leaders demanded more than autonomy, but owing to the religious fanaticism of the Turks, it was impossible to secure it by peaceful means. It could only be attained through the occupation of the province either by a great European power, a country allied with such a Power, or by a Balkan State which would receive a mandate from Europe for the purpose.¹⁵⁶

The same paper reported in September that General Tsonchev complained that the Ottoman commissioner in Sofia never lobbied for his arrest though he continually called for the arrest of Sarafov.¹⁵⁷ Even as the Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising was beginning the *Times* correspondent called Sarafov “the soul of the revolutionary agitation in Macedonia.”¹⁵⁸ An overstatement, but perception often mattered more than reality, especially when it came to the media and the battle for public opinion.

Preemption at Home

As illustrated by repeated references to ‘atrocities agitation’ and the events of 1876, members of the British Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service were aware of the how bad news from the Ottoman Empire could manifest into popular demands for government intervention. While members of the government could use their private

¹⁵⁶ “Macedonia,” *The Times*, August 27 1902, 3.

¹⁵⁷ “The Situation in the Balkans,” *The Times*, September 9, 1902, 3.

¹⁵⁸ “The Troubles in the Balkans,” *The Times*, October 11, 1902, 7.

influence to control some parts of the press to a degree, the sheer number of newspapers and magazines made it difficult to control all the news coming out of the Ottoman Empire. Lobby groups such as the Friends of Armenia and the Anglo-Jewish Association were making frequent appeals to the British government in 1902. Between the pro-Greek Byron Society and the news that Boris Sarafov was on his way to London to help set up a group to advocate for Macedonian autonomy, more pressure was surely expected along with the appeals for British favour from official Greek, Bulgarian, and Ottoman circles. Furthermore, as Lord Byron and William Gladstone had shown, the most poignant advocate of a given cause could be a Member of Parliament or the House of Lords, if not a celebrity. The grand old man of British Liberalism had championed the Bulgarian cause in 1876 and in 1897 he publically asked: "Why not Macedonian for the Macedonians?"¹⁵⁹ In 1902, William Gladstone was dead, but his nephew Herbert Gladstone was a Liberal member of parliament and was sympathetic to the cause of the Macedonian Christians.

As with their diplomacy, in order to mitigate a potential buildup of domestic pressure, the British acted preemptively. Members of the government and the Foreign Office engaged with critics and investigated some news reports to correct or at least soften potentially inflammatory reports. Limited information was provided in carefully worded responses to requests in parliament. After the violence escalated further in late 1902 and 1903, the release of information from the British diplomatic reports was more closely censored. These preemptive measures were increased after the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising, but there is evidence to show that this was a continuation of policy from before the October 1902 uprising and not merely a reaction to it.

There was no shortage of organizations appealing for British assistance with regards to the Ottoman Empire. The Mission among the Homeless and Fatherless of Armenia, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Council of Foreign Bondholders all requested the help of the Foreign Office from matters ranging from applying diplomatic influence to searching for missing persons. The Foreign Office obliged when it could depending on the request and the circumstances.

¹⁵⁹ "Mr. Gladstone and the Balkan Confederation," *The Times*, February 6, 1897, 12.

The Foreign Office took an active interest in how its policy toward the Ottoman Empire was perceived. Clerks were directed to take time to engage with private individuals who had written with questions on British policy. In one instance in late 1902, A British student studying in the United States wrote asking why the British had not intervened to stop the Armenian massacres.¹⁶⁰ A letter of response was promptly sent to one Mr. J.A. Roth at the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts. At Lansdowne's direction, the student was invited to order copies of the papers presented to Parliament and referred to books on the Eastern Question and International Law.¹⁶¹

By and large, Lansdowne had little reason to be concerned about the press regarding Macedonia prior to the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. Most newspaper stories contained little in the way of sensation and tended to spread the blame for the violence between the parties involved in Macedonia. For example, an article in *The Times* from March 15, 1902 began with the biological linkage between the violence and the spring. It made a disparaging reference to the "usual Turkish methods of restoring order" but then mentioned that "the organized system of assassination resorted to by the Macedonian revolutionaries had deprived them of all sympathy."¹⁶² A *Times* story from March 29, 1902 had no romantic illusions about the rebel cause, stating that—under the direction of Boris Sarafov—funds raised from the Miss Stone kidnapping were going into the production of dynamite bombs.¹⁶³ Another article likened Sarafov's "party of physical force" to the Fenian section of the Irish Nationals.¹⁶⁴ If the Foreign Office had not been helping to script such reports itself, it could have asked for more favourable press.

The only news report which truly caused a stir with the British prior to the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was an article in the periodical *Contemporary Review* published in September of 1902. The article described a number of atrocities and the ill-treatment of Macedonian Christians at the hands of the abusive Turkish beys and the Ottoman

¹⁶⁰ Mr. Roth to Foreign Office, November 7, 1902, FO 78/5212.

¹⁶¹ Foreign Office to Mr. Roth, December 1, 1902, FO 78/5212.

¹⁶² "The Near East," *The Times*, March 15, 1902, 7.

¹⁶³ "The Near East," *The Times*, March 29, 1902, 4.

¹⁶⁴ "The Situation in Macedonia," *The Times*, March 31, 1902, 10. In contrast to Sarafov, the article states that Tsonchev follows a "pacific policy." Although there is no mention of sources used to obtain the information, this was the British diplomatic assessment until the fall of 1902. The byline of the article is Athens.

authorities, including the poor conditions of the prisons in Monastir and Salonica. A letter by a Mr. Glover had referred to the article and prompted the Foreign Office to check the statements in the article against the British diplomatic reports. Having reviewed the findings, Lansdowne expressed concerns that the questions might arise from the article once parliament reconvened. He ordered that O'Connor be consulted to obtain more information and that an investigation be launched by the Ottoman authorities.¹⁶⁵ A response personally overseen by Lansdowne was written to Mr. Glover explaining that after checking the British diplomatic reports the "accounts of atrocities" in the *Contemporary Review* article were likely exaggerated. Nevertheless, they did promise further investigation.¹⁶⁶

The British diplomats conducted their own investigation and submitted detailed memos on the specific allegations in the article and condition of the prisons in question. They found that conditions in the prisons were bad owing to overcrowding and improper cleaning and maintenance. However, the reports of prisoners "being starved to death or suffering the tortures of racks, cords, weights, or slow fire" were exaggerated. Moreover, they reported that the German diplomat, Herr Padel, who was quoted in the article, had not visited the prisons in question for four years. In conversation with Mr. Young of the British Embassy in Constantinople, Padel stated that the Bulgarian Foreign Office had made use of his report in the past and that he "had suffered considerable annoyance from the unwarranted use of his name."¹⁶⁷

The time and effort taken by the British to investigate and deconstruct an article in the British press provides a good indication of their awareness and vigilance regarding potentially inflammatory, one-sided news reports from the Ottoman Empire. In calling for the Ottomans to investigate the alleged abuses in the *Contemporary Review* article, Lansdowne likely felt they could use such reports as leverage to further compel the image-conscious Ottoman Empire to enact further reform while showing that they, the

¹⁶⁵ Fairholme to Foreign Office, September 12, 1902, FO 78/5212.

¹⁶⁶ Foreign Office to Mr. Glover, September 19, 1902, FO 78/5212.

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum referring to the publication in the "Contemporary Review" of September 1902, on the Condition of Prisons in Salonica, describing Tortures and Outrages committed there, October 10, 1902, FO 78/5193/446; Memorandum by Mr. Young on alleged Salonica Prison Atrocities reported in the "Contemporary Review" for September 1902, October 10, 1902, FO 78/5193/446.

British, were actively dispelling false rumors and misinformation through their own investigations. The author of the article, Dr. E. J. Dillon, had been the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Russia. His future articles would provoke the further ire of the British in 1903 for their alleged provocative statements and half truths.

Lord Lansdowne's concerns over Dillon's article were not over the outrage of one letter writer but that the contents of the article might make their way to parliamentary circles, potentially attracting more media attention. There were only a few instances in which matters concerning Macedonia were brought up in parliament prior to October. These questions primarily involve requests for more information regarding news from Macedonia and offer little in the way of impassioned criticism. The government responses were made to parliament by the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Cranborne, who usually did not offer much substance in his answers and often denied information on the basis of the greater interests of the state.

In one such instance, on January 16, 1902 Frances Stevenson, the member for Suffolk, Eye, rose in the House of Commons to address the government on four matters concerning the material interests of the British Empire, two of which related to international obligations to which Great Britain was party. Stevenson spoke of the political situation in the Persian Gulf region and the competing German and Russian interests there, continuing on to protest against the excessive attention paid to South Africa. He then brought attention to the issue of the outstanding claims by a British merchant against the Ottoman Empire dating back to the Armenian Crisis of 1896. Stevenson then mentioned the Berlin Treaty with connection to "a disturbance" which had occurred in the Romanian mountains. Finally, he concluded by asking if the government—in accordance with its treaty obligations—was doing anything to enforce Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty with respect to Macedonia.¹⁶⁸

Lord Cranborne responded to all of Stevenson's inquiries. Regarding Macedonia, he stated that the conditions there were "as bad as it has been for many years past." Cranborne mentioned that the government had made representations to the Ottoman Empire as much as was politically feasible, stating that he hoped these measures would

¹⁶⁸ *Hansard's Parliamentary Papers* 101 (1902): 129.

prompt the Ottomans to “stave off” the sort of disturbances that threatened Macedonia. He finished his response with the following statement:

I do not think, however, that matters have reached a point at which any anxiety need be felt, though I am certainly of opinion that this special condition of unrest in Turkey is a serious matter, and might, if events were to advance, prove of a very dangerous character, not only to Turkey, but to Europe.¹⁶⁹

On April 15 Stevenson again stood up in the commons to ask the government to provide the text of a reported circular note presented to the Ottoman government by the Great Powers and release of the reports by the British consular officers in Macedonia over the past twelve months. Cranborne replied, truthfully, that no such circular note had been presented and that it was not in the public interest to release the papers yet.¹⁷⁰ Earl Percy spoke on the same day regarding information that orders had been given to arm the Muslims in the Salonica and Monastir vilayets. He asked the government to make representations to “discourage such measures” in order to avoid misunderstandings.¹⁷¹ This request was simply asking the government to take precisely the preemptive measures it was already taking. All Cranborne had to say in response was that the government had not heard of any such orders being given and that only regular soldiers and police were to partake in “repressive measures.”¹⁷² Only the conservative MP Thomas Gibson Bowles exhibited much excitement when he referenced Macedonia in a long diatribe criticizing his own party’s foreign policy.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷⁰ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 106 (1902): 279.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 112 (1902): 812. In the speech, Bowles lamented Britain’s failure over the “Eastern Question” with its failure to uphold the “fruits of the Crimea” in allowing Russia to build a new Black Sea fleet after 1871. Bowles also disparaged Lord Salisbury foreign policy for leaving Britain without allies on the European continent and the late minister’s weak policy towards Germany. Like many of his fellow Conservative MPs, Bowles was defeated in the 1906 general election, but he returned to the commons in 1910 as a member of the Liberal Party.

Shipka and the Political Lives of Commemoration Ceremonies

The political assessments, intelligence rumours, and historically informed warnings of an uprising in the autumn of 1902 were underlined by the anticipated commemoration ceremonies of the Battle of Shipka Pass. The events were scheduled to take place at the battlefield site on the twenty-five year anniversary of the battle during the first week of October, 1902. Fought at the height of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, the Russian triumph at Shipka Pass had opened the way south for the Russian army to fight its way to the shores of the Sea of Marmara, within striking distance of the walls of Constantinople. These events prompted Ottoman acceptance of the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano, which effectively brought about Bulgarian statehood. For Bulgarians, the battle was symbolic, not only of the military triumph that led to de facto independence, but as a reminder of an incomplete victory, since the San Stefano terms had later been amended, removing Macedonia from Bulgaria and placing it back under Ottoman rule. Politicians might very well be lured into using the anniversary celebrations as a rallying point for Bulgarian irredentism toward Macedonia. Moreover, Shipka was a reminder of how the 'Massacre Formula' had worked to bring about the tangible result of Russian intervention and the creation of Bulgaria. Therefore, there was an obvious temptation for one of the Macedonian organizations to launch an uprising of its own during the anniversary celebrations in the hopes of eliciting sympathy and support from Bulgarians, if not Pan-Slavic Russians and Gladstonian Britons, at a time when memories were being refreshed.

Commemoration and remembrance can be highly emotional and politically provocative. As Maria Bucur demonstrates in her examination of remembering war in Romania, commemoration ceremonies serve to legitimize governments of the present and also serve to draw attention to a historic event and mobilize action.¹⁷⁴ In her book *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, Katherine Verdery argues that dead bodies can become "a site of political profit" that can animate

¹⁷⁴ Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

politics and symbolize a political order.¹⁷⁵ Using the examples from the year 1989, Verdery maintains that commemorations and reburials can compress time by making historical events seem as though they occurred in the recent past. She gives the example of how the relics of the Serbian medieval ruler Prince Lazar were toured around not only Serbia but “Greater Serbia,” which included parts of the then Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as the then autonomous region of Kosovo. “In this way the new Serbia was rejoined with its days of glory as the first medieval state formed in Southeastern Europe, prior to the Ottoman conquest.”¹⁷⁶ The tour of Lazar’s bones served to reconnect Serbians with their pre-communist past, legitimize claims to the wider territory of “Greater Serbia” while excluding non-Serbs. Similarly, the 1989 reburial of Imre Nagy, the leader of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, brought Hungarians back to a point in their past when they resisted Russian imposed socialist rule precisely at a time when socialism was again being challenged. The ceremony served to reconfigure time as Nagy’s voice was played over loudspeakers. “It was as if this huge commemoration were following his execution, which had just happened. The intervening thirty-odd years had simply vanished.”¹⁷⁷

Akin to Hungary and Yugoslavia in the late twentieth century, the commemoration of the Battle of Shipka could have compressed time, connecting 1902 with the watershed events which had liberated Bulgaria from Ottoman rule some twenty-five years earlier. The Shipka celebrations were to be more than a commemoration ceremony, they were to be a large theatrical re-enactment, showcasing units of the Bulgarian army before an audience of international dignitaries and the press. To add further fuel to the fears of the diplomatic corps, the Russian Count Nikolay Ignatieff was to attend. During the Bulgarian crisis a quarter century earlier, Ignatieff had served as the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The active leader of the Pan Slav Society and a sympathizer of the Bulgarian movement, Ignatieff had successfully pushed for Russian intervention in 1877. Twenty-five years hence, Ignatieff was emerging from the imperial mothballs to journey to the nation he had championed to give a speech at the field of the battle he had helped make possible. With unrest and rumours of uprisings in

¹⁷⁵ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 33.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

Macedonia, the timing of the Shipka commemorations was beset with ominous historical warnings.

The anticipation of the Shipka commemorations had received diplomatic and media attention from early in 1902. Plans for the opening of a new church on the battlefield created national and ecclesiastical friction between Russians and the Bulgarians regarding the pecking order in the consecration ceremony to open the church.¹⁷⁸ In the summer, the Ottomans began to express their apprehensive that the celebrations might prompt an uprising in Macedonia or a declaration of outright independence by Bulgaria.¹⁷⁹ In August, Anthopoulos Pasha communicated a memorandum to Lansdowne that an uprising supported by members of the Bulgarian army was being planned to coincide with the inauguration of the new church at Shipka.¹⁸⁰ A week later, Marling reported from Sofia that the Italians and French had received requests from the Ottoman government to make representations to the Bulgarians regarding the Shipka ceremonies. While the Italian consul had been authorized to join in any joint representations being made to the Bulgarians, Marling had responded that since the events were being held in tribute to Russia it would not be appropriate for the British to make formal representations.¹⁸¹ As the date of the celebrations neared, the British were in a position where they could do little diplomatically to alter the "Shipka fetes." What is more, the British diplomats viewed the approaching events with more trepidation than previous alerts. In response to a telegram from Lansdowne regarding Greek concerns over activities in the Monastir vilayet,

¹⁷⁸ Scott to Lansdowne, April 28, 1902, FO 65/1641/154. The Russian foreign minister called the differences between the Russians and Bulgarians "an embarrassing difficulty." It was later decided that the Bulgarians prevailed in their wish to perform the ceremony and the Russian would only send minor church officials to the event. See: Elliot to Lansdowne, May 7, 1902, FO 78/5218/67.

¹⁷⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 25, 1902, FO 78/5218/84. The Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia warned that although Europe might consider a Bulgarian declaration of independence as a *fait accompli*, the Ottoman government would resist the move and would send troops to seize Eastern Rumelia. See: Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), Sofia, July 30, 1902, FO 78/5218/105.

¹⁸⁰ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, August 21, 1902, FO 421/194/58. The Greek government also expressed concerns that the assembling of some 50,000 Bulgarian troops for a military demonstration on the historic battlefield served no practical purpose and "would encourage the Bulgarian revolutionary propaganda in Macedonia." See: Stronge to Lansdowne (confidential), August 28, 1902, FO 32/737/78.

¹⁸¹ Marling to Lansdowne, August 27, 1902, FO 78/5218/113. The Austro-Hungarian and German consuls had not received any instructions.

Ambassador O'Connor dismissed the Greek fears as exaggerations, but he provided an ominous assessment of upcoming events at Shipka. In his words, the Shipka celebrations seemed

calculated to arouse Bulgarian feeling almost to fever heat in favour of their suffering brothers and coreligionists across the frontier. It is unlikely that the Revolutionary Committees will lose such an opportunity of provoking disturbances if they think they can turn this popular excitement in their favour. On this ground I believe the Shipka demonstrations and festivities may be regarded with some anxiety. They are certainly disturbing the Ottoman Government very considerably.¹⁸²

The British were comforted by reports that the Russians had taken steps to ensure the Shipka commemorations did not become a heavily politicized event. Prior to O'Connor's warning, Marling had reported from Sofia that it was "generally understood" that the arrest of Tsonchev and the measures taken by the Bulgarian government against the SMC had been "due to Russian influence in view of the approaching fetes."¹⁸³ The Russian ambassador to Serbia, who was a veteran of the Russo-Turkish War, informed Ambassador Bonham that the Russians had taken precautions, including placing restrictions on the speeches. Furthermore, the head of the Russian delegation, the Grand Duke Nicholai Nicholaievitch would proceed to Constantinople for an official visit immediately following the ceremonies which would "go far to remove any misapprehension on the subject."¹⁸⁴ Concurrently, Marling reported that Russia's influence in Bulgaria was "at present paramount" and his meetings with his Russian counterparts left him with the impression that the Russians were willing to put pressure on the Bulgarians.¹⁸⁵ Communication from St. Petersburg seemed to validate the sincerity of Russia's intentions. On September 28, Ambassador Scott reported the laying of wreaths and sympathetic messages for the Bulgarians along with official communications from the Russians to Sultan Abdülhamîd of Russia's "correct and peaceful intentions."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 16, 1902, FO 78/5192/405.

¹⁸³ Marling to Lansdowne, September 10, 1902, FO 78/5218/122.

¹⁸⁴ Bonham to Lansdowne, September 23, 1902, FO 45/144/110.

¹⁸⁵ Marling to Lansdowne, September 22, 1902, FO 78/5218/132.

¹⁸⁶ Scott to Lansdowne, September 28, 1902, FO 65/1643/312.

The Shipka Celebrations took place over the last five days of September and the first of October 1902. Five days were devoted to military reviews and re-enactments of the manoeuvres of the 1877 battle, involving thousands of Bulgarian troops, with one day reserved for the consecration of the new church on the site of the battlefield.¹⁸⁷ The entire Bulgarian government and the leading figures of the opposition parties attended. While Prince Ferdinand and the other speakers were full of adulation and gratitude for the Russian delegation headed by the Czar's representative, the Grand Duke Nicholai Nicholaievitch, the speeches strictly avoided political topics. The Bulgarian government had given its assurance to the Sultan that all political topics would be avoided. In adherence to the message, the Bulgarian speakers spoke only of their gratitude towards their Slavic patron while the Russians voiced only pride for "the progress of her protégé."¹⁸⁸ As scheduled, Nicholai Nicholaievitch proceeded to Constantinople. Other members of the Russian delegation continued on to Sofia and Philippopolis.

In the days following the Shipka commemorations, details emerged of friction between the Bulgarians and the Russians. Ongoing disagreement over which national church should perform the consecration of the new church was only resolved on the day before the ceremony, and only then after Prince Ferdinand rebuked his prime minister for his offer to yield to the Russians.¹⁸⁹ The Bulgarian prince was also taken aback by the reception Count Ignatieff received and the conduct of the count and some members of the Russian delegation. Ignatieff had not been allowed to speak at the ceremonies, but he had delivered a speech at a banquet in the village of Shipka, and been greeted enthusiastically by the Bulgarian public.¹⁹⁰ With "great bitterness" Ferdinand confided to his ministers that the Russians were behaving mischievously. Elliot reported that the prince's suspicions were due to jealousy. As Ferdinand himself remarked, the rapturous reactions to Ignatieff were greater than the receptions he received when he brought the principality its first princess.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Marling to Lansdowne, October 3, 1902, FO 78/5219/137. Marling lists the number of Bulgarians troops present at the review on October 1 as 36 battalions of infantry, 42 squadrons of cavalry, 76 guns, and one battalion of pioneers.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ "The Shipka Celebrations," *The Times* October 2, 1902, 3.

¹⁹¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), October 8, 1902, FO 78/5219/141.

Bulgarian frustrations with the Russians were mirrored by British frustration with the Bulgarians. In spite of his rhetoric, Ignatieff did not trigger a spontaneous uprising in Macedonia. Count Lamsdorff commented that while Count Ignatieff still enjoyed the art of agitation “neither he nor the Pan Slavist Societies were capable of exercising any dangerous influence in the Balkan States.”¹⁹² Nevertheless, O’Conor’s was largely correct in his warning that the Shipka celebrations and the presence of Russian dignitaries in Bulgaria would be too tempting an opportunity for at least one of the Macedonian Committees to pass up. During his departure from Shipka, the Grand Duke Nicholaievitch was reportedly presented with a petition from the SMC which prayed for Russian intervention in Macedonia.¹⁹³ A day later on October 4, the British also learned of a “reported insurrection” in Macedonia based on reports of the activities of Colonel Iankov’s band’s actions in the Monastir vilayet. Later that day, during the weekly audience given by Prime Minister Danev to the British representative, Marling reported that he told Danev that

Colonel Yankoff had obviously utilized the occasion of the Shipka celebrations to persuade the revolutionists that a resolute combined movement would, at this moment compel intervention from outside on their behalf, and I added that it was greatly to be deplored that so dangerous a man should have been allowed to escape.¹⁹⁴

Danev responded that he did agree that Iankov “had tried to exploit that situation” but added that he considered the Colonel’s chances of success were slim. Marling, who was apparently somewhat perturbed by the conversation, reported that Danev “as usual” stated that the newspaper reports of the fighting were exaggerated and that “he felt no apprehensions that the movement would spread.”¹⁹⁵ As it turned out, the main thrust of the uprising had just begun.

¹⁹² Scott to Lansdowne, October 7, 1902, FO 65/1643/325.

¹⁹³ “The Shipka Celebrations,” *The Times* October 3, 1902, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Marling to Lansdowne, October 4, 1902, FO 78/5219/138.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising in the autumn of 1902 did not come as a surprise. The resolution of the Miss Stone kidnapping and the credible warnings in the spring provided strong indications that violent agitations, if not an outright uprising, would take place in Macedonia. Having realized the potential dangers, the Great Powers made diplomatic representations and began to press the Ottoman government to enact reforms to undermine the popular appeal of the SMC and IMRO.

Great Britain paid particular attention to the situation in Macedonia and made efforts to preempt the rumoured uprising. In addition to acting in concert with the other Great Powers in making multilateral diplomatic representations, the British actively tried to exert their influence on the Ottoman government to initiate reform policy and restrain its security forces in Macedonia. In addition, the British pressured the Bulgarian government to counter the activities of the Macedonian organizations operating within its borders. The British also tried to monitor the activities and exert restraining influences on the Macedonian organizations themselves while engaging the press and the parliament in order to mitigate popular appeals to the British public.

Great Britain's preemptive efforts towards Macedonia were motivated not only by contemporary assessments but by historically informed concerns. Frequent references to 'atrocities agitation' and the ramifications of the 'Bulgarian Horrors' of 1876 fuelled concerns that calculated provocations would produce images and descriptions of victimized Macedonian Christians. Such depictions could create a popular sensation and demands for intervention at a time when the British Empire could ill afford a foreign policy adventure. The planned commemorations for Russian victory at the Battle of Shipka Pass further stoked British fears that the one or both of the Macedonian organizations would use this reminder of past glory to attempt to make history repeat itself.

Ultimately, the SMC's uprising at Gorna Dzhumaia elicited little popular sympathy even within Macedonia. The events did prompt more calls for reform, but they served as a warning of what was to come since the much larger and more popular organization, IMRO, did not participate. In the months following the autumn uprising, the British would intensify their preemptive efforts to undermine IMRO's appeal and mitigate the fallout of

an uprising. Arguably, the most important theatre in the struggle for Macedonia was the battle for the sympathy of the Great Power statesmen, diplomats, and popular audiences being fought by multiple governments, organizations and pressure groups. The lines of conflict in this struggle ran not only across national and sectarian boundaries but through governments, organizations, and even the very souls of the individuals involved.

Chapter 3. Uprising and Reform Part I: From the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising to the Vienna Reform Program

Brethren, only consider the free Balkan peoples that surround us, and you will find that their liberty was purchased at the cost of streams of blood. Let us follow their example. Freedom is not bestowed as a gift. It must be conquered.¹

Colonel Iankov

We who join the insurrection on behalf of human rights and of a life that is worthy to be lived call upon you Christian peoples in the name of humanity to force your leaders to support our sacred rights. Know that we will not lay down our arms until we have obtained the privileges which have been promised us, and until we have secured the freedom of Macedonia.²

Colonel Iankov

Will not Christian Europe at length shudder at the thought of the terrible sacrifice which the Christian population of Macedonia are prepared to make to gain their freedom?³

Boris Sarafov

It is distressing to be obliged to admit to one's-self that the Macedonians are right in their conclusion that this solution will never be reached except through insurrection and bloodshed.⁴

Vice-Consul Elliot

Introduction

The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising in the autumn of 1902 was a dismal failure. The SMC-initiated revolt failed to rally popular support beyond kazas bordering Bulgaria and without external support, the rebels were doomed. Appeals to fellow Christian Europeans to embrace their cause fell on deaf ears. Even in Bulgaria the revolt failed to

¹ "The Troubles in the Balkans," *The Times* October 11, 1902, 7.

² "The Troubles in the Balkans," *The Times* October 11, 1902, 7.

³ A Letter from Boris Sarafov, March 14, 1903, FO 7/1338/70.

⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), June 21, 1902, FO 78/5218/83.

create much of a stir. The preemptive measures by the British and the other Great Powers had contributed to keeping the SMC fighters isolated and in a hopeless position. It was not the cries of liberty from patriots but the pleas for humanity which attracted the sympathy of popular opinion in the Great Power capitals. Reports of atrocities by irregular Ottoman troops, damaged property, and the plight of some 3,000 refugees began to elicit sympathy as winter descended on Macedonia. Although the revolt accomplished little, the aftermath did rouse the Great Powers to consider stronger reforms.

Through the events of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and its aftermath, British diplomats continued to monitor the events and the conditions of the refugees, and to search for a more effective means of stabilizing Ottoman Macedonia. In several instances, these British officials found themselves doing 'peacekeeping' work as they collected refugee testimonials, investigated alleged atrocities, monitored the conditions of vulnerable populations, and inspected military formations and border regions in both Bulgaria and Ottoman Macedonia. As will be demonstrated, these experiences, combined with the knowledge of what they considered successful historical precedents, a growing sense of frustration with Ottoman 'maladministration,' and anxiety over the implications of another revolt, led the British officials to conclude that the proposed reforms needed to be administered by Great Power (European) officials. These considerations were reflected in the British attitude towards the Austro-Russian Vienna Reform Program which was accepted by the Ottoman Empire in February of 1903. British officials were privately sceptical as they considered the reforms to be incomplete and inadequate. Nevertheless, they gave conditional support to the reforms and continued to use diplomacy and the skills and networks of their diplomats in the ongoing effort to bring stability to Ottoman Macedonia.

This chapter begins with a recap of the actions of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. A brief discussion is then included regarding the naval intervention in Venezuela and the British concerns regarding the passage of Russian torpedo boats through the Dardanelle Straits. The purpose of this minor detour is to provide some comparative background for how the British were confronting related foreign-policy challenges in the autumn of 1902. The focus then shifts to the plight and politicization of the refugees from the conflict. Contact with the refugees, appeals for reform and restraint, and suggestions from

diplomats shaped British belief in the need for stronger reform, while Austria-Hungary and Russia designed the Vienna Reform Program in February 1903. Britain's conditional acceptance of the reforms is then examined, followed by a discussion of the efforts to restrain Bulgaria.

The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising

The first shots of the 1902 uprising occurred far to the west of the Bulgarian-Ottoman frontier in the Vilayet of Monastir. Having escaped from Bulgarian custody, the outspoken SMC Colonel Iankov struck west across Macedonia in July 1902 with a guerilla band of some 100 men. Iankov and his men forded the Vardar and moved into the south of the Vilayet of Monastir with the hope of enticing local IMRO bands to join their ranks against the Ottoman forces, thereby broadening the geographical scale of the uprising. Iankov made contact with the local IMRO leaders Vasil Chakalarov and Pando Kliashev and appealed to them to follow his men into action, affirming to them that Russia and Bulgaria were ready to intervene to assist them. Having not received any orders from their superiors, Chakalarov and Kliashev were unconvinced and dismayed when Iankov and his men began agitating the local population for support. In response, Chakalarov and Kliashev attacked and defeated Iankov's men.⁵ Iankov continued to agitate in the Monastir vilayet into the autumn, executing some successful ambushes against Ottoman forces but ultimately failing to inspire the mass uprising the SMC desired. Iankov exited Macedonia into Thessaly in Greece in late November.⁶

The British were well aware of Iankov's reputation as an agitator but, amidst the numerous reports of guerilla activity, they appear to have missed the significance of his band's activities until the outbreak of hostilities around Gorna Dzhumaia in early October. A report on August 9 noted Iankov's evasion of the Bulgarian authorities and the movement of his band near Strumica.⁷ Some two weeks after the fact, the British dragoman in Bitola, Mr. Pissurica, reported the fight between Iankov's SMC and the IMRO bands under Chakalarov and Kliashev. However, Pissurica's report does not

⁵ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 114-116.

⁶ Egerton to Lansdowne, November 22, 1902, FO 32/737/114.

⁷ Marling to Lansdowne, August 8, 1902, FO 78/5294/106.

mention the presence of Iankov. The main significance of the skirmish was said to be that it aborted Chakalarov's plans for a murder campaign against Ottoman and Greek elites in Kastoria on the night of Sultan Abdülhamîd II's birthday. The difference between the two bands was said to be their view on how to treat Patriarchists or Grecomans.⁸ Using Pissurica's reports, Consul-General Biliotti concluded "that the organizations of the Macedonian Committee are without consistence and quite superficial. ... The leaders of the bands have no real merit, but are selfish and capricious, forming grand schemes without having the means to carry them out." Eight such bands were said to be operating in the area "to the delight of the Turkish authorities."⁹ A dispatch by Biliotti on September 28 mentioned more attacks, leaving the population to believe that the situation was more serious than usual. The dispatch also reported the deployment of Redif battalions in the area and the stationing of Ottoman troops in a belt from Edessa to Serres, north of Salonica. Regarding these troops, Biliotti stated he was unable to resist pointing out to the Vali that "if my repeated suggestion for such an occupation by troops had been followed, the present incident would not have taken place."¹⁰ Nevertheless, Pissurica and Biliotti missed the political significance of the clash between Iankov's SMC band and the local IMRO fighters. Given the number of guerilla bands and leaders, the fluid nature of factionalism, and the amount of propaganda and misinformation, it is understandable how they could have been mistaken in their assessments. The conflict was identified as a matter of jealousy between Doncho and Sarafov—not entirely wrong but hardly fully accurate.¹¹

While some reports did indicate intensification in the violence in Macedonia, the British did not have precise intelligence regarding the intentions of the Gorna Dzhumajia Uprising. Upon returning from the Shipka commemorations, Vice-Consul Elliot learned of high numbers of killed and wounded in the Edessa region—which he connected to Iankov—and confronted Prime Minister Danev of Bulgaria with the news on October 4.¹² On that very day the president of the SMC, Stoyan Milhailovski, made a public

⁸ According to the report, the SMC said it would only target "bad Turks" and the Ottoman authorities.

⁹ Biliotti to O'Connor, September 20, 1903, FO 195/2133/156.

¹⁰ Biliotti to O'Connor, September 28, 1903, FO 195/2133/164.

¹¹ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 115-16.

¹² Marling to Lansdowne, October 4, 1902, FO 78/5219/138.

announcement about the uprising in Sofia.¹³ In the days that followed, General Tsonchev crossed the frontier with some 400 men, arriving in the town of Gorna Dzhumaia, just across the frontier from Bulgaria, on October 8. It was not until October 12 that the British received direct information from their vice-consul in the town of Serres that some villages in the region were rising in support of the SMC incursion.¹⁴ It was also on October 12 that Elliot reported that Tsonchev had escaped to Macedonia and was “determined to do something noteworthy.”¹⁵

Tsonchev’s forces enjoyed some early victories, but their success was short-lived. The SMC forces defeated the local Ottoman security forces and attacked the Muslim residents in Gorna Dzhumaia and the surrounding villages, killing some Muslim notables. However, the Ottomans had deployed reinforcements in the region and moved quickly against the SMC forces, reversing their gains and sending the Tsonchev band back across the border into Bulgaria in a matter of weeks. Muslim irregulars exacted revenge on the local Christians. The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was over before most in the outside world realized it was taking place. The only questions that remained were how bad the reprisals would be, and whether any gory details of Muslims killing Christians would prompt action by any of the European Powers. According to Perry, some of the local IMRO leaders believed the sole purpose of the seemingly pointless uprising was to provoke a massacre that would lead to Great Power intervention. However, Perry also notes that the uprising may have been an attempt by Tsonchev to undermine the credibility of IMRO’s leadership by demonstrating the military prowess of trained Bulgarian officers in the hope that IMRO supporters would align themselves with the SMC leadership. Popular support from the local peasants was politically and geographically limited, and, as was the case with Iankov’s band, some IMRO units fought against the SMC. The uprising resulted in some 28 villages being razed, an undetermined number of dead, and up to 3,000 displaced persons crossing the border to seek refuge in Bulgaria.¹⁶

¹³ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 116.

¹⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October, 12, 1902, FO 78/5196/111.

¹⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 12, 1902, FO 78/522/13.

¹⁶ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 117-118.

The propaganda war surrounding the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was just as desperate as the fighting on the ground, and would prove to be longer-lasting. On October 11, the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* of Vienna published a call to arms by Colonel Iankov. The article was also picked up by *The Times*:

Brethren, the sanguinary drama is beginning. Our country is ablaze. The duty of all of us is to rally round the Macedonian flag and shed our blood for the emancipation of our home. Macedonians, remember the greatest glory of Macedonia, the conqueror of the world, Alexander the Great. Remember the Emperor Samuele, and Marko Kraljevics, the pan-Slavist heroes. Genuine Macedonian blood flowed in the veins of those great men of our country. From Heaven above they now bless the work we have begun.¹⁷

If these references to history were not enough, Iankov made further allusions to the more recent past, which he surely hoped would resonate in the aftermath of the recently concluded Shipka celebrations:

Twenty-five years ago, the masters of Europe signed with the blood of two hundred thousand Russians, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Servians, and Montenegrins that Treaty of Berlin whereby the autonomy of our country was guaranteed. It also bore the signature of the ruler of the Mussulmans, Sultan Hamid the Second, but up to the present day that treaty has not been executed, and tyranny has not ceased to oppress our Fatherland. We who join the insurrection on behalf of human rights and of a life that is worthy to be lived call upon you Christian peoples in the name of humanity to force your leaders to support our sacred rights. Know that we will not lay down our arms until we have obtained the privileges which have been promised us, and until we have secured the freedom of Macedonia.¹⁸

If the British and others needed any justifying evidence for their preemptive efforts of the preceding months, the outbreak of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and Iankov's proclamation surely provided it. Here was a direct appeal to the Christian people of Europe to aid the rights of a population suffering under the "tyranny" of Muslim rule thanks to the callousness of the "masters of Europe" and their unwillingness to guarantee their own treaty. The proclamation also made it clear that the road to Macedonia's emancipation was to be, by historical necessity, a bloody one: "Brethren, only consider the free Balkan peoples that surround us, and you will find that their liberty

¹⁷ "The Troubles in the Balkans," *The Times* October 11, 1902, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

was purchased at the cost of streams of blood. Let us follow their example Freedom is not bestowed as a gift. It must be conquered.”¹⁹

As the uprising was underway, efforts to woo the sympathies of Europe continued. On October 15, *The Times* reported that it had been “announced from the [Bulgarian-Ottoman] frontier” that some 600 civilian refugees had crossed into Bulgaria following the destruction of four Christian villages and the massacre of the population of the village of Oranovo.²⁰ Hoping to capitalize on this news, the SMC circulated a telegram “praying statesmen to protect the Christians against Turkish atrocities.” The telegram, signed by SMC president Stoyan Michailowski, appeared in the press three days later:

The era of bloody deeds of violence in Turkey is commencing afresh. In the districts round Dschuma, Maleschovo, Milnik, and elsewhere women and children have been shot dead by Bashi-Bazouks and regular troops. In view of these sacrifices of human lives and in the name of Christian civilization, we turn to you with the request for your generous assistance, and beg you to defend the Macedonians, the nation of martyrs of the new century.²¹

By the time the telegram appeared, the military component of the uprising was failing badly. At the mass meeting in Sofia on October 20, Michailowski acknowledged that the uprising had been ill-timed for obtaining outside support, but that to wait for an ideal time would lead to their brethren in Macedonia and the Adrianople vilayet being “annihilated.” Resolutions were carried at the end of the meeting, voicing support for the SMC, protesting against opposition and the indifference of other “Macedonian and Adrianopolitan patriots toward the business of liberation,” and sending greetings to the combatants in Macedonia “who are sacrificing themselves without hope, and have found the means to give a rough lesson to the entire Bulgarian nation and to the diplomacy of Europe.”²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “The Macedonian Troubles,” *The Times*, Oct 16, 1902, 3. *The Times* also reported that a mass meeting of all the Macedonian societies was to be held in Sofia, and telegrams were to be sent.

²¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 18, 1902, FO 7/1325/250.

²² Elliot to Lansdowne, October 20, 1902, FO 78/5219/152.

However, the “rough lesson” was being learned by the SMC. As with its military endeavours, its propaganda campaign did not produce the desired immediate intervention. Vainly the SMC’s paper *Reformi* announced it had received letters of support from the Liberal British parliamentarians Herbert Gladstone and Francis Stevenson.²³ Rumours also appear to have been circulated that the British were planning a naval demonstration.²⁴ Neither claim was true. Observing the SMC’s mass meeting, Elliot remarked that fewer than one thousand of the anticipated crowd of 10,000 had turned out on the streets of Sofia.²⁵

As with its efforts to incite a mass uprising in Macedonia, the SMC had been thwarted by IMRO in the battle for European sympathies. The same newspaper article that carried Iankov’s proclamation also contained a message from Boris Sarafov that claimed there was “neither an insurrection nor insurgents” in Macedonia.²⁶ At the precise moment the uprising was at its height, its very existence was called into question by the man *The Times* called “the soul of the revolutionary agitation in Macedonia.”²⁷ Likewise, Elliot reported that Sarafov’s rival publication to the SMC-dominated *Reformi* was denying there was an uprising taking place. In a report on October 14, Elliot wrote that he considered the reports in *Reformi* to be “so obviously exaggerated that it would be futile to report them in detail.”²⁸ At the time, he was unwilling to say more than that there was “something out of the common going on beyond the frontier.”²⁹ *The Times* had also reacted rather sceptically to the SMC’s claims. An editorial called the situation in Macedonia “perplexing” and noting that the SMC had “fastened upon the report of Turkish atrocities with avidity, and have hastened to utilize it for their own ends.” The SMC claim was also balanced in the same article with an official Ottoman source reporting that the inhabitants of one of the villages in question appealed to the Ottoman authorities for protection against the SMC.³⁰ An editorial in *The Manchester Guardian*

²³ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 15, 1902, FO 78/5219/146.

²⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 22, 1903, FO 78/5219/153.

²⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 20, 1902, FO 78/5219/152.

²⁶ “The Troubles in the Balkans,” *The Times* October 11, 1902, 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 14, 1902, FO 78/5219/143

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “The reports as to the situation in Macedonia,” *The Times* October 16, 1902, 7.

early in the fighting expressed doubt that the uprising would be serious and attributed it to the Shipka Pass celebrations, which had “been fanning the Pan Slavist flame in every susceptible breast throughout the peninsula.”³¹ Such critical, if not skeptical, reporting, was not about to rouse William Gladstone’s disciples. There was to be no battle cry for the freedom of Macedonia in October 1902. The preemptive British efforts to lessen the popular appeal of the SMC appear to have paid off, and can partly explain why the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was an abysmal failure on the battlefield and in the court of public opinion.

Diplomatic reactions to the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising were rather subdued and slow to materialize. Before consular officials substantiated what was happening in Macedonia, the Ottoman government had sent a circular to the Great Powers, urging them to make representations to the Bulgarian government to discourage the acts of agitation on October 10.³² As with previous Ottoman circulars, Lansdowne sought a multilateral consensus and instructed his ambassadors to find out what the other Great Power governments were considering, adding that Britain was willing to cooperate with other governments.³³ However, the other powers had nothing to offer in the way of a coordinated response. The Italian officials were not present, the Russian foreign minister was in Yalta, and the Germans do not appear to have had anything to say regarding the matter.³⁴ The Austro-Hungarians considered the reports of the uprising to be exaggerated and wished to consult further on the matter.³⁵ The French responded a week later that they had made recommendations to the Ottomans to exercise moderation and to the Bulgarians to restrain the committees, but that they saw no need to make multilateral representations.³⁶ Although the Ottomans would complain about

³¹ “Editorial 6 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 1, 1902, 4.

³² Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 14, 1902, FO 421/194/174. On October 12, the Ottoman chargé added that the Vali of Monastir had received information that the “Bulgarian bands” had orders to murder Muslim and Greek notables, a fact that he claimed could be corroborated by the Greek ambassador in Constantinople. This information prompted Lansdowne to write to Elliot requesting information on the matter. See: Lansdowne to Elliot, October 14, 1902, FO 421/194/173.

³³ Lansdowne to Monson, October 17, 1902, FO 421/194/177.

³⁴ Rodd to Lansdowne, October 18, 1902, FO 45/857/64; Hardinge to Lansdowne, October 18, 1902, FO 65/1644/57.

³⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 18, 1902, FO 7/1326/25.

³⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, October 22, 1902, FO 421/194/203.

their requests being ignored by the powers, by the time the French informed the British of their actions, the Ottomans had announced they had defeated the rebels.³⁷

The Ottomans could hardly have hoped for a more favourable outcome. They had won the military conflict and acquitted themselves well in the eyes of Great Power governments. In addition to warnings from the French, the Russians were said to have privately told the Bulgarian government that it would bear responsibility for the continuation of the uprising.³⁸ The British were no less critical. Vice-Consul Elliot described his conversation of October 18 with Prime Minister Danev as “disjointed.” Elliot reminded Danev of his government’s failure to adequately incarcerate members of the SMC and of its toleration of the organization’s inflammatory public rhetoric. Danev reacted defensively, and pointedly asked if Elliot was making accusations at the Ottoman commissioner’s request and if Britain intended to make representations to Bulgaria as had been reported in the press. Despite the Bulgarian prime minister’s assurances of vigilance, Elliot wrote that he considered Danev’s language “unsatisfactory,” adding unfavorably: “I cannot, however, but remember that similar assurances have been given, and similar measures announced, periodically for many months.”³⁹

In contrast to their frustration with the Bulgarian government, British assessments of Ottoman conduct during the events of October 1902 were relatively favourable. Having reviewed the consular reports from the Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising, Ambassador O’Conor reported that the orders of the Grand Vizier “not to tolerate any acts of reprisals against the peasantry” appeared to have been carried out, with instructions being hastily sent to the local military commanders not to engage in pursuit of the retreating SMC bands at night, so as to “avoid indiscriminate slaughter and any irregularities on the part of the troops.”⁴⁰ General Tsonchev, who was wounded in the thigh during the fighting, later expressed his disappointment with the Ottoman decision not to pursue his men more doggedly.⁴¹ A month later, Biliotti reported how the SMC had failed in its attempt to

³⁷ Hamid Bey to Lansdowne, October 18, 1902, FO 421/194/197.

³⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 14, 1902, FO 78/5196/102.

³⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 20, 1902, FO 78/5219/151.

⁴⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 21, 1902, FO 78/5193/457.

⁴¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), November 17, 1902, FO 78/5219/169.

provoke the Muslims in the district of Djuma Bala “to outrage.” Biliotti also noted the implementation of the Ottoman amnesty, which was publicized by a party of Ottoman officers and local priests who were touring the villages of the district to read the Proclamation of Amnesty to the inhabitants.⁴²

As the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising subsided in the autumn of 1902, the sense of relief felt by the European Power diplomats that the insurrection had fizzled gave way to concerns that a more concerted uprising would take place in the following spring. Proverbial references to the pacifying effect of the Balkan winter brought few assurances of peace. General Tsonchev vowed to fight on and, as the diplomats knew very well, IMRO had not participated in the uprising and remained poised to initiate an uprising of its own.⁴³ The likelihood of a larger uprising in 1903 was high.

Comparative Concerns: Venezuela and the Straits

Before examining the aftermath of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising, it is useful, for the sake of comparison, to consider how the British responded to two other related foreign policy crises which also occurred in the autumn of 1902. British diplomatic efforts to stop the passage of a small contingent of Russian torpedo boats and Britain’s participation in a European show of force against Venezuela show that the Balfour government was—irrespective of public opinion—willing to act aggressively in its foreign policy if it felt its financial and strategic interests were at stake.

For the Foreign Office, the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was of secondary regional importance to the developing events concerning the Dardanelle Straits. At the same time Lansdowne was inquiring with the other powers about the Ottoman request for multilateral representations against the Bulgaria, he was seeking support from the Germans, Austro-Hungarians, and Italians to pressure the Ottomans to uphold the 1841 Straits Agreement. The Ottoman government had given approval for a squadron of

⁴² Biliotti to O’Conor, November 19, 1902, FO 195/2133/198. By and large, most villages accepted the amnesty, but some resisted. The account reports that the village of Bistritza greeted the amnesty party with a volley of gunfire, and that its entire population fled into Bulgaria after fighting which exacted considerable casualties.

⁴³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), November 17, 1902, FO 78/5219/169.

Russian torpedo boats to pass through the Dardanelle Straits and the Bosphorus and into the Black Sea. At the very height of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising in mid-October 1902, Lansdowne wrote to O'Connor informing his ambassador that the upcoming passage of the torpedo boats was in contravention of the Straits Agreement and, should the boats pass, Britain would "reserve the right of claiming corresponding privileges."⁴⁴ Judging by the volume of correspondence, the Foreign Secretary was a good deal more concerned about the route of a few Russian ships than the security situation in Macedonia and the welfare of its population.

Lansdowne's attempt to bring multilateral pressure to bear on the Ottoman Empire revealed Britain's diminished position and the cost of his predecessor's splendid isolationism. Lord Salisbury had allowed the Mediterranean Agreements with Austria-Hungary and Italy to lapse—a contributing factor in Vienna's decision to enter into the 1897 Agreement with Russia. Moreover, both the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans had understood that Salisbury had fundamentally shifted British policy when he reportedly made it known to them that Britain would not try to block Russian access to the Mediterranean, and that the Dardanelles were no longer a British concern. Lansdowne found himself having to convince the Germans and Austro-Hungarians that their accounts of Salisbury were inaccurate.⁴⁵ With their ties to the Ottoman Empire getting closer, the Germans announced they had no concerns regarding the matter.⁴⁶ The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Count Goluchowski said he was pleased that the British had decided to take an interest in the affairs of the Straits and used the occasion to express his disappointment that the Mediterranean Agreement had been dropped.⁴⁷ However, like the French, Goluchowski and the Austro-Hungarians did not see the need to make collective representations to the Ottoman government on the matter, citing the

⁴⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 15, 1902, FO 421/194/176A.

⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Plunkett, November 9, 1902, FO 421/194/245; Lansdowne to Buchanan, November 2, 1902, FO 421/194/238. Lansdowne attributed this to a misunderstanding. He maintained that Salisbury had only refused to commit the British government to obligations that would be unpopular with the British public, and that the records showed that there was nothing to indicate that the British had announced that they were no longer interested in the Straits. Nevertheless, the Austro-Hungarians maintained that Salisbury had indicated on multiple occasions between 1895 and 1899 that the British no longer wished to help mount a defense of the Straits against another power.

⁴⁶ Lascelles to Lansdowne (confidential), November 4, 1902, FO 64/1552/221.

⁴⁷ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 31, 1902, FO 7/1326/30.

fact that the Russian vessels were small and not equipped with armaments.⁴⁸ Like the French, the Austro-Hungarians likely did not wish to cause offense to the Czar owing to their diplomatic agreements with Russia. The British were able to secure limited Italian collaboration, but Austro-Hungarian support remained weak. As the torpedo boats made their way around Europe in the autumn of 1902, British requests for more concrete Austro-Hungarian support were repeatedly met with reiterations from Count Goluchowski calling for the renewal of the *accord à trois*.⁴⁹ By mid November, the Austro-Hungarians had agreed to make representations to the Ottoman government in defense of the Straits Agreement, but it was not done in concert with the British and the Italians, and it happened only after the torpedo boats had passed through the straits.⁵⁰ Lansdowne informed the Germans that warnings were to be given to the Ottomans by Britain and the Kaiser's alliance partners at the "most convenient moment" following a consultation of the British, Austro-Hungarian, and Italian ambassadors in Constantinople.⁵¹

The passage of the torpedo boats and Britain's inability even to enlist other powers to make representations are indicative of shifts in the European balance of power and the difficulty of coordinating concerted diplomacy. The intersecting interests of the European Powers in the 'Near East' region have often made effective multilateral diplomacy difficult. Yet, Britain's inability to muster any tangible pressure on the Ottoman Empire provides a poignant indication of Britain's declining power and authority, and it likely contributed to the opinions of those who thought Britain needed to go further in ending its isolation. The fact was that the British Empire was in a weakened state in 1902 and needed the concert of other powers and the authority of international laws and treaties. Unilateral diplomatic initiatives had become too politically and financially risky.

This is not to argue that the British were incapable of using force when they saw fit—far from it. Britain had much better luck imposing its will on Venezuela in late 1902 and early 1903. The British also found Germany and Italy to be willing partners in

⁴⁸ Monson to Lansdowne (confidential), October 24, 1902, FO 27/3580/398; Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), October 31, 1902, FO 7/1325/265.

⁴⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), November 20, 1902, FO 7/1325/279. The "*Accord à trois*" refers to the Mediterranean Agreement between Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

⁵⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, November 19, 1902, FO 7/1326/32.

⁵¹ Lansdowne to Buchanan, November 26, 1902, FO 421/194/292.

intervention. As the intervention in Venezuela occurred concurrently with the events in Macedonia and drew comparisons, it is worth discussing the principal events.

By 1902, the British were at loggerheads with the Venezuelan government of Cipirano Castro. The principal British grievance was Venezuela's repeated defaulting on payments for services rendered by British firms. Since Castro's rise to power in 1899, events had escalated as the British had granted tacit backing to General Manuel A. Mantos, Castro's rival in Venezuela's ongoing civil conflict. The British allowed General Mantos to take refuge on the British possessions of Trinidad and Tobago, just off the northeast coast of the South American country. While it is unclear whether the Foreign Office was actively seeking to overthrow the Castro government, it was turning a blind eye to the activities of General Mantos within its jurisdiction.

A British-registered ship, the *Ban-Righ*, had carried arms from Belgium to Venezuela in the services of General Mantos' forces. Venezuela likened the passage of the *Ban-Righ* to that of the *Alabama* during the American Civil War some forty years earlier.⁵² In response, Venezuelan gunboats seized four British-registered ships and sank two others. Several British subjects were detained and poorly treated. Together with the Germans and later the Italians, who both had similar grievances of their own with the Venezuelan government, a joint naval force blockaded the Venezuelan coast, quickly neutralizing Castro's navy and bombarding some coastal forts. The Venezuelans appealed to the United States to cover its debts and to help end the blockade and bombardment as a third party arbitrator. It was an American, Herbert Brown, who negotiated on Venezuela's behalf and obtained a settlement on February 13, 1903. A hearing on the Venezuelan intervention took place in the Hague in the autumn of 1903, and Venezuela was ordered to pay adjusted sums to the intervening powers.

Although the intervention in Venezuela had a successful outcome for Great Britain, it was not regarded as a particularly popular foreign-policy adventure. There was some nervousness at the partnership with Germany and concern that the improving

⁵² Clyde Eaton Hewitt, "Venezuela and the Great Powers, 1902-1909: A Study in International Investment and Diplomacy" (Phd diss., Chicago, 1948), 61.

relations with the United States might be damaged in the process.⁵³ What is more, many believed that the Royal Navy should not be used as an instrument to collect private debts and considered the Great Power naval demonstration against a much weaker country tantamount to bullying.⁵⁴ To a few observers, the robust display of force against Venezuela to coerce debt payments contrasted sharply with the humanitarian appeals emanating from Macedonia. In December 1902, a person by the name of Walker from Cheltenham sent a letter to the Foreign Office with a newspaper clipping from an unnamed periodical, which quoted a Bulgarian paper verbatim on the “terrible details of the Turkish atrocities in Macedonia.” Walker asked how the British government could “look on in cowardly helplessness and apathy, while they can find courage to proceed of course in the interests of money, against the petty state of Venezuela?” The relevant file contains neither a response from the Foreign Office nor any mention of a reply being sent to the letter writer.⁵⁵ The comparison of Macedonia to Venezuela was brought up in public on other occasions, but it did not become a rallying cry for those advocating intervention in Macedonia. In fact, Balfour even used the comparison in response to a critic in Liverpool. He asked the critic why he or she objected to the British intervention in Venezuela while at the same time calling for intervention in Macedonia. The Liberal

⁵³ The relationship with Germany was lampooned in Caroline Lewis’ *Lost in Blunderland*. In chapters 7 and 8, Germany is depicted as a large unicorn urging the naïve Carla (Balfour) to play a game called ‘Venezuela’ which required Carla to pull chestnuts out of a fire. When the pair are confronted by the “Monstrous Crow” (the USA), the unicorn shrinks to a size much smaller than Carla and hides behind her dress. See: Caroline Lewis, *Lost in Blunderland: The Further Adventures of Clara* (London: William Heinman, 1903). The sequence likely refers to the bombardment of the Venezuelan fortress of San Carlos by the German navy, which left over two dozen civilians dead. The action was not authorized by the British commander of the allied fleet, and it caused some outrage in the United States and a warning from President Roosevelt. Anti-German sentiment was rising in Great Britain at the time and many did not wish to see the country enter into an alliance with Imperial Germany, in which Britain would play a subservient role. The cooperation with Germany in the intervention in Venezuela produced concerns that Britain could be forced into an undesired conflict with the United States due to German provocations.

⁵⁴ Hewitt, “Venezuela and the Great Powers,” 74.

⁵⁵ Walker to Lansdowne, December 12, 1902, FO 78/5212. Such a response to a polemical article making unsubstantiated claims was precisely the sort of thing that Lansdowne and the Foreign Office feared would gain momentum and make things uncomfortable for the government. This letter was an exception, as the point did not capture many imaginations.

Party criticized Balfour for making the comparison in the House of Commons a few days later.⁵⁶

Britain's approach to Venezuela and the Straits provides further insight into British foreign policy in late 1902. Despite being in a state of 'imperial overstretch,' the British government clearly had the political and military means to intervene in other countries, if the political will to do so existed. Lansdowne was content to partake in a naval intervention in Venezuela in partnership with two other European Powers. Whether the British had the will to intervene in Venezuela unilaterally is questionable. What is clear is that when Lansdowne found no partners to enforce the Straits Agreement, he was not willing to take strong, unilateral measures to halt the passage of a few Russian torpedo boats. Nevertheless, the concern Lansdowne expressed and the efforts he made to block the Russian vessels diplomatically indicate that Lansdowne was not prepared to treat the Straits with the sense of disregard that Lord Salisbury had arrived at late in his tenure. While the British saw a Russian advance on the Straits as a distinct possibility, if not an inevitability, Lansdowne still wished to keep the Russians beyond the Bosphorus if possible. The Straits remained a strategic consideration which could command British attention—a point worth keeping in mind as the crisis in Macedonia escalated. Macedonia, by comparison, had little economic and strategic value to Britain: it was merely an annoyance. If troubles in Macedonia proliferated, they could threaten strategic interests and regional peace. As events unfolded through the winter of 1902-03, the British searched and pushed for a solution which would, they hoped, contain the unrest and get at the root of the problems.

Refugee Politics

The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising may have ended by November 1902, but violence continued in the uprising's aftermath and humanitarian concerns began to be raised with the onset of winter. The British continued to collect information on the conditions in Macedonia, making inquiries into some publicized accusations of atrocities that came to

⁵⁶ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* vol 118 (1903): 115-116. Francis Stevenson, Member of Parliament for Eye, Suffolk, maintained that the agreement with Germany to act against Venezuela was "temporary" and "accidental," while Macedonia came under international treaty.

light in December 1902. In addition, they monitored the conditions of some 3,000 refugees who had fled Macedonia and were being temporarily housed just inside the western border of Bulgaria. As they had previously, the British remained vigilant by investigating any potentially inflammatory information and working to corroborate or correct alleged facts. While the British assessments of Ottoman conduct remained mostly positive, most British officials concluded that a larger uprising in 1903 could only be averted by significant reforms.

“There can be no doubt that the revolutionary bands have at last succeeded in provoking an outbreak of Turkish ferocity on a very considerable scale.”⁵⁷ This was the leading sentence of a *Times* article of December 5, 1902 that got Ambassador O’Conor’s attention. The report claimed that “Turkish” reprisals had led to the plundering and burning of eighteen villages in the hard-hit Djouma Bala district, and that an Exarchate priest, Papa Christo, had been tortured to death in his Gevgelija home just north of Salonica under the supervision of the local Ottoman magistrate. The Vali of Salonica was reportedly refusing calls for investigation into the incident.⁵⁸ The article was hardly flattering to the rebel cause, stating that the villages were damaged in reaction to provocations, and that Papa Christo was tortured and killed in his own house specifically because that was where the insurgents had committed a well-publicized murder. Nevertheless, the damage to the villages implied that the Ottomans did not have sufficient control over their security forces, and the killing of the priest indicated that an act of barbarity took place under the direct supervision an Ottoman official. These were precisely the sorts of atrocities that could lead *The Times’* readership to conclude that the Ottomans were not fit to govern Macedonia, and that intervention might be necessary. Likely in light of these considerations, O’Conor had Consul-General Biliotti investigate the reported incidents.

Biliotti responded within a week of the publication of *The Times* article with two reports. He was critical of the article for making the event appear unconnected to the events of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. Biliotti recapped the events of the uprising, pointing out that it began with the massacre of thirty-one Muslim non-combatants in the

⁵⁷ “The Macedonian Question,” *The Times*, December 5, 1902, 5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Djouma Bala area, and that the Ottomans lost 350 men in the counterinsurgency operations. Furthermore, the houses which were damaged were mostly those in villages where fighting occurred and “destruction of property was really not so great as one could have supposed.” Biliotti concluded that, if properly contextualized, the reprisals were excusable:

On the whole, though 26 Christians, including 6 women and 3 children, were murdered, the behavior of the Turks, military and civil, in Djouma Bala can scarcely be stigmatized as having been ferocious on the scale implied in the “Times.” I should say that, under the circumstances mentioned above, the ferocity they displayed was on a very small scale.⁵⁹

Regarding the death of Papa Christo, Biliotti summoned his contact in Gevgelija, who reported that the priest had been tortured to death after having endured days of beating, burns from hot irons, and having his beard plucked out hair by hair. A request by the Exarchate’s local archimandrite for a post-mortem was refused. However, Biliotti noted that his informant spoke only from hearsay, and that neither he nor anyone he knew had seen the corpse. Biliotti was informed by the Vali of Salonica that the post-mortem request had been refused because the body had already been examined by an army doctor and the deceased’s physician, who attributed the death to a chronic disease with which the priest had been afflicted for two years. A Greek source added that the priest’s body had been delivered to the Bulgarians during daylight hours when any marks of torture or missing beard hair would have been plainly evident. Biliotti wrote that Papa Christo’s death remained shrouded in partisan belief. Aware that the truth of the matter might never be known, Biliotti concluded with some frustration: “This is one of the numerous cases in which the presence of a European Judicial Inspector would have cleared up the allegations against the local authorities.”⁶⁰

The thoroughness demonstrated by the British in their investigation of *The Times* article of December 5, 1902 again shows the ongoing vigilance by British officials against potentially inflammatory reports in the media. Biliotti’s deconstructive examination of the article illustrates how unsubstantiated and improperly contextualized information could be, and how it was often presented in even the reputable press as

⁵⁹ Biliotti to O’Conor, December 10, 1902, FO 195/2133/212

⁶⁰ Biliotti to O’Conor, December 9, 1902, FO 195/2133/211.

factual. As both primary sources and as critical third-party arbitrators of information coming out of Macedonia, the British consuls had a crucial role to play in the shaping of opinions in the English-reading world. In the coming months, as the propaganda war for Macedonia intensified, British diplomats would have further struggles with reporters and with local advocates and officials. Any prospective 'peacekeeping' force would be doing work that these diplomats were already doing.

Despite the onset of the cold, O'Connor continued to receive a steady flow of reports from his consuls about acts of terror and violence. In Salonica, Consul General Biliotti had little sympathy for the rebels or their brethren, expressing his admiration for "the really extraordinary patience and self-restraint of the Moslems, who are being provoked almost beyond endurance."⁶¹ But the plight of the Muslims of Macedonia was of little interest to Lansdowne and the Foreign Office, who, for the most part, only asked the consuls to investigate crimes against Christians.

By December 1902, the violence in Ottoman Macedonia had subsided to a low level, and was seen by most observers as localized tit-for-tat killings between different national groups. The revolution was on ice, but the presence of some 3,000 refugees in Western Bulgaria provided a living reminder of what might be in store in the coming year. It was soon evident that these refugees were not going to return home, since most either did not feel safe or they had no homes to go to. The presence of the refugees was both a humanitarian and a political concern. Their welfare had to be attended to, and their testimonies could arouse calls for more action by the Great Powers.

As the refugees became politicized in the autumn of 1902, the British monitored their plight. In late November, Bulgarian Prime Minister Danev informed Vice-Consul Elliot that the refugees were "in very destitute condition" and that they would require the aid of the Bulgarian government. When Elliot asked Danev why he had not tried to make arrangements with the Ottoman commissioner for the refugees to return to their homes, Danev replied that he felt morally responsible for their well being and did not wish to send them back to uncertain fates in Macedonia. When Elliot mentioned that reports indicated that the Ottoman forces had not committed excesses, Danev shrewdly

⁶¹ Biliotti to O'Connor, December 17, 1902, FO 195/2133/217.

acknowledged that the regular soldiers had maintained discipline, but that Muslim irregulars (Bashi-Bazouks) had committed numerous rapes, murders, and destruction of property.⁶² The Ottoman commissioner in Sofia, Ali Ferruh Bey, maintained that his government had made arrangements for the safe return of the refugees, but the Bulgarian government was blocking their return, so “that they may display them before the world as victims of Turkish oppression.”⁶³ Furthermore, Ali Ferruh Bey followed up on a previous grievance of the reported “ill-treatment” of Muslims in the Bulgarian city of Ruse, and accused the Bulgarians of oppressing the Muslims of the principality.⁶⁴

In his assessment of the situation, Elliot conceded that Muslim-Christian tensions had increased in Bulgaria, but that “no serious or general” repression of the Muslims was taking place. He attributed the Ottoman commissioner’s accusations to the political atmosphere: “It is natural enough that he should wish to show that many of the reproaches east of the Turkish Administration can be with equal justice addressed to the Bulgarian authorities.”⁶⁵ Elliot dismissed other Ottoman complaints against Bulgaria regarding the security of the frontier and the collection of funds by the Macedonian Committees.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Ottoman complaints about the treatment of Muslims within the borders of Bulgaria and attempts to draw equivalences to the conditions of Christians in Macedonia would continue.

British interest in the refugees increased in mid-December, when Madame Bakhmetieff, the wife of the outspoken Russian vice-consul in Sofia, departed the Bulgarian capital to distribute aid to the refugees temporarily housed in the towns of Dubnitza and Rila, near the border with Macedonia. Madame Bakhmetieff travelled with a small team of Russian and Bulgarian nurses and an official from the Bulgarian Foreign Office to distribute 10,000 roubles raised through the Slav Benevolent Society. Bakhmetieff frequently telegraphed her husband with updates on the conditions of the

⁶² Elliot to Lansdowne, November 22, 1902, FO 78/5219/175

⁶³ Elliot to Lansdowne, November 28, 1902, FO 78/5219/176.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. The Bulgarian shortcomings in sealing the frontier were mirrored by similar inability on the part of the Ottoman security forces to restrict the access of the SMC bands. Elliot credited the Bulgarians for almost completely stopping the open collection of funds by the Macedonian Committees but stated that the same rules could not be applied to the collection of charitable funds for the refugees, which had become substantial.

refugees. When Elliot asked about the refugees, the Russian consul-general alluded to the degree of suffering by telling Elliot (as Prime Minister Danev had a few days earlier) that “a Slav peasant will never leave his home until the utmost extremity.” Bakhmetieff said that the Ottoman troops had only begun to abuse and evict people since late October, after they been decentralized and quartered in small villages, whereupon they began to behave “as they did in Bulgaria in 1876.” The significance of Bakhmetieff’s choice of words was not lost on Elliot.⁶⁷

Madame Bakhmetieff returned to Sofia after a week with the refugees. Importantly, she had collected a number of testimonials from the survivors and witnesses of the atrocities. She was able to verify some victims’ accounts by physical inspections. The abuses endured by the refugees from the Razlog kaza were reportedly committed by regular Ottoman troops during searches for weapons. Bakhmetieff allowed Elliot to read the testimonials, which he summarized for his report to Lansdowne on December 23, 1902. The report contained a relatively short but graphic sampling of the testimonials, including several rapes where victim and assailant are named. As noted by Elliot: ‘There is evidently plenty of material whereon to found an “atrocities” outcry, if the European press gets hold of it.’⁶⁸

The British did not have any diplomatic representatives in the Bulgarian border towns. It would seem that Elliot did not want to make a trip to the refugee camps, either out of a wish not to draw attention through his presence or a personal dislike of the discomfort associated with visiting the camps in the dead of winter. Acting on his own initiative, he wrote to the American missionaries in Samokov, who were housing refugees from the Razlog kaza, expressly asking for statements from the refugees regarding what caused them to leave their homes. It was a move certainly taken in light of the reports arriving from Madame Bakhmetieff. Two days before Christmas, Elliot received letters from two American missionaries, Reverends Clarke and Baird, confirming much of what the Russians were reporting. The missionaries reported they had heard similar testimonies from the victims, including new information of a recently

⁶⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 13, 1902, FO 78/5219/183.

⁶⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 23, 1902, FO 78/5219/195.

formed Turkish “band of roughs...whose depredations are much feared.” Elliot surmised that the letters confirmed that atrocities had taken place during searches for arms.⁶⁹

Madame Bakhmetieff may not have had the celebrity appeal of Count Ignatieff, but her journey to the refugee camps caught the attention of the Foreign Office. Lansdowne wrote to O’Conor on December 29, requesting a report to verify the authenticity of the refugee testimonials reported by the Russians.⁷⁰ He does not appear to have seen the need to question the validity of the statements made by the American missionaries. He telegraphed O’Conor a day later, instructing his ambassador to “impress upon the Porte that if excesses of this kind are permitted, the results cannot fail to be disastrous to the interests of Turkey, and that it appears desirable that prompt measures of precaution should be taken.”⁷¹

Ambassador O’Conor was ahead of schedule. Having read a private report on the atrocities committed in Razlog, he had met with the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Grand Vizier a week earlier and conveyed precisely the sort of message the Foreign Secretary desired:

If these reports proved to be true, the friends of Turkey would lose confidence in her ability or sincere desire to govern the country in a civilized manner, and the consequences would be very serious. An atrocity outcry, if founded on even a few cases of wanton cruelty and inhumanity such as were now stated, would ring through Europe, where the terrible events of 1876 were still fresh in the memory of many people.⁷²

O’Conor also expressed his concern that the atrocities might have resulted from the discipline of the army being relaxed or from the deployment of Redifs, and called for the Ottoman government to launch an inquiry. The Grand Vizier responded defensively, stating that he had “no doubt whatsoever” that many of the atrocities had in fact been committed by the revolutionary bands in order to punish those unwilling to follow them. He argued that the bands’ main objective “was to raise an outcry against Turkey which

⁶⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 25, 1902, FO 78/5219/196.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to O’Conor, December 29, 1902, FO 421/194/366.

⁷¹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, December 27, 1902, FO 421/194/373.

⁷² O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 23, 1902, FO 78/5194/562A. This dispatch was not received by the Foreign Office until January 5, 1903, which accounts for Lansdowne’s giving instructions to discuss matters with the Ottoman government six days after the dispatch was sent.

would bring on foreign intervention.”⁷³ In a move very likely intended to deescalate the tension in the meeting, O’Conor asked the Grand Vizier if it was true that an “unruly and half-disciplined” Albanian regiment had been stationed at Razlog. Mehmed Said Pasha responded that this government had been very much aware of the inhumanity and political ramifications of atrocities, but he would promise to make inquiries with the minister of war.⁷⁴

O’Conor tasked Biliotti with making inquiries on behalf of Great Britain.⁷⁵ Like his superior in the Ottoman capital, the consul-general in Salonica had taken the initiative without waiting for instruction. In late December, Biliotti reported that a number of Bulgarian villagers had recently come to him from the Strumitca area to give statements of being mistreated by Turks. Biliotti pointed out that the statements were uncorroborated and were very likely orchestrated by the “Bulgarian Committees” in conjunction with the Bulgarian commercial agent in Strumitca and the town’s Exarchate archbishop. The report acknowledged that Bulgarian peasants were beaten in some cases, but noted that this was the only means by which the Ottomans were able to get the peasants to surrender their arms. Other alleged crimes reported to Biliotti were contextualized and scrutinized to the point where the victims’ credibility became highly questionable.⁷⁶

In a follow up report three days later, Biliotti went further, accusing the Bulgarians of coordinating false victims’ reports, including passing women off as rape victims. He expressed his frustration with well-intentioned reporters who did not take the time to verify inflammatory information, and he accused the “Committees” of being mischievous in leading public opinion astray and by “tending to awaken Moslem fanaticism, of which

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 31, 1902, FO 78/5194/574. O’Conor also discussed the possibility of sending a European delegation to Razlog to investigate the alleged crimes with the German and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors. However, the two ambassadors thought such an investigation “would increase rather than diminish the chances of an atrocity cry, which, although perfectly justifiable in some respects, is sure to be greatly exaggerated for political purposes.”

⁷⁶ Biliotti to O’Conor, December 28, 1902, FO 195/2133/225. For example, Biliotti had a doctor examine five “Exarchists” who claimed they had been beaten by the Turks. The doctor concluded that only two of the men had been beaten, and the others were likely chosen to join in the appeal to the British consul-general because they had various sores and marks on their bodies. Biliotti noted that the men were surprised that he summoned a doctor to examine them.

the Christians may end in suffering the terrible consequences.”⁷⁷ Perhaps not surprisingly, Biliotti was critical to the point of cynicism when it came to the Razlog refugees. He was unmoved and suspicious towards a party of refugees who had made their way from Razlog to Salonica to see him. Finally, he stated he was “fully convinced” that the population of Razlog was victimized at the direct instigation of the “Committees,” and that the local “Turks” and Ottoman forces that took part in the outrages acted as either “blind instruments” if not “paid agents” of the Committees.⁷⁸

British efforts to investigate the events at Razlog continued through January. On the tenth of the month, O’Conor reported that his repeated representations appeared to be having some effect, as the Inspector-General of Rumelia, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, was sending an officer to investigate the crimes committed in the hard-hit Djumaia area.⁷⁹ The Vali of Salonica had also promised to send officials to make investigations.⁸⁰ By the end of the month, the British were able to receive information directly from the Razlog kaza. The American missionary Dr. Clarke toured the area in late January as did the British military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell, who visited the refugee camps in Bulgaria before crossing into Ottoman territory and surveyed the afflicted Razlog and Serres districts. Both Clarke and Maunsell reported that many of the locals refused to join in the uprising, but were subject to aggressive searches for weapons by the Ottoman security forces after the SMC bands were repulsed. Maunsell described the situation in the town of Jumaa as very tense, with Christians having to wear the fez in public. Maunsell noted that the worst offenses had been committed by two Redif battalions, which had been deployed far from their homes and quartered in Christian villages, whereupon their officers lost control of them and allowed them to do as they pleased. Maunsell concluded that “in dealing with the disturbances here the Turks, as usual, began well but soon lost their heads and gave rein to their fanaticism.” He anticipated more violence in the near future.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Biliotti to O’Conor, December 31, 1902, FO 195/2133/229. Biliotti also described the double standard of the Bulgarian bands, who also committed rapes and quartered themselves in Greek villages, so the Greeks would incur the wrath of the Ottoman security forces.

⁷⁸ Biliotti to O’Conor, January 10, 1903, FO 195/2156/8.

⁷⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, January 10, 1903, FO 78/5264/15.

⁸⁰ Biliotti to O’Conor, January 10, 1903, FO 195/2156/8.

⁸¹ Maunsell to Whitehead, January 27, 1903, FO 195/2150/3.

The British went to some length to investigate the reported atrocities which had driven some 3,000 people to seek refuge in Bulgaria in the winter of 1902-03. Testimonial statements were examined by consular officials, the American missionaries were consulted and the British military attaché toured the region when temperatures were dipping below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Through their examinations a more accurate and authoritative accounting of the events was produced, which could be used to dispel any sensationalized accounts in the popular press.⁸² In addition the British representations may have helped prompt investigative action by the Ottoman government, which saw violence by the Ottoman security forces decrease sustainably in places after the first week of January 1903, and the replacement of several officers and officials by persons considered more competent.⁸³

In early February, Albert Biliotti produced two dispatches which contained a “labourous examination” of the alleged atrocities. In his examination, Biliotti stepped back slightly from his previous allegation that the Committees may have very well paid to have atrocities exacted on the population in the kazas bordering Bulgaria. Nevertheless, he was very critical of the SMC and the Bulgarian populations of the kazas, which, with one exception, participated enthusiastically in the uprising. Regarding the misery inflicted upon the population, Biliotti stated that the people had only themselves and the rebel bands to blame. As before, he cast considerable doubt on many of the testimonials given by the refugees, which, he reminded the reader, numbered “only 3,000” out of a regional population of 74,000.⁸⁴ Biliotti considered the actions of the Bulgarians understandable, given successful historical precedents which brought about intervention, but decried the “newspaper campaign” which had developed concerning the reported atrocities, and reiterated his frustration with reporters who turned rumors into

⁸² Ibid; Whitehead to Lansdowne, January 28, 1903, FO 78/5264/46. In seeking an investigation as to why the revolt was focused on the Eastern kazas of Macedonia, the British picked up on some of the politics between the Macedonian Committees. Mystified as to why the SMC chose to sacrifice seemingly friendly and highly strategic territory on the border of Bulgaria for the purpose of inciting atrocities, the British concluded that the SMC did so because the districts were loyal to Sarafov (or, more accurately, IMRO). Therefore, if the uprising were successful, the population and IMRO would be turned in the SMC’s favour, and if it were to fail, those being sacrificed would be IMRO loyalists. Also see: Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 117-118.

⁸³ Biliotti to Whitehead, January 31, 1903, FO 195/2156/24; Biliotti to Whitehead, February 5, 1903, FO 195/2156/27.

⁸⁴ Biliotti to Whitehead, January 31, 1903, FO 195/2156/24.

sensationalized stories without bothering to verify facts.⁸⁵ He finished by expressing his understanding of the difficulties faced by the Ottoman authorities and the Turkish population, suggesting that

the Military Attachés of the foreign Powers should accompany the Headquarters Staff on the frontier, with the dual purpose of being a restraining element on the Turks and of testifying to the truth, next time the latter have to act against the Bulgarians, as may occur very shortly.⁸⁶

Although Biliotti lamented misrepresentations in the popular media, there was relatively little initial damage control for the British to do concerning how the press had handled the refugees' story, especially relative to the challenges they would face later in 1903. The aforementioned *Times* article of December 5, 1902 was the only article the British diplomats were called upon to investigate regarding the plight of the refugees prior to the early spring. Biliotti's nerves were undoubtedly tested by a story in *The Times* of December 24, 1902, which reported that the "terrible week" of November 10-17 had been followed recently by the "plundering, beating, and torturing" of the "wretched villagers" by "Turks" acting on the pretext of searching for arms. The reporter did not provide any background or contextualization regarding the events reported in the article.⁸⁷ Likewise a *Times* article of January 7, 1903 related that "Moslem robber bands" had set up a parallel administration in the Dibra region and were subjecting the Christians to house and marriage taxes and outrageous acts of extortion.⁸⁸ Interestingly, on February 10, 1903, *The Times* also published a report by an anonymous eye-witness who had recently toured Macedonia. The article, which described numerous Ottoman abuses towards the Christian population in the Razlog area, was most certainly authored by the American missionary Dr. Clarke, who had recorded much of the same information, some of it verbatim, in his letter to the British vice-consul in Sofia in late January.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Biliotti to Whitehead, February 14, 1903, FO 195/2156/33.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "The Turks in Macedonia," *The Times*, December 24, 1902, 3.

⁸⁸ "Macedonia," *The Times*, January 7, 1903, 4.

⁸⁹ "The Turks in Macedonia," *The Times*, February 10, 1903, 5; Dr. Clarke to Elliot, January 30, 1903, FO 78/5293/18.

Nevertheless, these articles were the exception not the rule. Other articles in *The Times* did contextualize the events surrounding the atrocities, such as an article in November which prefaced the suffering of the “luckless peasants” by noting that the “Bulgarian military leaders” had tried to provoke a general insurrection.⁹⁰ An article from the newspaper’s French correspondent noted that detailed descriptions of the atrocities had been reported in the French press, to which the correspondent expressed his hope that the “European public” would “not allow themselves to be carried away by purely sentimental considerations.”⁹¹ *The Manchester Guardian* published an interview with the Cambridge Near East expert G. F. Abbott, who attributed the “present anarchy” in Macedonia to “the deliberate action of the Macedonian Committee.” Calling the committee “pernicious” and “unscrupulous,” Abbott accused the organization of hoping “to provoke a massacre, and, consequently, an intervention, which will result in autonomy as a first step to annexation.”⁹² One of few images the *Illustrated London News* produced from the time of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and its aftermath was a depiction entitled “Macedonian Rebels Carrying off Albanian Villagers near Monastir,” which showed bandoleered rebels gruffly ushering the Albanians away from their burning village.⁹³ These were hardly the sort of images, stories, and analysis geared to elicit sympathy for the rebel cause.

The British approach to the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and the issues surrounding the refugees was a continuation of the preemptive measures they had taken prior to the uprising. The British appealed to Ottoman officials to investigate the accusations of atrocities, to undertake necessary measures to restrain ill-disciplined members of their security forces, and to remember that enough bad publicity could produce an intervention by the Great Powers. In addition, the diplomats continued to pressure the Bulgarian government to be vigilant against the activities of the

⁹⁰ “The Troubles in Macedonia,” *The Times*, November 27, 1902, 5.

⁹¹ “The Situation in Macedonia,” *The Times*, January 8, 1903, 3.

⁹² “Stormcloud in the Balkans,” *The Manchester Guardian*, January 9, 1903, 10.

⁹³ “The Revolt in the Balkans,” *Illustrated London News*, October 11, 1902, 536. This was likely a depiction inspired by Colonel Iankov’s raid.

Macedonian Committees.⁹⁴ British officials also monitored the conditions of the refugees and investigated refugee testimonials. The refugee issue, like the uprising itself, remained relatively small and localized. For most journalists, as for most diplomats, the events simply reinforced their conviction that more immediate action and drastic reform were needed.

While the fighting during the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was short-lived, the events intensified the propaganda war to gain the favour of the diplomats and public opinion in the Great Power states. The precedents of the 1876 Bulgarian Uprising featured prominently in the rhetoric of all sides. The Ottomans were quick to defend their actions and accused the Macedonian Committees and the Bulgarian government of trying to manufacture atrocities. Additionally, the Ottomans called attention to the Bulgarian mistreatment of the Turks and Muslims within the borders of Bulgaria in an attempt to balance the reports of Christian persecution in Macedonia.⁹⁵ While his government took measures against the SMC activities, the Bulgarian prime minister did not miss the chance to liken the plight of the refugees to the events of 1876. Even the refugees themselves described their misfortune as part of a historical process they had to endure in order to realize their freedom.⁹⁶ During the winter of 1902-1903, parties of refugees made their way to Salonica to report their sufferings to the Vali, the Great Power consuls, and the newspaper reporters. Through his investigations, Biliotti suspected most of the refugees who presented themselves at the British consulate had

⁹⁴ Of particular concern was information that the Rila Monastery was being used as a weapons depot. The large historic monastery was housing several refugees, and the fact that it was a holy site likely would have made searches politically awkward. The Bulgarian government denied the tip as a false rumour. See: Elliot to Lansdowne, January 23, 1903, FO 78/5293/12; Elliot to Lansdowne, January 24, 1903, FO 78 5293/16.

⁹⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, November 28, 1902, FO 78/5219/176. The Ottoman commissioner complained that the Muslims in Bulgaria were being collectively oppressed, and had previously pointed specifically to the mistreatment of the Muslim population of Ruse. Elliot had the British vice-consul in the Danube port city investigate the matter, and he concluded that the crimes committed against Muslims in Ruse were not politically motivated. Likewise, Elliot did not find evidence of any general campaign against the Muslims of Bulgaria. He did note that he considered it "natural enough" for the Ottoman commissioner to make the accusations under the circumstances.

⁹⁶ Maunsell to Whitehead, January 27, 1903, FO 195/2150/3. After the refugees had complained to Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell about the abuses they had suffered at the hands of the Redif battalions and Bashi-Bazouks, the British military attaché recorded: "But as a Bulgarian sententiously observed when I remarked on all these crimes, that they had to suffer just the same in 1876, but afterwards they gained their freedom."

done so on the instruction of (one of) the Macedonian Committees. By late January 1903, he had become so inundated with petitions from the refugees that he no longer took any notice of them.⁹⁷

Two points became clear to the British through the events of late 1902 and early 1903. The first was that most British officials had come to view the parties in the struggle for Macedonia as being equally responsible for the troubles. Ottoman 'maladministration' and Muslim 'fanaticism' were as much part of the chronic instability in the territory as the callousness of the 'atrocities agitation' of the Macedonian Committees. The second point was that British officials believed Macedonia could only be stabilized through the implementation of thorough reforms, which would be overseen directly by representatives from the Great Powers. In their view, these European officials could ensure financial accountability. What is more, the British believed that uniformed European officers could mitigate potential sources of propaganda by being third-party eye-witnesses to events. At the same time, their presence would help ensure that the Ottoman security forces restrained themselves from committing atrocities. To some extent, British diplomatic officials were already informally performing several of these functions. A formal peacekeeping force would add legitimacy and authority with an expanded mandate to undertake the roles and tasks that needed attention.

The Road to Reform

The Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising and the plight of the refugees in its aftermath served to deepen the conviction of most Great Power diplomats and politicians that stronger reforms to the Ottoman administration of Macedonia were not only necessary but needed to be enacted before the spring of 1903. The events also confirmed the critical view many Great Power diplomats had of the Ottoman reforms, the implementation of which had officially begun in July 1902. By the time of the first week of the fighting, the diplomatic cables were buzzing with the need for more stringent reforms. The British would be amongst the most adamant advocates of reform.

⁹⁷ Biliotti to Whitehead, February 5, 1903, FO 195/2156/27.

The outset of the uprising coincided with a report on the need for reform by Consul-General Alfred Biliotti from Salonica. Biliotti found fault with the personnel and the methods of the Ottoman security forces in dealing with Christian guerilla bands, be they brigands or members of the Macedonian Committees. He criticized the conduct of the Ottoman gendarmes, pointing out that they were susceptible to bribery and extortion, and that there were multiple complaints that Albanian Ghegs were being particularly troublesome and “not so amenable to discipline as natives of other parts of the Ottoman dominions.”⁹⁸ Some residents accused the gendarmes of conspiring to ensure their own employment by allowing the bands to flourish. For Biliotti, the solution was to have more regular soldiers deployed in the rural districts as a first line of defence: an effective reversal of the current system which had gendarmes doing patrols and calling for regular soldiers to back them up when necessary. Biliotti held up the example of the recent successful deployment of regular troops in the districts north of Salonica to check the activities of Iankov’s band. This action had allowed fearful villagers to return to their homes in the presence of disciplined soldiers.

In the consul-general’s view, the quality of the personnel made the difference. Biliotti presented the example of Ferik Hassan Tahsin Pasha, an Ottoman officer, as an individual who could make a decisive difference. An ethnic Albanian, Ferik Hassan Tahsin Pasha was versed in Macedonia’s languages and had the respect of the Christians, the consuls, and the Vali. What is more, he had the valuable experience of having served as the commander of the gendarmerie of Crete, where Biliotti had made his acquaintance in 1899.⁹⁹ Biliotti’s experience in Crete appears to have factored significantly in his views regarding Macedonia. The fact that Crete was seen as a successful intervention gave more weight to the voice of a veteran member of the British Foreign Service, who had recently served there and was currently posted in one of the focal points of the struggle for Macedonia.

Ambassador O’Conor valued Biliotti’s input and solicited him for further insight. At the height of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and on his own initiative, O’Conor summoned Biliotti to a meeting on board a steamer in Smyrna on October 16,

⁹⁸ Biliotti to O’Conor, October 11, 1902, FO 195/2133/172.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

specifically to get the consul-general's opinions on the conditions in Macedonia.¹⁰⁰ In his subsequent report to Lansdowne, O'Connor opined that Macedonian autonomy would be the most desirable solution, but that he thought the idea was unlikely to receive sufficient political support and was skeptical over its plausibility, given "the existing divisions of races" in Macedonia. O'Connor also voiced his support for foreign advisors from non-Great Power European states, such as Belgium and Switzerland, to be attached to the administrative departments of Justice, Finance, and Police, where they would be able to assert their opinions with the backing of an international agreement. O'Connor believed this would be "an enormous step" towards improving the stability of Macedonia. He also mentioned that he and Biliotti felt that foreign advisors invested with "real power" could make "sensible improvement" in a short period of time.¹⁰¹ This was a consideration Biliotti would spell out in more detail in another report later in the autumn.¹⁰²

The British were the most enthusiastic of the Great Powers about forceful reforms, but finding a consensus amongst the Great Powers was difficult and would require compromise. At the time of his post-Smyrna report at the end of October, O'Connor reported that the French ambassador in Constantinople was in agreement with him on the need for reform.¹⁰³ The only power that was genuinely tepid towards reform was Germany. During a visit to Britain in mid November, Kaiser Wilhelm told Lansdowne that he did not think there would be serious trouble in Macedonia in the coming year, and the Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising was entirely the work of Bulgarian "ruffians." The Kaiser also said he considered the Ottoman Empire strong, although "badly governed."¹⁰⁴

More support for reform was forthcoming from the Balkans states. The Serbian foreign minister stated that the anticipated spring disturbances could be mitigated by

¹⁰⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 19, 1902, FO 78/5193/455. The meeting had likely been arranged earlier to discuss Biliotti's confidential report of October 11. Still, the fact that the ambassador had his senior diplomat in Macedonia leave his post in the midst of an uprising indicates either that the British did not grasp the extent of the events or did not consider them serious enough to warrant rescheduling the meeting. O'Connor only informed Lansdowne of the meeting three days after it had taken place, and asked that Biliotti have his expenses reimbursed.

¹⁰¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), October 28, 1902, 78/5193/235.

¹⁰² Biliotti to O'Connor, December 1, 1902, FO 195/2133/207.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Lansdowne to Buchanan (very confidential), November 14, 1902, FO 421/194/258.

concessions by the Ottoman government. Little was heard from the Greek government regarding the reforms, likely due to an election campaign and Greece's de facto support for the Ottomans in Macedonia.¹⁰⁵ Even some Ottoman officials were apparently open to reform. The Ottoman ambassador to Serbia confided to his British counterpart that he favoured allowing Christians to serve in the gendarmerie.¹⁰⁶ Bulgarian Prime Minister Danev leapt at the chance to endorse reform. In the Bulgarian parliament in mid-November, he defended his government's handling of its western border and downplayed the extent of the uprising. Danev also took the opportunity to publically criticize one power (Germany) for "standing aloof from the endeavour of others to obtain reforms in the administration of Macedonia."¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, when it came to reform, the key powers were Austria-Hungary and Russia. The events of the autumn of 1902 for a time strained relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg. While Ambassador Zinoviev in Constantinople was an ardent defender of the 1897 Agreement, Bakhmetieff, the Russian consul-general in Sofia, was more inclined towards Pan-Slavism and disliked the agreement with Austria-Hungary. He was energized by Ignatieff's visit and accused the Austro-Hungarians of intriguing against Russia in Macedonia.¹⁰⁸ During the uprising, Bakhmetieff informed the British that the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Count Golushowski, had informed him that he was in favour of perusing reforms aggressively, advocating a naval demonstration if not a military intervention to pressure Sultan Abdülhamîd. Furthermore, Golushowski had reportedly criticized his own ambassador at Constantinople for becoming "so Oriental as to be perfectly tolerant of Turkish methods."¹⁰⁹ This was almost certainly hyperbole or an outright fabrication. Czar Nicholas II had to intervene and summon both Bakhmetieff and Zinoviev to a foreign policy conference on the Black Sea coast at

¹⁰⁵ The main news out of Greece during the uprising was the arrest of founding IMRO member Dr. Hristo Tatarcheff, and later the arrest of Colonel Iankov. Tatarcheff's arrest sparked anti-Greek demonstrations in Bulgaria. He was released in late October. See: Stronge to Lansdowne, October 25, 1902, FO 32/737/98.

¹⁰⁶ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), November 18, 1902, FO 105/44/138. Ambassador Bonham commented: "Fethy Pasha, who, although a Mussulman, entertains very liberal views, quite agreed that this reform might be advantageous."

¹⁰⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, November 15, 1902, FO 78/5219/168. The German consul-general wondered on what ground Danev had made the accusation.

¹⁰⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 15, 1903, FO 78/5219/147.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Livadia in early November. Much to the relief of the Austro-Hungarians, Zinoviev's view prevailed and the Austro-Hungarians and Russians set to work cooperatively on a set of reforms.¹¹⁰

In November 1902, Baron Calice outlined a number of reform proposals. Calice identified three areas of concern: inadequate administration, incompetence due to patronage, and the lack of sound financial practices, which bred bribery, extortion, and irregular payment. As noted by Sowards, Calice's proposals went further still, advocating equal treatment and services for all the subjects in a move designed to address the mistreatment of the Christian peasantry. The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador also called for a commission headed by himself and Zinoviev to oversee the reforms.¹¹¹ Zinoviev approved his Austro-Hungarian counterpart's proposal and met with Sultan Abdülhamîd in late November. During the meeting, he presented the proposal and warned the Sultan that, if the measures were not taken, "the insurrectionary movement would certainly break out again in the spring with renewed force, and a situation would be created that would call for the interference of foreign Powers, and might possibly lead to an international conference."¹¹² In short, Sultan Abdülhamîd was told in so many words that he must reform or prepare to lose more of the Ottoman Empire's European vilayets.

However, as had been the case earlier in the year, the Ottomans had beaten the Great Powers to the punch. As soon as the Russian ambassador had finished his presentation, Sultan Abdülhamîd informed him that there was no need to have gone to the trouble of drawing up the proposal since administrative reforms were already being considered which would attend to the concerns of the Great Powers.¹¹³ As promised, the text of the Ottoman reforms was made available on December 2, 1902. Consisting of four chapters and seventeen articles, the most notable decrees were that new administrators were to be hired, Christians were to be welcomed in the ranks of the police and the gendarmerie, more schools were to be created, and criminal law was to be

¹¹⁰ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 21.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹² O'Connor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1902, FO 78/5194/530.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

secularized. Inspectors would oversee the reforms and would have the authority to fire incompetent officials where they saw fit.¹¹⁴

The Ottoman Reforms were not enough for the majority of the European powers and gave credence to the British concerns. The only power which expressed its satisfaction was Germany, where the press proclaimed it was upon the initiative of the German government that the reforms were enacted. The Austro-Hungarians were also displeased with the German conduct regarding the reforms.¹¹⁵ They were not happy with the Ottoman reforms either. Calice and Zinoviev called them “a farce.”¹¹⁶ The two ambassadors quickly produced a set of demands in mid-December, which called for the reforms to go further, while serving to preempt any of the other powers from seizing the initiative from them. The six demands were as follows:

- 1) the reorganization of the police,
- 2) the introduction of Christian field-guards in the Christian areas,
- 3) the expansion of the power of the valis, and
- 4) the regulation of the finance question, and also
- 5) the necessary precautions against continually crimes of the Arnauts [Albanians]
- 6) purging of the administrative and judicial personnel.¹¹⁷

Having issued the demands, the Russians and Austro-Hungarians made plans to meet in Vienna in the coming year to formulate a reform program that could be imposed on the Ottoman Empire in accordance with Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin.

The British View of Reform

The British reaction to the Ottoman reforms was similar to that of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians. O’Conor did credit the Ottomans for taking some action and expressed his approval for the introduction of Christians into the gendarmerie and for the appointment of inspectors to take action. O’Conor urged the Sultan to appoint a

¹¹⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 3, 1903, FO 78/5194/533. The text of the Ottoman reforms, “*Instructions concernant les Vilayets de la Turquie d’Europe*,” is enclosed with the dispatch.

¹¹⁵ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 22.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

Christian as inspector-general and to appropriate proper funding to ensure the regular payment of officials. Sultan Abdülhamîd cordially replied that he had plans to set funds aside for payrolls, that there was to be only one inspector-general, and that appointing a Christian would only promote jealousy between the Christian sects and nationalities.¹¹⁸ O'Connor was losing patience. In his confidential report, he called the Ottoman reforms "so palpably insufficient to meet the requirements of the situation in Macedonia that it is unnecessary to examine them seriatim."¹¹⁹ He reasoned that the key to the success of reform was the degree to which the Sultan appreciated the danger in the Balkans to the status quo in the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁰ The events of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising had hardened the ambassador's resolve. Reform was seen as being the only means of saving the Ottoman Empire from itself, and the more oversight (if not outright control) the Great Powers exercised in the reform process, the greater its chances of success.

If O'Connor was not already convinced of the need for Great Power control of the reforms, Biliotti's follow-up report from their meeting at Smyrna likely persuaded him. Biliotti advocated having Europeans control financial, security, and legal affairs in the Macedonian vilayets, but his recommendations did not simply reflect a patronizing attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. Biliotti pointed to the abuse and intimidation meted out by the Macedonian Committees against the Christians and the Muslims of Macedonia, stating that Christians were forced to act in sympathy with the committees even if it led to their destruction. He also explained the "impossibility" the Ottoman government faced since, as a Muslim power, it was not free to deal with an insurrection in the same manner a Christian government would, owing to the scrutiny it would likely face in the event its security forces acted too severely.¹²¹

For the British consul-general in Salonica, the blueprint for the solution to Macedonia's problems lay in the recent history of the island of Crete. Biliotti referred to the experience of Edhem Pasha, a leader of Ottoman forces in Crete, who told him that he could put down an insurrection in 24 hours provided that his measures were watched by one or more European officers. "Without which precaution, he claimed, the first bullet

¹¹⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), December 9, 1903, FO 78/5194/540.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1902, FO 78/5194/530.

¹²¹ Biliotti to O'Connor, December 1, 1902, FO 195/2133/207.

fired by his troops against the Christians would kill him.” As Biliotti reasoned: “What was true of Crete in the past, is equally true of Macedonia today.”¹²² Biliotti did not see anything wrong with Ottoman laws; the problem was that they were not properly applied. From security to the judiciary to finance, competent officials needed to be hired and paid regularly. A consideration which could best be met if there was a European inspector of finance. Likewise, a European judicial inspector would legitimize Ottoman efforts to punish the Macedonian Committees, enabling them to prosecute acts of political terror as acts of criminality. What validated Biliotti’s belief in the need for European oversight was the precedence he had witnessed in Crete. This was especially the case with the Cretan gendarmerie, which, in Biliotti’s words, had been “transformed from a wild horde of undisciplined men into a really first-class corps by the presence of a few foreign officers and regular pay.”¹²³ In finishing the report, Biliotti quoted an appeal from “a native” who pleaded that intercommunal violence would end if guerilla bands were thwarted. “With reforms the bands would disappear,” the consul-general concluded, and Crete offered the blueprint to make reform a success. “There is no reason to suppose that what succeeded as well in Crete should not succeed as well in these provinces. In any case, the matter is of such vital importance to these latter, and the remedy is so easy of application, that it is worth trying.”¹²⁴

During a private audience with Sultan Abdülhamîd in late December, O’Conor emphasized the need for “radical reform” and the deployment of Europeans. The private audience had come about at the behest of the Sultan, who asked O’Conor to express his opinions regarding Macedonia “as a friend.” Referring to the “maladministration” and “misdeeds” of Ottoman officials and the “tyranny” of the Macedonian Committees, O’Conor pleaded for “thorough and effective” reforms to “inspire hope in Macedonia and confidence in Europe.”¹²⁵ He recounted that, while he was speaking, the Sultan fidgeted on his sofa and crossed his legs, something the British ambassador had never seen him do. Sultan Abdülhamîd then asked O’Conor for precise details. O’Conor responded by

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid. Biliotti also noted how undisciplined Albanians had been trained to be a “very efficient corps” by the British in the Ionian Islands. He additionally made reference to Cyprus as an example of successful and honest tax collection.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), December 19, 1902, FO 78/5194/553.

suggesting that Christians join the commissions investigating the recent events; he also advocated that experts from European nations be attached to the administrative departments, and that the gendarmerie and police be reorganized. The Sultan replied diplomatically, discussing the merits of several high-ranking individuals to appoint to the commissions, including Christians. He questioned the wisdom of taking on foreigners in the security forces, whose abilities he had no means of assessing, and who would be ignorant of the laws and languages of the empire. The Sultan finished by reassuring O'Connor of the sincerity of the commissions and his will to reform. In reflecting on their three-hour conversation, O'Connor wrote that he considered the Sultan to be under Russia's spell and anxious for the support of Britain as a kindred conservative empire. He remarked that the Sultan seemed to have forgotten the significance of the events of the Armenian Crisis of 1895-1896, and how they had affected public opinion in Britain. In conclusion, the ambassador said that their informal conversation had done nothing to allay the Sultan's fears.¹²⁶

In these reports and conversations by Biliotti and O'Connor there is no mention of the apparent stumbling block of Ottoman national sovereignty. Between the precedence of the program in Crete and the critical situation in Macedonia, it had become obvious—to the British diplomats at least—that the only means of preserving the Ottoman Empire's holding in Europe was the implementation of reform, with as much European and Christian participation as possible. Indeed, they considered reform to be the “carrot”; the “stick” was the threat—often alluded to—of armed intervention following an uprising and the specter of an international conference, which would, inevitably, redraw the map of the Balkans to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. For his part, Sultan Abdülhamîd also avoided mention of sovereignty, referring instead to the practical drawbacks of having more Christians and Europeans in positions of influence and authority in his empire. It seems that the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire was the proverbial ‘elephant in the room’ that neither party wished to mention. O'Connor did not even refer to it in his dispatches regarding these conversations and reports. One assumes this was either because Ottoman sovereignty was so obvious that it did not need to be mentioned, or, more likely, because the British thought the situation in Macedonia so critical and the Ottoman ‘maladministration’ so deeply ingrained that sovereignty had

¹²⁶ Ibid.

ceased to be an issue. Such a consideration would have been reinforced by the history of interventions in the Ottoman Empire.

Yet, British attitudes towards reform and the Ottoman Empire were not one-dimensional. British diplomats favoured an increased Christian and European presence partly because they believed it would work, as the case of Crete demonstrated. In private, few British diplomats or statesmen cared much for the Ottoman Empire. As discussed in Chapter One, Prime Minister Balfour would have been content to see its demise and had even privately advocated British participation in a war against the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁷ But Balfour knew these positions to be impractical. Early in 1903, Lord Lansdowne suggested to the Prime Minister that a Christian should be appointed as governor of Macedonia. Balfour replied that, given the circumstances, such a move would be unwise. Whilst he agreed that “honesty” and “resolution” were qualities more likely to be found in Christian as opposed to Muslim officials, he noted that the Russians and Austro-Hungarians favoured the appointment of a Muslim to prevent resentment between the Christian sects. Balfour reasoned: “This being so, I would venture to suggest that you do not lay quite so much emphasis upon the question of religion, which is, after all, secondary” (underlined in original).¹²⁸ Thus any private reservations were set aside for the sake of expediting the reforms and maintaining solidarity with the executive powers. In the end, realism was paramount in British policy.

Another illustration of the triumph of practicality occurred around the time the reforms were taking shape, when the Ottoman ambassador to Great Britain, Athropolu Pasha, died. The Sultan nominated a replacement, Musurus Pasha, who was a Muslim. However, King Edward VII, who ultimately had to approve all ambassadorial appointments, resisted on the grounds that earlier Ottoman ambassadors had usually been Christians. Furthermore, he considered Musurus Pasha under-qualified and a man of dubious background.¹²⁹ After the Sultan reaffirmed his wish to appoint Musurus Pasha to the London embassy,¹³⁰ the King thundered that he must “decline to allow the court of

¹²⁷ Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, 104

¹²⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903, BP Add MSS 49728.

¹²⁹ Knollys to Lansdowne, November 25, 1902, FO 800/143.

¹³⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 27, 1902, FO 800/143.

St. James to be turned into a refuge for a disreputable Levantines.”¹³¹ Still the Sultan persisted, and O’Conor and Lansdowne lent their support to the appointment, defending Musurus Pasha’s character and stating that the stories against him had been exaggerated.¹³² Within a few days, the King relented, and Musurus Pasha was issued his official welcome to London, a posting he would retain for the next five years.¹³³

Ultimately, the British government and its senior diplomats cared less about the religious background of Ottoman officials, be they ambassadors or gendarmerie commanders. What mattered more was the quality of the personnel and having them operate under Great Power supervision, thereby circumventing issues of ethno-religious rivalry and remedying what they perceived as endemic ‘maladministration’ and corruption. This would, the British believed, expedite the reform process and stabilize the region. As the plans for Great Power-sponsored reform moved forward in the winter of 1902-03, the British supported the Austro-Russian reforms, but with conditions.

Towards the Vienna Reform Program

Amid press fanfare and critical scrutiny, the Russians and Austro-Hungarians forged ahead with the work of transforming the six demands into a concrete reform scheme. The Russian foreign minister, Count Lamsdorff, was to arrive in Vienna to discuss the reforms at the end of the year, visiting Belgrade and Sofia en route. Not much was expected in Belgrade, where the Serbian leadership had little to say regarding the reforms. Sofia was quite another matter. Upon returning from his incarceration in Greece, Colonel Iankov was met with a torchlight procession, and was then prompted to give a speech with Tsonchev to the crowds before the headquarters of the Macedonian Committee.¹³⁴ The Bulgarian government had already delivered its dismissal of the Ottoman reform plans with Prime Minister Danev’s statement that, without specific

¹³¹ Knollys to Lansdowne, November 29, 1902, FO 800/143.

¹³² O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1902, FO 800/143.

¹³³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, December 9, 1902, FO 800/143. King Edward VII also refused to bestow the Order of the Garter on the visiting Shah of Persia in August of 1902, reasoning that it was a Christian decoration. Lansdowne was left to attend to diplomatic repairs. See: Adelson, *London and the Middle East*, 36.

¹³⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 15, 1902, FO 78/5219/188.

allowances for the regular payments of gendarmes and European oversight, “any scheme of reform must be illusionary, and must be intended merely to throw dust in the eyes of Europe.”¹³⁵ The Russian foreign minister would also have to deal with the Pan-Slavic antagonisms of his own consul-general, Count Bakhmetieff, who was aspiring to follow in the footsteps of Count Ignatieff. Bakhmetieff had been very candid in telling Elliot that he thought a European governor-general should be appointed to “purify” the methods of the Ottoman administration in Macedonia and control the territory’s finances. Bakhmetieff thought a display of force by the Great Powers would be necessary to get the Sultan’s consent, while serving the purpose of appeasing the Macedonian Committees: “the Tsconcheffs and Yankoffs would be satisfied for the present, at least, with being able to say...that they had forced the hand of Europe and brought about intervention.”¹³⁶

However, Count Lamsdorff did everything to dampen excitement during his visit. He opted not to arrive in uniform, wearing a suit instead, and was treated with second-class diplomatic courtesy. He tried unsuccessfully to cancel the torchlight parade held in his honor and declined to give anything resembling a patriotic speech. He rebuffed Bakhmetieff’s efforts to have him meet with Colonel Iankov, and he refused to see Boris Sarafov, who had travelled to Sofia for the express purpose of meeting the Russian foreign minister. Lamsdorff spent most of his time with Prince Ferdinand, and only briefly met with lower-level representatives of the SMC, the Sarafovists, and IMRO, warning all three against future agitations. The contrast with Ignatieff’s October visit could not have been sharper.¹³⁷ Even so, the Austro-Hungarians regretted that Lamsdorff had visited Sofia at all.¹³⁸

Regardless of Austro-Hungarian misgivings about the Russian foreign minister’s route to Vienna, the meeting between Lamsdorff and Goluchowski was a success. The ministers agreed to proceed with a reform plan for Macedonia based on the six points

¹³⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 6, 1903, FO 78/5219/182.

¹³⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 16, 1902, FO 78/5219/190.

¹³⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, December 30, 1902, FO 78/5219/198; Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), December 30, 1902, FO 78/5219/199.

¹³⁸ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 136

produced by their ambassadors in Constantinople in December.¹³⁹ They drafted a plan which stipulated that the new inspector-general be given independent command over the Ottoman security forces in Macedonia. European officers were to oversee the reform of the gendarmerie and the police force, and funding was to be supplied by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, which was already under Great Power control. The power arrangement was to be similar to that of the Lebanon, with a Governor whose appointment and removal was subject to Great Power approval.¹⁴⁰ The reforms were to be made in the name of Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin, necessitating agreement from the other four signatory powers (France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain) before they could be presented to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴¹ The Austro-Hungarians announced that the details of the plan would be presented to the other four powers as soon as the Russian Czar gave his approval.¹⁴²

The other powers gave their support for the plans, but there was friction almost from the outset. Lansdowne informed the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador that the British government was watching the events with great interest. While acknowledging Austria-Hungary's and Russia's "advantageous position" for dealing with the reforms, Lansdowne reminded the ambassador that Britain was putting its own diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire to enact substantial reforms. He stated that Britain had an "earnest desire to contribute" and added that he was personally available "at any time" to discuss the reform process with the ambassador.¹⁴³ The British had definite opinions on the reforms and desired more input. According to Ambassador Plunkett, the Germans and Italians expressed annoyance at not having been consulted by their alliance partner.¹⁴⁴ The Greeks were also concerned with the process.¹⁴⁵ Some of the Vienna newspapers reasoned that Britain's annoyance at being on the outside of the reform process was the reason why the British had decided to protest against the

¹³⁹ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), January 7, 1903, FO 65/1659/7.

¹⁴¹ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 24-25.

¹⁴² Plunkett to Lansdowne, January 6, 1903, FO 7/1342/4.

¹⁴³ Lansdowne to Plunkett, January 6, 1903, FO 421/196/18.

¹⁴⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903, FO 7/1342/6.

¹⁴⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), January 15, 1903, FO 7/1338/18.

passage of the Russian torpedo boats through the Dardanelle Straits.¹⁴⁶ The Ottomans continued to make their case that European-imposed reforms were unnecessary, arguing that arrangements had been made to meet the Great Power demands. Shortly before O'Connor embarked on his leave in mid-January, Sultan Abdülhamîd informed him that hundreds of incompetent and abusive officials had been arrested in Macedonia under the energetic direction of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, and more Christians were to be appointed to the gendarmerie. O'Connor encouraged the Sultan to go further with the reforms and reported Abdülhamîd's desire to improve Ottoman-British relations.¹⁴⁷

Contrary to British expectations, the six points presented in December by the Austro-Hungarians and Russians were diluted, as the ambassadors Calice and Zinoviev worked out the details of the Vienna Reforms in January. Zinoviev began to have doubts as to whether the Berlin signatory powers could remain united in the face of Ottoman opposition to issues arising over the appointment of civil servants. Any failure in the face of Ottoman brinksmanship would make the Russian and Austro-Hungarian leadership in the reform process appear weak. Zinoviev also had reservations about using the Ottoman Public Debt Administration to fund the reforms, since it exercised significant control over Ottoman finances and was controlled by the British and the French. As an alternative, he advocated using the Imperial Ottoman Bank. Zinoviev was able to convince Calice to consent to his revised plans, and the ambassadors successfully prevailed upon their governments to give their assent.¹⁴⁸

The British were in the dark about most of these developments and were hard-pressed to procure information regarding the development of the reforms. In conversation with the Russian foreign minister in early February, Ambassador Scott reported that Count Lamsdorff had reasoned that pushing reforms so far as to undermine the authority of the Sultan could be interpreted as a victory for the rebels. Lamsdorff hinted that the arrangement should be akin to the 1861 Lebanon Agreement, with an inspector-general to oversee administration rather than a more powerful

¹⁴⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903, FO 7/1342/6.

¹⁴⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, January 14, 1903, FO 78/5264/27A.

¹⁴⁸ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 25.

governor.¹⁴⁹ Rather unexpectedly, the British received advance notice of the reforms from the Austro-Hungarians on February 10. Imploring that there be secrecy, Count Lützow informed the British Ambassador that he would read the draft of the reforms to him in the hope of securing the British government's goodwill and feedback. Ambassador Plunkett agreed, but said producing a summary from a dictation would be difficult, and that Lansdowne and the Foreign Office would need time to consider. Lützow reminded the ambassador of the importance of Great Power unity and the urgency of acting expediently before the snow melted. After he had finished his dictation, anticipating probable British disappointment, Lützow added:

The scheme may seem rather incomplete and meager, but the spirit which had guided the Austro-Hungarian and Russian governments was to ask little, in order that it might be possible to have it carried out at once, and thus maintain the political "status quo" for some time longer at all events.¹⁵⁰

In London, initial excitement swiftly turned to critical disappointment. Lansdowne quickly telegraphed his thanks to Austro-Hungarian government for their confidence, assuring them that the privy information would be kept secret.¹⁵¹ However, upon examination, the Foreign Secretary was not altogether pleased with what he read. He criticized Plunkett for the vagueness of his summary and expressed concern about the apparently weakened degree of European oversight. To Lansdowne, the key was the quality of the inspector-general. He fired off a list of questions for Plunkett:

The whole scheme appears to turn on the Inspector General who is to be appointed by the Sultan. Have the two governments any particular candidate in view? Is it intended that the appointment should be subject to their consent alone or to that of all the Powers signatory of the Treaty of Berlin? Similarly is his removal to be subject to the consent of Austria and Russia only with reference to the other Powers? By what authority are such points as [the] number of Christians employed in the police, selection of foreign specialists and applications of amnesty for political officers to be decided[?] I have raised these points with [the] Austrian

¹⁴⁹ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), February 4, 1903, FO 65/1659/28. Scott also noted that the Bakhmetieffs had taken leave from Sofia and were currently in St. Petersburg attempting to cultivate sympathy amongst Russian society for the Macedonian Committees. Lamsdorff assured the British Ambassador that, if it were true, he would put a stop to it.

¹⁵⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne (secret), February 10, 1903, FO 7/1338/39.

¹⁵¹ Foreign Office to Plunkett (secret), February 11, 1903, FO 7/1342.

ambassador this afternoon. Can you supply any information respecting them[?]¹⁵²

Answers to Lansdowne's questions were not forthcoming. When Plunkett expressed regret at the slow pace of the reforms, Lützow reacted defensively, stating that it had not been Austria-Hungary's fault that the negotiations had taken so long. Plunkett concluded—correctly—that the delays had been due to Zinoviev's concerns.¹⁵³ Three days later, the Russian ambassador in Vienna tried to assure the British of the executive powers' good will, arguing that it would be best if all the signatory power gave immediate backing to the reforms. In his estimation, leaving the reforms in the hands of the Great Power ambassadors in Constantinople would slow the process and irritate the Ottoman government. The swift expedience of acceptance was paramount. The details could be examined later.¹⁵⁴ The reforms were formally presented to the Ottoman government on February 21, 1903.

Reform and Reaction: The Vienna Program of February 1903

The reforms would become known as the Vienna Program. The seven articles of the program called for (1) Austro-Hungarian and Russian oversight by an inspector general who had power over local valis, (2) the valis of the three vilayets are to obey the inspector general and make the mission successful, (3) reorganization of the gendarmes under foreign supervision, (4) measures to be taken against Albanian bandits, (5) the employment of Christian gendarmes and rural police (watchmen) in Christian-dominated areas, (6) amnesty for political prisoners, and (7) financial reform (Appendix I)¹⁵⁵

As the rumours and early drafts indicated, the Vienna Program was much less stringent and binding than the British had hoped. The inspector-general would not have the same powers as a governor, and the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians would have no say in his appointment or dismissal. The only article which called for an explicit

¹⁵² Foreign Office to Plunkett (secret), February 12, 1903, FO 7/1342.

¹⁵³ Plunkett to Lansdowne (secret), February 12, 1903, FO 7/1338/41.

¹⁵⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne, February 13, 1903, FO 7/1342/14.

¹⁵⁵ *Project for Reforms in Macedonia—(Communicated by Count Deym, February 17, 1903)*, FO 421/196/178.

European presence and influence was Article III concerning the police and the gendarmerie. Even so, while it called for more Christians to be hired and the input of foreign specialists, the article stipulated that the specialists were to take their orders from the Ottoman government. Contrary to British views and wishes, the Vienna Program effectively limited the role of the European Powers to one of administrative advisors. Ottoman sovereignty was not significantly challenged. This was likely why Sultan Abdülhamîd accepted the program within forty-eight hours, before the other Great Powers had made their support official.¹⁵⁶ The Grand Vizier admitted that his government expected to have been presented with more “drastic” reforms backed by the palpable threat of military intervention.¹⁵⁷ Regardless, the Ottomans still expressed reservations about the reforms’ challenging their sovereignty on the Balkan Peninsula inasmuch as the reforms were only for the Macedonian vilayets, while the Ottoman reforms covered the entire peninsula.¹⁵⁸

Despite some misgivings, the British were quick to publically voice their support for the Vienna Reform Program. Lansdowne authorized the British embassy in Constantinople to accept the reform program in principle, subject to the examination of details, and, in March, instructed his consuls in Macedonia to offer their Russian and Austro-Hungarian counterparts.¹⁵⁹ The Foreign Secretary received most of the European Power and Balkan ambassadors in the days around the release of the reforms, each seeking the British position on the reforms. The Russians and Austro-Hungarians sent signals to ease British concerns. The Russians said there was some flexibility to the reforms and indicated that the door was still open to more reform beyond the boundaries of the Macedonian vilayets.¹⁶⁰ Baron Calice in Constantinople hinted at his own

¹⁵⁶ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 26.

¹⁵⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February 23, 1903, FO 78/5272/36. Ambassador Plunkett reasoned that the rapid acceptance may have been prompted in part by concerns that the British might press for the stronger measures O’Conor had articulated to the Sultan in December. See: Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 26, 1903, FO 7/1338/57; Plunkett to Lansdowne (most confidential), February 26, 1903, FO 7/1338/58.

¹⁵⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 4, 1903, FO 78/5265/117.

¹⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Whitehead, February 20, 1903, FO 421/196/198; Lansdowne to O’Conor, March 12, 1903, FO 421/196/285.

¹⁶⁰ Scott to Lansdowne, February 10, 1903, FO 65/1659/37; Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), February 16, 1903, FO 7/1338/46.

dissatisfaction, suggesting that it would be preferable for the powers to have the ability to remove the inspector-general, should they see fit.¹⁶¹

Reactions from the other Great Powers and the Balkan nations were mixed. The French gave approval, and were quick to emphasize to their domestic audience that they would only act multilaterally towards Macedonia.¹⁶² The Italians also gave their support, but formally expressed concern in Vienna that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians should not be taking such initiatives regarding the Treaty of Berlin ahead of the other Great Power signatories.¹⁶³ Italy also stated that it was open to modifications.¹⁶⁴ Like the British, the Italians and the French had also been privy to the drafts of the reforms prior to the official presentation.¹⁶⁵ The Greeks said nothing directly regarding the reforms, only expressing their hope that Britain would be mindful of Greek interests.¹⁶⁶ Likewise the Serbians' first reaction was to request that "the Servian nationality" not be put in a disadvantageous position regarding the reforms.¹⁶⁷ They were soon disappointed, expressing resentment at being grouped together with the Bulgarians, and complaining that the reforms were too "modest," and that they did not go far enough in protecting Serbians against "the lawlessness of the Albanians" in the Vilayet of Kosovo.¹⁶⁸ The Bulgarians were also dissatisfied. Prime Minister Danev called the reforms "defective as an instrument of immediate conciliation and appeasement," since they did not challenge Ottoman sovereignty with any mention of external control or autonomy, although Danev was pleased with the amnesty.¹⁶⁹ Vice-Consul Elliot noted popular disappointment in Bulgaria regarding the reforms, with the opposition newspapers blaming the government for failing to convince the powers to enact more thorough reforms. The Macedonian Committees and their followers were entirely dismissive. Their newspapers in Sofia

¹⁶¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 24, 1903, FO 78/5264/97.

¹⁶² Monson to Lansdowne, February 20, 1903, FO 27/3618/98.

¹⁶³ Rodd to Lansdowne, February 17, 1903, FO 45/872/30.

¹⁶⁴ Rodd to Lansdowne, February 22, 1903, FO 45/875/18.

¹⁶⁵ Monson to Lansdowne (confidential), February 25, 1903, FO 27/3618/105; Rodd to Lansdowne, February 24, 1903, FO 45/872/34.

¹⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Egerton, February 18, 1903, FO 421/196/188.

¹⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Bonham, February 18, 1903, FO 421/196/189.

¹⁶⁸ Bonham to Lansdowne, March 3, 1903, FO 105/148/35.

¹⁶⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 2, 1903, FO 78/5293/45.

continued to advocate preparation for an uprising.¹⁷⁰ In case the message was lost in translation, Boris Sarafov published a letter in the Viennese paper *Die Zeit* on March 5, expressing scepticism about the diplomatic intervention and underlining the need to carry on fighting until Europe intervened militarily.¹⁷¹ But while the reforms were too weak for IMRO, they were too strong for the Albanians of the Macedonian vilayets. The Albanians of Kosovo had already demonstrated their resistance to the Ottoman reforms earlier in the winter and would not have liked the fact that one article of the Vienna Reforms addressed the Albanians specifically as a destabilizing element that must be confronted.¹⁷² With so many competing interests and different parties expressing displeasure with the reforms for different reasons, even partial implementation of the Vienna Program was something of an achievement.

The Ottoman Government's acceptance of the reforms effectively required it to make extensions to its own reforms that it had begun to initiate in 1902. The inspector-general, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, had already started work on purging the administration and the security forces in Macedonia, and reviewing the budget for the new fiscal year in the spring. The offending rebels were amnestied, and some Christians were hired into the gendarmerie. After some talk of hiring German officers to serve as the prescribed European specialists tasked with reforming the gendarmerie, two Swedish officers were brought in.¹⁷³ Having had the chance to observe the reform work of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha in the Vilayet of Kosovo during the winter, the British vice-consul in Uscub, Benjamin Fontana, reported in January and February 1903 that some progress had been made, noting the construction of new prisons and the hiring of Christians into the gendarmerie. Fontana additionally credited the energy and initiative of the inspector-general for getting rid of corrupt and incompetent officials. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha also had "numberless petitions from all classes" submitted to his office, indicating he had the respect of a wide spectrum of the population.¹⁷⁴ As the vice-consul concluded:

¹⁷⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 2, 1903, FO 78/5293/44.

¹⁷¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 14, 1903, FO 7/1338/70. The translated text of the letter is enclosed within the dispatch.

¹⁷² Fontana to Biliotti (confidential), February 17, 1903, FO 294/25/11.

¹⁷³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 23, 1903, FO 78/5265/149.

¹⁷⁴ Fontana to Biliotti, January 21, 1903, FO 294/25/5.

He hardly has time to eat or sleep, and his good will is unquestionable. He is in telegraphic communication with all the Kaïmakams, and has dismissed several incompetent minor officials. The Albanians already fear his very name. It is, however, much to be regretted that his sphere of action is limited to the lines at present laid down by his Government. Were he granted *carte blanche* for the complete reorganization to the administration and finances upon lines indicated by a Power seriously desiring the reformation of European Turkey, I think that he might work wonders.¹⁷⁵

As Fontana's conclusion indicates, for all the successes, there were still many shortcomings with the pace, scale, and implementation of reforms. Fontana reported that the Albanians (particularly those north of the Shar Mountains) were resistant, showing contempt for Ottoman officials, evicting Slavs from their homes, and making it difficult to enroll Christians in the gendarmerie.¹⁷⁶ The Christians who had been hired for the gendarmerie were described as men of "dubious repute," and publication of the improved salaries to be given to new conscripts caused resentment amongst the existing rank and file. Moreover, Muslims resented this affirmative action, accusing Christians of wanting to "take bread out of their mouths." The Vienna Program did little to improve these matters. The relatively few Christians who were recruited into the Gendarmerie often faced cold shoulders from their Muslim colleagues and could be suspected, not unjustifiably, of espionage. Earnest recruits had to endure accusations of betrayal from their religious/national communities. To IMRO, joining the gendarmerie was an act of treason. The only Christian to volunteer to join the gendarmerie in Monastir was found two days later floating in the city's river "with his throat cut and an explanatory label tied to him."¹⁷⁷

In the days and weeks that followed the announcement of the Vienna Program, other British officials were quick to voice concerns over the reforms. O'Connor described Article V as being "framed in especially vague language," and stated that the success of

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Fontana also reported contemptuous actions by Albanians towards the Gendarmerie, and noted that the men "certainly seemed adverse to any encounter with Albanians." He did the gendarmes held such sentiments towards Christians.

¹⁷⁷ Report on Macedonia for February 1903, FO 78/5265/116. An informant from the Edessa/Voden region said the Christian ranks of the gendarmerie were "being filled with spies" to such a degree that the Ottomans were only taking on Christians whom they had employed previously. See: Biliotti to O'Connor, February 25, 1903, FO 195/2156/44.

the entire program would depend on how it was executed.¹⁷⁸ O’Conor’s sending of Fontana’s January and February reports to Lansdowne helped support his case. An experienced opinion was also solicited from Consul-General Freeman in Sarajevo. Referring to his years of experience in the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Freeman called the Ottoman gendarme one of the empire’s most important security forces but also one of its worst, stating that the gendarmes had a “legion” of duties and “unlimited” power to do good or evil, frequently neglecting their duties and engaging in acts of corruption, extortion, and abuse of power. According to Freeman, gendarmes were drawn from “the scum of the population,” and adding a few Christians would make no difference without cross-sectarian conscription. Freeman called for a radical reorganization of the gendarmerie. “The best men must be chosen, irrespective of their religion, they must be well and regularly paid and clothed, officered by Europeans, and there should be even a leaven of Europeans among the non-commissioned officers, if not among the men.” Freeman commended the Austro-Hungarian administration of Bosnia–Herzegovina for creating a gendarmerie force that worked; or, more to the point, that worked thanks to Austro-Hungarian organization:

It is composed of trustworthy men, natives as well as Austro-Hungarians, most of whom have served their time in the regular army, is admirably disciplined, has gained the confidence of the people, and has rendered most valuable service in the restoration and the tranquility in these provinces. It is in every respect a model force, only I fear that exception would be taken to the employment of Austro-Hungarian officers to organize a similar force in Macedonia.¹⁷⁹

Freeman additionally noted a number of problems with the reforms, pointing out the difficulty of subduing the armed populations with a relatively small force of gendarmes and the comparative fact that the population in Bosnia was “unarmed and tractable.”¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, his disparaging view of the Ottoman gendarmerie was unequivocal, as was his call for European-led reform. Bosnia-Herzegovina could be

¹⁷⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February 24, 1903, FO 78/5264/97.

¹⁷⁹ Freeman to Plunkett (confidential), March 21, 1903, FO 7/1338/76. Freeman’s caveat on possible Austro-Hungarian-led organizing in Macedonia was in recognition of the fact that the Ottomans would be understandably apprehensive about giving the Austro-Hungarians authority, considering that Vienna had obtained de facto rule over Bosnia-Herzegovina at Ottoman expense.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

added to the Ionian Islands and Crete on the list of regional historical precedents that proved to the British officials that European oversight of gendarmerie reorganization was a method that worked.

Freeman's critique from a regional vantage point was received by Lansdowne within a few days of Alfred Biliotti's report from Macedonia's urban crossroads. Biliotti issued a scathing critique of the reforms a month after their proclamation, calling the amnesty a "lamentable failure." Citing recent examples, he argued that the amnesty was only sparking more political violence as those who were released were given little or no support to transition themselves back to civilian life.¹⁸¹ Indeed, he said he was told that some of the amnestied men were debating which band they should join. While many of his colleagues in the diplomatic corps felt that the bands were a product of Ottoman "maladministration," Biliotti maintained he was convinced that the bands would "do their best to oppose the reforms, and maintain the present state of disorder, which they themselves called into existence, and which constitutes their *raison d'être* in the eyes of Europe."¹⁸² In the consul-general's mind, the only solution was to apply the reform in conjunction with the "extermination" of the bands, which could only be done by gendarmes led by foreign officers. As he had maintained previously with the situation in Razlog, the presence of foreign officers would instill restraint and discipline in the Ottoman ranks, and the officers could contradict false accusations of atrocities by the Macedonian Committees:

The mere presence of an European officer of gendarmerie will do more than anything else to inspire the population with confidence in the proposed reform and in the intention to exterminate the bands and to break the fetters of terrorism which now binds them. I cannot, therefore, insist too strongly or too often on the absolute necessity of immediately dispatching to Macedonia the foreign gendarmerie officers, as they are enrolled, without waiting for the formation of the whole corps."¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Biliotti to O'Connor, March 3, 1903, FO 195/2156/49. Biliotti could see nothing positive coming from the release of some 2,000 "broken and unemployed" men, who begrudged the Ottomans for their imprisonment. He argued that the men should either receive rations or money, so that they would not resort to crime and could better make a peaceful transition to society.

¹⁸² Biliotti to O'Connor, March 11, 1903, FO 195/2156/54.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Biliotti's words roused the normally restrained Lansdowne to action. He asked O'Connor to present Biliotti's observation to the Grand Vizier, and "to press earnestly that there may be no delay in carrying this essential portion of the scheme of reform into effect."¹⁸⁴ Like many British officials, Lansdowne had become convinced that more European oversight—especially with regard to the gendarmerie—was essential to the success of the reforms. His exasperation on this point is evident in the following dispatch:

It is unnecessary that I should repeat the grounds on which the measure is clearly to be advocated in the interest of the Turkish government no less than the population...It is greatly to be regretted that more efficient action has not yet been taken in this direction, and I cannot doubt that your representations on the subject will be supported by the Representative of the other Powers, whose assistance you should invite.¹⁸⁵

The delay of this "essential portion" of the reforms was a point that would drive British policy towards Macedonia and the reforms in the months and years to come.

Although Lansdowne was willing to grant British consent to the reform program, he made it very clear from the outset that British support was conditional. Having been presented with a copy of the reform text by the Austro-Hungarian ambassador on February 17, Lansdowne issued a seven-point written response emphasizing Britain's commitment to expedited reform, while reminding the authoring powers of the lack of time to properly examine the text. Conditional acceptance was granted, but Britain would reserve the right to recommend future modifications and make alternative proposals in the future (Appendix II).¹⁸⁶

However, the fact remained that conditional acceptance was the best Lansdowne could make of a frustrating situation. Had the British withdrawn their support, the reforms—limited as they were—might have collapsed entirely, giving the powers reduced influence in Macedonia and quite possibility increasing both the likelihood and the scale of the anticipated uprising. Lansdowne's seven-point response did give the British the opportunity to be critical of the Austro-Russian executed reforms and to make

¹⁸⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, March 25, 1903, FO 421/196/327.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Plunkett, February 17, 1903, FO 421/196/181.

concrete proposals in the event that the reforms failed to have the desired pacifying effect on Macedonia. Nevertheless, the acceptance of the reforms by all the Great Powers was a diplomatic victory for Vienna and St. Petersburg, as European oversight was entrusted exclusively to Austria-Hungary and Russia. The British were disappointed, but Lansdowne's conditions would give them leverage in any future crisis. Should the Vienna Reform Program fail to keep the peace, there would be an opportunity for the British to put their stamp on a future revision of the reforms.

Keeping the Pressure on the Bulgarians

The manoeuvring to impose the Vienna Reform Program upon the Ottoman Empire through the winter of 1902-1903 coincided with another preemptive measure by the Great Powers: to pressure Bulgaria to take more aggressive measures to restrain the Macedonian Committees. The British and the other Great Powers had at times been frustrated with the apparent reluctance and recalcitrance of the Bulgarian government to act effectively on the matter. The Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising had confirmed their suspicions. With prognostications of another, larger uprising to come in the spring of 1903, the Great Powers were in solidarity and adamant that the Bulgarian government had to enact all necessary measures to bring the Macedonian Committees to heel.

Importantly, the Russians were fully committed and attentive to putting pressure on the Bulgarians. Lamsdorff's message during his visit to Sofia prior to this meeting in Vienna to discuss reform was decidedly dampening. Pleased with the Great Power resolve and expressing concern about the prospect of a coordinated attack by the Serbians and the Bulgarians in the spring, the Ottomans made plans to deploy large numbers of troops to Macedonia and Adrianople.¹⁸⁷ Upon hearing this, the Bulgarian government appealed to the Great Powers to make representations to the Ottomans for a cessation of their "extraordinary" military preparations. Elliot reported that he had told Danev that the Bulgarians' appeal would have more effect if they could point to an

¹⁸⁷ Maunsell to Whitehead, February 9, 1903, FO 195/2150/7.

example of action they were taking against the Macedonian Committees.¹⁸⁸ However, no support was forthcoming. The Russians issued a swift rebuke two days later with a statement to the effect that “it is Bulgaria’s own fault if the Sultan takes such action.” Lamsdorff also instructed Bakhmetieff to inform Prince Ferdinand of his views and to make clear Russia’s disapproval of the Bulgarian’s government’s shortcomings in checking “Macedonian propaganda.”¹⁸⁹ In addition, the Russian press’s coverage of Macedonia was censored.¹⁹⁰ An angry Bakhmetieff returned to St. Petersburg to confront Lamsdorff and demand to be relieved of his posting in Sofia. Lamsdorff promptly rejected the request and sent Bakhmetieff back to the Bulgarian capital with instructions that Madam Bakhmetieff would abandon her intended trip to Macedonia to provide relief. Lamsdorff told Bakhmetieff that he was expected to carry out these instructions, and was reported to have made the warning remark that “disobedience to the Emperor’s will had sometimes entailed the consequence of an involuntary trip to the Island of Sakhalien.”¹⁹¹

Backed into a diplomatic corner, Danev and the Bulgarian government quickly went into action. On February 14, Danev informed the Great Power representatives that the government had made the decision to close all the offices of the Macedonian Committees and to seize the committees’ newspapers. With some reluctance, the Bulgarian prime minister also announced that leaders of the Macedonian Committees, who were known to have led men into action in Macedonia, would be arrested and prosecuted. The number of border guards would be doubled and a mounted force of

¹⁸⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, February 10, 1903, FO 78/5293/25. Elliot described the Ottoman commissioner as being “decidedly bellicose” on the issue, stating that Macedonia would likely only stay under Ottoman rule over the next decade if the Ottomans were to “march in and give the Bulgarians a thorough thrashing, under the express undertaking that they would march out again as soon as it had been administered.”

¹⁸⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 12, 1903, FO 7/1338/43.

¹⁹⁰ Scott to Lansdowne (very confidential), March 4, 1903, FO 65/1659/51.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. British Ambassador Scott noted that Bakhmetieff had underestimated Lamsdorff’s ability to persuade the emperor. Though very displeased, Count Ignatieff and the “extreme Slavophil quarters” had lost the battle to influence the Czar for the time being and could do nothing to assist Bakhmetieff.

gendarmes was to be created to enable faster responses to incidents along the border. The Bulgarian army would not mobilize in response to the Ottoman deployments.¹⁹²

The British vice-consul noted that Danev did not feel all these measures were necessary. The Bulgarian government had, by its prime minister's own admission, adopted these measures as proof of their intention to suppress the Macedonian Committees. Privately, Elliot congratulated Danev and assured him that, despite the domestic opposition he was likely to incur, the external dangers that the government's actions had met with were of greater importance. Mikahailovski, Tsonchev, and several other leaders were arrested in a cross-country crackdown, which was described as catching the Macedonian Committees by surprise.¹⁹³ In the days that followed, the Bulgarian foreign ministry ordered the Bulgarian commercial agents in Macedonia to "endeavour to dissuade the Bulgarian notables in Macedonia from listening to the agitators, who desire to provoke a revolutionary movement."¹⁹⁴

Nonetheless, as pleasing as the Bulgarian government's measures were to the British and the other Great Powers, the events again revealed the troubles in Bulgaria—which were, potentially, a greater threat to regional stability than Macedonia. Public protests against the government crackdown on the Macedonian Committees took place in the days and weeks following the announcement, and the government also came under fire in the Sobranie.¹⁹⁵ Most disconcerting was the news that the Macedonian Committees had received advance warning of the intended crackdown, giving the organizations time to remove sensitive documents and funds in advance of government raids. While some of the leaders were arrested, others escaped, including Boris Sarafov, who slipped across the border into Macedonia accompanied by a well-armed group of

¹⁹² Elliot to Lansdowne, February 14, 1903, FO 78/5293/20. Elliot additionally reported that a diplomatic communication from the Ottoman government demanding that the Bulgarian government act aggressively against the Macedonian Committees had been leaked to the local press, making it appear that the Bulgarian government's actions were a result of Ottoman pressure and not that of the Great Powers. Danev had a heated conversation with the Ottoman commissioner. Elliot's theory was that the note in question had been leaked to the press by Macedonian employees in the Bulgarian ministry of foreign affairs. See: Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), February 14, 1903, FO 78/5293/30.

¹⁹³ Ibid; Elliot to Lansdowne, February 18, 1903, FO 78/5293/34.

¹⁹⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), February 20, 1903, FO 78/5293/36.

¹⁹⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, February 24, 1903, FO 78/5293/40; Elliot to Lansdowne, February 23, 1903, FO 78/5293/37.

followers, reported to number as many as 120.¹⁹⁶ As was the case around the time of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising, the Great Powers were left questioning whether Danev's government had the ability—or willingness—to act effectively against the Macedonian Committees.

Conclusion

The events which transpired between the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and the Vienna Reforms left the British with mixed impressions. Coordinated multilateral diplomacy had helped to ensure that the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising of 1902 was a military and political failure, and it had helped usher in a new reform scheme which offered more Great Power input. However, the Vienna Program was a disappointment to many British officials, who felt that the reforms were not strong enough. As British diplomatic officials were performing several 'peacekeeping' tasks themselves, it made sense to have Great Powers representatives formally carrying out these duties and administering the reforms in an official capacity. Still, the British remained on the outside looking in on the reform process—a situation they wished to change. In the coming months the British would continue their official support for the reforms, but their conviction that the reforms needed to be expanded and strengthened would deepen, as Macedonia lurched from crisis to crisis through the spring and summer of 1903.

¹⁹⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), February 16, 1903, FO 78/5293/ 33. Before the crackdown could take effect, the officers of "Macedonian origin" in the Bulgarian army were called upon to resign their commissions and join the revolutionary movement. See: Elliot to Lansdowne, February 14, 1903, FO 78/5293/31.

Chapter 4. Propagating Peace Work: From the Vienna Reform Program to the Eve of the Ilinden Uprising

From now on you'd better get used to living with consuls. That's how it is these days. And he'll find something to do, don't you worry. He'll sit beside the Vizier, ordering this and arranging that, he'll watch and see how you begs and agas are behaving and how the Christian rayah is treated, and he'll report everything to Bonaparte.¹

Ivo Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle*

I have taken the trouble to explain to those who have spoken to me on the subject that, provided the Turks act with prudence, I do not believe there is any likelihood of my countrymen, who know more of the question than they did in 1876 and 1877, starting off a campaign similar of that of twenty-five years ago.²

Frances Plunkett, British Ambassador to Austria-Hungary

Introduction

As winter turned to spring in the Southern Balkans, British scepticism towards the Vienna Reform Program received validation. Although the much anticipated and feared uprising by IMRO did not materialize in the spring, the region remained volatile. In March of 1903 an armed force of Albanians in the west of present day Kosovo marched on the regional centre in Mitrovitza to protest against the terms of the Vienna Reform Program. A month later an IMRO splinter group initiated an urban bombing campaign in Salonica, briefly plunging the city into chaos and darkness. Still, these events were mere preludes for what was to come later in the summer.

This chapter will illustrate how the British confronted these crises diplomatically as they attempted to leverage stronger reforms. Importantly, the ongoing state of

¹ Ivo Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 4.

² Plunkett to Lansdowne(confidential), February 26, 1903, FO 7/1338/61.

insecurity in the region led the British to resolve that a European force needed to be deployed not only to train the Ottoman gendarmerie and monitor military activities, but also to arbitrate disputes, investigate alleged crimes, and accompany Ottoman patrols. As such, the prospective force could would act as observers and provide an authoritative presence that would deter the conflicting parties from committing violent acts. This belief in the need for 'peacekeepers' came partly from recent experiences in Crete and partly from the work of British military attachés and some of the more energetic British consuls, who were already performing these tasks in Macedonia without a mandate.

This chapter will also demonstrate how the British intensified their preemptive efforts to undermine the appeal of the Macedonians Committees' cause. In the hope of limiting the abilities and appeal of the rebels, the British continued to use diplomacy to leverage more reforms from the Ottoman government and prompt the Bulgarian authorities to initiate an internal crackdown. In what was becoming an information war, diplomats were ordered to investigate the claims being made by some newspapers. As will be shown, the British were not above using some of the intimidating and manipulating tactics they witnessed from the Ottomans in order to undermine sensational news stories and present the 'correct' version of events. What made this strategy all the more effective was that it planted a degree of scepticism towards the media in the minds of many inquiring souls in Britain. In order to clarify events, inquisitive members of parliament relied on the authoritative 'Blue Books' of consular dispatches, which were carefully edited by the Foreign Office. These measures—combined with a consistent rhetoric of Balkanisms that depicted the rebels and the Ottomans as equally culpable for the violent situation in Macedonia—helped to degrade the appeal of the Macedonian Committees in what was already an unfavourable national and international political climate for intervention. The British government and the Diplomatic Service remained determined to avoid a potential repetition of the scenarios which stemmed from the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876.

The chapter begins with a review of the conditions that followed the announcement of the Vienna Reform Program in the spring of 1903. This is followed by a discussion of one the reforms' immediate by-products: the uprising in north of the Kosovo Vilayet and the Salonica Bombings in April of 1903, which prompted the arrival of European powers' warships in Salonica harbour. British actions to diplomatically

arrest conflict in Macedonia are discussed next, before an examination of the strategies and techniques to preempt sympathy and control the information that reached the British public and parliament. This is followed by a review of domestic and international conditions on the eve of the Ilinden Uprising. Finally, the work and words of British diplomats in Ottoman Macedonia are discussed, which will illustrate how their efforts provided more evidence in support of the creation of a 'peacekeeping' force.

Spring Assessments, 1903

Reports assessing the conditions in Macedonia in the early spring of 1903 focused much attention on the Vienna Reform Program. Young's report for February 1903 stated that the situation in Macedonia remained static following the publication of the Vienna Reform Program, while the application of the preceding Ottoman reforms remained ongoing. By March, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Count Goluchowski was reportedly "less optimistic" than he had been a month earlier. Over dinner with the British ambassador, Goluchowski confided that they would have to "wait till the snow melts" before they could judge the degree to which the Macedonian Committees would accept the reforms. He also expressed concerns about whether the Sultan's quick acceptance of the reform scheme would translate into genuine results.³ Moreover, Goluchowski was concerned about whether Russian foreign minister Lamsdorff could restrain the Panslavs in Russia who were sympathetic to the Macedonian Committees. He feared a shift in Russian public opinion that would challenge Austro-Russian solidarity and potentially produce the elements that led to the 1877-8 war.⁴ In contrast, the Russians had much more confidence in the reforms. A month after the release of the reforms, Lamsdorff expressed satisfaction with the progress that had been made and stated he was receiving positive reports from the Russian consulates in Macedonia. He also praised the Ottomans for proceeding "earnestly" with the reforms and said the Bulgarians had "greatly exaggerated the difficulty of the task set them."⁵

³ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), March 10, 1903, FO 7/1342/17.

⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 10, 1903, FO 7/1338/66.

⁵ Scott to Lansdowne, March 18, 1903, FO 65/1659/66.

The Bulgarians, however, were not inclined to agree. Danev's government continued to face domestic resistance over the reforms and the restraining measures placed on Bulgaria by the Great Powers. The Macedonian issue remained a destabilizing influence. There were more thefts of rifles and ammunition from military depots, and an American journalist reported that guerrilla bands were continuing to use the western regions of country as staging areas for forays into Macedonia with little or no opposition from the Bulgarian authorities.⁶ Rumours circulated that Ottoman officers were moving about the country conducting reconnaissance missions disguised as mullahs. Some Turkish communities expressed their unease, fearing they would be attacked as part of the wider program by the Macedonian Committees to provoke the Muslims of Macedonia to massacre Christians.⁷ Vice-Consul Elliot reported that Danev was endeavouring to make the best of the reforms. The Bulgarian prime minister argued that the reforms needed to be executed quickly, but that the process could be "impeded by irreconcilables." The statement particularly referred to Boris Sarafov, whose band was said to have engaged Ottoman forces a week earlier.⁸ Prince Ferdinand found himself at odds with members of the government, some of whom were having regular meetings with Bakhmetieff, who had not met with the prince since returning from his humiliating trip to St. Petersburg.⁹ The Austro-Hungarians feared the complications that might arise should Prince Ferdinand be assassinated.¹⁰ Ferdinand resented the Great Power coercion being exacted on his country and the suspicion levelled against him for his alleged ties to the SMC. Elliot reported that the prince ended their conversation "by very earnestly insisting upon the mistake that was being made by England and by Europe in looking upon him with suspicion, when he was, in fact, one of the mainstays of order, and more interested than almost anyone in the maintenance of Turkish authority."¹¹

⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/47; Elliot to Lansdowne (Confidential), March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/50. Danev downplayed the rumour, reasoning that itinerant mullahs always went from village to village and that there was no evidence that they were engaged in espionage or Ottoman officers in disguise.

⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 23, 1903, FO 78/5293/55.

¹⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), February 16, 1903, FO 7/1338/46.

¹¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 23, 1903, FO 78/5293/55.

Unease with the situation in Macedonia was prevalent across the region. Serbia was on the defensive over its interests in Macedonia in the face of Bulgarian and Albanian advances. The Serbian foreign minister, Lozantich, voiced displeasure that the reforms were too weak in pointing to Article V, which he felt did not go far enough in protecting the Serbs of the Kosovo area ("Old Serbia") from the Albanians. He said that Serbia resented being grouped with the Bulgarians in being told to "maintain a peaceful attitude."¹² In meetings with British Ambassador Bonham, Lozantich complained about the outrages committed against Serbians by Bulgarian bands in Macedonia and was sceptical about the prospect of an autonomous Macedonia. His solution was to partition Macedonia between Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.¹³ Like Serbia, Greece's main concern was that the Great Powers would remember Greek interests in Macedonia. British attention was called to the killings of Greeks in Macedonia, with the Greek ambassador expressing hope that the new gendarmerie could be organized as soon as possible.¹⁴ The Romanian government stated that it was uneasy about the situation in Macedonia and expressed its concern over a possible Russian naval demonstration in the Black Sea.¹⁵

Of the remaining Great Powers, the Germans and Italians had reportedly little to say that was noteworthy for the British dossiers. The Italians were, by and large,

¹² Bonham to Lansdowne, March 3, 1903, FO 105/148/35.

¹³ Bonham to Lansdowne, March 19, 1903, FO 105/148/46; Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), March 10, 1903, FO 105/148/42. Lozantich reasoned that since the Slavs of Macedonia spoke a language that was a mixture of Serbian and Bulgarian, they would be assimilated into each country within five years. He did not elaborate on what might be the fate of such Slav speakers who found themselves in Greek areas, or the future of non-Slavic speakers and non-Christians.

¹⁴ Memorandum Communicated by M. Métaxas, February 24, 1903, FO 421/196/228; Lansdowne to Egerton, March 18, 1903, FO 421/196/314.

¹⁵ Kennedy to Lansdowne (confidential), February 23, 1903, FO 104/155/14. Romanian concerns rose in early April when a Russian naval corvette appeared in the highly strategic Sulina Channel of the Danube Delta and docked at the port of Sulina. As the British Ambassador to Romania explained, the ship was not "stationnaire"(stationary) and thus violated the Treaty of Berlin. The Romanians interpreted the visit as a sign of Russian hostility to the European Commission on the Danube, which was not connected to the Balkans question. The Danube Delta was a sensitive issue for Romania and Russia since the 1856 Treaty of Paris had moved the Russia border to the north of the delta. Russia was not party to the European Commission on the Danube. Like the Straits Agreement, its underlying motivation was to keep Russian warships out of the strategic waterways leading out of the Black Sea. See: Kennedy to Lansdowne (confidential), April 7, 1903, FO 104/155/22.

supportive of the reforms.¹⁶ An Italian military attaché who toured Macedonia in early March was pessimistic about the reforms, but did not expect an uprising in the spring. He remained concerned about the implications of a massacre.¹⁷ Germany maintained its support of the Ottoman Empire. Following the arrests of the Macedonian Committee members in mid February, Kaiser Wilhelm remarked that the arrests showed that the Bulgarians could have gotten such results earlier, had they wished to do so.¹⁸ The Germans largely stayed out of the reform process, although there were some moves to have German officers on loan to the Ottoman Empire to lead the reorganization of the gendarmerie. This initiative was met with disapproval by the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians and provoked questions in the British House of Commons.¹⁹ However, Germany's improved bilateral relations with the Ottoman Empire were already manifesting on the ground in Macedonia. German officers were training the Ottoman forces in counter insurgency techniques and were observed on patrol with the Ottoman gendarmerie in the summer of 1903.²⁰

For their part, the Ottomans were fairly content. The Vienna reforms had not been as harsh as they had feared, and they were pleased with the solidarity the Great Powers had exhibited in demanding that the Bulgarian government take action against the Macedonian Committees. The Ottomans were also pleased that the Great Powers had rebuffed Sofia's requests for the Great Powers to make representations to the Ottoman Empire for deploying more troops to Macedonia and the Vilayet of Adrianople. The Ottoman Ambassador informed Lansdowne that the Ottoman security forces were diligently pursuing and arresting criminals and that that Muslim communities would not let themselves be antagonized by the violent provocations of the Macedonian Committees.²¹ British diplomats in the region were less certain.

¹⁶ Rodd to Lansdowne, February 24, 1903, FO 45/872/34.

¹⁷ Freeman to Lansdowne, March 13, 1903, FO 421/196/310.

¹⁸ Lascelles to Lansdowne, February 18, 1903, FO 64/1574/2.

¹⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), March 12, 1903, FO 7/1338/68; Question asked in the House of Commons, March 17, 1903, FO 421/196/309. The Sultan also expressed concerns that having German officers employed in such a sensitive role might compromise the harmony of Ottoman-German relations, especially if the Ottomans found themselves compelled to relieve a German officer of his duties. See: O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 10, 1903, FO 78/5265/128.

²⁰ Reverend J.F. Clarke to Elliot, June 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/149.

²¹ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, Received February 26, 1903, FO 421/196/231.

British diplomatic reports from Macedonia were much more in line with Austrian scepticism than Russian optimism. The British reports usually qualified any successes attributed to the reforms and presented a picture of instability in Macedonia. Albanian resistance in the Kosovo Vilayet coincided with an escalation of activity by IMRO in the Monastir Vilayet. IMRO bands continued their activities, skirmishing with Ottoman security forces and displaying increased aggression in their intimidation of the local population. Young men who did not willingly join the ranks of the insurgents could be press-ganged into doing so. Villagers who did not heed requests for supplies could be fined or the bands might quarter their members in alleged offenders' homes. IMRO had organized taxes and a penal code to settle civil cases between Christians, thereby creating the institutions of a parallel state that negated the need for parts of the Ottoman infrastructure.²² The organization even began issuing receipts for the goods it procured from the population, which it claimed would be redeemable after Macedonian autonomy had been achieved.²³ The question was not whether IMRO would launch an uprising in 1903, but where it would occur and what its scale would be.

Consul-General Alfred Biliotti's reports on IMRO were particularly disparaging. Most of the British reports on Macedonia came from Biliotti's desk in Salonica. Biliotti employed a small network of informants and synthesized and forwarded reports from the British consulates in Macedonia for Ambassador O'Connor and the Foreign Office. In late February, Biliotti predicted that an uprising in the spring was a near certainty.²⁴ He commended the beys for restraining the Muslims in the Strumica region from meting out reprisals in response to violent provocations, noting an incident during which 30 Muslims intent on burning a Christian village were intercepted and dissuaded from carrying out their plans by hastily dispatched Ottoman troops. Using a word British diplomats usually reserved for descriptions of 'excited' Muslims, he called the Macedo-Bulgarians in the Strumica district "fanatical." Biliotti despaired that local Patriarchists would soon be attacked by "Bulgarian" fighters from the Macedonian Committees dressed in Ottoman military uniforms or clothed as irregular Bashi-Bazouks for the express purpose of

²² O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 4, 1903, FO 78/5265/116.

²³ Biliotti to O'Connor, February 28, 1903, FO 195/2156/45.

²⁴ Biliotti to O'Connor, February 28, 1903, FO 195/2156/45.

provoking reprisals that would compel the Great Powers to intervene.²⁵ Referencing similar precedents from his experience on Crete, Biliotti reasoned that a series of such incidents orchestrated by IMRO would create widespread panic and uncertainty. He reported on rumours that if foreign warships appeared in Salonica harbour, “the Bulgarians of some neighbouring farms and villages shall...rush down shouting wildly that massacres have begun in the interior.”²⁶ Biliotti used these accounts as evidence to support his argument that the reform’s amnesty had failed and European gendarmes needed to be deployed in authoritative positions as soon as possible.

There were few encouraging signals from other consuls. In Sarajevo, Consul-General Freeman predicted that an insurrection was all but inevitable. Nevertheless, in likening the situation in Macedonia to that of Bosnia in 1875-78, Freeman did not predict that the uprising would spread due to the restrained diplomatic climate, provided that the neighbouring states did not intervene.²⁷ In Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot received word from Mr. Kolusheff, the Acting Bulgarian Commercial agent in Monastir, that the population was “in such a state of ferment” that even IMRO could probably not halt the uprising, should it wish to do so. Kolusheff reported that complaints against the Ottoman Redifs were continuing to be received and that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s powers were too limited to make enough of a difference. He cited the example of the Inspector General’s orders to remove a Redif battalion from Veles being overruled by the capital. Kolusheff suggested that the foreign consuls “ought openly and energetically to proclaim the reality of the reforms, and the necessity of remaining quiet in order to allow them to be applied.”²⁸ He was not alone in maintaining that the peace could only be kept via the more energetic involvement—if not the outright intervention—of the Great Powers. There were indications that the Macedonian Committees were looking specifically to Britain for their salvation. In a farewell speech, the outgoing president of the SMC, Professor

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Biliotti to O’Conor, February 28, 1903, FO 195/2156/44. As with his argument that foreigners needed to be employed to oversee the reform of the Ottoman gendarmerie, Biliotti referenced his experiences in Crete regarding the effects of panic. In his words, “I had the opportunity of witnessing panics in Crete, and nobody who has not seen one can imagine how little it takes to raise one, how much to allay it (if allayed it can be), and what far-reaching consequences it can have.”

²⁷ Freeman to Plunkett, March 16, 1903, FO 7/1338/76.

²⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 30, 1903, FO 78/5293/59.

Mikhailovsky, said the only power that might aid their cause was Great Britain.²⁹ The American missionary, Dr. Clarke, wrote that “a more favourable feeling” towards England was growing amongst the refugees from Razlog. Clarke himself added: “I wish England could have an influence which would be decisive in the matter—joined by the United States, France and others.”³⁰ These sentiments were spreading across religious and ethnic divides. In Salonica, Biliotti reported widespread wishes for Anglo deliverance from the impending chaos:

The Greeks look to England for help out of their difficulties, and I am told that their women to pray in the churches and burn candles for that intervention, while the local Turks also believe England to be the only Power who can lend them efficient help owing to community of interest and bygone political traditions.³¹

In Constantinople, there was little Ambassador O’Conor could do besides continue to monitor the situation and urge the Ottomans to implement the reforms. On March 26, he transmitted the Ottoman regulations for the execution of the reforms and reported that Foreign Affairs minister Tevfik Pasha had informed him that the reforms would not be implemented throughout all of Ottoman Europe—only in the three vilayets of Macedonia. Although he found the financial plans encouraging, providing that they were “faithfully carried out”, he noted that the administrative plans contained supplementary clauses designed to weaken the reform proposals.³²

The news from Macedonia continued to show little promise of peace. In anticipation of the uprising, the Ottomans mobilized seven battalions of Ilave troops.³³ More bad news soon arrived from Biliotti, who informed the ambassador that the Ottoman Empire had dismissed an estimated one-quarter of the gendarmerie for the purpose of making room from Christians, which had left the force depleted and disorganized “at this critical moment.”³⁴ It does not appear the consul-general

²⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, March 25, 1903, FO 78/5293/57.

³⁰ Dr. Clarke to Elliot, March 5, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

³¹ Biliotti to Whitehead, February 15, 1903, FO 195/2156/34.

³² O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 26, 1903, FO 78/5265/159.

³³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 28, 1903, FO 78/5265/160.

³⁴ Biliotti to O’Conor, March 26, 1903, FO 195/2156/70.

considered this eventuality to have occurred due to the prompt execution of the terms of the reforms, which he had advocated.

Armed with Biliotti's damning reports on the reforms, O'Connor confronted Tevfik Pasha, expressing his disappointment over the Ottomans' handling of the reforms. He bluntly told the Ottoman Foreign Minister that if the Ottomans did not hire foreign inspectors and instructors for the gendarmerie, "it would make a very bad impression as showing that the work of reorganization was not looked upon seriously, and that the object of the Imperial Government was rather to evade than to execute the reforms."³⁵ O'Connor also informed Lansdowne that he was speaking to the other ambassadors in order to coordinate the application of diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman government.³⁶ Scarcely six weeks after its announcement, the Vienna Reform Program was in danger of becoming undermined, and the situation was about to get worse.

The Kosovo Insurrection

On March 31, 1903 O'Connor telegraphed the Foreign Secretary with reports that an insurrection was underway in the north of the Kosovo Vilayet, where a force of some 2,000 Albanians,³⁷ mostly from the northwest of the vilayet, had marched to the regional centre of Mitrovica.³⁸ According to Vice-Consul Fontana's report, Ottoman troops backed by field artillery had hastily taken defensive positions around Mitrovica to meet the insurgent advance. Having deployed forces to the north and south of Mitrovica, the Albanians attempted to storm the city from the south across a bridge. They were halted by heavy casualties (reports indicated over 300 dead and over 500 casualties in total). Ottoman losses were very light and reinforcements were rushed to Mitrovica in

³⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 31, 1903, FO 78/5265/165.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ While this force was reportedly entirely Albanian in its composition, it was not a pan-Albanian uprising. The men who marched on Mitrovica in late March of 1903 came from the northwestern Pec region of the Vilayet of Kosovo. Albanians in other parts of the Kosovo Vilayet and the other Macedonian vilayets did not rally to support the insurgents. While these insurgents vocally opposed the reforms, there are indications that they had additional grievances with the Ottoman administration.

³⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 31, 1903, FO 78/5272/61.

preparation for a westward offensive to push the Albanian force back to the Pec region, where it had originated.³⁹

The violent action of the Albanians of northwestern Kosovo Vilayet had been motivated in large part by their objection to the reforms, which they did not wish to see implemented "in Albania."⁴⁰ This sentiment was reportedly so strong that it reportedly led to a *Bessa* being worked out between Catholic and Muslim Albanians, who hoped that Austria-Hungary would support the Albanians if the Ottoman government tried to force the reforms on them.⁴¹ The insurgents particularly resented plans to hire Christian gendarmes. Negotiations between Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and the Albanians in the western Pec region of the Kosovo Vilayet regarding the employment of Christian gendarmes in the region had proved futile.⁴² As the Albanian force advanced through the villages towards Mitrovica, it peacefully expelled recently appointed Christian gendarmes and judicial employees. The purpose of the march was to forcibly evict not only the Christian gendarmes and officials from the region's centre, but also the newly appointed Russian Consul in Mitrovica. The insurgent sacrifices proved to be not entirely in vain. While observing the fighting on horseback, the Russian Consul, Mr. Stcherbina, was fatally wounded in the abdomen by an ethnic Albanian soldier in the Ottoman ranks, who reportedly acted out of revenge for the death of his brother on the other side of the lines.⁴³

Reactions to the news of the Kosovo Insurrection ranged from indifferent to concerned. Count Goluchowski dismissed the events as a minor incident that was to be expected, given the political climate and the time of year.⁴⁴ However, other members of the Austro-Hungarian government did not share his opinion. They expressed concern that the Ottomans had used excessive force against the insurgents and that the Sultan's resolve to carry out the reforms might be compromised because his personal

³⁹ Fontana to Biliotti, April 4, 1903, FO 294/25/25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Fontana to Biliotti, April 2, 1903, FO 294/25/24.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Fontana to Biliotti, April 2, 1903, FO 294/25/23.

⁴⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne, April 8, 1903, FO 7/1339/91.

bodyguards were Albanians.⁴⁵ Similar concerns were expressed in neighbouring Serbia, which sent a leading Belgrade surgeon to Mitrovica to attend to the mortally wounded consul.⁴⁶ Although the Russians were upset over the death of a promising, young member of their diplomatic corps, they did not wish to see the events incite anger against the Ottoman Empire. The Russian government published an article in the press to make its stance clear to the Russian reading public. In this article, the Ottoman ambassador in St. Petersburg expressed his “very profound regret” over the death of the consul and the measures being taken against the insurgents by the Sultan’s forces.⁴⁷

The Ottomans had to walk a fine by taking action against the insurgents who had (indirectly) caused the death of diplomat without being too heavy-handed. Damage control measures were necessary. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha tried to “hush up” the details of the confrontation by saying that “relatively few” Albanians had been killed, a move that Vice Consul Fontana called “regrettable.”⁴⁸ In Constantinople—a few days after the events in Mitrovica—the Sultan informed O’Conor that a special commission of government and religious officials would be sent to Kosovo to explain to Albanian leaders that the reforms would not be detrimental to Albanian interests.⁴⁹ The British soon learned that this olive branch was being backed up with plenty of rifles. Some Ilave battalions had already been mobilized in late March in the Kosovo and Monastir vilayets.⁵⁰ One week into April, the British Military Attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell, reported that a division of Anatolian Redifs from the third army corps comprised of 12,800 men would soon ship out of Smyrna for Salonica, where they would travel by rail to Mitrovica. In addition, 10,000 more armed Ilaves were being mobilized in the Kosovo and Salonica vilayets. The Ottoman Minister of War mentioned that he did not wish to

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Bonham to Lansdowne, April 2, 1903, FO 105/148/57.

⁴⁷ Scott to Lansdowne, April 5, 1903, FO 65/1660/92.

⁴⁸ Fontana to Biliotti, April 4, 1903, FO 294/25/25.

⁴⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 4, 1903, FO 78/5265/168.

⁵⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 28, 1903, FO 78/5265/160.

see Muslims fighting each other.⁵¹ Maunsell deduced that the Ottomans would try to avoid a large-scale campaign against the insurgents and that the principle reason for the mobilization was to deal with Christian insurgents. Local militias were called out to compensate for shortfalls in the numbers of gendarmes, which meant that large numbers of Macedonian Muslims and Albanians were under arms. Maunsell's assessment was bleak. He noted that guerrilla warfare was straining the discipline of regular troops, stating that "in the case of such ill-trained levies as the *llave* there is a grave danger of their getting out of hand, if employed on detachment away from their respective centres."⁵² Furthermore, if the men were posted in other districts, their homes would be more vulnerable to attack and their families would incur more economic hardship since many of the men had previously been exempt from service because they were the sole supporters of their families.⁵³

In London, Lansdowne was paying attention. It was becoming clear to the British Foreign Secretary that the way to deter the impending violence was to deploy European military attachés. Lansdowne had expressed concern about the deployment of more Redifs to Macedonia even before receiving Maunsell's report and asked his ambassador in Constantinople whether it

might not be desirable to send the British and other military attaches to the more disturbed districts, in order that they might report whether proper steps are being taken to keep the troops in hand and restrain them from committing acts of cruelty?...We are certain to receive many reports of atrocities committed in these regions and we shall be expected to ascertain, by any means in our power, whether there is any foundation for such reports, and whether there are any grounds for making remonstrances with regard to them.⁵⁴

It appears that Lansdowne not only accepted Biliotti's view that the physical presence of Great Powers' officers could have a restraining influence on the Ottoman

⁵¹ Maunsell to O'Connor, April 7, 1903, FO 195/2150/21. Maunsell also wrote that the commander of the Third Corps was against calling up Albanian Redifs due to their lack of discipline, but was overruled by the capital and Albanian Redif battalions from parts of Monastir and Kosovo were mobilized. Pristina Redifs had recently "got out of hand" and "molested" the inhabitants of a Macedo-Bulgarian village, leaving the officers to admit they "could do nothing with their men, and referred to them as '*eshkia*' or brigands."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, April 7, 1903, FO 421/197/25.

security forces, but also considered the deployment of men a potentially vital source of information in what was likely to be a public relations war of words aiming to solicit the sympathies of the British public.

However, Ambassador O'Connor had ideas of his own. In responding to the Foreign Secretary four days later, he considered that a deployment of foreign military attachés would be logistically difficult and that the Macedonian Committees would see it as a step towards a larger foreign intervention, which would likely prompt it to continue agitating. He also expressed his view that consular officials were doing well in supplying "very full and accurate information on the state of affairs."⁵⁵ Moreover, the idea had no support from the other ambassadors, especially Austro-Hungarians and Russians who called the idea "impractical and inexpedient, and likely to bring about embarrassment."⁵⁶

The ambassadors agreed that the events surrounding the Kosovo Insurrection provided them with the opportunity to increase pressure on the Ottomans to implement the Vienna Reform Program. When O'Connor was informed by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire's intent to inquire into the uprising, he expressed disappointment the gendarmerie reforms, and said that the appointment of two Swedish officers would not suffice to convince the Great Powers of the Ottoman Empire's sincere intention to follow through on the reforms.⁵⁷ The Russians and the Austro-Hungarians stated that they were willing to go beyond appealing to the Sultan's desire for peace and the protection of the Ottoman Empire's image. Citing what they considered to be the Ottoman government's "undecided attitude" towards the Kosovo Insurrection and its "want of vigour" regarding the execution of the reforms, the two powers threatened to free themselves from the restraining measures they had taken against the Balkan states regarding Macedonia, particularly Bulgaria.⁵⁸ This would effectively give the Balkan states license to initiate hostile actions against the Ottoman Empire with Austro-Russian

⁵⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 11, 1903, FO 78/5272/72.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 4, 1903, FO 78/5265/168. The Russian Ambassador Zinoviev had urged O'Connor to impress upon the Sultan the need to take measures against the Albanian insurgents and execute reform.

⁵⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 11, 1903, FO 78/5272/72. O'Connor reported that the Russian ambassador had informed him that the Sultan had issued secret orders not to put the reforms into effect. See: O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), April 4, 1903, FO 78/5265/172.

backing. The British did not escape criticism. The Russian Ambassador to London voiced his country's displeasure with Great Britain for its "half-hearted" support of the reforms, and Lansdowne denied this accusation.⁵⁹

True to form, the British supported putting multilateral pressure on the Ottoman Government. They acceded to requests to support the Austro-Hungarian and Russian representations to the Ottoman government that called for more vigorous measures to suppress the Kosovo Insurrection in order to facilitate a more thorough implementation of the reforms.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, as April neared its end, conditions in the Macedonian vilayets remained unstable. O'Connor confirmed that the application of the reforms was "seriously impeded" by the volatile conditions. In some respects, the reform process was slowing down. Save for the handful of Swedish instructors, no other European officers had been appointed to reform the gendarmerie. Christians were unwilling to sign up for the gendarmerie when news circulated that Christian gendarmes were being removed from their positions by armed Albanians in the Albanian-dominated regions of the Kosovo Vilayet.⁶¹ This news, coupled with the growly litany of reports of political violence and clashes between guerrillas and the Ottoman security forces, made any positive words regarding the reforms mere silver linings on a very dark cloud.

By late April the Ottomans were reporting success in their campaign against the insurgents. However, as the consular reports trickled in, it became apparent that resistance to the reforms would not be quickly squashed. The Ottoman special committee dispatched to Pec to negotiate with the leaders of the Kosovo Insurrection was prevented from leaving and effectively held hostage.⁶² An Ottoman relief force had to march west to Pec in May before entering the rebel stronghold and relieving the committee. In the process, it destroyed villages and kulas, killing several hundred

⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Scott, April 14, 1903, FO 421/197/62. There is some evidence that even the Austro-Hungarians and Russians did not take their own reforms seriously. On April 11, Biliotti reported he had approached the Russian Consul-General in Salonica with a list of critical questions about the wisdom and the execution of the reforms. Biliotti noted the following response: 'M. de Giers replied, presumably jokingly: "But you are speaking disparagingly of our reforms; I shall have to report it to my Embassy."'

⁶⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 20, 1903, FO 78/5265/102.

⁶¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 26, 1903, FO 78/5272/80; Fontana to Biliotti (confidential), April 23, 1903, FO 294/25/31.

⁶² Fontana to Biliotti (confidential), May 1, 1903, FO 294/25/33.

insurgents.⁶³ Although the remaining Albanian leadership proclaimed its loyalty to the Ottoman government, the leaders of the insurgency had fled into the mountains. As a result, the Ottomans felt compelled to continue reinforcing their military presence in the Kosovo Vilayet. The British consul in Montenegro reported that emissaries from the insurgents had visited Scutari (present day Shkoder) and had tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the Albanians on the western slopes of the *Prokletije* to join their revolt.⁶⁴

Although the Kosovo Insurrection accomplished little, in the eyes of Britain and some of the other Great Powers, it provided more proof that the reforms and the Ottoman counterinsurgency methods were inadequate. The British would continue to press for more effective reforms, becoming increasingly convinced that only the uniformed presence of Europeans could avert disaster.

The Salonica Bombings

Less than a month after the Ottomans had defeated the Albanians insurgents at Mitrovica, the beleaguered Vienna Reform Program and the stability of Macedonia were dealt another blow by a series of bombings in Salonica. On April 28, 1903, the French vessel *Guadalquivir* was preparing to set sail from Salonica harbour when an explosion ripped a hole in its hull. The passengers were fortunately rescued unharmed as the ship listed in the water. However, the bombing was the first of a series which ripped through the city in the following days. On the evening of April 28, a massive dynamite bomb was detonated from under the foundations of the Ottoman bank. The German school and the post office were targeted along with the city's gas main, plunging the city into darkness. Bombs were also tossed into cafés and heaved at the Ottoman security forces as they rushed to respond to what was initially thought to be an attack by the guerrilla forces of

⁶³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 18, 1903, FO 78/5266/286.

⁶⁴ Shipley to Lansdowne, May 1, 1903, FO 421/197/186. While the emissaries were not successful in convincing their brethren to join in the struggle, the Albanians leaders assembled at Scutari did promise to join the resistance if troops of a foreign power occupied lands they considered Albanian domain. The disgruntlement with the Ottoman government—particularly amongst Muslim Albanians—had manifested itself a few weeks earlier when two newly arrived judges had been assassinated in broad daylight in the streets of Scutari. The judges were of Armenian and Jewish backgrounds. See: Shipley to O'Connor, April 23, 1903, FO 421/197/168. Shipley to Lansdowne, April 25, 1903.

the Macedonian Committees. In fact, the bombing campaign was the work of a rogue group of young men who were literally suicidal in their resolve to cause chaos and inflicting losses of life. Over the next few days, most of the bombers died in hails of gunfire after throwing their last bomb, and one saved his last bomb for himself. Angry soldiers and enraged mobs of local Muslims attacked Christians in the streets and vowed to attack the Macedo-Bulgarian quarter. Thanks to personal appeals for restraint by the Vali, Hassan Fehmi Pasha, large-scale violence against the Macedo-Bulgarian community was averted. Accusations of responsibility were understandably leveled at IMRO and sightings of Boris Sarafov moving about incognito as a monk were reported, although IMRO had only played at best a supporting role in the disturbances.⁶⁵

The group of young men who carried out the bombings was known as the *Gemidzhii*. The *Gemidzhii* can best be classified as an IMRO splinter cell. Its leaders were the students of some of the IMRO's founding members and were not willing to heed their mentors' pleas for patience. Although they remained in contact with IMRO, they advanced with their own agenda in 1899. This agenda was stoked with the fervor of anarchism and nihilism that one of their leaders, Svetoslav Merdzhanov, had found so intoxicating during his studies in Geneva.⁶⁶ The *Gemidzhii* rented a barbershop near the Ottoman Bank and proceeded to tunnel their way under the bank's foundations. Boris Sarafov did play a part in their procurement of some 160 sticks of dynamite.⁶⁷ Still, IMRO urged them postpone their intending bombing campaign due to fear that it would jeopardize the organization's own uprising. The *Gemidzhii* were undeterred. Having already failed in their attempts to launch a bombing campaign in Constantinople and assassinate the Sultan, they were not about to risk having their plot thwarted after some five years of preparation. The *Gemidzhii* told their mentors to leave Salonica and resolved to sacrifice themselves in order to bring Europe's attention to their cause. They chose to bomb the *Guadalquivir* precisely because they thought that the French might be most sympathetic Great Power to their cause and might therefore convince their Russian allies to initiate an intervention.⁶⁸ IMRO had good reason to fear the hot-headed

⁶⁵ Biliotti to O'Connor (separate and confidential), May 17, 1903, FO 421/197/278.

⁶⁶ Stoyan Christowe, *Heroes and Assassins*, 77.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

actions of its prodigal sons. Reprisal massacres were averted, largely in thanks to the work of the Vali of Salonica and his officers. Although the *Gemidzhii* had sought the sympathy of Europe, they and the Macedonian cause in general received only its scorn.

Reactions to the Salonica bombings in the European press were almost universal in their condemnation of the bombers. The Sofia newspaper *Dnevnik* declared that “one dynamite explosion is worth a hundred Consular reports” and the *Vechera Posta* interpreted the bombings as “a protest against the cynicism and indifference of Europe”, but the latter soberly noted that “The best friends of the Macedonians, however, will deplore these atrocious acts as a tending to extinguish the growing sympathy of Europe with their cause.”⁶⁹ *The Times* correspondent in Salonica reported that “the majority of all nationalities” approved of the restraint shown by the Ottoman security forces. The correspondent also reported bearing witness to Ottoman professionalism in the face of a suicidal attack when a sentry had shot one of the bombers dead during an attack on the telegraph office.⁷⁰ The condemnations for the bombings poured in. Even the “reflecting persons” of the Bulgarian capital condemned the bombings “not only [for their] crimes against humanity, but [also] as a political blunder.”⁷¹ An editorial published on May 4 was particularly damning, stating that:

Our telegrams to-day show that Europe resents the efforts of a handful of obscure conspirators to force her hand and dictate her action by a policy of outrage....No people was ever freed yet by mere murderous crime, and no people which relies upon such deeds to accomplish its freedom is worthy to be free. The calculation of the Committees as stupid as it is nefarious. Their object, as they have all along acknowledged, is to compel Europe to intervene and liberate Macedonia from the Turks....They forget that the murder of innocent men as a protest against “cynicism” is more likely to arouse reprobation against the murderers and their accomplices than sympathy with their aims.⁷²

The *Gemidzhii* did not issue a statement to the press or publish a manifesto. As their IMRO mentors had feared, the bombing campaign sparked a security crackdown, but the public relations damage to IMRO’s cause was even more damning. The finger for

⁶⁹ “The Balkan Crisis,” *The Times*, May 2, 1903, 7.

⁷⁰ “The Balkan Crisis,” *The Times*, May 5, 1903, 5.

⁷¹ “The Balkan Crisis,” *The Times*, May 4, 1903, 8.

⁷² “The Blow Which the Macedonian Committees,” *The Times*, May 4, 1903, 11.

the blame was pointed not at the little-known splinter cell but at the Macedonian Committees and Bulgaria. IMRO had yet to launch its uprising, and many of their leaders knew that obtaining sympathy from at least some of the Great Powers could very well determine the success of its their future revolt. Yet, they were far from building up an image of being Balkan Robin Hoods or Macedonian Garabaldis. Instead, they were receiving unflattering descriptions and being criticized for their ruthless tactics. The Miss Stone Affair may have garnered some sympathy for IMRO's cause, but the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and the Salonica Bombings were disasters to IMRO even if neither was its own doing. A wholesale condemnation of the Macedonian cause in one of Europe's most read and most influential newspapers did not bode well for IMRO's prospect of winning public sympathy in Great Britain, especially since IMRO had already earned the enmity of many British diplomats.

The bombings did not come as a complete surprise to the British. A few weeks earlier, Biliotti had reported a rumoured plot to bomb targets around the city during the Orthodox Easter weekend in mid-March. In Constantinople, O'Connor had apparently grown tired enough of Biliotti's gloomy assessments to call his subordinate a pessimist. The Ottomans presented the British with intelligence on the planned bombings a few days before the first explosion detonated, but the information did not prompt the British to act

Like his counterparts in other Salonica consuls, Biliotti had assumed that the bombs being detonated in Salonica were the work of one or both of the Macedonian Committees. This was an understandable assumption, given the level of political violence in the three vilayets, much of which was being instigated by IMRO. For Biliotti, the bombings added support to his contention that the "reign of terror" by the committees far exceeded the abuses perpetrated by the Ottomans during the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. Biliotti stated that: "In a word, never has there been a reign of terror such as exists in Macedonia at this moment, and no outburst of Turkish ferocity has ever caused so much misery over such a large and thickly-populated area."⁷³ The Consul-General considered it necessary to give the Ottoman authorities the green light to strike

⁷³ Biliotti to Lansdowne, April 29, 1903, FO 421/197/185.

aggressively against the committees and advocated that the Ottomans impose martial law.⁷⁴

As for a coordinated Great Power response, there were calls for some form of a naval demonstration in Salonica harbour.⁷⁵ Most of the powers had naval vessels in the Mediterranean, so this was an attractive means of providing a quick response. Naval demonstrations had become a staple of nineteenth century imperial diplomacy as a result of increased firepower. The British navy had served as the empire's debt collector on several occasions— notably in China and Greece, and more recently in Venezuela. Over the course of the nineteenth century a newfound belief had crystallized that naval forces could do more than just collect bills. Battleships could enforce resolutions through bombardments and limiting landings, as was the case during the Egyptian-Ottoman War of 1839-41. Some also believed that a naval presence could have coercive political effects and the same calming influence as an officer of the law in a public area. The history of Salonica itself provided precedence for naval force being used to apply the will of the Great Powers. In 1876, French and German consuls had been murdered by an angry mob of local Muslims and the Great Powers responded by sending naval vessels to Salonica harbour. They fired not a shell, merely aiming their guns at the city for the purpose of persuading the Ottoman authorities to expedite the prosecution of the offenders.⁷⁶

If the precedence of 1876 was not on Biliotti's mind, he was certainly thinking of his Crete experience when he suggested on April 7 (two weeks before the bombing of the *Guadalquiver*) that the presence of some small Great Power warships in Salonica

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York: Vantage Books, 2004), 162-163. The slain consuls were originally taken hostage for the purpose of being used in an exchange. A Christian girl had expressed her wish to convert to Islam and had journeyed to the city wearing a veil in proclamation of her intent of conversion. However, this was against her mother's wishes and at the mother's prompting, some local Christians removed the veil in the very public space of the train station and took the girl into hiding after commandeering the carriage of the American consul, who happened to be a local Greek. Some members of the Muslim community had demanded the authorities take action, threatening to attack the consul's house. The unfortunate consuls were in the wrong place at the wrong time and were abducted, held in a mosque and later beaten to death by a mob. Although the authorities had some difficulties due to popular sympathy for the perpetrators of the crimes, over thirty men were arrested and six were hanged.

harbour “might do good by acting as a tonic on the population and preventing panic, in case of any movement on the part of the Bulgarians in the vicinity.”⁷⁷ Biliotti admitted that members of the Italian ex-patriot community had suggested this through their consul. He added that in the event that the other powers considered such a move to be too provocative, ships could be stationed at a nearby port such as Volos.⁷⁸ Commenting on Biliotti’s dispatch, O’Conor reported that the measure was considered unnecessary by the other ambassadors. O’Conor added that he thought such a deployment of Great Power warships would play into the hands of the Macedonian Committees, who would understand it to be a reaction to their agitations and a prelude to an intervention.⁷⁹ After reading about the Constantinople ambassadors’ reaction, Biliotti expressed regret for the wording of his dispatch.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Lansdowne thought highly enough of Biliotti’s advice to ask the Admiralty a week later if it could arrange for a British warship to visit Volos “at the end of the present week, and remain there for some days in case of her presence being required at Salonica.”⁸¹ On April 17, the HMS *Victorious*, a majestic-class pre-dreadnought battleship, left the Mediterranean fleet at Malta and sailed for Volos.⁸² Biliotti seemed rather embarrassed by the deployment, and just a few days prior to the bombing of the *Guadalquiver*, O’Conor received a telegraph from him stating that he no longer considered the presence of the HMS *Victorious* at Volos to be necessary.⁸³

Biliotti maintained his restrained attitude towards a British naval deployment once the bombing campaign commenced. When the bombings were reported, two more British ships of war were dispatched from Malta with orders to proceed to Salonica harbour.⁸⁴ The *Victorious* prepared to sail for Salonica.⁸⁵ However, when asked whether the safety of British subjects in Salonica necessitated the presence of a British naval

⁷⁷ Biliotti to O’Conor, April 7, 1903, FO 195/2156/84.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 11, 1903, FO 78/5265/177.

⁸⁰ Biliotti to O’Conor, April 12, 1903, FO 195/2156/99. Biliotti wrote that having small ships of war near a potentially troubled area had served the powers well in Crete, when Great Power warships were stationed at Piraeus and thus could and did sail for Crete when they were needed.

⁸¹ Foreign Office to Admiralty, April 15, 1903, FO 421/197/66.

⁸² Lansdowne to O’Conor, April 17, 1903, FO 421/197/74.

⁸³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 26, 1903, FO 78/5272/79.

⁸⁴ Lansdowne to O’Conor, April 30, 1903, FO 421/197/146*

⁸⁵ Admiralty to Foreign Office, May 2, 1903, FO 421/197/166.

vessel, Biliotti responded in the negative, describing the Ottoman security measures as “perfect” in that the city was under de facto martial law. Furthermore, he reported that “satisfactory” steps had been taken to maintain public order and that the city’s Muslim community was closely watched by the authorities, who had strictly ordered it not to take reprisals.⁸⁶ The British decided keep the Victorious anchored at Volos. The dispatch of the two ships from Malta was deemed “unnecessary.”⁸⁷

No British ships sailed to Salonica. Biliotti’s stance may have been influenced by a sense of embarrassment over his earlier perceived endorsement of a naval deployment. He also had concurred with O’Conor and other critics in the diplomatic corps that such a move would be a victory for the Macedonian Committees, who were agitating specifically for Great Power intervention. In late February Biliotti had reported a rumour that the regional Macedo-Bulgarian community was to use the presence of Great Power war ships as an opportunity to cry out about atrocities.⁸⁸ It is also possible that Biliotti saw no need for the British to bother deploying ships, since other powers had already doing so.

The Great Powers were not in agreement over sending warships to Salonica. The fact that only three of the six Great Powers sent ships to Salonica is indicative of the divisions over the issue between national diplomatic corps as well as between powers. Although the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Baron Calice opposed the move, his government was very quick to order a naval squadron which was arriving at Smyrna to alter course for Salonica.⁸⁹ Austro-Hungarian ships began arriving on May 2, 1903.⁹⁰ A week later, four Austro-Hungarian ships of war, eight Italian vessels and one German ship were anchored in Salonica harbour.⁹¹ The Ottomans were displeased by the presence of the ships and there was some suspicion over the haste of the Austro-

⁸⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, May 1, 1903, FO 78/5272/88.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Biliotti to Lansdowne, February 28, 1903, FO 195/2156/45.

⁸⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, May 1, 1903, FO 78/5272/88.

⁹⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, May 2, 1903, FO 78/5272/89.

⁹¹ Biliotti to Lansdowne, May 9, 1903, FO 195/2156/144. There is little in the British records regarding the presence of the solitary German ship. Its presence could have been a show of support for its Triple Alliance allies or possibly a counterbalance to the other ships in a positive gesture to the Ottoman Empire.

Hungarian ships' arrival. Three days after the arrival of their first ship, the Austro-Hungarians issued diplomatic assurances and statements in the press that the squadron was able to deploy quickly because it had been cruising in the area and its sole purpose was to protect Austro-Hungarian subjects in the city.⁹² The Italian government echoed the Austrian line, arguing that "[t]hese were the usual methods in similar circumstances and had only the usual significance. As soon as the situation permitted it, all the vessels would be withdrawn with the exception of one, which would be left for the protection of the Italian representative."⁹³ The French were in much the same position as the British. The French ambassador in Constantinople had been very insistent that ships be sent to Salonica and the French government had dispatched vessels to the region, but not all the way to Salonica.⁹⁴ The fact that the French did not wish to act in disaccord with their Russian allies made it a delicate matter. In St. Petersburg, Lamsdorff expressed agreement with the British position and said the Russians would not order their ships to Salonica unless all the other powers did so.⁹⁵ There were no more bombs and the reprisals were contained, so the majority of the ships left Salonica by early June.⁹⁶ While the deployment of naval vessels had little bearing on the events in Macedonia, it again illustrated the difficulty the Great Powers faced when trying to establish a united response to events in Macedonia. This problem would continue to dog the powers in coming months and years.

In the days following the Salonica bombing, multilateral diplomacy was needed to calm jittery regional governments. There was some worry that Serbia would mobilize. The Serbian foreign minister considered the Salonica bombings to be the work of Bulgarian agents, but his government's main concern was its southern border. The Serbs feared that an Austro-Hungarian intervention might result in Vienna extending its presence southward into the Kosovo Vilayet, just as it had done in Bosnia-

⁹² Plunkett to Lansdowne, May 5, 1903, FO 7/1339/118.

⁹³ Bertie to Lansdowne, May 13, 1903, FO 45/873/94.

⁹⁴ Scott to Lansdowne, May 9, 1903, FO 65/1663/31.

⁹⁵ Scott to Lansdowne, May 7, 1903, FO 65/1663/30; Scott to Lansdowne, May 9, 1903, FO 65/1663/31. Like most of the British diplomats, Lamsdorff felt the presence of the ships would be "misinterpreted." Ambassador Plunkett reported in June that the deployment of the Austrian ships had damaged Austro-Russian relations, but that things had improved in recent weeks. See: Plunkett to Lansdowne, June 9, 1903, FO 7/1342/31.

⁹⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne, June 9, 1903, FO 7/1339/149.

Herzegovina.⁹⁷ While the Serbians urged the Ottomans to resist Austro-Hungarian intervention—be it overland from Bosnia or amphibiously in Salonica—they feared for the welfare of their brethren in the Macedonian Vilayets (parts of which they coveted).⁹⁸ A southward push by Serbian forces as far as Uscub was considered likely in the event of an Ottoman-Bulgarian war.⁹⁹ Diplomacy was able to allay any ideas the Serbs may have had about mobilizing in the aftermath of the Salonica bombings, but concerns over the stability of the Ottoman-Serbian frontier remained.

A much more serious diplomatic conflict existed between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. The Ottomans were incensed by the bombings and accused the Bulgarian government of allowing “formidable” bands of insurgents to cross the border, armed with weapons from Bulgarian military arsenals and led by Bulgarian officers on leave from their regiments. The Grand Vizier also complained of the “ruinous financial burden” imposed on the Ottoman Empire by Bulgaria’s broken promises.¹⁰⁰ On May 2, the Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia delivered a note to the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs accusing the Bulgarian Government of being responsible for the Salonica bombings.¹⁰¹ The Bulgarian government denied the accusations. On May 5, Prime Minister Danev showed Elliot the offending note and said that if the Grand Vizier did not modify it, he would reply in similar terms. Danev believed the note “betrayed hostile intentions” and said the government would be on its guard.¹⁰² A British military attaché’s report that a strong jingoistic sentiment was present in the Ottoman military and preparations were underway for war against Bulgaria was even more worrisome. More

⁹⁷ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), May 20, 1903, FO 105/148/83.

⁹⁸ Bonham to Lansdowne (confidential), May 5, 1903, FO 105/148/76.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, May 4, 1903, FO 78/5272/91.

¹⁰¹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 3, 1903, FO 78/5296/9.

¹⁰² Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 5, 1903, FO 78/5296/10. In a more detailed dispatch sent a few days later, Elliot expressed sympathy for the Bulgarian government, stating that Danev was “with justice, indigent at the two main charges brought against his Government, that of negligence on the frontier and of allowing this country to be the main source of dynamite.” See: Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 5, 1903, FO 78/5293/90.

Redif battalions were called up and recent orders for rations and new combat uniforms were hurriedly filled.¹⁰³

A measure of multilateral diplomacy and some political change deescalated the tension over the Ottoman note in mid-May. With Danev still seething over the note and wishing to reply in kind, Elliot and the German and Austro-Hungarian representatives met with the Bulgarian prime minister in an effort to persuade him to accept a private note from the Ottoman Commissioner, Ali Ferruh Bey, which quieted the language of the original Ottoman note.¹⁰⁴ Danev initially resisted, but after the intervention of the Russian Consul-General Bakhmetieff—who Elliot described in the dispatch as being “too magnificent a personage to join the common herd of diplomatists in the waiting room”—Danev was persuaded to write to the Ottoman Commissioner that he had taken note of the revised Ottoman sentiment and that he considered the matter closed. Danev presented a draft of his note to the Great Power consuls. However, the Ottoman Commissioner was upset with Danev’s choice to use the verb “*retire*” (which means to remove or withdraw) with respect to the Ottoman government’s accusations. He asked that the “obnoxious” word be replaced with “*attenuer*” (mitigate). Danev at first consented to the request, but then apparently changed his mind. When the finished draft arrived complete with “*retire*”, Ali Ferruh Bey was “indignant.” However, having politely cajoled the resolution to the dispute, the Great Power consuls put their collective feet down and “strongly dissuaded” the Ottoman Commissioner from sending an inflammatory response as well as convinced him to send Danev’s note to the Grand Vizier in Constantinople.¹⁰⁵

By Elliot’s own admission, the controversy surrounding the note was “comparatively trivial in itself”. However, with relations between Constantinople and Sofia in a very delicate state, even an apparently minor issue such as the choice of a French verb could have unpleasant repercussions. One needs to look no further than the genesis of the Franco-Prussian War for an example of how an infamous line of

¹⁰³ Maunsell to O’Conor, May 12, 1903, FO 195/2150/28. According to Maunsell, the Ottoman military elite had come to the conclusion that the only way to deal with the guerillas in Macedonia was to cut them off at their source through war with Bulgaria.

¹⁰⁴ The Ottoman Commissioner had already communicated this sentiment to the German Consul.

¹⁰⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 12, 1903, FO 78/5293/95.

diplomatic verse can ignite an armed conflict. The diplomatic drama surrounding the note also shows how the concerted efforts of the Great Powers could mediate a point of conflict and then expedite a resolution. Lansdowne followed up on Danev's response by telegraphing O'Connor that the "Ottoman government would doubtlessly be well advised to take no further action."¹⁰⁶ Lansdowne had also supported O'Connor's warning to the Ottomans that they should not antagonize the Bulgarian government, given that its hands were tied, and should "think very seriously of the possible consequences before he attempted an aggressive policy upon a Christian country like Bulgaria."¹⁰⁷ Although Elliot privately considered the Bulgarians to have been just in their position regarding the Ottoman note, he was not about to let Danev push his luck. When Danev appealed to him for British assistance to curb the oppressive treatment of Bulgarian schoolteachers by the Ottoman authorities in Macedonia, Elliot rebuffed him by pointing out that the schoolteachers were well known to be the heart of the revolutionary movement.¹⁰⁸

In any case, the British did not have to worry about Danev after mid-May because his government did not survive a conflict with Prince Ferdinand. A new government was formed that consisted of a coalition of members from several parties under Rancho Petkoff, the leader of the Stambolovist Party.¹⁰⁹ Elliot viewed this as a positive development. While he sympathized with Danev's difficulties in his attempts to curtail the activities of the Macedonian Committees, he called Danev undependable and "in complete subjugation of the Russian Agent."¹¹⁰ Elliot reported that the Ottoman Commissioner was "jubilant at the prospect" of the new government and commented that Petkoff's government would ease the tension in Ottoman-Bulgarian relations.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Lansdowne to O'Connor, May 12, 1903, FO 421/197/223.

¹⁰⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 5, 1903, FO 78/5266/235.

¹⁰⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, May 11, 1903, FO 78/5293/94.

¹⁰⁹ Prince Ferdinand had earlier had a disagreement with the Minister of Public Instruction, Mr. Radeff, over the appointment of officials. Although Prime Minister Danev had originally promised to replace the minister but failed to do so during Ferdinand's absence in the French Riviera, which also coincided with the Salonica Bombings. In the ensuing confrontation between Danev and the Prince after Ferdinand's return, the Prince invited Petkoff to form a multi-partisan government, which he did, spelling the end of Danev's rule.

¹¹⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), May 16, 1903, FO 78/5293/98. Elliot substantiated this claim with French information that Danev had kept neither the prince nor the Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent in St. Petersburg apprised of his communication with the Russians.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The Salonica bombings did not give rise to the chaos and massacres their perpetrators had hoped to incite. The Ottoman security forces acquitted themselves well with their conduct in pursuing the bombers and their ability to have a restraining influence on the Muslim communities of Salonica. The British diplomats also wrote favourably of the Ottoman conduct in Uscub, where the Ottoman authorities had exercised similar restraining powers. Nevertheless, the violence continued elsewhere. In the days following the Salonica bombings, an incident in Monastir sparked mob attacks on Christian shops in the bazaar and several Christians were beaten or killed in the streets.¹¹² After the defeat of a large insurgent band near the town of Radovich, the victorious Ottoman forces reportedly executed the prisoners, prompting the British to make diplomatic representations to the Ottoman government.¹¹³

In Salonica and Uscub, the Ottomans had shown the British and the other Great Powers that they could execute police and security operations with acceptable professionalism. Yet, the incidents at Monastir and Radovich made it clear that Ottoman officers could not always control their subordinates and were willing to tolerate if not commit acts of 'fanaticism' and other practices that violated the Geneva Convention and the 'gentlemanly' rules of war. The British continued to urge the Ottomans to use their regular army against the insurgents.¹¹⁴ To the British, the Ottoman regulars must have appeared akin to the 'martial races' of the British Empire, as they demonstrated their capability of behaving professionally. The problem was there were not regular enough troops and they were spread too thinly to perform the regular policing and counterinsurgency operations that would decisively counteract the rebels. Such action would require the reform of the gendarmerie, and the British had come to the conclusion that this endeavour would best be realized through Great Power oversight.

¹¹² McGregor to Biliotti, May 7, 1903, FO 294/28/45.

¹¹³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 3, 1903, FO 78/5266/227.

¹¹⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 8, 1903, FO 78/5272/93.

Propaganda and Preemptive Diplomacy: The Ongoing Struggle to Influence

All the parties in the Macedonian dispute were conscious of their image and how they were perceived. In more contemporary terms, 'optics' mattered. The success of IMRO's anticipated uprising would depend on how the parties in the conflict were viewed by Great Power diplomats, journalists, observers, and ultimately, the newspaper-reading publics in the Great Power nations. Would the results be more akin to those of the Bulgarians of the 1870s, or to those of the Armenians in the 1890s? What the Great Power diplomats reported in their dispatches could significantly influence decisions. Therefore, the competing parties tried to present themselves and their policies as favourably as possible and to direct negative publicity towards their rivals. In addition, by the spring of 1903, Great Britain had come to be seen as the power most likely to sympathize with the rebel cause.

As will be demonstrated, British diplomats were very much aware of the significance of the struggle being waged to secure British sympathy. In fielding the many solicitations for their support, the British also tried, in turn, to exert their diplomatic influence on competing parties in their ongoing effort to preempt, or at least limit, another uprising. Sympathies for particular parties in the conflict varied amongst the British diplomats. Nevertheless, the British reports almost completely concurred that the competing parties were all very willing to use sensation, if not outright fabrication, in order to propagate their cause. This contributed to the conception that all of these 'Balkan' elements were capable of morally reprehensible actions, which strengthened the belief in the existing British policy of status quo plus reform.

For the Ottoman Empire, gaining British favour over Macedonia meant defending the conduct of its security forces by pleading for realism and understanding of the context and the constraints in which their men had to operate. Furthermore, the Ottomans sought to put pressure on the Bulgarian government by accusing Sofia of complicity with the SMC and IMRO and drawing attention to the conditions of Muslims in the Bulgaria. When called upon to address the conduct of their security forces in Macedonia, senior Ottoman officials often initiated investigations into reports of specific abuses. The most frequent British appeal was for more regular soldiers to be deployed and for reform to be expedited. British officials frequently couched these

recommendations as being in the Ottoman Empire's best interest. Quite often the Grand Vizier and the Sultan would acquiesce to these recommendations by making somewhat vague statements befitting of parliamentary candour that expressed agreement without being terribly specific. For instance, in a meeting with the Sultan a few days after the Salonica bombing, O'Connor reported that he "earnestly" impressed upon Sultan Abdülhamîd the importance of legally "repressive measures" with the regular army. The ambassador recorded that: "The Sultan replied that the orders he had given had been to this effect throughout."¹¹⁵

At times, Ottoman officials could be more defensive. For example, when O'Connor urged the Grand Vizier to be restrained in his response to the Salonica bombings, the Grand Vizier replied with some exasperation that the Ottoman government was already doing what had been asked of it. He cited efforts to affect reforms in the Vilayet of Kosovo, the deployment of over 30,000 soldiers against the Albanian insurgents, the incarceration of Albanian leaders and their transportation to Asia Minor, and the intended offensive against the rebel strongholds. The Grand Vizier related: "If these extreme measures were not a proof of their readiness to put the reforms into execution, their execution must clearly depend on something beyond the Sultan's power."¹¹⁶ Further, he lamented the sheer expense of conducting security operations amidst cash-strapped circumstances.¹¹⁷

British reports exhibit ample evidence of a variety of Ottoman damage control efforts. When possible, the British did undertake their own investigations into some of the alleged abuses of the Ottoman security forces. By the time of the Salonica bombings, Biliotti was impressed enough with the conduct of the Ottoman men at arms that he advocated the Ottomans should declare martial law, "which would enable the authorities to deal in a summary manner anyone found in the possession of arms, ammunition or dynamite."¹¹⁸ Others were more critical. Vice-Consul Fontana questioned the Ottomans' commitment to pursuing the Albanian insurgents and accused Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha of lowering casualty figures after the insurgents failed attempt to storm

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 5, 1903, FO 78/5266/235.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Biliotti to Lansdowne, April 29, 1903, FO 421/197/185.

Mitrovica.¹¹⁹ After the bloody riots in Monastir in the days following the Salonica Bombings, Vice-Consul McGregor commended the Ottomans for arresting Turkish perpetrators, maintaining a heavy military presence in the streets, and confining the Albanian Redifs to barracks. However, when he visited the hospital, the staff and the victims were not forthcoming with information on the events:

The officials surrounding me were manifestly displeased at my addressing the wounded in Bulgarian, and every effort was made to distract my attention by hints of the danger of infection, and so on; but these precautions were superfluous, as the patients had evidently been schooled beforehand; and in some cases I heard the Dragoman prompting the sufferers to say that their wounds had been inflicted by soldiers. Three or four Bulgarians, however, declared emphatically that they had been attacked by Bashi-Bazouks, while the Greeks all replied in a significant manner that they had not seen their assailants.¹²⁰

McGregor's report illustrates Ottoman damage control in action. The Ottomans' coached the wounded to say they had been injured by (regular) soldiers in order to show observers that they were not using irregular troops and that they had the situation in Monastir under control. Although this would not have reflected well upon the regular soldiers, the authorities must have thought that presenting this scenario would have been less damaging to them. The Ottomans—whether the Grand Vizier, the Sultan, or mid-level officials in the vilayets—were keenly aware of the importance of presenting an image that would not offend British officials' sensitivities.

In war, as in politics and diplomacy, offense is often considered the best defence. While the Ottomans fielded complaints about their policies and the conduct of their security forces in Macedonia, they concurrently tried to direct attention to Bulgaria in order to counter the accusations against them. As has been demonstrated, the Ottomans repeatedly leveled complaints against Bulgaria for not cracking down sufficiently on the Macedonian Committees; for not taking enough measures to seal the frontier; and, at times, for acting in outright complicity with the Macedonian Committees. Their accusations often had some basis. In addition, the Ottomans went a step further by calling British attention to other matters within Bulgaria. In late February of 1903, the Ottoman Ambassador sent a communication to the British Foreign Secretary accusing

¹¹⁹ Fontana to Biliotti, April 4, 1903, FO 194/25/25.

¹²⁰ McGregor to Graves, May 19, 1903, FO 294/28/46.

Bulgaria of ill-treating its resident Muslim populations.¹²¹ In April, Musurus Pasha blamed the Bulgarian Government for violating the Treaty of Berlin by repairing the fortress of Vidin on the Danube River and preparing new defensive fortifications in Rumelia along the border with the Ottoman Empire.¹²² Regardless of whether they were valid or not, the hope was that these accusations could take some of the pressure off the Ottoman Empire to change its conduct in Macedonia. If it could be demonstrated that the Muslims of Bulgaria were being repressed, the cries of the Christians of Macedonia could be seen in a comparative light that might make the point moot. Bulgarian credibility could be eroded further if it could be shown that the Bulgarians were making military preparations which contravened the Treaty of Berlin.

Was there any truth to these accusations, or were they merely political ruses designed to deflect attention away from Macedonia? As they had done previously, the British used their diplomatic network to investigate the Ottoman allegations. A report submitted a month later by the Acting Vice-Consul, Mr. Heard, in Philipopolis found there was some validity to the Ottoman accusations. Heard reported considerable anti-Muslim sentiment amongst Christian Bulgarians in the Turkish and Pomak-populated regions of the Rhodope Mountains and Eastern Rumelia (south of Philipopolis). He referenced incidents of bureaucratic malice, violence, murder, and several attacks on mosques and related acts of religious desecration. Heard was most concerned about the lack of energy that the Bulgarian authorities displayed in pursuing justice against known offenders and protecting Muslims from further attacks.¹²³ Lansdowne also directed his consuls to investigate the allegations that the Bulgarians were constructing fortresses. Elliot made inquiries with the diplomatic corps and Heard investigated the state of the Bulgarian earthworks in Rumelia.¹²⁴ In May, the British Intelligence Division submitted a

¹²¹ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, February 22, 1903, FO 421/196/231. Musurus Pasha cited incidents where Muslims in Bulgaria had been attacked or intimidated by Christian Bulgarians, including an incident at a Muslim village near Philipopolis where shots had been fired through the windows of a school during a lecture on the Mawlid. A Muslim deputy in the Bulgarian Sobrane had also "caused great uproar" by likening the emigration of Bulgarians from Macedonia to the emigration of Muslims from Bulgaria. See Elliot to Lansdowne, February 10, 1903, FO 78/5293/23.

¹²² Aide-memoire communicated by Musurus Pasha, April 1, 1903, FO 421/197/4.

¹²³ Heard to Elliot, March 31, 1903, FO 78/5293/62.

¹²⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 22, 1903, FO 78/5293/80; Heard to Elliot, May 2, 1903, FO 78/5293/87.

report, which stated that although there was no evidence of any new renovations being made to the fortress of Vidin, proposed earthworks were being planned near the Ottoman frontier that would be valuable to the Bulgarians in the event of war. Nevertheless, the report surmised that Vidin would be of little strategic significance in a war between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria and that the plans for earthworks in Rumelia had been reported since 1895 and the Ottoman government had only recently attached any significance to them.¹²⁵ In late May, Lansdowne wrote to Musurus Pasha that no repairs or construction of any importance were being made to either the fortress of Vidin or the fortifications in Rumelia.¹²⁶

While the British acknowledged that there was validity to complaints about the treatment of Muslims in Bulgaria, the Ottoman accusations against the Bulgarian Government concerning fortifications appear to have been more politically motivated. The condition of the fortifications had long been known and the timing of the complaints coincided with the Albanian attack on the Mitrovica and a new round of Great Power scrutiny regarding the implementation of the Vienna Program reforms some six weeks after their inception. Neither matter seems to have received much further attention from the diplomats as the events in Macedonia continued to outstrip those in Bulgaria.

The circulation of new rumours surrounding Boris Sarafov benefitted both the Ottoman and the Bulgarian governments. In late March, Musurus Pasha passed along intelligence that in the event of the suppression of the “Revolutionary Committee” (presumably IMRO) in Bulgaria, Sarafov would direct his men to assassinate the Salonica consuls of France, Germany, or Great Britain.¹²⁷ To Lansdowne, such an eventuality seemed very improbable. However, the gunning down of the Russian consul in Mitrovica a few days later gave cause for concern. Biliotti expressed fear for his welfare and that of the British consuls and dragomen in the three vilayets.¹²⁸ The British appealed to the Ottomans to take further security precautions.¹²⁹ Nothing came of the

¹²⁵ Intelligence Division to Foreign Office, May 12, 1903, FO 421/197/225.

¹²⁶ Lansdowne to Musurus Pasha, May 28, 1903, FO 421/197/299.

¹²⁷ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, March 20, 1903, FO 421/195/324; Lansdowne to Elliot, March 25, 1903, FO 421/196/325.

¹²⁸ Lansdowne to O’Conor, March 26, 1903, FO 421/196/332.

¹²⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, March 27, 1903, FO 421/196/334.

alleged threats, and it does not appear that the British recorded whether IMRO confirmed or denied them. Irrespective of whether the threats were truth or fiction, Sarafov's reputation provided useful proof of the Ottomans' view that IMRO was one of the root causes of the instability of Macedonia. Sarafov's infamy was an asset to the Bulgarian Government, too. When asked for his opinion on the reforms in March, Danev insisted on their rapid execution, but admitted it would be difficult since they would be "impeded by the irreconcilables, whether insurgents or invaders like Sarafoff."¹³⁰

Like the Ottomans, the Bulgarian Government sought to gain the favour of Britain and the Great Powers. The political situation in Bulgaria was delicate and political assassinations were quite common. The Bulgarians tried to advocate for their brethren in Ottoman Macedonia while distancing themselves from the Macedonian Committees. This was a tricky balancing act as the Bulgarian government supported a network of commercial agents and, less directly, the churches and schools of the Exarchate in Macedonia. Many of the commercial agents and the teachers and priests of the Exarchate's system were either sympathetic to or influenced by one or both of the Macedonian Committees. Consequently, the British had limited sympathy for the Bulgarian appeals, particularly Consul-General Biliotti. The Bulgarians often found themselves on the defensive, refuting Ottoman allegations of complicity. As has been previously discussed, the accusations leveled against the Bulgarians following the Salonica bombings produced exasperation in Sofia.¹³¹ The British officially supported Bulgarian efforts to crackdown on the Macedonian Committees, but they remained skeptical as to the Bulgarian government's ability and willingness to thoroughly suppress the committees. Some of the Bulgarian actions pleased the British, such as Danev's circular statement to the Bulgarian Commercial Agents in Macedonia that instructed them to urge the Macedo-Bulgarian population in Macedonia to not participate in revolutionary provocations.¹³² Elliot requested the text of the circular from Danev for the express purpose of having it included in the next publication of the British Blue Books. With some reluctance, Danev agreed. Elliot noted that

¹³⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

¹³¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, May 5, 1903, FO 78/5296/10.

¹³² Elliot to Lansdowne, March 23, 1903, FO 78/5293/54.

although he would have much rather kept the Bulgarian Government out of the business altogether; as, however, the reform scheme did not contain any striking feature calculated to capture the imagination...,they were obliged to do their best to make it a success by persuading the population to believe in it.¹³³

Tepid support for the reforms did not ostensibly mean that the Bulgarian Government lacked its own ideas for furthering peace and security in Macedonia. In early April, the Danev Government presented a thirty-six-article draft convention for joint Ottoman-Bulgarian patrols of the frontier in order to improve security. They and appealed to the powers for support.¹³⁴ The Bulgarians claimed that the proposal was a renewal of one they had made in 1899, although neither the Austro-Hungarian representative nor Elliot had any record or recollection of it. Nonetheless, the Austro-Hungarian Consul-General believed the Bulgarians to be acting in good faith. However, in Constantinople, Zinoviev and Calice both expressed the opinion that the proposed convention would not be favoured by the Ottoman Government and thought that it was a potential source of disputes.¹³⁵

The British did have their Intelligence Division conduct an analysis of the Bulgarian convention. Their report concluded that too many of its articles were unfeasible or unwise. For example, the report was critical of the proposal that guards should share seized smuggled goods, and that men of one nationality would patrol under the command of officers of another nationality.¹³⁶ Citing the intelligence report, Lansdowne told O'Connor not to recommend the convention to the Ottoman government.¹³⁷ The Bulgarian proposal raised doubts. It was debatable whether the Bulgarian proposal was genuine or a desperate ploy by an embattled administration

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 8, 1903, FO 78/5293/66. The proposal came after new warnings from the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Italian governments following bombings in Macedonia that damaged the property of an Austrian company. The Austrians charged that the bombings had been planned in Bulgaria and that the Bulgarian Government would be held responsible for further damages to the property of Austrian Companies.

¹³⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, April 14, 1903, FO 78/5293/70.

¹³⁶ Intelligence Division to Foreign Office, May 5, 1903, FO 421/197/169.

¹³⁷ Lansdowne to O'Connor, May 14, 1903, FO 421/197/220. The Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia called the proposed convention unnecessary, but said if the Bulgarian government was sincere in its intentions, his government would welcome improved communication across the border. See: Elliot to Lansdowne, May 4, 1903, FO 78/5293/84.

under constant criticism and suspicion. It certainly did no harm to the Bulgarian Government, and its timing meant relevant issues were being discussed and analyzed during the crisis created by the Salonica bombings. If anything, it showed that the Bulgarian government was interested in taking responsibility for securing its borders, and it may have put some distance between the government and IMRO, the organization that was considered the greatest nemesis to peace.

Both the SMC and IMRO knew that if their campaigns were to have any success they had to capture the sympathies and imaginations of the Great Powers. Winning the support of politicians, newspaper editors and the general public could move government executives to action even in authoritarian states. If Great Power diplomats could become sympathizers of the Macedonian cause, so much the better. Progress was slow. Although by mid-1903 they had yet to achieve a public relations breakthrough, the SMC and IMRO knew well that intervention could very well be just a massacre away.

The two revolutionary organizations continued to solicit sympathy while the Great Powers made moves to check them. SMC president Stoyan Mikhailovski touted the cause during a tour of Europe during the winter. While he reported that responses were supportive in general, Elliot's report from Sofia at the conclusion of Mikhailovski's tour suggests that he did not communicate with influential people. Elliot reported that Mikhailovski's visit to London had gone "entirely unnoticed." Upon his return to Sofia, Mikhailovski proclaimed, however, that five of the six powers favoured "their cause" and that the faithful must be prepared to rise in the spring.¹³⁸ The Austro-Hungarians were worried about public opinion in France and Great Britain being "worked up" over a new atrocity cry and made these concerns known to the British Ambassador. Plunkett responded to this concern by assuring them that the British knew the historical lessons:

I have taken the trouble to explain to those who have spoken to me on the subject that, provided the Turks act with prudence, I do not believe there is any likelihood of my countrymen, who know more of the question than they did in 1876 and 1877, starting off a campaign similar of that of twenty-five years ago.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, January 13, 1903, FO 78/5293/6.

¹³⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 26, 1903, FO 7/1338/61.

The Austro-Hungarian government issued public warnings in the press and in the parliaments of Vienna and Budapest that the Christian population of Macedonia must support the reforms and not be “drawn into committing acts of violence which would justify Turkey in employing measures of repression.”¹⁴⁰ As noted by Plunkett, a member of the Hungarian assembly named De Szell stated the government’s case very plainly. He affirmed Austria-Hungary’s solidarity with Russia, stating that both countries were resolved to defend the political status quo of the Ottoman Empire and its territorial integrity. No room for inference was given to encourage the revolutionaries:

Both Powers disapproved of all efforts, whatever might be their source, to bring about a change by means of acts of violence. Should the populations of those countries allow themselves to be led into taking revolutionary steps, in spite of this warning, no one—not even Russia—would prevent Turkey from taking energetic measures of repression.¹⁴¹

With the exception of the antics of Russian Vice-Consul Bakhmetieff in Sofia, this Austro-Russian solidarity remained relatively steadfast. In the wake of the Salonica bombings, with rumours spreading of an impending Ottoman-Bulgarian war, there was movement in the Russian position. This shift was likely caused by fear of the political repercussions that would occur if when Bulgaria was crushed. Even so, the shift did not provide assurances for the SMC or IMRO. During a rally in early June, Mikhailovski said Russia’s policy shift was motivated by self-interest and “that the only disinterested powers in the Macedonian cause were the Western Powers.”¹⁴²

The Macedonian Committees sought to influence the British consuls by appealing to humanitarian principles and Christian solidarity. There is little evidence that their efforts had much effect. Both the SMC and IMRO were seen as shameless in their attempts to use the exploit the plight of the Razlog refugees to draw attention to the Macedonian cause. Indeed, the steady march of refugees with sad stories to the Great Power consuls in Salonica had driven Biliotti to accuse the organizations of directing their victimized followers to the point where their testimonies had to be disregarded.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 4, 1903, FO 7/1338/65.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Elliot to Lansdowne, June 9, 1903, FO 78/5294/126.

¹⁴³ Biliotti to O’Conor, January 10, 1903, FO 195/2156/8.

In March of 1903, the British re-opened their consulate in Monastir, transferring Vice-Consul McGregor, who spoke Bulgarian, from Philipopolis in Bulgaria. This gave the British a consular presence in Monastir, the city that was to be at the centre of the upcoming uprising. The move did not go unnoticed. Even McGregor's exit from Philipopolis sparked anticipation. Elliot reported that a "deputation of Macedonians" wished to meet the outgoing consul before his departure to give him an address. McGregor refused to receive the deputation and asked the Philipopolis authorities to prevent a planned demonstration from taking place at the railway station during his departure.¹⁴⁴ McGregor's new posting was a positive development for the Macedonian Committees, as it put a British official near the epicentre of the upcoming uprising. A month after his arrival Monastir, McGregor reported that he had received a copy of a petition to the Great Power consuls from the citizens of Prelip, some 45 km to the north, calling for their protection from the abuses of a Redif battalion quartered in the town. McGregor verified that many of the victims in Prelip had been acknowledged in the records of the Ottoman authorities, but noted that all the victims were Slavs and that there was no mention of the documented Turkish victims who had suffered at the hands of the guerrilla bands in the area. The petition and the deputation were certainly approved, if not coordinated, by IMRO. McGregor duly forwarded the petition to the embassy in Constantinople, but also included a list of crimes committed in the Monastir kazas, which bore a multinational roster of victims.¹⁴⁵ O'Connor brought the petition to the attention of the Ottoman Government.¹⁴⁶ There would be more such petitions to come.

British records mention very little about direct contact between British officials and the Macedonian Committees in the months prior to the Ilinden Uprising. Unlike the Austro-Hungarians, the British do not appear to have seen it appropriate or useful to make any special announcements in the press or to have sought out the leaders of the committees in order to speak to them directly. It seems that British did not feel they needed to do any more than publish statements from parliament supporting the reforms and the Ottoman government, and issue warnings to the Bulgarian government. The British likely believed they could best deliver their message through the official channels

¹⁴⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), March 9, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

¹⁴⁵ McGregor to Biliotti (confidential), April 5, 1903, FO 294/28/27.

¹⁴⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 15, 1903, FO 78/5265/190.

in Sofia, especially given their longstanding suspicion of collusion between the Bulgarian government and both the SMC and IMRO. Yet, as noted, the Macedonian Committees had come to regard Great Britain as one of the most sympathetic of the powers, if not the most sympathetic. At the time of McGregor's departure from Philipopolis, Vice-Consul Elliot noted that "[s]ymptoms of the hopes of the Macedonians turning towards England, notwithstanding official disappointment, appear from time to time."¹⁴⁷ Stoyan Christowe's *Heroes and Assassins*, which includes interviews with a *Gemidzhii* member who survived the events of 1903 amongst its sources, notes that prior to the Salonica bombings a supportive diplomat informed the *Gemidzhii* that "England was sympathetic but without any allies at the moment and was therefore unlikely to take any drastic measures by herself."¹⁴⁸ Whoever the British sympathists were, Alfred Biliotti was certainly not one of them. Any genuine British sympathy that existed did so behind a wall of realpolitik. Dissatisfied as they were over the reforms of the Vienna Program, the British were not interested in seeing Ottoman sovereignty undermined and challenged to the point of redrawing borders. The many preemptive efforts of the British diplomats that have been discussed are a testament to the Britain's adherence to the policy of status quo plus reform. Petitions could put the wheels of diplomacy in motion, but British diplomats remained largely unmoved by the rhetoric of the Macedonian Committees and were often appalled by their methods.

Try as they did, the Ottoman Government, the Bulgarian Government, and the Macedonian Committees did not succeed in winning much favour from the British. Individual diplomats had their sympathies, but the records consistently indicate that the British collectively believed that all the parties could be disingenuous and prone to shameless lying to further their respective causes. As the Macedonian cause involved European Christians striving for liberty, it resonated with the British to a certain extent. However, the 'barbarous' atrocities committed by the guerrilla bands compromised much of Britain's empathy. What is more, the callousness exhibited by the Macedonian Committees when they openly advocated massacres of their own brethren to induce Great Power intervention led to suppositions that the rebels were capable of the same

¹⁴⁷ Clarke to Elliot, March 5, 1903, FO 78/5293/49.

¹⁴⁸ Christowe, *Heroes and Assassins*, 97. According to Christowe, this advice influenced their decision to bomb the French vessel *Guadalquivir* in the hope that the French would compel their Russian ally to intervene.

'fanaticism' as their Ottoman overlords. For the sake of stability, the British gave public support to the Bulgarian Government and investigated Bulgarian complaints about the treatment of their compatriots in Macedonia. Nevertheless, the British vice-consul in Sofia remained suspicious of the Bulgarians due to their apparent inconsistency when it came to taking effective actions against the Macedonian Committees within the borders of the Principality. The Ottomans continued to be viewed as being in dire need of European directed reforms.

Despite the commendable actions of Ottoman officials and the professionalism displayed by some elements of the security forces, the British felt that the extent of the instability in Macedonia necessitated the deployment of more reliable regular forces to replace undisciplined Redif and Ilave battalions and irregular forces, some of which were prone to committing atrocities. Consular dispatches reporting that Ottoman officials were taking great liberty with the truth only hardened British opinions. Collectively, British assessments fuelled the perception that the all the peoples of the Balkans were afflicted with same malady—one which needed to be remedied by the curative methods of the Great Powers.

In addition to multilateral diplomacy and support for the reforms of the Vienna Program, the British continued to use their consuls and networks to undertake preemptive initiatives in the hope of bringing stability to Macedonia and staving off a wider conflict. They discouraged the Macedonian Committees while giving credit to the Bulgarian government's efforts to crack down on the rebels, despite their privately held misgivings. To some extent, British diplomatic officials were already doing 'peacekeeping' work when they inspected alleged crimes in Macedonia and in Bulgaria, effectively functioning as unofficial investigators in disputes. The deployment of warships to the Aegean Sea also showed that the British were willing to at least give the appearance of force in order to support their diplomatic demands. The British were willing to invest proactively in preventing a wider conflict because it was in the national interest and in the interests of the greater peace of Europe.

The British undertook one other endeavour in the interest of conflict prevention. This was to collect population statistics in a further attempt to better understand Macedonia. To most European observers, the territory's medley of peoples was considered its curse. The fact that the violence which plagued Macedonia had religious

and national guises validated this view. It was reasoned that if the population of Macedonia was 'properly' accounted for, a solution to the violence might be achieved. The Victorians had long sought to understand the human and natural world through scientific classification. Furthermore, the Edwardian era marked the ascent of the new science of racial eugenics. Perhaps the new science and the census could help unravel the 'Gordian Knot' that dominated perceptions of the three vilayets. As part of his intelligence gathering efforts as a military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell collected a series of maps and statistics during his travels around the Balkans. As Maunsell reported, the contradictions between these sources were such that it was "most difficult to strike a mean between these various statistics."¹⁴⁹

In Maunsell's analysis, all the sources reflected the national and religious biases of their authors, who had obvious interests in presenting a favourable demographic portraits of Macedonia to their superiors as well as to their wider audiences, which included Great Power diplomats. Maunsell delinated between the conflicting statistics, noting that the Greek figures were based on religious criteria and counted "Bulgarians under the Patriarchate" as Greeks and Pomaks as Turks. Both these populations were counted as Bulgarians by Bulgarians. Another Bulgarian source indicated that Muslim Albanians were were secretly either Cathloic or Orthodox. While acknowledging the methodological biases, Maunsell did proclaim that "La Macedonie," published in Berlin and authorued by the Greek academic Dr. Cleanthe Nicolaides offered the most "sataifactory and least exaggerated" view. Maunsell appears to have felt compelled to find at least one source that sas serviceable to assist in the comprehension of confusing demogarpahic context that confronted the British.¹⁵⁰

Maunsell's report was passed along to Intelligence Division, which had an officer. In keeping with the theme of contradiction, the intelligence officer disagreed with part of Maunsell's examination, but seconded the military attaché's assessment that "with such contradictory data to work on, there is great difficulty in arriving at any

¹⁴⁹ Maunsell to O'Connor, March 23, 1903, FO 195/2150/18.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

conclusion as to the exact proportion of the different races.”¹⁵¹ For the British and the Great Powers the demography of Macedonia presented yet another layer of ‘Oriental’ and/or ‘Balkan’ confusion and inefficiency that needed to be put right by occidental logic. Not surprisingly, the mapping and grouping of Macedonian population would factor in to the next round of reforms.

Mitigating the Media and the Case of “The Reign of Terror in Macedonia”

In mid-1903, the British government and the Foreign Office remained concerned about a potential media sensation arising from events in Macedonia. To date, nothing truly sensational had happened (or had been reported) to capture popular imaginations. None of the crises had caused a large enough stir within the British readership to inspire calls for intervention. No British politician or celebrity had yet emerged to take the mantle of Byron or Gladstone and champion the liberty of Macedonia. For the most part, the agents of the crises had failed miserably to elicit popular interest in their causes. The pleas of the leaders of the Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising had fallen on deaf ears as their rebellion had quickly perished along with their credibility. The Albanian insurgents who marched upon Mitrovia in the late spring did not make much of an effort to court Great Power support—least of all that of the British public. The *Gemidzhii* had not thought to invest in articulating a manifesto to the newspaper readerships of Europe, preferring to direct their energies to digging and dynamite procurement and let their actions speak for themselves. In so doing they provided fin-de-siècle Europe with another round of murderous nihilism, which engendered much more revulsion than sympathy.

The lack of popular sympathy for the Macedonian cause was no accident. In addition to the general public’s prevailing passive and skeptical sensibilities, the British government had been taking care to ensure that its public received ‘balanced’; information on the conflict in Macedonia. Like the other Great Power governments—who also monitored the British press—the British government did not let stories and articles

¹⁵¹ *Remarks on Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell’s despatch No. 18 of March 18, inclosing translation of “Makedonia, Ethnographica and Statistca,” forwarded in Sir N. O’Conor’s despatch No. 157, of March 25, 1903., April 8, 1903, FO 421/196/341.*

they considered sensationalist go unchallenged, especially if a particular item attracted the attention of the opposition. As will be shown in the case of a well-publicized article by the Orientalist E.J. Dillon, British officials were prepared to go to some length in their investigations to counter unfavourable news stories. The response to the Dillon article further illustrates the British government's awareness of the high stakes of the information war for public opinion and its determination to avoid repeating the events of 1876.

The British would have been pleased if the suicide bomber was the most prominent symbol of the Macedonian movement, but there was more to it than that. While the SMC-initiated uprising had failed and the *Gemidzhii* had self destructed, notable SMC leaders remained politically active and IMRO was very much alive as it ignored warnings and signals from the Great Powers that it would receive no support in the event of an uprising. Although the Macedonian Committees had failed to capture European imaginations, the enduring presence of the 3,000 refugees huddling in settlements just inside the western border Bulgaria retained the attention of the press. What is more, the refugees received the high profile support of Madame Bakhmetieff, who raised funds to help the refugees and made trips to the camps to distribute aid and administer the medical services of her volunteer team. The presence of Madame Bakhmetieff and her team attracted journalists and thus kept the plight of the dispossessed and their harrowing tales in the European press. As evidenced by Vice Consul McGregor's move to the revived British Consulate in Monastir, the mere presence of a European official was pleasing to the leaders of the Macedonian Committees. This also applied to journalists. When Mr. MacDonald of the *Daily News* crossed into Ottoman Macedonia in February of 1903, his journey attracted attention. The American missionary Dr. Clarke commented that he hoped MacDonald's presence in Ottoman Macedonia would "incidentally, prevent or postpone much cruelty."¹⁵² This comment again illustrates the belief that Europeans could have a pacifying effect just by being present in the three vilayets. Nevertheless, the presence of more Europeans and consuls also boded well for IMRO. If one of these men witnessed a future massacre of Christians, so much the better, since their testimony would validate the events and attract publicity. The Massacre Formula needed the media to compute.

¹⁵² Clarke to Elliot, February 20, 1903, FO 78/5293/41.

In order to undermine the Macedonian Committees' message, some Great Power governments had used the media themselves for the express purpose of counteracting negative publicity or attacks against them. The British paid attention to the way in which their Great Power contemporaries dealt with the Macedonia, undoubtedly to identify methods that worked. For instance, at the time the Vienna Reform Program was released, a mass meeting was held in Paris that called upon the French "to intervene in favour of the oppressed Christian subject of the Porte."¹⁵³ French Foreign Minister Theophile Delcassé opted not to ignore the meeting. Two days later a fairly lengthy interview with the foreign minister was published in *Le Matin*, in which Delcassé confronted the call for intervention by asking if it was wise to proceed on such a course without the support of the other powers. He also questioned on whose behalf France would be fighting. Alluding to the enmity between the competing nations in Macedonia, Delcassé commented that Macedonian independence would mean anarchy and more war. The interviewer noted that the foreign minister then switched from a "mocking and ironic" tone to one of seriousness as he stated that France had humanitarian obligations, but should be thankful that there was good deal of geographical separation between it and the Balkans. In closing, he stated: "France cannot forget her duties vis-à-vis humanity, but it should not forget the duties it owes itself. The first and last condition to be fulfilled is that France must retain a coolness that does not exclude firmness and a calm that does not exclude vigilance."¹⁵⁴ By drawing attention to the diplomatic complications the inherent complexities of Macedonia, Delcassé demonstrated an understanding of the Macedonian issue that would impress his critics. He did not rule out intervention, but instead indicated that it should be considered with great care. Delcassé informed the British Ambassador that France did not wish to assume a larger role than the other secondary powers in the reform program and that France's duty was strictly humanitarian.¹⁵⁵ When the British government was later confronted with mass rallies in the streets of its cities, the reasoning and refrains it employed echoed those of Delcassé.

¹⁵³ Monson to Lansdowne, February 16, 1903, FO 27/3618/91. Monson reported that "men from all shades of opinion were represented in this demonstration." Prominent politicians were present, including Mr. Jaures, the leader of the Socialist Party.

¹⁵⁴ Extract from the "Matin" of February 18, 1903, FO 27/3618/98.

¹⁵⁵ Monson to Lansdowne (confidential), February 20, 1903, FO 27/3618/96. Ambassador Monson also indicated that the *Le Matin* interview was sympathetic, noting that Delcassé's language was authentic and was only published with his consent.

Russia and Austria-Hungary also used the media to send messages about Macedonia, but their messages were even less ambiguous than those of the French. In mid-March, the Russians published their consular reports from Uscub and Monastir in the *Official Gazette* and the *Journal de Saint Petersburg*, which “describe[d] the terrorism exercised by the Macedonian Committees, and the manner in which they [thwarted] the reform efforts of the Powers and the Porte.”¹⁵⁶ The dispatch also contained an extract from the periodical *Novoe Vremya* that accused the English and French presses of alarmist reporting of the events in Macedonia and unflattering perceptions of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁷ The Russians also took measures to censor the Russia press. After the announcement of the reforms, the Russian Foreign Office sent a secret circular to the Russian press telling the editors not to contradict the imperialist message about Macedonia.¹⁵⁸

Vienna likewise used the press to send messages. As discussed in the previous section, in March the Austro-Hungarians had issued blunt warnings via the press to the people of Macedonia not to join the anticipated uprising.¹⁵⁹ In mid April the Austro-Hungarians again took to the newspapers, publishing warnings to both the Ottoman and Bulgarian Governments to adhere to their duties and avoid the dangers of the Macedonian Question. Ambassador Plunkett commented that the article looked like it had been issued by the Ballplatz.¹⁶⁰

These publicized warnings did not go unnoticed by IMRO and the SMC. In late April Boris Sarafov published a long letter in the Viennese paper *Die Zeit* in response to allegations leveled against Macedonian movement over their mistreatment of “peace loving Turks.” Sarafov denied the allegations and expressed disappointment that they

¹⁵⁶ Extract from the “Journal de Saint Petersburg” of March 19 (April 1), 1903, FO 65/1660/81.

¹⁵⁷ Extract from the “Novoe Vremya” of March 18 (31), 1903, FO 65/1660/81. (14)The extract has relatively little to say about the British press, calling the alarmist reports “easy to understand, as the creation of dangerous complications in the Balkans undoubtedly meets the views and interests of British policy.” While the author notes that such reporting was to be expected from the British, he was disappointed to see similar reportage from the French press, owing to the fact that France was an ally.

¹⁵⁸ Scott to Lansdowne, February 22, 1903, FO 65/1659/42. The British Ambassador was given a copy of the circular.

¹⁵⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 4, 1903, FO 7/1338/65.

¹⁶⁰ Extract for the “Politische Correspondenz” of April 17, 1903, FO 7/1339/98.

had appeared in the Russian press. He appealed to “European diplomacy” to compel the Ottomans to follow through with the reforms in convention with the Berlin Treaty, adding that his brethren were resolved to continue their campaign with the hope of from “enlightened Europe.”

[I]t is true that we have instilled courage into the hearts of the insurgents by bidding them not to give up hope of the sympathy of Christian and educated Europe. We ourselves are animated by the assurance that civilized Europe will not allow the destruction of a Christian people fighting for its rights and liberties, and therefore we hope for success in our terribly hard struggle.

In this assurance we will continue the fight which has been begun. Should, however, civilized Europe remain indifferent to the terrible slaughter which is now going on in the mountains of Macedonia, and which may shortly extend yet further, even in that case the combatants do not fear the verdict of history. This verdict will surely be: There was once a people which was animated by the wish to become a useful member of the family of nations, but which sank honourably in the struggle against barbarism.¹⁶¹

Sarafov’s articulated disappointment with Russia indicates that IMRO knew it could not rely on the brotherhood of panslavism. His appeals to “Christian”, “educated”, and “civilized” Europe shared the conclusion that had been reached by Mikhailovski, the SMC, and the *Gemidzhii*: that a broader European appeal was needed. More specifically, the rebels needed to appeal to France and Great Britain, where press freedoms were greater and press articles were more likely to be sympathetic to the Macedonian cause. The cause found sympathy in the Viennese Newspaper *Die Zeit*, which did more than publish their appeals. In mid April, a concerned O’Conor reported that he had been misquoted in *Die Zeit* articles that had been picked up by the British press. Moreover, as he did not know the identity of the newspaper’s correspondent in Constantinople, he concluded that the articles were likely concocted elsewhere.¹⁶² In early May, *Die Zeit* published an appeal by Mikhailovski, pleading for European action against the “bloodthirsty tactics” of the Ottomans to prevent the organized massacres of Christians across Macedonia that were surely to come following the Salonica Bombings:

¹⁶¹ Extract from a Letter of Boris Sarafoff, April 23, 1903, FO 7/1339/108.

¹⁶² O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 14, 1903, FO 78/5265/186.

In the name of civilization, in the name of universal brotherhood and justice—principles which the European press cannot ignore without failing in its mission—on behalf of the Macedonians resident in Sophia, I beseech you to take under your protection their unfortunate brothers in Turkey, and to raise your voice against their extermination by Pan-Islamists hordes.¹⁶³

The British response to this newspaper agitation was more subtle and indirect than that of Austria-Hungary and Russia. The British government made its policy known but did not issue direct warnings through government-friendly presses. The British press itself was viewed by many international diplomats as a volatile entity. The Russians and the Austro-Hungarians had stated (publically, in the case of the Russians) their worries about exaggerated accounts of ‘Turkish atrocities’ in the British press. The Ottomans too made complaints. In April, Ottoman Inspector General Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha reacted to the “change of tone” in the British press from his office in Uscub.¹⁶⁴ The Ottoman ambassador to Serbia echoed his concern, commenting on a newfound lack of impartiality in the British papers. In response, Ambassador Bonham replied that the British press enjoyed “extreme liberty” and was “independent of official control.”¹⁶⁵ For the most part, the British Government was content to abide by Bonham’s statement. However, the British press was not beyond reprimand, especially with respect to articles that the government and the Foreign Office considered grossly inaccurate and potentially inflammatory.

The concerns of British officials and diplomats mostly related to the refugees who had been temporarily housed in settlements in western Bulgaria. Although the Bulgarian government was undertaking efforts to move the refugees to other locations where they could be employed, several hundred still remained in the border area and new arrivals continued to trickle in across the Struma River from Ottoman Macedonia with stories of victims being murdered, tortured, looted, and subject to sexual depravities at the hands of Ottoman Redifs and Muslim Bashi-Bazouks. Newspaper reports of Ottoman violence against the guerrilla bands do not seem to have moved British officials, very likely in part because these purely military excesses tended to cancel each other out when guerrillas

¹⁶³ Plunkett to Lansdowne, May 9, 1903, FO 7/1339/128.

¹⁶⁴ Bonham to Lansdowne, April 18, 1903, FO 105/148/68. The dispatch also notes that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had denied a British journalist’s request to visit a jail.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

revenged them. It was when the victims were civilians and the reports contained sensational images that the British took note – or, more specifically, when critics brought these circumstances to their attention.

The article which provoked the most fervor in Britain in the run-up to the Ilinden Uprising was Dr. E.J. Dillon's "The Reign of Terror in Macedonia", which was published in the March 1903 edition of the periodical *Contemporary Review*. This graphic account of Ottoman cruelties was penned by an expatriate English Orientalist who was ostensibly informed by official Russian sources. It prompted the British authorities to undertake their own damage control measures. "The Reign of Terror in Macedonia" caught the attention of members of the parliamentary opposition and was reprinted in other periodicals in the following weeks.

This first sign of parliamentary unrest came when a request was made by John Boland, the Member of Parliament from Kerry South, who asked for the government to make information supplied by the Russian Vice-Consul in Philipopolis about the plight of the Macedonian refugees during the winter available to the members of the house.¹⁶⁶ Lansdowne deduced (correctly) that the information came from Dillon's article in *Contemporary Review*.¹⁶⁷ Balfour responded to Boland's request by stating that it was as unusual to ask a foreign government to supply diplomatic reports to the British parliament. He then referred the questioner to Vice-Consul Elliot's December 12, 1902 dispatch on the matter, which had been published recently in the Blue Books.¹⁶⁸ While it may have been unusual to print foreign newspaper articles for parliamentarians, the British, as evidenced, did collect them very liberally for their confidential publications. In this case, Lansdowne wrote to Ambassador Scott in St. Petersburg, requesting the articles in question.¹⁶⁹ He also asked his diplomats in Macedonia to investigate the accounts in the article.

"The Reign of Terror in Macedonia" was in many respects no different or more inflammatory than other reports on the plight of the refugees. The difference was the

¹⁶⁶ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 119 (1903): 95.

¹⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Scott, March 12, 1903, FO 421/196/284.

¹⁶⁸ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 119 (1903): 95.

¹⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Scott, March 12, 1903, FO 421/196/284.

volume of vividly described atrocities and even more importantly, the fact that its sources appeared to have more credibility than that of a journalist visiting the encamped refugees on the Bulgarian side of the frontier. The information on refugees came from Madame Bakhmetieff's memoranda from her journey of mercy into Macedonia, which had been undertaken amid brutal winter conditions.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Russian vice-consul from Philipopolis, Mr. Westman, had reportedly made a trip of his own into Macedonia for the express purpose of verifying the extracts from the Bakhmetieff memoranda. Westman's findings not only validated the claims in the memo, but in some respects what he reported was even more horrific.¹⁷¹

The author of the *Contemporary Review* article was a veteran correspondent with strong academic credentials. Dr. Emile Joseph Dillon was an expert in Oriental languages, the holder of three doctoral degrees, and had reported from Russia for several newspapers since the late 1880s. Dillon complemented his linguistic prowess by being a master of disguises. He had been one of the few journalists to gain entrance to Anatolia during the Armenian Massacres of 1894-5. It was Dillon's articles in the *Daily Telegraph* which had sparked cries of outrage amongst the British public and given William Gladstone the evidence he needed to support his accusations against the Ottoman Government. Dillon also used his talents to disguise himself as a Greek Orthodox Priest and embed himself amongst the Cretan insurgents during the Cretan uprising of 1897.¹⁷² The British Government did not need any proof that Dr. Dillon could produce legitimate accounts of atrocities capable of arousing the British public to demand action, as he had done it before.

As a correspondent for *Contemporary Review*, Dr. Dillon wrote frequently about affairs in Macedonia. In addition to the full length article on Macedonia, he published regular pieces sections on Macedonia in his Foreign Affairs column for the periodical. Dillon was an unabashed advocate of the Macedonian cause. He criticized the Great

¹⁷⁰ E.J. Dillon, "The Reign of Terror in Macedonia," *Contemporary Review*, 83, Jan-June, 1903, 310.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 311-14

¹⁷² Joseph O. Baylen, "Dillon, Emile Joseph," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 7, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/32828>; "Obituary: Dr. E. J. Dillon," *The Times*, June 10, 1933, 14. Dillon claimed to speak 29 languages, of which he was fluent in 10.

Power governments and their populations for ignoring the “ghastly Macedonian spectacle of fire and blood.”¹⁷³ In the article “The Reign of Terror in Macedonia” he continued his refrain, reifying IMRO and its work to correct the “gross breach of faith” committed against the people of Macedonia by the Ottoman government and the Great Powers.¹⁷⁴ Still, it was the lines referencing the *Novoye Vremya* articles which packed the most shocking punches. Dr. Dillon’s depiction of the killing of two priests was likened to the story of St. Lawrence, in which victims were hanged over fires and burned with hot irons.¹⁷⁵ According to Vice-Consul Westman, women had been forced to flee their homes and spend 20 days trekking through the frigid winter conditions of the mountains clad only in their “chemises” to “save their honour and their lives.”¹⁷⁶ Some accounts contained graphic details, such as Ottoman soldiers reportedly forcing parents to listen as acts of depravity were committed against their own children. For example, they were forced to watch their children’s

once pretty faces...slowly lowered into the fire into which Turkish pepper had been plentifully scattered. This is in truth a form of torture which only a devil could have invented; for long before a death releases the tiny mite, the eyes are said to start from their sockets and burst.¹⁷⁷

The litany of horrors continued in the article and is backed up by accusations against the Great Powers and the Ottoman Government.

Had Dillon been a well-known sitting member of the British Parliament, “The Reign of Terror in Macedonia” might have attained the renown of Gladstone’s 1876 ‘Bulgarian Horrors’ article. However, he was not, and the fact that Mr. Boland asked the government to obtain copies of the *Novoye Vremya* articles suggests that even the Liberal opposition was not prepared to take the articles at face value. While the British government moved to make inquiries, their Russian counterparts took action. As mentioned, authentic Russian diplomatic documents were published that were critical of the Macedonian Committees and a circular was issued that told the Russian press not to

¹⁷³ E. J. Dillon, “Macedonia: Attitude of Christian Europe,” *Contemporary Review*, 83, Jan-June, 1903, 894.

¹⁷⁴ E.J. Dillon, “The Reign of Terror in Macedonia,” 307.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 313.

contradict government on its Macedonian policy. *Novoye Vermya* got the message. In late March, Ambassador Scott passed along articles which had presented Ottoman officials more favourably and one which criticized the French and British press for their alarmist coverage of Macedonia.¹⁷⁸

British investigations into the sources of the *Contemporary Review* article continued into the spring. In late March, Ambassador Scott reported back to Lansdowne with translations of the five *Novoe Vremya* articles in question. All five of the articles were written by a correspondent who signed himself as “Nestor.” Scott found that the information supplied by Vice-Consul Westman did not come from any official Russian report “but from information which Mr. Westman gave him confirming what “Nestor” had heard from other sources.” The main source for the articles was a report supplied by Madame Bakhmetieff for the St. Petersburg Slavonic Benevolent Society.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the accounts in the report did not have the authority of an official Russian source and could be discredited as the sensationalist accounts of a partial source who was the wife of the very diplomat actively aspiring to bring about much-dreaded Russian intervention. A Foreign Office memo filed next to Scott’s dispatch noted that copies should be sent to Salonica and Sofia, where the identity of “Nestor” might be discovered.¹⁸⁰

From Salonica, Consul-General Alfred Biliotti responded with a report best described as a refutation of the Dillon article, if not a complete demolition. Biliotti stated that all of the information in the article came from the same “utterly untrustworthy and tainted source”: the Macedonian Committees. Having already critiqued Madame Bakhmetieff’s stories, he had the following to say about her:

A woman is rarely entirely to be trusted in dealing with hard facts, where there is room for sentiment, personal or national, and Mme. Bakhmetieff has this additional disadvantage, that she is an American by birth, a Russian by nationality, a convert to the Orthodox faith by religion, and by nature an ambitious lady, who wishes to make a name herself in Russia and Bulgaria.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Scott to Lansdowne, April 1 1903, FO 65/1660/81.

¹⁷⁹ Scott to Lansdowne, March 30, 1903, FO 65/1659/77.

¹⁸⁰ Foreign Office to Scott, March 30, 1903, FO 65/1659/77.

¹⁸¹ Biliotti to Lansdowne, April 28, 1903, FO 421/197/184.

Biliotti wrote that he had never heard of the sorts of tortures (i.e. pepper-strewn fires) described by Vice-Consul Westmann, and referred to a report from Vice-Consul McGregor, who had recently served at Philipopolis. McGregor called Westmann inexperienced and lacking in linguistic abilities as well as intelligence and doubted if the Russian Vice-Consul had travelled into Macedonia at all.¹⁸² To further his assessment that the stories in the article were exaggerations, if not outright fabrications, Biliotti referred to a conversation he had recently had with the American reporter Frederick Moore from the *New York Tribune*. According to Biliotti, Moore said that he felt “perfectly sick” at the lies they had told him.¹⁸³ Moore mentioned being told that young Christian girls had crosses tattooed on their foreheads to make them less likely to be taken into Muslim harems. However, when Moore was shown three such girls, he found the crosses were drawn in mere charcoal, which came off at the touch of the reporter’s finger.¹⁸⁴

Finally, Biliotti enclosed a letter to the editor of the *Spectator* from the American missionary Reverend Edward B. Haskell, who complained about Dillon’s article, and called the statements in the article

so astoundingly at variance with the facts familiar to myself that my conscience is not satisfied to let them pass unchallenged. He wrote that Biliotti had sent a Bulgarian man to investigate the alleged atrocities who reported back that while murders and rapes had indeed taken place, the artistic torture and killing of children and the use of red hot pincers were falsehoods and such stories were “manufactured for the foreign market.”¹⁸⁵

Reverend Haskell also noted that the account of women fleeing into the mountains clad only in their nightgowns was absurd since “[t]he Macedonian peasant woman’s wardrobe does not boast such an article. She wears the same clothes day and night.”¹⁸⁶ Haskell’s letter also mentions his work as an interpreter for Biliotti during the

¹⁸² McGregor to Biliotti, April 26, 1903, FO 421/197/184.

¹⁸³ Biliotti to Lansdowne, April 28, 1903, FO 421/197/184.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ “The Rev. E. B. Haskell to the “*Spectator*,” published April 4, 1903, FO 421/197/184. Dillon’s article had been reproduced in the *Weekly Scotsman* and the *Review of Reviews*.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

recent refugee influx and the inconsistent testimonies they received from the new arrivals. At the end of his letter, the reverend appeals for cool reason:

The situation is sad. It is terrible. But in the writer's humble judgement, shrieking and hysterics will not contribute materially to a wise settlement. Grave and momentous issues require cool, impartial, sober consideration of the facts involved. If we cannot by impartial, let us at least be sane.¹⁸⁷

The efforts made by the British Government and its Foreign Service to investigate Dr. E.J. Dillon's *Contemporary Review* article are worth examining because they provide a poignant example of the importance many British officials attached to how Macedonia was covered by the press. As some of the passages illustrate, at times their efforts went beyond investigations to debunk myths and falsehoods and entered into the realms of character assassination, bullying, and misinformation to counter unfavourable news stories that they believed had been 'manufactured.' The British knew very well that the British consuls' dispatches were the last word in a story from Macedonia. Unlike journalists who might only have visited Macedonia briefly and would not have been sufficiently versed in its history, culture, politics, and languages, most of the British consuls had spent years in the region and thus their words had credibility and finality. The diplomats' belief in the superiority of their work is evident in Biliotti's dispatch critiquing the Dillon article. Nevertheless, his frustration with having to counter journalistic accounts that were produced faster and usually with less rigor is evident:

All the information on the alleged Turkish atrocities, which have been given to the public, has come from interested parties, and the publication of a second Blue Book giving the opinions, founded on undeniable facts, of British Diplomatic and Consular officers on the spot will never succeed in effacing the impression produced by previous publications, though the former are trustworthy and the latter are not.¹⁸⁸

As Biliotti goes on to articulate, the Blue Books were published long after the offending periodical articles and because of this delay, did not make a difference to influencing public opinion. Therefore, parliamentarians and the general public approved of forming opinions based on the interests of

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Biliotti to Lansdowne, April 28, 1903, FO 421/197/184.

interested parties and foreign officials...without having had an opportunity of examining the reports on which British officials have bestowed so much time and trouble in their endeavour to arrive at the truth—even the Consular officer’s most task. If articles, such as those of “Nestor,” which are to be published, cannot be published side by side with official reports, could they not be accompanied by accounts drawn from impartial sources, as for instance the letter to the “Spectator”...which one of the American missionaries, though naturally more in sympathy with the Bulgarians than the Turks, felt it his duty to write a contradiction of some of Dr. Dillon’s statements? So that the statesmen for whose benefit the Confidential papers are printed would have an opportunity of confronting the two versions and of forming an opinion after having heard both sides?¹⁸⁹

Biliotti’s call for a more judicious weighing of opposing interpretations reflects his frustration with journalists. He had had to meet with journalists on a regular basis as the consul-general in Macedonia’s largest centre, and during the preceding months he had been repeatedly tasked with investigating the claims of refugees, journalists, and advocates. What is interesting in this passage is his plea for a more equitable presentation of the accounts. He was certain the official British accounts would win out in the court of public opinion if there was a fair trial. As it was, British officials faced the difficulty of having to try to reverse opinions weeks if not months after they had been formed. Potentially, it would be too late to reverse the sort of momentum that drives a nation to demand war. This is why the diplomats tried to engage the reporters to get the story ‘right’ in the first place. Sometimes they got favourable results. As Biliotti mentioned in his dispatch, he was pleased with the work and disposition of the *New York Tribune* journalist Frederick Moore had adopted.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Elliot reported in May that Mr. MacDonald of the *Daily News* had spoken to him after returning from the frontier near Kustendil, where refugees were arriving with “the familiar” accounts of horror and tragedy at the hands of Ottoman irregulars.¹⁹¹ However, some British officials’ efforts to produce a desirable perception of the situation in Macedonia suggests they were not above employing their own propagandist tactics and being very selective about what was eventually presented to audiences outside the inner circles of the Foreign Office.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, May 20, 1903, FO 78/5294/104.

This method of information management is very evident in the investigation of the Dr. Dillon's *Contemporary Review* article. Although Sir Alfred Biliotti decried the irresponsible methods of the journalists who wrote unqualified condemnations of Ottoman 'horrors,' there is documentation that suggests he was willing to take liberties with information and to use his influence in order to produce favourable accounts that found their way into Blue Books. When the American journalist Frederick Moore met Vice-Consul Elliot in early June of 1903, Elliot showed him Biliotti's dispatch of April 28, in which Biliotti cited Moore's accounts as proof that the Macedonian Committees were creating pseudo victims. Moore was taken aback. As recounted by Elliot:

Mr. Moore was very indigent at Sir A. Biliotti's perversion of his evidence to suit his own views, and told me that American missionaries had a similar grievance against him, but did not venture to complain of it openly, as they had to look to Sir Alfred for protection and assistance.¹⁹²

Moore added that he had indeed been sceptical of Madame Bakhmetieff owing to her gender and background. However, he conceded that despite some exaggerations, the miseries of the refugees were legitimate, and stated that he believed that such maltreatments were occurred "beyond the reach of consular supervision." In concluding the dispatch, Elliot indicated his belief in the validity of Mr. Moore's grievance. Elliot's analysis opposed both Biliotti's report and Biliotti's assertion that Ottoman atrocities were no longer taking place.¹⁹³

Elliot's despatch regarding his meeting with Moore indicates that Biliotti was going beyond providing a favourable spin on events to the point where he was quite possibly manufacturing information. Moore was angered by the dispatch and wrote to the Foreign Secretary to express his displeasure.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, Moore's assertion that the views of American missionaries in Macedonia had been misrepresented by Biliotti presents the possibility that Reverend Haskell, who was based in Salonica and worked at times as an interpreter for Biliotti, may have written to the editor of the *Spectator* at Biliotti's behest. What makes this more potentially plausible is the fact that Haskell referenced the work of Biliotti's own Macedo-Bulgarian investigator, who debunked the

¹⁹² Elliot to Lansdowne, June 6, 1903, FO 78/5293/125.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Moore to Lansdowne, June 6, 1903, FO 421/197/372.

more outrageous atrocities described in Dr. Dillon's article. This suggests that Haskell was being supplied with diplomatic intelligence to strengthen his position.¹⁹⁵ For his part, Elliot's disagreement with Biliotti is not surprising given that Elliot did not view the plight of the refugees and the cause of the Macedonian Committees with anywhere near the level of cynicism consistently expressed by Biliotti.

Despite the questionable actions of Sir Alfred Biliotti, the Foreign Office was more concerned with the conduct of its man in Sofia. In a memorandum, the permanent Under Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Sanderson, explained that Biliotti had heard of Mr. Moore's accounts via Vice-Consul Shipley in Uscub "and in repetition his remarks were very probably misconstrued, the more so as Sir A Biliotti is extremely deaf."¹⁹⁶ Regardless, Sanderson's main concern was that Elliot had showed confidential diplomatic papers to a journalist—an American journalist no less—and that he had invited comments from Moore on another member of the Foreign Service. Sanderson suggested that Elliot be "asked for an explanation and cautioned."¹⁹⁷ Lansdowne concurred, adding "Certainly it was very indiscreet" to the memo.¹⁹⁸ In his own defence, Elliot explained that he did not consider the dispatch to be confidential as it did not contain any official secret and that he showed it to Moore during their conversation for the sake of ascertaining "verbal accuracy." Nevertheless, Elliot wrote that it was "not suitable for publication in extenso in a Blue Book" (underlined in original).¹⁹⁹ In another dispatch written the same day, Elliot referenced the second paragraph of his previous dispatch and expressed his regret for appearing to have been "a party to an unjustified attack upon an honourable colleague." He stated that the subject of the paragraph should have been written in a private letter to the Under Secretary of State and not included in a dispatch. Elliot's superiors apparently agreed. The back of the dispatch contains the following note: "The paragraph in question will not be printed." It was written

¹⁹⁵ "The Rev. E. B. Haskell to the "Spectator," published April 4, 1903, FO 421/197/184. When he took over from Biliotti in July of 1903, Vice-Consul Graves describes the intelligence agents that were passed onto him by Biliotti as being pro-Greek. Although the investigator was Bulgarian, there is nothing to say he sympathized with the cause of Bulgaria or the Macedonian Committees.

¹⁹⁶ Sanderson, Foreign Office Memorandum, June 19, 1903, FO 78/5294/125.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/146.

by Sanderson and initialed by Lansdowne. True to their word, the paragraph was omitted and does not appear in even the Confidential Print for the Foreign Office. The dispatches by Elliot from June 27, 1903 were also omitted, along with the Foreign Office memo on the matter. Frederick Moore's letter to Lansdowne, which Elliot indicated to have been enclosed with his dispatch, is not present in the archival records.²⁰⁰

In examining the records regarding the Dillon article, it becomes very apparent that the members of the Foreign Office and the diplomats in the field were well aware that they were often writing not only for their colleagues and superiors. They were also writing for a wider audience and knew that their dispatches would be referenced as being definitive, impartial records of the events in Macedonia.²⁰¹ Elliot and Biliotti both actively made suggestions for the future publications of their own dispatches. Ambassador O'Connor also gave his input, and Sanderson and Lansdowne made the final decisions. In his article on the life and work of Sir Alfred Biliotti, David Barchard writes that O'Connor was correct when he expressed concern that Biliotti's descriptions of the violence in Macedonia would spark political controversy. Indeed, these descriptions are still referenced over a century later by individuals with interests in the history of the contemporary Macedonian Question. However, Barchard's conclusion that Biliotti's accounts turned out to have been correct may be a bit overstated.²⁰² Although a detailed and exhaustive examination of all the accounts referenced in cited the Dillon article was not within the scope of Barchard's article, Frederick Moore's reaction and Vice-Consul Elliot's input add some interesting pieces to the puzzle. These actions were about more than classifying confidential reports, as the documents suggest that Biliotti may well have been mindfully manufacturing favourable accounts to suit his perspective of what was happening and what needed to be done in Macedonia. Knowing that his would be referenced as the definitive record, he sought to produce accounts that would serve the purpose of convincingly overriding the reports of naïve journalists and propagandists vying for Great Power intervention. In some respects, Biliotti's reports suited Britain's policy of status quo plus reform. Considering how high the stakes were in this

²⁰⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/147.

²⁰¹ Barchard, "The Fearless and Self-Reliant Servant," 51.

²⁰² Ibid.

propaganda and information war, it can hardly be considered surprising if the diplomatic dispatches were at times tailored to suit the defenders of British policy.

What must be kept in mind is that the months-long controversies surrounding the Dillon article originated from a question given by a member of parliament. If the government could support its responses to such questions with diplomatic dispatches, the odds of successfully pre-empting the next Gladstonian episode would be greater. Although media mattered, any intervention on the part of the British would ultimately have to gain the consent of the parliament, which became more likely in 1903 because Macedonia was getting more attention from the members of the Lords and the Commons.

Parliament and the Control of Information

As the British parliament began its session in February of 1903, it was clear that Macedonia was going to be an issue that received recurrent inquiry. Several questions on Macedonia were posed and a few lengthy debates occurred, most of them between the opening of parliament in February and the aftermath of the Salonica Bombings in early April. The opposition repeatedly queried the government on the status of the reforms and the conditions in the three vilayets, and frequently requested that the government be more forthcoming with information in the form of more 'Blue Books' or by verbally referencing consular dispatches.

In response, the government members defended Britain's role in the reform process while being careful not to contradict Austria-Hungary and Russia on the reforms. They were alert in answering calls of support for Christian victims, but also reminded the oppositions that there were Muslim victims, too. Likewise, they acknowledged calls for condemning the abuses committed by the Ottoman security forces, but stated that the Macedonian Committees were also guilty of similar crimes. This parliamentary strategy worked effectively to create understandings of equivalency between the two sides or equivalencies between the multiple factions.

The other rhetorical strategy the government used was to view the troubles in Macedonia as being traditional symptoms of chronic maladies in the Balkans. The

conflict was cast as merely the latest in the long line of perennial 'Balkan' struggles, which, to the outsider, were often seen as confusing and violent affairs that were genetically inherent to the Balkans and its peoples. To the government's satisfaction, some members of the opposition articulated the government's view at times, drawing comparisons between the suffering and misdeeds of the competing agents in the Macedonian Struggle and remarking on how Macedonia and the Balkans remained prone to violence. Only the more radical members of parliament directed unqualified criticism at the government. The manner and slowness with which the government produced its Blue Books drew more ire from the ranks of Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Liberals. These were the authoritative sources that would tell them what was *really* going on in the distant hills and valleys of Macedonia. The government's casting of doubt on "sensationalist" newspaper reports was so effective that the opposition looked to the government's publications for a definitive account on the events in Macedonia, which gave the government and the Foreign Office a decided advantage because they controlled the production of this information.

Macedonia received plenty of attention on the first day of the parliamentary session from the King's Throne Speech onwards. After announcing the resolution of the Venezuelan blockade and the Alaska boundary dispute, Edward VII said the following about Macedonia:

The condition of the European provinces of Turkey gives cause for serious anxiety. I have used My best efforts to impress upon the Sultan and his Ministers the urgent need for practical and well-considered measures of reform. The Governments of Austria-Hungary and Russia have had under their consideration what reforms it would be desirable that the Powers who were parties to the Treaty of Berlin should recommend to the Sultan for immediate adoption. I trust that the proposals made will prove to be sufficient for the purpose, and that I shall find it possible to give them My hearty support. Papers on the subject will be laid before you.²⁰³

The King's remarks reviewed British diplomacy and policy on Macedonia and offered the opposition what it most craved—information. There were several replies. After a conservative member provided some supporting commentary and a reminder of the events of 1902, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the leader of the opposition, spoke

²⁰³ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 118 (1903): 2.

about Macedonia, among other issues, in his lengthy reply to the throne speech. Campbell-Bannerman's first point was about the timing of the new Blue Book. He was rather upset that the Blue Book had only been made available that day and insinuated that the government had deliberately delayed the release of the material (which may very well have been true).

I confess at once that I have only given this Blue-book the most cursory examination. I have not had time to do more. It was perfectly well known that the House would meet on the 17th of February, and it ought to have been so arranged that the Papers up to date, or at least up to about ten days ago, should be placed in our hands in order that we might be able to come to a fair decision upon the questions involved.²⁰⁴

Campbell-Bannerman called the situation in Macedonia a longstanding "European scandal" and warned that the implications of the instability could go far beyond the Balkans. He then asked for more information on the reforms.²⁰⁵

In his response to Campbell-Bannerman's lengthy discussion of foreign policy, Prime Minister Balfour acknowledged the danger that existed and deferred to the expertise of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians to make good on the reforms. In addressing the description of the reforms, Balfour stated there was much less need for an elaborate political formula than for an improvement in the execution of governance, which was hindered by both sides:

I do not believe the law is so utterly defective. It is the administration of the law by Turkish officials and the invasion of the country by Macedonian bands from the neighbouring territories of Bulgaria; these are the two scourges under which the Macedonian population are now suffering; and what we want is a strong and effective and incorruptible Government, so far as such a thing can be obtained, which shall introduce the primary elements of government into those districts, where too often, I am afraid, even the primary elements of good government are absent.²⁰⁶

When pressed about the specifics of the reforms, Balfour was evasive, remarking that discussing them in detail was inexpedient.²⁰⁷ What was expedient was to spread the responsibility for the insecurity in Macedonia between the two primary belligerents. The

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 69.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 93.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 94.

prime minister's descriptions of "two scourges" and the need for better government bear the mark of some of Alfred Biliotti's analysis, which ultimately served the British policy of reform and limited interference.

Other members of the opposition in the Commons and the Lords echoed Campbell-Bannerman's criticism of the government. However, their orations complemented government policy in many respects. In an extensive response to the King's Speech and a published comment by Balfour, Francis Stevenson, the Liberal member from Eye in Suffolk County, reminded the house that Britain and its fellow Great Powers were obliged by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin and by moral imperative to ensure the well being of Macedonia's inhabitants.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless, Stevenson then proceeded to deliver a contemporary assessment and a history lesson that could have been an extension of Balfour's response to Campbell-Bannerman. He attributed the "chronic state of misgovernment" in Macedonia to Ottoman policy and the "indefensible" methods of "certain extremists" based in Bulgaria. Stevenson enhanced his portrayal of the chronic violence and complexities of Macedonia by referencing the years of "tribal feuds" between Serbians and Albanians and the grievances of the Greeks and the Vlachs in the south, all of which had long been "fermented" by the Ottoman Government's misrule and its policy of sowing divisions amongst its subjects.²⁰⁹ He called for no more than more reform, stating that: "I would urge the Government to do their utmost to secure that the reforms now being pressed upon the Sultan should be manageable reforms. I agree with the hope of the Prime Minister that they will be of a simple character."²¹⁰ Balfour and Lansdowne could hardly have asked for a more of an endorsement. While they remained officially supportive of the Austro-Russian sanctioned reforms, they were privately critical of them because—just like His Majesty's loyal opposition—they did not consider the reforms to be sufficiently far reaching.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 117. Balfour had asked a critic why it was that he or she objected to Britain's multilateral intervention in Venezuela while calling for precisely such action to be taken regarding Macedonia. Stevenson maintained that the issues were "diametrically opposite." The Venezuelan intervention was gunboat debt collecting while Britain and the European powers were obliged by treaty to protect the Christians of Macedonia. Furthermore, it was feared that by cooperating with Germany in an aggressive stance toward Venezuela could damage Britain's relations with the United States.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 115.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 116.

A similar exchange also took place in the House of Lords on February 17. In his reply to the King's Throne Speech, Viscount Althrop (Earl Spencer) acknowledged the chronic difficulties the Macedonian Question had caused Europe in previous years and expressed his concern over the escalating military build-up in the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. He finished by saying that although the throne speech did not give him much hope, he trusted the government would do what it could to support the Austro-Russian reforms in order to "moderate and improve the existing state of affairs in that part of the world."²¹¹ However, Viscount Althrop also made a point of mentioning the lack of information the government had yielded on Macedonia. He referenced the recent production of a new "Yellow Book" of published French documents, which indicated that the situation was not only grave, but also characterized by more acute animosity than in years past.²¹²

In response, the Duke of Devonshire recognized Althrop's assessment with a nod to the perennial nature of the instability. He stated: "I think I can go further than the noble Earl and say that I do not think I remember a time in which the condition of some part of the dominions of Turkey has not caused anxiety." With respect to the release of British documents, the Duke of Devonshire promised more papers on Macedonia would be forthcoming in the near future and attributed the delay was to the consideration of presenting the papers in "a somewhat complete form." He also noted that it would not be possible to release papers about the reforms since it necessitated the consent of the other powers.²¹³ The pressure for more information intensified two days later when MP James Bryce pressed for the notification of a date when the promised papers would be presented and asked whether they would include consular reports describing the conditions and indications of British policy towards the reforms.²¹⁴ Lord Cranborne affirmed that such information would be forthcoming within a few days.²¹⁵

The release of diplomatic documents was a sensitive issue for the government. As discussed in the previous section, the Foreign Office and the diplomats considered

²¹¹ Ibid., 15-16.

²¹² Ibid., 15.

²¹³ Ibid., 24-25.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 283

²¹⁵ Ibid.

not only which dispatches should be withheld, but also which paragraphs should be omitted. At times the editing process demanded the precision of a surgeon's scalpel. While members of the opposition lobbied for more freedom of information, the British and French governments faced pressure from the more conservative powers to not disclose too much information. The Austro-Hungarians and Russians were especially concerned about this since they had a large stake in the reforms and did not wish to see their work questioned and potentially undermined by the publication of papers from the unpredictable democracies. For example, excerpts of a French Yellow Book appeared in the Russian press in early February. In the eyes of the Russian Foreign Minister, the Yellow Book had been published prematurely and its contents made it look as though the French had played a much more prominent role in the reform process than was actually the case.²¹⁶ In Vienna, there were similar concerns. Ambassador Plunkett reported in late February that the French may have published the Yellow Book in question due to public pressure, while the Austro-Hungarians saw it as proof of popular sympathy for the rebel cause amongst the French population. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarians feared of a repetition of 1876-77, which Plunkett tried to dispel:

Hints have also been dropped to me that a certain anxiety exists here lest a fresh "Bulgarian atrocity" cry should be worked up also in England. I have taken trouble to explain to those who have spoken to me on the subject that, provided the Turks act with prudence, I do not believe there is any likelihood of my countrymen, who know more of the question than they did in 1876 and 1877, starting off a campaign similar to that of twenty-five years ago.²¹⁷

It was not only the temperaments of parliamentarians and the sensitivities of foreign governments that needed to be considered. What went in the Blue Books was not only for parliamentary consumption, but also for the public. The written words of a vice-consul in the Macedonian interior could therefore be read by the citizens in his

²¹⁶ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), February 4, 1903, FO 65/1659/28. Russian irritation increased over the following weeks with Scott reporting that the Yellow Book had caused "considerable irritation" the "[g]reat annoyance" felt by the Russians over claims that any other government had taken more initiative than Russian was likely exacerbated by the publication of the newspaper articles referencing the journeys of Madame Bakhmetieff and Vice-Consul Westman. See: Scott to Lansdowne (very confidential), March 4, 1903, FO 65/1659/51.

²¹⁷ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 26, 1903, FO 7/1338/61. The publication of the Yellow Book was also not received well in Athens. See: Egerton to Lansdowne, February 15, 1903, FO 32/744/14.

neighbourhood. Such was the case for Mr. Theodorides, the British vice-consul in Serres, who found himself being slandered by town's former Bulgarian commercial agent, Mr. Schopoff, who took offence to Theodorides' words published in the Blue Books. Biliotti wrote that he feared the hostilities of the Macedonian Committees might be directed against his unpaid subordinate working on the railway line at Serres.²¹⁸

The government's strategy of using Balkanisms, equating responsibilities, and speaking from the authority of its own documents continued in March but faced its most vehement challenge after the publication of Dr. Dillon's *Contemporary Review* article. A few days following the request for the Russian documentation referenced in the Dillon article, Thomas Legh delivered a considerable speech in the House of Lords. He called attention to the latest Blue Book and remarked how the accounts of violence were all too familiar. Legh then lectured on the background of the troubles, noting how Macedonia was coveted by three neighbouring countries and how violence in the Balkans tended to flourish with the leaves of spring. While acknowledging the responsibility of the Ottoman government for the "lamentable" conditions, Legh stated that "the greater part of the responsibility for the events which are now occurring in Macedonia is due to the action of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committees." He called the methods of the committee "detestable" and spelled out the massacre formula for the members of the Lords:

As I have said, the deliberate object of these proceedings is to get the Turkish Government to commit a massacre on a large scale, involving the murder of numbers of perfectly innocent people, with the view of bringing about European intervention, and, in my opinion, these callous proceedings are as repulsive as the blind and brutal ferocity of the semi-barbarous Turks themselves.²¹⁹

Stating first that "[t]his is a thing which has been going on for years," Legh then added his personal testimony from his trip to Bulgaria, accusing the Bulgarian government of being irresponsible if not complicit when it came to the committees. He described springtime in the Bulgaria as a time when guerrilla bands formed much like a picnicking group or sporting party might "in more civilised parts of the world" before they left for Macedonia, where they would kill Turks as though they were doing so for sport. Citing the references of independent testimonies from the Blue Book, Legh exonerated

²¹⁸ Biliotti to O'Connor (confidential), March 9, 1903, FO 195/2156/53.

²¹⁹ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* 119 (1903): 708-709.

the actions of the Ottomans while urging patience for the reform process and concluded with a final warning: "I do not wish to appear as a prophet of evil, but I cannot help seeing in the present situation an ominous resemblance to that which existed in 1877."²²⁰

Rising to add what he called a "simple supplementary inquiry" to Lord Legh's speech, John Percival, the Lord Bishop of Hereford, issued a strong challenge to the Blue Books themselves and a plea for more a more government action. Percival said that any reader of the Blue Books did not require "any great amount of imagination, as one reads between the lines, to realise that the condition of Macedonia must be intolerable to those who live in it."²²¹ He maintained that a better understanding could be gained by reading what he called the "Red-book," which was Dr. Dillon's article "The Reign of Terror in Macedonia" from the *Contemporary Review*. Demonstrating a detailed knowledge of both texts, Lord Percival began by referencing Mr. Elliot's dispatch of December 12, 1902 in the Blue Books, which noted that Madame Bakhmetieff had undertaken a relief trip to Macedonia.²²² This is not surprising since Balfour had directed the opposition to the same dispatch four days previously in the commons in response to the request for information pertaining to the relief trip described in the Dillon article. However, Percival pointed out that the Blue Book did not tell readers what Bakhmetieff and her party found, while the "Red-book" did. He continued by listing several of the gory details from the article and repeating Dillon's accusation that the Great Powers were not ignorant of the atrocious facts and even more importantly, had "far more harrowing" accounts in their possession. After referencing the investigations of Mr. Westman, Percival suggested weighing the evidence in the name of common heritage:

I venture to put this evidence side by side with the diplomatic evidence contained in the Blue-book, and to ask the noble Marquess. Can nothing be done? In reading the Blue-book no one can fail to recognise with thankfulness and pride as Englishmen the tone of the noble Marquess's correspondence; but to plain people like myself all over the country the question is constantly recurring, Can

²²⁰ Ibid., 713.

²²¹ Ibid., 714.

²²² Ibid.

nothing be done to stop this in the neighbourhood of ancient Greece, in the heart of Europe?²²³

Percival was not finished. He acknowledged that the government placed the balance of the blame on the Macedonian Committees, but then sympathetically asked: "what can be expected so long as you allow the state of things in Macedonia to remain what it is?" He continued by asking how Bulgaria could be expected to stand by and watch while its brethren were being tortured and killed in Macedonia. He blamed the Great Powers for being irresponsible, calling their leaders a disgrace, and finished with an allusion to William Gladstone:

A long time since some of us had hoped that the policy which was once described by one of the greatest Englishmen as the "bag and baggage policy" might be carried into effect. We were young, some of us, in those days; and now we are old, and things are now apparently as bad as ever; but still we pray that statesmen may arise in the different countries of Europe who will, for very shame, say that the cup has run over, and that the time has come for taking whatever steps may be necessary to put an end to a condition of things so discreditable to Christian Europe. I beg to ask the noble Marquess if he can give us any hope that this better state of affairs will be realised in the near future.²²⁴

The Lord Bishop of Hereford's speech was the most damning of the government's policy toward Macedonia to date. By making direct comparisons between the Blue Books and Dillon's article (the "Red-Book"), Percival had tactfully accused the government of withholding information and had provided evidence to back up his claim. Although he mentioned that all the Great Powers had a common duty to their Christian heritage and to the defence of European Civilization itself, he had issued severe criticism of existing policies. Percival had come the closest of any parliamentarian to endorsing the rebel cause, and had alluded to the possibility of military intervention. He even called for the conjuring of Gladstonian spirits across the states of Christian Europe. The references to Gladstone coupled with the discussion of the gaps in the Blue Books also

²²³ Ibid., 716.

²²⁴ Ibid., 717-718. The "bag and baggage policy" as it was known, stemmed from a speech by William Gladstone during the 1876 debate in the House of Commons over the "Bulgarian Horrors." To Gladstone, the best way to ensure the Ottomans did not carry out such abuses again would be to have them, literally pack their bags and leave: "Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely, by carrying off themselves." See: J. Castell Hopkins, *Life and Work of Mr. Gladstone: A Great and Varied Career* (Canada: The Gladstone Publishing Company, 1898), 276.

echoed Benjamin Disraeli's denials of the reports of atrocities committed by the Ottomans when they crushed the 1876 Bulgarian Uprising, which occurred because there was no record of such events in the diplomatic reports.

Lord Percival's speech was precisely what the government did not want to hear. Both domestic and foreign diplomats and ministers had feared exactly this sort of sentiment crystallizing in British public life and now a damning and potentially inflammatory speech had been delivered by a member of the House of Lords. Although he was an openly radical lord, he was a lord nonetheless and also a prelate. Percival's speech also came at the time when the ripples of the publication of the latest French Yellow Book were being felt and when Dr. Dillon's *Contemporary Review* article was being reprinted. In light of these events, the efforts of the Foreign Office to debunk and discredit Dillon and his sources becomes more understandable. Fortunately for the government, the Lord Bishop of Hereford was no William Gladstone.

Not surprisingly, it was Lord Lansdowne who answered Percival's accusations. He did so by discussing the issues raised, acknowledging points, and giving criticisms and correctives as he proceeded. Lansdowne noted Britain's treaty obligations, but also issued a reminder of the implications of Balkan instability for the stability of Europe. Hinting that Percival's own creed and profession may have clouded his judgement, Lansdowne pointed out that there Muslims as well as Christians suffered in Macedonia.²²⁵ He acknowledged both Lord Newton's condemnation of Bulgaria and Percival's sympathy for it, mentioning that the Bulgarian government had recently taken proactive measures and that the British agent in Sofia had been active in making diplomatic representations. He defended the British response to the "Razlog outrages" and the records in the Blue Books, describing Vice-Consul Elliot's investigations into the incidents. He pointed out that the last report in the Blue Book (January 9) was not recent enough to include further documentation on all of the events discussed in Dillon's article. Furthermore, Lansdowne reported that British diplomats were investigating the accounts in the article and that reports would be forthcoming. He also questioned the credibility of information in the Dillon article, stating that some of it was at least somewhat exaggerated. Finally, the Foreign Secretary asked for patience to let the two most

²²⁵ Ibid., 718.

qualified powers continue their work on the reforms, and affirmed to the House that the British would remain vigilant.²²⁶

Lansdowne was followed by the Liberal leader of the House of Lords, Viscount Althorp, who—despite being a long-time colleague of Gladstone—exhibited an attitude and tone much closer to Lansdowne than Percival. He spoke of the sympathy that existed in Britain for those who suffered under Ottoman rule. However, he distanced himself from Percival, and spoke of the “evil” which had been “simmering” for some time. His finishing remarks gave qualified support to the government:

So far as I follow the noble Marquess in his despatches and his speech, he seems quite alive to the difficulties and responsibilities of the position, and I sincerely hope that he will lose no opportunity, in conjunction with other Powers, of seeing that the Sultan carries out the reforms he has undertaken, and if they are not satisfactory, that still more effective measures will be pressed for.²²⁷

The Lord Bishop of Hereford may have been ready to invoke the spirit of Gladstone and the ethos of Lord Byron, but the executive of the Liberal Party was not. Criticism of British government and Great Power policy would continue to be tempered by acknowledgement from both sides of the houses that the violence in Macedonia and the complexities of the Balkan region were chronic and historic in nature. Therefore, it not surprising that some of the most vehement criticism of the government prior to the August uprising was with respect to the release of information.

Parliamentary speeches and debates through the spring of 1903 illustrated more of the same tendencies and rhetoric. Even the more radical members of the opposition stopped well short of advocating intervention. Speaking to the plight of Macedonia in late March, James Bryce used the Blue Books to support his calls for more reform in the face of Ottoman “cruelty,” “oppression,” “violence,” and “maladministration.”²²⁸ Still, his observations of the outrages were qualified with the comment that “controversy and falsehood” were always attached to news from the East. Bryce went on to discuss the historical context and the intricacies of the delicate political situation in Bulgaria, noting

²²⁶ Ibid., 720-722.

²²⁷ Ibid., 723.

²²⁸ *Hansard's Parliamentary Papers* 120 (1903): 1564.

the destabilizing agents of the “large immigration of unhappy Macedonian exiles” and the “high-spirited” Albanians who “lived for war.” Bryce’s demand was only to know more about the details of the reform process. Importantly, throughout his speech, he referenced only the Blue Books, with no mention of Dillon’s *Contemporary Review* article or any other source.²²⁹

This speech by Bryce came only 10 days after the Lord Bishop of Hereford’s ‘Red-Book’ oration, suggesting that Lansdowne and the government had cast enough doubt on the validity of the Dillon article for the opposition to discontinue referencing it. The promise of consular investigations into the alleged atrocities and the release of further information was enough to placate the opposition. Furthermore, by giving the opposition a sufficient supply of documentation upon which to both inform itself and base its criticism, it was less likely that the opposition would seek out alternative sources. Indeed, Lord Cranborne responded to Bryce by acknowledging his comments about the “very old story” of Ottoman misgovernment. He only contradicted the opposition MP by quoting Biliotti’s dispatches to describe the Macedonian Committees’ misdeeds against not only Muslim Turks, but also Greeks, Vlachs, and Bulgarians loyal to the Patriarchate. He noted that all of Europe recognized “the immense difficulty of the problem to be solved” and promised that there was no intention “on the part of the Government to keep information from this House which ought to be given.”²³⁰

Nevertheless, information remained an issue. Following the news of the Salonica Bombings and the reports of related violence in the Macedonian interior (notably in Monastir), there were renewed calls for the government to produce more information about the situation in Macedonia as well as to take further action. Cranborne’s statement that the government had no information about the well-being of the Christians of Mitrovitca was called “monstrous” by William Redmond of the opposition.²³¹ Cranborne called the criticism severe. Redmond was unapologetic and added that a special envoy should be sent to Macedonia.²³² As had become customary by this time, Cranborne responded by defending the diplomatic work of the Foreign Office and noted the

²²⁹ Ibid., 1566.

²³⁰ Ibid., 1573-1574.

²³¹ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 120 (1903): 1377.

²³² Ibid.

“disease” of misgovernment and incompetence which plagued Christians and Muslims alike in Macedonia.²³³ Future Prime Minister David Lloyd George remarked that perhaps the proposed envoy could deliver a prescription of good governance to the British government as well as to its Ottoman counterpart.²³⁴ When pressed by Redmond for details as to whether there might be some agreement for British officers to accompany Ottoman troops in Macedonia, Cranborne replied that the matter was under consideration and finished by saying: “I do not know whether there is any other point on which I can enlighten the hon. Gentleman, but I think hon. Members will acquit the Government of any desire to withhold information.”²³⁵

Redmond, it appears, remained unimpressed with the government’s efforts. A month later he inquired about an alleged massacre of Christians near Monastir.²³⁶ Cranborne answered by citing a telegraph Vice-Consul McGregor had sent him saying that the Ottoman authorities had the situation under control and that the reported loss of life was very likely exaggerated.²³⁷ When Redmond asked if any additional representations had been made to the Ottoman government on the matter, Cranborne replied that the British Ambassador was “constantly in communication with the Porte on many of these matters.”²³⁸ In response, Redmond remarked: “It does not do much good.”²³⁹

The last documented exchange in parliament prior to the Ilinden Uprising took place on July 23, 1903. James Bryce reminded the commons not only of Britain’s moral and legal obligations, but also of its economic and strategic interests in the region. However, his first point was to complain about the lack of reliable information:

We had been very ignorant of what had been really going on in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Albania, the papers last presented not bringing the story down to the events of the last four or five months, and the information in the newspapers being scattered and contradictory, and

²³³ Ibid., 1377-1378.

²³⁴ Ibid., 1378-1379.

²³⁵ Ibid., 1378.

²³⁶ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 122 (1903): 688.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

often obviously biased and tinged by the sources from which it came, or through which it passed, so that little confidence could be put in it.²⁴⁰

Bryce finished with two questions: “When were they to have any papers relating to the state of affairs in Macedonia, and what was the view Government took of the present condition of things in Macedonia and what their hopes were as to peace being preserved between Turkey and Bulgaria?”²⁴¹

The lack of confidence Bryce showed towards the newspapers must have pleased the government, especially given that an opposition member of the Lords had quoted from Dillon’s *Contemporary Review* article a few months previously. James Bryce had helped rally Gladstone out of retirement to take up the cause of the Armenians in 1895-6, and he was surely familiar with the past work of Dr. Dillon.²⁴² Yet, Bryce’s did not take the government to task on any of the allegations in Dillon’s articles and his statement on July 23 was a condemnation of the press’ ability to supply reliable information on Macedonia.

In response to Bryce, Cranborne paid lip service to the need for another Blue Book, mentioned the “melancholy monotony” of Balkan politics, and discussed the reforms. Although he even said things might be improving, he was unequivocal in his criticism of the Ottoman government and the Macedonian Committees:

There was a very large force of Turkish troops under arms, and although the regulars were well controlled, there was no doubt that the presence of large bodies of armed men, irregulars, constituted a very menacing fact which could not be ignored. On the other hand there was no doubt that the Revolutionary Association had not abandoned their propaganda, and that the Mohammedan population had been infuriated by the methods which the revolutionary bands had adopted. These methods restrained all sympathy which Europe might otherwise have given them. Dynamite, murder, outrage, were methods of achieving their emancipation, with which civilized Europe could have no sympathy.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 126 (1903): 183-184.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁴² Joseph O. Baylen, “Dillon, Emile Joseph,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 7, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/32828>.

²⁴³ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 126 (1903): 187.

Bryce had little to say in response, other than to call attention to the plight of non-combatants.²⁴⁴

Through most of the 1903 sessions of the Commons and the Lords, the British government's handling of Macedonia was an effective application of parliamentary statecraft. The opposition accepted the government's argument that the violence in Macedonia was a chronic condition as well as the government's critiques of newspaper sources. The opposition even elaborated upon these sentiments at times, which gave further weight to the government's policies. Most importantly, the majority of the opposition came to accept the government's word on Macedonia and relied upon the government issued Blue Books as their main source of information. The fact that the Blue Books were not terribly complementary to any group or government likely enhanced their credibility. Since the government possessed the most credible source of information on Macedonia, they therefore could, and did, control it to their advantage. Although there was known contact between members of the opposition and the Macedonian Committees, the opposition never brought the political cause of the Macedonian Committees to the floor of the houses of parliament. Although some members of the opposition sympathized with the rebel cause, their accusations of Ottoman atrocities, the government simply acknowledged it and then countered it with rebuttals that the Macedonian Committees were guilty of the same reprehensible actions as the Ottoman irregulars. These government counters were not effectively challenged and the perception (however accurate or inaccurate) that the different sides involved in the conflict were equally culpable in that they committed the same morally depraved acts added more validity to the view that the problems were the product of intractable 'ancient hatreds.' Put simply, Macedonia was not worth the life of a single Grenadier guardsman.

Moreover, the pointed criticism from the opposition benches came mostly from the fringes of the Liberal ranks, not from its centre. The Liberal party had been fractured by the wars in South Africa into ranks of 'Liberal Imperialists,' 'Pro-Boers,' and 'Centralists.' These fissures are evident in the debates and speeches on Macedonia. Liberal leaders Campbell-Bannerman and Viscount Althorp of the Commons and Lords had respectively taken centralist positions on the Boer War and had restrained their

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

criticism of the government's Macedonia policy.²⁴⁵ They did not lend much public support to the more radical elements in their caucuses and may well have censured these elements behind closed doors.

Edmond Fitzmaurice, the younger brother of Lord Lansdowne, also counted himself as a follower of Campbell-Bannerman's centralism. It is unlikely there was a Liberal member of either house with more knowledge of the Balkans than Fitzmaurice. He had served as the British representative on the ill-fated European Commission to reorganize Ottoman Europe under the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, and he had participated in a conference on the navigation of the Danube River. As a contender for the position of the next Liberal Foreign Secretary, Fitzmaurice could have added tangible legitimacy to the 'pro-Macedonian' and pro-interventionist messages, but he stopped short of that in pointing out only that the key to peace lay in recognizing the claims of the competing nationalities.²⁴⁶

Parliamentarians of more radical persuasions and 'less conventional' (or at least less English) backgrounds were the more vehement critics of the government's Macedonia policy. Hugh Law, William Redmond, and John Boland were all Irish nationalists and social reformers to varying degrees.²⁴⁷ The Bishop of Hereford, John Percival, came from rather humble beginnings and was an outspoken advocate of education reform. Queen Victoria had tried to block his nomination to become Bishop of Hereford on the grounds that he supported having the Welsh Church disestablished.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ George Charles Beresford, "Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 14, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/32275?docPos=1>. The Centralists were at odds with the other factions of the Liberal party on the Boer War. Campbell-Bannerman had lent support to a motion to condemn the concentration camps resulted in 50 Liberal Imperialists publically breaking ranks and walking out of the Commons.

²⁴⁶ *Hansard's Parliamentary Papers* 120 (1903):1369; T. G. Otte, "Fitzmaurice, Edmond George Petty," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 14, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/35499>.

Fitzmaurice was also more sympathetic to the Greek cause in Macedonia.

²⁴⁷ Boland had visited the region as a member of British team at the 1896 Athens Olympics, and won two medals in tennis, making him Britain's first Olympic medalist. See: G. Martin Murphy, "Boland, John Pius," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 14, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/58692?docPos=1>.

²⁴⁸ John Sadler, "Percival, John," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 14, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/35471?docPos=4>.

Sir Charles Trevelyan came from a well-to-do London family but had a cantankerous reputation even amongst Liberals. He was also a known advocate of the abolition of the House of Lords.²⁴⁹ James Bryce was the most conservative of the Liberal critics. Nevertheless, he was more of a scholar than a firebrand political orator, and although he sympathized deeply with the plight of the people of Macedonia, his criticisms of the government were usually tempered with qualifications, as were the criticisms of older Liberal Centralists. While the Liberal Party's attempts to influence the government's Macedonia policy were relatively ineffectual, Bryce was to enjoy more success from his work outside the halls of parliament.

By mid 1903, the government had effectively neutralized any impetus for more strident intervention in parliament. Moreover, the discourse examined and quoted in this section demonstrates that the government had done its part to further instill a general sense of negativity towards the Balkans in the minds of the parliamentarians. As IMRO primed its uprising, most of the parliamentarians in the country it looked to for sympathy were viewing Macedonia with a good deal of reservation and were behind the government's policy of status quo plus reform.

The Pressure Groups

Due to the ongoing bad news from Macedonia, the British government faced criticism and concerns from individuals and organizations that wanted it to do more to stop the carnage. Correspondence from the public was another means by which the government could gauge the public's mood about Macedonia. As he had in the past, Lansdowne took time to engage with letter writers. Pressure groups had grown in number in the latter nineteenth century and were of more concern. While individual letter writers made their protests known individually, pressure groups had networks, which gave them the potential to mobilize larger groups of people and attract press attention. The rise of a new pressure group, the Balkan Committee, was likely the source of some unease for the government as it was comprised of some opposition members of parliament and intellectuals with experience in Macedonia.

²⁴⁹ J. A. Morris, "Trevelyan, Sir Charles," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed November 14, 2011 <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/view/article/36553?docPos=2>.

True to his practices the previous year, Lansdowne paid attention to citizens submitting letters about affairs in Macedonia. This was especially the case when the letter contained newspaper clippings or pamphlets, as these were the letters which were commented upon and archived. For example, in February, Mr. Glover, a property agent from Hull, wrote to the Foreign Secretary with a letter that included a clipping from the *Hull Daily News*. The news article was a reprint of an article by Mr. MacDonald of the *Daily News* that detailed the grim stories of the Razlog refugees who had been forced to winter in Bulgaria. Lansdowne instructed his secretary to respond by stating that papers (Blue Books) would be presented to parliament showing the actions the government was taking on the matter. As has been demonstrated, the government was not only taking action on such matters, it was also taking action on the reporting of such matters.²⁵⁰

In March a rather angry letter arrived from A. Ardantz in Maidstone, Kent, who took direct issue with Lansdowne for 'still clinging to the old song by accusing the Macedonian troubles as being "exaggerated news."' Ardantz continued by expressing his hope that Britain's 'once Christian government will rise and rescue the poor and suffering victims—be it Macedonians or Armenians—from the "gueule da le Bete Rouge."' He also enclosed an album of drawings graphically depicting the massacres of 1894-6, which included a sketch of a crowd of refugees who had breached the entrance of a British consulate and were appealing to a rather bewildered official for protection.²⁵¹ Ardantz was Armenian and professed to Lansdowne that he had been an eye-witness to the wrath of "the Turk." The enclosed album would not have been news to Lansdowne or anyone at the Foreign Office, as they were well aware of this history. Nonetheless, it was a visual reminder of how very public and brutal the massacres could be and what sort of fallout could be expected. Moreover, Ardantz was not writing just as an individual, but with the stamp of the organization "Armenian Relief Work."²⁵² The government was likely very aware that many of the organizers of the various pressure groups and relief

²⁵⁰ Mr. Glover to Foreign Office, February 12, 1903, FO 78/5288.

²⁵¹ Mr. Ardantz to Lansdowne, March 18, 1903, FO 78/5288.

²⁵² Ibid.

agencies that had lobbied for the cause of the Armenians less than a decade previously were rallying to the cause of peace and justice for Macedonia.²⁵³

The peace movement in Europe and Britain had been increasing in size and influence in the latter nineteenth century. The word 'pacifist' became part of the English language in 1901 and a National Peace Congress was formed in 1904, which reflected the growing belief that there could be an end to war.²⁵⁴ In 1899 the first Hague Conference was held that tried to create the institutional means for arbitrating disputes. The euphoria over the conference was somewhat short lived due to the commencement of the Boer War. During the war, anti-war organizations were established such as the Anti-Aggression League, the South Africa Conciliation Committee, and the League of Liberals against Aggression, which was the counterweight within the fractured Liberal Party to the 'Liberal Imperialists.'²⁵⁵ Plenty of individuals who gained experience from lobbying and advocating for Armenia and South Africa were qualified and ready to take up the cause of Macedonia.

While there were several groups with interest in Macedonian affairs, the foremost group was the Balkan Committee. The organization was founded in 1902 by the parliamentarian and historian James Bryce, the aspiring politician Noel Buxton and his lawyer brother Charles Buxton, the historian George Peabody Gooch, the archaeologist Arthur Evans, the journalist H.N. Brailsford, and Liberal party whip Herbert Gladstone, among others. As noted by Davide Rodogno, several members of the organization had been active in past campaigns for the Bulgarians, Cretans, and Armenians.²⁵⁶ The aim of the Balkan Committee was to encourage informed dialogue on issues "in a way which left not room for the more emotional and crude aspects to which some of Gladstone's followers were wont to resort."²⁵⁷ This is a notable statement. The appeals of William Gladstone's intervention had at times been bombastic and unabashedly pro-Christian.

²⁵³ The organization "Friends of Armenia" corresponded regularly with the Foreign Office. In May of 1903, they wrote requesting information on a recent earthquake in the region, having not heard from their Mission in Van. See: Friends of Armenia to Foreign Office, May 30, 1903, FO 78/5288.

²⁵⁴ Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 151

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 235

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

While these sentiments certainly existed in the Balkan Committee, the organization was much less inclined to wear its cross on its sleeve. Bryce saw Macedonia as a matter of justice and humanity—and passive humanity at that.²⁵⁸ Eighty years earlier, Lord Byron, Jeremy Bentham, and the London Greek Committee had openly procured weapons and recruited artillery officers to aid the Greek rebels against the Ottoman army.²⁵⁹ The Balkan Committee was to do nothing of the sort.

While the Balkan Committee was the most prominent pressure group and the one with the most ‘star power’, it did not stand alone when it came to lobbying the government over matters in the Macedonia. The only formal resolution the government received on Macedonia before August of 1903 was a resolution from the International Arbitration and Peace Association that urged the government to uphold the Treaty of Berlin as it pertained to Macedonia.²⁶⁰ The Byron Society was another society with interests in Macedonia and its focus was to make a case for the Greek cause in Macedonia. Although comparatively little was heard from the Byron Society in the months prior to the Ilinden Uprising, the organization let it be known that Greeks in Macedonia had come to see the “Bulgarian committees” as more oppressive and abusive than the Ottoman authorities.²⁶¹ Other public events and statements involving the Byron Society concerned the nuptials and anniversaries of members of the Greek Royal Family. What is revealing about the Byron Society is that several of its members were also members of the Balkan Committee. The membership list of the Byron Society included men such as James Bryce, Herbert Gladstone, and Francis Seymour Stevenson, who were not just members of the Balkan Committee, but also its leaders.²⁶² Thus, the very individuals the Macedonian Committees were counting on for sympathy were endorsing Greek interests in Macedonia.²⁶³ As the extent of the Christian division became more pronounced in 1903, this contradiction undoubtedly troubled those

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Bass, *Freedom’s Battle*, 86.

²⁶⁰ International Arbitration and Peace Association to Foreign Office, June 4, 1903, FO 78/5288.

²⁶¹ “Through the reconstruction of the Bulgarian,” *The Times*, April 1, 1903, 9.

²⁶² James Bryce et. al. “St. George’s Day,” *The Times*, March 2, 1903, 8.

²⁶³ “Name-Day of the King of the Hellenes,” *The Times*, May 7, 1903, 10. At a celebration of the name day of King George I, members of the Byron Society rose to speak of the millions of Greeks still needed to be freed “from a yoke that had been borne too long,” and the fact that Mt. Olympus (part of Ottoman Macedonia) had yet to be liberated.

individuals who sympathized with rivals groups in Macedonia. The cross-membership may account for the relative lack of outcries from the Balkan Committee prior to the Ilinden Uprising, but the escalation in violence would lead the Balkan Committee to prove itself very adept in galvanizing interventionist sentiments.

Britain and the Balfour Government, Summer 1903

By mid-1903 Arthur Balfour's Unionist government was courting successes in its foreign policy while coping with a steady erosion of domestic support and a significant internal schism that was to lead a wave of resignations by the autumn. The Unionists had ridden to re-election on the wave of jingoism inspired by the Boer War. By mid-1903 the fading echoes the South African conflict had allowed Britons to turn their attention to domestic issues and their dissatisfactions had manifested into a string of by-election defeats for the Unionists. The controversial Education Bill of 1902 abolished school boards and gave more financial support to Church of England schools. This outraged nonconformists and produced considerable passive resistance in 1903, particularly in predominantly Methodist Wales, where David Lloyd George emerged as an eloquent leader of the bill's opposition, which would earn him Balfour's respect in the process.²⁶⁴ The fortunes of the Liberals and Unionists were moving in opposite directions. Thanks to the energies of Herbert Gladstone, the Liberals had reconciled the rift that had dogged them during the Boer War. In 1903 it was the Unionists' turn to suffer the upheaval of party infighting.

Trade was the issue that wrecked havoc in the Unionist cabinet was trade. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain had proposed a new policy of 'Imperial Preference' which at its core aimed to grant a measure of protectionism to British Industry by giving preference to trade within the British Empire and imposing tariffs on imports from non-empire countries. Although there appeared to be initial support for these policies, they were not adopted for the budget in April 1903. This was due to resistance from free trade advocates in the party, such as the Duke of Devonshire, the leader of the House of Lords, and Winston Churchill, a rising star in the party. Much of

²⁶⁴ Kenneth Young , *Arthur James Balfour: The Happy Life of the Politician, Prime Minister, Statesman, and Philosopher, 1848-1939* (London: G. Bell, 1963), 206-7.

Chamberlain's work was undone during his trip to South Africa, prior to the budget being determined. Chamberlain did not let the issue pass following the budget, making his case in public speeches and in the House of Commons. In turn, the voices of his critics grew louder. Chamberlain had begun his political career as a liberal and had allied with the Conservatives under the Unionist umbrella. Although he had proven himself as an enthusiastic defender of the empire and deserved a good deal of the credit for the Unionist election victory in 1900, some of his views—such as those on tariffs—were much more in tune with the opposition. Consequently, he was treated with some reserve by the Tory establishment.

Balfour sought compromise. As elaborated in the biography by Kenneth Young, the prime minister realized conditions had changed since the times of mid-century industrial supremacy, when Robert Peel had instituted free trade. However, he was not partial to any drastic changes without due examination and reflection.²⁶⁵ Balfour feared he would inherit Peel's legacy of a split party, which was exactly what transpired in the summer and autumn of 1903. The intricate details of this chapter of Unionist party politics are peripheral to this study, but it is salient to note that the time was trying for the Balfour government. In claiming the middle ground, Balfour appealed from a position of compromise and unity while preparing for resignations from both far ends of the cabinet, which was precisely what happened. As Balfour anticipated, Chamberlain resigned, and to his disappointment, he also lost the Duke of Devonshire.²⁶⁶ Balfour emerged with better control of his cabinet, but his tactics had sown more seeds of suspicion.²⁶⁷ His government would remain on shaky ground until the end of its mandate, facing further defections and lost seats, more effective criticism from a reenergized opposition, and looming disaster at the polls. The significance of these events to Macedonia was that the cabinet crisis over tariffs and free trade came to a crescendo during the Ilinden Uprising. At the very moment IMRO was fighting for its life and appealing for intervention, the British government was fighting internally over trade policy in a party struggle that led to the loss of five cabinet ministers. IMRO's losses on the political and military battlefields were a good deal higher.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 213.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 216-217.

²⁶⁷ Brooks, *Age of Upheaval*, 61.

Although the Unionist government achieved little domestically, several historians have praised Balfour's administration for the acumen and far-sightedness of its foreign policy. Balfour's frustration with the lack of a coordinated defence plan for the empire and the home islands led to the founding of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), which held its first meeting in December of 1902. The CID was designed to assess the British Empire's strategic needs and to make plans and contingencies to present to ministers in the event of a crisis. The more impromptu practices of old were superseded. The CID was a product of Balfour's initiative and he attended its every meeting, taking over as chair after the Duke of Devonshire's departure in October of 1903.²⁶⁸ Balfour also pushed the envelope of military reform and rearmament. It was Balfour who pushed for the production of the 18-pound and 13-pound field guns into production, backed Admiral Fisher's naval reform plans, and provided the impetus for building the first Dreadnaught class battleship.²⁶⁹

The sense of urgency which drove Balfour was the uncertainty that prevailed in the wake of the Boer War. The British Empire was left exposed in a state of what has more recently been dubbed 'imperial overstretch.' The 1902 alliance with Japan eased some strategic and financial pressure, but what was to be done with Europe? An alliance with Germany appeared to offer the natural solution and some Unionists, including Balfour and Chamberlain, had been open to the possibility. However, the British were less inclined to enter into the sort of alliance which would bind them to a continental conflict. In addition, Britain would be the weaker party in an alliance with Germany.

The continental strain was eased thanks to King Edward VII's visit to France in the spring of 1903 by. A long time admirer of all things French, Edward's first visit as king to the city of his youthful cavorting amounted to a charm offensive. The affable king quite literally turned hostile crowds into adoring masses during the course of his visit. During the summer, French president Émile Loubet paid his own visit to London. Behind the scenes, the diplomats went to work. When the Entente Cordiale was signed in April

²⁶⁸ Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee*, 185-86.

²⁶⁹ Young, *Arthur James Balfour*, 232. These weapons and ships were to be used in the First World War. As Young notes, the Liberals halted the Dreadnaught program when they entered office in 1906. One reason why Balfour clung on to power until the end of his mandate was to see these rearmament programs through.

of 1904, it settled colonial disputes between the two empires over territories ranging from Newfoundland to Africa to Siam. However, the negotiations were not without their difficulties and took place amidst the foreboding backdrop of the escalating conflict between Russia and Japan, which had the potential to create conflict between Britain and France. It is also important to note that before the foreign minister got down to the business of working out the details during through the winter months of 1903-04, the two governments had worked to arrive at the Anglo-French Arbitration Treaty came to be in October of 1903.

In 1903, Great Britain was in the process of reigning in many of the commitments of its empire. The alliance with Japan and the anticipated colonial entente with France would do much to ease the strains of imperial overstretch and the high costs of the Boer War. Quite simply, the nation was much less inclined to extend itself by getting involved in another foreign policy adventure. The multilateral foray against Venezuela had proven to be unpopular with the British public. As the parliamentary session commenced in February, the opposition expressed concerns about the escalation of Britain's presence in the ongoing conflict in Somalia. The British had been working with local Abyssinian forces and the Italians against the insurgent forces of Mohammad Abdullah Hassan—the so-called 'Mad Mullah' in the interior of the region—over the previous two years with limited success. In early 1903, the government was moving to reinforce the army's position with approximately 1,200 colonial troops that would be shipped directly from South Africa to the Horn of Africa in order to mount a third expedition to take the fight to the rebels in the Somali interior. For Campbell-Bannerman and the opposition, this was cause for some discomfort. The government's lack of precise objectives and allusions to the difficulties of the Sudan expeditions of the 1880s and 1890s did not inspire much confidence. In his reply to the throne speech on February 17, Campbell-Bannerman asked the following questions:

But what is there behind this Mullah? According to the right hon. Gentleman himself, a waterless waste peopled by nomad fanatics. That is his description of the country. How are we going to pursue the campaign against the Mullah? May I ask the attention of the House to this?²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 118 (1905): 76.

The opposition's concerns would prove to have merit. Mohammad Abdullah Hassan and his forces continued to be dogged and determined opponents. On April 17 1903, reconnaissance forces commanded by British officers were ambushed at Gumburu Hill and suffered over 200 casualties, including the loss of all the British officers present.²⁷¹ While the British-led forces fared better at the subsequent Battle at Daratoleh, Mohammad Abdullah Hassan's men were not completely defeated and continued to execute allusive and daring manoeuvres that challenged the multinational forces deployed against them.²⁷² In response, the British government deployed more troops to Somalia and made plans for another expedition in 1904.

The prospect of another foreign adventure did not attract much popular support in Britain and it served as another political lightning rod for the opposition Liberals. Throughout the 1903 parliamentary session, the opposition repeatedly lamented the costs of the Somalia campaign as the government awkwardly dealt with this additional expense coming on the heels of the millions of pounds that had been poured into achieving victory in South Africa.

Historic breakthroughs are often about good timing and luck. IMRO had neither. During the first half of 1903, the British government was being taken to task over its accounts for the waging of war and the deployment of its military and strategic assets across the globe. As government accounting came under examination amid pleas for economization, the government found itself on the defensive in justifying the cost of sending a few thousand men to Somalia. Garrisons still needed to be maintained across the empire. It was not a good time for a potentially costly intervention in the Balkans. Macedonia did receive attention, but it was not a high priority and, by in large, the government's and opposition's attention were on other matters. Foreign expeditions needed to be cost effective and diplomatic negotiations were a priority. At the very moment the French and British were busy preparing the groundwork for their historic *rapprochement*, the Ilinden Uprising was taking place in Macedonia. Given the pre-emptive measures taken to undermine interventionist sentiment and the political atmosphere in Britain in mid 1903, it would have taken a seismic shift in public opinion

²⁷¹ B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 185.

²⁷² The British forces in Somaliland consisted of Shikhs, Yaos, and local Somalis. The Italians also coordinated in these operations with the British.

for IMRO to obtain British sympathy for its cause. Even someone with William Gladstone's charisma would have struggled to conjure such a level of sympathy. IMRO's timing could not have been much worse.

Britain, the Great Powers, and the Balkan States in mid 1903

During the weeks leading up to the Ilinden Uprising, the political conditions in Macedonia and the Balkans became increasingly unstable. In addition to the ongoing violence in Macedonia, there were varying degrees of political unrest in Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Although reports prognosticating another uprising were supported by credible evidence, it was very likely difficult for observers to take the warnings any more seriously than they already did, as predictions of an uprising had been commonplace since the spring. Further, there was little more that could be done diplomatically or otherwise without the united political impetus of the Great Powers. The British continued to monitor the situation and to use diplomacy to maintain the extent of peace that existed.

Macedonia was a peripheral, yet potentially troublesome concern within the larger context of defending the British Empire. Cabinet documents from 1903 show that Britain's main concern was the Ottoman Empire's ability to resist Russian attacks. Britain estimated that a Russian attack through Anatolia toward the Levant and the Suez would be physically and logistically arduous for the invaders due to the terrain and sheer distance, but the British political executive had little confidence in the Ottoman Empire's ability to defend itself against Russians attacks closer to the capital.²⁷³ In April, the Committee on Imperial Defence (CID) concluded that the Ottoman defenses on the Bosphorus and the number of troops available were insufficient to stop an amphibious Russian assault. They also estimated that the Russians could be in possession of Constantinople within twelve days following mobilization. Even if the Russians were delayed, the CID considered it unlikely that the British could muster an effective response.²⁷⁴ The recent passage of the Russian torpedo boats through the Dardanelles

²⁷³ Report of the Committee on Imperial Defence, February 11, 1903, CAB 17/55.

²⁷⁴ Report on the Defence of Constantinople, April 4, 1903, FO 78/5288.

and the Bosphorus had annoyed the British. More recently, Russian torpedo boats had been making their presence known on the Danube River. The British were diplomatically impotent to prevent what the Romanian minister for Foreign Affairs lamented as the removal of the last vestiges of the 1856 Treaty of Paris.²⁷⁵

The CID was more optimistic about the Ottoman's commitment to defend the Adrianople frontier with Bulgaria.²⁷⁶ Nonetheless, as was the case with the Russians, the CID estimated that the Bulgarians would be able to bring a stronger force to the fore more rapidly than the Ottomans, making at least a partial Bulgarian seizure of Macedonia a distinct possibility. Depending on the persuasion of the governing powers in Sofia, Russia might give its backing to the creation of a Bulgaria that bore a close resemblance to the boundaries of the Treaty of San Stefano. Alternatively, it might intervene to undermine a Bulgarian administration that it considered to have overstepped its mark. The Russian Empire had annexed the non-Slavic regions of Central Asia and the possible envelopment of Slavic speaking Bulgarians was not out of the question. Whether such a move would occur in concert with a southward thrust by Austria-Hungary was another question. As a result, a revolutionary force in the Macedonian hills had the potential to alter the balance of power in the Balkans and set off a European crisis, despite the ongoing diplomacy and the reforms. Many senior statesmen who paid attention to the situation felt that it bore an eerie resemblance to 1876.

Following the troubles of the spring, the situation on the ground had calmed somewhat in the early summer. Ottoman forces had encountered considerable stiff resistance as they progressed across western Kosovo in May. In one incident near Pec, an Ottoman cavalry detachment of fifty men was almost wiped out by Albanian riflemen. Aided by superior firepower, the resistance was ground down, and some of the rebel strongholds and kulas were subdued by artillery fire.²⁷⁷ By the end of May, some of the offending Albanian chiefs had been detained and brought to Uscub, while the remaining

²⁷⁵ Browne to Lansdowne (confidential), July 22, 1903, FO 104/155/48.

²⁷⁶ Report of the Committee on Imperial Defence, February 11, 1903, CAB 17/55.

²⁷⁷ Fontana to Biliotti, May 18, 1903, FO 294/25/36.

resisters had fled into the mountains.²⁷⁸ A relative calm had returned to the city of Salonica in the weeks after the bombings of late March and early April. In early June, Consul-General Biliotti reported that four of the remaining ringleaders of the bombing campaign had been sentenced to death.²⁷⁹ The majority of the Great Power warships had left Salonica harbour by mid-May.²⁸⁰ In St. Petersburg, Count Lamsdorff expressed his happiness with the Ottoman campaign against the rebellious Albanians. He said he felt it was unlikely that either of the Macedonian Committees or the Balkan government would attempt any provocations because Russia had remained unmoved in spite of the Salonica Bombings, the murder of the Russian consul, and the steady reports of Christians being murdered. Ambassador Scott noted that Lamsdorff had been moved to historically-inspired self-congratulation:

He had succeeded in breaking the wave of popular excitement in Russia which had been allowed to get beyond control in 1877, and by doing so, he thought he had rendered a greater service to humanity and peace than if he had actively sympathized with the oppressed Christians in Turkey.²⁸¹

There was, however, still some history to be written for 1903.

Continuing reports of violence and unrest from Macedonia were coupled with destabilizing news from the wider Balkan region. The change in government in Bulgaria was followed by a political shake-up in Greece in late June, when the defection of several members of Prime Minister Theodoros Delyannis's government resulted in a lost vote of confidence for the government.²⁸² Within a few days Georgios Theotokis's new fragile coalition government of was under attack in the parliament as members of the "Athens Mob" loyal to Delyannis rioted in the streets, clashing with Theotokis supporters. The mob took its protest directly to the home of the new prime minister, which had to be defended by troops. British Ambassador Egerton reported that Delyannis and his allies had encouraged the mobs and that shots were fired during a fight between rivals in front

²⁷⁸ Fontana to Biliotti, May 26, 1903, FO 294/25/38. It is important to note that the Albanian resistance was not universal. It was predominantly centred in Western Kosovo and was led by a certain clans. South of the Shar Mountains, the Albanian populations continued to serve the empire loyally and partake in counterinsurgency operations against the Macedonian Committees.

²⁷⁹ Biliotti to O'Connor, June 6, 1903, FO 195/2156/175.

²⁸⁰ Biliotti to O'Connor, May 14, 1903, FO 195/2156/152.

²⁸¹ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), June 10, 1903, FO 65/1660/162.

²⁸² Egerton to Lansdowne, June 26, 1903, FO 32/744/63.

of the parliament.²⁸³ Opposition pressure mounted with news arriving the next day that peasants in the town of Pyrgos in the Western Peloponnese had taken up arms. Theotokis called his government together and announced that either the peasant uprising in Pyrgos must be dealt with forcefully, or the government must resign. They opted for the latter option and Theotokis stepped aside in face of the violent opposition engineered by Delyannis.²⁸⁴ Greece's third government in two weeks was formed a few days later under the leadership of Dimitrios Rallis.²⁸⁵

The situation in Serbia was more serious. On the night of June 10-11, 1903, a party of army officers stormed the royal palace. After an hour-long search they found the royal couple, King Aleksander Obrenović and Queen Draga, who had been hiding in a secret compartment in the royal chamber. After tricking the couple into emerging from their panic room, the officers duly executed them and their mutilated bodies were flung from a window. The assassins were led by Captain Dragutin Dimirijević, the same officer who would direct the Black Hand assassins eleven years later. King Aleksander had been ridiculed for marrying Draga Mašin despite her reputed 'gold-digger' reputation. Furthermore, Queen Draga had urged her husband to purge the Serbian military, which ultimately sparked the regicide.²⁸⁶ The assassination ended the reign of the pro-Austrian Obrenović dynasty and led to the installment of the rival Russophile Karadjordjević family under King Peter I. The British condemned the coup and broke off diplomatic relations with the new Serbian government.²⁸⁷

The Serbian regicide would impact Macedonia as the new government was more nationalistic and was ready to take a greater interest in advancing the Serbian cause in the three vilayets. However, the British disgust with the coup and its grotesque execution were even more damaging to those hoping for the British to initiate a more robust response by the Great Powers in Macedonia. The murders of King Aleksander and

²⁸³ Egerton to Lansdowne, June 26, 1903, FO 32/745/65.

²⁸⁴ Egerton to Lansdowne, July 3, 1903, FO 32/745/67. The riots in Pyrgos ceased on the King's command after the government resigned.

²⁸⁵ Egerton to Lansdowne, July 11, 1903, FO 32/745/69. The life of governments in turn of the century Greece was notorious short, with some lasting only for a few months or even weeks. From 1902 to 1909, Delyannis, Theotokis, and Rallis played a political musical chairs with Theotokis forming three governments apiece and Delyannis taking power twice.

²⁸⁶ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 187-188; Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars*, 33.

²⁸⁷ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 123 (1903): 1172.

Queen Draga as well as the chaotic nature of Greek politics likely affirmed notions that the entire Balkan region was chronically prone to spasms of endemic chaos and violence. In fact a few days after the regicide Ambassador Bonham commented how the death of the royals had been accepted with “unfeeling levity” by the Serbian people.²⁸⁸ Further, Ambassador Egerton in Athens had observed the riots and unrest following the fall of the Delyannis government with some dismay and had described the weakness exhibited by the Theotokis government as “deplorable.”²⁸⁹ Events in Serbia and Greece affirmed the British government’s viewpoint in Macedonia, as elsewhere in the Balkans, one nation or political entity was just as bad as its opponent.

Relations between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire showed small signs of improvement in the late spring. In early June G.D. Natchovitch, a member of past Bulgarian cabinets, arrived in the Ottoman capital on behalf of the Bulgarian government to present a solution to the ongoing Macedonian Crisis. Arguing that the Vienna Program did not go far enough, Natchovitch lobbied for more autonomy for Macedonia. In particular, he argued that the subject populations should be given the right to elect their own mayors and civic officials, who could in turn appoint various municipal officials, including tax collectors. According to the envoy’s reasoning, this would prevent the recurrent abuses that accompanied the collecting of tithes. Natchovitch also hoped the Ottomans would agree to eventually allow Macedo-Bulgarians who had graduated from Bulgarian universities to serve as judges and administrators in Macedonia.²⁹⁰

Ambassador O’Conor reported that Natchovitch had confided to him that he believed Austria-Hungary and Russia were set to occupy and divide the Southern Balkans once Russia had completed with its affairs in the Far East. It was for this reason that the envoy had sought to negotiate secretly and directly with the Ottoman Government. Natchovitch appealed to O’Conor for British support. In response, O’Conor informed him that Britain was committed to the reform process and would not change its policy without consulting with the other powers. O’Conor reported that although the Bulgarian envoy’s ideas might be have “inestimable value” to the reform process, it was

²⁸⁸ Bonham to Lansdowne, June 14, 1903, FO 421/197/402.

²⁸⁹ Egerton to Lansdowne, July 9, 1903, FO 32/745/68; Egerton to Lansdowne, July 11, 1903, FO 32/745/69.

²⁹⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, June 5, 1903, FO 78/5266/323.

highly unlikely that the Ottomans would accept them, especially in light of the Albanians' resistance. Furthermore, he thought Natchovitch to be ill-suited to the task given to him due to his being an outspoken Russophobe and the envoy's foolish attempt to circumvent the Great Power ambassadors by trying to engage in direct and secret negotiations with the Ottoman government. After listening to his proposals, the Ottomans had in fact immediately communicated the information to the Great Power ambassadors, leaving Natchovitch to make what was surely a rather embarrassing round of visits to the embassies.²⁹¹

Natchovitch's mission came to nought. He was politely received by the Ottomans and was granted an audience with Sultan Abdülhamîd. The Ottomans thought favourably of his ideas but maintained they would be impossible to implement given the current conditions in Macedonia. In a meeting with O'Connor before his departure, Natchovitch maintained some hope, maintaining that he although he had "received only vague and empty promises, the road was open for further negotiations on the same lines." O'Connor was less certain, as were Calice and Zinoviev, who considered the Bulgarian's mission to be "fruitless." Calice remarked that he had "consoled M. Natchovitch by telling him that he had, at all events, put the Sultan in better humour with his country."²⁹² Zinoviev snubbed the Bulgarian envoy, expressing that he regretted "to have missed seeing M. Natchovitch when he called, but the moment was inopportune for pressing his demands."²⁹³

In Bulgaria, Natchovitch' mission was seen as the last chance to avert an IMRO uprising. In Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot reported that Prime Minister Petroff was depressed over Natchovitch's failure to obtain a diplomatic breakthrough. Petroff lamented to the British Vice-Consul over the news that the Ottomans promised to enact reforms only once Macedonia was pacified, which was tantamount to sanctioning blackmail, pillage, and killing. He assured Elliot that the Bulgarian government had been doing its utmost to secure the border and exert a pacifying influence on the Macedo-Bulgarians within Bulgaria. However, he warned that if the Ottomans did not alter their policies, "the excitement of the Macedonians in Bulgaria and their friends might become

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² O'Connor to Lansdowne, June 14, 1903, FO 78 5267/340.

²⁹³ Ibid.

uncontrollable, and the Government could not answer for the consequences."²⁹⁴ It is quite likely that IMRO had indicated to Petroff and his government that Natchovitch's mission was the last chance to avert an uprising. From his mission near the frontier in Samokov, the American missionary, Dr. Clarke, wrote that Natchovitch's mission was one reason why IMRO's uprising had been delayed.²⁹⁵ Acting Vice-Consul Heard reported from Philipopolis that he had been informed by his Russian counterpart, Mr. De Westman, that IMRO's chiefs (including Boris Sarfov) had met in early June and resolved to launch a general uprising if Natchovitch's mission failed to produce results.²⁹⁶ What transpired gave credence to these reports.

By the time Natchovitch was prepared to leave Constantinople, the tension and rhetoric between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire was increasing. The steady trickle of refugees arriving from Macedonia was accompanied by a new influx arriving in the east from the Adrianople vilayet, where (Elliot noted) there had been little or no rebel activity.²⁹⁷ By mid-June the Bulgarian government reported that 1,500 refugees had arrived in the eastern Burgas prefecture, with more arriving daily.²⁹⁸ By early July estimates were as high as 4,000. Priests amongst the ranks of the refugees stated that the Ottoman security forces were clearing ethnic Bulgarians in the border regions to eliminate any possible fifth column elements in an anticipated war with Bulgaria.²⁹⁹ The Bulgarian government had also alerted the British and the other powers to the recent deployment of Ottoman troops in the heights opposite the western border near Kustendil. While Elliot had downplayed the presence of the Ottoman troops and suggested to Petroff that it might well be a move to help secure the border, the Bulgarian prime minister feared the Ottoman move was a hostile act and that the troops were only an advance guard of the large Ottoman force which had recently pacified the Albanian

²⁹⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 20, 1903, FO 78/5294/138.

²⁹⁵ Clarke to Elliot, June 19, 1903, FO 78/5294/139.

²⁹⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 6, 1903, FO 78/5294/158.

²⁹⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, May 26, 1903, FO 78/5294/111.

²⁹⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 13, 1903, FO 78/5296/130.

²⁹⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 6, 1903, FO 78/5294/158. The priest said that in the border regions the "barbarity of the Turks is given free reign." However, there was much less activity in the vicinity of the town of Adrianople owing to the deterring presence of the Great Power consuls stationed there. The tension in the area had been further compounded by a border incident which resulted in the deaths of an undetermined number of Ottoman soldiers. See Heard to Elliot, July 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/149.

rebellion in the north of the Vilayet of Kosovo. Elliot cast considerable doubt on the prime minister's concern.³⁰⁰

The Bulgarian complaints also came a day after Elliot reported the explosion of an IMRO bomb factory near Kustendil, which killed five men. Elliot also noted that the Bulgarian government was trying to keep the news of the explosion out of the press.³⁰¹ When Elliot learned that there were three other underground bomb factories in Bulgaria, including one in Sofia, he bluntly told the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior that the authorities should have been able to shut these operations down.³⁰² Regardless of whether this concern was legitimate, the presence of new Ottoman forces near the western border coupled with the influx of refugees in the east enabled the Bulgarian government to deflect attention from fact that IMRO had been operating a bomb factory near the western border with Ottoman Macedonia, which the Bulgarian government was most certainly aware of.

True to form, the British diplomats were quick to make inquiries. Lacking a consular representative in Adrianople, Ambassador O'Connor checked with the French, Austro-Hungarians, and Italians who maintained consuls in the vilayet. Based on their information, he concluded that the reports of the refugees in the Bulgarian Press were "grossly exaggerated."³⁰³ O'Connor had the industrious military attaché Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell submit his own analysis of the deployment of Ottoman troops in the mountains west of Kustendil. Maunsell concluded that the Ottomans could have only deployed troops from Uscub and points eastward, and that the troops totalled no more than 3,500 men. While this was hardly sufficient for an invasion force, Maunsell noted that it was also too strong and concentrated to serve the mere purpose of blocking the passages of insurgents, and that the Bulgarians had some justification for regarding it as a threat to their border positions.³⁰⁴ A day after O'Connor dispatched this information, the Bulgarian government issued a circular to the Great Powers asking them to urge the

³⁰⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/144.

³⁰¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 26, 1903, FO 78/5294/143.

³⁰² Elliot to Lansdowne, July 11, 1903, FO 78/5294/160.

³⁰³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, June 28, 1903, FO 78/5267/363.

³⁰⁴ Memorandum, June 30, 1903, FO 78/5266/376.

Ottoman government to move their massed formations away from the frontier and to expedite the reform process in Macedonia.³⁰⁵

A few days later the Bulgarians declared they had received intelligence that 30,000 Ottoman soldiers had arrived at Kumanovo (just east of Uscub) and were poised to move east towards the Bulgarian border. The Bulgarians were prepared to mobilize if the information was confirmed.³⁰⁶ When Elliot told Petroff a few days later that this intelligence was unsubstantiated, the Bulgarian Prime Minister did not back down. While acknowledging that a full-scale invasion was unlikely, he feared an incursion or another border incident, adding that the mere presence of so many Ottoman troops was unsettling to residents, especially since the troops were being quartered in private homes. He also buttressed his claims of a large invasion force by relating intelligence from a Belgian contractor who was repairing the road between Kumanovo and the Bulgarian border. Petroff said the Ottomans were about to give the Macedo-Bulgarians treatment similar to that they had meted out on the Armenians. He warned that an extermination would be tempered only by the fact that Macedonia was under closer observation from the Great Powers. Petroff's words resonated to some extent with the British vice-consul, who reported that it was "difficult to blame" Petroff for his choice of actions.³⁰⁷ Maunsell's report supported some of the Bulgarian concerns and the tensions along the border were well-known. Referencing intelligence from a Western European (Belgian) source would have given the Bulgarian Prime Minister's words more legitimacy in the eyes of the British diplomat and the obvious reference to the Armenians was an undeniable and recent historical precedent.

Nevertheless, the British found no tangible evidence that such a large force was present in the region or that any more Ottoman troops were about to move towards the Bulgarian frontier. O'Connor stated unequivocally that the report of 30,000 troops in Kumanovo had "no foundation in fact."³⁰⁸ Ottoman ambassador Musrus Pasha visited Lansdowne to formally declare that the Ottoman Empire had no hostile intentions toward Bulgaria and that the Bulgarians were also exaggerating the "imaginary vexations" they

³⁰⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 1, 1903, FO 78/5294/152.

³⁰⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 4, 1903, FO 78/5296/20.

³⁰⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, July 7, 1903, FO 78/5294/159.

³⁰⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 6, 1903, FO 78/5272/108.

were allegedly being subjected to for the purpose of requesting an intervention from the Great Powers.³⁰⁹ Lansdowne told the Ottoman Ambassador that the British would take no action regarding the Bulgarian circular. This information was telegraphed to Sofia and related to the Bulgarian Government two days later.³¹⁰

Although the British did not see any reason to act on the Bulgarian circular, the Russians and the Austro-Hungarians saw fit to address both the Ottomans and the Bulgarians about the matter. These actions led to the Ottomans withdrawing their irregular troops from the frontier region in question. The Bulgarians were cautioned to “observe a peaceful attitude.” Furthermore, Lamsdorff had reportedly blasted the Bulgarians, calling their circular “ridiculous and impudent” and reminding them that since they were still officially a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, they were in no position to object to the Ottomans’ attempts to arrest the passage of guerrilla bands across the frontier. In turn, Lamsdorff told the Ottoman Ambassador that he knew full well their troops had committed atrocities and “could not answer for the consequences if such action were continued.”³¹¹ It seems that Lamsdorff rather enjoyed occasionally indulging some diplomatic bullying of the Ottomans and the Bulgarians. A few days later, a more pointed reprimand came from Count Forgach, the Acting Austro-Hungarian Vice-Consul in Sofia, during a meeting with Prime Minister Petroff. As related by Elliot, Petroff had remarked in conversation with the Austro-Hungarian diplomat that if Bulgaria had executed a partial mobilization, more concessions could have been exacted from the Ottomans:

Count Forgach replied that if the Bulgarian Government had done that they would have deserved a thorough thrashing, and would have probably got it; and went on to read the Minister a severe lecture on the ingratitude he was showing for the efforts of the Powers, which his Excellency took in good part.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, July 9, 1903, FO 421/198/33.

³¹⁰ Ibid; Elliot to Lansdowne, July 11, 1903, FO 78/5294/160. Elliot reported that Prime Minister Petroff recoiled somewhat and said that while the deployment at Kumanovo had not happened, he did have intelligence that the move had been ordered. The French vice-consul was also present at the meeting, and Elliot remarked to him that if the meeting had been interrupted before he informed Petroff of the British decision, there likely would have been no change in the situation.

³¹¹ Johnstone to Lansdowne, July 10, 1903, FO 7/1342/201.

³¹² Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential) July 14, 1903, FO 78/5294/161.

This was hardly the first or last time a Great Power diplomat vented his frustration on a Bulgarian prime minister. In the space of a few days, the prime minister of Bulgaria had been effectively branded a liar and accused of having a potentially callous disregard for the peace and security of the region. Petroff's conduct and the bungled Natchovists mission were seen as acts of amateur diplomacy by the Great Powers. Petroff's willingness to lie and exaggerate so unabashedly gave the British and the powers another example of the tiresome malice and trickery that was seemingly endemic to the Balkans. Vice-Consul Elliot did not display the condescension of the Russian Foreign Minister or the anger of his Austro-Hungarian counterpart, but he did take the opportunity to congratulate Petroff on the peaceful resolution to the crisis. In addition, Elliot pointedly urged Petroff to "take advantage of it to redouble his precautions against the proceedings of the Committee, and especially against the manufacture of dynamite bombs in this country."³¹³

While the Great Powers had diplomatically averted a potential crisis between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, events in Macedonia continued to formidably challenge the powers' efforts to induce peace. Reports of disturbingly violent incidents continued to emerge from the territory, with the steady trickle of refugees crossing into Bulgaria offering human proof of the misery and underlining the need for a more effective reform mandate.

Diplomats with a Difference

By mid-1903, the British seem to have reached the limits of their capabilities to pre-empt conflict in Macedonia. Efforts by the government and the diplomats to forestall an emotionally charged campaign in the media and parliament had been successful. High-level diplomacy had elicited all the right language, but the unpleasant realities on the ground in Macedonia persisted, with Ottoman officials and regional governments alike either powerless or lacking the will to adequately address the respective provocations and reprisals. Obtaining reliable information also continued to be a challenge.

³¹³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential) July 11, 1903, FO 78/5294/160.

One solution was demonstrated by the British consuls in Macedonia. These men represented Britain and recorded their observations of the events, sending streams of information to the British embassy. Some of them went further, investigating alleged crimes and engaging the Ottoman authorities. They projected an authoritative presence while amassing evidence that suggested an uprising was imminent. If a few consuls could have such affect, perhaps a larger force of Europeans invested with power and authority could have a pacifying effect that would encompass the width and length of Macedonia.

Britain's and the Great Power's limited ability to influence and obtain reliable information about events on the ground was what prompted some of the diplomats to call for the deployment of military attachés to go on patrols with the Ottoman gendarmerie. These attachés could serve as witnesses, conduct investigations, and provide the population with a reassuring presence. Biliotti had repeatedly referenced his experiences in Crete in making this recommendation. The ongoing work of the British military attaché Lt. Colonel Maunsell provided precise assessments of military activities. Yet, there was an articulated need for this prospective force to do more than just observe. Ideally, the British envisioned a force of individuals with the fitness, training, and presence of a military officer, and the authority, acumen, and cultural understanding of a diplomat. In many respects, Vice-Consul McGregor possessed several of these desired traits. He spoke Bulgarian, performed his duties with considerable energy and initiative—often conducting his own investigations into alleged atrocities—and displayed a willingness to confront soldiers and officials (at times quite brazenly). In effect, his appointment to Monastir in the late winter of 1903 foreshadowed the work of the 'peacekeepers' who would be deployed in 1904. McGregor's efforts and those of the other British consuls in the region in the months prior to the Ilinden Uprising are therefore worthy of investigation and discussion.

James McGregor began a program of exemplary work shortly after his arrival in Monastir in February of 1903. He conducted investigations into the local riots that followed the Salonica Bombings, during which he recorded his encounters with Ottoman damage control methods. As the violence in the Monastir Vilayet escalated in the spring, McGregor's work and dispatches began to attract more attention from his superiors, especially his investigations into the reports of two alleged massacres.

The first was at the village of Mogila just north of Monastir. On May 23, 1903 Ambassador O'Connor telegraphed Lansdowne with reports that the Ottoman security forces' had annihilated a small IMRO band at Mogila, on May 20. The news that the band and its charismatic leader, Svetkoff, had been wiped out was not terribly noteworthy. What attracted attention were allegations that civilians had been killed, houses had been looted and burned, and dead insurgents had been stripped of their clothing.³¹⁴ Vice-Consul McGregor was able to visit Mogila on the afternoon of May 21 and report his findings at length in two dispatches. He arrived in time to witness the "heartrending" funeral ceremony for the dead insurgents, noting that the corpses had been stripped of their outer garments. However, although the bodies displayed ghastly wounds, he reported that they did not appear to have been mutilated. He also confirmed the deaths of two female civilians and evidence of looting, the destruction of property, and ongoing intimidation by Bashi-Bazouks.³¹⁵ Because of his visit to the village, McGregor was able to contradict an official statement by the Ottoman authorities on the events at Mogila, pointing out in his dispatch that the death of the two women was not mentioned in the Ottoman report, nor was the destruction of property. Furthermore, he noted that the Ottoman statement made no distinction between the deaths of "brigands" and local villagers.³¹⁶

In Constantinople, O'Connor took McGregor's information to the Grand Vizier and brought his attention to the stripping of the corpses and the reports of pillaging. O'Connor warned the Grand Vizier of the potential wrath of the European public's opinion. In response, the Ottoman government sent a memo to O'Connor. This memo maintained that the corpses had not been "stripped," but rather, the uniforms and badges were removed as evidence to confirm to the European consuls that the dead were members of IMRO and not mere bandits.³¹⁷ However, physical evidence of this does not appear to have been produced. In light of McGregor's dispatches, the Ottoman's statements amounted to unconvincing acts of damage control. The Ottomans surely knew they had

³¹⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 23, 1903, FO 78/5272.

³¹⁵ McGregor to Biliotti, May 23, 1903, FO 294/28/54.

³¹⁶ McGregor to Biliotti (confidential), May 25, 1903, FO 294/28/55.

³¹⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 27, 1903, FO 78/5266/304.

blundered by allowing McGregor and his boisterous Russian counterpart to visit Mogila a day following the fighting. They were more careful following the next massacre.

The second, and much larger, massacre involved the near destruction of Smyrdesh, a village on the road between Florina and Kastoria on May 21, 1903. The village was the home of Vasil Chakalaroff, a regional IMRO commander. Chakalaroff and his men often visited and it was known as an IMRO stronghold and essentially a 'no go zone' for the Ottoman authorities. Regardless of their motivations, the Ottomans approached Smyrdesh with a strong contingent of soldiers, supported by four artillery pieces and the accompaniment of local Bashi-Bazouks. It was not clear whether Chakalaroff was still in Smyrdesh at the time of the attack. There were, however, very few able bodied local men present in the village at the time of the attack. Most of the men worked as itinerant stone masons and skilled labourers around the Levant during the summer months. It was a village of considerable wealth, which made it a tempting target. The initial British report stated that 180 villagers were killed or wounded by Albanian Redifs and Bashi-Bazouks in the wake of the raid.³¹⁸

Ambassador O'Connor was quick to make representations to the Sultan for the "savage and cruel" behaviour of the irregular forces. The Sultan promised to launch an investigation and punish the guilty, but noted that the information on precisely what happened at Smyrdesh was conflicting and that he was well aware of the fact that "acts as I [O'Connor] had described would do more harm than anything else to the interests of Turkey."³¹⁹

The details on what had transpired at Smyrdesh were in fact not clear, and nor was information easy to obtain. In the days following, McGregor reported that the Ottoman authorities were remaining "obstinately reticent" and that the few villagers from Smyrdesh who had reached Monastir were "dogged by the police" and fearful of speaking about the events to anyone, least of all to a European consul. McGregor was able to find some witnesses. A former employee of a British insurance company named Dimitraki confirmed the original British casualty figures, adding that only 25 of the village's 285 houses had been left standing. Significantly, according to Dimitraki, no

³¹⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 28, 1903, FO 78/5272/100.

³¹⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, May 29, 1903, FO 78/5272/101.

insurgents had been present in the village since Chakalaroff and his band had left Smyrdesh a day before the Ottomans arrived. Soldiers and Bashi-Bazouks sacked the villages and proceeded to sell the wares of their plunder in regional market towns.³²⁰ Dimitraki's testimonial was seconded by accounts from four Patriarchist peasants who stated that after a bombardment, the Ottoman troops used petroleum to ignite a fire that gutted most of the buildings in the village. This action was accompanied by an "orgy of rape murder and pillage" by Bashi-Bazouks, which the commanding Ottoman officer Khair-ed-Din Bey and his officers were unable to control. The villagers said the Ottomans suffered no losses on account of the there being no resistance.³²¹

The Vali of Monastir presented McGregor with an official statement based on military communiqués, dated May 27. While acknowledging the fire and damage to homes, the Ottoman communiqué stated that the fire originated in houses where ammunition was being stored and was fanned by violent winds. The Ottomans admitted to 81 persons being killed, but noted that these included a Bulgarian captain (Foti) and an insurgent leader (Tyrpo).³²² However, the four peasants maintained that Foti and Tyrpo were merely "poor and insignificant villagers, totally unconnected either to the Macedonian Committees or the Bulgarian army."³²³ McGregor pointed out that the Ottomans made no mention of Chakalaroff and his band, of any rebel fortifications existing, or of weapons seized. McGregor had to further prod the Vali to get him to admit that Albanians troops had been involved in the operation. McGregor deduced that the operation against Smyrdesh amounted to a punitive raid since it was known to be Chakalaroff's headquarters and a centre of rebel propaganda. He therefore commented that the village had been "reduced to submission by the traditional Turkish methods."³²⁴ The known abundance of booty in Smyrdesh likely meant it was not hard to enlist local volunteers in the operation.

³²⁰ McGregor to Biliotti, May 29, 1903, FO 294/28/62.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Official communiqué regarding the Destruction of Smyrdesh, taken down as verbally communicated by the Dragoman of the Vilayet, May 27, 1903, FO 294/28/62.

³²³ McGregor to Biliotti, May 29, 1903, FO 294/28/62.

³²⁴ Ibid.

Under pressure from the Great Powers, the Ottomans did dispatch a commission of inquiry to investigate the events at Smyrdesh. The commission consisted of three Turks and two Greeks, and visited Smyrdesh in early June.³²⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Grand Vizier reported some sixty arrests, the return of stolen property, and the establishment of a fund to rebuild the homes damaged in the events of May 21.³²⁶ The commission's report on the Smyrdesh events was released to the consuls in late June. This account of events differed from the initial Ottoman reports as the commission's report had addressed the omissions pointed out by McGregor. The Ottoman report stated that the Ottoman security forces had moved on Smyrdesh after having received intelligence that Chakalaroff's band was present in the village. Upon their arrival, the Ottoman forces were reportedly engaged by Charkaroff's band and had to use of artillery against the village. Insurgent stores of explosives and ammunition ignited during the course of the fighting, which caused fire to spread through the village. The inferno was further exacerbated by the insurgents, who deliberately set fire to the church and school. While the loss of civilian life was acknowledged, the report also noted the village had long been a hotbed of IMRO activity and had been visited by Boris Sarafov six weeks prior to the May 21 raid. Moreover, the Ottoman report stated that rifles and ammunition had been discovered in the remains of a house. Finally, 90% of the stolen property had been returned to the owners thanks to the initiatives of the Ottoman authorities.³²⁷

To McGregor, the Ottoman report was little more than clumsy damage control. He called it "merely a repetition of previous declarations," with added blame placed on Chakalaroff.³²⁸ McGregor also reported that the Ottoman authorities were very anxious to prevent any non-official accounts of the events from being produced and had prevented a British reporter from getting any closer to the village than the regional centre of Kastoria. The British vice-consul also noted that plans to fund the construction of 100

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, June 16, 1903, FO 78/5267/347. The Grand Vizier did add the caveat that Chakalaroff was still in the vicinity and had visited Smyrdesh. Whether this was true or not, it offset the information he had reported and suggested that the area was still volatile and not safe to be visited by consuls or reporters.

³²⁷ Summary of the Documents embodying the Results of the Inquiry held on the Events at Smyrdesh by the Deputy Governor General, Stefanaki Bey, the Judicial Inspectors, Galib Bey and Pascal Effendi, and the Members of the Court of Appeal, Ali Lutfi Effendi and Alexander Effendi, FO 294/28/89.

³²⁸ McGregor to Biliotti, June 25, 1903, FO 294/28/83.

houses and distribute maize had not been carried out. Furthermore, the very word “Smyrdesh” was being used by Ottoman troops as a threat against villages around the district as they searched for arms.³²⁹ By contrast, in Salonica, Biliotti was pleased with the report and took it at face value, pointing out that it confirmed his assertion that Chakalaroff’s band had been present and that some of the fires had been set by insurgents and accelerated by munitions.³³⁰

Ambassador O’Conor found McGregor’s more thorough and critical work much more impressive than Biliotti’s. In a meeting in early July, he told the Grand Vizier that the Ottoman inquiry had been inadequate in light of McGregor’s reports and analysis. The Grand Vizier attributed this to communication difficulties between the Vali of Monastir and the consuls, but was defensive about disclosing military details. While he admitted that Albanian Redifs had been present and had “been guilty of gross misconduct,” his assurances of punishment were not enough for the British ambassador. O’Conor pointedly concluded that “the evidence does not bear out the conclusion of the Commission that the village was occupied by Chakalaroff and his band at the time, and they admit that no bodies of person not native of the village could be identified among the killed.”³³¹ O’Conor followed up on the punishment of the guilty parties at Smyrdesh a week later in a meeting with the Ottoman minister of Foreign Affairs. There, O’Conor learned that some of those charged had been given sentences of a few months’ imprisonment or hard labour. He did not think these punishments were strong enough to deter potential perpetrators in the future.³³² Lansdowne concurred and issued his approval of O’Conor’s representations later in July.³³³

The Ottomans’ handling of the May 1903 incidents at the villages of Mogila and Smyrdesh illustrates their understanding of the importance of image management and propaganda. Mogila was not well-managed, and the Vali realized his error in allowing consuls and journalists to visit the village a day after the fighting. While the Vali promised to punish the soldiers in question who tried to block the passage of the Russian consul,

³²⁹ McGregor to Biliotti, July 3, 1903, FO 294/28/89.

³³⁰ Biliotti to O’Conor, June 28, 1903, FO 195/2157/199.

³³¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, July 7, 1903, FO 78/5267/384.

³³² O’Conor to Lansdowne, July 14, 1903, FO 78/5267/396.

³³³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, July 30, 1903, FO 421/198/93.

he did not issue any an apology for the soldiers' actions.³³⁴ Considering the care which the Ottomans took to coach the injured after the violence in Monastir city during spring, it is likely the Vali underestimated the extent of what transpired at Mogila. With Smyrdesh, the Ottomans did not make the same mistake. The village was effectively sealed off. Reporters and consuls were not granted access and witnesses were monitored. Although there were inconstancies between the official Ottoman reports and the witness testimonies procured by McGregor, the absence of any authoritative third party that independently investigated the events meant that the Ottomans controlled the flow of information. Therefore, the credibility of witnesses contesting the Ottoman version of the events could always be called into question. The notable added mention of Chakaroff to the investigating commission's report appear clumsy and diminished the Ottoman credibility in the eyes of most of the British diplomats privy to the diplomatic correspondence.

Nevertheless, the Ottoman efforts to manage the situation in their favour and control information were rather similar to measures that the British measures had taken to limit the impact of press reports on the British parliament. What is more, while O'Connor used the spectre of public opinion as a threat, the British officials do not appear to have made many efforts to help get journalists into Smyrdesh or to furnish them with diplomatic reports, which would have given diplomatic authority to the rumours which were circulating at the time. The British government was well aware of the potential ramifications of the news of such incidents not just from past events in the Balkans and the Levant but from the recent experience of its own army in South Africa. The British army in South Africa did not have the equivalent of local Bashi-Bazouks formations to inflict sensational and grotesque acts of violence that would curl the toes of European newspaper readers. However, the army's the punitive campaigns against the Boer farmers, which included the destruction of houses and movable property, as well as forced confinement, were no less devastating to the Boers than what the Ottomans inflicted on the villagers of the Macedonia. It took a self-appointed commission of British

³³⁴ McGregor to Biliotti, May 25, 1903, FO 294/28/56.

women (the Fawcett Commission) to expose the cruelties the British army was inflicting on the Boer population, which resulted in severe embarrassment for the government.³³⁵

What actually happened at Smyrdesch on May 21, 1903 was never clearly established, not even in hindsight. H. N. Brailsford later wrote that the raid was deliberately conducted with Bashi-Bazouks for the express purpose plundering a village that was both troublesome and wealthy.³³⁶ Yet even Brailsford, who was partial to the insurgent cause, wrote that he was not certain whether members of Chakaroff's band were present in the village at the time of the raid.³³⁷ In any case, the raid and sacking of the village struck enough fear into the population of the region that IMRO bands experienced difficulty obtaining food from other villages and had to resort to force to get the support they desired. The Ottoman authorities also began to enjoy some success in their counterinsurgency efforts in June and some villages surrendered stashes of weapons.³³⁸

The Ottomans were acquitting themselves rather well in the propaganda war with the Macedonian Committees. The more astute officials like Tevfik Pasha and Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and Sultan Abdülhamîd himself knew well enough to tell the powers what they wanted to hear and even to supply them with the necessary supporting evidence. In early June, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha informed Vice-Consul Fontana in Uscub that he had obtained IMRO pamphlets printed in Bulgaria that implicating locals and gave fresh directions to the rebel bands, including instructions on the use of dynamite, and orders to kill Christians hostile to IMRO. They are also advised to try and attribute blame for these actions on Muslims. In addition, the pamphlet allegedly instructed members to compel the heads of villages to make complaints about the abusive conduct of Ottoman troops, should any arrive in their village.³³⁹ These pamphlets appear to have had as much to do with image management and propaganda as military preparations. In response, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha promised to issue an amnesty for anyone wishing to turn in armaments to

³³⁵ Simpson, *Unreliable Sources*, 42-44.

³³⁶ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 145. The plunder would have served as a reward to the Bashi-Bazouks.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 146 n. 1.

³³⁸ Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 97; McGregor to Biliotti, June 14, 1903, FO 294/28/73.

³³⁹ Fontana to Biliotti, June 1, 1903, FO 294/25/39.

the authorities.³⁴⁰ Two weeks later, McGregor reported that Ottoman troops had killed several insurgents and seized IMRO documents, including pamphlets similar to those obtained in Uscub and a cypher. In July, the Ottomans passed along more captured pamphlets to the British, which included detailed medical instructions on how to treat wounds, instructions and reasons for bombing railways and telegraph lines, and a copy of IMRO's constitution.³⁴¹

The sharing of this intelligence on the elusive revolutionary organization could not help but have a positive effect as it gave the British and the powers added confirmation that an insurrection was forthcoming. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was particularly attuned to the Great Power's sensitivities and the requirements of the security situation. In July he visited the regions along the Bulgarian border for the ostensible purpose of dealing with the refugee situation. He also withdrew the Redif battalions from the frontier regions, which appeared as an act of de-escalation that in fact put the Redifs closer to where they would be needed—in the Macedonian interior.³⁴²

Of all the parties of interest in Macedonia, IMRO was the hardest for the British to contact and influence. The signals the British were receiving on IMRO were rather contradictory. By late spring, the organization was expressing outward exasperation with the reform process and cynicism towards the Great Powers for abandoning Macedonia to its fate at the hands of the Ottoman security forces. Yet, at least some members of the organization still clung to the expectation that some of the Great Powers, or at very least Bulgaria, would come to its rescue once the inevitable reports of atrocities began to circulate. In early June, British officials reported on large pro-Macedonia meetings in Sofia and Philipopolis. During these meetings the Bulgarian government was implored to forcefully intervene in Macedonia and supporters were called upon to appeal to foreign governments and the international press to embrace the Macedonian cause.³⁴³ At a meeting in Sofia, Stoyan Mikhailovski, the former president of the Supreme Committee, criticized Russia and said that the Western Powers, namely France and Great Britain,

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 7, 1903, FO 78/5267/383; McGregor to Biliotti, July 3, 1903, FO 294/28/89; Biliotti to O'Connor, June 27, 1903, FO 195/2157/198.

³⁴² Elliot to Lansdowne, July 11, 1903, FO 78/5272/21.

³⁴³ Heard to Elliot, June 2, 1903, FO 78/5294/122.

were the only disinterested powers.³⁴⁴ However, those within the IMRO ranks had a feeling that outside support might not be forthcoming. In a newspaper article an unnamed IMRO member voiced his frustration at Europe's indifference to the Macedonian cause. Citing the atrocities at Smyrdesh in comparison to the Salonica bombings, the writer lamented that the walls of a bank were of more value to the Europeans than the lives of Macedonian villagers. He warned that "European public opinion must not, therefore, be surprised when the revolutionaries adopt means, the results of which will be terrible and will not even spare Europe, but for which Europe herself will chiefly be to blame."³⁴⁵

The British consuls gathered what intelligence they could on IMRO. From what the British were hearing, IMRO was exhibiting a stubborn resolve that bordered on nihilism. From Uscub, Vice-Consul Fontana reported that IMRO was prepared to settle for nothing less than an autonomous status for Macedonia akin to the status of Bulgaria.³⁴⁶ From Sofia came news that that *The Times* correspondent James Bouchier had received word from his source in IMRO that preparations for a general uprising were underway.³⁴⁷ A week later, Biliotti reported on intelligence obtained about IMRO activity in the Kilkis and Serres region north and east of Salonica. Although the bands in the area had not fared well, his sources informed him that there some 60 Macedonian bands were well-armed and supplied and ready to commence an uprising when the signal was given.³⁴⁸ Later in June, the American missionary Dr. Clarke wrote that the events of the spring had delayed the date of IMRO's uprising, but it could not be postponed much longer and would likely take place during or after the harvest. He stated: "The wrongs are too great; the feelings of the people both in Bulgaria and Macedonia are too deep."

³⁴⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 9, 1903, FO 78/5294/126. The meetings were described as emotional affairs. Heard noted that despite the blatantly pro-IMRO nature of the meetings in region, the Bulgarian government made no attempt to stop the meetings.

³⁴⁵ Extract from the "Information" of June 3, 1903, FO 7/1339/153.

³⁴⁶ Fontana to Biliotti, June 1, 1903, FO 294/25/39. Fontana noted the existence of a certain urban-rural divide between peasants who loathed the rule of "the Turk" but lacked the nationalistic zeal and commitment of the urban elites and particularly the teachers and pupils in the Exarchate school system.

³⁴⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, June 2, 1903, FO 78/5294/119. Bouchier also reported that there were signs a uprising was imminent in the revolutionary newspapers, including a threat to sow the water supplies of Salonica and Constantinople with plague.

³⁴⁸ Biliotti to O'Connor, June 9, 1903, FO 195/2156/182.

Clarke confessed his sympathy for the rebels and commented that several members of his protestant flock were dedicated members of IMRO. Nevertheless, he did not think the rebels had much of a chance of success.³⁴⁹ The British were gathering correct information that events had been set in motion and that there was little they or anyone else could do to prevent or dissuade the uprising from taking place. In mid-July, McGregor reported several obvious signs that an uprising was afoot. Insurgent ranks around Monastir were being swelled by recruits and the leading IMRO members had town left with the organization's archives in tow.³⁵⁰ McGregor related details of the following conversation, which he had with one of the local "inexperienced enthusiasts":

I had a conversation recently with one of the latter, who came to see me with the purpose of ascertaining what the attitude of His Majesty's Government would be in the event of a general rising, and, on my replying that the Committee might expect no countenance of any kind, stated that he and his friends could not believe that England would remain indifferent; but that, happen what might, an insurrection had been decided upon. They preferred death to gradual extermination.³⁵¹

If the British needed any further evidence that the uprising was imminent, the Ottomans happily supplied them with the aforementioned IMRO pamphlets, which provided instructions on dynamiting railroads, framing Muslims for killing Christians, lying under oath, and treatment of the wounded. The Ottomans probably chose to divulge a particular selection of pamphlets to the British. While one pamphlet stated that England was sympathetic, another spoke of the struggle against tyranny and referenced the "valiant nation, that hardly race, the Boers, who defended their country with such courage, who fought undismayed for three years and killed a number of Englishmen equal to the whole of their own population."³⁵² The second article of the pamphlet, entitled "Who Requires Reform in Turkey?" stated the following objective: "The

³⁴⁹ Clarke to Elliot, June 19, 1903, FO 78/5294/139. Clarke wrote that the rift between IMRO and the SMC would hinder the chances of the uprising's success. He also put some stock in the effectiveness of the Ottoman security forces owing to the presence of German officers heading some of the units partaking in the counterinsurgency. "I fear much bloodshed will come [here be there] a change in the situation; and I am not sanguine that the Bulgarians will succeed. The German leaders will be likely to make careful plans, and the Bulgarians are not united, nor do they seem to seek aid of God."

³⁵⁰ McGregor to Biliotti, July 10, 1903, FO 294/28/91.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Resume by Mr, Blech of Pamphlets, FO 78/5267/383; Introduction to the "Treatise on the Use of Explosives and the Art of Destruction," FO 195/2157/198.

Macedonians must prove to their enemies, both in the Balkans and of the Great Powers, that they are no longer a savage race.”³⁵³ However, on the eve of the Ilinden Uprising, IMRO and its followers had still not gotten their message across. They had been bettered and outmaneuvered by the Ottomans in the battle to curry the favour of the British and the Great Powers’ governments. At the same time, the British and the Great Powers’ governments had worked to undermine IMRO’s international appeal and cajole the Ottoman and Bulgarian governments into actions to thwart IMRO. Furthermore, the unabashed recklessness which IMRO had repeatedly demonstrated only served to confirm the view that although some of the Ottomans and their methods were despicable, other members of the Ottoman government and administration were reasonable and at least open to reform. In short, the Ottomans were reformable, whereas IMRO was fanatical.

Anyone paying attention to the diplomatic reports realized that the Ilinden Uprising of August of 1903 was the worst kept secret in the Balkans. The Bulgarian prime minister even foretold it a day before it was announced in order to help dispel rumours of another round of impending bomb attacks in Salonica.³⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the Austro-Hungarians based their actions on the hope that at least, the worst was over for 1903. In early June, Goluchowski told the British ambassador that he doubted the Macedonian Committees would attempt to rise due to fact that the Salonica Bombings had failed to move public opinion in Europe. He noted a decrease in number of telegrams from the Austro-Hungarian consuls in the Balkans and announced that the last Austrian warship had been ordered to leave Salonica harbour. Ambassador Plunkett expressed some surprise, and alluded to the recent violence in Mogila and Smyrdesh. Goluchowski admitted to Plunkett that his government had made representations to the Ottoman government. He made no further mention of the incidents, which suggested that he did not attach much importance to them. In late July the Austro-Hungarians and Russians formally urged the Ottomans to stop employing irregular soldiers.³⁵⁵ Although the Austro-Hungarians were concerned about possible “aggressive action” by the Macedonian Committees after the harvest, they expected that any such action would

³⁵³ Resume by Mr, Blech of Pamphlets, FO 78/5267/383.

³⁵⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, August 1, 1903, FO 78/5294/175.

³⁵⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne, July 28, 1903, FO 7/1342/53.

likely be minimal, akin in significance to the Salonica Bombings, and that there was no immediate threat to the security of the Balkans.³⁵⁶

In light of the British reports and the intelligence they had gathered, the actions and attitudes of the Austro-Hungarians seem odd and even naively optimistic. Although high-level diplomacy was—as is often the case—behind the pace of events on the ground, there was no shortage of tangible intelligence that IMRO was about to make a significant move. The sheer saturation of repeated warnings of an uprising may have affected an attitude of indifference, and the conventional wisdom that Balkan uprisings take place in the spring may have done the same. However, there may well have been more to the Austro-Hungarian actions than what was initially apparent. In his study of Austro-Hungarian reform policy, Angelos Chotzidis' argues that the Austro-Hungarians likely felt that it was in their interest to sustain "a controlled and very promising crisis which would not, however, excite, the compassion of European public opinion."³⁵⁷ According to Chotzidis, the Austro-Hungarians maintained this policy into the Mürzsteg reforms. The policy reflected the Balplatz's desire to maintain its influential position through limited reforms that would not address the underlying causes of the Macedonian conflict and would retain Austria-Hungary and its conservative partner Russia as the executives of the reform process.³⁵⁸ In pursuing reform initiatives, the British would have to work against the bureaucratic resistance of not only the Ottomans, but also the conservative Great Powers.

The increasing reports of an imminent uprising in mid-1903 confirmed the original British assessments that the Vienna Program reforms were woefully inadequate for bringing stability to Ottoman Macedonia. In Uscub, Inspector General Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha continued to impress the British representative with his work ethic. The pasha's doctor told Fontana that he "greatly feared that Hilmi Pasha will break down if he continues to work so incessantly without change and sufficient rest." The Inspector General had overseen the deportation of some 80 Albanians who had participated in the spring insurrection and was contemplating the exile of some 250 incarcerated Macedo-

³⁵⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne, July 30, 1903, FO 7/1340/220.

³⁵⁷ Angelos A. Chotzidis, "A Re-appraisal of the Austro-Hungarian Reform Policy in Macedonia (1903)," *Balkan Studies* 37: 2 (1996): 269.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Bulgarians. The Austro-Hungarian and Russian consuls were appealing for the release of the detained men.³⁵⁹ There were more new cases than the Ottoman courts could keep up with. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha could claim success for his work in Kosovo, but he could not allege the same for Macedonia, where the situation was deteriorating. Although some of his military engagements with IMRO had been successfully and his forces had seized documents and weapons as well as made arrests, rebel activity was ongoing and political assassinations continued to take place in the streets of Uscub.³⁶⁰

A Swedish officer and a Norwegian officer entered this chaos in June as part of the multinational force to train the Ottoman gendarmerie. Fontana found their arrival so unremarkable that he afforded them only a sentence of acknowledgement in his despatch.³⁶¹ The few men of the 'peacekeeping' force, of whom much was expected, were to be utterly overwhelmed. Lacking an effective mandate to carry out their tasks and knowledge of the country and its languages, they had little chance of success. Shortly upon arriving they found themselves confronted by the opening of the third and largest insurrection in the three vilayets in the past ten months. As a result, they would become the very symbol of the inadequacy of the reforms.

In contrast, the British could look to their consul in Monastir as an example of how an assertive external agent could use his will to demand accountability from the authorities while gathering information and making his country's presence known. McGregor's visit to the village of Mogila the day after the events of May 20, 1903 gave the British their own account of what transpired, which enabled them to take issue with the accounts provided by the Ottomans. McGregor also made representations to the Vali of Monastir about the menacing presence of armed Albanian soldiers in the streets.³⁶²

In June, McGregor reported on the poor behaviour of Ottoman soldiers, who were often accused of "petty pilfering and persecution at the expense of the Christians." McGregor witnessed one such incident wherein a group of soldiers refused to pay their bill at a cafe and left with some of the furniture after smashing glasses and plates. When

³⁵⁹ Fontana to Biliotti, July 2, 1903, FO 294/28/45.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² McGregor to Biliotti, May 23, 1903, FO 294/28/54.

the consul questioned the owner of the cafe, he was verbally assailed by a group of Ottoman military cadets. He took his complaints to the Vali, who promised to station more military police in streets of the city.³⁶³ Later in the month, McGregor and his deputy, the dragoman Mr. Pissurica, visited a number of villagers who had been badly beaten by Ottoman soldiers and the Monastir police. McGregor concluded that many of the beatings had been unprovoked and that all were excessive. After making sure the victims were attended to by a competent doctor, McGregor visited the Vali to bring his attention to “these acts of stupid cruelty” and to lodge complaints about the conduct of a district police commissioner and the municipal doctor, who had failed to adequately treat the victims. McGregor told the Vali he would hold him responsible for any further mistreatments of villagers and urged the Vali to conduct an inquiry into the conduct of his troops. McGregor also reported that the district police commissioner was dismissed at his request. Nonetheless, the British the vice-consul remained unsatisfied with the speed and the diligence with which the Vali conducted his affairs.³⁶⁴

A week later McGregor lamented the fact that the Vali had not sent support to Patriarchist villages that had requested assistance in their defence against IMRO. Without the forces of the state to defend them, the leaders in one of the villages were shot and the remainder of the inhabitants were forced to transfer their allegiances to IMRO. McGregor noted with some dismay that the Vali had not taken effective and timely action and that a Patriarchist village near Monastir had welcomed an IMRO band.³⁶⁵ McGregor’s disappointment with the Vali of Monastir got the attention of the foreign secretary, who ordered Ambassador O’Conor to bring the matter to the attention of the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs.³⁶⁶ However, by the time the representations were made, the events in question had been overshadowed by the Ilinden Uprising.

Vice-Consul McGregor’s work provided evidence of the advantages of having an energetic and competent British presence in the midst of a volatile region. During the few months he had been posted in Monastir, McGregor provided a rich source of intelligence for the British, including a first-hand report on the events at Mogila. He kept close record

³⁶³ McGregor to Biliotti, June 8, 1903, FO 294/28/69.

³⁶⁴ McGregor to Biliotti, June 17, 1903, FO 294/28/75.

³⁶⁵ McGregor to Biliotti, June 23, 1903, FO 294/28/81.

³⁶⁶ Lansdowne to O’Conor, July 21, 1903, FO 421/198/80.

of events in Monastir and was able to obtain information on happenings in the nearby villages through his subordinates and a network of contacts and witnesses. His experience in the region undoubtedly aided him as did the fact that he was fluent in Bulgarian. Although he had no legal authority, it is salient to note that on some occasions, his words held weight with the Ottoman authorities. He was supported by the foreign secretary, who read his dispatches and used diplomacy to back his man in Monastir up, a fact that was certainly known by the Vali and the Ottoman administrators in the region. In essence, McGregor's record gave credence to Alfred Biliotti's point that an official British presence in the Macedonian hinterland could procure information, conduct investigations, hold authorities to account, and have a pacifying effect on combatants and the population in general. McGregor and his work provided an example of how a larger group of capable Great Power officials might be able to keep the peace.

Although the British consuls' loyalty to the British crown was unquestionable, they had significant differences in styles and attitudes. Most of them exhibited some tendency to sympathize with the locals in the places they were located, at least to a certain extent. In Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot largely sympathized with the Bulgarian government over the challenges it faced vis-a-vis Macedonia and the Macedonian Committees. He did occasionally express frustration over the ineffectiveness the Bulgarian authorities displayed when it came to effectively cracking down on the Macedonian organizations. However, he was quite aware that the precarious nature of the Bulgarian political landscape could easily lead to a pro-Macedonian coup, which would in turn likely initiate a rapid escalation in domestic and regional tension. Despite their shortcomings, the Danev and Petroff governments were preferable, warts and all.

Elliot does not appear to have ventured from Sofia much during this time. His consuls in Ruse, Varna, and Philipopolis were well-positioned to monitor strategic points in Bulgaria and produced reports that addressed accusations made by the Ottoman government about the security of the frontier and the conditions of the Muslim and Turk populations. Although the British maintained no consular presence in the border towns near the Macedonian frontier, Elliot received plenty of communication from the American missionaries living in the area. He also procured intelligence from British journalists, notably the veteran *Times* correspondent James Bouchier, who had contacts in IMRO. Given the close proximity of Sofia to the frontier, it is surprising that Elliot did not

undertake trips to the region, especially during the refugee influx after the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. Perhaps he feared being abducted, knowing that IMRO and the SMC by and large did as they pleased in the area.

In Macedonia, Sir Alfred Biliotti oversaw four consuls from his premises in Salonica. Mr. Theoderides in Serres was a local Greek and had relatively little to report of note, save for his reports on the Gorna Dzhumaia events and the intimidation he received after the publication of his dispatches in the Blue Books. Drama, Kavala and their environs in the east remained relatively quiet. As discussed, McGregor's posting to the reopened consulate in Monastir appears to have revitalized the vice-consul as he preformed his job energetically, utilizing a network of contacts to obtain information and conducting his own investigations into alleged atrocities and the mistreatment of civilians. Although he was critical of the Ottomans, McGregor was not sympathetic to IMRO. He expressed empathy for all the civilian victims of violence and took an active interest in defusing tensions.

In Uscub, Raphael Fontana led a busy if less assertive life in the presence of the Ottoman Inspector General Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha. Like Elliot, he does not seem to have strayed too far from the British consulate. Nor does he appear to have expressed much in the way of favouritism. He had little sympathy for the Albanians and made few efforts to obtain information from them. While he mistrusted the methods of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, he was impressed by the dedication the Inspector General devoted to his job. If Fontana was biased, it was in favour of the Ottoman security personnel, who faced multiple foes and had to deal with scrutiny and provocation. Fontana expressed his regret that a very capable Ottoman kaimakam, Rassim Effendi, had recently been dismissed from his post for handcuffing the mother of a known "Albanian brignad—an action not permitted under Islamic law."³⁶⁷

In Salonica, Sir Alfred Biliotti was in the final months of his British Foreign Service career, but he did not relent in his harsh criticism of the Macedonian Committees and his support for the Ottoman security forces. Biliotti's views had been hardened by the aftermath of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and the terms of the Vienna Reform

³⁶⁷ Summary of Consular Despatches not sent to Foreign Office during month, March 15 to April 15, 1903, FO 78/5265/206.

Program. Vocally critical of the amnesty for the rebel combatants, he continued to maintain that reform could only come to Macedonia after the Ottoman security forces had crushed the rebels. In Biliotti's opinion, the Ottomans should have been allowed to subdue the rebels with known IMRO members being sent into exile.³⁶⁸ However, it seems Biliotti's word carried less weight as time went on. While Lansdowne defended him over the accusations levelled by Frederick Moore of the *New York Tribune*, it is likely that O'Connor and Lansdowne began to view their vice-consul in Salonica with some concern. In the aftermath of the Smyrdesh massacre, Biliotti expressed uncritical and unqualified support for the Ottoman version of the events. This contrasted with the more nuanced and thorough position of Vice-Consul McGregor, and O'Connor's and Lansdowne's agreement to act on McGregor's words indicate that they were content to let Biliotti cross off the days on the calendar as he approached his retirement in July. In fact, McGregor may have been sent to Monastir to provide an alternative assessment of the events in Macedonia to that of Biliotti. Robert Graves took over the position of Consul-General in Salonica in July, and later wrote in his memoirs that his predecessor's information networks were dominated by Greeks.³⁶⁹ This gives another clue as to why the tone of Biliotti's reports were so pro-Ottoman, since most Greeks at this time were largely in league with the Ottomans to stop IMRO. Given the conflicting interpretations produced by his own staff, it should not be surprising that Ambassador O'Connor remarked that there was "little to choose" between the Ottoman and the Bulgarian accounts of the events.³⁷⁰

Differences in style and ability aside, the British consuls in Macedonia had proven themselves to be indispensable. Moreover, McGregor's and Maunsell's energetic endeavours proved Biliotti's points regarding the benefits of having officers deployed in Crete. The advantages of having an official European presence in Macedonia were becoming clear to several British politicians and diplomats watching the events in Macedonia—be it the deployment of military officers, an increased number of consuls, or the presence of more military attachés.

³⁶⁸ Biliotti to O'Connor (confidential), July 9, 1903, FO 195/2157; Biliotti to O'Connor, July 17, 1903, FO 195/2157/218.

³⁶⁹ Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East*, 197.

³⁷⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), June 30, 1903, FO 78/5267/374.

Conclusion

Considering the pertinent circumstances and the structural constraints, it is difficult to envision that the British could have done more to pre-empt the uprising which was to come in August of 1903. The British were most effective was in the propaganda and information battles. By discrediting provocative news reports, controlling the flow of information, and maintaining a disparaging rhetoric of Balkanisms, the government and the Foreign Office had neutralized any tangible domestic sympathy by mid-1903. As a result, only the fringes of the opposition were expressing any support for the rebels' cause, and no individual with the celebrity stature of Byron or Gladstone had emerged to champion the cause of 'Macedonia for the Macedonians.' In Britain and in the other Great Power countries, the political landscape was unsympathetic to the Macedonian Committees. The chances of IMRO eliciting the necessary empathy to affect political deliverance were about as poor as the organization's odds of defeating the Ottoman army in the field without outside help.

Pre-empting the rebellion in Macedonia was more of a challenge for the British. British diplomats could exert little pressure on IMRO and could only rather indirectly urge the Bulgarian government to be vigilant. If the British could not influence IMRO at its sources, they could limit the effectiveness and appeal of its message. The British hoped that urging the Ottomans to pursue reform would persuade IMRO's constituents to not take up the fight, and that the consistent messages and outward diplomatic solidarity of the Great Powers would also mitigate the rebels' appeal. These measures had at best a limited effect, and they did not stunt IMRO's logistical capabilities.

IMRO's stated intention to provoke massacres, the ongoing instability in the Macedonian vilayets, and the inadequacy of the Vienna Reform Programs, led several British officials to the conclusion that an expanded presence of uniformed Europeans was the solution to stabilizing the situation on the ground. It was clear that the small force of Scandinavian officers was not adequate. The events of Ilinden Uprising would serve to further confirm this belief and strengthen British resolve to realize the creation of some sort of 'peacekeeping' force.

Chapter 5. Uprising and Reform Part II: From the Ilinden Uprising to the Mürzsteg Reform Program

A person on whom every reliance may be placed has informed the French Consul that the Committee, disheartened by the failure of the Russian Consul's death to bring about intervention, and discouraged by the fall of Krushevo, has decided to throw bombs among the authorities and the Consuls on Thursday morning, on the occasion of the Russian Consul's funeral procession; the Committee hopes by this act to provoke a massacre.¹

Vice-Consul James McGregor

The political questions in Macedonia can wait; this question of elementary human rights cannot.²

The Manchester Guardian

Introduction

The Ilinden Uprising in August 1903 presented the British government with its most serious challenge in the succession of crises in Macedonia, which had begun in October 1902. Centred in the Vilayet of Monastir, the uprising enjoyed some initial success before the superior numbers and firepower of the Ottoman security forces overwhelmed the rebel strongholds. IMRO continued its guerilla campaign into the autumn. The fighting produced atrocities, large-scale destruction of property, and mass displacement. By late September some 60,000 people had been left homeless and hungry amidst the cooling temperatures. Hoping to mitigate a humanitarian disaster and create a durable peace, the Austro-Hungarians and Russians promulgated the Mürzsteg Reform Program in October 1903, helping to bring some relief to the beleaguered population and creating the mandate for officers from the European powers to train the Ottoman gendarmerie. Though not present at the conference in Mürzsteg, the British government made its presence felt and received credit for emboldening the reforms. The

¹ McGregor to O'Connor, August 18, 1903, FO 78/5268/501.

² "Editorial 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 27, 1903, 4.

British navigated the crisis well, averting potential disaster and taking a series of steps which positioned them to benefit from the crisis.

This chapter will provide a detailed thematic examination of the British response to the Ilinden Uprising, showing how the British conducted an effective and even advantageous management of the crisis. The British government was prepared for the events of the Ilinden Uprising. Capable consuls were on the ground, a naval presence was nearby, and the British public had been well informed of the intricacies and complexities of the Macedonian conflict. This allowed the British to respond effectively and authoritatively in the early days of the uprising, offering solutions through diplomacy and addressing domestic critics with well informed statements. The British were able to marginalize IMRO's political message and present the rebels as terrorists; in a few instances, they advised the Ottoman government to respond to particular news stories. In time, the mounting news reports and documented evidence of atrocities, and an impending humanitarian disaster pushed the British government to take a more assertive position and publically express its wishes for the reforms to be enlarged and emboldened. By doing so, the British government won over many of its domestic critics and used this sentiment and the evidence collected on the ground to press its points for more reform, some of which were very similar to the points in the Mürzsteg Reform Program of October 1903.

The key question in the British response to the crisis in Macedonia is what prompted the apparent shift from being passive to taking the lead in advocating for more reform. The historiography suggests that the media and public opinion weighted heavily in the decision, and that the British also saw a chance to increase their influence in the region. While these points certainly factored in the decision, it is important to consider other dynamics. The British had already expressed their displeasure with the reforms; and most of the domestic criticism was relatively moderate and did not call for aggressive military intervention. What is more, the British government had ample evidence from its own sources that atrocities were being committed. Is it fair to assume that the decision to press for reform was an act of cold political calculation devoid of any genuine compassion? Perhaps, but perhaps not. The reasoning for the British policy shift will be studied carefully here.

This chapter will begin with a brief background on IMRO's decision to launch the Ilinden Uprising and an overview of the principal events of the conflict. This will be followed by a look at the opening weeks of the conflict, which saw the crisis in Macedonia become further internationalized with the killing of the Russian vice-consul in Monastir. From this point the chapter will proceed thematically, presenting the challenges faced and addressed by the British government domestically, on the ground in Macedonia, and in the arena of diplomacy. Finally, there will be a discussion of the British contributions to the Mürzsteg Reform Program, and some concluding remarks on the shift towards a more interventionist policy and Britain's approach to the crisis.

IMRO and Its Politics

The Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and its aftermath had brought IMRO more attention and had put the organization under intensified pressure. In places, the uprising of late 1902 had brought IMRO into clashes with SMC units. IMRO had prevailed in these armed encounters and had successfully resisted the political attempts by the Sofia-based organization to co-opt its constituents in Macedonia. Nonetheless, these events had a weakening effect on IMRO. Any element of surprise had been lost. In the preceding months, IMRO's leadership was hindered by the authorities of the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. Under factional pressure from within and fearing a loss of credibility amongst its supporters, IMRO launched the ill-fated Ilinden Uprising, from which it never recover. The organization would face increased and multi-factional opposition and would be riven by internal divisions.

The immediate military consequence for IMRO following the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising was an increase in Ottoman troop strength in Macedonia. The Ottomans mobilized local security units and brought in extra troops, numbering some 300,000 by mid-1903. In addition to this, IMRO faced resistance from new formations of Greek guerrillas on its southern flank, who were working cooperatively with Ottoman authorities. Patriarchist Bishop Germanos Karavangelis had turned the city of Kastoria into a Greek stronghold and was actively persuading nearby villages, which had gone over to the Exarchate to return to the Patriarchist fold, lest they should incur the wrath of the Ottoman security forces. The Serbians were also moving to counteract IMRO. In Bulgaria, IMRO lacked tangible support from the government, and Tsonchev and the

military men of the SMC still sought to control IMRO for their own means. The Exarchate remained quietly resentful of being IMRO's instrument. On the European stage, the Great Powers had maintained a clear message of non-support aside from the antics of the Russian Vice-Consul Bakhmetieff. To make matters worse, IMRO's message had failed to gain much traction with European public opinion. The organization had to decide whether it could afford to act in 1903, or, indeed, whether it could afford not to act.

An important consideration in the timing of IMRO's ultimate decisions to launch its uprising in 1903 was the fact that its Central Committee was under the control of former adversary Ivan Garvanov. A native of central Bulgaria and a physics teacher by profession, Garvanov had headed the Revolutionary Brotherhood, the pro-Exarchate organization which had endeavoured to counteract IMRO's influence. In 1899-1900, Garvanov and his colleagues had plotted the assassination of several IMRO leaders. IMRO hatched similar conspiracies in turn, including a plot to kill Garvanov. Thanks to SMC mediation, the Revolutionary Brotherhood was merged into IMRO in the fall of 1900. When IMRO came under increased scrutiny in 1901, a year which saw many of its members arrested or in hiding, leadership of the Central Committee was turned over to Garvanov. As noted by Perry, "What [I]MRO leaders thought they would realize from the merger was peace and one less enemy; what they actually gained was a Trojan horse."³

In the aftermath of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising in late 1902, Garvanov resolved that IMRO should take action in 1903. A congress was called for January 1903 in Salonica. Garvanov reasoned that the organization should make its move before the Ottomans initiated another crackdown. The decision was made at the congress to launch a revolt in the spring. However, several of IMRO's founders were not pleased with the decision, and most of them had not been able to attend the Salonica congress, where pro-Garvanov delegates held sway. The most vocal critics were long-time IMRO stalwarts Giorche Petrov and Gotce Delchev, who argued that the organizations followers were not ready for an uprising, as they lacked both the necessary equipment and training. With the general amnesty coming into effect in accordance with the Vienna

³ Duncan Perry, "Igor Garvanov, Architect of Ilinden," *East European Quarterly* 19, 4 (1985): 407.

Program, Delchev and Damian Gruev were able to meet with Garvanov and have the start of the uprising postponed until after the summer harvest. They also decided to limit the uprising to the confines of the Vilayet of Monastir, where the population was most sympathetic and the terrain favourable to guerrilla warfare. It was also a point distant from the main Ottoman troop concentrations, which were in the upper regions of the Vilayet of Kosovo and along the border of Bulgaria. Furthermore, by revolting in the westerly Vilayet of Monastir, it was hoped the uprising would be interpreted as being as uniquely Macedonian and not linked to Bulgaria. The plans were finalized at a congress in the town of Smilevo in early May. Word was circulated in the organization that the uprising would receive Bulgarian and Russian support, but this was a promise the executive would have known was a false hope. As discussed, many of the prominent members of IMRO and the SMC had become disappointed with Russia. Their hopes turned towards Britain as the power most likely to be sympathetic. Knowing it could not defeat the Ottoman security forces in open battle, IMRO planned to wage a guerrilla campaign with the hope of holding out long enough for a groundswell of public support in Britain, and possibly France and Italy, to manifest itself.

The intrigue surrounding the planning of the Ilinden Uprising was apparent from the outset. While there was validity in Garvanov's assessment that the organization would only be weakened if it delayed the uprising, Petrov's and Delchev's concerns about the population's preparedness were very well founded. As argued by Perry, it is quite likely that Garvanov pushed for the revolt, knowing the chance of success was slim and that the weakened remains of IMRO would be forced to regroup under the SMC banner. It is not surprising that Petrov and Garvanov articulated opposing viewpoints, as they had been plotting each other's assassination only a few years previously. A few days after the meeting which finalized the timing and location of the uprising, Delchev and his band were ambushed by the Ottoman security forces in a village near Serres. Delchev was killed in the fighting, thus eliminating one of Garvanov's key opponents and the man remembered most fondly as the soul of the organization. Petrov accused Garvanov of betraying Delchev's whereabouts to the Ottomans. While Perry expresses doubts that the death of Delchev was due to Garvanov's malice, he concludes adamantly that Garvanov had pushed for the Ilinden Uprising with the full expectation

that it would fail.⁴ Perry finds further support for his view in the fact that Garvanov spent the Ilinden Uprising in jail and fled to Bulgaria upon his release. After his death by an assassin's bullet in 1907 in Sofia, he was given a state funeral, a treatment not commonly bestowed on IMRO leaders. As Perry intimates, this would indicate where his loyalties lay. However, it also suggests that Garvanov may have been acting under the direction of Bulgaria all along and may have been a longstanding Bulgarian agent, who fulfilled his duty and later paid for it with his life.⁵ In any case, Garvanov's initiatives in early 1903 had set the wheels in motion for the fateful Ilinden Uprising.

The Ilinden Uprising, August-November 1903

Launched on St. Elijah's Day (*Ilin den*)—August 2, 1903—the uprising met with initial success. IMRO guerrilla units cut telegraph wires and dynamited railroad tracks, severing Ottoman communications and making hit-and-run attacks on Ottoman garrisons. In the mountains, IMRO was able to control wider tracts of territory in the south and west of the vilayet, notably in the town of Krushevo, where they proclaimed a republic. IMRO units also rose up in mid-August in the Vilayet of Adrianople and later in parts of the Vilayet of Salonica, further hindering the transportation and deployment of Ottoman reinforcements from Asia Minor. IMRO had instructed its units not to burn Muslim villages unless provoked and to respect Muslim civilians. However, these orders were not universally followed, and Muslim villages came under attack, driving local Muslims to the ranks of the Ottoman effort to crush the rebellion.

IMRO's flourishing was brief. Flush with the glory of initial victory, the rebels did not adequately consolidate their gains and were soon on the defensive against superior numbers of Ottoman forces with superior firepower. In most places the rebel guerrilla units melted away, leaving Christian villages to bear the brunt of reprisals. With the intention of assuring passive Christians that their neutrality would be respected, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha ordered the Ottoman troops to burn only Christian villages in which there were no men, or where all the inhabitants had fled. As was the case with IMRO's command to spare Muslim villages, the pasha's orders were not universally carried out.

⁴ Ibid., 414.

⁵ Ibid.

IMRO did mount a defense of its de facto capital Krushevo, repelling an initial attack and attempting to answer Ottoman mountain artillery with home-fashioned cannons made out of cherry-tree trunks. Ultimately, their efforts were in vain. The Krushevo Republic fell ten days after its inception with a group of IMRO fighters under the command of the Vlach bandit Petu Guli taking the "Freedom or Death" banner to its literal meaning and fighting to last man on a hill outside of the town. Krushevo became the Macedonian Alamo, but its fall at the time was an ominous sign of what was to come.

As its territorial holdings began to collapse, IMRO appealed desperately to the powers and to Bulgaria to intervene. Help would not be forthcoming, and the rebels were hopelessly outnumbered, fielding some 27,000 guerrilla fighters against over 350,000 Ottoman troops and local irregulars. After Krushevo, the fall of Smilevo was followed by a large-scale counter-insurgency operation in the south of the vilayet under the leadership of the newly appointed Nassir Pasha, who employed 'driving' techniques reputedly fashioned after the British efforts against Boer guerrillas in South Africa. These coordinated campaigns cleared rebel territory but netted relatively few IMRO fighters. Christian peasants were left to bear the brunt of reprisals by the Ottoman forces, particularly the irregular Ilave and Redif formations and the dreaded Bashi-Bazouks. The counterinsurgency operations in the Vilayet of Adrianople produced similar results. By early September, reports circulated of over 200 villages being destroyed and upwards of 30,000 people displaced with the impending onset of winter. It was this humanitarian crisis that galvanized British public opinion for action, much more so than any affinity for IMRO's call for Macedonian autonomy. Provisions for humanitarian assistance, along with gendarmerie reforms, were hammering into the Mürzsteg Reform Program, which was agreed upon by the governments of Austria-Hungary and Russia in October and subsequently imposed on the Ottoman Empire. Though it was not the sort of intervention they had been hoping for, the rebels derived some initial satisfaction from the fact that they had prompted the Great Powers to act, and they hoped these ostensibly more robust reforms would herald more effective intervention.

Nevertheless, the Mürzsteg Reform Program would not prove to be much of a consolation prize for IMRO. Far from capturing the imagination of Europe, the Macedonian Committees were presented in many reports as being bloodthirsty belligerents, who were as morally reprehensible as the Ottomans, if not more so. The

knowledge that the rebel leaders knowingly sought to sacrifice the lives of their own people to elicit sympathy for their cause provoked revulsion. Militarily, the uprisings had been a failure. IMRO's resources and its manpower had been depleted, with over 1,000 guerillas having fallen in the fighting. The signing of an armistice in November ended the revolt, but the violence continued. The organization would face political challenges from the SMC; factionalism and internal conflict (often deadly) would haunt the organization for years to come.

As pointed out by Fischer-Galati, the end of the uprising marked the beginning of a new phase, which he describes as "the total internationalization of the revolutionary movement and of the Macedonian question and all its aspects."⁶ Greek and Serbian guerrilla formations were about to make their presence felt, as were the Great Powers, with a presence on the ground in the form of military officers tasked with reforming the Ottoman gendarmerie and monitoring events in Macedonia. The reforms would no longer be the exclusive domain of Austria-Hungary and Russia. British, French, and Italian officers would join in the intervention, thanks in no small part to the diplomatic efforts of Great Britain to expand the scope of the reforms.

Initial Responses and the Death of a Diplomat

The first days of the Ilinden Uprising produced confusing news reports on the fighting, a number of statements and proclamations, and the slaying of a Russian vice-consul. To the British, the events proved the value of the preparations they had taken. Re-opening their consulate in Monastir gave the British a diplomatic presence in the very midst of the conflict, and complemented their network of consuls and informants in the region, which provided reliable accounts of the fighting and the events. The information that the British received from their 'ground network' allowed diplomats and the government to speak with confidence regarding Macedonia and to make informed decisions.

⁶ Stephen Fischer-Galati, "The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization: Its Significance in 'Wars of National Liberation.'" *East European Quarterly* 6, 4 (1973): 466.

Four days passed before the first British reports of the Ilinden Uprising reached Lord Lansdowne's desk at the Foreign Office. On August 6, Ambassador O'Connor relayed a telegraphed report from Vice-Consul McGregor in Monastir that an insurrection had broken out in the kazas of Ochrid, Prelip, Florina, and Monastir, with many peasants moving "*en bloc*" from their villages into the mountains. Krushevo had fallen, and railway and telegraph lines had been cut. McGregor also noted that Turkish villages had been attacked, and O'Connor added that the Ottoman government had informed him that the rebels had burned the crops of Muslim villagers. The Ottoman government maintained that it was doing its best to prevent Muslims from enacting reprisals.⁷

The telegram from O'Connor coincided with the arrival of a circular telegram from the Ottoman embassy reciting an Ottoman version of the events, which accounted for the alleged massacre of 50 of its soldiers in Krushevo. The Ottoman circular described the rebels as bandits engaging in acts of brigandage, who had attacked Muslim (not Turkish) villages and forced Bulgarian (not Macedonian) peasants to follow them into the mountains. The Ottoman telegram also blamed the Bulgarian government for its lack of vigilance in patrolling the border and suppressing insurgent activities within its borders.⁸ The Ottoman circular telegram arrived on August 6, a full four days before IMRO made its appeal from Sofia, showing the acumen gained by the Ottomans in public relations. The Ottomans would repeatedly remind the powers that Muslims were being victimized by the rebels, which would help those against forceful intervention to remind critics that both sides were culpable for the violence and atrocities which were unfolding in Macedonia. In the first weeks of the uprising, their efforts met with some success.

Although it was August 17 before Lansdowne received the detailed dispatches from his consuls in Macedonia, these reports furnished him with sufficiently detailed and largely accurate information on the Ilinden Uprising. Reports from Vice-Consuls Graves, McGregor, and Fontana informed the Foreign Office of the scope and nature of the uprising. The reports detailed how the rebels had gained control of stretches of mountainous territory in the Vilayet of Monastir and had withdrawn entire villages into "concentration camps" in the high country. This enabled the rebels to have civilians

⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 6, 1903, FO 78/5272/118.

⁸ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, Received August 6, 1903, FO 421/198/120.

produce resources for the insurgent forces more effectively, and to be at a safer distance from Ottoman counter-measures. It also took the options of dissent and neutrality away from the villagers. The consuls reported correctly that Boris Sarafov had journeyed to the Vilayet of Monastir and was directing the campaign with Charkalaroff and Yankoff. Incidents of sabotage around the three vilayets were chronicled, and McGregor was able to obtain detailed information on the insurgent destruction of Muslim and Patriarchist property, including the names of the offended proprietors.⁹ From Salonica, Graves reported a “prevalent belief” that the uprising was being centred in the western Vilayet of Monastir for the political purpose of distancing it from Bulgaria, and to show that it was “Macedonian in its origin.”¹⁰ August 17 also marked the arrival of a report on the military situation from British military attaché Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell, detailing Ottoman troop strengths, deployment of forces, and updates on the fighting, including the appearance of the insurgents’ red banner flying over Krushevo. Maunsell additionally picked up on Ottoman damage-control measures. He reported finding it “interesting” that the Ottomans had officially rebranded the infamous Ilave battalions as “second-class reserves” and wrote that newspaper reports of German officers serving on active duty with the Ottoman army in Macedonia were false, owing to the reports of German-speaking officers actually being Turks practicing their language skills.¹¹

By having experienced and highly able consular officials stationed in Ottoman Macedonia at the time of the Ilinden Uprising, the British were in a far more advantageous position than they had been a generation earlier during the Bulgarian Uprising of 1876. Following the Batak Massacre, Prime Minister Disraeli lacked a consular presence with which to challenge newspaper reports of Ottoman atrocities.¹² In 1903, by contrast, the British government had four consuls in or near the fighting zones,

⁹ McGregor to Graves, August 6, 1903, FO 78/5268/462.

¹⁰ Graves to O’Conor, August 9, 1903, FO 195/2157/243.

¹¹ Maunsell to O’Conor, August 11, 1903, FO 195/2150/40. Although Maunsell concurred with the Ottoman explanation on the reports of German officers, it would seem more feasible that an Ottoman officer would have been practicing his German language skills if there were a German in his presence, particularly in a time of conflict. While the Ottomans maintained they were keeping the German away from combat, it is entirely plausible that some German officers were closely observing if not directing the counter insurgency in Macedonia in some capacity. Revered Clarke wrote to Vice Consul Elliot in late June informing him that a German officer “commanding the Turkish troops” remarked that they (the German officers) “expected to remain in Macedonia until the Committee bands were cleared out.” See: Clarke to Elliot, June 27, 1903, FO 78/5294/149.

¹² Bass, *Freedom’s Battle*, 271.

enabling the submission of streams of telegrams and dispatches on the events based on their eyewitness accounts and information obtained from networks of informants. The consuls knew more and could offer more authoritative accounts of the events as they unfolded. Furthermore, with a military attaché like Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell, who had traversed the territory and knew the structure of the Ottoman military well, the British were provided with further insight into the proceedings by a knowledgeable commentator. Unlike 1876, the British had their own official sources which provided them with fairly reliable information on the conflict and gave them authoritative accounts that they could use in diplomatic negotiations and in countering opposition in the press and parliament. In particular, the deployment of McGregor to the reopened consulate at Monastir proved to be a highly beneficial and timely move, as it gave the British the energetic presence of a perceptive and capable diplomat who spoke Bulgarian and could function as something of a 'peacekeeper' in his own right.

The immediate urgency surrounding the Ilinden Uprising was soon compounded by the news of the killing of the Russian vice-consul in Monastir, Alexander Arkadievich Rostkovski, on August 8. Upon entering Monastir by carriage from the nearby monastery at Bukovo, Rostkovski noticed that an Ottoman gendarme on sentry-duty had declined to salute him. The Russian vice-consul ordered his driver to stop, and he delivered a reprimand, which may have included hitting the sentry with a stick. What is clear is that the sentry, an ethnic Albanian by the name of Halim, reacted by shooting Rostkovski dead. Halim and another gendarme shot at Rostkovski's carriage as it sped away.¹³ Rostkovski was the second Russian consul to die from Ottoman fire in Macedonia in six months. The rebels were reportedly jubilant at this propaganda windfall, which came just days after they had commenced their uprising. Surely, they deduced, this would force Russia's hand and would force the Sultan to either grant them autonomy or face the wrath of the Russian army.¹⁴ The conflict was seemingly destined to become internationalized, but it remained to be seen if the escalation would include Great Power intervention.

¹³ Duncan Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul: Macedonia 1903," *Russian History* 7 Pts. 1-2 (1980): 209.

¹⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 11, 1903, FO 78/5272/126.

For the Great Powers and the countries in the region, the scale of the uprising and the death of Russian vice-consul made it clear that this Macedonian crisis would exceed the crises that had preceded it. The Bulgarian government was quick to distance itself from the rebels, if rather awkwardly. General Petroff and Minister of Interior Petkoff hastily cancelled a planned visit to the frontier “for fear of misconception.”¹⁵ In receiving the diplomatic corps, the Bulgarian government stated it maintained a “loyal and correct attitude toward Turkey,” and asked only that the Ottomans use regular troops to decrease the likelihood of atrocities, and that they respect Bulgaria’s frontiers. When Elliot inquired about the reports of atrocities being committed against Turks and Patriarchists, Petroff called them exaggerations and denied that guerrilla bands were still crossing the frontier. Elliot pointed out that the reports came from British consular sources and brought his letter from the American missionary Dr. Clarke, which confirmed that bands were still crossing the border. He also commented that two IMRO bomb factories within Bulgaria had recently exploded. Nevertheless, Elliot remained sympathetic to the difficult situation confronting the Bulgarian government. He gave credit to the Bulgarian government for its “genuine desire” to prevent assistance from being given to the rebels, and he reported that Petroff had given latitude to the Ottomans to suppress the rebellion so long as they restrained their troops from committing massacres. He also noted that the pro-government press was very much against a war with the Ottoman Empire, since defeat was likely and, even in the event that Bulgaria were victorious, it would have terms dictated to it by the Great Powers.¹⁶ The Bulgarians were to remain on the defensive through the critical days of August and September, as the Great Power diplomats discussed sanctions against Bulgaria, with some even insinuating the possibility of punitive Great Power measures being directed against Sofia.

Initial Serbian reactions to the events Macedonia were relatively minimal, owing to the persisting instability within Serbia following the April coup. From Belgrade, Thesiger reported that the Serbians were officially concerned with the situation in Macedonia, but privately they were happy to see a conflict develop which they thought would weaken both Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the government

¹⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), August 12, 1903, FO 78/5294/177.

¹⁶ Ibid.

was pleased to have a foreign drama playing out which could direct the Serbian public's attention away from turbulent domestic affairs.¹⁷ The uproar produced a minor attack on the Ottoman legation.¹⁸ Thesiger also estimated that Serbia might attempt to occupy "Old Serbia" (northern Kosovo Vilayet) in the event of an Ottoman-Bulgarian war.¹⁹

The early Greek reaction to the uprising was to express support for the Ottoman efforts to crush the rebels. The months preceding the uprising had seen the Greek metropole Germanos Karavangelis coordinating with the Ottoman security forces to counteract IMRO in the villages around the Hellenic redoubt of Kastoria. While the Greek government voiced its support for the Ottomans, it was under considerable domestic pressure to intervene militarily in Macedonia.²⁰ The government press urged calm and patience, but Prime Minister Rallis was sufficiently concerned to have the Greek ambassador make a direct appeal to Lansdowne. In response, Lansdowne assured the Greeks that the events had made a "deep impression" on the British government, and that they would urge the Ottoman government to maintain order in Macedonia in a disciplined fashion.²¹ Though relatively stable for the time being, the reactions from the neighbouring Balkan governments and the conditions within their respective nations were reminders to the British and the other powers that the Ilinden Uprising had the potential to exact a destabilizing influence well beyond the borders of the three vilayets.

Having lost their second consul in Macedonia in less than six months, the Rostkovski assassination forced the hand of the Russian government into a diplomatic and military show of force. Two days before the shooting, Lamsdorff had informed ambassador Scott that he did not think much had changed in light of the uprising, commenting that the insurgents would continue their activities, and Ottoman troops would continue to commit atrocities into the autumn, unless the reforms were strengthened.²² It was far from a strong vote of paternalistic solidarity for the cause and

¹⁷ Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 9, 1903, FO 105/149/137.

¹⁸ Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 9, 1903, FO 105/149/136.

¹⁹ Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 9, 1903, FO 105/149/137. Within a few days, the Serbian government was experiencing ministerial crisis. See: Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 13, 1903, FO 105/149/140.

²⁰ Des Graz to Lansdowne, August 12, 1903, FO 32/745/93.

²¹ Lansdowne to Des Graz, August 14, 1903, FO 421/198/163.

²² Scott to Lansdowne, August 6, 1903, FO 65/1661/228.

plight of Russia's Slavic brethren. With the death of Rostkovski, the Russian stance changed in word if not so much in deed. Fully aware of the potential ramifications, the Russian government sought to obtain "satisfaction" from the Ottoman Empire before Russian public opinion had a chance to "work itself up."²³ Yet, from the outset, Lamsdorff was quick to dispel any suggestions that Russia was being induced into intervention in Macedonia.²⁴

Although Russian pride was at stake, the Russian government largely concurred with the opinion in diplomatic circles that Rostkovski had done much to bring about his own death. In many respects, Rostkovski was cut from the same provocative cloth as Vice-Consul Bakhmetieff, perhaps even more so. He had served as a vice-consul in the region for a decade and was two years into his second posting to Monastir at the time of his death.²⁵ He was rumoured to have contact with IMRO, and the Ottomans suspected that he might be directing IMRO movements through some greater Russian/Panslav plot.²⁶ Like McGregor, Rostkovski had visited the sights of conflict and had conducted investigations into alleged atrocities and abuses of Christians. Like his British counterpart, Rostkovski had not been shy about making his feelings known to the vali, Ali Reza Pasha. The difference was Rostkovski had conducted himself in a manner aptly described by Perry as "abrasive."²⁷ McGregor's own communications certainly attested to this, a fact that O'Connor pointed out in a dispatch regarding the killing two days after it took place.²⁸ According to Perry's examination, Rostkovski considered the Ottomans' approach to the reform to be disingenuous, and he had developed an antagonistic relationship with the vali. In addition to incidents concerning the conduct of Ottoman troops in counterinsurgency operations and their attitudes toward Christians, Rostkovski

²³ Plunkett to Lansdowne, August 11, 1903, FO 7/1342/59.

²⁴ Scott to Lansdowne, August 14, 1903, FO 65/1663/60.

²⁵ Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul," 206.

²⁶ Any sympathy for IMRO was Rostkovski's own and not that of the Russian government. Although it is certainly possible he may have quietly been in touch with Bakhmetieff and others who sympathized with the rebels about revolutionary matters, a plot by rouge Russian diplomats appears to have been unlikely. What is more, in his memoirs, the IMRO voyivod Anastas Lozanchev wrote that he considered Rostkovski to be a "Turkophile." See Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul," 206.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 10, 1903, FO 78/5268/460. O'Connor referenced three of McGregor's dispatches he had forwarded to Lansdowne in the spring.

was also irked by Ali Reza Pasha's order to his soldiers only to salute foreign consuls if the latter were in full dress.²⁹

In Perry's estimation, the events of August 8 were a disaster waiting to happen. Amidst the turbulence of the Ilinden Uprising, Rostkovski returned to Monastir on the morning of August 8, having spent the night with his family at the nearby Bukovo monastery. Entering the town by carriage, accompanied only by his children's tutor, Rostkovski ordered his driver to stop when a sentry failed to salute him. Although likely not in uniform at the time, Rostkovski alighted and walked over to obtain the sentry's badge number. The sentry, Gendarme Halim, rose from a seated position and shot the consul. When the tutor yelled at the sentry that he had just shot the Russian consul, the sentry shot Rostkovski again before one of his compatriots joined him in firing at the carriage as it sped away.³⁰ In addition to the orders and the "xenophobic" attitude of the vali, Perry suspects that the Albanian nationality of the sentry Halim may have played a role in the shooting, since the Albanians thought the Great Power-backed reforms were merely devices to take land and power away from the Albanians. Furthermore, the context of the greater conflict should be considered, along with the fact that several Albanians and other Muslims had been pressed into service to fight IMRO during the critical weeks of the harvest, depriving many of them of sources of revenue and future sustenance.³¹

The details and circumstances of the death of Alexander Rostkovski were disputed at the outset. McGregor reported that the initial official Ottoman version stated that Rostkovski had been armed with a pistol and had fired at the sentry first. McGregor dismissed this version, adding that the Russian diplomat "was unarmed, though he may have used strong language."³² British diplomatic cables indicate that Rostkovski's abrasive reputation travelled well. From Belgrade, Thesiger wrote that he had heard that Rostkovski had "made use of his riding whip in disputes with soldiers or police."³³

²⁹ Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul," 208.

³⁰ Ibid., 209. Interestingly, the tutor was Kirste Misirkov, who would later write *On Macedonian Matters*.

³¹ Ibid., 209-210.

³² O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 9, 1903, FO 78/5272/124.

³³ Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 9, 1903, FO 105/49/136.

Rostkovski's character and the questions around the events seemed to have given McGregor reason to reconsider his first report. On August 16, he telegraphed O'Connor to say that he was "morally satisfied" that Rostkovski had fired the first shot in the incident. In response, O'Connor reported that he "enjoyed great caution on Mr. McGregor" and reminded him of his original telegram.³⁴ By the time O'Connor reported McGregor's telegram to Lansdowne on August 17, the brief court-martial proceedings had concluded, and the offending gendarmes had been hanged. McGregor's full report of the sentences contains no mention of his telegraphed assessment from the previous day, which, it would appear, was a private concern expressed in the strictest confidence to his superior. As McGregor likely realized, the British government was not going to support the case of an Albanian gendarme who had already been executed. To help prosecute their case in the court of international diplomatic opinion, the Russians gave the British copies of the Russian diplomatic telegrams regarding the death of Vice-Consul Rostkovski.³⁵

As the sheer swiftness of the court martial and execution indicate, the Ottoman responses to the death of the Russian vice-consul had more to do with damage control than justice. This fact was not lost on most parties concerned, particularly the accused. Court-martial proceedings were carried out swiftly and were completed by August 13. McGregor reported that the second dragoman of the Russian Embassy, Mr. Mandelstam, who had been dispatched to Monastir in the wake of the murder, had taken an "active part" in the private proceedings of the court martial.³⁶ The vali of Monastir, Ali Reza Pasha, had quickly been dismissed, and Inspector-General Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had arrived in Monastir to take over as interim vali and also to oversee the court-martial proceedings.³⁷ Gendarme Halim was sentenced to death for the killing of Rostkovski. Gendarme Abbas, the other gendarme present at the scene, was also given the death penalty for not doing anything to prevent the crime. Gendarme Zenial, who witnessed the events, was given a fifteen-year sentence for stating that Rostkovski shot first. Other officers were reduced to the ranks for expressing approval of the crime, and the

³⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 17, 1903, FO 78/5272/135.

³⁵ Scott to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 65/1661/236.

³⁶ McGregor to Graves, August 17, 1903, FO 78/5268/509.

³⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 10, 1903, FO 78/5268/460.

commanding officers of the gendarmerie were dismissed from their positions. In addition to the swift and thorough punishment, Mandelstam had wanted the whole Ottoman garrison to be present for the execution. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha consented to having a battalion present, but declined further Ottoman participation, opting to skip the execution himself, a snub which infuriated the Russian dragoman.³⁸

The executions were promptly carried out with the two gendarmes being hanged from trees in Monastir. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha acted under orders to carry out the executions without delay following the sentencing; the expedience surely aimed at appeasing the Russian appetite for vengeance.³⁹ Indeed, McGregor had commented in his telegram the previous day that he had reservations about the degree of the gendarmes' guilt.⁴⁰ The bigger political picture of the event was painfully evident to Gendarme Halim and Gendarme Abbas. They went to their fate in the arboreal gallows, "both declaring their innocence, but adding that they knew their death was necessary for the welfare of their country."⁴¹

The spilling of Russian blood and the injury to Russian pride would demand a high price. This was a fact not lost on the Ottomans, who had hanged the accused gendarmes and offered monetary compensation for Rostkovski's widow before the Russians had even articulated their demands. Three days after the executions, Ambassador Scott telegraphed the Russian demands to the Foreign Office. They called for a mixture of justice for the killing and implementation of the terms of the Vienna Reform Program, including proof that the vali had been banished, the release of peasants who had been unjustly imprisoned, and the appointment of foreign officers to positions in the gendarmerie and the police.⁴² The Russians also announced that they were sending a squadron of ships into Ottoman waters.

³⁸ McGregor to Graves, August 17, 1903, FO 78/5268/509. Mandelstam warned Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha that if he did not do as he wished, the Russian ambassador and the Sultan would be furious and the result could mean a Russian declaration of war. Mandelstam asked that the executions be postponed but the Inspector-General was undeterred and maintained the execution would be carried out immediately without his presence.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 17, 1903, FO 78/5272/135.

⁴¹ McGregor to Graves, August 17, 1903, FO 78/5268/509.

⁴² Scott to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 65/1663/65a.

The Russian naval manoeuvres provoked some concern. The British consul in Odessa was suspicious that the Russians were sending military supplies to the Bulgarians, and the moves provoked some alarm in the press, which O'Connor was quick to dispel.⁴³ The Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire was himself concerned about how the move would be perceived by the other powers.⁴⁴ However, from the start, the Russians were adamant that the deployment of the ships was solely to "accentuate the gravity with which his Government regard the murder of the Russian consul, and was not otherwise connected with the situation of affairs in Macedonia."⁴⁵ Despite some misgivings in the Vienna press about the subversive conduct of the Russian consuls in Macedonia, the Austro-Hungarians were officially in concert with the Russians in that they would not be moved by the provocations of the insurgents.⁴⁶ The Russians also made it clear to the Bulgarians that Rostkovski's death would not change their policy.⁴⁷ The Russian ships sailed only as far as the Bay of Iniada on the east coast of the Vilayet of Adrianople just south of the frontier with Bulgaria, stopping short of the Bosphorus. Perhaps as an acknowledgment of the innocuous nature of the demonstration, the Sultan even dispatched a ship loaded with provisions for the Russian fleet.⁴⁸

The formal articulation of the Russian demands on August 18 was, with respect to the assassination, a moot point since, as the Russian ambassador noted, several of the demands had already been met.⁴⁹ The Russian stipulations were as follows:

1. punishment of the murderer;
2. exile of the Vali;
3. severe and immediate punishment of the civil and military personnel responsible for the assassination;
4. severe punishment of all Ottoman personnel reported by [the Russian diplomat] Mandelstam;
5. the establishment of the future duties of Hakky Ismail, as recommended by Mandelstam;

⁴³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 21, 1903, FO 78/5272/145; O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 78/5272/131.

⁴⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 19, 1903, FO 78/5272/141.

⁴⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 17, 1903, FO 78/5272/137.

⁴⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne, August 12, 1903, FO 7/1340/234; Plunkett to Lansdowne, August 18, 1903, FO 7/1340/246.

⁴⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), August 15, 1903, FO 78/5294/182.

⁴⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 19, 1903, FO 78/5272/141.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

6. freedom for those arrested for providing information to the consuls of Russia and Austria;
7. a severe reprimand for Hilmi Pasha for his attitude towards the representations of Mandelstam; and
8. immediate appointment of foreign officers to the gendarmerie and police.

Any hesitation to fulfill these conditions could lead to the most serious consequences for Turkey.⁵⁰

In spite of the final forceful phrase, the Russians had no intention of meting out consequences. The fact that six of the eight demands concerned the assassination speaks to the fact that the welfare of the Macedonians was of secondary concern. The demands give no hint of support for IMRO. Their primary aim was to recover Russian pride, and to appease public opinion in Russia. Indeed, given the antagonistic relationship between Lamsdorff and his consuls in Macedonia and Bulgaria, it is doubtful that the Russian foreign minister would have demanded as much as he did, were it not for the specter of the public mood within Russia. The only thing that the British could hope for was more willingness from the Russians to be amenable to gendarmerie reform in future negotiations.

Although the Russians made their position clear to the Bulgarian government, IMRO either did not get the message or chose to ignore it. The arrival of the Russian naval squadron in the Bay of Iniada on August 18 coincided with IMRO's uprising in the Vilayet of Adrianople. Known as the Preobrazhenski Uprising, the purpose of the IMRO attacks in Adrianople was to divert Ottoman forces away from the main theatre in the Vilayet of Monastir, and to disrupt communication and supply lines between Constantinople and Salonica. The Preobrazhenski Uprising was effectively IMRO's second front, outweighing the other diversionary uprisings in the Uscub and Salonica vilayets.⁵¹

Despite Russian reassurances, the presence of the fleet served to inflame the situation in the Vilayet of Adrianople. The insurrection was strongest in the northeastern kaza of Kirk Kilissi, with IMRO men crossing the border from Bulgaria and local IMRO formations rising in a coordinated attack. The Russian naval presence buoyed the rebels

⁵⁰ Supplementary List of Russian Demands, FO 78/5268/493.

⁵¹ Perry, *The Politics of Terror*, 237.

and annoyed the Ottoman authorities. On August 22, O'Connor cabled the Foreign Office that the Ottoman government was demanding that the fleet withdraw from its waters, as its presence was encouraging IMRO and would potentially make it harder for the Ottomans to maintain discipline in their own ranks.⁵² The Ottoman appeals seem to have had an effect. The next day, orders were issued for the return of the fleet to Sevastopol.⁵³ Nevertheless, the flames had already been fanned. Local Greeks and Turks were attacked, and those who survived were forced to flee. The *kaïmakam* of the village of Veletikos was abducted by IMRO fighters and smuggled over the border to the Bulgarian town of Burgas, where the Bulgarian authorities promptly ordered the rebels to release him. As the villages along the coast burned, the Russian sailors looked on, training their vessels' searchlights on the flames at night, which the Ottomans saw as a sign of encouragement to the rebels; however, no Russian troops were landed.⁵⁴ When the Russian fleet weighed anchor, the insurgents destroyed Iniada's lighthouse with dynamite.⁵⁵ By August 25, some 880 Greek and Turkish refugees from Veletikos and Iniada were being housed in quarantine stations near Therapia, on the outskirts of Constantinople. Most had fled by sea, and the Ottomans had sent a transport vessel to bring back more refugees from points further south, as the insurgents closed on the town of Midia, some 50 miles from the Bosphorus.⁵⁶

⁵² O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5272/249.

⁵³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5272/250.

⁵⁴ Maunsell to O'Connor, August 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/46. This information on the events of the Preobrazhenski Uprising differs from that of Perry's article, which maintains that the Russian fleet remained at Iniada until the Mürzsteg reforms were agreed upon in October and that the ships shone their searchlights on the shore at that time as Ottoman troops torched the villages. See: Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul," 211. Perry's source for this information in Brailsford's *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*, which cites the British Blue books for some of the information. However, Brailsford's states that "The fleet lay at anchor, watched the flames of burning villages and beacon fires unmoved, and when wretched gendarme had been hanged in Monastir sailed quietly home." See: Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*, 158. This is consistent with the original British diplomatic accounts cited in this study, but it does not state who lit the fires. As the British accounts indicate, the Russians watched as IMRO lit fires. Brailsford goes on to say that the Ottoman initiated reprisals took place after the fleet had departed. The Perry article appears to be mistaken in stating that the Russians watched as the Ottomans burned villages, when at that time, it was in fact IMRO that carried out the burnings. This is not to detract from Perry's article, but it is matter worth pointing out.

⁵⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 28, 1903, FO 78/5268/519.

⁵⁶ Maunsell to O'Connor, August 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/46.

Whether desired or undesired, displays of military force, however benign in their true intention, had effects. Great Power naval vessels had been dispatched in the Near Eastern region during previous conflicts to communicate the intentions of one or more of the Great Powers. Sometimes guns were fired, and troops were sent ashore; at other times it was only a matter of physical intimidation and perhaps searchlights. This had been the case in the spring following the Salonica bombings, when the only shots fired by the multinational fleet had been triggered for the sake of practice. The presence of the ships was intended to intimidate the terrorists and the authorities and calm the population.

In August, there were again calls for a Great Power naval flotilla to congregate in Salonica harbour. While the Russian fleet had sailed to Iniada to make a diplomatic point, the Russian consul in Salonica had additionally called for naval vessels to be dispatched to Salonica harbour for the sake of the security of the Russian diplomats and subjects in the city and the region.⁵⁷ Other Great Power diplomats also made the same suggestion to their governments, including Graves of Great Britain, who described Salonica as being in “imminent danger” and said the arrival of Great Power warships would be “most salutary,” regardless of their nationality.⁵⁸ The physical safety of the consuls was also a concern, especially in Monastir. On August 11, a mere three days after the assassination of Rostkovski, McGregor telegraphed that there were plots coming from within the ranks of the Ottoman security forces to kill the Austro-Hungarian, French, and Italian consuls. The Ottoman government urged the British to take precautions, and O’Conor pondered approving McGregor’s request to carry a revolver. However, the ambassador thought better of it, considering such a move unwise, as it would “relieve the Ottoman government of responsibility.”⁵⁹ Lansdowne concurred with O’Conor on the question of arming diplomatic officials.⁶⁰

Threats to the consuls were not only coming from the Ottoman ranks. On August 18, McGregor reported on rumours that IMRO, upset that the death of the Russian consul and the fall of Krushevo had failed to move the powers toward intervention, was

⁵⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 78/5272/133.

⁵⁸ Ibid. There were, however, relatively few Britons in the Salonica and the region.

⁵⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 11, 1903, FO 78/5272/126.

⁶⁰ Lansdowne to O’Conor, August 11, 1903, FO 421/198/152.

planning to throw bombs at the authorities and the consuls during Rostkovski's funeral procession, in "hopes by this act to provoke a massacre."⁶¹ Threats against McGregor were also rumoured to be coming from the insurgents, who considered the British vice-consul to be "an intimate of the late *vali*."⁶² O'Connor took his concerns to the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who reassured him of the Ottoman government's commitment to the safety of the foreign consuls and ordered Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha to take "the strictest" security measures.⁶³ Nevertheless, the threats to the Great Power consuls were not merely rumours and idle threats. Events and rumours could spark violent reactions. This was the case in late August, when an Ottoman infantry regiment opened fired on the Austrian consulate in Uscub while it was marching through.⁶⁴ The American vice-consul in Beirut was also shot at in an incident suspected of being connected to the events in Macedonia.⁶⁵ Despite assurances, instability and terror reigned in Macedonia.

The death of the second Russian diplomat in Macedonia and the threats to the lives of consuls were obvious causes for concern to the British and the other powers. The question was how to respond effectively. Having consuls carry revolvers was not considered a viable option, but it was troubling to have the safety of consuls in the hands of the Ottoman security forces, from whose ranks a gendarme had gunned down a diplomat. The British were well aware of IMRO's intentions to use terror to provoke massacre and intervention. The memories of the April Salonica bombings were still fresh. Then, the response had been to dispatch a multinational naval force to the city. Following the events of early August, it seemed an encore appearance of the latest in

⁶¹ McGregor to O'Connor, August 18, 1903, FO 78/5268/501.

⁶² O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5268/505.

⁶³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 78/5268/483.

⁶⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 27, 1903, FO 78/5272/155. O'Connor's telegraph reports "considerable excitement" in the Ottoman capital owing to the bombing of a train on the Adrianople line the previous day and the arrival of dead and wounded in the city. Although O'Connor does not indicate that the two events were connected, it is possible the Ottoman soldiers reacted upon hearing news of this or perhaps another loss of life inflicted upon their comrades in arms. Actions interpreted as acts of fanaticism were often undertaken in reaction to another event.

⁶⁵ "The Tragedy at Beirut," *New York Tribune*, August 28, 1903, 8. The initial report assumed that the attack had likely been carried out "by some fanatic animated by Moslem hatred of Christians and of foreigners generally." Initially, the consul was reported to have died in the attack. President Theodore Roosevelt sent ships to Beirut in response.

pre-dreadnought grey was the appropriate response. It was entirely logical that IMRO would take its insurgency to the streets of Salonica, where there was an abundance of 'soft targets' and journalists and consuls ready to quickly convey eye witness reports of horror and blood-letting back along the telegraph cables to the European capitals. The problem was that any such display of force would be playing directly into IMRO's hands. Unlike April, when the actions of an IMRO splinter group had provoked a response, the focus in August was on the consul who had died at the hands of an Ottoman gendarme. Any display of force would be interpreted as being a reprimand against the Ottomans, perhaps foreshadowing a more robust intervention, and would likely spur IMRO on in its struggle. The events in the Vilayet of Adrianople following the arrival of the Russian ships at Iniada confirmed this assumption. Yet the safety of the consuls of foreign nations and the deteriorating security situation in the Macedonian vilayets demanded some form of response. The question was what sort of response was appropriate?

Given the context, some of the Great Powers opted not for a naval demonstration but to move ships into position, should a future display of battleships be considered necessary. Even when it came to such precautions, there was no consensus. O'Connor summarized the prevailing views on August 22, twenty days into the uprising and a week after Krushevo had fallen, as follows:

The Russians will not send a ship, and the Germans will do nothing displeasing to the Sultan. The Austrians are undecided, as are the French, but the [French ship] the "Condor" is in the neighbourhood. The Italians are anxious to send a ship as they have a large Colony, but do not like doing so alone.⁶⁶

By this time the Italians had marshalled a squadron of warships in Sicily in readiness for a naval demonstration in Salonica.⁶⁷ However, most of the other powers were not inclined to join with the Italians. The Russians made their point unilaterally on the Black Sea coast, and the Austro-Hungarians were outwardly maintaining solidarity with their entente partners. The French took the partial measure of increasing their naval

⁶⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 21, 1903, FO 78/5268/504.

⁶⁷ Rodd to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 45/875/62.

presence in the Mediterranean, but made it clear to the British that they were stopping well short of Salonica and not entering Ottoman waters.⁶⁸

Like the French, the British were not eager to rush ships for a naval demonstration at Salonica, but they were taking steps, should a display of warships be considered necessary. The consideration that a display of naval force could have an intimidating or pacifying effect prevailed within the ranks of the British government and its diplomats. In Salonica, Vice-Consul Graves had expressed his wish to have a British man-of-war “remain in the neighbourhood” in mid-July, prior to the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising.⁶⁹ In August, Graves explained to the vali—who had caught wind of the matter—that the possible arrival of Great Power warships made it clear that any arrival of ships would not be a naval demonstration but a show of support for the authorities:

The idea of the Consul in making the suggestion had been to strengthen his hands for the maintenance of order by the presence of a couple of ships, whose search-lights might prove of the greatest value in preventing panic, if the city was again plunged into darkness by dynamite explosions, and whose crews might furnish valuable assistance to the local authorities in extinguishing incendiary fires.⁷⁰

While Lansdowne did not wish to act in haste, he had taken discreet steps to make sure that Britain would be part of any multilateral naval demonstration. In mid-July, Lansdowne had ordered HMS Vulcan to remain within quick sailing distance of Salonica at the island of Lemnos near the western end of the Dardanelle Straits.⁷¹ At the end of the month, he had advised the Admiralty to have the Vulcan maintain a low profile by not landing large groups of its sailors on Lemnos for exercise, so as not to arouse any political suspicions.⁷² The Vulcan remained in position in August, and on August 20, Lansdowne gave Ambassador O’Conor the authority to order the warship to Salonica in the event that other Great Power vessels were en route, or if he considered it

⁶⁸ Monson to Lansdowne, September 16, 1903, FO 27/3625/63.

⁶⁹ Foreign Office to Admiralty, July 13, 1903, FO 78/5288.

⁷⁰ Graves to O’Conor, August 20, 1903, FO 195/2157/248.

⁷¹ Foreign Office to Admiralty, July 13, 1903, FO 78/5288.

⁷² Foreign Office to Admiralty, July 31, 1903, FO 78/5288.

necessary.⁷³ The same day, the Admiralty issued top-secret instructions to Admiral Domvile of the Mediterranean fleet to prepare six vessels to sail to the eastern Mediterranean on short notice.⁷⁴

The British were not about to take the lead in initiating a naval demonstration in Salonica, but they were prepared to move in with a show of force if necessary. As Lansdowne explained to the Austro-Hungarians, these were steps to strengthen the British position in the region.⁷⁵ The British intentions did not remain top-secret for long. The news that six British war ships were readying to sail east from Gibraltar to Salonica was reported in the *Daily Chronicle*, prompting a quick visit by the Ottoman ambassador and an evasive response by Lansdowne.⁷⁶ Given how little time there was between the orders and the information appearing in the press, the information was very likely leaked deliberately.⁷⁷ The discussion of whether or not to send ships to Salonica continued into September and October.

Despite the rumoured threats of violence against consuls, Rostkovski's funeral arrangements proceeded without incident. As McGregor reported, heavy security precautions were taken, which saw the funeral procession route lined with troops and the public barred from attending, a point which set off another "lively altercation" between Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and the Russian dragoman, Mandelson.⁷⁸ The special funeral train left Monastir to a seven-gun salute, arriving in Salonica that evening. The following day, the top Ottoman officials and the consular corps followed the coffin on foot through the streets before it was loaded onto a Russian warship, which transported it to

⁷³ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 20, 1903, FO 421/198/224. Vice Consul Graves was later given the authority to ask the commander of HMS Vulcan for assistance if it was a matter of "urgent necessity". See: Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 31, 1903, FO 421/198/300.

⁷⁴ Admiralty to Admiral Sir Compton Domvile, August 20, 1903, FO 78/5289. Instructions were also given for the Vulcan to be relieved by HMS Montagu.

⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Plunkett, August 25, 1903, FO 800/117.

⁷⁶ Foreign Office Memorandum, August 21, 1903, FO 78/5289, It was noted that the ambassador was confused by the news as it contradicted statements the British government had made on the crisis, namely Balfour's "balance of culpability" statement.

⁷⁷ As ever, the leaking of information to the press was a tool of statecraft. When he suspected Russia of making covert arms shipments to the Bulgarians, O'Connor suggested they could "let Europe know" by passing the information along to the Belgian, German, or Italian press. See: O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5268/506.

⁷⁸ McGregor to Graves, August 20, 1903, FO 78/5268/517.

Constantinople.⁷⁹ Although there were no incidents at either of the funerals, European consular officials remained on edge. Multiple sources reported that the Monastir consuls were in danger from Ottoman soldiers, as well as Turkish landowners and unpaid state employees who allegedly were “sick of Turkish administration and ready for any substitute for it, and who believe that the readiest method of bringing about foreign occupation would be the murder of more Consuls by more wearers of the Sultan’s uniform.”⁸⁰ The Ottoman government warned of an alleged plot by “Bulgarian revolutionaries” to bomb Great Power embassies.⁸¹

As far as the Great Powers were concerned, the most important event during the first month of the Ilinden Uprising was the assassination of Russia’s vice-consul in Monastir. While some Russian diplomats went about their work in a rather belligerent manner, the demands made by the Russian government and the brief appearance of the naval squadron off the Black Sea coast were principally aimed at placating Russian public opinion. The British correspondence contains reports of the fighting and alleged atrocities by both sides, but relatively little expression of concern for the plight of civilians and absolutely no sympathy for IMRO. When Ambassador O’Conor met with Sultan Abdülhamîd on August 14, it was at the Sultan’s request, and the Sultan used the meeting to impress upon the British ambassador that he could restrain his subjects and security forces from being provoked into reprisals by IMRO.⁸² During his two subsequent meetings with Ottoman officials, O’Conor appealed for the Ottomans to protect the lives and property of British nationals and to take measures to protect Vice-Consul McGregor.⁸³ Even if there had been a multilateral initiative for a naval demonstration at Salonica, it would have been foremost for the welfare of consular staff or foreign nationals.

⁷⁹ Graves to O’Conor, August 23, 1903, FO 195/2157/251.

⁸⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5294/192. This information came to Elliot via the American missionary Dr. Clarke in Samokov, who had heard from his colleague in Monastir, Mr. Bond, that McGregor had avoided an assassination attempt because he varied his routes.

⁸¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 78/5268/534. Ambassador O’Conor expressed some doubts about the credibility of this threat. O’Conor noted that despite an increase in security at several embassies, the Ottomans had not taken any further precautions at their public buildings, and indicated that the Ottoman warning may have been alarmist.

⁸² O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 13, 1903, FO 78/5272/130.

⁸³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 16, 1903, FO 78/5268/483; O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 17, 1903, FO 78/5272/138.

What the diplomatic events surrounding the opening weeks of the Ilinden Uprising indicate with great clarity is how concerned the Great Power governments were about the power of public opinion to dictate a shift in policy. Macedonian rebels and Ottoman government officials also knew well that victory or defeat would ultimately be decided in the court of public opinion and not on the military field of battle. The Ottomans had reacted quickly by circulating reports of attacks on Muslim villages and pledges not to let their men take IMRO's bait and be duped into committing massacres. After the Russian consul in Monastir was killed, the Ottoman authorities administered justice before the Russians articulated their demands. IMRO was slower to act and was falsely confident that the slaying of Rostkovski would provoke intervention. From the perspective of the British government, the events proved the value of having a capable vice-consul representing Great Britain and dispensing a steady stream of information from the heart of the conflict zone. The events also validated British concerns regarding the reform of the gendarmerie. The fact that a gendarme had killed a diplomat supported the view that the gendarmerie lacked adequate training and discipline, and needed the training that European officers could provide. However, articulating the need for reform would have to wait. Parliament was still in session and the British government would have to take some measures to mitigate against a potential domestic groundswell of interventionism.

Marginalizing IMRO

News of the Ilinden Uprising reached Great Britain rather sporadically in the first weeks of August 1903. Initial news stories presented a confusing civil conflict where several actors were assaulting one another's forces and civilian populations. Although the rebellion's success was contingent on eliciting public sympathy in Great Britain and elsewhere, the Macedonian Committees (principally IMRO at this stage) found their messages had little resonance even at the time their fighters were mounting gallant if hopeless defenses of the few towns and villages they had taken. Public opinion was only moved after stories from British reporters began surfacing, which depicted a litany of atrocities being committed by the Ottoman security forces, and this came too late to save IMRO's rebellion. What accounts for this?

The failure of IMRO to win public sympathy in Britain for its cause is only partly the organization's own fault. IMRO was rather slow to publicize its demands, and it did not have dynamic representatives engaging European reporters and onlookers in Sofia, let alone London. It is true that many members of the Macedonian Committees believed that intervention would only come after well-publicized reports of massacres, yet it is still rather surprising that IMRO did not try to wage a more effective propaganda campaign to show themselves as the heroic liberators of Macedonia, as their revolutionary forebears had done in Greece, Bulgaria, and, most recently, Crete. The Ottoman Empire contributed to IMRO's public relations failure by supplying news reports of its own that described crimes and atrocities being committed against Muslim civilians and property. The British government also played its part in mitigating IMRO's appeal. The preemptive measures to present the rebels as reckless, and the situation in Macedonia as a complex political problem, instilled caution and scepticism in journalists and the general public. As the Macedonian Committees were non-state entities, they were more easily ignored than the Ottoman Empire, whose concerns had to be respected due to diplomatic protocol. What is more, despite their wishes for more reform, the British government did not wish to see IMRO succeed, even if members of the government and the diplomatic service privately expressed the view that they found some of IMRO's demands reasonable.

The news of the Ilinden Uprising was rather slow in reaching the British press. This is not surprising, given that one of IMRO's first moves was to sever telegraph wires and sabotage the rail link between Monastir and Salonica. IMRO was also slow to publicize its revolution. During its early days, events connected to the revolt were just part of the continuing stream of reports of violence from the region. As late as August 3, the latest news from Macedonia was that the Ottomans were planning to disband thousands of troops.⁸⁴ On August 5, *The Times* reported that rebels had attacked and destroyed the government building (*konak*) at Krushevo and had dynamited a railroad bridge near Monastir.⁸⁵ Printed confirmation that a general insurrection was underway

⁸⁴"The Porte and Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 3, 1903, 6.

⁸⁵"The Bulgarian Bands in Macedonia," *The Times*, August 5, 1903, 3.

was not published until August 6, four days after IMRO fighters had first lit their haystacks.⁸⁶

To newspaper readers in Britain, the first weeks of the insurrection presented a rather bewildering picture of civil conflict. Macedo-Bulgarians were attacking Turks and Greeks, burning villages and killing civilians.⁸⁷ The Ottoman security forces were responding in kind with “severe repressive measures” which included burning villages and activating Albanian militias, which would “lead inevitably to massacres.”⁸⁸ The news of the murder of Vice-Consul Rostkovski produced connections to Muslim “fanaticism” in opposition to Pan-Slavism.⁸⁹ Ten days after the first news of a general insurrection, a Russian naval force was preparing to sail across the Black Sea, and the two perpetrators of the murder had been hanged.⁹⁰ For added sensation, the prolific Boris Sarafov was reportedly serving notice that his men were about to bomb the iconic Orient Express.⁹¹ It was a small wonder that one of the first editorials on the conflict argued that all news from Macedonia be taken with caution, as all sides were prone to exaggeration.⁹²

Nevertheless, Macedonia was in the headlines. By the middle of the month, articles and editorials were appearing daily in the press, letters to the editor were increasing, and Britain’s response to the uprising was being debated in the houses of parliament. The insurrection rippled through the financial markets, affecting “Little Turks” and contributing to a “dull tone” in the continental bourses.⁹³ In a move that is indicative of Macedonia’s being a subject of popular curiosity, the publishers of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ran a large advertisement in *The Times* of August 14 entitled “Outlines of the Macedonian Problem,” giving historical backgrounds and a summary of each of

⁸⁶ “Insurgent Activity in Macedonia,” *The Times*, 3, August 6, 1903; “Serious Position in Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 6, 1903, 6.

⁸⁷ “The Renewed Outbreak in Macedonia,” *The Times*, August 7, 1903, 3; “The Macedonian Revolution,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 7, 1903, 5.

⁸⁸ “The Macedonian Revolution,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 7, 1903, 5.

⁸⁹ “The Rising in Macedonia,” *The Times*, August 10, 1903, 3.

⁹⁰ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 15, 1903, 3.

⁹¹ “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1903, 7.

⁹² “It is disappointing,” *The Times*, August 8, 1903, 9.

⁹³ “The Stock Markets: A Dejected Feeling,” *Financial Times*, August 7, 1903, 1; “The Continental Bourses,” *Financial Times*, August 10, 1903, 1.

Macedonia's peoples, and inviting readers to enlighten themselves on the "Macedonian problem" and to take advantage of their limited-time offer.⁹⁴

There was no editorial surge in the first weeks of the insurrection. The aforementioned *Times* editorial of August 8 spoke not only of exaggeration on behalf of the combatants but of disappointment in their actions. The authors took direct aim at IMRO's leadership: "They play their political game or indulge their sporting instincts at the expense of quiet people bound to the soil, who might prefer the ills they have to the remedies forced upon them." The editorial continues to blame IMRO for flagrantly provoking the Ottomans into reprisals against Macedo-Bulgarians in a game of revenge "the Turks are too prone to play." The authors plead for the Ottoman government to only use regular troops so as not to alienate the Christian peasants.⁹⁵ A *Manchester Guardian* editorial published a day later takes much the same approach, predicting that neither Boris Sarafov and the insurgents nor the Sultan and his men will "attain any tangible result." The article reasons that the Christians are too divided to prevail and the poorly organized Ottoman security forces will not be able to "extirpate" the rebels from the mountains. "The wretched inhabitants who stay at home will be the chief sufferers by this renewed insurrection, and in their interest the Powers might surely intervene."⁹⁶ Another *Manchester Guardian* editorial two days later also decries IMRO's callous methods to "create an anarchy so dangerous that Europe must interfere." However, the author(s) pose the question: "But what course should the rebels pursue?" The editorial criticizes the reforms and identifies the essence of the Macedonian question as the "misery of the peasantry," which ultimately drives the peasants into sympathy with the rebels.⁹⁷

To different degrees, these editorials reserve sympathy for the Christian peasants of Macedonia. It would have been hard for *The Times* editorial to have articulated an opinion closer to the British government's position on Macedonia. *The Manchester Guardian* offered only understanding for IMRO's motives and was very critical of its strategy. There was no cry for intervention. What is notable about these

⁹⁴ "The Outlines of the Macedonian Problem," *The Times*, August 14, 1903, 11.

⁹⁵ "It is disappointing," *The Times*, August 8, 1903, 9.

⁹⁶ "Editorial Article 4 – Not Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 8, 1903, 6.

⁹⁷ "Editorial Article 1 – Not Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 10, 1903, 4.

editorials is that while they lack certainty regarding the details of events unfolding at the time, they display a sound understanding of the broader political dynamics of the Macedonian crisis. The crises which had preceded the Ilinden Uprising can account for some of this, but the preemptive efforts of the British government to inform its subjects through the press, parliament, and the authoritative words of its consuls bound up in the Blue Books also had an effect. The understanding of the situation produced only qualified support for the insurrection, which was usually limited to civilian victims and qualified by explanations of Macedonia's complexity. In essence, even those who sympathized with IMRO's cause had trouble articulating passionate support for the Macedonian cause, not because they knew too little but because they knew too much. Furthermore, even as the voices of the critics grew louder, their messages were never too far from the position of a British government which wanted stronger reforms and more British input.

There was also little sympathy for the rebels because they were outmanoeuvred by the Ottomans in the communication and propaganda war. The initial reports on the Ilinden Uprising came almost exclusively through official Ottoman channels. Other reports came from Ottoman-friendly sources such as the German government, who let it be known that the newly reported "outrages and other horrors" perpetrated by "Sarafoff and his friends" would result in the rebels losing the sympathy of "civilized Europe." Despite the severing of communications, Inspector-general Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was able to get a dispatch through to Constantinople describing the destruction of three Turkish villages by a "Bulgarian band." He also reported that Krushevo's *konak* and telegraph office had been firebombed. The inspector-general wrote: "The revolutionists also set fire to the granaries belonging to Turks and Greeks, and forced the Bulgarian population of the villages they traversed to join them on pain of death."⁹⁸ The director of the Salonica-Monastir railway link had been forewarned of the bomb attacks which damaged the line in a letter from Boris Sarafov.⁹⁹ This information reached the capital relatively quickly and was communicated to the European embassies and journalists. The stories appeared in the in British press on August 5 and 6. Over the next two days, the Ottoman government pledged to use only regular troops in its counterinsurgency

⁹⁸ "The Bulgarian Bands in Macedonia," *The Times*, August 5, 1903, 4.

⁹⁹ "Serious Position in Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 6, 1903.

operations, and proclaimed that it had already enacted several of the reforms of the Vienna Reform Program.¹⁰⁰

Even with the propaganda windfall of a slain Russian vice-consul, IMRO was at a decided disadvantage. The measures of justice the Ottomans meted out in the wake of the assassination were well-publicized, presenting the picture of a government that was reacting swiftly and maintaining control of the security situation in its European provinces. The Ottomans had made sure that they got their story out, and they chose their words carefully. The rebels and their civilian brethren were described as “Bulgarians” not “Macedonians”; the rebel fighters were branded as “brigands.” Thus the Ottomans endeavoured to criminalize and Bulgarianize the rebels and their cause, and to give feature to the notorious Sarafov. This was an advantage that the Ottomans and the opponents of IMRO would maintain through the first critical weeks of the revolt. It would be late summer before any tangible support for the Macedonian cause materialized thanks to the work of journalists. Even then, the sympathy was largely limited to civilian victims.

For its part, IMRO was slow to publicize its victories and articulate its demands. News of the insurrection came first from the Ottomans. A statement by IMRO’s representatives in Sofia was published in *The Times* on August 6, announcing that revolution had been proclaimed in the Vilayet of Monastir. The statement was reported as being unconfirmed.¹⁰¹ Although the rebels rejoiced at the news of the assassination of Rostkovski, they did little to capitalize on the event, trusting that Russian vengeance would secure their deliverance. IMRO did not take its circular to Great Power consulates and presses until August 9 when Dr. Tatarcheff and Hristo Matov delivered the message in Sofia. The message was not published until August 11, nine days into the insurrection, with IMRO’s largest prize, Krushevo, under Ottoman attack and about to fall.¹⁰²

The IMRO circular stated that the Christians had been driven to insurrection by attacks from Muslims and systematic oppression by the Ottoman state, after passive

¹⁰⁰ “Macedonian Revolution,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 8, 1903, 6; “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 8, 1903, 5.

¹⁰¹ “Insurgent Activity in Macedonia,” *The Times*, August 6, 1903, 3.

¹⁰² “The Balkan Crisis,” *The Times*, August 11, 1903, 3.

resistance had failed to bring about change. Referring to international treaties, they called on the Concert of Europe to intervene to affect the appointment of a Christian governor-general with no connections to the Ottoman state, “and (2) the institution of an international board of control vested with full penal powers.” The circular concluded with a final appeal to the “civilized world.” It was far from a stirring manifesto.¹⁰³

Given what was at stake, IMRO’s circular seems rather restrained. There is no call for the freedom and liberation of Macedonia. While making a religious appeal, the circular’s other main point is to refer to the obligations of the Great Powers under the terms of international treaties. There is no mention of the proclaimed Krushevo Republic or the other regions the rebels held at the time. The circular calls for improved governance within the Ottoman state, but governance that would make Macedonia autonomous or a Great Power protectorate. IMRO’s circular likely reflects a realistic consideration by the authors, as Macedonia’s outright liberation was unlikely to have been realized. It is also notable that IMRO appealed only to the Great Power governments to enact reforms and not to the Christian masses of Europe to compel their governments to come to their aid. The document is far from an emotional battle-cry for freedom and liberty. Indeed, the tone of the circular is not dissimilar to that of the statements the Ottomans were making, as they pointed to the brutality the rebels inflicted on Muslims and Greeks and maintained that they were following the letter of the law in their response to the crisis.

Simply put, IMRO lacked an effective public-relations campaign. It is likely the organization assumed that its forces would be able to control their liberated territory for a longer period, which could attest for the lack of reference to the liberated Krushevo Republic. While the Ottoman government was quick to release information to the Great Power embassies and the international press corps, IMRO’s men in Sofia did comparatively little. Given the considerable popular sympathy and political clout the organization had in Bulgaria, it is unlikely that the Bulgarian government could have done any more to prevent IMRO from speaking to consuls and journalists than it did to stem the flow of men and munitions across its frontiers into Ottoman territory. In London, Mr. Lazaorwich, a reported representative of the Macedonian Committee, did little more

¹⁰³ Ibid.

than pass circulars to the press and the British government from his address on Gough Street. What IMRO needed was a flamboyant personality to be present on the streets of Sofia—if not London, St. Petersburg, or Paris—making heroic speeches and engaging the press. In fact, it had one in Boris Sarafov, who, for better or worse, was known and had become the international face of the movement. While he was a trained military officer and valuable to the IMRO's war effort in the mountains of the Vilayet of Monastir, his talents would have been better deployed on a soapbox in Soho than behind barricades in Smilievo. IMRO understood the principles of the 'massacre formula' very well, but the organization lacked the skills and vision to make the procedure compute.

Another factor to weigh in the Ottoman public-relations victory over IMRO in the early stages of the Ilinden Uprising is the role of the British government. The British were conciliatory towards the Ottoman government and were even apt to offer public-relations advice. Referring to the Ottoman government's circular of August 3, Lansdowne responded to a note from Ottoman ambassador Musurus Pasha by stating that the British government

fully understand the difficulties with which the Turkish government have to contend, and that they have heard with satisfaction of the endeavours made by the Turkish authorities to maintain order in Macedonia, to prevent and punish any excess on the part of the troops, and to carry out the recommendations of the Power in regard to reforms.¹⁰⁴

Lansdowne stopped short of acquiescing to the Ottoman request to make representations to Sofia, but the next day he wrote to O'Connor regarding a story from Sofia in *The Times* that the Ottoman authorities in Uscub had distributed 5,000 rifles to the local Muslim population amidst rumours of an impending massacre of the Christian population. Lansdowne wrote that if, as they suspected, the statement was false, the Ottoman government should contradict it.¹⁰⁵ Musurus Pasha cordially responded that it was hardly necessary to refute the report, as it was one of many similar stories "manufactured in Bulgaria."¹⁰⁶ In a meeting with Ambassador O'Connor, Sultan

¹⁰⁴ Lansdowne to Musurus Pasha, August 12, 1903, FO 421/198/151.

¹⁰⁵ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 13, 1903, FO 421/198/155. Lansdowne also ordered O'Connor to obtain a report from Vice-Consul Fortuna on the matter. It was referenced along with other newspaper stories in parliament on August 10, 1903

¹⁰⁶ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, August 14, 1903, FO 421/198/167.

Abdülhamîd assured the British that he knew well of “the Committees” intention to provoke reprisals and he was confident he could restrain his subjects from falling into the rebel trap.¹⁰⁷

An obvious yet important advantage the Ottoman government had over IMRO was the structure and institutions of the state. Irrespective of policy or opinion, the British government was obliged to respond to Ottoman communications according to diplomatic protocol. Through its embassy in London and to the ambassadors in Constantinople, the Ottoman government made its case before and during the Ilinden Uprising. Other affairs of state also surfaced during these months of turmoil, which were in some respects advantageous to the Ottoman government, since any diplomatic breakdown between the two countries over Macedonia could have made these matters embarrassing to the British government. In mid-September 1903, the Ottoman ambassador presented an official request for a British officer to help reorganize the Ottoman fleets. The ambassador also requested that a British officer be present for the launching of a brand-new Ottoman warship at Newcastle-upon-Tyne on September 25.¹⁰⁸ The British granted the request for the launching but were evasive regarding the request for an officer to reorganize the Ottoman navy. The Ottomans made their request at the very time the British were trying to galvanize Great Power support for a European gendarme force for Macedonia, which suggests the Ottomans may have been looking to divert British attention. In any case, British acceptance of these requests would potentially make it more awkward for the British to engage in coercive intervention, which, however unlikely, the Ottomans knew from history was a possibility.

The Macedonian Committees lacked the institutions of a state; consequently, it was relatively easy for the British government to ignore and impede their designs. While no embargo existed against IMRO, when the Nobel Explosives Company of Glasgow wrote to the Foreign Office asking whether it was advisable to fill an order for a large

¹⁰⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 14, 1903, FO 78/5272/130.

¹⁰⁸ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, September 16, 1903, FO 78/5289. Other matters of diplomatic business included the return of the effects of Turkish sailor drowned off the eastern coast of Canada and a former passenger on the French ship Guadalquivir, who wished to sue the Ottoman government for compensation for his lost property. See: Government House, Ottawa to Foreign Office, September 15, 1903, FO 78/5289; Kramrisch, Wertheimer and Coy to Monson, October 28, 1903, FO 78/5289.

quantity of dynamite and guncotton for “a person unknown to us living in Sofia.” Lansdowne replied by saying that, although the sale would not be illegal, the British government was “certainly not prepared to encourage, or to offer facilities for the introduction of explosives into the Balkan Peninsula”¹⁰⁹ It is not known whether Nobel proceeded with the transaction, but the British government had provided only discouragement. The unknown person in Sofia had less access to recourse than a state agent purchasing a warship.

This disparity of influence was also evident in the few direct communications between IMRO/The Macedonian Committee and the British government. On September 6, 1903, a letter for Lansdowne arrived at the Foreign Office from an E. L. Lazarovich with a twelve-article document entitled “Project for Autonomy for Macedonia, Albania, Old Servia and Adrianople.” The project called for the Ottoman Empire’s European vilayets to be renamed on a national basis as the provinces of Albania, Macedonia, Old Servia, and Thrace. Ottoman sovereignty would be maintained, but there would be significant European oversight and administration, including a commissioner for internal security, a governor-general for each province, and a commission to determine provincial frontiers and oversee day-to-day administration. In communication with Lansdowne, Undersecretary Sanderson noted that he had copies made for distribution to other politicians and diplomats since, in his words, “it is moderate and seems to contain various proposals which are worth consideration.”¹¹⁰ Lansdowne agreed, writing on the communication that copies should be sent to Balfour, the Duke of Devonshire, and Ambassador O’Conor, since “[O’Conor] is in favour of a moderate scheme of autonomy. I should like to know whether this is the kind of scheme he has in his mind.” Lansdowne also inquired about the identity of the organization which had sent the document.¹¹¹ However, there is no evidence of return communication to Mr. Lazarovich. Even when IMRO/The Macedonian Committee produced a document which pleased the British government, they were not given so much as an acknowledgment.

The only following-up the British did respecting Lazarovich was to try to procure intelligence on him. In an interview a few days later, Sanderson reported that Noel

¹⁰⁹ Nobel Explosives Company Limited to Sanderson, August 29, 1903, FO 78/5289.

¹¹⁰ Sanderson to Lansdowne, September 7, 1903, FO 78/5289.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Buxton of the Balkan Committee told the permanent undersecretary that he did not know Lazarovich personally, but knew him to be a friend of Boris Sarafov's, and that he did "speak on behalf of the Macedonians," though his nationality was thought to be German.¹¹² One would assume that, given the situation, Lazarovich might have been placed under surveillance, although it does not appear that he was even questioned or interrogated. The "Project for Autonomy for Macedonia, Albania, Old Serbia and Adrianople" was circulated to the European chancelleries and to Sultan Abdülhamîd. With no response from the Foreign Office, Lazarovich tried again and re-sent the project-document two weeks later. It was accompanied by a letter in which he tried to appeal to Britain's interests in the region, arguing that Austria-Hungary and Russia might soon split the southern Balkans between them and produce another reign of tyranny. England could become the protector of the Balkan states and gain commercial markets at Germany's and Russia's expense, with the possibility of sponsoring the creation of another autonomous region in the Slavic provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike the project-text of a fortnight earlier, Lazarovich's appeal to Britain's commercial interests and her role as a special protector of the region elicited no interest from the Foreign Office. Sanderson scribbled "This is a wild story," and noted that the writer was "said to be an imposter."¹¹³

Lazarovich had better luck in late November when his American wife paid a visit to the Foreign Office to speak to an official with whom she was acquainted. Despite the official's stated refusal to speak to her about political matters, she elaborated on her husband's background and presented a letter from him addressed to Lansdowne which reviewed the insurgents' view of the current political situation and called for the British government to negotiate directly with the Ottomans on behalf of the people of Macedonia.¹¹⁴ Madame Lazarovich also presented a copy of a letter that her husband had sent to the Sultan after having been received at the Ottoman embassy by Musurus Pasha. Sanderson wrote that the letter should be made official and sent copies to

¹¹² Interview with Noel Buxton, September 12, 1903, FO 78/5289.

¹¹³ Lazarovich to Sanderson, September 26, 1903, FO 89/5289.

¹¹⁴ Foreign Office to Lansdowne, November 28, 1903, FO 78/5289.

O'Connor. Lansdowne also viewed the letters.¹¹⁵ Lazarovich had eventually got his point across, although it took the charms and connections of his wife and, perhaps most importantly, the stamp of legitimacy of the Ottoman government to him credibility with the British.

To the Prorogation of Parliament

While it proved relatively easy for the Macedonian Committees to be marginalized, the British government faced a much stiffer challenge from its domestic critics. The first two weeks of the Ilinden Uprising coincided with the last two weeks of the 1903 session of Parliament. Macedonia was only discussed twice, although the exchanges on the final day of Parliament were rather animated. Balfour and Lansdowne were on the defensive, the former using history and Balkan complexities to deflect calls for action, while the latter responded to the opposition with up-to-date statements from Ambassador O'Connor. Much to their relief, Balfour and Lansdowne did not have to endure face-to-face criticisms from their opposite benches at Westminster after mid-August. Nevertheless, the final days of the 1903 parliamentary session served as a preview of the more intense questioning the government would face in coming weeks.

The Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia was first raised in the House of Commons by James Bryce on August 10. Having only learned of the violence recently, Bryce expressed his wish for the government to do everything in its power to impress upon the Ottoman government the need to restrain its soldiers, singling out one group in particular by adding: "and, above all, that they would endeavour to prevent the Albanians from being let loose upon the unfortunate peasantry of the provinces which adjoined the Albanian frontier."¹¹⁶ He further lamented the plight of the peasants by stating that they were just as likely to be plundered by insurgents. Bryce then took a more critical line by

¹¹⁵ Sanderson Memo, November 28, 1903, FO 78/5289. For the letter to the Musurus Pasha see: Lazarovich to Musurus Pasha, November 28, 1903, FO 78/5289. In the letter, Lazarovich argued that the demands were "reasonable and moderate" and urged the British to become more involved as the people were hostile to the exclusive control of the reform process by Russia and Austria-Hungary. He also maintained that Russian officers had command of the rebel bands and would lead them into the field in the spring.

¹¹⁶ *Hansard's Parliamentary Papers* 127 (1903): 693.

asking the House to remember “when stories of atrocities were brought to this country, that it was largely Europe itself that was to blame for the state of things in these provinces.” He continued by citing the “evils” of the Treaty of Berlin, which had brought on the state of misery and criticized the “feeble” Austro-Russian reforms, which had not been effectively executed because “no proper powers” could exercise meaningful influence, and ended by requesting more information from the government.¹¹⁷

Balfour responded with general statements on Balkan history and principally blamed the rebels for the conflict, uttering a sentence which would be heard across Europe. He began by excusing Europe’s historical diplomatic shortcomings in the region on the grounds of “extreme difficulties” which the Balkans presented to Europe. Balfour continued by contextualizing the present crisis and its complexities as being the product of a long-standing, biological condition:

I do not think that the critics of European diplomacy ought to forget the extra-ordinary and complex difficulties with which the task is surrounded. As the House knows, it is not merely a question of dealing with the misrule of the dominant Government; it is a question which raises local and national animosities, not alone among Mahomedans, but among the Christians in the areas concerned; and it is also a question which touches to the quick some of the most complicated problems of large European diplomacy. These are great aggravations of a deep-seated disease; and much as I deplore, with the right hon. Gentleman, the total unsuccess which so far has attended the efforts of Europe to relieve the situation, I mention it with more regret than I do with surprise.¹¹⁸

Balfour continued by addressing the reform process. He pointed to the disorders perpetrated by the “revolutionary bands” as being “one of the chief obstacles” to the success of the reforms. Acknowledging Bryce’s description of the “miserable” conditions of Macedonia’s Christian populations, he noted that they were caught between the “licence of the Turkish troops” and the schemes of the rebels. Balfour then went a step further in putting the balance of the blame on the rebels. “So far, I believe that the historic truth requires us to say that the balance of criminality lies rather with the revolutionary bands than with the Turkish troops.”¹¹⁹ He added that the British government would continue to impress upon the Ottoman government the importance of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 694.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 695.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 696.

restraining its troops. Balfour said that he believed the Ottoman government was aware of the political wisdom of doing so, although he expressed doubt as to whether the Ottomans were as “keenly alive” to the humanitarian issue as the British. He went on to warn that the Ottomans were faced with a difficult task in light of the rebels’ deliberate attempts to provoke intervention by the European powers.¹²⁰ Balfour finished with words of rather tepid support for the Austro-Russian reform program, stating that it was “probably the best plan of dealing in the immediate future with the deep-seated evils of these most unhappy portions of the European nations.”¹²¹

With references to “deep-seated” animosities and inherent complexities, Balfour was keeping with past traditions of offering up Balkanisms to explain away the situation. His stated confidence, albeit rather qualified, in the Ottoman government’s willingness to restrain its troops and his faith in the reform process were also consistent with previous statements. But by assigning “the balance of the criminality” to the rebels, Balfour went a step further in blaming one side more than the other(s) for the crisis. The statement was consistent with the British government’s actions in support of the Ottoman government in the opening weeks of the Ilinden Uprising, but it was a risky statement to make publically. It would earn Balfour praise from European conservatives like Count Goluchowski and from Sultan Abdülhamîd, but it did not play well domestically.

Against the backdrop of press stories describing impending massacre in Macedonia, Balfour was taken to task for his comments during the final day of the parliamentary sitting: August 14. *The Times* reported on August 13 and 14 that the Ottomans were preparing a massive assault against the rebels’ self-proclaimed capital, Krushevo, and that Albanian bands were wreaking destruction on Macedo-Bulgarian villages. Furthermore, the Ottoman authorities were reportedly distributing weapons to Muslims in the Uscub area. In other regions the rebellion was still spreading, with communication and transportation networks being attacked and Turkish civilians being massacred.¹²² Nevertheless, it was the report of Muslims killing Christians *en masse* which garnered attention in Britain, especially if it appeared that there was complicity by

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 697.

¹²² “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, August 13, 1903, 3; “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, August 14, 1903, 3.

the Ottoman state. As mentioned, Lansdowne swiftly telegraphed Ambassador O'Connor on August 13 to have the report of weapons being distributed in Uscub investigated, and to advise the Ottoman government to deny it.¹²³ Sure enough, it was amongst the five points mentioned in Parliament the following day.

The man who joined Bryce in taking Balfour to task on Macedonia was Thomas Power O'Connor, a well-known journalist, author, and publicist. As with others who had been very critical of the government's handling of Macedonia, O'Connor was of rather radical persuasions. He also held the only seat for the Irish Parliamentary Party on mainland Britain: the Scotland division of Liverpool. Yet, O'Connor was by no means an outsider. Since the early 1890s, he had started a number of newspapers on Fleet Street and had authored several books, including a biography of Disraeli. While he had a radical reputation, O'Connor was a knowledgeable veteran of Parliament, which gave him the background to deliver a few history lessons.

T. P. O'Connor began his criticism with reference to the report that the Ottoman authorities were distributing arms to Muslims, "which could only end in massacre." He said Britain bore the "gravest responsibility" for the situation in Macedonia, which was still under Ottoman rule due to the diplomacy of Benjamin Disraeli. O'Connor then quoted Balfour's "balance of criminality" statement from August 10, calling it "most disastrous," since it "implied that the sympathy of this country was with the oppressors and not with the oppressed." He referred to the *Daily News* correspondent's calling Macedonia "a hell on Earth." He noted that *The Times* correspondent had found only one example of Christians committing outrages on Muslims, and that the same correspondent had found no evidence that the uprising had been engineered from beyond Macedonia's borders. O'Connor continued with criticism of the Ottoman government for the "organized anarchy" its rule had produced.¹²⁴ Evidencing Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Crete, he argued that only liberty would end the misery, and called on the prime minister to make a new statement. He also gave a nod towards intervention by stating: "The nations of Europe who had the power to deal with this matter should be

¹²³ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 13, 1903, FO 421/198/155.

¹²⁴ *Hansard's Parliamentary Papers* 127 (1903): 1313.

given to understand that in any attempt to liberate the people of Macedonia they would have the sympathy of the people and the Government of this country.”¹²⁵

James Bryce seconded many of O’Connor’s criticisms. He said O’Connor had not exaggerated the past or present situation in Macedonia, calling the Treaty of Berlin “terrible” and criticizing the Ottomans for inflicting “daily horrors” on the Christians “in areas removed from Western knowledge, such as the interior of Asia Minor and Macedonia.”¹²⁶ After Bryce quoted Balfour’s “balance of criminality statement,” the prime minister denied making it.¹²⁷ O’Connor then read the passage verbatim from *The Times*.¹²⁸ Bryce continued by arguing that the balance of criminality could only be decided by a tribunal. Arguing that implementation of the San Stefano treaty would have prevented the present horrors, he said Macedonia was destined to be emancipated from Ottoman rule like the other parts of southeastern Europe: “Surely if that was to be so, the sooner the better.”¹²⁹ He called on the government to take “vigorous and prompt” measures in order to give the people of Macedonia “a chance, under a regime of autonomy and freedom, of obtaining happiness and prosperity.”¹³⁰

Bryce continued with a further litany of questions before Balfour rose to defend the government’s position. Turning to the “long, bloodstained, and tragic history of the Eastern question,” Balfour reminded the House that Disraeli’s diplomacy had saved Europe from war. He argued that if history was to be involved, it was necessary to look further back than 1876. He lectured that the divisions between the Balkan Christians predated Ottoman rule and were still producing the same conflicts in the twentieth century that they had been causing since the fourteenth century. Balfour then addressed T. P. O’Connor, whose criticisms he called “severe,” with the following words:

When the hon. Member for the Scotland Division tells me that I am historically inaccurate in the account of affairs in Macedonia which I gave the other day let me respectfully retort on him and say that he has not really grasped one of the deepest sources of mischief at the present

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1314.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1315.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 1316.

moment in Macedonia, which is that the Christians are not united in the praiseworthy object of obtaining an amelioration of their wretched lot and an improvement in the Turkish administration, but that their methods of barbarism are directed against each other. It is not the Turk alone, deep as is his guilt, who is responsible for the present miserable condition of Macedonia.¹³¹

Balfour's use of Balkan "ancient hatreds" and "inherent complexities" was not a new rhetorical strategy. It served to illustrate the risks of intervention without making direct references. By invoking centuries of regional history, Balfour undercut arguments based on recent history and his opponents' understanding of the current situation. Bryce and O'Connor both objected to Balfour's analysis, stating that the present conflict was due to Ottoman oppression.¹³² Balfour then argued that the government was trying to transcend the appropriation of blame through its support of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian leadership in the reform process. He added that now was not the time for the signatories of the Berlin treaty to convene over Macedonia and finished with another jab at O'Connor: "The hon gentleman opposite apparently tried to revive the old passions raised by the Bulgarian atrocities of 25 or 27 years ago. I do not think, if he desired to make political capital out of it, that he will succeed."¹³³ O'Connor responded that he merely wanted "to protect the Christians of Macedonia."¹³⁴ To which, Balfour replied: "Then he and I, in that, are perfectly at one." Balfour finished by stating that the government wished for nothing more than to see good government in regions like Macedonia that "have hardly known it in recent historical times" and added that, since the government and the opposition agreed upon this, there was not much "room for any exchanges of unfriendly compliment between the two sides of the House."¹³⁵

Balfour's defence displayed his historical knowledge, his philosophical expertise, and his parliamentary prowess. He had argued skillfully that the opposition's criticisms were flawed for their historical ignorance and accused them of negligence in wanting to undermine the reform process for political gain. Macedonia was only one of the matters Balfour responded to that day. There can be no questioning his skill as a parliamentary

¹³¹ Ibid., 1325.

¹³² Ibid., 1325-1326.

¹³³ Ibid., 1326.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1327.

orator. Those who had doubted he was tough enough to handle a ministerial portfolio were now watching him credibly lead his party in parliament. Indeed, he had made few references to the specifics of the situation in Macedonia, couching it solely in historical terms which lent themselves to biological explanations. However, he had been put uncomfortably on the defensive and his remark from the August 10 session of Parliament that the “balance of the criminality” for the situation in Macedonia sat with the rebels would not be quickly forgotten.

In the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne faced much less critical questioning and responded with well-referenced answers. Viscount Althrop (Earl Spencer), who had brought up Macedonia on the first day of the parliamentary session, commented on the worsening news in the newspapers and requested that the government provide more information, additionally noting that the Austro-Russian reforms had not had a positive effect.¹³⁶ Lansdowne replied that it was unfortunate that the violence of the spring had recurred. In more diplomatic terms than Balfour, Lansdowne assigned blame to the rebels: “We are aware that a very serious recrudescence of the trouble has recently taken place, mainly, I am afraid, owing to the increased activity of the Bulgarian revolutionary bands.”¹³⁷ Lansdowne showed less faith in reforms than Balfour, reminding the upper house of the reservations Britain had made regarding the Vienna Reform Program. He reminded the Lords that O’Conor had been continually advising the Ottoman government to take measures “to restrain their troops from excesses, and to use their influence over the Mussulman population with the same object.” Lansdowne said that the government believed that the advice had “been taken to heart,” and that the Ottoman government had informed him that they had arrested and court-martialled several soldiers who had committed offences. He supported the information by referring to reports made by O’Conor, promising that the government would remain vigilant. Lansdowne’s words drew no further remarks from his fellow peers.¹³⁸

While being as critical as Balfour of the rebels, Lansdowne had given conditional support to the Ottomans and had affirmed Britain’s ongoing vigilance not only toward Ottoman conduct but toward the Austro-Hungarian and Russian reforms. While Balfour’s

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1120.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1122.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

words reminded Parliament and the general public of the perils of rash, knee-jerk responses, Lansdowne reminded politicians and newspaper readers alike that Britain had taken pre-emptive measures, and that they had cards to play. Indeed, the points raised by Bryce and Viscount Althorp regarding their mistrust of the Ottomans and the inadequacy of the reforms were views most members of the government's executive privately held themselves. The trick was to keep moderate liberals relatively friendly to government policy on Macedonia and not allow radical elements to galvanize public opinion in favour of robust intervention. Thanks to their pre-emptive measures and their management of the crises which preceded the Ilinden Uprising, the British government had avoided Disraeli's mistakes and had put itself in a relatively strong position domestically. The government also had the benefit of fortunate timing. The news of atrocities would only come to press after the prorogation of Parliament, allowing the government to communicate with the public on a more selective basis and to avoid opposition harangues and debates which would be printed verbatim in the press.

The 1903 parliamentary session closed on August 14. The King's Speech included Macedonia, describing a situation of general anxiety prevailing in the territory. The Houses were reminded of Britain's pre-emptive measures and its support for the multilateral reform process, which, it was hoped, would "effect some improvement in the condition of all classes of the population in Macedonia."¹³⁹ In private, the British political executive was under few illusions that they had a potentially major crisis on their hands.

For the government, the 1903 parliamentary session had not ended a moment too soon. The calming assurances Lansdowne had delivered to the House of Lords on August 14, were not present in a dispatch he wrote to Ambassador O'Connor later that day. "I'm afraid that we are in for serious trouble in Macedonia," he began, noting that it appeared the rebels were responsible for provoking the situation. For Lansdowne, the prorogation of Parliament was a silver lining, as it would be more difficult for public opinion to move the government without the daily spectacle of question period. "We are not at all inclined to take a prominent part, & now that we have got rid of parliament, we are less likely to be pressed to intervene."¹⁴⁰ As reports of atrocities rolled in during the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 1284.

¹⁴⁰ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 14, 1903, FO 800/143.

early autumn, Lansdowne remarked: "Fortunately parliament is not sitting."¹⁴¹ In mid-August, he was not yet concerned enough about Macedonia to remain at the Foreign Office. He told O'Connor that he was off to Ireland and to keep him apprised of the situation.¹⁴²

With the summer break upon them, the other members of the executive followed suit. The King had not remained in London long enough to deliver his own speech at the closing of Parliament. On August 13, he arrived in Austria-Hungary, over two weeks ahead of his scheduled visit to Vienna and travelling incognito as the "Duke of Lancaster."¹⁴³ His destination was the resort of Marienbad in the hills of western Bohemia, where the King regularly took "a month's cure" in the late summer, during which he would go on crash diets while mingling with the guests under his pseudonym, which he is said to have enjoyed immensely.¹⁴⁴ The leader of the opposition, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, also frequented Marienbad in the late summer, and that year the two spoke to each other at the resort.¹⁴⁵ Whether or not they discussed Macedonia is unknown; King Edward also met with other European royals and heads-of-state during his visits to Marienbad. Perhaps it was some extra attention in 1903 which brought out hordes of camera-clicking royal-watchers, and forced the King to request additional plain-clothes security from Emperor Franz Joseph.¹⁴⁶

Prime Minister Balfour had a much less relaxing August. He had little time to partake in his golf game, as there were family matters to attend to. On August 22, 1903, Balfour was at his uncle's estate (Hatfield House) in Hertfordshire for his half-aunt's funeral. Whilst the burial was taking place, Lord Salisbury, the man from whom Balfour had received so much guidance and support over the course of his life and political career, was on his death-bed after suffering heart failure on August 12. Salisbury died a few hours after his half-sister's burial. As a series of memorial services were held around the country, Balfour attended to the arrangements and responsibilities, some days

¹⁴¹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

¹⁴² Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 14, 1903, FO 800/143.

¹⁴³ Plunkett to Lansdowne, August 12, 1903, FO 7/1340/233.

¹⁴⁴ Philip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh: The Most Edwardian of Them All* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 340.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 394.

travelling to London to attend to state affairs.¹⁴⁷ On the last day of August, a memorial was held at Westminster Abbey before Salisbury's private funeral at Hatfield House. Balfour was reported to have been "conspicuous" in the funeral procession.¹⁴⁸ As he stood by the grave of the man who had directed so much of Britain's foreign policy over the past quarter-century, a new foreign-policy crisis was escalating. A crisis, the government would be repeatedly reminded, which had much of its roots in Salisbury's diplomacy. Disturbing reports of Ottoman atrocities were emerging from Macedonia, and the public clamour for the British government to act was mounting. Although there were no more parliamentary questions to answer, the intensity of questioning in the press was increasing.

Press Pressure and the Balkan Committee

Between mid-August and late September 1903, there was an upsurge in public outcries with respect to the situation in Macedonia. The work of the Balkan Committee was instrumental in galvanizing this sentiment and in providing the high-profile support in the newspapers and at public rallies which helped compel the British government to act. Newspaper articles, letters to the editors, and speeches will be examined here, illustrating the diversity of support for the plight of Macedonia, from clergymen to politicians to lay persons and celebrities. The Balkan Committee provided leadership for those concerned about Macedonia. The organization's leaders consisted of politicians, intellectuals, and activists, many of whom had spent time in Macedonia and could speak with authority as experts. What is more, the Balkan Committee was very effective in connecting the unfolding tragedy to the decisions of the Disraeli administration, and making the current British government appear more accountable. The Balkan Committee helped bring the cause to aid Macedonia into the political mainstream. Although the calls for intervention were tempered, ultimately they helped compel the government to answer its critics and push the envelope of reform for Macedonia.

Balfour's assertion in the House of Commons that "[t]he historic truth requires us to say that the balance of criminality lies more with the revolutionary bands than with the

¹⁴⁷ "The Late Lord Salisbury," *The Times*, August 25, 1903, 7.

¹⁴⁸ "The Late Lord Salisbury," *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 8.

Turkish troops” would echo for months to come. Conservative statesmen like Count Goluchowski praised Balfour’s words, and copies of the statement were reportedly quoted to journalists by Ottoman officials.¹⁴⁹ But in Britain, the government faced a growing barrage of criticism from the press, as well as from Parliament. A *Guardian* editorial deplored the government’s “pitiful attitude” in meekly following Austro-Hungarian and Russian diplomacy. To the editorial’s author, the rebel actions were understandable, given the “notorious evils of Turkish rule in Macedonia.”

Whatever may be the misdeeds of the insurgents, they are fighting against the most abominable tyranny, and if Mr. Balfour will not help them he should at any rate refrain from prejudicing them in the eyes of his more thoughtless supporters. It is idle for a statesman to say that the revolutionary bands are one of the chief obstacles in the path of such trifling improvements as the Austro-Russian programme would effect if honestly carried out. The bands are a natural product of the conditions under which the Macedonian Christians live, and statesmen must reckon with them in propounding a solution of the Macedonian question.¹⁵⁰

A *Times* correspondent claiming to have recently been in Macedonia asked mockingly: “What is the ‘historic truth,’ what is the ‘criminality,’ and what are the ‘revolutionary bands’? A ‘historic truth’ is presumably a euphemistic term for a Consular report.” While acknowledging that the insurgents did commit crimes, he maintained that the majority of the victims he saw were Christians.¹⁵¹ A *Manchester Guardian* correspondent commented the following day that he found it “refreshing to find Mr. Balfour taken to task” for his comments. The correspondent—very likely H. N. Brailsford—concurred from his own experiences that the Ottoman security forces were outstripping the insurgents in killings. The documented brutality of rebel actions against its enemies (mostly spies) were attributed to the context of a revolutionary organization lacking the means to imprison and a cultural disregard for the sanctity of human life, which was a product of centuries of life “under the Crescent.”¹⁵² *Manchester Guardian* editorials in the following days continued to criticize Balfour and call for European

¹⁴⁹ “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, August 13, 1903, 3.

¹⁵⁰ “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1903, 6.

¹⁵¹ “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, August 13, 1903, 3.

¹⁵² “Our London Correspondence,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 14, 1903, 4.

administration of Macedonia to be imposed, if necessary by the military intervention of Austria-Hungary and Russia.¹⁵³

Nevertheless, most new reports emanating from Macedonia in mid-August presented a confusing and unclear picture of the conflict. While the Ottoman security forces were reportedly doing the majority of the damage, there were accounts of the insurgents committing similar crimes.¹⁵⁴ With the rebels getting aid from Bulgaria and local Greeks aiding the Ottomans, the conflict in Macedonia had all the characteristics of a civil war spiraling out of control. Word had spread that Krushevo had fallen, yet confirmed details were hard to come by. Not for the first time, *The Times* complained on August 17: "It is harder than ever to construct out the confused and contradictory intelligence to hand a clear picture of the situation in Macedonia."¹⁵⁵ While *The Manchester Guardian's* editorial line called for the British government to pursue at least a greater diplomatic role in the crisis, *The Times* was more restrained, even acknowledging Balfour's position: "So true is Mr. Balfour's reminder to the impetuous friends of the revolutionists that the Christian peoples of the Balkan states are by no means of one mind amongst themselves."¹⁵⁶

Attitudes shifted after August 22, the day when news of the aftermath of the fighting at Krushevo broke, which brought accusations of widespread massacre by the Ottoman security forces. Independent sources reported details of Krushevo being sacked on August 14, after a two-day bombardment, and after the bulk of the rebel forces had abandoned the town. The victorious irregular troops were alleged to have raped and pillaged at will, killing at least 360 civilians, destroying a similar number of houses and over 200 shops, and leaving some 8,000 people homeless.¹⁵⁷ Similar reports soon emerged from other villages taken from the rebels, notably Smilievo and Armensko. The reports were similar: regular Ottoman troops would occupy the territory,

¹⁵³ "Editorial Article 4 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 15, 1903, 6; "Editorial Article 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 18, 1903, 6; "Editorial Article 5 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 20, 1903, 4.

¹⁵⁴ "Macedonian Revolution," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 15, 1903, 7; "The Macedonian Outbreak," *The Times*, August 14, 1903, 3.

¹⁵⁵ "Index," *The Times*, August 17, 1903, 7.

¹⁵⁶ "There is again little or no direct news," *The Times*, August 19, 1903, 7.

¹⁵⁷ "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 22, 1903, 7; "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, August 22, 1903, 3.

mopping up any resistance, leaving irregular Ilave, Redif and Bashi-Bazouk troops to rape, kill, plunder, and burn at will, and then sell their spoils in market towns.¹⁵⁸ The full weight of the Ottoman army was being brought to bear, and there were suggestions that a systematic campaign was underway to realize “the total extirpation” of the Macedo-Bulgarian population.¹⁵⁹

The condemnations in the press were evident in the descriptions of the events, and outraged reactions poured through in editorials and letters. *The Times* declared that the Macedonian crisis had entered a new phase, in which new reforms under closer European supervision would be necessary owing to the “the hopeless want of discipline on the part of the Turkish troops, whose rapacity and fanaticism can no longer be checked by their military commanders.”¹⁶⁰ *The Manchester Guardian* hinted at intervention:

The alternative and the only course consistent with the claims of humanity is for Europe to hasten the inevitable end and prepare the way for the too long delayed liberation of a miserable and downtrodden population from a government hopelessly incompatible with the tolerant existence for a European race.¹⁶¹

The Ottomans scrambled to control the damage to their public image. The Ottoman government issued the following statement to the press, which was carried by the British newspapers on August 27: “The Turkish Embassy contradicts reports of excesses committed by Ottoman troops at the villages of Smilievo and Givato, in the town of Krushevo, at Karbounitza near Kitchevo, and in 15 other villages in the districts of Okhrida.”¹⁶² This statement does not appear to have been made at the behest of British officials, who had advised the Ottomans to respond to press reports.¹⁶³ At that time, the Ottoman Ambassador in London had replied that there was no need.¹⁶⁴ On August 27, the ambassador wrote a memo to the British government complaining of the

¹⁵⁸ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 26, 1903, 3; “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 22, 1903, 3; “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 3, 1903, 7.

¹⁵⁹ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 26, 1903, 3.

¹⁶⁰ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 27, 1903, 3.

¹⁶¹ “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 25, 1903, 4.

¹⁶² “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 27, 1903, 3.

¹⁶³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, August 13, 1903, FO 421/198/155.

¹⁶⁴ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, August 14, 1903, FO 421/198/167.

biased news coverage of the conflicts in Macedonia and Adrianople, which sensationalized violence committed against Macedo-Bulgarian civilians while making little mention of crimes committed against Muslims and Greeks.¹⁶⁵ The Ottoman government continued to issue similar statements of protest in the press during the following weeks, but their efforts appear to have had diminishing effects. The Ottoman statements were usually placed at the end of long columns of reports detailing litanies of violence and atrocities. Often set in a smaller font size, the Ottoman statements amounted to little more than footnotes contradicting essays. By October, *Times* editors were openly mocking the statements: “The Turkish embassy issues the usual emphatic contradiction of the statement referred to in the above telegram.”¹⁶⁶ Another report in mid-October noted that the Ottoman statements were made with “clockwork regularity” and lacked credibility.¹⁶⁷

Given the inability of the Ottoman government to stem the tide of negative press towards its handling of the Macedonian crisis, it would stand to reason that IMRO would have profited from the situation. However, by and large, this was not the case. The previously tepid mood in Bulgaria shifted with the news of escalating atrocities bringing thousands into the streets to demand European intervention. On August 29, the Macedonian Committee’s twelve-point proposal for autonomy was published in *The Manchester Guardian*, though not *The Times*.¹⁶⁸ The absence of this document from Britain’s best-known broadsheet is conspicuous, especially considering the discussion of IMRO’s autonomy proposals by the Foreign Office.

Nevertheless, the Macedonian Committee’s twelve points did not cause any significant stir of sympathy for the rebels amongst the British public. Calls for Macedonian autonomy and support for its population were all for the sake of the civilian victims of the violence. While reporters, editors, and letter-writers were becoming

¹⁶⁵ Memorandum communicated by Musurus Pasha, August 27, 1903, FO 421/198/277. The memo also contains an extract from a *Times* story from August 24, 1903, which reported “the Turks” had burned numerous villages, where they massacred women and children and executed prisoners of war. The streets of Krushevo were allegedly littered with corpses which the population dared not bury for fear of provoking “the suspicions of the Turks.”

¹⁶⁶ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, October 2, 1903, 3.

¹⁶⁷ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, October 17, 1903, 4.

¹⁶⁸ “The Macedonian Committee,” *The Manchester Guardian*, August 29, 1903, 7.

increasing critical of their government's handling of the crisis, they were largely in concert with the British government's view that the insurgents had knowingly provoked the violence being wrought against civilians in Macedonia. As *The Times*' correspondent surmised: "Then would come that wholesale massacre which M. Boris Sarafoff announced long ago was desired by the Macedonian insurgent leaders in order to arouse general indignation and force the hand of the Powers."¹⁶⁹ Likewise, James Bouchier finished his report on the litany of Ottoman abuses with the following analytical caveat:

Whether this system of wholesale devastation and rapine is being carried out in accordance with a settled plan or is attributable to the lawlessness of the undisciplined soldiery and Bashi-Bazouks the result is the same. The program of the revolutionaries is being fulfilled to the letter.¹⁷⁰

The publication of the twelve-point plan for autonomy also coincided with two more acts of terror perpetrated by the rebels: the bombing of the Orient Express on August 26, and the bombing of the Hungarian passenger steamer *Vashkapu* off the Bulgarian coast on August 31.¹⁷¹ Both were acts of international terror which took civilian lives. The Macedonian Committees appeared simply as crazed terrorists with an appetite for sensation and blood. Theirs was not a noble cause. The perspective offered in a *Guardian* editorial, probably came closest in summing up the consensus of British public opinion after the first month of the Ilinden Uprising: "The political questions in Macedonia can wait; this question of elementary human rights cannot."¹⁷²

Public sentiment was growing for the British government to take some form of action on Macedonia, but it was a movement without a face. Boris Sarafov would have been the only person connected to the insurrection whose name would have resonated with British newspaper readers, and his reputation was more negative than positive. While some prominent politicians and members of high society had voiced their concerns, no one with the sort of magnetism and charisma of Lord Byron or William Gladstone had emerged to champion the humanitarian outcry to help the people of

¹⁶⁹ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, August 22, 1903, 3.

¹⁷⁰ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, August 26, 1903, 3.

¹⁷¹ "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 28, 1903, 5; Elliot to Lansdowne, September 7, 1903, FO 78/5295/215.

¹⁷² "Editorial 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 27, 1903, 4.

Macedonia. To use contemporary terminology, the movement lacked a celebrity endorsement. This was not lost on the Bishop of Hereford, who had railed against the government in Parliament. At a conference in Oxford to promote higher education amongst the working class, he lamented how there was less interest today than there was a generation ago for the Balkans. The bishop longed for a voice to rouse the nation:

In 1876 they were stirred through the length and breadth of the land by the eloquence of Mr. Gladstone on the Bulgarian atrocities. Now, with respect to Macedonia, there was no voice to rouse the country on the subject. There was a need of such a voice, and he thought probably the truest interpretation of it was that in the language of a very ancient writer, "When the vision fails the people perish."¹⁷³

In 1903, no individual emerged who could match the charisma of the grand old man of British liberalism, but the wave of sentiment being expressed in editorials, letters, trade meetings, church congregations, and civic gatherings would effectively be expressed by the committee—The Balkan Committee.

The Balkan Committee articulated a critique of British policy and presented recommendations for action, which helped galvanize and focus interventionist sentiment in September 1903. Led by an executive committee of well-known academics, journalists, and politicians, the organization could address the crisis in Macedonia with an air of authority that was at the very least close to that of the government. Founding member H. N. Brailsford had left Macedonia just prior to the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising, and Noel Buxton was quick to remind editors and readers that he had logged four journeys to the region. Their neutrality could be called into question, but their experience and credentials could not. Some of the leading members of the Balkan Committee were Britain's leading authorities on Macedonia, outside government circles.

Referring to the fact that they had borne witness to the "tyranny and insecurity" that the Macedonian peasants endured under Ottoman rule, the executive of the Balkan Committee published a short letter to the press on September 1, accusing "diplomatists" of forgetting the Treaty of Berlin and of cultivating a sense of self-belief that there was no "practicable remedy" to alleviate the suffering of the Balkan peoples. Acknowledging that the insurgents had only limited demands, they called for a Christian to be appointed

¹⁷³ "Working Men and University Extension," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 24, 1903, 6.

governor of Macedonia, “supported by a gendarmerie under the command of European officers, managing the local finances and controlling the military and civil officials.” This “simple” solution, the executive argued, had proven its worth through the “Lebanon precedent.” Its implementation would be calming, “allowing a period of rest during which the territorial divisions of the country would be rectified, its normal racial tendencies would assert themselves, and its political development would proceed under sympathetic, but watchful, guidance.” The British government, the executive argued, could do much to realize their recommendations by lending its moral and material support.¹⁷⁴

Noel Buxton articulated a more damning analysis of British policy in a letter published on September 12. He called attention to the diplomacy of Benjamin Disraeli at the Treaty of Berlin, which had returned the Macedonian vilayets to the Ottoman Empire. Buxton argued that Disraeli’s work made England directly responsible for the present carnage of a “defenceless people within three days’ journey from London.” He lambasted Balfour’s “balance of criminality” argument, calling on English pride to “try to atone for the past by our present action.” Referring to the misery depicted by *Times* correspondents and a recent feature article by Dr. Dillon in *Contemporary Review*, Buxton called on England to take the lead in realizing intervention as the nation had done in Crete only a few years previously: “Only by some honest effort to induce intervention can England wash her hands of blood.”¹⁷⁵

Driven by the deteriorating humanitarian situation depicted in the press, the Balkan Committee published its “manifesto” on the Balkan Crisis in the press on September 18. It was also published as an eight-page booklet. Penned by James Bryce and Noel Buxton, the booklet articulated the Balkan Committee’s position and recommendations in more detail. It began with a history lesson, stating that it had long been British policy to protect the Ottoman Empire as a means of blocking Russian domination in Eastern Europe. This, they explained, was why Disraeli had worked to rescind the Treaty of San Stefano. Nevertheless, while the terms of the Treaty of Berlin returned Macedonia to the Ottoman Empire, the authors pointed out that the Great

¹⁷⁴ H. N. Brailsford et. al., “Views of English Observers,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 1, 1903, 7; H. N. Brailsford et. al., “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, September 1, 1903.

¹⁷⁵ Noel Buxton, “A Macedonian Policy,” *The Times*, September 12, 1903, 7.

Powers were also obliged by the treaty to protect the Christians of Macedonia, and to intervene to ensure the correct discharge of civil and political rights if necessary.¹⁷⁶ Articles 23 and 62 of the Berlin treaty were quoted verbatim to help make the point. England, they reasoned, was not only historically responsible for creating the conditions which had produced the present crisis, it had been historically and legally responsible for the welfare of the Macedonian Christians, but had displayed only negligence in its “dog-in-the-manger” policy.¹⁷⁷

It is, nevertheless, perfectly clear that the responsibility for keeping Macedonia under the Turk, and therewith for oppressions which have gone on ever since and for the massacres actually in progress, rests primarily with Great Britain; and that has not only a right, but a solemn duty to take any steps in her power to arrest the present strife, and secure peace and order for the miserable inhabitants of Macedonia.¹⁷⁸

Bryce and Buxton continued by pointing out the repressive conditions that the Macedonian Christians endured in peacetime. They argued that systemic Ottoman corruption, incompetence, and injustice had created miserable conditions for the peasants, as they were made to endure unfair tax burdens amongst other abuses. Under Ottoman rule and with no support from the Great Power guarantors of the Berlin treaty or the Vienna Reform Program, it was, therefore, no surprise that the “Bulgarian Macedonians” found their champions from within their own ranks and rose up. According to the Balkan Committee, they had every right to have done so:

The insurrection, justified if ever insurrection was justified, has at length broken out, and it is beyond dispute that many thousands of non-combatants have been barbarously butchered. The unhappy people justly cry aloud for the intervention of Europe.¹⁷⁹

The authors found the answer in the past precedents and urged the government to do in Macedonia as had been done in Crete and Lebanon. Both cases showed that European intervention and reform had produced peace and stability. In their words, it was not only England’s “moral responsibility” but its right and duty to push for stronger

¹⁷⁶ The Balkan Committee, *The Macedonian Crisis: The Balkan Committee presents the following summary of the situation in the Near East* (London: Bradbury, 1903), 4-5.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

reforms in concert with the other powers. As in the committee's letter of September 1, Bryce and Buxton called for the withdrawal of Ottoman troops, the appointment of a European governor with control over civil and military administration, and the reform of the gendarmerie under European officers. They reasoned that Britain could likely get France and Italy on side and, with their combined will, Russia and Austria-Hungary would likely follow. Inaction, they warned, could very well result in a European war.¹⁸⁰

In many respects, the Balkan Committee's manifesto is a work of moderation. There is no direct call for armed intervention, and no call for Britain to act unilaterally, merely to take leadership in pushing the Concert of Europe to multilaterally impose reform. The manifesto simply asks that a reform mandate be applied, based on precedents which had proved successful in producing peace in other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. There is no advocacy for removing Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire, although the level of autonomy lobbied for would have effectively made Macedonia a protectorate of the Great Powers, making a future return to full Ottoman rule unlikely.

Where the Balkan Committee's publication is particularly damning towards the British government is in its use of history. By arguing that Britain was "uniquely responsible" for putting the victims of the present crisis back under the rule of their tormentors, the British nation is singled out as a historically guilty party. Moreover, the authors emphasize this point by quoting Disraeli and printing the neglected articles of the Berlin treaty verbatim. As was the case when Count Ignatieff visited Bulgaria during the Shipka Pass celebrations a year earlier, the effect was to create a time collapse, in which the current humanitarian tragedy—being described daily in horrific terms in the press—was connected to the actions of the British government of a generation ago. The fact that the current British government was headed by conservative ministers, who owed their political opportunities to one of the architects of the Berlin treaty, would not have been lost on the reading public. In this light, Balfour's "balance of criminality" statement in 1903 began to ring as hollow as Disraeli's dismissive comments in 1876 about how he could not find evidence of the "Bulgarian Horrors" in the Foreign Office

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 7-8.

reports.¹⁸¹ The fact that the newspapers were reporting stories of systematic “extermination” and casualties in the tens of thousands only made the Balkans Committee’s words resonate more with public opinion.

Each day in September brought worsening news from Macedonia. In the Vilayet of Adrianople, Albanian Redifs were reportedly out of control, with victimized villagers being forced to sign petitions that the damage to their property had been done by Bulgarians.¹⁸² The authorities in eastern Bulgaria were bracing for an influx of 10,000 refugees.¹⁸³ There were stories of poor conduct by Ottoman troops in the Uscub area, with troops robbing peasants at will as they marshalled and made their way eastward to the Bulgarian frontier near Kriva Palanka.¹⁸⁴ The worst news came from the Vilayet of Monastir. The landscape was said to be ablaze with forests and villages burning from fires set by Ottoman troops in efforts to punish the inhabitants and deprive the rebels of their cover. Looting, torture, murder, rape, and acts of destruction and depravity were reported, including civilians and prisoners of war being slaughtered in cold blood. The countryside was so strewn with dead bodies that sickness was spreading.¹⁸⁵ In Krushevo, the torment was said to be continuing. The town’s stolen livestock had not been returned, and the town remained cordoned off. The sick were not allowed out; aid was not allowed in. To make matters worse, the town’s only doctor had been murdered and its drug store destroyed.¹⁸⁶ In Monastir itself, the atmosphere was tense, with some 1,000 wounded Ottoman soldiers being housed and more reinforcements arriving.¹⁸⁷

In early September, the Ottomans completed a large-scale, coordinated campaign against IMRO forces in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir. Although these “driving operations” allowed the Ottomans to take the last of the IMRO strongholds, they netted relatively few rebels. While most of the IMRO fighters fled to fight another day, the villagers who remained bore the brunt of the offensives. By the middle of the month,

¹⁸¹ Bass, *Freedom’s Battle*, 257.

¹⁸² “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 3.

¹⁸³ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 16, 1903, 3.

¹⁸⁴ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 3.

¹⁸⁵ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 5, 1903, 3.

¹⁸⁶ “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 14, 1903, 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

there were reports under the headline “Christian Populations Exterminated” that up to 60,000 Macedo-Bulgarians had been killed.¹⁸⁸

The coordinated and highly organized nature of the Ottoman counter-insurgency campaign in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir gave rise to interpretations that the mass killings were calculated undertakings and not merely the acts of ill-disciplined or “fanatical” irregulars. On September 18, the Balkan Committee’s manifesto was published, along with news that the town of Kastoria had been sacked by Ottomans troops, resulting in the slaughter of some 10,000 Christians.¹⁸⁹ Although this report was false, its timing could not have been more poignant.

Editorials, letters, and the reports of correspondents during the first half of September reflected public opinion growing ever more aghast at the situation in Macedonia and frustrated with the British government. *The Manchester Guardian* took an increasingly critical tone, urging the British government to show leadership and work with France and Italy (the “Liberal powers”) in pushing for autonomy for Macedonia. “The preservation of peace and the removal of a standing disgrace to Europe rests largely in the hands of France and England, armed with the generous passion of pity, justice, and liberty.”¹⁹⁰ The editors called European inaction on Macedonia a calculated policy and stated that it was the “plain duty” of Balfour and Lansdowne to do something.¹⁹¹ In response to cautions that the numbers of casualties might be exaggerated, an editorial on September 10 scoffed that, even if the numbers were overstated ten times, it “would still be a crime that smelled to heaven. If only 1,000 human beings had been massacred, Europe would still have abundant cause for shame.”¹⁹² *The Observer* called for the British government to champion reform and to insist on the appointment of a Christian governor, a commission, and European officers to reform the gendarmerie. Failure to be

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ “Statement by the Balkan Committee,” *The Times*, September 18, 1903, 10; “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 18, 1903, 3.

¹⁹⁰ “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 4, 1903, 4.

¹⁹¹ “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 5, 1903, 6; “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 8, 1903, 6.

¹⁹² “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 10, 1903, 6.

insistent would be taken by “the Turks” as a *carte blanche*, and the “Muslim barbarity” would continue.¹⁹³

Letters and interviewees went further still. One contributor accused the European Powers of being “as cold blooded as they were with the Armenians.”¹⁹⁴ Madeline Cole, the treasurer of the Armenian Relief Fund, wrote to express sorrow for Macedonia and told readers to remind themselves that England was responsible for the situation.¹⁹⁵ James Bryce went further. In an interview with *The Manchester Guardian*, he said that the “obvious remedy” was to end Ottoman rule on the European continent. He referred to Gladstone’s “bag-and-baggage” policy as the “only way of meeting the difficulty. “Everybody knows that sooner or later Macedonia will be taken from the Turk. Why should this agony be prolonged?”¹⁹⁶ This was a stance that went beyond the program of the Balkan Committee that Bryce co-led. The interview illustrates his frustration with the situation and with the British government’s silence on Macedonia.

Letters to *The Times* also showed frustration, giving vent to more interventionist sentiment, and were heavy with historical guilt. One writer asked whether England had forgotten the “noblest of our national traditions” in not stepping in to aid a “great European province” whose misery was the product of British foreign policy.¹⁹⁷ Another letter-writer argued that the English people had been “far too patient” and asked if the cabinet realized how the “humiliating memory” of the Berlin treaty was moving the people of the country to demand their elected representatives take action.¹⁹⁸ Others made similar historical references, with C. W. Gibraltar of Oxford asking: “Have the Great Powers of Europe lost their Christianity?” Gibraltar looked further into history, referring to the latter chapters of Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and linking the current state of Christian disunity to the Fall of Constantinople in

¹⁹³ “What Macedonia Wants,” *The Observer*, September 6, 1903, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Gilbert H. W. Harrison, “England and the Macedonian Tragedy,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 12, 1903, 8.

¹⁹⁵ Madeline Cole, “England and the Macedonian Tragedy,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 11, 1903, 8.

¹⁹⁶ “Interview with Mr. Bryce,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Handley Dunlem, “Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times,” *The Times*, September 14, 1903, 10.

¹⁹⁸ J. Hereford, “Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times,” *The Times*, September 14, 1903, 10.

1453. "What was the consequence of these divisions? Constantinople fell, the Greeks were massacred or carried off into slavery, and Eastern Europe has ever since been cursed by Turkish misgovernment."¹⁹⁹ For Gibraltar, intervention in Macedonia offered a chance not only for British redemption of 1878 but Christian atonement for 1453. Some were coming to the conclusion that diplomacy might be more effective if it came with battleships: "A demonstration in the Queen's Hall may be a poor thing as compared with a demonstration of the Fleet in the Bosphorus. Possibly the one might lead to the other."²⁰⁰ However, most letters stopped short of suggesting military solutions.

Contrary to most of the letter-writers it published, the editorial line of *The Times* was more restrained and urged caution. An editorial on September 14 defended the British negotiators at the Berlin treaty, arguing that the lack of follow-through on the administrative reforms in Macedonia was due to the policies of the Liberal government elected in 1880. The editorial warned against British unilateralism, asking: "Are we prepared to engage in war with Turkey, or to run the risk of being left in the lurch by our allies if we remonstrated in any manner of which war might be a natural consequence?"²⁰¹ An editorial two days later defended the government, suggesting that Macedonia had the attention of Cabinet and pointing out that Lord Lansdowne had foreseen the weaknesses of the Vienna Reform Program in February, and had reserved for Great Britain the right to recommend modifications.²⁰² Considering this was precisely the action that was being formulated behind the closed doors of Cabinet at the time, Lansdowne could scarcely have penned a more favourable editorial himself. While one can only speculate as to whether these *Times* editorials came at some behest of the government, the editors were openly taking issue with their own correspondents, who were expressing their increasing exasperation with the British government.²⁰³ Even the veteran journalist James Bourchier in Sofia was losing patience; he accused the powers of allowing "matters to drift" and of making "useless and irritating admonitions" to the

¹⁹⁹ C.W. Gibraltar, "Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 14, 1903, 10.

²⁰⁰ J. Guinness Rogers, "Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 15, 1903, 19.

²⁰¹ "The message we publish today," *The Times*, September 14, 1903, 7.

²⁰² "There can be no reasonable doubt," *The Times*, September 16, 1903, 7.

²⁰³ "The message we publish today," *The Times*, September 14, 1903, 7. After summarizing the reports and views recently published from correspondents in the region, the editors stated: "we are compelled to say that we cannot express entire agreement with our correspondents."

Bulgarian government, instead of taking steps to at least limit the suffering in Macedonia.²⁰⁴

The newspapers also reflected growing impatience in other Great Power nations, some of it coming from high-profile sources, particularly in France. From Paris, Georges Clémenceau expressed his admiration for the rebels in not being intimidated by the words of Foreign Minister Delcassé or Balfour, and defended their acts of terror as products of desperation. Why, he asked, had intervention not taken place? "Much bloodshed would have been avoided."²⁰⁵ The leader of the French Colonial Party, Eugene Etienne, wrote in a commentary on French foreign policy that the events in Macedonia should have been foreseen and that history showed that the solution was the nomination of a Christian governor for Macedonia, as had been the case with the appointment of Prince Ferdinand in Eastern Rumelia and Prince George in Crete.²⁰⁶ The former French naval minister, Jean-Marie de Lanessan, also raised his voice for France to take a more active policy towards Macedonia.²⁰⁷ With news circulating that France might intervene in Morocco to create a French protectorate, the Socialist leader Jean Jaures asked why the French government was considering intervening in Morocco and "not in the far more barbarous war in Macedonia between Turk and Christian."²⁰⁸

There were indications of growing interventionist sentiment in Italy. In the Vatican, a group of cardinals were pressing the Pope to denounce the violence in Macedonia and make a humanitarian appeal.²⁰⁹ The Macedonian crisis was also attracting attention in the United States, especially after the attempt on the life of the

²⁰⁴ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, September 15, 1903, 3. Other correspondents had gone further. *The Times* correspondent in Constantinople called the statesmen of Europe irresponsible for focusing on the "balance of criminality" and argued the Ottoman crimes were far worse owing to their "Asiatic Government" and its "Oriental" methods of administration and policing. See: "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, September 5, 1903, 3.

²⁰⁵ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 3.

²⁰⁶ "M. Etienne On French Foreign Policy," *The Times*, September 12, 1903, 5. The French foreign minister Delcassé was wary of Etienne, warning the French Chamber of Deputies that Etienne and his "clique" wished to revive French chauvinism and conquer Morocco. However, Delcassé was receptive to Etienne's idea to pursue entente with Great Britain. See: Stuart M. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby, 1889-1938* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1983), 52.

²⁰⁷ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, September 16, 1903, 3.

²⁰⁸ "Editorial Article 3 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 6.

²⁰⁹ "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 8, 1903, 7.

American vice-consul in Beirut. Some assumed that the assassin was a Muslim who was lashing out at an official from a Christian power in connection with Macedonia. True to his growing resume of boldness when it came to foreign policy, President Theodore Roosevelt dispatched a squadron of American warships to Beirut, which the commander, Rear Admiral Cotton, said inspired “a feeling of confidence and security in all foreigners and Christians.”²¹⁰ Voices in Russia were stirring a month after the Russian naval demonstration in the Black Sea. The newspaper *Novce Vremya* suggested foreign officers be deployed to monitor the Ottoman security forces. The next day, the St. Petersburg daily *Viedomosti* called for Russia and Great Britain to address the Eastern Question in concert with their mutual friend, France.²¹¹ This was at the same time that the German emperor and chancellor were about to meet with the Austro-Hungarians in Vienna. There was little indication of popular sentiment for intervention coming from Austria-Hungary outside of royals connected to Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and none from Germany.

While interventionist sentiment was building on the continent, in Britain demands for the British government to act were mounting in the editorials and letters in the press. The day after the publication of the Balkans Committee’s manifesto, *The Times* editors offered another history lesson, calling for the “many new factors” in the Balkans to be taken into account. Nevertheless, the editorial did call for some measure of action, despite some of their disagreement with the interpretation offered by Bryce and company.²¹² Letters and editorials in *The Manchester Guardian* echoed the points of the Balkan Committee, pointing to Britain’s historic responsibility and its duty to act. As an editorial opined: “We know that massacres, whatever their proximate causes, are the result as well as the illustration of infamous misgovernment. We know our hands twenty-five years ago made that misgovernment possible. Is it nothing to us?”²¹³

Apparently, it was nothing to the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister. On September 23, Count Goluchowski was reported as saying that the “slaughter of 2,000 Macedonian peasants is not an occurrence of such moment as to warrant complaints

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 15, 1903, 3.

²¹² “We published yesterday two communications,” *The Times*, September 19, 1903, 9.

²¹³ “Editorial Article 1 –No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 21, 1903, 4.

regarding the extermination of the Bulgarian race in Macedonia."²¹⁴ Published the day before a public meeting in Manchester, Goluchowski's timing could not have been worse. Even *The Times* editors were appalled, expressing their disbelief at the "Olympian indifference" displayed by the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers and the German chancellor.²¹⁵

The announced public meetings in Manchester and London in late September showed that the cause to aid Macedonia was being embraced by the mainstream of British society. While the Balkan Committee was instrumental in building publicity for Macedonia, much of the emerging grass-roots support for its message was coming from church congregations. Rev. R. V. Meyer of Clophill Rectory, Ampthill, Bedfordshire was a prominent member of the Balkan Committee, but the organization did not produce overly Christian messages. Such statements came from the pulpits. Outspoken figures who featured in the newspapers were Rev. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple; the Bishop of Hereford, who had raised Macedonia in the House of Lords; the Bishop of Worcester, whose address was published immediately following the Balkan Committee's manifesto; and the prolific letter-writer Malcolm McColl, who had been a protégé of William Gladstone and had long railed against the Ottoman Empire and Islam since the time of the "Bulgarian Horrors."

The messages ranged from prayers of peace to vitriol fit for a twentieth-century crusade. Many of the sermons delivered gave Christian validation and moral authority to the historic and legal points articulated by the Balkan Committee. Minister James Johnson of Darwen, Lancashire spoke of how British diplomacy had removed Macedonia from a state of "deliverance" in 1878 and had tossed it "back to the clutches of the Turk."²¹⁶ Some spoke of Macedonia's place in the Bible, asking why the "one anti-Christian power among the nations" was still being able to defile Europe in its rule of "ground made sacred by the footsteps of St. Paul."²¹⁷ Rev. Jasper More of Linley, Shropshire referred to the Bible in his hope that the Great Powers would be moved from

²¹⁴ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, September 23, 1903, 3.

²¹⁵ "The Truco-Bulgarian negotiations," *The Times*, September 24, 1903, 7.

²¹⁶ James Johnson, "Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 4, 1903, 10.

²¹⁷ James H. Rigg, "The Situation in Macedonia," *The Times*, September 18, 1903, 10. Rigg identified himself as a Wesleyan Methodist.

their state of indifference regarding “what is going on in the district to which St. Paul wrote his two Epistles to the Thessalonians, after he had heard the voice from Macedonia saying ‘Come over and help us,’ and St. John addressed in the beginning of the Revelations.” Rev. More also questioned the degree to which considerations of the British Empire’s Muslim subjects were affecting “the connexion which should exist between diplomacy and Christianity.”²¹⁸ Others decried Christian Europe’s division in weakening its resolve. Similarly to the manner in which C. W. Gibraltar had pointed to the lack of solidarity in the loss of Byzantium, Rev. R. B. Meyer spoke of being “absolutely unmanned” by the news of the massacre and displacement of Christians. He argued that Britons had spent so much time and energy killing fellow Christians in recent years that “they were unable now to maintain a full force for the protection of their fellow Christians under Turkish rule.”²¹⁹ The Bishop of Hereford called the situation in Macedonia a disgrace to Christian Europe, and exclaimed: “What a mockery it is for the Great Powers to call themselves Christian Powers; and what a gilded hypocrisy is the coronation of every Christian Emperor or King.”²²⁰

As with secular commentators, the overriding sentiment amongst the prelates who spoke out about the situation in Macedonia was compassion for the victims, coupled with a desire for the government to take some form of action. As the calendar turned to the second half of September, a growing number of congregations passed resolutions, and several of the bishops and clergy who had been quoted in the press were scheduled to address the upcoming public meetings. Pleasingly for many advocates, the Christian appeal transcended denominational divisions. Anglicans and Nonconformists alike stood in solidarity for their brethren in Europe’s southeast, at a time when feelings were still raw over the Balfour government’s Education Bill. Indeed, Macedonia was becoming much more than the Balkan Committee’s cause. In addition to the churches, and special-interest groups, the situation in Macedonia was being discussed in working-class organizations. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) passed a motion calling on the government to act, even by military means if necessary.²²¹

²¹⁸ Rev. Jasper More, “To the Editor of The Times,” *The Times*, September 19, 1903, 7.

²¹⁹ “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 10, 1903, 7.

²²⁰ “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 15, 1903, 7.

²²¹ “Trade Union Congress,” *The Times*, September 12, 1903, 12.

Amidst the wave of interventionist momentum, there were a few voices of the realist school, who urged caution. Like *The Times* editors, they urged a more balanced assessment of history and warned that unilateralism could place Britain in a compromising position. The publication of the Balkan Committee's manifesto in *The Times* was preceded by a letter from H. Drummond Wolff, who had served on the international commission to implement the Berlin treaty prior to being succeeded by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice. Wolff was critical of the Great Powers for neglecting Macedonia, but he warned against "warlike intervention" except as a last resort, and then only under the authority of the Concert of Europe. The former diplomat called for a new conference to complete the work of the Berlin treaty, arguing that "both the Porte and the subject races have confidence in the impartiality of a combined Europe."²²² A stronger letter came a day later from P. Lyttelton Gell, who criticized attacks on British policy by the "left wing of the Episcopal Bench." He called the Berlin treaty a product of realism, which had seen more Christian majority regions of the Balkan Peninsula liberated. He accused "Gladstonians" of being naively deluded by Russia, which had since demonstrated "successive instances of tyranny, bad faith, and misgovernment." Gell called autonomy for Macedonia impossible and warned that unilateral British military intervention would be complicated and disastrous. Like the government, he was wary of the emotionally charged tone emanating from British religious circles and asked whether the bishops had any practical suggestions.²²³ However, Gell and Wolff were squarely in the minority in the columns of the newspapers. Conservative realists were losing the battle for British public opinion; for the Ottoman government and Greek interests in Macedonia, it was all but a lost cause.

By mid-September, the Ottoman government was facing a public-relations disaster. In spite of the measures taken by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha to restrict the

²²² Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, "The Situation in Macedonia," *The Times*, September 18, 1903, 10. Wolff's letter was followed by a contribution from Malcolm McColl, who also referenced history by peppering his letter with Blue Book quotes from the British commissioners who investigated the causes of the Bulgarian Uprising. McColl accused Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia of "deliberately conniving at the extermination of the Christian population of Macedonia." He argued that the horrors were deliberately planned by the Sultan and that "rural Mahomedans—both landlords and peasantry—would welcome European intervention, and British intervention in particular." See: Malcolmm McColl, "The Situation in Macedonia," *The Times*, September 18, 1903, 10.

²²³ P. Lyttelton Gell, "To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 19, 1903, 7.

movement of journalists in the Vilayet of Monastir, the stories of atrocities by the Ottoman security forces had emerged to flood the British press on a daily basis. On the accusation of spreading false information, Sultan Abdülhamîd ordered all foreign correspondents to leave Macedonia. The Ottoman government also took the step of hiring Mr. Joseph Morecambe, an American, to travel to Constantinople to be the Sultan's press agent in the "hope that an American in this position will correct the alleged exaggerations of the evils of Turkish rule."²²⁴ As contemporary governments, corporations, and individuals are given to hiring public relations firms, the Ottoman government realized that it had to try and arrest the Ottoman Empire's tainted image in the international press. The Ottoman embassy kept up a steady stream of press releases refuting several allegations. As was the case with the false claim of 20,000 Christians being slaughtered at Kastoria, these statements were not merely reactionary rejections. Even if the statements amounted to only footnotes, it was important for the Ottoman government to tell its version of the events. However, these statements were usually brief and unqualified rejections, which would have left readers deeply skeptical in light of the plethora of paragraphs detailing the death and destruction being meted out by the Ottoman security forces. There was no apparent move by the Ottoman embassy to reach out to the press. Unlike the affable Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador did not (or was not permitted to) make himself available to reporters. The statements that the Ottomans issued were at times mocked by the very newspapers which carried them. It seems that Mr. Morecambe did not arrive in the Ottoman Empire in time to make a difference prior to the Müritzsteg Reforms.

Greece and Greek interests also suffered during the Ilinden Uprising. The Greek cause produced mixed messages, resulting in criticism and even mockery. *The Times* wrote of a "Greco-Turkish" alliance being formed to crush Greece's fellow Christians in Macedonia. A Greek newspaper editor took issue with *The Times*, arguing that there was no alliance, only an arranged "co-operation" of understanding to lend Greek support to the Ottoman security forces in their efforts to maintain peace and order in the face of a "Bulgarian-backed" insurrection, which he termed an "anti-Hellenic crusade".²²⁵ Indeed, the Patriarchate had offered more than just moral support for the Ottomans. Notably, the

²²⁴ "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 9, 1903, 5.

²²⁵ D. Caclamano, "To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 2, 1903, 9.

metropolitan of Kastoria, Germanos Karavangelis, had collaborated with the Ottoman authorities to counter IMRO in Kastoria's environs.²²⁶

However, the Greco-Turkish arrangement was troubled. The principle victims in Krushevo had been the town's Vlach population, which many Greeks counted as their own. Prime Minister Rallis called for Bakhtair Pasha to be punished for the events at Krushevo.²²⁷ A *Manchester Guardian* editorial reacted, "We can hardly expect, perhaps, that Greece should revolt against outrage inflicted solely upon Bulgarians, but at least this protest shows a clearer understanding of the case than her earlier appeal to Turkey to repress the insurgent bands."²²⁸ Some of the Greeks in Macedonia were also changing their minds. On September 21, it was reported that Greeks in the Melnik area near the border with Bulgaria had joined the ranks of the insurgents in their fight against the Ottoman security forces.²²⁹ To the British public, the Greek actions and sentiments likely appeared at best to be confused; at worse the Greco-Turkish arrangement showed a cynical disregard for fellow Christians, which resulted in loss of life for Greeks themselves. The Greek cause elicited little sympathy in Britain. There were only a few calls for aid.²³⁰ Organizations such as the Byron Society were conspicuously quiet during the height of the crisis.

Since well-publicized massacres had been one of their strategic objectives, the Macedonian Committees should have been reaping the benefits of good publicity from the public outcry in Great Britain. Yet, what limited sympathy the organizations did receive came in spite of themselves. Some apologists in Britain claimed the organization had been driven to desperate measures by the miserable circumstances in Macedonia and the neglect of the Great Powers, and that rebels brutal methods were the product of centuries of Ottoman rule.²³¹ At best, they were understood as juvenile delinquents who

²²⁶ Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia*, 124-127.

²²⁷ "The Rising in Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 4, 1903, 10.

²²⁸ "Article 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 14, 1903, 4.

²²⁹ "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 21, 1903, 6.

²³⁰ One of the few Greek appeals for assistance from the British public came from the Hellenic Consul in Manchester. In his letter, the consul appears to have been careful not to ask for help for Greeks in particular, appealing only for assistance for the "unfortunate inhabitants of Macedonia." See: S. Hazzopulo, "Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 12, 1903, 8.

²³¹ Editorial Article 1 – No Title, *The Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1903, 6.

were the products of broken homes and disadvantaged upbringings. Direct contact between IMRO and the press was limited, and the organization continued to show it had a tin ear when it came to the humanist sensitivities of the British public. An unnamed leader informed a *Manchester Guardian* correspondent that their remaining hope was to induce European intervention by provoking war between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. “We have at our command means with which will infallibly provoke war. To you they might seem cruel and barbarous, but they are sure, and in extremity we shall not scruple to use them.” The correspondent called these means “mysterious and horrible.”²³²

A week later, an IMRO leader, presented only as “Dr. X,” stated that his organization could provoke intervention without starting an Ottoman-Bulgarian War. When the journalist voiced his doubts about how this would be achieved, “Dr. X” explained:

The aim of our insurrection is to create in Turkey a state of anarchy such as to make life insupportable not only for us Macedonians, but also for Turks and Europeans. We will paralyze trade and industry, paralyze all forms of productive activity and destroy all sources of prosperity: we will abolish all guarantees of property, of public and personal security. If necessary, we will reduce the country to ashes.²³³

“Dr. X” continued to elaborate on IMRO’s strategies and tactics, claiming that if guerilla warfare failed, they would “pass to systematic terroristic action,” claiming that they were well supplied with “resolute men” and dynamite, and would do whatever was necessary to create a state of anarchy. He defiantly warned: “We are strong enough to depend on our own forces, and are able to carry on the struggle endlessly—do you understand me?—endlessly.”²³⁴

The limited glimpse these interviews gave of the insurgents would not have inspired sympathy from most of the British public. As was often the case, the first articles blurred the lines between IMRO and the SMC. When the differences between the two organizations are delineated, as they are in the second article, bitter political riffs are

²³² “The Bulgarian Agitation,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 7, 1903, 5. It is not clear whether this “unnamed leader” belonged to IMRO or the SMC.

²³³ “An Insurgent Chief Interviewed,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 12.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

exposed. Even the attentive observer is confronted with a confusing picture. The Macedonian Committees appear to be in a state of disunity and presenting a shadowy image. If having “unnamed” leaders or persons with noms-de-plume like “Dr. X” were not bad enough, the elaboration of ruthless tactics would have left readers to conclude that these men were terrorists. Their articulated demands were reasonable to many, their cause justified to some, but their “mysterious and horrible” methods were seen as those of pitiless terrorists.

By contrast, the Bulgarian government was presenting itself well, with several relatively moderate representatives making their voices heard. In mid-September, the Bulgarian government issued a statement informing the press that it was warning the European Powers that it could no longer stand by while its brethren in the vilayets of Macedonia and Adrianople were slaughtered, and hundreds of thousands of Ottoman troops massed around its borders. The Petrov government also issued a partial mobilization order.²³⁵ A few days later it was announced that the Bulgarian and Ottoman governments had started talks to end the conflict. In holding out an olive branch with one hand and loading a rifle with the other, the Bulgarian government looked to be working for peace while preparing for war. With daily news of atrocities and refugees crossing the borders, the Bulgarian authorities were compelled to act. As Prime Minister Petrov pleaded, Bulgaria had restrained its forces, it had appealed for intervention, and disaster had come of it.²³⁶ The IMRO leader Hristo Tatarchev dismissed the peace initiatives as unimportant. This would have only helped the Bulgarian government, which could be seen as desperately working for peace while being faced with a massive army poised to invade its territory and being hostage to the actions of terrorists within its borders.²³⁷

Indeed, the Bulgarian government was well aware of the importance of its image. On September 16, it was announced that the new position of Bulgarian diplomatic agent to Great Britain had been created. The post was to be filled by Dimitri Tsokoff, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had sixteen years of experience in the diplomatic service and was an expert on Macedonia.²³⁸ The

²³⁵ “Macedonia: Bulgaria’s Final Appeal,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 5.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ “The Balkans,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 24, 1903, 7.

²³⁸ “Macedonia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 5.

fact that the Bulgarian government was prepared to send one of its most capable diplomats to Britain in the midst of a crisis which was veering towards war with the Ottoman Empire indicates the importance the government placed on its relationship with Britain and the British people. In addition, two university professors with Macedonian roots, Dr. Georgoff and Dr. Miletitch, embarked for London in late September to “labour in the cause of Macedonia.”²³⁹ The groundswell in public sympathy in Britain had not gone unnoticed in Bulgaria. A mass funeral-procession in Sofia stopped in front of the British and French consulates, and in Ruse a public meeting passed resolutions thanking the bishops of Durham, Worcester, and Hereford; C. W. Gibraltar; the TUC; and the British press in general for the published expressions of sympathy.²⁴⁰

Another advocate for Bulgaria appeared from within Britain. A merchant from Manchester by the name of Joseph Angeloff, who had long been active in Manchester literary circles, was interviewed by *The Manchester Guardian* in mid-September. Angeloff argued that Bulgaria had been placed in an unenviable position, where it might be forced into war with the Ottoman Empire. Angeloff lectured from recent experience, having just returned from three weeks in his homeland. Knowing his audience, he spoke of the Bulgarian people’s enduring respect for William Gladstone. Angeloff ended the interview with an appeal to the Christian people of Manchester for donations of money, food, and clothing, which could be made directly to his office and would be distributed by the Bulgarian Government. Community leaders and some members of Parliament were so impressed with Angeloff that they had reportedly lobbied the Bulgarian government to have him serve as the new Bulgarian agent to Great Britain. However, Angeloff was already doing his native country a greater service. Other prominent Mancunians had joined him in calling upon the mayor to hold a public meeting to address the situation in Macedonia and to “invoke the help of the charitable.”²⁴¹ Thanks to the Balkan Committee, members of the clergy, and men like Joseph Angeloff, the calls for the British government to do something to alleviate the suffering in Macedonia had moved from the back benches to the mainstream. This groundswell of support was about to move out from the church pews to public halls, and the first major rally was held in Manchester.

²³⁹ “Balkans Rising,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 24, 1903, 5.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ “The Position in Bulgaria,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 15, 1903, 7.

On September 24, 1903, a citizens' meeting was held at Manchester City Hall to protest against the cruelties being committed against the Christians of Macedonia and to establish a fund to raise support for humanitarian relief. Led by the mayor, a series of messages of support from prominent dignitaries were read to the crowd, followed by speeches and resolutions presented by bishops from the area and a direct appeal from Joseph Angeloff. The messages and speeches hit the points articulated by the Balkan Committee. The crowd was reminded of Britain's historic guilt, its neglected responsibility to enforce the Berlin treaty, its duty to make amends for past wrongs, and the examples of Lebanon and Crete, which offered blueprints for intervention. Details of the humanitarian costs of the conflict were underlined in a graphic letter from an undisclosed source in Macedonia, which was read by the Bishop of Salford. Angeloff also spoke of his recent visit and pleaded for Great Power intervention and humanitarian assistance, for which a funding committee had been established.²⁴² There were expressions of Christian solidarity. Count Goluchowski was shamed, and the Turks were called "barbarians and savages." Some speakers veered into attacking Islam. Sir Wilfred Lawson commented: "Why the cause of Islam is so dear to Englishmen I have never been able to understand. This policy has caused incalculable evils." Mr. C. E. Schwann, also an MP, said: "It is no use trusting the common sense or clemency of the Sultan. He is a Moslem, and can only yield to force."

Nevertheless, few speakers mentioned, let alone called for, outright military intervention. One speaker who mentioned it immediately noted that the difficulties of such an operation were "formidable."²⁴³ A resolution was passed, calling for the British government to urgently press the other powers party to the Treaty of Berlin to insist on the immediate withdrawal of Ottoman troops from the areas affected by the fighting. The resolution also called for the establishment of an administrative system to secure peace in the region, which was to be "free from Turkish interference."²⁴⁴

The public meeting in Manchester not only showed the growth in the British public's outrage over Macedonia; it illustrated the extent to which this sentiment had

²⁴² "A Rising Tide," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 26, 1903, 6. The mayor was to be the treasurer of the funding committee with Joseph Angeloff serving as secretary.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

moved into the political mainstream. The following day, newspapers listed speakers who included bishops and members of Parliament from Manchester and the north of England, as well as prominent national figures. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster sent his regards for a successful meeting to “promote a unified voice in the cause of humanity in the East, which we have all so much at heart.”²⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, James Bryce sent a message. However, unlike the debates in the recent sessions of Parliament, front-bench liberals also sent their support. Telegraphed messages came from Herbert Gladstone and Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who expressed his “full sympathy for the meeting.”²⁴⁶ Joseph Angeloff informed the crowd that he had received letters from a number of members of Parliament, including Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, the brother of the foreign secretary.²⁴⁷

The calls for the British government to act on Macedonia were going mainstream and attracting moderate politicians, members of the clergy, and celebrities. The Balkan Committee had slated a public meeting in London for September 29 with a roster of well-known names. The prime minister had received a written appeal from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the recently knighted Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had moved a resolution at a meeting in Grayshott. Like others, the best-selling author of the popular Sherlock Holmes series advocated for the appointment of a European governor with the authority to enact reform and impose order. He reasoned: “Up to the present the Government was acting very well, but even though it were going along a straight road, no government was the worse for having someone with a pin walking behind pricking it.”²⁴⁸ For Balfour, Lansdowne, and the recently patched-together cabinet, it was time to address the court of public opinion.

Controlling Damage

The British government confronted the domestic public clamour for action on Macedonia with well-publicized diplomacy and some carefully chosen words. Thanks in

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ “Macedonia,” *The Times*, September 28, 1903, 8.

part to its preemptive measures, the criticism of the government was relatively restrained, but by late September it had reached a point where some crisis-statecraft was required. It will be shown that through a series of moves the British government not only appeased public opinion, but it succeeded in winning over several of its critics, including the Balkan Committee, the leadership of the opposition Liberal Party, and the clergy. The critical voices of September were very literally transformed into a supporting chorus by October.

This section will begin with a discussion of the British government's domestic position regarding Macedonia in September 1903. The effect of an open letter by Prime Minister Balfour to the Archbishop of Canterbury will be examined in conjunction with Lansdowne's very public foreign-policy moves just prior to the Austro-Russian conference at Mürzsteg. The establishment of a *de facto* agreement between the British government and the Balkan Committee will be studied, along with the significance of the publication of a new set of parliamentary papers, which appeared just prior to the release of the text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Finally, the successful results of the British statecraft will be illustrated, followed by a historiographical discussion regarding the degree to which public opinion influenced the change in the British government's approach to the crisis in Macedonia.

After the prorogation of Parliament in mid-August, the British government communicated very little publically regarding Macedonia until late September. One reason why Balfour's "balance of criminality" statement had such enduring resonance was that it was one of the few quotable statements in circulation regarding the British government's stand on the Ilinden Uprising. As discussed, editorials by *The Times* did remind readers that Macedonia had the government's attention, and that in reserving the right to call for more changes to the Vienna Reform Program in February, Lord Lansdowne had foreseen the present situation and was prepared to act accordingly.²⁴⁹ Although these messages seem lost amidst the volume of interventionist sentiment, many of the government's refrains from the previous months had gotten through to all but the most radical of those calling for action on Macedonia.

²⁴⁹ "There can be no reasonable doubt," *The Times*, September 16, 1903, 7; "We published yesterday two communications," *The Times*, September 19, 1903, 9.

To be sure, times had changed. War-weariness following the South African conflict can account for the lack of jingoism regarding Macedonia. Turn-of-the-century interventionists were much more disposed to pacifism than their mid-nineteenth-century forefathers. There was no talk of procuring weapons for the insurgents or of organizing volunteer brigades to journey to Macedonia and fight in the name of liberty. As one French commentator observed, twenty years previously war would have been inevitable, but in 1903 it was “out of the question,” owing to the Czar’s pacifism, the Austrian emperor’s weariness, the Italian king’s wish for peace, and a lack of interest on the part of Germany, France, and Britain to risk war in the name of a cause for which they cared little: “In spite of all the shouting of the Bulgarians, Europe will not interfere. Interference is no longer of this century.”²⁵⁰ If that was the case, the British government had helped ensure it was so.

Adventurous jingoists were a fringe element in the ranks of the interventionists. When they did speak out, they either qualified their statements or were rebuffed, bluntly or subtly, by others. To start with, one needs to look no further than the arguments advanced by the Balkan Committee. For all the responsibility the organization’s manifesto heaped upon Great Britain, it asked only for the British government to apply diplomatic pressure to the other signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, for the sake of “immediate joint action” to realize the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from Macedonia and the establishment of reform measures. The authors estimated that, if Great Britain, France, and Italy pressed the issue, Russia and Austria-Hungary would follow suit in order to avoid war.²⁵¹

Most of the “Pro-Macedonia” activists envisioned a diplomatic solution. For example, when a resolution was tabled at the Trades Union Congress calling on the British government to prevent further atrocities in Macedonia, the resolution’s architect, Mr. W. Walker of Belfast, made a preemptive argument against opposition: “Anticipating the objection that interference meant war, he denied that this was the only alternative; but if it was, we had waged war for less worthy objects than the abolition of Turkish

²⁵⁰ “The Eastern Question: A French Official View,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 2, 1903, 5. The author goes on to mention the ethnic and political complexities of Macedonia, which would make ethnic and sectarian conflict a likely by-product of intervention.

²⁵¹ The Balkan Committee, *The Macedonian Crisis*, 5.

misrule.” Although the motion was carried, a number of delegates abstained from voting. One delegate complained that “the resolution was not the voice of the congress.” It was noted that there was “decided opposition to the resolution which had not been heard.” Another delegate remarked: “It is the most unfair proceeding I have ever heard of.”²⁵² At Manchester Town Hall on September 24, Rev. J. S. Simon set the tone for the meeting by stating:

Whilst the difficulties of British military intervention are most formidable, it is possible to let our voices be heard at this crisis as a Christian and humane people. Our protest may avail to arrest the tragedy that is being enacted in the presence of an apathetic Europe. Even if we fail, we shall have the consciousness that when mercy needed a voice to speak for her we were not dumb.²⁵³

The massing interventionist lobby was not “dumb,” but it was not militaristic, and consciously so.

Pacifism and war-weariness aside, the reservations over armed intervention reflect the messages the government had been delivering on the conflict in Macedonia over the preceding months. The British public was very much aware that the insurgents had knowingly provoked the Ottoman security forces into committing the massacres which were taking place in the late summer of 1903. They were knowledgeable about the complex national and sectarian composition of the Macedonian vilayets, and how the end of Ottoman rule might only mark the beginning of a new set of problems. They knew full well of the possible geopolitical complications which could arise if Britain were to embark on a strategy of aggressive unilateralism. The public was aware of this because the government had made sure they were aware.

The fallout from the 1903 Macedonian crisis did not turn into a repeat of the 1876 “Bulgarian Horrors” in part because the British government had learned from history. The government had taken the preemptive measure of embedding such a sufficient degree of doubt in the press, in Parliament, and elsewhere that even those most vehemently in favour of intervention only advocated for a multilateral diplomatic intervention. The pro-

²⁵² “The Trade Union Congress,” *The Times*, September 12, 1903, 3.

²⁵³ “A Rising Tide: Manchester’s Protest Against the Turkish Atrocities,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 25, 1903, 6.

interventionists regulated themselves against jingoistic sentiments within in their own circles and even as individuals. What is more, despite its weakness, there was no challenge to the authority of the government. While criticism rang in the press, there were no cries for the government to resign over Macedonia and no calls for a vote of confidence. The critics only wished for the government to exert its diplomatic influence, which it was about to do.

The British government did not wish to involve itself further with the crisis in Macedonia if it could help it. Lansdowne had made this clear in his communication to Ambassador O'Connor after the conclusion of the parliamentary session in mid-August.²⁵⁴ With negotiations proceeding with France, escalating tension developing in northeastern Asia between Russia and Britain's new ally Japan, and a cabinet riven by divisions over trade and education policies, the government was not inclined to take any sort of initiative in the Balkans. Nevertheless, the pressure to act was building, and it was coming not only from the British public but from the diplomats.

On August 28, 1903, Ambassador O'Connor submitted a lengthy report in which he called the political situation in the region "grave." Expressing concerns that the situation had reached a point where it affected the peace of Europe, he advocated that the government push for a broadening of the reform program while allowing the Austro-Hungarians and Russians to maintain their leadership in the reform process. Citing points from the IMRO demands and referring to his own past suggestions regarding European administrators, O'Connor advocated a "moderate regime of autonomy," which would likely be accepted by the Bulgarian government and could be imposed on the Ottoman government. While he admitted autonomy would be an affront to Ottoman sovereignty, he reasoned that the preservation of Ottoman territorial integrity was more likely to be upheld through autonomy than through ongoing instability and possible war.²⁵⁵ O'Connor called his observations in favour of autonomy "bold" but considered them necessary, given the situation. His report got the attention of the prime minister.

On September 10, Balfour wrote to Lansdowne regarding O'Connor's ideas. He concluded that the ambassador was motivated by worry about a sudden move by Russia

²⁵⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 14, 1903, FO 800/143.

²⁵⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 28, 1903, FO 78/5268/521.

and fear of “Exeter Hall.”²⁵⁶ He concurred with O’Conor’s suggestion of some sort of autonomy along the lines of the Lebanon Constitution, which would placate the clamour of public opinion, although he questioned whether, as O’Conor suggested, “Exeter Hall” would be satisfied if they let the Russians take the credit.²⁵⁷

The existing records do not provide us with a full accounting of the details of the British executive’s decision-making process regarding Macedonia.²⁵⁸ From what can be pieced together, it is evident that during mid-September, Balfour, Lansdowne, and the cabinet decided to act on O’Conor’s suggestions and to press the other powers to revamp the reform program. As the aforementioned *Times* editorial indicated, Macedonia was undoubtedly discussed during the cabinet meetings which began on September 14. On September 23, Lansdowne wrote to Balfour suggesting changes to a “draft letter” regarding the reforms. He emphasized that he wanted population statistics included, and that he wished it to be made clear that they were not just “saying ditto” to Austria-Hungary and Russia in the expansion of the reforms.²⁵⁹ By this time it had been made clear that during the upcoming meeting between the Emperor Franz Joseph and Czar Nicholas, the respective foreign ministers would be considering revisions to the Vienna Program reforms. A day later, Lansdowne wrote to O’Conor stating that they felt justified in revising the reforms but that they did not wish to overshadow the Austro-Hungarians and Russians. Lansdowne asked O’Conor to urge the Sultan to take credit for the ideas himself, as it would make obstruction of the reforms more difficult.²⁶⁰ However, the foreign secretary took a rather different tone in a letter to Balfour dated the same day (September 24). The Russians had issued a communiqué which erroneously stated that the British had accepted the “extreme anti-Bulgarian view” of Austria-Hungary and Russia. Lansdowne called it a “shabby trick” and worried about the implications, should the press get word of it.²⁶¹ To counteract the Russians, Elliot and O’Conor were informed immediately of the draft of the reform recommendations Lansdowne was

²⁵⁶ Exeter Hall on The Strand was used for holding religious and philanthropic meetings and had been a meeting place for humanitarian lobbyists.

²⁵⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, September 10, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

²⁵⁸ A full examination of the relevant diplomacy can be found later in this chapter.

²⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 23, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

²⁶⁰ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

²⁶¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 24, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

preparing to send to the Austro-Hungarians and Russians when the two powers met the following week. Lansdowne also stated that it should be “on record” that the British had put forward the proposal.²⁶² He suggested to Balfour that their proposals find their way to the press²⁶³. After several weeks, the British government was about to break its silence on Macedonia, in a move Lansdowne had likely calculated would both please ‘Exeter Hall’ and make use of the emotional capital building in the churches and town halls around the country.

The government continued to monitor press reports on Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising, but there was little direct communication with the public until late September. In early September, O’Conor expressed his concern that *The Times* had misrepresented Prime Minister Balfour’s language regarding atrocities in Macedonia. Lansdowne concurred that Balfour had not used the language in question, but if the Foreign Office took the matter up with the editors, they did not make a record of it.²⁶⁴ This is not to suggest that the government and the Foreign Office were deaf to the growing sense of public outrage over Macedonia; far from it. Foreign Office files contain a veritable scrapbook of press clippings, public notices, and communications from organizations and individuals with respect to the crisis in Macedonia. When it came to individuals like Lazarovich and members of Balkan Committee, the record-keeping amounts to something of a surveillance scrapbook. The government and the Foreign Office were paying close attention to the events and to the words and actions of their critics, but they were very selective about when and with whom they engaged.

As the reports of widespread violence and atrocities multiplied in late August and September, Lansdowne only requested investigations of the most extreme or attention-grabbing reports. During the first days of the Ilinden Uprising, the Ottoman embassy had downplayed the British government’s advice to respond to negative reports regarding the Ottoman security forces.²⁶⁵ However, by the end of August, the Ottoman government

²⁶² Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

²⁶³ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 25, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

²⁶⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1904, FO 800/143. Given the moderate tone of *The Times* editorials in mid to late September and the fact that *The Times* did not publish the Macedonian Committee’s manifesto, it seems likely that there was some communication between the Foreign Office and the editors regarding coverage of Macedonia.

²⁶⁵ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, August 14, 1903, FO 421/198/167.

was complaining about the biased press coverage, regularly updating the Foreign Office on its account of the fighting, and issuing statements to the press. When meeting with Ottoman officials, Lansdowne and O'Connor would usually urge them to reign in their troops for the sake of public opinion in the "civilized world." Lansdowne was only moved to ask O'Connor to investigate a few extreme cases. One came with alleged reports of Ottoman soldiers executing "Bulgarian" prisoners of war, a clear violation of the Geneva Convention, to which Lansdowne said he expected the Ottoman government to issue a categorical denial, which it did.²⁶⁶ In late September, Lansdowne requested his diplomats look into reports of Ottoman troops abducting girls and carrying them off to their barracks. He was prompted by a discerning letter-writer.²⁶⁷ However, the files do not contain many such letters. Most concerned citizens appear to have preferred to let their feelings be known through the press or by attending meetings. These very public protests called for public responses.

Prime Minister Balfour responded to the mounting criticism with an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The letter was published in the press on September 25, the day after the passionate appeals from the meeting at Manchester City Hall had made the headlines. The letter was "officially supplied" to the press and responded to a letter the Archbishop had written to the prime minister. Compared to his often-quoted "balance of criminality" speech in Parliament six weeks previously, Balfour showed more sensitivity in his delivery, but much of the message was the same. He said he completely understood the outpouring of sympathy amongst Britons for the Christians of Macedonia, and acknowledged that Britain bore some responsibility for ignoring the "unremedied...ills." However, he cautioned that action must come in accordance with knowledge, and called attention to the "salient elements in the present situation." Balfour

²⁶⁶ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/507; O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 7, 1903, FO 78/5269/644; Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 30, 1903, FO 421/198/542.

²⁶⁷ B.R. Balfour to Lansdowne, September 28, 1903, FO 421/198/532; Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 8, 1903, FO 421/199/62. Lansdowne asked O'Connor to make investigations and to make sure that the women were released. O'Connor reported back in late November that the Ottomans had investigated and only found a few incidents where soldiers had committed crimes. In these cases, the soldiers were punished, including 100 Albanian *redifs* who were court martialled. O'Connor was satisfied that the Ottoman authorities "did their best to limit and repair the evils done by undisciplined *redifs* in the face of great provocation." See: O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 24, 1903, FO 78/5271/782.

drew attention to the mixed population of Macedonia, reminding the archbishop that there were different Christian populations, and that the territory had been victimized by years of “corrupt and incapable administration,” inadequate security forces, and “detestable” tax systems, which had intensified national rivalries “in a population not fully imbued with Western ideas of humanity.” Balfour urged faith in the Concert of Europe, commending the Austro-Hungarian and Russian-inspired reforms and blaming the lack of success on Ottoman recalcitrance and negligence of the Macedonian Committees. Taking aim at his critics who expressed understanding for the rebels, Balfour accused the rebels of wilfully and knowingly provoking the massacres. He then returned to discuss international sensitivities and Macedonia’s complex demography. He appealed for “sober judgment” and a multilateral approach to the crisis and reminded the readers that Britain had reserved the right to offer suggestions to the reform process and would continue to do so.²⁶⁸

Balfour’s open letter was addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, but many of the messages were directed at the government’s more radical critics. By displaying detailed knowledge of the populations of Macedonia, the intricacies of history, and contemporary international relations, he made those appealing for rapid intervention appear to be emotionally-driven dilettantes who were being successfully manipulated by the rebels. According to Balfour, the critics had fallen into the trap; the government, through its wisdom, had not. In arguing for a careful approach guided by knowledge and reason, Balfour appealed for moderates to trust the government in its approach to the crisis. Theirs was the voice of prudence; the government’s critics were courting recklessness.²⁶⁹

Balfour’s hope was that the moderate elements would maintain their faith in the government’s policy toward Macedonia. In making his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury public, he was hoping to reach those who had recently been swayed by the moral messages and appeals of Christian unity voiced in churches around the country. He showed that the government was very much aware of its past mistakes and the present situation. What is more, the government’s policy had “even higher sanction” from

²⁶⁸ “The letter addressed by Mr. Balfour to the Archbishop of Canterbury,” *The Times*, September 26, 1903, 9.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the fact that it was the best course for improving Macedonia and maintaining the security of Europe.²⁷⁰

Some of the reaction to Balfour's open letter to the Archbishop was positive. *The Times'* presentation of the letter was buffered with supportive comments, in which it called Balfour's letter "most timely" and called his discussion of the "intricacies" of the problem "lucid." While the editors credited the government for "seriously concerning themselves" over these problems, they concluded that the time had come for some sort of intervention by the European powers.²⁷¹ One letter-writer defended the government, accusing the "the Bishops" of being ignorant of foreign politics and advocating foolish policies that could plunge the British Empire into war "for the Macedonians, to whom we are bound by no conceivable tie either of tradition or expectation."²⁷²

Still, most of the response was negative. *The Observer* called the letter "vague" and "indefinite," saying Balfour's "calm Ministerial disquisitions" would not appease the sense of "moral indignation" rising in the country.²⁷³ *The Manchester Guardian* went further, calling the letter a disappointment and maintaining that, while the prime minister's remarks in Parliament were "forgivable," the words in his letter were not. "We hardly recollect any occasion in recent times when British statesmanship has cut so pitiable a figure on the European stage."²⁷⁴ A "special correspondent" said Balfour had "added little to the knowledge of those who remembered his August 14 speech."²⁷⁵ Another contributor called Balfour's letter "cynical" and "unworthy of an English statesman."²⁷⁶ The Balkan Committee said that the proportion of crimes committed by the Ottomans was so much greater than those committed by the rebels that it was unfair to compare the two, and asked why the government could not at try to work with France

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Edward Mallet, "Macedonia: To the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, September 30, 1903, 4.

²⁷³ "Banks and Bourses," *The Observer*, September 27, 1903, 3.

²⁷⁴ "Editorial Article 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 26, 1903, 8.

²⁷⁵ Your Special Correspondent Just Returned from Macedonia, "Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 28, 1903, 8.

²⁷⁶ W.H. Lever, "Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times," *The Times*, September 29, 1903, 8.

and Italy to “at least check the policy of extermination and prepare the way for a serious European control?”²⁷⁷

A greater degree of European control with more input from the “Liberal Powers” was precisely what the British cabinet was angling for in Macedonia. Between cobbling a new cabinet together in London and the subsequent trip to Balmoral Castle in Scotland to obtain the King’s approval, Balfour and Lansdowne had resolved to invoke the reservations Britain had expressed regarding the Vienna Reform Program. Citing the level of human suffering over the previous weeks, which he admitted had been “very terrible,” Lansdowne said he felt justified in this course of action, and wrote to O’Conor that it was “important that we should place it on record that we have put forward the proposal.”²⁷⁸ The problem, as Lansdowne knew well, was that if they were too assertive, they would “overshoot the mark” and thereby isolate themselves from the other powers.²⁷⁹ Wary of having to negotiate a path between the restrained position of Austria-Hungary and Russia, and the clamour of public opinion at home, Lansdowne produced a memorandum and intentionally let its contents be known to other governments and the press (Appendix III).²⁸⁰ As the Austro-Hungarians and Russians prepared for a royal visit which was becoming a two-power summit on the future of Macedonia, the British would make their presence felt with the weight of British public opinion behind them.

While Balfour did not mind debating openly in the public eye, Lansdowne preferred more subtle approaches. When Balfour’s open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury made a big splash, Lansdowne had already been producing a series of news ripples which were not going unnoticed. On September 21, it was noted in the press that Britain had not joined the other powers in a negative reply to the Bulgarian appeal for help.²⁸¹ Two days later, the German press reported that the British were allegedly pushing for more reforms—information that came from the Ottoman ambassador in

²⁷⁷ H.N. Brailsford et al, “Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times,” *The Times*, September 29, 1903, 8.

²⁷⁸ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

²⁸¹ “Macedonia.” *The Times*, September 21, 1903, 5.

Berlin.²⁸² On September 25, news came that a squadron of British warships had arrived at Suda Bay (Crete) and was ready to proceed northwards “in view of the situation in Macedonia.”²⁸³

Word was out that the British were making concrete proposals to embolden the reforms. On the eve of the Czar’s visit to the Austrian emperor, it was reported that the two powers would be examining British proposals during their meetings. In Sofia, the Bulgarians were hopeful that the news would result in genuine British support. A large public demonstration was held with black banners and the names of victims held aloft as the procession made its way around the capital, including a stop in front of the British consulate.²⁸⁴ In Constantinople, the Ottomans were nervous, as all eyes turned to Austria-Hungary, where the Russians and Austrians were set to review the Macedonian reforms between shooting-parties at the imperial lodge in Mürzsteg.²⁸⁵ Although the details of the British proposals did not appear in the press until mid-October, what was published showed that the British government was pushing the envelope on reforms, and not diminutively following the Austro-Russian lead on Macedonia. While the British government’s moves would likely not be enough to please the radicals, the hope probably was that they could satisfy the moderates. Those who had written letters and attended public meetings could take satisfaction that their voices had been heard. The timing could not have been better. The news that the British government had made concrete reform proposals came on the eve of the Mürzsteg meeting and on the same day that the Balkans Committee was set to hold its public meeting at St. James’s Hall.

The evening of September 29, 1903 brought inclement weather to central London, but St. James’s Hall was filled beyond its capacity with a crowd described as “enthusiastic” and “somewhat partisan.”²⁸⁶ Noel Buxton began the meeting by reading a number of letters of support from prominent political and religious figures, including Lord Spencer; the bishops of Durham, Rochester, and London; and the Archbishop of

²⁸² “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 23, 1903, 3.

²⁸³ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 25, 1903, 3.

²⁸⁴ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 29, 1903, 3.

²⁸⁵ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 30, 1903, 3.

²⁸⁶ “Meeting in St. James’s Hall,” *The Times*, September 30, 1903, 4.

Canterbury.²⁸⁷ These were followed by a speech from the Bishop of Worcester, who declared that the aim of the meeting was to “give expression to, and to strengthen a thousand-fold, the demand which the country made upon the Government for more effective intervention in the affairs of Macedonia.” He said people wanted more than what they had read in Balfour’s letter and called for reform and the appointment of a Christian governor. James Bryce then took the podium to loud cheers and tabled a resolution for the cessation of direct Ottoman rule and its replacement by an administration which was not accountable to the Ottoman government. Bryce then proceeded with a long speech to hit upon most of the Balkan Committee’s themes and arguments. He pointed out Britain’s historic duty and responsibility, and the continuing carnage, while calling for removal of direct Ottoman rule, not only for the sake of the people of Macedonia, but also for the stability of the Balkan region and peace in Europe. A second resolution made by Lord Stanmore called for Britain to act in accordance with its obligations to the 1878 Berlin treaty. A third resolution was moved by the Bishop of Hereford for the Balkan Committee to establish a relief fund to meet the dangers of famine and homelessness faced by refugees. All three resolutions were passed unanimously.²⁸⁸

Although partisan, the Balkan Committee’s meeting at St. James’s Hall was not an outpouring of militant interventionism. The stated aim of the meeting called for the government to pursue “more effective intervention.” Most of the speeches and the resolutions maintained the wish for intervention to be diplomatic and multilateral. Rev. R. J. Campbell went furthest by suggesting the possibility of a naval display at Constantinople, and argued that Britain had unilaterally pursued a just war in South Africa in spite of opposition from the European continent.²⁸⁹ In calling for the government to act, the Bishop of Worcester made it clear that the Balkan Committee’s support was not for the Macedonian Committees but strictly for the “innocent peoples of Macedonia,” irrespective of their religious background. Mindful of the intricacies of diplomacy, he stated he did not know what was diplomatically possible. The bishop was adamant that

²⁸⁷ Most of those who had sent messages of support to the meeting in Manchester also sent letters to the meeting at St. James’s Hall.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Campbell’s statement on South Africa produced a strong outcry from many of those present and produced a state of “disorder,” which lasted for some time.

Britain should not act alone and should enlist the support of France and Italy to pressure Austria-Hungary and Russia. Likewise, James Bryce called his resolution “moderate and cautious” and took pains to make the point that such diplomatic intervention was not a reckless adventure but a sound strategy for simultaneously alleviating humanitarian suffering and securing peace. Bryce poked fun at Balfour’s idiosyncrasies and his habit of “thinking and speaking” but did not challenge the prime minister’s authority.²⁹⁰

In taking care to qualify their calls of action with acknowledgments of Macedonia’s complex demography and the delicate diplomacy which surrounded the crisis, the speakers appeared frustrated. The Bishop of Worcester concluded his remarks by exclaiming: “Oh for one half-hour of Gladstone.” Mr. Evelyn Ashley remarked that he would “like also to have an hour of Palmerston.—(Hear, hear.)”²⁹¹ It was a subtext of frustration. Although the Balkan Committee had built up substantial support, even its own leaders were acknowledging that their cause—if not British Liberalism—was lacking the sort of great voice and magnetic personality who could conduct popular sentiment into more potent political force.

While the more radical voices at the St. James’s Hall meeting fell over themselves not to sound too reckless, the voices of moderation showed their support for the government. Several of those who contributed letters, such as the Bishop of London and Rev. Stephen Gladstone, offered little more than sympathy for strengthening the hand of the government. The Archbishop of Canterbury said that “such meetings” can only help to embolden the government by showing that the British public was behind it in its efforts to end “tyranny, rapacity, and misrule” and bring peace to the Christians and Muslims of Macedonia.”²⁹² Evelyn Ashley said he believed that “Mr. Balfour meant well, but he had not the sacred fire in him. The people of Great Britain must put it in him.” The Bishop of Hereford said he believed that Lord Lansdowne “had a sincere desire to benefit these unhappy people, and that his colleagues ought to have done more than they had done to strengthen his hands.”²⁹³ Again, it is important to note that there was no call to fire Balfour, only to put the “sacred fire” in him. As much as some of those

²⁹⁰ “Meeting in St. James’s Hall,” *The Times*, September 30, 1903, 4.

²⁹¹ “Editorial Article 1 – No Title,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1903, 4.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ “Meeting in St. James’s Hall,” *The Times*, September 30, 1903, 4.

present at the St. James's Hall meeting took the opportunity to criticize, mock, and literally hiss at the British government, the meetings produced only support for the government, which, unbeknown to most of those present, was pursuing policies very similar to the Balkan Committee's demands.

In further analyzing the meeting at St. James's Hall, it is clear that the government had made its presence felt. While there were critical references to Mr. Balfour's open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the speakers were also careful to acknowledge Balfour's points on the complexities of the Macedonian crisis, and the larger diplomatic and political situation. What is more, the Archbishop of Canterbury did not contradict Balfour and offered only support for the work of "our responsible government." The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London offered only cautious support for the meeting and did not attend in person, quite possibly in a move to consciously distance themselves from the more firebrand speakers who would be taking the stage. The tone of the meeting was notably less Christian than the town-hall meeting in Manchester a few days previously. Although several Anglican bishops and clergymen spoke, there were few partisan Christian statements, with speakers preferring to express their sympathy for Christians and Muslims or the population as a whole, which indicates that they were taking Balfour's points on the diverse nature of Macedonia's population into account. Likewise, the speakers and letter-contributors were aware that the government was pushing the envelope on reform. Lord Spencer said that it would be "difficult" and "unwise" to make exact comments on the government's course of action without knowledge of the current state of diplomatic negotiations.²⁹⁴ The Bishop of Worcester said that he was unaware of the possibilities of "diplomatic contingency" and wished only for multilateral, diplomatic intervention.²⁹⁵ Balfour's open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the news that Britain was pushing for revisions to the reforms blunted the points of the Balkan Committee's meeting at St. James's Hall and—effectively—turned the occasion into a well-publicized rally of support for British policy on the very eve of the meeting of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers at Mürzsteg.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Although not present at Mürzsteg, Britain would very much make its presence felt during the talks at the Austrian hunting lodge through the publication of its diplomacy. Lansdowne's memorandum was seen by many as the impetus behind the expansion of the reforms promulgated at Mürzsteg, much to the satisfaction of the British public and to the annoyance of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian architects of the reforms, as well as the German government. On the first day of the Austro-Russian meeting came news from Constantinople that the British ambassador had delivered a repetition of Britain's "serious verbal representations" regarding the undisciplined conduct of irregular Ottoman troops. Ambassador O'Connor called the current reform scheme "inadequate."²⁹⁶ The news report credited Britain for being the

only Power which has drawn this important distinction regarding the reforms, the other Embassies having simply and formally supported the Austro-Russian declaration made to the Porte on the 24th inst., in which the two Powers announced their determination to persist in their reform scheme.²⁹⁷

On the following day came the news that the British ambassador in Vienna had had a "long conference" with a high-ranking official at the Austro-Hungarian foreign office, during which he had communicated the British suggestions for expansion of the reforms.²⁹⁸ The next day it was reported that the two foreign ministers were observed on a balcony at the Mürzsteg hunting lodge "examining a long document."²⁹⁹ The reporter suggested that the document was Lord Lansdowne's memorandum. The Austrians would maintain that the British memorandum arrived only after the new reform points had been agreed upon; however, that was not how the story played out in the British press.

As the Russian entourage departed a few days later, news of the Mürzsteg Reform Program depicted a British diplomatic coup, if not a triumph. The Russians and Austro-Hungarians released the instructions they had sent their ambassadors in Constantinople, which contained the principal concepts of the reforms. The two powers were credited with finally gaining a "true appreciation" of the situation. *The Times* drew

²⁹⁶ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 1, 1903, 3.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 2, 1903, 3.

²⁹⁹ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 3, 1903, 7.

the conclusion of what it considered to be obvious British influence: "The language they now employ approximates to that of the recent British declaration to the Porte, and there can be little doubt that the British representations at St. Petersburg and Vienna have largely conduced to this change of attitude."³⁰⁰ As expected, the diplomatic feedback was mixed.³⁰¹

The reaction of British public opinion to the Mürzsteg Reform Program was initially mixed. In the space of little over a week, the British government had gone from having nothing to say regarding Macedonia to being the champion of the revised reforms. *Times* editorials noted that the government was following through on its words from February and expressed disappointment that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians had opted to disregard the British suggestions to have military attachés accompany Ottoman troops. The paper warned that the new reforms would only pacify the British public if Vienna and St. Petersburg made good and followed through on the reforms.³⁰² Likewise, speakers at town hall meetings continued to point out Britain's historical and legal obligations to correct the situation in Macedonia and urged the government to keep the pressure on the other powers to follow through and enforce the reforms. Speaking at a meeting at Birmingham Town Hall, Sir Oliver Lodge urged the government to work with the other powers to end the massacres and argued that Lord Lansdowne would be more willing to act if he felt that he had the country behind him.³⁰³ A speaker at a public meeting in Glasgow joked about Balfour's propensity for philosophical writing and how the prime minister could be found "on the golf links at North Berwick." Although the speaker suggested the option of Britain's sending a naval squadron to the Bosphorus, he only insisted that the government take "practical action" against the Ottoman government.³⁰⁴

Criticism from the ranks of the Liberal Party in October was primarily constructive. There were those who meted out disapproval. A. H. Scott, the Liberal

³⁰⁰ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 5, 1903, 3.

³⁰¹ The diplomacy is examined thoroughly later in this chapter.

³⁰² "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 5, 1903, 3; "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 6, 1903, 3.

³⁰³ "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 10, 1903, 10.

³⁰⁴ "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 21, 1903, 8.

candidate for Ashton-under-Lyne, said it was “scandalous” that Lansdowne was conducting foreign policy after his failures to prepare for the South African war. Scott said that the English race would be much better represented by William Gladstone, who, if he were alive, “even as an invalid,” would have commanded such fear and respect that “the Turk would not have dared go so far upon his present course.”³⁰⁵ Still, A. H. Scott was not a prominent name in Liberal politics, let alone national politics. Herbert Gladstone did channel some of his firebrand uncle in a speech to his constituents in Leeds. He called for the government to exert the “heaviest pressure” to coerce the Sultan, but he did not call for the British fleet to sail to the Dardanelles, and he said the object of British pressure should be “free government.”³⁰⁶ Lord Spencer simply called on all Liberals to press the government to bring about good government in Macedonia.³⁰⁷ Future prime minister Herbert Henry Asquith delivered a lengthy oration on Macedonia to his constituents in Fife, brimming with historical points and Britain’s responsibility and duty to correct the situation by forcing the Sultan to accept European oversight of the governance of Macedonia. For all his bluster, Asquith expressed his satisfaction that the government was moving in the right direction on Macedonia.³⁰⁸ Indeed, most of the Liberal Party establishment concurred with Asquith. The words most Liberals expressed, Herbert Gladstone among them, were far from the rancour of William Gladstone and his “bag and baggage” view of the Ottoman Empire.

The British government’s words and actions towards Macedonia from late September to early October had won over the support and respect of the national political mainstream. Calls for anything more than multilateral diplomacy to affect good government in Macedonia appear to have largely dissipated by mid-October. Significantly, religiously-charged comments about anything other than compassion for the victims were few. On October 8, the full text of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s letter to the Bishop of Worcester was published in *The Times*. Only a paragraph of the letter had been read aloud at the Balkan Committee’s meeting at St. James’s Hall.

³⁰⁵ “An Urgent Cry for Help,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 5, 1903, 5.

³⁰⁶ “Mr. Herbert Gladstone at Leeds,” *The Times*, October 16, 1903, 4.

³⁰⁷ “Lord Spencer on the Fiscal Question,” *The Times*, October 10, 1903, 6.

³⁰⁸ “Mr. Asquith in Fife,” *The Times*, October 15, 1903, 5.

Acknowledging Balfour's public letter, the archbishop backed away from support for the Balkan Committee's demands:

Without an ampler knowledge than I myself possess of the historical and political conditions of the tangled problem before us, I do not feel competent to judge whether the constructive policy sketched in your committee's circular is, in its details, that which would best meet the present difficulties, or whether its introduction is at this moment practicable. We have, I hope and believe, no reason to doubt that our Ministers are honestly doing their utmost in face of difficulties greater perhaps than some of us, in the flow of our righteous indignation, are apt to appreciate.³⁰⁹

Whether Balfour had further communication with the Archbishop of Canterbury beyond the open letter published in the press is not known. What is clear is that, after his exchange of correspondence with the prime minister, the archbishop acquired second thoughts about endorsing the Balkan Committee and of being overly critical of the government. This was evident in the archbishop's address to the clergy and laity of his diocese when he called for prayers for the "wisdom and courage" of European statesmen in confronting a problem in Macedonia of "quite extraordinary complexity and magnitude."³¹⁰ The government's message seems to have gotten through to the Anglican bishops and clergymen speaking at public meetings and congregations. At a service of intercession at St. Matthew's Church in Westminster, Mr. G. W. Russell said that it was "not the time or place" to speak of secular methods to save their fellow Christians in Macedonia and asked those in attendance to join him in invoking "divine mercy and assistance."³¹¹ In a postscript to a written message to his diocese, the Bishop of Winchester noted that Balfour's "most valuable communication" shed new light on matters and gave "welcome evidence that the Government does not intend to commit the country to a policy of drift in so grave and anxious a problem."³¹² After the Mayor of Nottingham had made it clear during a public meeting that he did not wish to embarrass the government, Bishop Hamilton Baynes spoke next and also affirmed that he was "not

³⁰⁹ "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 8, 1903, 6.

³¹⁰ "The Archbishop of Canterbury Appeals for Prayers," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 2, 1903, 5. The article states that the Archbishop gave "instructions in detail as to the form the prayers shall take."

³¹¹ "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 1, 1903, 10.

³¹² "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 2, 1903, 9.

in any sense” attacking the government.³¹³ The Evangelical Alliance stated its full acknowledgement of the concerted measures already taken and urged the government “not to relax their utmost efforts” to bring about “serious” reform.³¹⁴ Similar sentiments were expressed elsewhere. When it came to policy on Macedonia, the government of Great Britain had the support and respect of most of the Christian establishment and the opposition Liberals.

As for the Balkan Committee, October saw the organization focus most of its energy on a relief-effort to help the thousands of people in Macedonia facing cold and hunger with the onset of winter. The third resolution from the St. James’s Hall meeting was quickly acted upon with the establishment of the Macedonian Relief Fund, which was announced in the newspapers on October 1.³¹⁵ An independent committee was established with the objective of procuring donations at future meetings where the situation in Macedonia was discussed. Churches and newspapers were urged to help with fundraising, and an account was established with Barclay’s Bank.³¹⁶ Relief was to be distributed by the American missionaries in Monastir until such time as the British representatives arrived. In the announcement of the creation of the Macedonian Relief Fund, the only request made of the British government was for its support to help the organization carry out its work in Macedonia.³¹⁷ Subsequent press in October was largely devoted to publishing accounts of atrocities in Macedonia from anonymous sources. Criticism for the British government was in short supply.

Although it was led by many prominent members of the Balkan Committee, the Macedonian Relief Fund was officially a separate organization. The Balkan Committee faded into the background somewhat, as attention shifted from politicking for intervention to the procurement and distribution of aid. Meetings succeeded in raising funds, and representatives were soon on their way to Macedonia, led by the journalist H. N. Brailsford. Following the St. James’s Hall meeting, the members of the Balkan

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Evangelical Alliance to Foreign Office, October 15, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³¹⁵ “Macedonia,” *The Times*, October 1, 1903, 10; “The Famine in Monastir,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 1, 1903, 5.

³¹⁶ “Macedonia,” *The Times*, October 1, 1903, 10; “Macedonia,” *The Times*, October 10, 1903, 10.

³¹⁷ Brailsford to Lansdowne, September 28, 1903, FO 78/5289.

Committee reduced much of their criticism of the British government. Was this because they were pleased with the government's policy on Macedonia, or were they somehow compelled to ease their critique? The Archbishop of Canterbury had certainly come around to being supportive of the government regarding Macedonia. On October 10, the archbishop wrote to Lord Lansdowne, asking if he had any objection to his supporting the Macedonian Relief Fund.³¹⁸ Lansdowne replied that the archbishop's non-political advocacy "could have nothing but useful results."³¹⁹ The Balkan Committee's shift in focus from criticism of British policy to organizing aid came about through a combination of satisfaction with the British government's diplomacy and a newfound olive branch which bound government and pressure group in a unique sort of public-private relationship.

Members of the Balkan Committee quietly approached the government in September, requesting its assistance in the distribution of aid. Anticipating a humanitarian disaster, H. N. Brailsford wrote to fellow Balkan Committee member James Bryce, asking him to contact the foreign secretary. Brailsford suggested that it would be wiser to write to the government than publish a letter in *The Times*.³²⁰ Bryce concurred and wrote to Lord Lansdowne the next day. He enclosed Brailsford's letter and mentioned the problem of distributing aid. Bryce also assured the foreign secretary that the upcoming meeting at St. James's Hall was not intended to embarrass the Foreign Office but to strengthen its hand, and suggested that a deputation of the Balkan Committee visit the Foreign Office.³²¹ Although he thought it unwise to receive a deputation, Lansdowne was affable in his response. Regarding humanitarian assistance he wrote that: "The question is far too serious to be made use of for party purposes and I believe that we all want the same thing." He mentioned that he had read Brailsford's article in *Fortnightly Review* and was receptive to his ideas to organize aid. Lansdowne promised that British consular staff would do what they could to help facilitate the distribution of aid, and he would have his ambassador make inquiries. He suggested that

³¹⁸ Archbishop of Canterbury to Lansdowne, October 10, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³¹⁹ Lansdowne to Archbishop of Canterbury, October 10, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³²⁰ Brailsford to Bryce, September 21, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³²¹ Bryce to Lansdowne, September 21, 1903, FO 78/5289.

the best method would be for a private agency to distribute aid, with consuls providing information and watching the Ottoman authorities.³²²

Given that the Balkan Committee was pouring ridicule on the government during most of September, it is, in some respects, surprising that the government would be so receptive to offering assistance. Brailsford, Bryce, and Lansdowne each realized the sensitive politics of the situation, and it is hardly unexpected that Lansdowne did not receive the Balkan Committee's deputation. It seems that the decision to establish of the Macedonian Relief Fund, which, Brailsford insisted, was independent from the Balkan Committee, came in part from Lansdowne's suggestion that a private agency could provide the best organizational means to procure and deliver aid.³²³ Lansdowne recognized the need for aid, but he did not want the British consuls to take a leading role in an aid-operation as they had done a few years previously during the Armenian crisis.³²⁴ Having a private agency undertake the work would reduce British official involvement to a supportive role. Lansdowne's humanitarian concerns were very likely genuine. He knew very well that a humanitarian disaster was unfolding in Macedonia, but the move also made political sense. He would have realized from reading Brailsford's letter that a refusal to help the Balkan Committee would leave the government subject to further accusations of being indifferent and weak in the press, at a time when the momentum for intervention was building daily. For its part, the Balkan Committee knew that it would need the support of British diplomacy and the consular network to distribute aid; ridiculing the government would, therefore, not help them save lives in Macedonia. Although there is no direct evidence of a deal, it seems that the British government and the Balkan Committee came to an unwritten understanding that the government would assist with the efforts to administer relief, provided that the Balkan Committee lessened its public criticism of the government. The events certainly bear this out. As September turned to October, British diplomats began to pressure the Ottomans to allow aid to flow, and the Balkan Committee shifted its focus in the press from pro-

³²² Lansdowne to Bryce, September 24, 1903, FO 78/5289

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Some of the British diplomats in Macedonia had been posted to Eastern Anatolia and had participated in the aid operation. From Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot said he did wish to undertake such a responsibility again. See: Elliot to Lansdowne, October 5, 1903, FO 78/5295/265. On the other hand, Colonel Massy, who had toured the Vilayet of Adrianople Vilayet during the uprising, reported he was eager to help. See: Massy to Elliot, October 3, 1903, FO 78/5295/267.

interventionist criticism to fundraising under the new guise of the Macedonian Relief Fund.

Events moved quickly in October 1903. H. N. Brailsford submitted a number of suggestions to the government on how British officials could assist the Macedonian Relief Fund, and he went to some length in trying to convince the government that he was the right person to organize the operation on the ground in the Vilayet of Monastir.³²⁵ Before the Foreign Office could raise any objections, Brailsford and his wife were on a steamer to Salonica.³²⁶ The news that the British government was lending assistance to a private relief agency did not escape the Ottoman government. The Ottoman ambassador urged the British to reconsider, arguing that the insurgents had also destroyed villages, and that distributing aid would only encourage the rebels.³²⁷ Lansdowne was blunt in his response. He told the ambassador that funds were being raised, and that the British government would not discourage these activities. Moreover, as Lansdowne related to O'Connor, he did not think that the Ottomans had much of a case in arguing to keep aid agencies out of Macedonia, when they were largely responsible for the unfolding humanitarian disaster. "Feeling, as I did, how largely the Turkish Government were responsible for the sufferings of these poor people, we should expect the Turkish authorities to afford every facility to those who might be engaged in the task of distributing relief."³²⁸ When the Ottoman ambassador resisted more strenuously, Lansdowne pointed out that the aid workers would observe strict political neutrality and would assist all victims, regardless of race or creed. He told the ambassador that the Ottoman authorities were in no position to cope with the difficulties, and that they should welcome this aid and assistance.³²⁹ By late October, the Ottomans

³²⁵ Brailsford to Lansdowne, September 28, 1903, FO 78/5289; Brailsford to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³²⁶ Brailsford to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5289. In this letter, Brailsford announced that he and his wife would be in Monastir in ten days.

³²⁷ Aide-Memoire from Musurus Pasha, Received September 30, 1903, FO 421/198/539.

³²⁸ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 30, 1903, FO 421/198/543.

³²⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 7, 1903, FO 421/199/56; Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/291.

had relented, and the Grand Vizier had issued instructions that the aid workers were to receive “all necessary facilities.”³³⁰

Lansdowne’s support for the Macedonian Relief Fund did not come without conditions and a few reservations. When Noel Buxton paid a visit to the Foreign Office to discuss the Macedonian Relief Fund’s plans in mid-October, Lansdowne made it clear that the organization was to maintain neutrality and to avoid Ottoman suspicions that it was “of a political character.”³³¹ Buxton asked if the aid operation could be directed by the Red Cross, a consideration already raised by Ambassador O’Conor.³³² Lansdowne made strong appeals to the Red Cross to get involved in Macedonia. He met with its senior British representatives but to no avail, as they maintained that the relief operation did “not come within the province of the Red Cross Society, and cannot properly be undertaken by it.”³³³ While there is little reason to question that the involvement of the Red Cross would have contributed significantly to the relief effort in Macedonia, Lansdowne’s lobbying of the organization had political motivations. As he disclosed to O’Conor, he hoped that having the Red Cross active in Macedonia would limit the influence of the Macedonian Relief Fund, as he had concerns that Bryce, Brailsford, and their cohort would have the field too much to themselves.³³⁴ Given the political context, he felt the government had no choice but to lend its assistance to the Macedonian Relief Fund. In informing O’Conor that Brailsford and his compatriots were en route to Salonica, he said it would be “impossible to stop them or to not help them.”³³⁵ The public-private partnership between the British government and the Macedonian Relief Fund helped bring about domestic political unity for Britain’s Macedonian policy, but below the surface Lansdowne continued to regard the activists-cum-aid workers with a sense of unease. Nevertheless, the foreign secretary’s work had directed the energies of some of his government’s most vocal and best-known critics to the very practical challenge of arresting famine, disease, and homelessness in Macedonia.

³³⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 26, 1903, FO 78/5272/208.

³³¹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/110.

³³² Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/110; O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 8, 1903, FO 78/5272/189.

³³³ Foreign Office to Macedonian Relief Fund, November 2, 1903, FO 78/5289. Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 21, 1903, FO 421/199/140.

³³⁴ Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 18, 1903, FO 800/143.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

The government also produced a hastily-assembled Blue Book. In an effort to exonerate themselves in the eyes of the British public, and to make a political point in foreign policy, the British government released *Turkey No. 4* on October 16, 1903. It contained a collection of diplomatic papers displaying British efforts to lobby for reform between September 6 and October 6. Large sections of *Turkey No. 4* were quoted verbatim in the press, and it appeared six days before the Austro-Hungarians and Russians released the official text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program.³³⁶

Turkey No. 4 begins with two telegrams from Ambassador O'Connor, accounting for his representations regarding excesses committed by Ottoman irregular troops and the Grand Vizier's promises that guilty parties would be punished, and that such events would not recur. Lansdowne's communication of September 19 to the Austro-Hungarians and Russians regarding the reforms had shown the foreign secretary affirming his support for multilateralism, while issuing a strong critique of the current state of reforms. Lansdowne referred to Britain's reservations about the Vienna Reform Program and argued that Britain could not remain indifferent to humanitarian suffering. Next, Lansdowne's proposals presented at Mürzsteg were published (Appendix III). There follows a commutation on October 5, in which Lansdowne informed Ambassador Plunkett in Vienna that the Austro-Hungarian ambassador had said that the British suggestions were in accordance with changes to reforms that the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers had already agreed upon. While Lansdowne's words did not contradict the ambassador, he made the point that he hoped the reforms would be quickly finalized, implemented, and communicated to the other powers. The paper finishes with British remonstrances to the Ottoman and Bulgarian governments, warning both governments to reign in recalcitrant elements: a point which, Lansdowne reminds his ambassador in Constantinople, the British have made repeatedly since 1902.³³⁷

While the publication of *Turkey No. 4* would have sent a message to foreign governments and organizations, it also served to placate domestic public opinion. The volume was published in some haste. The last dispatch included was written a mere ten days before the publication. Foreign governments may have been interested to see

³³⁶ "Macedonia," *The Times*, October 17, 1903, 14; "The Balkans," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 17, 1903, 6.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

exactly what the British were communicating to other countries, but they were quite aware of Britain's views, and many of them had already seen Lansdowne's memorandum. Like its predecessors, *Turkey No. 4* is far from a complete record of British policy on Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising. Lansdowne's arguments for more reforms were published in detail. Previous dispatches in which the foreign secretary remarked to his ambassadors that they were "not at all inclined to take a prominent part" in the Macedonian troubles, or when he expressed his thanks that Parliament was not sitting, are absent.³³⁸ The volume is an attempt by the British government to exonerate its approach to the crisis in Macedonia. The statements and actions taken in late September and early October are further elucidated, and they are given a supporting genealogy of references which were not previously made available to the public. Not only was the British government calling for more reforms in mid-September, the published documents indicate that it had lobbied for military attachés to be deployed in the first week of the Ilinden Uprising. Furthermore, in *Turkey No. 4* the government is shown to have been active in issuing warnings and calling for reforms for months before the uprising, as they endeavoured to ensure that the reforms were implemented as swiftly and as transparently as possible.

Turkey No. 4 was a product of well-calculated statecraft. Its predecessor (*Turkey No. 3*) had presented proof that, in the months prior to the Ilinden Uprising, the British government had established that the accounts of its diplomatic personnel offered the most unbiased picture of the conflict in Macedonia. Rival correspondents and foreign governments contradicted one another, often producing confusion. Members of Parliament and the general public had come to rely on the publication of British parliamentary papers ("Blue Books") for the authoritative 'last word' on events in Macedonia. Lansdowne undoubtedly had this in mind when he quickly had *Turkey No. 4* assembled in October 1903. It was an effective refutation of accusations that the British government had been inattentive to events in Macedonia. The papers showed that Lansdowne and the Foreign Office had not only been paying close attention to Macedonia, but they had also been actively engaging in attempts to embolden the

³³⁸ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 14, 1903, FO 800/143; Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143. Indeed, these dispatches were also omitted from the Foreign Office collections.

reforms, restrain the combatants, and aid the victims of the conflict. Lansdowne's published statements echoed many of the sentiments of the Balkan Committee. *Turkey No. 4* presented hard evidence that the British were leading the way when it came to pushing the envelope on reform in Macedonia. The government was producing knowledge to enhance its reputation, its policies, and its perception of events in Macedonia. The message to critics was that they need not worry—the government was managing the situation in Macedonia to the best of its abilities, and doing so with knowledge and compassion, and one could read the correspondence in the press.

With the details of the Mürzsteg reforms still forthcoming from the Austro-Hungarians and Russians, the publication of this selection of British documents produced favorable reactions in Britain. Not surprisingly, *The Times* ran an editorial which discussed the parliamentary papers on the same day that it published much of the contents of *Turkey No. 4*. *The Times* praised the government for having “acted with salutary insight and decision, and at the same time with a clear perception of the limitations that inevitably circumscribe the policy of England in dealing with the Macedonian question.” The editors note that “it is permissible to feel some satisfaction” that the “conversion” of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians to a commitment to more robust reform was due to the influence of the British government. They also expressed their trust in the British government to follow through on the reform: “We feel confident, however, that the British Government will continue to bring to bear upon [Austria-Hungary and Russia] the stimulating influence which even the anticipation of its counsels has already exercised.”³³⁹ *The Manchester Guardian* announced that the powers were finally beginning to take concrete steps to relieve the situation in Macedonia.³⁴⁰ *Turkey No. 4* appeared as a harbinger that the Mürzsteg Reforms were only days away and would bring increased Great Power oversight to the reform process.

The news of the Mürzsteg Reform Program brought further accolades for the British government from traditional supporters and critics alike. A *Times* editorial discussed the Mürzsteg points in relation to the British suggestions, noting that the reforms did adhere to several of the British points, but fell short on some matters: in

³³⁹ “The Official Correspondence as to Affairs in Macedonia,” *The Times*, October 17, 1903, 11.

³⁴⁰ “The Balkans,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 17, 1903, 6.

particular, the deployment of military attachés.³⁴¹ A *Manchester Guardian* article also noted that several of the reform's points appeared to have been based on Lansdowne's proposals.³⁴² *The Manchester Guardian's* editorial board was supportive, if tepidly so.³⁴³ Canon McColl, who had written several letters to the editor criticizing the government, proclaimed at a public meeting in Derby that he "thought Lord Lansdowne was honestly doing his best to compel the Sultan to fulfil his obligations; but he had no trust in Austria or Russia, believing that those powers with Germany behind them had made up their minds to the partition of Turkey in Europe."³⁴⁴ At the same meeting, the Bishop of Derby expressed his approval of "Lord Lansdowne's insistence upon his wise and humane proposals that European officers should accompany the Turkish troops to watch their conduct." The popular support for the government was not limited to Britain.³⁴⁵

On October 25, crowds packed the Théâtre de Sarah Bernhardt in Paris to hear a host of speakers from France, Italy, Britain, and Belgium deliver speeches on Macedonia and Armenia. The British press was lauded, and the British government's action was called "decidedly promising." Lansdowne was credited with pushing the Austro-Hungarians and Russians into action at Müzzsteg. Speakers lectured about the possibility of a new united era in European politics, with a "Triple Alliance" of Liberal states (France, Italy, and Great Britain) giving hope "not only to the oppressed Macedonians and Armenians, but to civilization in general." The Socialist vice-president of the French Chamber of Deputies called the occasion a "welcome change." British speakers from the Balkan Committee spoke of their government's policy with pride and satisfaction. The archaeologist Arthur Evans proclaimed that England was "united in the demand for reform, adding that in his opinion the English government asked nothing better than to be supported by public opinion." Noel Buxton remarked: "The English Government has taken the first step, we are now waiting for the cooperation of France."³⁴⁶

³⁴¹ "Some Little Time and Study Will be Needed," *The Times*, October 26, 1903, 9.

³⁴² "Macedonia," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 26, 1903, 5.

³⁴³ "Editorial Article 1 – No Title," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 27, 1903, 5.

³⁴⁴ "Trafalgar Day," *The Times*, October 20, 1903, 9.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ "Turkish Misrule," *The Times*, October 26, 1903, 5.

It was surely pleasing to Lord Lansdowne when, in early November, Arthur Evans and Noel Buxton of the Balkan Committee published an article-by-article critique of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. While they expressed some detailed criticism of some of the finer points of the reforms, they saw the reforms, on the whole, as step in the right direction, and gave credit to Lansdowne:

It is only right, therefore, that we should make a public acknowledgement of the very great service rendered by Lord Lansdowne's diplomacy. There can be no doubt that the new Austro-Russian reform scheme largely embodies the suggestions made in his Note. Formally, at least, the new proposals must be regarded as a real step in advance. We have before us an instrument, doubtless containing serious defects and betraying some important omissions, but which, yet, if worked with an honest purpose and interpreted in a liberal manner, may be productive of distinct alleviation.³⁴⁷

Even in the words of some the government's harshest critics, British diplomacy received credit for strengthening the reforms. By making his diplomacy public (albeit selectively), Lansdowne had shown the British public that he had taken a prominent role in the reform process and had pushed for reforms, which were more demanding than those which were finalized. The message was that Lansdowne had done the best he could under the diplomatic circumstances. Criticism would be levelled more at Austro-Hungary, Russia, and Germany for blocking more thorough reforms, notably the deployment of military attachés. Indeed, the accolades for Lansdowne's efforts would endure for some time. Four years later, when Noel Buxton published his book *Europe and the Turks*, he still gave credit to Lansdowne for resisting the "Turcophiles" in the British cabinet and pushing for strong reforms.³⁴⁸ To Buxton, the British foreign secretary had produced a prudent roadmap for reform in Macedonia that the other powers had failed to follow:

It is impossible for anyone who has seen for himself the state of things in Macedonia, and made friends among the agents of the Powers concerned, not to conclude that Lord Lansdowne was right in his proposal

³⁴⁷ Arthur J. Evans and Noel Buxton, "The Reforms in Macedonia," *The Times*, November 3, 1903, 9.

³⁴⁸ Noel Buxton, *Europe and the Turks* (London: John Murray, 1907), 76.

for real control by the European Powers. There is neither reform nor sufficient pretence of it to avoid the danger of war.³⁴⁹

Lansdowne's initiatives and the Mürzsteg Reform Program were by no means the end of the criticism of the British government or the lobbying for its favour. As the fighting cooled in Macedonia, IMRO presented rosters of statistics and lists of victims, detailing the human and material misery inflicted by the Ottoman security forces.³⁵⁰ The Greek lobby presented a pamphlet to the Foreign Office in November, giving a record of the Greek victims ("of Bulgarian Outrages") from 1897 and February 1903.³⁵¹ A steady stream of petitions and resolutions from public meetings around Britain crossed Lansdowne's desk through the autumn of 1903, but few of them called on the government to do much more than it was already doing. The general public was informed of complexities of the situation and understood the government's limitations. The most the resolutions asked for was for the government to bring clarity to the conflicting reports by publishing more consular reports.³⁵²

There were those who were not impressed with the government's handling of the crisis in Macedonia. From Sofia, E. J. Dillon called the Mürzsteg Reform Program a "practical joke" and quoted "a diplomatist" who had called it merely the latest chapter in Great Power inaction since the Treaty of Berlin: "And the results? Questions in Parliament, representations to the Porte, the publications of the Blue Books, White Books, Green Books, in a word, the perpetuation of the old regime."³⁵³ Nevertheless, most of the British political mainstream was behind the government's action on Macedonia, including the majority of the Liberal Party, the religious leadership, and the Balkan Committee. Even the insurgents in Macedonia, as Dillon's own interviews confirm, were prepared to restrain their actions and give the reforms a chance.³⁵⁴ In the space of a few weeks, the British government had managed the domestic political uproar over Macedonia to its favour.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 77.

³⁵⁰ Communication from the Macedonian Committee, Received August 31, 1903, FO 294/27/124.

³⁵¹ *Tragedies of Macedonia: A Record of Greek Victims of Bulgarian Outrages in Macedonia between 1897 and Feb 1903*, Received November 11, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³⁵² Resolution from Carlisle, December 14, 1903, FO 78/5289. To this resolution and a similar one from Paddington Town Hall Lansdowne replied that consular reports would be published.

³⁵³ E.J. Dillon, "Powers and Causes of the Insurrection," *Contemporary Review*, 84 (1903): 732.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 745.

The central historiographical question with respect to public opinion and domestic politics during the Macedonian crisis was the extent to which public opinion influenced the change in the British government approach during August and September of 1903, and its decision to lobby for stronger reforms and autonomy as articulated by Lansdowne on September 29, 1903. Francis Radovich maintains that the government decided that public opinion “required some measure of appeasement” and was, therefore, compelled to adopt a “far less passive role” towards reform in Macedonia.³⁵⁵ Bojzar Samardjiev calls British public opinion a “powerful component” which could both support the government and pressure it. He describes the Balkan Committee as having a “peculiar link” between public opinion and the Foreign Office.³⁵⁶ Like Radovich, he points to the upsurge in public opinion in September as being instrumental in the British government’s decision to “demonstrate a more active attitude” towards Macedonia and to advocate autonomy.³⁵⁷ He notes that the Balkan Committee was pleased with the British government’s change of heart and gave its “unreserved support” to Lansdowne and solicited the government’s support in initiating humanitarian relief.³⁵⁸

Radovich and Samardjiev are not mistaken in their respective analyses; however, there are some important factors in the details that give pause for further consideration. To begin with, Samardjiev’s point that a state of apparent harmony developed between the Balkan Committee and the government is only reflective of how the Balkan Committee saw the relationship. British officials had reservations and insisted on conditions in the relief operation. Their lobbying of the Red Cross to lend its participation was motivated by political as well as humanitarian concerns.³⁵⁹ The government’s agreement to assist the private aid-operation proves the power of public opinion, for Lansdowne realized that to deny assistance would invite ridicule.³⁶⁰ As Samardjiev notes, the Balfour cabinet was indeed in a weak position in September

³⁵⁵ Radovich, “Britain’s Macedonian Reform Policy,” 496.

³⁵⁶ Samardjiev, “On the Role of Public Opinion,” 17.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 21. Samardjiev notes that the French diplomats in London noticed a “tangible” change in the British government by the end of September, and a shift in the attitude of the conservative press.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁵⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 8, 1903, FO 78/5272/189.

³⁶⁰ Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 18, 1903, FO 800/143.

1903.³⁶¹ Public opinion did initiate a shift in British policy, but the nature of this policy-shift must be considered. First, although the government professed its desire not to get involved at the outset of the Ilinden Uprising, it had publically noted its reservations regarding the weakness of the Vienna Reform Program. The British government did want stronger reforms. Although the events of August and September 1903 brought volatility which was of obvious concern, it was a chance for the government to “play their card” for stronger reform with the weight of public opinion behind them. Secondly, the public outcries were, by and large, relatively restrained and had limited effects. As Davide Rodogno points out, the “Pro-Macedonians” did not convince any of the Great Powers to intervene in Macedonia militarily.³⁶² Indeed, as has been demonstrated here, most of the opinions ventured in the press and at public meetings did not ask the government to do more than use diplomacy to realize more effective reforms. Military options were only advocated by radicals, and they were opposed by more mainstream elements within the ranks of the protesters.

When the public protests grew more vociferous in late September, Lansdowne’s diplomacy appeased public opinion, while Balfour’s words brought the British political mainstream to heel. The limited demands of the British public during the Ilinden Uprising are at least in part a reflection of the effect of the preemptive measures taken by the British government to engage public opinion in the months prior to the fateful uprising. The British government in no way desired the crisis in Macedonia, but it had positioned itself to manage the crisis to its advantage as much as possible.

Covering Macedonia: The Consuls, the Pashas, and the Press Corps

While much of the British press was at odds with the government regarding Macedonia, journalists enjoyed a relatively complementary relationship with the British consuls in Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising. As discussed, the British government still called upon its diplomats to investigate press reports. However, whereas Alfred Biliotti’s investigations into Dr. E. J. Dillon’s work in *Contemporary Review* in the spring

³⁶¹ Samardijev, “On the Role of Public Opinion,” 22.

³⁶² Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 238.

found exaggeration, the ongoing investigations by British consuls into the alleged cases of atrocities in places like Armensko and Krushevo largely confirmed what was being reported in the press. The difference was that Parliament was not sitting, so the government was under no obligation to make any more statements than it wished with respect to the situation in Macedonia. The vice-consuls and the journalists who remained in Macedonia formed a largely cooperative relationship during the Ilinden Uprising. The journalists could supply useful information to the consuls and, in return, the consuls provided the necessary support to help leverage the authorities to allow the journalists greater latitude of movement. The British consuls continued to liaise with the Ottoman authorities, urging them to exercise restraint with their troops and to investigate alleged wrongdoings. For their part, the Ottomans tried to limit the movements of consuls and journalists alike in the conflict zones. As more news of massacres and atrocities aroused public opinion in Europe in September, the Ottomans took more strident measures to arrest the swell of unfavorable press by expelling reporters; conducting investigations, tribunals, and courts martial; and making renewed promises to enact reform. While the Ottomans continued to be ridiculed, their damage-control efforts were not altogether in vain. In drawing attention to Muslim victims and reminding journalists and diplomats of the rebels' intention to provoke massacres, they mitigated sympathy for the insurgents and their cause.

The relationships between the British consuls and the journalists “on the ground” in Macedonia and the Ottoman authorities will be examined here. At times antagonistic, at other times symbiotic, the associations between the consuls, the pashas, and the press corps were where the ‘ground-theatre’ of the information war was fought. Despite the efforts of the Ottoman authorities to restrict the physical movements of journalists and to censor their words, the reporters did get to the sources of the stories. What is more, the sources literally got to the journalists and the consuls. As the conflict intensified and brought about considerable displacement, refugees appeared not only in Monastir but also in Salonica and Sofia, where they could easily be interviewed. Between these testimonials and their observations, the British consuls were able to compile detailed and nuanced accounts of the events of the Ilinden Uprising. The humanitarian plight of the refugees and the documented abuses by irregular Ottoman forces underscored the British belief that a uniformed presence of officers from the Great Powers would be vital to the success of the anticipated new reforms.

Although reference will be made to information from across Ottoman Macedonia, Bulgaria, and the Vilayet of Adrianople, most of the attention here will be focused on the Vilayet of Monastir, where most of the fighting took place, and from which we have the most complete documentation. A review of the main 'players'—the British consuls, the press corps, and the key Ottoman officials—will be given, followed by an examination of the Ottoman measures to mitigate a public-relations disaster at the local level, how the stories ultimately got out, and what the consequences were with respect to British policy.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, by August 1903 the British had assembled an experienced and competent cast of consuls in Macedonia's main centres. Having already monitored the conflict in the Vilayet of Kosovo, Raphael Fontana in Uscub would watch the Ottomans rush many of their forces south by rail, and would witness increased local tensions and provocations just to the east, on the road to Bulgaria. Further south along the eastern frontier in Serres, Dr. Theodorides, a Greek physician, could monitor traffic along the Constantinople-Salonica railway line and was alert to movements down the river valleys from the Bulgarian border. There was no consular presence in the Vilayet of Adrianople, but Du Vallon in Philipopolis was privy to some of the activity along the border, and Lieutenant Colonel Massy—the recent former vice-consul in Adana—who happened to be in Constantinople during the uprising, undertook a trip into the Vilayet of Adrianople in the midst of the fighting. James McGregor found himself very much in the middle of the conflict at his post in Monastir and, although not permitted to leave the town, he would be considerably busy during the conflict. The new consul-general in Ottoman Macedonia was Robert Graves in Salonica. After leaving his post on Crete with some reluctance, Graves arrived in Salonica on July 23, 1903, just in time to receive some advice from Sir Alfred Biliotti before the veteran diplomat sailed off to retirement on the island of Rhodes. Graves had scarcely acquainted himself with his new job when the Ilinden Uprising began. Taking up private residence in the consulate, Graves kept a busy schedule over the following weeks, advising his subordinates, passing their reports up the mail and telegraph to Constantinople, and keeping in regular contact with the Ottoman vali, Hassan Fehmi Pasha.³⁶³

³⁶³ Graves, *Strom Centres*, 196-7.

In the propaganda and information war for the future of Macedonia, all parties in the conflict were keen to influence the British consuls. The Ottoman authorities and IMRO regularly presented evidence to support their version of events. Community representatives and refugees also sought out the British diplomats in the hope that their pleas might find sympathetic ears. Like Biliotti some months earlier, Graves received and interviewed several refugees from the conflict, who had made their way to Salonica, and he exhibited more sympathy for these visitors than his predecessor.³⁶⁴ Consuls also had their own intelligence networks from which to gather information. Mr. Pissura, McGregor's dragoman in Monastir, produced a steady stream of reports and testimonials during the conflict. In Salonica, Graves inherited Biliotti's agents, which he confessed in his memoir that he found "showed a decided bias in favour of the Greek as opposed to the Bulgarian claims in Macedonia."³⁶⁵ In his effort to "keep an even mind and report only sure facts as could be confirmed from independent sources," Graves looked to the some of the journalists who were covering Macedonia. The principle port-of-entry for most reporters was Salonica, and the wayward scribes relied upon Graves to introduce them to the Ottoman authorities and to facilitate the necessary paperwork for passage into the conflict zone. Some were happy to express their gratitude by passing along information in return.³⁶⁶ Most of the consuls were confined to their offices during the Ilinden Uprising. Journalists, on the other hand, could and did take chances to give the Ottoman authorities the slip and visit the sites of alleged atrocities. In essence, journalists could serve the consuls as private investigators, and there were cases where journalists and consuls collaborated in their inquiries.

The conflict in Macedonia drew numerous international journalists and special correspondents, including several famous authors and eccentrics, who supplemented their reports with published memoirs. Amongst the better-known of this cast were *The Times'* veteran Balkan correspondent James D. Bouchier, who was based in Sofia; Frederick Moore of the *New York Tribune*, who was already featured in Foreign Office records; the boisterous Reginald Wyon of the *Daily Mail*; the anthropologist Frederick George Abbott, who had recently published an academic monograph and a memoir on

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 199.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 197.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 199.

Macedonia; the feared Orientalist E. J. Dillon, whose work had come under critical scrutiny in the spring; the prolific writer and humanitarian Henry Noel Brailsford; and the essayist H. H. Munro (also known as “Saki”). Notably, Brailsford toured Macedonia in the summer of 1903 and submitted stories to *The Manchester Guardian* and *Contemporary Review*. He was joined for at least part of his journey by H. H. Munro. Brailsford had visited Mogila with Vice-Consul McGregor in July and was very attuned and connected to developments in the territory, yet he and Munro misjudged the situation and departed for England on the very eve of the Ilinden Uprising. Brailsford would make his contributions as an expert commentator in the press and would return to Macedonia with the Macedonian Relief Fund in the autumn. E. J. Dillon did most of his reporting from the relative safety of the western reaches of Bulgaria; he does not appear to have set foot in Ottoman territory during the conflict. It is unlikely British officials would have assisted him and even less likely that the Ottomans would have permitted him to enter their territory.

Indeed, few members of the British press made it to the Vilayet of Monastir during the Ilinden Uprising. Moore and Wyon were quick to arrive, along with reporters for the *Morning Post* (Whigham) and *Reuters* (Gwynn). All were assisted by Graves in Salonica, who helped them on their way to Monastir. Graves was especially impressed with the work of *The Times*' man, Philip Howell, “a young subaltern of Indian Cavalry of the Guides on long leave from India, who had persuaded [*The Times*] to send him as their ‘special’ to Macedonia.”³⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the reporters who crossed paths most the British consuls and the Ottoman authorities during the conflict were Wyon and Moore. Moore became the *Daily Express* correspondent in Macedonia and also made special contributions to *The Times*. He was the first reporter to reach Krushevo after its recapture by the Ottoman security forces, and he and Wyon attempted to evade the Ottoman authorities and visit the scene of the massacre at Armensko, near Florina. The Ottoman government found Wyon’s criticisms particularly abrasive, and he was asked to leave the country before exasperation compelled the Ottomans to order all reporters out of the Vilayet of Monastir. In an effort to make his way into forbidden territory, the reporter and adventurer A. G. Hales went a step further by embedding himself with the

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

SMC forces of General Tshonchev and crossing the frontier armed and in uniform in September 1903.³⁶⁸

In addition to their prolific reputations, Moore and Wyon are of particular interest because they both published thick memoirs of their experiences. Moore also provided the perspective of a non-European observer, as he was an American national. More so than their contemporaries, they took measure of the British diplomats. Moore had sparred with Elliot and Biliotti earlier in the year, when he complained that he had been misrepresented in the Foreign Office records. In his memoir, Moore has an interesting description of James McGregor. He depicts the vice-consul creating a minor storm of attention during daily strolls through the streets of Monastir with his white British bulldog, an indication that the late Russian vice-consul did not have a monopoly on imperial swagger.³⁶⁹ Wyon expressed some antipathy for Biliotti owing to the retiring diplomat's pro-Greek bias, but, like Moore, he admired McGregor's capacity for talking tough with the Ottoman authorities and was appreciative of the assistance the British vice-consul—and other consuls—afforded them in a time of conflict.³⁷⁰ Both had sympathy for IMRO's cause, if not for its methodology. As for the Ottomans, Moore and Wyon's works contain no shortage of despairing details and tropes, but both men maintained respect for select Ottoman officials, in particular Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, with whom they had to negotiate with, in order to do their jobs.

Undeniably, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was perhaps the best asset the Ottoman Empire had in its uphill struggle to mitigate the wave of negative public opinion it was incurring during the Ilinden Uprising. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was a career imperial official and diplomat extraordinaire. He had served as vali in Yemen for two-and-a-half years prior to his appointment as inspector-general to the Macedonian vilayets in October 1902.³⁷¹ He was the right man for the job. Perhaps more than any other Ottoman official, he not only understood the importance of maintaining good public relations with

³⁶⁸ A.G. Hales, *My Life of Adventure* (London: Hodder and Soughton, 1918), 26. During the trip, Hales was also in the company of a Russian and a Swiss journalist, the latter of whom was killed just after the band crossed the frontier.

³⁶⁹ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 145.

³⁷⁰ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, x.

³⁷¹ Thomas Kuhn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 20, n28.

European reporters and consuls, but he also knew how to deal with them. He could be both a calculating spin-doctor and a charming citizen of the world. He read many of the major European papers himself, which enabled him to challenge some reporters directly. One journalist reportedly disguised himself as an “antiquarian” and attempted to get permission to travel into the countryside to ostensibly search for Roman ruins. Permission was not granted. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha knew the man’s background as an editor and the paper which employed the man.³⁷² Importantly, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha knew when to take responsibility for the actions of the Ottoman security forces, and when to plead the case of the embattled victim of circumstance. Reporters and consuls alike were very impressed with Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s work-ethic and his artful ability with language, and he could speak directly to his European visitors in French. Raphael Fontana noted how Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had downplayed the casualty figures and the severity of the unrest during the Kosovo Insurrection in the spring.³⁷³ After the assassination of Rostkovski, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha took over as Vali of Monastir and moved to Monastir to direct affairs and engage the eyes and ears of Europe.³⁷⁴

Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha impressed those who interviewed him. Wyon wrote extensively of his conversations and dealings with the inspector-general. On one occasion he wrote how he went into an interview with a few precise questions and came out with a blank notebook. Wyon also remarked that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s “perversion of the truth was simply superb, and we used to say of him that he could make a man believe that Paris was really the capital of England, and prove it with statistics.”³⁷⁵ John Foster Fraser called Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha “Viceroy of Macedonia” and provided the following description:

Hilmi is a tremendous worker. He is at his desk at daybreak, sees secretaries, dictates despatches, receives a constant stream of callers, smokes endless cigarettes, drinks innumerable cups of coffee, never takes exercise, keeps on working till midnight. He is a nervous man. All the time he is speaking his long fingers are twitching almost convulsively. He speaks rapidly, but never dogmatically; always with an appeal to your

³⁷² Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 47.

³⁷³ Fontana to Biliotti, April 4, 1903, FO 294/25/25.

³⁷⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 10, 1903, FO 78/5268/460.

³⁷⁵ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 38.

intelligence, as a sensible man, that the view he presents is the correct view.³⁷⁶

Unlike most other Ottoman officials in Macedonia, the consuls and the journalists maintained their respect for Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha as an honorable man doing his best under trying circumstances. The Vali of Salonica, Hassan Fehmi Pasha, was affable enough but jealous of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, a man of junior years, having been promoted ahead of him.³⁷⁷ Nassir Pasha, who directed the 'driving' operations in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir, received some credit for his military acumen gleaned from the study of Britain's recent operations in South Africa, but others said that he was not worthy of this praise.³⁷⁸ What is more, the news of massacres and "extermination" ultimately left Nassir Pasha in only slightly higher regard than the man whom he replaced, Bakhtair Pasha, who had overseen operations at Krushevo.³⁷⁹ Indeed, when Vice-Consul Fontana detected intrigue aimed against Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, he was concerned.³⁸⁰ Men like Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha were seen by many British officials as the best hope to realize reform as provincial governors in a more decentralized Ottoman Empire.

From the outset of the Ilinden Uprising, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had shown his capacity to be proactive in his engagement with the European press and the consuls. The inspector-general had been quick to report the death of Muslim peasants and the destruction of Turkish property by IMRO, and to assure the consuls that he had taken precautions to calm the Muslims of Monastir.³⁸¹ He had produced a circular on the fighting and damages inflicted by IMRO before the insurgents' representatives in Sofia articulated the organization's demands. Following the assassination of Vice-Consul Rostkovski, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had journeyed to Monastir to take over as vali and to oversee the swift application of justice himself. By the time the squadron of Russian

³⁷⁶ Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, 97-98.

³⁷⁷ Graves, *Storm Centres*, 196.

³⁷⁸ Graves to O'Connor, September 8, 1908, FO 195/2157/263; Maunsell to O'Connor, December 15, 1903, FO 195/2150/64. Maunsell wrote that Nassir Pasha was unable to deal with the complexities of guerilla warfare. Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 71. Wyon called Nassir Pasha a "butcher" and said he lacked Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's finesse and ability to lie.

³⁷⁹ McGregor to Graves, October 15, 1903, FO 294/28/137.

³⁸⁰ Fontana to Graves, October 19, 1903, FO 294/25/66.

³⁸¹ McGregor to Graves, August 4, 1903, FO 195/2157.

vessels had arrived off the Black Sea coast, the offending gendarmes had been hanged. Yet Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and the Ottoman authorities knew well that it would take more than hasty statements and swift justice to shield the Ottoman Empire from the wrath of critical consuls and journalists. There would be no need to make apologies for alleged atrocities and point to extenuating circumstances and rebel provocations if such information was not reported in the first place. For this, the Ottomans needed more than the charms of a few good administrators, they needed the bureaucratic and security apparatus of the modern state to realize obstructionism.

The Ottomans had already begun restricting access to conflict zones prior to the Ilinden Uprising. While McGregor and Brailsford had been able to breeze into Mogila after a skirmish, to inspect insurgent corpses, and to assess the situation, no such access was permitted to Smyrdesh following the sack of the wealthy village in late July.³⁸² Journalists and visitors alike were required to carry the latest in identification—the passport. In addition, the Ottoman government required special visas (*teskere*) to visit specific regions. As Keith Brown notes, the very journalists whose work ran thick with Balkanisms and tropes of backwardness were subject to the very latest in state surveillance, which documented them down to their physical descriptions.³⁸³ Before entering Ottoman territory, Wyon secured a *teskere* for Monastir in Belgrade. He accounts how an American traveler refused to surrender his passport at the frontier since “he was an American citizen, and as such meant to stand no nonsense. The American was subsequently confronted by armed guards and had his tobacco confiscated. In Salonica, he was hauled before the chief of police and accused of being a Bulgarian spy.”³⁸⁴ The Ottomans were not to be cowed by blustering foreigners, especially Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha. McGregor describes how the inspector-general was a master at intercepting information from conflict zones.³⁸⁵ The Ottomans also tried to control the information that went out. Any journalists who used the imperial telegraph offices to send reports back to their newspapers were subject to Ottoman censors. It was the British consuls who helped the journalists circumvent this by allowing the

³⁸² O’Conor to Lansdowne, July 7, 1903, FO 78/5267/384.

³⁸³ Keith Brown, *The Past in Question*, 64-65.

³⁸⁴ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 24-25.

³⁸⁵ McGregor to Graves, September 4, 1903, FO 294/28/122.

correspondents to put their articles in the diplomatic bag for Serbia, whereupon they would be sent on by telegraph by associates. In mid-August, the Vali of Salonica, Hassan Fehmi Pasha, complained to Graves of this practice. Raphael Fontana stood by the practice, arguing that Graves' predecessor, Sir Alfred Biliotti, had approved the measure, and that the Ottoman post had not proved reliable, since registered letters from private citizens in Britain often did not reach their recipients in the Ottoman Empire.³⁸⁶ It does not appear that the British acquiesced to the Ottoman request.

The journalists who covered the conflict in Macedonia were resourceful, and some did succeed in getting to the towns and villages that had been ravaged during the conflict. When Moore and Wyon left Salonica by train, their visas were strictly for the city of Monastir. In an attempt to break away from Ottoman surveillance, they alighted prematurely at Florina and hired a carriage to take them to the village of Armensko, which had reportedly been brutally sacked by the Ottoman security forces. What followed was a cat-and-mouse game with the local Ottoman authorities. After blocking their path, the police telegraphed Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha for permission for the two journalists to proceed. Knowing what the pasha's answer would be, Moore and Wyon announced that they were going for a walk while they waited for a response, and then they promptly headed for Armensko, which Moore reckoned was about two hours' travel on foot. Wyon recounts how they were chased by "an ancient police officer," who caught up with them and implored them to go no further. What deterred the journalists was not the Ottoman police office but the sight of some two hundred Albanians camped further along the road. To the "intense relief" of the police officer, they "hastily reconsidered" their plans and returned to Florina, where they were briefly arrested and sent on their way on the afternoon train to Monastir.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Wyon and Moore had seen plenty of the human toll of Armensko in the hospitals and private homes of Florina. The local Greek bishop maintained that the crimes had been committed by the insurgents, but their host (also a Greek) privately called the bishop a "terrible liar" and maintained

³⁸⁶ Fontana to Graves, August 18, 1903, FO 195/2157/254.

³⁸⁷ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 117-8,

that the bishop was covering up for the fact that the Greek-Patriarchist inhabitants of Armensko had been subjected to depravities despite being friendly to the Ottomans.³⁸⁸

The journalists broke more stories during their time in Monastir. Both men described the intense feelings prevailing in the regional centre. Moore described the town as being “thronged with Turkish warriors, Albanians, Anatolians, and European Turks, soldiers and Bashi-Bazouks.”³⁸⁹ Wyon described a sea of fez hats in the streets, in which there were so few Europeans that the Ottoman sentries saluted them.³⁹⁰ Despite the Ottoman restrictions, there was no shortage of information. IMRO sent an emissary to contact them, “a man of nerve, resource, and careful judgment,” who made the organization’s case to the journalists and consuls while dodging the authorities.³⁹¹ Moore notes that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was annoyed that IMRO’s words were received with any credibility, but there was equal reason not to always take the pasha at his word.³⁹² In a meeting, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha “volunteered” information on the events at Krushevo, contradicting prior claims that the damage and atrocities had been the work of the insurgents and maintaining that Bashi-Bazouks were guilty. The inspector-general assured Moore that thirty Bashi-Bazouks were under arrest, and that 4,000 stolen animals has been returned to Krushevo.³⁹³

Perhaps it was a sense of frustration with the rival narratives that led Moore to chance journeying to Krushevo himself. The morning after his talk with Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, Moore was awoken at 4:30 am by a “tremendous Albanian,” who gave him a note saying “an Albanian which can be trusted shall bring horses, and you shall be taken to Krushevo.” Moore does not say how the escort was arranged, only noting that the

³⁸⁸ Moore, *Balkan Trail*, 153-154. According to Moore’s source, the Bishop had advised the inhabitants to go out and meet the Ottoman troop and tell them they were Greeks. The Ottoman troops who sacked the village had recently been defeated by an IMRO band and took out their frustrations on Armensko. The villagers either did not have a chance to tell their tormentors that they were Greeks or it made no difference.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

³⁹⁰ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 78.

³⁹¹ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 246. Meetings were hastily arranged and documents were smuggled with care. Moore notes how papers were hidden in a basket of eggs presented to them.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 247.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 260.

note came from a “consul, a man who gave me much assistance.”³⁹⁴ The journalists were in touch with several consuls in Monastir, notably Kral of Austria-Hungary. However, it is probable that the trip was arranged by McGregor, who was in regular contact with Moore and Wyon and, as Moore acknowledged, was allowing him use of the British diplomatic mail service to get his stories to Nish in Serbia, where they were telegraphed on to London.³⁹⁵

Although Krushevo was briefly the *de facto* rebel capital, IMRO did not have any European journalists present to chronicle its hour of triumph or the subsequent defeat and atrocities exacted by the Ottoman security forces. An “embedded” journalist would have been taking considerable personal risk in making such a journey, but as the accounts of Wyon, Moore, and Hales (who embedded himself with Tsonchev’s forces) attest, there were well-known correspondents in the region who likely would have taken the chance had IMRO presented it to them. It seems the organization either did not think of taking a European journalist, or did not think it was necessary or worth the risk.

Moore was the first European correspondent to set foot in Krushevo since the commencement of the Ilinden Uprising. He and his dragoman were able to elude the soldiers and to take a few photographs before they were spirited away by members of the Vlach community, who lodged them in a pillaged home and related their accounts of the recent events.³⁹⁶ Moore’s initial report made it to print in *The Times* on August 22, and his story would be picked up by other newspapers.³⁹⁷ What makes the news story convincing are the precise details of the numbers of houses destroyed, and persons killed and left homeless. Politics are noted. The Bulgarian quarter was spared, while the Vlach quarter was looted and/or burned.³⁹⁸ Moore’s more lengthy account in his memoir discusses the point further, noting that the “rich and thrifty” Vlachs were deliberately targeted, and that most of the looting was done by Bashi-Bazouks and Turks from villages in the area, some of whom made multiple trips to load up pack-horses with loot,

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 262.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 261.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 264. For a comprehensive analysis of Moore’s account in comparison to other narratives on the events at Krushevo and their meaning in the Republic of Macedonia see: Brown, *The Past in Question*.

³⁹⁷ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 22, 1903, 3.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

much of which was soon on sale in the market in Monastir.³⁹⁹ Contrary to Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha word, there was no evidence of the promised return of livestock.⁴⁰⁰ Far from a small contingent of Bashi-Bazouks, the looting operation, wanton killings, rapes, and acts of depravity were widespread, although the Ottoman regulars took much less part. Citizen representatives said that they had approached the Ottoman commander, Bakhtair Pasha, and begged him to put a stop to the proceedings. However, Bakhtair Pasha, who had a clear view of the town from his tent, maintained that he could do nothing to control the local Bashi-Bazouks, despite the fact that their leader, Adam Aga, was seated beside him. It was assumed that the loot was shared.⁴⁰¹

Moore's Krushevo 'scoop' confirmed what was already suspected and rumoured. While the consuls had not been able to access the town, the reports from IMRO were already circulating, and the riches of Macedonia's wealthiest town were already on display in Monastir's market. Despite Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's order that no one was to leave Krushevo, some survivors were making their way out, including a boy who rode to Monastir on the back of Moore's horse.⁴⁰² For anyone who cared to look, the evidence was mounting, and journalists were getting the stories out.

The news from Krushevo in late August started a cascade of stories which heaped independently confirmed ridicule on the Ottoman authorities. Working in collaboration with the Austrian vice-consul in Monastir, Reginald Wyon pieced together the story of the town of Smilievo, which had endured a fate similar to that of Krushevo.⁴⁰³ Wyon also journeyed east and broke away from his approved itinerary in the Vilayet of Adrianople. Without authorization, he struck east from the city of Adrianople and bluffed his way into the town of Kirk Kilise, near the recent fighting, by maintaining that his visa for Adrianople was good for the whole vilayet.⁴⁰⁴ With help from the local French consular agent, he managed a brief visit to the rubble of the nearby village of Raklitza:

³⁹⁹ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 272.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 270.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 276.

⁴⁰³ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 59.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 129. When a police officer told him the visa was for the city of Adrianople and not the whole vilayet, Wyon said it was "good enough for us," and told the officer not to worry about him.

“There, in the brilliant sunshine, lay the handiwork of the Turk, desolate and infinitely sad, one of many hundred examples.”⁴⁰⁵

Stories were also emerging of examples of a different sort. During the second week of September, *Times* correspondent Philip Howell secured details of the fighting from the south of the Vilayet of Monastir, reporting the “driving” operations carried out by the Ottoman forces which had swept away the rebel fighters. The commanding officer, Nassir Pasha, claimed to be using the same techniques the British had employed in the recent South African war. As *The Times* reported: “Albanians and Bashi-Bazouks were being substituted for blockhouses and barbed wire.” The results were similar to those of Krushevo, but with a more worrying dimension. Whereas in Krushevo the excesses were seen as the result of pure greed and “fanaticism,” the “driving” operations seemed to be mixing “fanaticism” with calculated clearances of a highly competent modern army. These were seen not as isolated massacres but deliberate campaigns of “extirpation” and “extermination” aimed at the Macedo-Bulgarian population.⁴⁰⁶ Howell made his way to Salonica and informed Graves of the developments.⁴⁰⁷ Consuls and journalists alike were becoming exasperated with the events they were recording. With public clamour growing in Britain, their superiors were also reaching the conclusion that some change in the status quo was becoming necessary.

From his office in Monastir, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha struggled to mitigate the damaging wave of bad press. As more details of the events at Krushevo emerged and were confirmed, the inspector-general ordered stolen livestock to be returned and 10,000 kilos of flour to be sent to the town.⁴⁰⁸ A document was drawn up which made Muslim notables liable for any massacres which might occur.⁴⁰⁹ Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha made assurances to Vice-Consul McGregor that most Muslims were calm and understood the politics of the situation. He claimed that several “turbulent Turks” had been arrested, and some thirty soldiers who had made threatening remarks had been

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁰⁶ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 10, 1903, 3; “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 12, 1903, 5.

⁴⁰⁷ Graves, *Storm Centres*, 199.

⁴⁰⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 19, 1903, FO 78/5272/142.

⁴⁰⁹ Fontana to Graves, August 18, 1903, FO 195/2157/247.

posted elsewhere.⁴¹⁰ Admitting that the reported excesses in Krushevo and Smilevo were true, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha maintained that he was doing his best to punish the offenders and prevent recurrences. McGregor wrote that these efforts were in vain, and the probabilities were that Ottoman forces were committing more atrocities, as the large-scale counterinsurgency operations began in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir.⁴¹¹

Despite some reports of more disciplined behavior by the Ottoman troops in the “driving” operations south of Monastir, concerns persisted. The rebel-held towns of Nevska and Klissura were recaptured on August 27 and 28 without report of atrocities. Credit was given to Nassir Pasha, who had replaced Bakhtair Pasha, and who commanded a disciplined army of Anatolians from the Konya region. However, it was also reported that three nearby Macedo-Bulgarian villages were burned, suggesting that there were still Bashi-Bazouks running amok, or that the Ottoman troops had deliberately targeted the three villages.⁴¹² News that the defeated rebels were surrounded on a mountain, along with civilian refugees from the burned villages, led Graves to the conclusion that a massacre might be imminent. He therefore sent an urgent request to Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha that the Ottoman troops be under the strictest orders not to commit excesses.⁴¹³ By mid-September few European observers believed that the Ottoman security forces were interested in or capable of exercising restraint. Horror stories continued to circulate, as some of the bedraggled refugees made their way to the larger towns in search of shelter and relief, and looters’ wares were on sale in the markets of Monastir. When erroneous reports were published that 10,000 had perished in Kastoria, there was little reason for observers and newspaper-readers alike to employ much scepticism.⁴¹⁴

The deluge of criticism and the growing calls for intervention pushed the Ottomans to further curtail the journalists and, eventually, to order them to leave the Vilayet of Monastir. With the rebel forces in retreat, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha informed

⁴¹⁰ McGregor to Graves, August 21, 1903, FO 195/2157/248.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Graves to O’Conor, September 1, 1903, FO 195/2157/259; McGregor to Graves, September 4, 1903, FO 294/28/122 (393)

⁴¹³ Graves to O’Conor, September 1, 1903, FO 195/2157/262.

⁴¹⁴ “Macedonia: Kastoria Destroyed,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 18, 1903, 4.

McGregor that he had intelligence that IMRO had decided to murder a British consul, a British journalist, or an American missionary. McGregor considered such an assassination was more likely to be a “Turkish outrage,” and he reminded Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha that it was the responsibility of the Ottoman government to protect British subjects.⁴¹⁵ The journalist who was annoying the authorities the most was Reginald Wyon. The Ottomans made repeated attempts—five according to Wyon—to expel him.⁴¹⁶ The Ottoman embassy complained in early September that Wyon had insulted the Sultan and would be expelled for it. O’Conor protested, but he also warned Wyon that, if his reports were “false or malicious,” he could not protect him, cautioning the *Daily Mail* correspondent to “be circumspect.”⁴¹⁷ Two weeks later, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha informed McGregor that Wyon had been ordered to leave the country. McGregor was defiant and vowed that he would not allow Wyon to be arrested, unless ordered to comply by his superiors.⁴¹⁸ By this time, the foreign press-corps in Monastir had dwindled to three people.⁴¹⁹ However, one did not need to be wandering around in the mountains south of Monastir to interview victims of the conflict. Several had even turned up in Sofia, Salonica, and elsewhere, and many were not shy about relating their stories to reporters and consuls.

The British government and its diplomats had initially been rather cautious with journalists in the early days of the Ilinden Uprising. The British had advised the Ottoman embassy to respond to potentially inflammatory reports in the press. The Ottoman government had been delighted at Balfour’s statement in the House of Commons that the “balance of criminality” lay primarily with the insurgents. As one correspondent related, a copy of Balfour’s words “was printed out and distributed throughout European Turkey, and I found every Turkish official ready to throw it in my face whenever the subject of Turkish severities was touched on.”⁴²⁰ O’Conor reportedly had to tell the Ottoman government that Balfour’s language was “of a purely Parliamentary character,

⁴¹⁵ McGregor to Graves, September 7, 1903, FO 294/27/123.

⁴¹⁶ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 49.

⁴¹⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 15, 1903, FO 78/5272/169.

⁴¹⁸ McGregor to Graves, September 15, 1903, FO 195/2157/266.

⁴¹⁹ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 15, 1903, 3.

⁴²⁰ Your Special Correspondent Just Returned from Macedonia, “Macedonia: To the Editor of The Times,” *The Times*, September 28, 1903, 8.

being designed for the purposes of esoteric debate,” and that Britain was firmly behind the Austro-Russian reforms.⁴²¹ However, as events unfolded in August, the British became frustrated with the contradictory information they received and with the steadfast reluctance of the Ottoman authorities to grant diplomats access beyond the towns. It was this context that produced the *de facto* cooperation between the consuls and the correspondents in joint endeavours to obtain more information about what was transpiring in the villages and the countryside. There was still some unease at the journalists’ propensity to exaggerate stories. McGregor reported in mid-September that he had made a tour of the military hospital in Monastir, as he had heard that information was about to be circulated about the facility, so he considered it wise to inspect it, in case a story appeared in the British press.⁴²² Nevertheless, for the most part, the diplomats and journalists were in league with each other to circumvent the Ottoman restraints, investigate stories, and get the news out.

As the days and weeks passed, the British diplomats and government found that they had few reasons to doubt the words of the reporters, as subsequent refugee testimonials, official reports, and analyses corroborated many of the stories. By early September, Graves had obtained multiple eyewitness accounts of the events at Kurshevo which supported Moore’s words and provided further details. Graves himself took statements from “Greco-Vlach” men whom he called men of “intelligence and education.”⁴²³ Graves also received a report from the dragoman Pissura, who had taken statements from survivors of Krushevo who reached Monastir.⁴²⁴ With all the information available to him, Graves reached the conclusion that, contrary to his prime minister’s words, the balance of the criminality lay primarily with the Ottoman security forces, particularly the Redif and Ilave battalions; noting the “comparative moderation shown by the Bulgarian insurgent bands and the barbarous and wanton conduct of the troops,

⁴²¹ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, August 20, 1903, 3.

⁴²² McGregor to Graves, September 10, 1903, FO 294/28/127

⁴²³ Graves to O’Conor, August 30, 1903, FO 195/2157/258. The witnesses stated that they considered Bakhtair Pasha to be complicit in the looting and that he may have delayed reporting his victory to his superiors to give his men more time to plunder. They also accounted notable differences between the disciplined and compassionate conduct of the regular Anatolians and the local Muslim and ethnic Albanian Redif battalions. Local Muslims began the looting, followed by Albanians from Gilhan and Preshevo (in the Vilayet of Kosovo). The four days of pillage only ceased when the Greek metropolitan of Monastir arrived in the town on August 16.

⁴²⁴ Graves to O’Conor, August 24, 1903, FO 195/2157/255.

especially the Albanian Redifs of Ghilan, who at Salonica distinguished themselves by their disorderly behavior during the disturbances last April.”⁴²⁵ Aiming to establish the true balance of criminality, McGregor tabulated all the statistics he had received on the first month of the uprising (August 2-September 2) and came to the following conclusions:

From these lists, one of which has been supplied to me by the Macedonian Committee, and the other has been drawn up by my direction on the basis of information obtained from non-Bulgarian sources, you will observe that, according to the most moderate calculation, the number of villages burnt by the Turks is sixty-two, while the insurgents are responsible for the destruction of six, not including the “keeps” and farms of Mussulman land-owners. I calculate that the number of unarmed peasants of all ages and of either sex murdered by the Turks cannot be less than 800, whereas I am not aware that the Mussulmans murdered by Bulgarians accounts to more than fifty. I have not heard of the Bulgarians accused of outrages on women, but I am informed on good authority that not less than 200 offences of this nature committed on women and children must be imputed to the Turkish soldiery and Bashi-Bazouks.⁴²⁶

Although they were not publicizing it, most of the reports being produced in the British diplomatic records were relatively close to the stories being printed in the press. A wide range of sources were producing corroborating accounts from Monastir, Salonica, Sofia, and Adrianople. From Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot reported that Prime Minister Petrov was “very depressed,” lamenting that the Ottoman troops were operating with a *carte blanche*:

The policy being pursued in Macedonia, his Excellency said, was one of extermination of the Bulgarian population, if not by direct massacre, at least by the destruction of villages and means of livelihood, the result of which be that the inhabitants would either perish from their privations or would be driven to emigrate.⁴²⁷

While Elliot stated that he had assured Petrov that the Ottoman counterinsurgency was operating under recommendations “consistent with the requirements of civilization,” he noted that the special correspondent of *The Times* (likely Howell) said Petrov had “not at all over-stated the case, that the extermination of the

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ McGregor to Graves, September 7, 1903, FO 294/28/124.

⁴²⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 12, 1903, FO 78/5295/229.

Bulgarians is being carried out systematically and relentlessly, and with every circumstance at atrocity and horror, and that if this continues a few weeks longer there will be practically no Bulgarians left in the Vilayet of Monastir.”⁴²⁸

F. R. Maunsell, the British Military Attaché, was not able to tour the Vilayet of Monastir, but from his intelligence sources and the consular reports, he concluded that the districts of Ochrid and Prespa, in the south and west of the vilayet, had “suffered severely.”⁴²⁹ From Uscub, Vice-Consul Fontana also lamented the conduct of Ilave battalions, calling them “simply straggling crowds of armed irregulars, who refuse to obey their officers, and of whom their officers are afraid.” Fontana urged that the further mobilization of Ilaves be suspended for “Turkey’s interest.”⁴³⁰ However, far from being demobilized, the Ilaves were being redeployed in mid-September to help crush the resistance in the Vilayet of Adrianople. Maunsell described the units moving east as coming from “turbulent Albanian districts” (Prizren and Ghora) in the Vilayet of Kosovo and said that they could be expected to “be under no restraint and practically without military discipline.”⁴³¹ A British official was able to tour the Vilayet of Adrianople and accompany the Ottoman forces in the field. Lieutenant Colonel Massy had served as the British vice-consul at Adana and, during a stay in Constantinople, he journeyed to Kirk Kilise with some help from the French consular representatives. In a lengthy report to O’Conor, Massy praised the Ottoman troops—save for the Albanians, whom he described as lawless and prone to acts of insubordination, which included burning a Bulgarian village in spite of their officer.⁴³² Massy feared that, if left unchecked, such conduct would spread to the regular troops. It seems he may have been correct. Although the Albanians were withdrawn from the field, the evidence of excesses continued. On his return to Constantinople in late September, Maunsell visited the refugees in the Bulgarian coastal city of Burgas and heard multiple accounts which suggested an organized approach to attacking civilians, looting moveable property, and destroying non-moveable property:

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 10, 1903, FO 195/2150/50.

⁴³⁰ Fontana to Graves, August 31, 1903, FO 294/25/55.

⁴³¹ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 10, 1903, FO 195/2150/50.

⁴³² Massy to O’Conor, September 10, 1903, FO 78/5269/562.

The story of the refugees is much the same throughout; several villages, Gramatiko, Stoilovo, Geuk Tepe and others were bombarded by artillery and burnt, the inhabitants taking to flight as best they could. In most cases the villages were first pillaged, the goods being systematically removed in carts; the cattle and sheep were driven off and bought up by Greek contractors and merchants, who either sent them to Constantinople or resold them to army contractors. Many women, girls, and boys have been carried off to the Turkish camps and have not been seen again.⁴³³

In Monastir, Vice-Consul McGregor was collecting similar stories from the aftermath of the fighting in the southern districts of the Vilayet of Monastir. Testimony from Christian villagers, who had made their way from villages such as Buf, Slivnista, and Shtprlovo, spoke of sackings by Bashi-Bazouks, and incidents of murder, robbery, and rape. McGregor sent many of the witnesses on to Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha in the company of his dragoman; the inspector-general recorded their stories and promised justice. However, McGregor stated that he had little faith in Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's assurances, and he found it hard to accept the Ottoman line that the revolt was over, when refugees were still straggling into the city and Albanian recruits continued to arrive by train. McGregor was also frustrated with his ongoing difficulty in obtaining unbiased information. "If it has hitherto been difficult to obtain independent information regarding what is going on in the country, it may now be said to be practically impossible."⁴³⁴ The furthest McGregor was allowed to roam from Monastir was the nearby village of Bukovo. On one occasion he encountered a party of 600 women and children who arrived "in a deplorable condition" to make representations to the inspector-general for shelter and relief. McGregor suspected that the group had arrived at IMRO's behest, as did Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, who did not let them enter Monastir. McGregor credits his own presence at the scene with helping the refugees to obtain temporary food and shelter in a monastery, as well as promises from the authorities to rebuild their houses.⁴³⁵ McGregor again visited Bukovo in late September, after Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had promised that Christian watchmen had been appointed as part of the promised Ottoman reforms. However, McGregor found only Muslim watchmen present at the Patriarchist village, and was becoming somewhat exasperated with the situation:

⁴³³ Maunsell to O'Connor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/52.

⁴³⁴ McGregor to Graves, September 23, 1903, FO 294/28/129.

⁴³⁵ McGregor to Graves, September 23, 1903, FO 294/28/130.

I lost no time in bringing the matter to the notice of the Inspector-General, who immediately made an inquiry and promised that measures should be taken, requesting me at the same time to inform him of any other cases that might come under my notice, but I have no means of making personal inquiries on the spot which would be of any use, and if I find that the Inspector-General's statements are false with respect to a village almost forming a suburb of Monastir, what must be the state of things in the more remote districts?⁴³⁶

By and large, McGregor's question could only be answered by piecing together journalists' reports, personal testimonials of displaced individuals, and the competing accounts of the IMRO and Ottoman authorities, both of whom produced a steady supply of statements and statistics. The balance of the evidence indicated that Ottoman irregular troops had plundered and assaulted Christian civilians on a wide scale, with their Ottoman superiors either unable or unwilling to stop them, or actually complicit in their actions.

What may very well have been the 'smoking gun' of testimonial evidence for the British was when a German officer who had been attached to the Ottoman security forces met with the British military attaché in Constantinople in mid-September. An officer of the German general staff, von Goeben had commanded the Germans who fought alongside the Boers during the South Africa War, though he said he felt no ill will towards the British. Von Goeben had been in Macedonia for six months under the guise of being the correspondent for the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*. The British were aware of von Goeben's presence and he had met with McGregor on at least one occasion. Although Nassir Pasha consulted with him, von Goeben maintained that his role was strictly that of an observer. Embedded with the Ottoman troops, he claimed to have witnessed the massacre at Armensko, and to have toured the ruins of Krushevo, but he was unable to enter Smilevo as he was fired upon by Bashi-Bazouks. He said the insurgents fought well, but not so the Ottoman forces, and, like others, he had nothing positive to say about the conduct or fighting skills of the Albanian irregulars. As Maunsell related: "After seeing women skinned alive and dead bodies violated by the Turks, he is too thoroughly disgusted with them to bear them any sympathy and has left and come

⁴³⁶ McGregor to Graves, September 30, 1903, FO 294/28/132.

down here.”⁴³⁷ To McGregor, von Goeben’s work proved the value of having Europeans present who could chronicle events and prevent atrocities by being present:

[I]t is a pity that the massacring—which von Goeben declares has been ordered by the Sultan—should go on unchecked: if, indeed, the presence of Europeans would be allowed to hinder it. Rumours from Debyrsta and Kyrchevo have it that the Christian population there has practically been exterminated.”⁴³⁸

If the British had any reservations about the extent of the atrocities and the conduct of the Ottoman security forces, they were likely dispelled by the testimony from an officer from the Great Power most closely allied to the Ottoman Empire. Given that the German government had steadfastly defended the Ottoman counterinsurgency campaign, it is unlikely that von Goeben’s decision to leak his reports and then speak directly to the British was anyone’s decision but his own.

Even though their view was somewhat obstructed by the Ottoman authorities, the British diplomats in and around the Macedonian vilayets had—with some help from a few journalists—provided their government with a detailed and nuanced picture of the Ilinden Uprising during the critical months of August and September 1903. By the time the cabinet convened in the second half of September, there was ample evidence to support the government’s taking a stronger policy towards the reform process in Macedonia. To begin with, there was clear evidence that a humanitarian crisis was unfolding. According to Maunsell’s estimations, there were some 10,000 refugees from the Vilayet of Adrianople.⁴³⁹ The British military attaché reported dire conditions in the Vilayet of Adrianople and reserved harsh criticism for the Ottoman authorities. “From this state of affairs it is impossible but to draw the conclusion that the Turkish Government,

⁴³⁷ Memo on von Goeben, September 15, 1903, FO 195/2150/51. Graves also surreptitiously received some of von Goeben’s report which detailed the systematic approach of coordinated “drives” employed by Nassir Pasha to push IMRO out of its mountain strongholds in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir. According to the report, the reprisals were far worse in the west of the Vilayet of Monastir in the regions of Ohrid and Dibra, where “beyond the observations of Consuls, correspondents and missionaries, the Bulgarian element is being systematically wiped out.” See: Graves to O’Conor, September 8, 1903, FO 195/2157/263.

⁴³⁸ McGregor to O’Conor, September 8, 1903, FO 195/2150/51. McGregor’s dispatch was enclosed with Maunsell’s memorandum on von Goeben.

⁴³⁹ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/52. In October, Lieutenant-Colonel Massy, who had returned to monitor conditions in the east of Bulgaria, estimated the number of refugees in the area to be 16,000. See: Massy to Elliot, October 16, 1903, FO 78/5295/282.

as at present constituted in these districts, is quite incompetent to deal with either civil or military control of the country which it still occupies.”⁴⁴⁰ In the Vilayet of Monastir the situation was even worse. By Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s own admission there were 40,000 displaced persons in the vilayet (other estimates put the number as high as 60,000), and the Ottoman state gave no indication that it had the means of providing any tangible relief.⁴⁴¹

Much of the misery was attributed to the conduct of the Ottoman security forces, which had only seemingly triumphed through the sheer weight of superior numbers and firepower. As previously discussed, the Ottoman troops had repeatedly shown themselves to be undisciplined, unruly, and an absolute blight on Christian civilian populations. The officers seemed to be either unwilling or unable to control their subordinates, if they were not orchestrating the looting and pillaging themselves. Inhuman acts such as the mutilation of corpses, which was attributed to “certain barbarous Asiatic tribes,” continued to be recorded by the consuls.⁴⁴² Others reported more evidence of calculated attacks on villages, including a report that one commander had telegraphed the capital for permission to “destroy” four “Bulgarian villages” near Serres which had sheltered insurgents.⁴⁴³ Added disgust from the consuls and the journalists came when it was learned that Bakhtair Pasha, who had commanded the Ottoman forces at Krushevo, had been redeployed to Macedonia and had been awarded the Order of the Mejidié.⁴⁴⁴ The gendarmerie forces, which had been a focus of the February Vienna Reform Program, had not performed well during the uprising. It was a gendarme who shot down the Russian vice-consul in Monastir. In the relatively more peaceful environs of Uscub, Vice-Consul Fontana reported murders and undisciplined conduct by the gendarmes. One of the few Christian gendarmes had his nose cut off when he attempted to get intoxicated llaves to leave an establishment. Two others were killed in Kosovo.⁴⁴⁵ The two Swedish officers tasked with reforming the gendarmerie arrived in Monastir in early September and began the unenviable task of weeding out

⁴⁴⁰ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/52.

⁴⁴¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 25, 1903, FO 78/5269/617.

⁴⁴² McGregor to Graves, October 13, 1903, FO 294/28/135.

⁴⁴³ Graves to O’Conor, September 17, 1903, FO 195/2157/268.

⁴⁴⁴ McGregor to Graves, October 15, 1903, FO 294/28/137.

⁴⁴⁵ Fontana to Graves, September 19, 1903, FO 294/25/59.

incompetent gendarmes and trying to recruit Christians while the vilayet was in still in a state of insurrection.⁴⁴⁶ The evidence spoke of a security force in disarray. There was an obvious case to be made for nothing short of a new reform program backed by strong mandate of European reform.

Some observers proved more apt at perceiving the root causes of the ill-discipline and outbreaks of fanaticism perpetrated by the Ottoman forces. Raphael Fontana, the British vice-consul in Uscub, had watched the effects of conflict in the region for several months, as the Ottoman military's theatre of operations moved from the eastern frontier with Bulgaria to the north of the Vilayet of Kosovo, to the Vilayet of Monastir. In accounting for the abusive conduct of Albanian llaves in and around Uscub, Fontana provided political and economic explanations. He reported that Muslims in the Vilayet of Kosovo continued to resent the Vienna Reform Program, which, they felt, gave undue favour to the Christians through the amnesty of fighters involved in the 1902 Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising and the recruitment of Christian gendarmes. The latter reason had been one of the sparks of Albanian discontent in the spring, which had been met with a military response. Given this context, Fontana suggested that Christian gendarmes should be given bodyguards

especially when dealing with Albanian llaves called out, owing to insurrection, before the harvest was garnered or provision was made for the modest wants of family dependents. Such a family not infrequently includes parents, grand-parents, and infirm or infant relatives, as well as wife and children.⁴⁴⁷

In Fontana's estimation hundreds if not thousands of Albanian families had been left without their principal breadwinner. Most of the Redif and llave battalions called up in Kosovo came from the poorest classes. Fontana called it "lamentable" that such a large body of these irregular troops should be armed and "turned loose." He also questioned the wisdom of the practice of billeting these "anxious, sullen, and resentful men" in houses in Macedo-Bulgarian villages at times when even the "most-enlightened" of them would be full of resentment. A prominent Albanian from Prizren explained to the British consul that his people had no trouble being called to the colours in a time of war, but the

⁴⁴⁶ McGregor to Graves, September 2, 1903, FO 294/28/121.

⁴⁴⁷ Fontana to Graves, September 19, 1903, FO 78/5269/595.

men resented having to leave their people “half starved to prowl about villages and towns on the lookout for insurgents and for something to supplement their ration of black bread.”⁴⁴⁸

Fontana had indentified another systemic problem which made the Ottoman troops—especially the irregular forces—unruly; they were not properly equipped, inadequately provisioned, and paid little or nothing. As elaborated by Ipek K. Yosmaoğlu, the Ottoman forces in Macedonia were literally “marching on an empty stomach” to the point where they were, at times, too malnourished and afflicted by conditions such as scurvy to perform their tasks.⁴⁴⁹ Soldiers were typically given a staple diet of bread supplemented with beans, rice, and occasionally mutton. The “black bread” described by the “prominent Albanian” was often the cause of complaints, due to its undesirable colour. Other complaints included “rancid flour that produced bitter, inedible bread, bread baked from flour infested with worms (and served), and flour mixed with sand.”⁴⁵⁰

Most of the Ottoman army’s flour came from the mill of the Allatini brothers in Salonica, who operated the only modern mill in the area with sufficient capacity to supply flour for the Ottoman army in Macedonia.⁴⁵¹ In the spring of 1903, the Allatini brothers cut off delivery of flour due to lack of payment.⁴⁵² The Ottomans did produce the funds to get the provisions flowing again, but the Allatinis were not extending much credit. During the height of the Ilinden Uprising, they suspended fulfilment of a contract to supply 500,000 kilograms of biscuit for cash payments, when they did not receive payment after delivery of the first 150,000 kilos. Graves also reported in the same dispatch that the Oriental Railway Company had briefly defied orders to provide trains to the military to transport troops out of Kosovo due to lack of cash payment.⁴⁵³ These problems went

⁴⁴⁸ Fontana to Graves, August 28, 1903, FO 195/2157/255.

⁴⁴⁹ Yosmaoğlu, “Marching on an Empty Stomach,” 279-80. As the author notes, scurvy in particular would stagger the performance of an army with its symptoms of bone pain, loose teeth, blisters, and lethargy.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴⁵³ Graves to O’Conor, September 22, 1903, FO 195/2157/270.

beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire. In later September, Barrowfield Iron Works wrote to the British government regarding money owed by the Ottoman government.⁴⁵⁴

British observers also reported the Ottoman military to be lacking in proper uniforms and related gear. Maunsell noted that it look as long as ten days to mobilize Redif and llave battalions in the Vilayet of Adrianople, “owing to lack of organization and equipment.”⁴⁵⁵ Shukri Pasha, the commander of the garrison in Adrianople, admitted to Maunsell that equipment for most llave battalions was “entirely wanting.” While praising the fighting prowess and endurance of the Turkish soldiers, Maunsell thought they would be hampered by the upcoming autumn weather, since they only had sandals for footgear and were lacking proper coats. What is more, the cavalry corps was without a full complement of horses. Like the flour suppliers, the horse contractors gave the army second-rate products, collecting “all the most worthless and worn out animals they could find to dispose of to the Turkish Government.”⁴⁵⁶ A British observer in Gallipoli inspected Ottoman troops en route to Macedonia and found the Redifs to be lacking in necessities:

He instanced in particular one battalion of some 700 men. These soldiers were without uniforms for the most part, and had neither belts nor boots. Such as were shod at all were wearing the peasants' sandals (“charuko”). For belts they were partially furnished with lengths of lamp-wick, which they tied round the waists, and in which they placed their swords. Many had not even got this substitute, their swords being thrust into the clothing. There were no rations provided: each man was supposed to receive 60 paras (3*d.*) per diem to feed himself, but this payment was irregular.⁴⁵⁷

Such conditions drove men to desert the ranks. O’Conor reported that Ottoman soldiers “worn out by fatigue and privations” were throwing down their weapons and fleeing into Bulgaria.⁴⁵⁸ Maunsell even encountered a Turkish deserter who had fled across the border and was travelling amongst a group of Bulgarian peasants on their

⁴⁵⁴ Barrowfield Iron Works to Foreign Office, September 25, 1903, FO 78/5289.

⁴⁵⁵ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/52.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Eyres to O’Conor, October 9, 1903, FO 421/199/101.

⁴⁵⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 78/5268/532.

way to Burgas. The soldier said he could no longer bear service in the Ottoman military, due to hardships and lack of food.⁴⁵⁹

The evidence shows that, for the duration of the Ilinden Uprising, the Ottoman military was lacking the financial means to adequately and consistently supply sustenance, gear, and transportation to all of its troops. It is likely that many of the local and regional Ilave and Redif battalions were called up as a cost-saving measure, in spite of the pleas of Great Power diplomats to use regular troops. Without the means to adequately provision, clothe, and equip these men, while taking them away from their families during the harvest season, the unruliness and insubordination of the Ilave and Redifs appears more the logical consequence of circumstance than the manifestation of primitive 'Balkan' habits or seizures of 'Muslim fanaticism.' That many Ottoman officers were reportedly unable to prevent their troops, particularly the irregulars, from pillaging is not surprising. What is more, as was suggested in the aftermath of the sacking of Smerydesh in July, some less scrupulous commanders likely used the promise of looting as an incentive to motivate their hungry, ragged, and unpaid troops, or, in the case of Krushevo, as a chance to profit from pillage themselves.

To most British observers and statesmen, there was overwhelming evidence of a need for European-sponsored reforms to rectify the chaotic and tragic situation in Macedonia. In a dispatch to O'Connor dated September 21, Lansdowne credited his ambassador for anticipating instructions sent to him and for repeatedly reminding the Ottoman government to remove "regiments which had shown a want of discipline" and to dismiss and punish officers who had failed to restrain their men from committing atrocities.⁴⁶⁰ To Lansdowne, the evidence produced by the consuls and the newspaper correspondents showed that the Ottoman government had failed to heed the advice it had been given:

The reports which are now being received from His Majesty's Consular officers, and the still more distressing accounts which have within the last few days appeared in the Press, show that these remonstrances and warnings have not received sufficient attention, and that acts have been perpetrated, which, after every allowance has been made for the

⁴⁵⁹ Maunsell to O'Connor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/52.

⁴⁶⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 21, 1903, FO 421/198/440.

exasperation produced by the conduct of the insurgent bands, must be condemned as quite inexcusable on the part of the authorities and forces of an established Government. Your Excellency cannot too empathetically warn the Porte of the effect which such events must have on civilized opinion, and of the extent to which it must alienate the sympathy and support of this Government and country.⁴⁶¹

According to the foreign secretary, "it had become necessary to consider whether the scheme [of reforms] should not now be remodelled upon a wider basis."⁴⁶² True to his word the memorandum presented to the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers at Mürzsteg less than two weeks later, called for gendarme reform, the withdrawal of "undisciplined troops, whether Redifs or Ilaves, now employed there," the deployment of European military attachés to accompany the Ottoman forces, and facilities to distribute relief (Appendix III).⁴⁶³ Although the memorandum contained no mention of funding allocations and financial reform, the terms of the Mürzsteg Reform Program did make stipulations for the compensation of victims. Financial allocations for the funding of the gendarmerie would be a priority in future discussions of gendarmerie reorganization. Financial issues would continue to factor in the politics of the Ottoman security forces, as new classes of European-trained gendarmes were resented by the regular army due to perceptions that they received preferential treatment and more resources.⁴⁶⁴

Favourable views of the British expressed by the residents of Macedonia may have also buoyed the British decision to press for reform. Intervention was a political aim of IMRO, and IMRO's detractors in the Macedo-Bulgarian communities would have also welcomed intervention. After initial steadfast support for the Ottoman Empire, the wanton destruction at places like Krushevo, Armensko, and other villages which were at least partly "Greco-Vlach" or Patriarchist and considered part of the Hellenic world compelled the Greek government and the Greek lobbyists to appeal to the British government to help stop the carnage.⁴⁶⁵ What is more, there were signs that some of the Sultan's traditional supporters were hopeful that Britain would show leadership in initiating

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

⁴⁶⁴ Yosmaoğlu, "Marching on an Empty Stomach," 292.

⁴⁶⁵ Lansdowne to De Graz, September 8, 1903, FO 421/198/334.

intervention by the Great Powers. In the early days of the uprising, rumours had swirled around Monastir that some “Turkish landowners” were sick of Ottoman rule and were even prepared to sponsor the assassination of another consul, to induce European intervention.⁴⁶⁶ In early September, Vice-Consul Fontana in Uscub was presented with a petition signed by several Albanian notables from the larger towns in the upper Kosovo vilayet and delivered in the strictest of confidence. In the document, the Albanian notables expressed their fear of panslavism, their distrust of Austria-Hungary, and their frustration with the Sultan’s rule. They proclaimed that they would welcome autonomy, and they urged England to take action, which France and Italy would follow. They stated that they considered England to be a just and civilized state, and that they thought the British Empire was uniquely qualified to be their protector, as it was already a protector of Muslims. In Fontana’s words, they thought that, if England pushed the envelope on these matters, Europe would thank them for “finding a Western remedy which would help to convert a sick Macedonia into an eventually sound constitution without surgery, and without risk of dire hemorrhage.”⁴⁶⁷ Fontana looks to have thought the petition to be sincere, as he took it seriously and forwarded it to O’Conor marked “Secret.” Although nothing appears to have developed directly from the petition, it would have given the British the message that Macedonia’s most notoriously defiant and belligerent ethnic population would not oppose intervention and reform. To the British, it amounted to yet more evidence that revision of the reforms and more European control would work.

An important point of note with respect to the future gendarmerie reforms was the understanding of the role that race and regional origin had played during the Ilinden Uprising. From the observations and testimonials collected, certain patterns of behaviour were noted which set ill-disciplined ethnic Albanians and local Muslim irregulars apart from the Anatolian Turks, who filled the ranks of the regular army. At times, race seemed as perhaps more important than rank. According to the British records, the Albanians had repeatedly disgraced themselves—from the shooting of two Russian consuls, to the sack of Krushevo, to the defiant men who journeyed from Kosovo and performed acts of violence and depravity in Christian villages. These incidents helped to cement the reputation of Albanians as being inherently war-like and recalcitrant. Local Muslim

⁴⁶⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 78/5269/505.

⁴⁶⁷ Fontana to O’Conor (secret), September 4, 1903, FO 195 2157/260.

fighters and Bashi-Bazouks fared no better. Testimonials from Krushevo and villages such as Shtyrboro (in Prespa kaza, in the Vilayet of Monastir) described notable differences between the conduct of “locals” and Anatolian troops. The “Greco-Vlachs” interviewed by Graves recalled that the pillaging of Krushevo was led by Bashi-Bazouks and Muslims from local villages. By contrast, they testified that Anatolian troops largely abstained from such activity and showed compassion by bringing food and water to the women and children hiding in the forests nearby.⁴⁶⁸ A “native of Shtyrboro” claimed that the people of his village fled because they saw Bashi-Bazouks approaching and were not aware that regular troops were also advancing:

If we had known that the soldiers were coming we should not have fled, because they are foreigners, and we do not fear them as we do the Bashi-Bazouks. When the Commanding Officer arrived we heard him forbid the soldiers to enter the village and he told the Bashi-Bazouks to go away, but they (the Bashi-Bazouks) got angry and said: “Do you think that we came here to go away without taking anything from the Ghiaurs?” The officer cursed them, and said they were a misfortune for the Empire; but he could not prevent them from entering the village.⁴⁶⁹

These two accounts exemplify the contrasts and frictions between “local” and “foreign” soldiers. In both cases envy, greed, and revenge may have motivated the locals; the witness from Shtyrboro stated that the Bashi-Bazouks were from Muslim villages which had been burnt by IMRO. Nevertheless, what seems to have endured in the minds of the British was the fact that locals should not police locals, and that certain races were more suitable for martial professions than others. These were interpretations which dovetailed with policies and practices of British imperial rule, and they would factor in the British approach to the future gendarmerie reforms.

As word circulated in late September that the Austro-Russian meeting at Mürzsteg would produce a revision of the reforms, the Ottomans pleaded with the powers that they were doing their best to implement the existing reforms and bring peace to Macedonia. In Monastir, McGregor continued to be frustrated with conflicting accounts he was receiving, the lack of steady sources of independent information, and the inability to undertake his own investigations:

⁴⁶⁸ Graves to O’Conor, August 30, 1903, FO 195/2157/258

⁴⁶⁹ Deposition of Tesse Karanfil, a native of Shtyrboro, in the District of Presba, September 11, 1903, FO 294/28/129.

If the Turkish version is to be believed, the insurgent forces have been demoralized and disorganized, and are now being dealt with in detail by the regular troops, while the misguided peasantry are hurrying back to their villages and delivering up their rifles to the authorities. On the other hand, the Bulgarians declare that the bands have suffered but slightly in their encounters with the troops, and, supported by the population, are more determined than ever to continue the struggle, while the Turks, both regular troops and Bashi-Bazouks, are systematically devastating the country and pillaging and murdering the defenceless peasantry.⁴⁷⁰

While he maintained that the revolt was over, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha continued to update McGregor about daily encounters between IMRO and the Ottoman security forces. While the inspector-general conceded that a state of widespread ruin existed, he attributed “the destruction of Bulgarian villages to the Bulgarians themselves” for the sake of sensation. McGregor scoffed at the remark and stated that he found the peace news hard to reconcile with the continued arrival of Albanian recruits and the continued arrival of destitute peasants with horrific stories to tell.⁴⁷¹

Officially, the push for peace was on. On September 27, the Ottoman government sent a proclamation of amnesty to its valis in Macedonia, offering pardon to those who laid down their arms, while warning those who did not would be “treated in the most rigorous fashion.”⁴⁷² Two days later—on the eve of the talks at Mürzsteg— Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha announced a series of successes: special village guards drawn from different communities had been appointed; repairs had been made to roads and bridges; schools and tribunals were opening; the police gendarmerie had been reorganized; and special commissions were being formed “consisting of representatives of each Macedonian race” to assist the inspector-general in the application of the reforms. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha also denounced the rebels, saying that their actions were “viewed with horror by Europe” and threatened punishment with “measures much more rigorous than those employed hitherto if the brigandage which still continues does not promptly cease.”⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ McGregor to Graves, September 23, 1903, FO 294/28/129.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Graves to O’Conor, September 27, 1903, FO 195/2157/272.

⁴⁷³ McGregor to O’Conor, September 29, 1903, FO 195/2157/271.

By and large, the Ottoman announcements were just a last-ditch effort to avert an emboldening of the reforms, which might include a degree of Great Power intervention. McGregor was not impressed, writing at the end of his telegram which outlined the announcements that they were “for the most part fictitious.”⁴⁷⁴ In a dispatch written the same day, McGregor acknowledged that the special commissions had succeeded in convincing a growing number of peasants to surrender their rifles and submit their villages to government authority. However, he also pointed to evidence that the troops accompanying the special commissions had bullied the villagers into submission, beating them and threatening to destroy their houses, unless the beleaguered peasants produced rifles and convinced their relatives hiding or running with the rebels to return. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha did not deny the allegations and promised to punish the guilty parties.⁴⁷⁵ The following day, McGregor reported having no evidence that there was any truth to the Ottoman announcements, commenting that the only tribunals in session were for captured insurgents. “As I have already had the honour to point out, the list of reforms accomplished is purely illusory, and I venture to express the opinion that it is likely to remain so as long as the work of reform is in its present hands.”⁴⁷⁶

To McGregor and other European consuls, correspondents, and observers, there was little credibility in the words and actions of the Ottoman authorities. The stringent restrictions on movement outside the towns merely provided more evidence that the Ottomans were concealing their crimes. Enough evidence had been gathered to confirm belief in the point that the presence of Europeans could offer an independent accounting of what was transpiring and would deter the Ottoman security forces from committing excesses. The fact that the towns where consuls were stationed had remained relatively peaceful furthered the point. As if to prove the point that uniformed European officers could make a difference, the Russian and Austro-Hungarian consuls in Uscub undertook a tour of inquiry on horseback through the eastern regions of the Vilayet of Kosovo. The journey produced the trial and dismissal of twenty-four officials, gendarmes, and police at the behest of the consuls. Although Vice-Consul Fontana expressed some

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ McGregor to Graves, September 29, 1903, FO 294/28/131.

⁴⁷⁶ McGregor to Graves, September 29, 1903, FO 294/28/132.

reservations about the limited scope and biased results of his counterparts' work, he would have seen value in it, had it been conducted more thoroughly: "Had they devoted five times the period of their tour to the thorough investigation of important complaints laid before them, more respect for their mission would, I think, have been felt both by Christians and Moslems."⁴⁷⁷

By mid-October, it was evident that peace was coming to Macedonia. News that the Austro-Russian meeting at Mürzsteg had strengthened the reforms gave rise to feelings that autonomy might follow. IMRO had reportedly scaled down its operation and its manpower, but had vowed that it would renew its campaign in the spring unless autonomy or European control were implemented.⁴⁷⁸ McGregor put it down to a combination of defeat and bad weather.⁴⁷⁹ The Ottomans were recovering some of their credibility with the British. In mid-October, the results of the court martial on the massacre in July at Smyrdesch came down, with thirty-two officers and soldiers receiving punishments ranging from incarceration (in prison or in chains) or demotions to the ranks. However, the commanding officer at Smyrdesch, Bakhtair Pasha, who had also been in command at Krushevo, was not punished at all and received the Order of the Mejidie from the Sultan.⁴⁸⁰ McGregor did have enough faith in Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's word to advise deputations from local villages who sought his council to surrender their weapons to the Ottoman authorities.⁴⁸¹ In October, the inspector-general also authorized "an English gentleman" to journey to Krushevo to conduct a full inquiry into the recent events. The English investigator was permitted to take testimonies from representatives of the various Christian communities, and from Ottoman military and civil officials. The findings confirmed McGregor's reports of August. It does not appear Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha tried to influence the process in any way.⁴⁸²

For all his reputation as a man who took great liberty with the truth, the British consuls and correspondents who encountered Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha seem to have

⁴⁷⁷ Fontana to Graves, October 3, 1903, FO 294/25/62.

⁴⁷⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), October 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/288.

⁴⁷⁹ McGregor to Graves, October 13, 1903, FO 294/28/135.

⁴⁸⁰ McGregor to Graves, October 15, 1903, FO 294/28/137.

⁴⁸¹ McGregor to Graves, October 19, 1903, FO 294/28/138.

⁴⁸² McGregor to Graves, October 21, 1903, FO 294/28/140.

maintained a level of respect for the inspector-general as civilized and courteous—if not entirely honourable. McGregor’s despatches often brimmed with frustration towards Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, but at no point did he call for the inspector-general’s removal. McGregor expressed some satisfaction when Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha took responsibility for some of the actions of the Ottoman security forces, and when the inspector-general followed through on some investigations and courts martial. The British knew of worse officials and were well attuned to the intrigue in the Ottoman imperial bureaucracy. During his visits to the Vilayet of Adrianople, Maunsell described the Ottoman command as being hamstrung by incompetence and intrigue. In Monastir and Adrianople, power struggles had produced situations where two senior officers had to sign off on commands which, in Maunsell’s words, produced “deplorable results on the course of the campaign.”⁴⁸³ Maunsell reported that competent officers had been moved to insignificant positions, and that many staff officers were little more than spies, one of whom interrupted Maunsell’s conversation with the artillery commander in Adrianople, Shukri Pasha:

Apropos of nothing, he introduced references to the state of Russia and the Kisheneff massacres, the Czech and German differences in Austria, and finally assured me that Ireland would be in revolt next spring. The other spy, who was rather of a morose temperament, then made his sole remark saying, “Yes, the Turks are called the only barbarians in the world.”⁴⁸⁴

Although Nassir Pasha had been credited as the master strategist who had employed British “driving” techniques from the South African war in the counterinsurgency sweep in the south of the Vilayet of Monastir, Maunsell was not impressed, noting that most of the guerrillas escaped the manoeuvres.⁴⁸⁵ Maunsell later reported that he felt Nassir Pasha was “unfit” for the position and called him “simply ignorant and wanting in the capacity for dealing with this complicated guerrilla warfare.”⁴⁸⁶ Fontana suspected that Nassir Pasha had been placed beside Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha to spy on the inspector-general and wrote that he “countermands and stifles

⁴⁸³ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 10, 1903, FO 195/2150/50. Maunsell thought well of Shukri Pasha, noting that he was a “very capable officer who has turned to good effect an education in Germany.”

⁴⁸⁴ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 25, 1903, FO 195/2150/53.

⁴⁸⁵ Maunsell to O’Conor, September 10, 1903, FO 195/2150/50.

⁴⁸⁶ Maunsell to O’Conor, December 15, 1903, FO 195/2150/64.

every possible order given by him."⁴⁸⁷ If true, this may explain to some degree why the promises and assurances Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha gave to McGregor were not consistently realized. In any case, by October, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was feeling the strains of office. Fontana expressed concern for Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, writing that a correspondent who had recently arrived had described the inspector-general as being "merely a shadow of his former self."⁴⁸⁸ He had recovered somewhat by the end of the year. During a visit to Monastir in December, Maunsell watched Nassir Pasha interrogate an insurgent and give his opinion on the characteristics of Greeks and Bulgarians. By contrast, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha wished to compare imperial notes, inquiring about the British campaign in Somaliland, after which Maunsell asked about the revolt in Ottoman Yemen. Maunsell recalled:

In fact after listening to him for a short time, it was difficult to see how any disturbances could occur anywhere in the Sultan's dominions, and if they did it was doubtless only temporary, and would soon be well. A Turkish officer whom I met elsewhere told me in confidence that Hilmi Pasha was a really a charlatan of the first class, and I cannot but think there may be some truth in his remark.⁴⁸⁹

Expressions of sympathy and imperial affinity aside, it is important to note that most of the British officers and consuls did not dismiss all the Ottomans as inferior and incompetent. While they found no shortage of men who fit their Oriental stereotypes, other men like Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, Ibrahim Pasha (commander of the Ninth Serres Division), and Shukri Pasha earned the praise and respect of the British, who saw them as good men operating in a corrupt and dysfunctional system.⁴⁹⁰ Like many of the regular (usually Anatolian) troops, who had reportedly conducted themselves with honour and compassion, these capable men were proof to the British that the Ottoman security forces were reformable. The events appear to have further pushed the British to the conclusion that all that was needed was a strong reform mandate and European supervision to weed out incompetence and sloth, and to train the Ottomans to European standards.

⁴⁸⁷ Fontana to Graves, October 19, 1903, FO 294/25/66.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Maunsell to O'Connor, December 15, 1903, FO 195/2150/64.

⁴⁹⁰ For a discussion of the British military attaché's assessment of the character and ability of prominent Ottoman officers involved in the campaigns in the vilayets of Macedonia and Adrianople, see: Maunsell to O'Connor, September 10, 1903, FO 195/2150/50.

Shared experience during the Ilinden Uprising brought newspaper correspondents and the consuls closer together. Relative to the mass of articles published during the uprising, there were few instances where the consuls were requested to investigate reports. As they often worked together to procure information, the newspaper correspondents developed similar dispositions towards the Ottoman officials, which the journalists expressed forthrightly. Wyon commented that there “is no more courteous and affable gentleman than the educated Turk; and it is one of the hardest things imaginable to realize that the suave and smiling man before you is lying, and lying all the time.” Like the British officials, Wyon also saw the potential of Ottoman officers who had received European education. He recounted how one such officer complained: “ ‘You have no idea how hard it is for me,’ he said. ‘Just back from the law and order of Prussia, I am supposed to turn my knowledge to account with my own battalion, but as long as the insurrection lasts I am powerless. *These men won’t be drilled.*’ ”⁴⁹¹ Another Ottoman soldier who had worked on an English steamer exclaimed: “ ‘England is a great country ... look at what she has made out of Egypt.’ That’s just it. Every educated Turk has Egypt before him, and compares. He also ponders.”⁴⁹² To Wyon as to the consuls, the upright men of the Ottoman Empire could best be served by European-supervised reform.

However, like the consuls, the overwhelming sentiment of most correspondents towards Turks, Muslims, Albanians—and the Ottoman Empire and its institutions—was negative. Words of praise are the exception and are usually qualified. Even a casual perusal of the news reports quickly turns up references to ‘Asiatic Government’ of ‘the savage Turk’ who is genetically prone to ‘outbreaks of fanaticism.’ Reading Wyon’s memoir, it is not difficult to see why he inspired complaints and expulsion orders. He describes the Müzzsteg Reforms as a dangerous affront to the “scared feelings” of the Muslim population, and warns against “heaping fresh indignities upon the head of their ruler, utterly ignoring the fact that we are dealing with a nation of semi-civilized fanatics.”⁴⁹³ Moore noted that “the Turk” did many things “in an opposite way to which we

⁴⁹¹ Wyon, *The Balkans from Within*, 58

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

do them,” evoking images of a world that was both exotic and backward.⁴⁹⁴ Such examples can be found in abundance. It is not difficult to find what inspired the critical editorials, letters, and speeches discussed earlier.

From newspapers, to memoirs, to parliamentary papers, the coverage of the conflict in early twentieth-century Macedonia produced decidedly Orientalist discourse. In his examination of the Western news media, Edward Said illustrates how Arabs and Turks are cast in negative terms, and how Islam is depicted as being “outside the ‘normal’ human experience.”⁴⁹⁵ Very little changed in the intervening decades between the coverage of the Ilinden Uprising and Said’s scrutiny of how the media and the experts established (or establish) how the East is seen. Descriptions of Islam as a “menace” to the West and a breeding ground of “fanaticism” and “fundamentalism” could just as easily have been clipped from the newspapers of 1903 as taken from late twentieth-century television reports.⁴⁹⁶

Yet there were also healthy doses of Balkanism to go along with the Orientalism. The pejoratives did not stop with the depictions of the Muslims. As defined and discussed by Maria Todorova, Balkanism came into focus in the late nineteenth century and crystallized during the Balkans Wars and the First World War. The Balkans are depicted as a bridge between the West and the East, and as “a bridge between stages of growth, and this invokes labels such as semi-developed, semicolonial, semioriental.”⁴⁹⁷ Unlike the fluid Orient, the Balkans are concrete, a transition-zone full of turbulent racial diversity, where Western Christianity gives way to “a putative Eastern Orthodox entity.”⁴⁹⁸ Unlike the feminine, mystical, and sexualized Orient, the austere Balkans have “a distinctly male appeal: the appeal of medieval knighthood, of arms and plots.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁴ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 170.

⁴⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xviii.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

⁴⁹⁷ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 16.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

As one would expect, there is much in the coverage of the Ilinden Uprising to support Todorova's thesis. The depictions of the events and personalities contributed to the crystallization of Balkanist discourse, which Todorova points out can mostly be found in journalism and "quasi-journalistic literary forms."⁵⁰⁰ While IMRO's apologists pleaded that the organization's terrorism was born out of acute frustration or was an understandable symptom of centuries of life under Ottoman rule, most of the reporters who covered the conflict were less sympathetic. They considered IMRO's actions to be callous. Moore called them "fanatics," using the very term usually reserved for Muslims who performed acts of violence:

The high chiefs of the committee never expected to defeat the Turks with their inadequate force of untrained peasants; their purpose was to provoke the Sultan to set his soldiers upon the Christians. They were willing to pay the lives of many thousands of their brother Macedonians for the accomplishment of their desire—the country's autonomy. They were fanatics.⁵⁰¹

The Macedonian Committees often did themselves no favours by being candid to journalists. Even as fighting drove thousands into destitution, the IMRO leader described as "Dr. X" promised to use terrorism to fight on, with the goal of creating "a state of anarchy such as to make life insupportable not only for us Macedonians, but also for Turks and Europeans."⁵⁰² Two years later, the British reporter John Foster Fraser encountered a rebel leader who affirmed plans to provoke intervention. When Fraser stated that this would lead to a massacre, he was told that was exactly the point:

"We know it, we know it" was the quick exclamation in reply. "We want a big massacre! It is the price we shall have to pay. We shall provoke the Turk into such a measure that Europe will—must—intervene.... That is the way by which Macedonia will get its liberation."⁵⁰³

The Macedonian Committees' methods and rhetoric did not win them many sympathizers and helped confirm the views of their critics. They gave credence to Balfour's assertion that the "balance of criminality" lay with the insurgents, and that the

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁰¹ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 251.

⁵⁰² "Insurgent Chief Interviewed," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 15, 1903, 12.

⁵⁰³ John Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans* (London and Paris: Cassell, 1906), 14. Fraser describes the interviewee as a revolutionary with a well-known international reputation. Presumably, he was speaking to Boris Sarafov.

conflict in Macedonia was deeply rooted in centuries of ethnic and sectarian struggle, which was as much inter-Christian as it was against Ottoman rule. While the statistics would show that the Ottoman security forces and Bashi-Bazouks committed the majority of the crimes during the Ilinden Uprising, many observers pointed out that the carnage was a strategic aim of the rebels, to induce intervention. What emerged was an even balance of criminality, in which the stigma of “fanaticism” was extended to the rebels. Even most of those who apologized for the rebels and advocated autonomy spoke of the need for European supervision, as they considered the people of Macedonia, irrespective of race or religion, to be incapable of managing their own political affairs.

While the reckless comments of the insurgent leaders and the rhetoric of politicians like Arthur Balfour certainly had an effect on balancing the criminality, some credit should be given to Ottoman politicians like Tevfik Pasha and Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha in their approach to the consuls and correspondents. They were quick to point out that Muslim villages and property were being attacked and showed that they understood the rebel strategy to provoke massacres. Importantly, they did not issue blanket denials, admitting to some of the alleged crimes committed by the Ottoman security forces and promising to initiate investigations and tribunals. Though accused of obfuscation and lying, they were seen as civilized gentlemen, living evidence of the potential for reform, more of which, it was hoped, could bring stability to strife-torn Macedonia with the right touch of European supervision.

When considering the relationships between the British consuls, the Ottoman authorities, and the European journalists on the ground in Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising, a complex picture emerges. Most significantly, in providing support for journalists, using their own networks, and taking testimonials from witnesses, the British officials were able to produce a thoroughly documented picture of the conditions of the conflict and the state of the combatants and civilians. The British not only amassed considerable evidence of misdeeds committed by the Ottoman security forces, but they also received explanations for the violence which shaped their understanding of the conflict, and, in turn, shaped their accounts and presentations of the conflict. The evidence provided them with more proof that more European oversight was needed to pacify Macedonia and to create a workable reform scheme, particularly with respect to

the gendarmerie and the perceived need to establish a uniformed presence in the countryside of war-torn Macedonia.

Crisis Diplomacy, British Initiatives, and the Mürzsteg Reform Program

By the time the British cabinet convened on September 14, 1903, a large scale humanitarian crisis had developed in Macedonia. The senior members of cabinet had already decided on a new course of action towards Macedonia, and before the end of the week, the British government was pursuing the matter in its diplomacy. By the end of the month, Lord Lansdowne had drawn up a memorandum advocating stronger reforms, which included the appointment of a Christian governor, the appointment of European officers to train the Ottoman gendarmerie, the withdrawal of irregular Ottoman troops, and Great Power support for the establishment of a relief mission. What is more, the British called for the deployment of European military attachés to accompany the Ottoman forces, a point which they lobbied for vigorously. The British memo was produced in time for the meeting of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian foreign ministers at Mürzsteg between September 30 and October 3. It is difficult to say exactly what degree British diplomacy influenced the text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, which emerged three weeks later, but the British foreign secretary did not refute the credit he received in what became a public relations victory for the British. What is apparent is that having made the decision to press for stronger reform, the British were resolved to work the situation to their advantage while remaining within the multilateral context of the reform framework. An expansion of the reforms and a uniformed presence in Macedonia, it was hoped, would quell the violence, address the humanitarian crisis, satisfy domestic critics, and enhance Britain's strategic presence in the region at a time when other powers were making gains at Britain's expense.

What prompted this shift which made Britain the leading advocate for the strengthening of the reforms in Macedonia? Why were the British so convinced that military attachés were a key part of the solution? This section investigates the role of British diplomacy in the production of the Mürzsteg Reform Program from the aftermath of the Rostkovski assassination in August to the announcement of the new reforms in late October. The views of the British statesmen and diplomats will be discussed

followed by a review of the diplomatic climate regarding the situation in Macedonia in September. The course of British diplomacy will then be reviewed and examined with an assessment of the British contribution to the articles of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Finally, this shift in British policy towards Macedonia will be discussed with reference to the topic's historiography, which will lead to the chapter's conclusion.

Opinions within the ranks of the British government and diplomatic service on how to best respond to the unfolding crisis in Macedonia were varied. The events of August and September affirmed the reservations Lansdowne had expressed toward the Vienna Reform Program, but the agreement to pursue a more interventionist policy took time to form. The diplomats closest to the violence could not help but be affected by the stories they reported and the events they witnessed. From Monastir and Uscub respectively, vice-consuls McGregor and Fontana documented rosters of victims and lists of destroyed property. While acknowledging the callousness of the rebels, the events only confirmed to them that the Ottoman authorities had chosen to ignore repeated British advice to their restrain soldiers from committing excesses and to avoid using irregular troops. The reports from Maunsell and Massy on the conditions in the Vilayet of Adrianople were further testament for the need for change. In Salonica, Consul-General Graves lobbied for Great Power warships to be on hand to provide a display of force and to land marines if necessary. In Sofia, Vice-Consul Elliot spoke again of the fragile political situation in Bulgaria, which was only getting more tenuous as violence on its borders threatened to drag the Bulgarian army into the conflict. From his office in Constantinople, Ambassador O'Connor compiled the dispatches from his consular network, assessed the situation in the Ottoman capital and concluded by late August that a humanitarian crisis was unfolding which necessitated change to the reforms.⁵⁰⁴ His recommendations to the foreign office would help set events in motion which produced the shift in British policy.

In London, Balfour, Lansdowne and the political executive were not quick to act. Balfour had placed the primary blame on the rebels and Lansdowne had informed O'Connor at the prorogation of the parliament that Britain was not inclined to get

⁵⁰⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 28, 1903, FO 78/5268/521.

entangled in the crisis.⁵⁰⁵ The confirmed reports of atrocities and the groundswell in public opinion shifted their position in the ensuing weeks. While Balfour was quick to play up the inter-Christian quarrels and the cyclical nature of violence in the Balkans, the politics of the British Empire may have also been influential in giving the British statesmen reason to pause and consider their response. The British Empire was home to millions of Muslims for whom Sultan Abdülhamîd was the caliph and the guardian of Islam's most holy site, Mecca. In addition to millions of Muslims in Imperial India, the British had presided over Egypt for twenty years. A strong stand against the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia ran the potential risk of inciting unrest and perhaps mutiny against British rule. Furthermore, Imperial Germany had forged close relations with the Ottoman Empire. In 1898 Kaiser Wilhelm II had proclaimed Germany as the protector of Muslims in an affront to British influence in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁶ The Germans were backing up their words with iron horses. 1903 marked the beginning of construction on the Berlin to Baghdad railway.

Another railway was also under construction which would further established links between Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Empire. This was the Hejaz Railway being built to connect Damascus to Medina, linking the Hejaz to the Levant and allowing pilgrims faster and more comfortable access to the Islam's holiest sites. The Hejaz Railway was a project of international pride for Muslims, connecting the distant Muslim communities of India to the Ottoman Empire via financial investment. Indian Muslims contributed 5,000,000 rupees to the Hejaz Railway fund. The Muslims of the State of Hyderabad requested to be taxed 6.25 per cent on their wealth to help fund the project, their only stipulation being that three-fifths of the revenue be specially allocated to fund a branch line from Mount Arafat to Mecca. At the time of the Ilinden Uprising, the railway was in the midst of its construction and providing a strong, mental link between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslims of India.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Lansdowne to O'Connor, August 14, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁵⁰⁶ Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898-1908* (London: Penguin Books, 2011,) 14.

⁵⁰⁷ M. Metin Hülagü, *The Hejaz Railway: The Construction of a New Hope* (New York: Bluedome Books, 2010), 50.

Public opinion amongst the Muslims of the British Empire added another political dimension to conflict in Macedonia. As a former viceroy of India, Lansdowne was surely very much aware of the sensitivities involved. During the mid September cabinet meeting, the India Office wrote to the Foreign Office regarding arrangements for the Begam of Bhopal to visit Mecca. This would require the British to assist in the passage of a Muslim dignitary to the Ottoman Empire at a time when they were contemplating a degree of intervention in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁸ If the government was not cognizant of the potential of the Macedonian Crisis to upset the Muslims of the British Empire, it was spelt out by a well-informed letter writer by the name of Browne, who submitted two letters to the Foreign Office in September. Browne complained about the coverage in the British press, warning that it would irritate Muslims in India. Browne thought it wise to praise Sultan Abdülhamîd as a “humane and beloved Sultan.” Browne took direct aim at Ambassador O’Conor, calling him the wrong man to represent Great Britain in Constantinople and accusing him of being “too bigoted in the manner of religion.”⁵⁰⁹ Nothing politically tangible arose in Egypt or India from the British decision to pursue stronger reforms. In October the Indian Muslims who donated to the Hejaz Railway asked permission to wear the medals presented to them by the Ottoman government, but there is no indication this was connected to Britain’s Macedonia policy.⁵¹⁰ Still, it is likely that when Lansdowne expressed his concern not to “overshoot the mark” on pressing for more reform he also had the Muslims of the British Empire on his mind.⁵¹¹

By the end of August, Ambassador O’Conor had read enough reports and gathered enough of his own intelligence to make the assessment that the British needed to make a push for more reforms. As early as August 10, he telegraphed Lansdowne reporting that the scale of the insurrection and the provocations of the insurgents were bound to produce atrocities. He referenced a telegram from Lansdowne in April, in which the foreign secretary had suggested the possibility of deployment of military attachés and argued the presence of British and Great Power attachés would exercise “a restraining influence” on the Ottoman security forces and could provide “trustworthy

⁵⁰⁸ India Office to Foreign Office, September 12, 1903, FO 78/5289.

⁵⁰⁹ Browne to Foreign Office, September 18, 1903, FO 78/5289.

⁵¹⁰ India Office to Foreign Office, October 30, 1903, FO78/5289.

⁵¹¹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

information as to the behavior of the soldiery.”⁵¹² O’Conor indicated the French ambassador was amenable to the idea and suggested skipping the Russian and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors and taking the issue directly to the Ottoman government.⁵¹³ Lansdowne concurred but instructed O’Conor not to keep the matter from the two ambassadors, stressing preference for multilateralism.⁵¹⁴ Two days later, Krushevo fell. A week later, the Russians fleet sailed for Iniada, and news came from St. Petersburg that the Russians and the Austro-Hungarians considered military attachés to be an impractical measure, arguing that it would be impossible to follow the movement of so many Ottoman troops over such a wide geographical area.⁵¹⁵

This first attempt by the British to alter the reforms came quickly to naught due to intrigue and opposition from the executive powers. When O’Conor met with Abdülhamîd on August 14 the Sultan assured him that he and his soldiers would not fall for the rebel provocations. He maintained that the implementation of the reforms had been hampered by rebels. On the question of autonomy for Macedonia, O’Conor had the impression from the Sultan’s manner that he might be “ready to entertain proposals for an autonomous regime on the lines perhaps of that of the Lebanon: which would leave him to control of his army and respect his sovereign rights.” The conversation finished with the Sultan lamenting the hanging of the gendarmes in Monastir, which, he complained, “had been imposed on him by political expediency.”⁵¹⁶

Four days previously, O’Conor had been hopeful of pressing the Sultan to agree to allow European military attachés to accompany Ottoman troops. He left the meeting only with observations of body language clues. O’Conor learned—possibly from the Abdülhamîd himself or from a source close to the Sultan—that the Russian ambassador had advised the Sultan not agree to the British proposal. O’Conor was displeased with the Russian intrigue and maintained that that Austro-Russian solidarity could have “imposed the acceptance of the measure with ease.”⁵¹⁷ Ambassador Zinoviev informed

⁵¹² O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 10, 1903, FO 78/5271/125.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Lansdowne to O’Conor, August 10, 1903, FO 421/198/151.

⁵¹⁵ Scott to O’Conor, August 17, 1903, FO 65/1663/66.

⁵¹⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 18, 1903, FO 78/5268/491.

⁵¹⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne (secret), August 15, 1903, FO 78/5268/475.

O'Connor a few days later that they thought the attachés would be exposed to excessive risk and that a possible "untoward accident" would only further complicate matters. O'Connor felt the Russians were just making excuses. He reminded Zinoviev that in places there were large concentrations of Ottoman troops that could easily be monitored by a few attachés. His view of the Austro-Hungarians was similar as they reiterated the Russian position and expressed views on the matter of attachés that O'Connor reported were "not very precise."⁵¹⁸ The experience affirmed to the British ambassador that the executive powers in the reforms were not interested imposing additional measures, even after the death of a Russian consul. If the British were to initiate the call for the deployment of military attachés or the revision of the reforms, they would have to do more than privately pass advice to the Russian and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors.

By late August, the further deterioration of the situation prompted Ambassador O'Connor to, in his words, "make bold to submit" a number of observations to Lord Lansdowne. O'Connor described "a distinct and very grave aggravation" of the political situation in the Balkans and in Constantinople, which was threatening to destabilize the Ottoman Empire and draw in other powers. In his assessment, the Ottoman Empire would already be at war with Bulgaria were it not for Russia. If the ill-discipline irregulars and Bashi-Bazouks continued to wreck havoc, Bulgarian intervention was likely, a possibility which could also lead to Russian involvement since "she [Russia] cannot afford either to let Bulgaria win her own military laurels or be beaten." O'Connor also considered Russian intervention possible if there was a coup in Constantinople wherein "the Sultan may be overwhelmed by the fanaticism of his Moslem subjects, and have to choose between siding with them or losing his throne and his life."⁵¹⁹ To O'Connor, the time for new reforms had come:

It is evident that the Austro-Hungarian scheme of reforms is dead and that even if it could be revived it would no longer answer to the requirements of the situation or have the faintest chance of pacifying the Macedonians. Some more drastic and active measures would have to be enforced in one way or another if incalculable misery is to be avoided and the Balkan Peninsula is not to become a scene of desolation and of starving and famine stricken inhabitants. The Russian and Austrian Ambassadors must be ready to acknowledge today that their scheme has

⁵¹⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 19, 1903, FO 78/5268/502.

⁵¹⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 28, 1903, FO 78/5268/521.

been a ghastly failure, and that something else must be substituted without delay if European complications are to be avoided. Indeed it would be surprising if the Russian government is not already considering the subject.

There is no reason, however as the questions appears to me, for desiring to take the lead of the hands of the two Powers who, by their geographical position and their affinities of race and creed, are primarily interested in the affairs of the Balkan Peninsula. The time, however, has arrived when the other Powers may properly be expected to make their voices heard, and to let it be understood by the two Powers that they consider it is necessary to propose more drastic and thorough reforms so as to secure for the Macedonians a charter of such a liberal description as will satisfy their legitimate aspirations and conquer the grave dangers now threatening those parts and the peace of Europe.⁵²⁰

For a solution, O'Connor saw the potential for a settlement which might be acceptable to the belligerents and produce regional stability. Based on past meetings with the Sultan, he deduced that "a moderate regime of autonomy" might be acceptable to the Sultan if it would "cover his prestige while securing the reality." Since IMRO's demands called for the nomination of a Christian Governor General and an international Board of Control with full judicial controls, within the Ottoman state, O'Connor reasoned that the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire could be preserved through an autonomous solution that—with the right dose of diplomatic encouragement and swift execution—might be amenable to the Ottoman and Bulgarian governments.⁵²¹

To O'Connor, the deployment of a few military attachés would no longer be enough. The situation merited a redrafting of the reforms, if not a reconstituting of the political rule of the Macedonia, and it would be up to the other powers (Great Britain, France, and Italy) to initiate a liberal political makeover. Like others, O'Connor had foreseen what was transpiring, but he was the first senior British diplomat or member of the government executive to make the case for reform and autonomy since the onset of the Ilinden Uprising. What is notable about the observations he communicated on August 28 is the prominence O'Connor gave to geopolitical ramifications beyond Macedonia in making his case. Perhaps he thought reports of humanitarian suffering might have more resonance in the corridors of the Foreign Office if they came with

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

warnings of a shift in the balance of power in region. He sent copies of consular despatches with details on the fighting and the humanitarian conditions the following week, but it was his private recommendations that captured attention.⁵²²

O'Connor followed his observations up with two private letters to Lansdowne assessing the mood of the diplomats in Constantinople capital and discussing the difficulties of implementing his observations. Writing in strict confidence, O'Connor suggested that the way to realize autonomy and reform would be to let the Russians take credit for the idea. In order to make it acceptable,

means might be found of openly leaving to Russia, at all events for the moment both the credit and the odium—the scheme can be left—as well as the lead—to the two powers who have undertaken the job, but I am sure that something like the Lebanon [Convention] only with a dash of foreign control would make its acceptance here much easier.⁵²³

He found the French ambassador to be receptive to this idea of bringing the western powers (France, Italy, and Great Britain) “more to the forefront without necessarily taking the lead from Russia.” His Gallic counterpart was acutely fearful of a breakdown of security in the capital. Although less concerned, O'Connor stated he did “not think it would be a bad thing” if the British Mediterranean fleet were kept in the area without attracting attention.⁵²⁴

O'Connor's observations regarding diplomatic strategy and intrigue got the attention of the prime minister. In a letter to Lansdowne dated September 10, Balfour discussed his own take on the ambassador's remarks. In view of the situation in the Constantinople, Balfour suggested the Mediterranean Fleet be moved east and that the Foreign Office consult the positions of the Imperial Defence Committee. Balfour saw O'Connor's fears arising in part from the upsurge in public opinion over Macedonia. He maintained he did not see how public opinion would be placated by giving Russia all the credit for such an initiative and he questioned why O'Connor had ignored Austria-Hungary.⁵²⁵ Balfour suggested Lansdowne contact Ambassador Plunkett in Vienna to

⁵²² O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 78/5268/532.

⁵²³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 28, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁵²⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁵²⁵ Balfour to Lansdowne, September 10, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

“privately and unofficially” discuss Macedonian matters with the Austro-Hungarian in order

to point out that we had always retained the liberty of suggesting stronger measures than those which had actually been proposed by Russia and Austria; that we had, however, felt all along, and still felt, that whatever was to be done could best be done by the two Powers most closely interested; that we therefore made no official suggestion at the present moment of a wider scheme of reforms, especially as such a suggestion might have not other effect than that of increasing the disorders in Macedonia, and thereby diminishing still further the chance of any reforms being effected; that, at the same time, we thought it desirable to say that if Austria and Russia were of opinion that, either now, or in the course of the next few months, something like the Lebanon Constitution should be pressed upon the Sultan, we should regard such a solution as satisfactory.⁵²⁶

Balfour was advocating moving more cautiously than O’Conor. His wish for Plunkett to assure the Austro-Hungarians that there was no British reform proposal being planned shows his concern that Britain should not be seen to be sticking its neck out over Macedonia. However, while Balfour was adamant that Britain should remain in the background, his wish to support the imposing of a constitutional arrangement akin to Lebanon makes plain that he also wished for a change in the status quo. In addition, Balfour informed Lansdowne that he considered both Austria-Hungary and Russia to be in a position of weakness over Macedonia. Therefore, he argued, “their declared policy may be upset by sheer indecision and timorousness on the part of Austria by divided ministerial responsibility, and by Pan-Slavist agitation in the case of Russia.”⁵²⁷ Indeed, Austria-Hungary was also facing a political crisis in Budapest and Russia’s primary attention was in the Far East. Balfour’s letter indicates little in terms of humanitarian concerns. But through his past association with Near East affairs and his involvement with the Imperial Defence Committee, the prime minister was acutely aware of the potential ramifications that O’Conor had brought to his attention. Balfour was advocating that Britain should discreetly put out diplomatic feelers to see what might be possible and suggested he and Lansdowne discuss the matter when they convened in London for the cabinet meeting. Although careful to keep their comments out of the public eye for

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

the moment, Britain's political leadership was preparing to act on the crisis in Macedonia.

The news that Christians were being displaced en masse and were the victims of atrocities at the hands of Muslims splashed across the press headlines of Europe in late August and into September. As public opinion was roused across the continent, politicians and diplomats took note. There were rumbling that something should be done, but what? The political and diplomatic situation was fluid.

Officially, Austria-Hungary and Russia were maintaining their solidarity, but behind the scenes there were signs of strain. From Vienna, Ambassador Plunkett reported that Goluchowski was downcast regarding Macedonia and was hoping there would be no great change before the onset of winter. He was certain that Bulgarians (though not the Bulgarian government) had aided the uprising in the Adrianople Vilayet. Goluchowski thought the Russian naval demonstration was an unfortunate move.⁵²⁸ The Russians had not consulted Austria-Hungary about the action and Goluchowski maintained it had encouraged the rebels.⁵²⁹ The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister considered Lamsdorff was an honest man but worried about the power of "Muscovite influences...to pull the wires."⁵³⁰ When Vice-Consul Elliot reported from Sofia that he thought the Russians had been "playing a double game" in the Balkans, Plunkett stated his agreement and said that 'even at the "Ball Platz" the confidence in the purity of Russia's intentions has received a severe shake of late.'⁵³¹

As for the Russians, there were some indications which favoured O'Connor's hopeful view that the Russians might be persuaded to lead the lobby for more reform if not autonomy. Lamsdorff defended the naval demonstration as necessary. He also stated that more European gendarmes were required in Macedonia and that Great Power unity was needed to successfully affect more reforms. However, the Austro-

⁵²⁸ Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), August 30, 1903, FO 7/1340/258.

⁵²⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), August 30, 1903, FO 7/1340/252; Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), August 30, 1903, FO 7/1340/258.

⁵³⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne (very confidential), August 30, 1903, FO 7/1340/258; Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), August 30, 1903, FO 7/1342/64.

⁵³¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), September 13, 1903, FO 7/1340/273. Plunkett notes that Elliot sent him two of his despatches on the subject.

Hungarians had objected to the idea. Lamsdorff denied rumours that Russia wished to call a conference on Macedonia but he was in favour of a meeting of ambassadors on Macedonia.⁵³² There was good reason to think that the Russians might be in favour of more reform. Nevertheless, Lamsdorff was at such pains to discourage the Bulgarians that some wondered if the Russians might prompt Great Power intervention in Bulgaria.⁵³³ Lamsdorff had been adamant that he had no intention of doing so, but he urged the Great Powers to make it clear to the Bulgarians that the hand of intervention would not be forced by the actions of the Macedonian Committees.⁵³⁴

In solidarity with the Russians, the Austro-Hungarians urged the British to support them in using “energetic language” against the Bulgarians.⁵³⁵ The Austro-Hungarians went further still, reminding the Bulgarians that they could expect no assistance if they were defeated and they would not be permitted to add territory if they were victorious.⁵³⁶ Vienna took the step of prohibiting an arms shipment to the Bulgarian government.⁵³⁷ On September 12 the Austro-Hungarians and Russians presented the other powers with a copy of the circular they had issued to the Bulgarian and Ottoman governments. The circular stated that the two powers would not be influenced by the events in Macedonia and that neither Bulgaria nor the Ottoman Empire could count on support from Austria-Hungary or Russia if they impeded the implementation of the Vienna Reform Program. Although aimed at both governments, the circular stated that the “current situation” had been “created by the efforts of criminal committees and revolutionary bands,” implying that they held Bulgarians, if not the Bulgarian government, primarily responsible.⁵³⁸ By this time, Lansdowne had telegraphed Ambassador Scott in St. Petersburg wondering if a threat toward the Bulgarians was being suggested.⁵³⁹

⁵³² Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), September 2, 1903, FO 65/1661/236).

⁵³³ Elliot to Lansdowne, August 20, 1903, FO 78/5296/31.

⁵³⁴ Scott to Lansdowne, September 2, 1903, FO 65/1663/84.

⁵³⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 1, 1903, FO 7/1342/66.

⁵³⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 1, 1903, FO 78/5220/32.

⁵³⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), September 14, 1903, FO 78/5295/231.

⁵³⁸ Memorandum left by the Austro-Hungarian Minister, September 12, 1903, FO 421/198/378.

⁵³⁹ Lansdowne to Scott, August 30, 1903, FO 421/198/292.

In an effort to take the temperature of the other powers, the Lansdowne made inquiries with his ambassadors near the end of August, asking them for their reaction.⁵⁴⁰ The German government deferred to the leadership of Austria-Hungary and Russia.⁵⁴¹ The French were giving subtle indications that they could be persuaded to act. From Paris on September 9, Ambassador Monson reported that when the Russian ambassador had urged the French and the other “less interested” powers to renew their representations to Sofia and Constantinople, Delcassé rebuffed him by saying that the French “had never stopped making representations whenever they had the chance to do so.” Monson said Delcassé told the Russian ambassador that France had nothing to propose or initiate regarding Macedonia. While Delcassé vowed he would not move a ship of war unless it was absolutely necessary, the French had already moved ships to the Eastern Mediterranean and were prepared to act in concert if the other powers opted for a naval demonstration.⁵⁴² The Italians had already indicated they had vessels in Sicily ready to sail for Salonica if required.⁵⁴³ The Italians also expressed sympathy for the Bulgarian government and the difficulties it faced in trying to seal its borders.⁵⁴⁴ Still, they were willing to make representations to Sofia in concert with the other powers but also thought it wise to take a stronger line against the Ottoman Empire by reminding Constantinople of “the necessity of proper discrimination in exercising repressive measures.”⁵⁴⁵

The increasing internationalization of the conflict in Macedonia was giving the British and the other powers more reasons to consider their options. News of the massacres of national kin and rumours of possible intervention by regional rivals gave the governments of Serbia, Greece, Romania and especially Bulgaria cause for concern. Though Serbia was still beset with internal power struggles, the British representative in Belgrade reported that Serbia would likely not stand idly by in the event of war between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, or if the Albanians in the Kosovo Vilayet attacked

⁵⁴⁰ Lansdowne to Monson, August 29, 1903, FO 421/198/287A; Lansdowne to Plunkett, August 29, 1903, FO 421/198/287A.

⁵⁴¹ Lascelles to Lansdowne, September 1, 1903, FO 64/1575/16.

⁵⁴² Monson to Lansdowne, September 9, 1903, FO 27/3623/476.

⁵⁴³ Rodd to Lansdowne, August 22, 1903, FO 45/875/62.

⁵⁴⁴ Rodd to Lansdowne, August 30, FO 45/874/179.

⁵⁴⁵ Rodd to Lansdowne, August 30, FO 45/875/63.

local Serbian populations. In these events, the Serbian army, even in its limited capacity, would likely enter the Kosovo Vilayet, the north of which Serbians considered to be “Old Serbia.”⁵⁴⁶ These sentiments were confirmed by the Serbian ambassador in Constantinople in mid-September.⁵⁴⁷ The Romanian government was under pressure from opposition press and the “Macedo-Roumanian” community in Bucharest to, at the very least, make representations to the Ottoman government over the ill-treatment of the Vlach community of Krushevo. However, the Romanians were reportedly not inclined to act as they anticipated the Sultan would grant an Episcopate to the Romanians (Vlachs) of Macedonia.⁵⁴⁸

As far as the Greek government was concerned, the Vlachs of Macedonia were Greeks. While the government of Dimitrios Rallis in Athens supported the Ottoman counterinsurgency, the events at Krushevo and Armensko, where “Greco-Vlachs” had suffered at the hands of the Ottoman security forces, prompted the Greek ambassador to urge Lansdowne to make representations to the Ottoman government for the sake of the welfare of the Vlachs.⁵⁴⁹ As more details on the events at Krushevo became available, Prime Minister Rallis expressed his wish for an inquiry into the suspicious circumstances, which had allowed the rebels to escape and left the Greco-Vlach community to bear the brunt of the ravages while the Macedo-Bulgarian quarter of the town was largely spared. However, the Greek prime minister made it clear that Greece still supported the Ottoman Empire and its counterinsurgency campaign.⁵⁵⁰ He complained quite bitterly of the biased coverage in the western press and the “clerical influence” of the Balkan Committee in London, arguing that the crimes committed “by the Bulgarian bands” against fellow Christians had been glossed over. ‘M. Rhalley concluded his remarks by saying with some bitterness “had we [the Greeks] ever

⁵⁴⁶ Thesiger to Lansdowne, August 30, 1903, FO 105/49/147.

⁵⁴⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), September 17, 1903, FO 78/5268/568.

⁵⁴⁸ Browne to Lansdowne, September 5, 1903, FO 104/155/57. A source told the British ambassador that the Romanian government estimated that only 100,000 of the estimated 500,000-600,000 “Kontzo-Vlachs” in Macedonia had any sense of connection to Romania.

⁵⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Des Graz, September 9, 1903, FO 421/198/358. Lansdowne notes that the conversation with Ambassador Metaxas took place on August 19, 1903, following publication of the sacking of Krushevo.

⁵⁵⁰ Des Graz to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 32/745/101.

committed such an act, we should have at once have been subjected to a blockade or some like punishment.”⁵⁵¹

The diplomatic pressure from the Great Powers was resented by the Bulgarian government. General Petrov’s administration was repeatedly on the defensive for its apparent inability or unwillingness to seal its frontiers and prevent guerrillas from crossing into Ottoman territory.⁵⁵² Vice-Consul Elliot was sympathetic, arguing that Petrov’s government was faring better than its predecessors with respects to border security.⁵⁵³ Elliot felt making further representations to Sofia was unnecessary and that overly strong demands could spark a revolution or a coup.⁵⁵⁴ Like O’Conor in Constantinople, Elliot was suspicious of the Russians. Although Lamsdorff was repeatedly making and asking the other powers to make representations to the Bulgarian government to seal its frontiers and clamp down on rebel activities in the country, Bakhmetieff continued to serve as Russia’s senior diplomat in Bulgaria and was widely believed to be encouraging the Macedonian Committees in their endeavours. Elliot noted that Bakhmetieff had been reprimanded and was less outspoken he had been in 1902. Nevertheless, his attitude was still “one of unmistakable sympathy with the revolutionary movement.”⁵⁵⁵ Russian policy towards Bulgaria appeared enigmatic if not outright contradictory. Why did the Russian government not replace Bakhmetieff? The matter suggested intrigue. The Bulgarian foreign minister said Russia wanted to intervene in Bulgaria, and desired Bulgaria to go to war with the Ottoman Empire to help realize the fact.⁵⁵⁶

By mid-September, Bulgarian exasperation was turning to desperation. On instruction from Lansdowne on September 9, Britain renewed its representations to the Bulgarian government, urging it to seal its borders and clamp down on the activities of the Macedonian Committees. In response, General Petrov maintained he was doing his utmost and urged the powers to apply pressure to the Ottomans, vowing Bulgaria would

⁵⁵¹ Des Graz to Lansdowne, September 5, 1903, FO 32/745/102.

⁵⁵² Elliot to Lansdowne, August 26, 1903, FO 78/5294/197.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 1, 1903, FO 78/5296/32.

⁵⁵⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne (very confidential), September 7, 1903, FO 78/5295/217.

⁵⁵⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne (secret), September 9, 1903, FO 78/5295/226.

not sit idly by in the event of widespread slaughter of its brethren in Macedonia and Adrianople.⁵⁵⁷ On September 12, Elliot reported finding General Petrov “very depressed” at the news that as Ottoman security forces’ carte blanche in Macedonia was amounting to the “extermination of the Bulgarian population, if not by direct massacre, at least by the destruction of villages and means of livelihood, the result which would be that the inhabitants would either perish from their privations or would be driven to emigrate.”⁵⁵⁸ Elliot said that the news had been confirmed by *The Times* correspondent. The Bulgarian Minister of War was also expressing his concerns to the Bulgarian cabinet that with 25,000 Ottoman troops in the Adrianople Vilayet, mobilization in Eastern Rumelia would be impossible in the event of a surprise attack.⁵⁵⁹

Feeling cornered, the Bulgarians took action. On September 14 the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated a circular to the Great Power governments calling on them to stop the “extermination” of the “Christian population” of “Turkey in Europe” and to halt the concentration of Ottoman troops on the Bulgarian frontier.⁵⁶⁰ Promising to take measures to defend their territory, the Bulgarians mobilized some 30,000 troops in the frontier districts.⁵⁶¹ Elliot and the Italian vice-consul cautioned Petrov that the mobilization order was unwise as the powers had not been given a chance to digest the Bulgarian circular. Visibly irritated, Petrov said he was continually being advised to keep quiet, while he saw no evidence of such advice being given to the Ottomans. He maintained he could not remain indifferent to “the process of extermination of the Bulgarians which was going on in Macedonia with the encouragement of two of the Powers.”⁵⁶² The details of the partial mobilization were confirmed by the British military attaché, Colonel Maunsell, during his visit to Sofia a few days later.⁵⁶³ The rebellion in Macedonia may have been defeated, but its aftermath had caused tensions in the region to escalate.

⁵⁵⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 9, 1903, FO 78/5295/225.

⁵⁵⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 12, 1903, FO 78/5295/229.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 14, 1903, FO 78/5295/233.

⁵⁶¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 15, 1903, FO 78/5295/235.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), September 19, 1903, FO 78/5295/238.

From Constantinople, Ambassador O'Connor confirmed much of the bad news, and it seemed that his and the other ambassadors' representations were having no effect on the Ottoman Empire's prosecution of its counterinsurgency campaign. O'Connor's "strong and earnest" representations to the Grand Vizier on September 7 garnered promises of dismissals, redeployments, and military councils.⁵⁶⁴ However, on the September 11 he stated there was

no doubt that great excesses have been committed by the Turkish Redifs and Ilaves since the outbreak of the insurrection on the 2nd of August, and that cruel retribution is being inflicted upon Bulgarian villagers who are in not any way connected with the revolutionary movement.⁵⁶⁵

The dispatch included reports from Graves, McGregor, and casualty lists from IMRO, providing damning and detailed testimonies. O'Connor stated that he had repeatedly warned the Ottoman government "that nothing could be more certain to alienate the friendly feelings of His Majesty's Government than a policy of repression based on cruel outrages upon the inoffensive Bulgarian inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula."⁵⁶⁶ It seemed the ambassador's words had had no effect.

Reading his prime minister's letter, the incoming diplomatic despatches, and the newspapers in advance of the mid-September cabinet meetings, Lord Lansdowne would have concluded that Britain had a responsibility and an opportunity to embolden its policy toward the conflict in Macedonia. The ongoing fighting and the unfolding humanitarian crisis was threatening to destabilize the region with tensions escalating between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, and Greece and Serbia expressing their dissatisfaction with the situation. Reports of potential coups and revolutions within the Balkan states only added to the concern. The international diplomatic climate also favoured British action. The Balkans were no longer 'on ice' and the Vienna Reform Program had proven inadequate, just as Lansdowne had feared it would. Austria-Hungary and Russia, the executive powers of the reforms, were quietly becoming increasingly suspicious of each other, and Russia was sending signals that it was interested in revising the reforms when the Czar paid his visit to Mürzsteg at month's

⁵⁶⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 8, 1903, FO 78/5268/543.

⁵⁶⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 11, 1903, FO 78/5268/588.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

end. Furthermore, there were signs that the French and Italians were willing to act if another power was prepared to take some leadership in revising the Concert of Europe's approach to the conflict. Diplomatically, the opening for action was evident. As the Unionist cabinet convened Lansdowne knew there would be no round table conference of ministers or even ambassadors. Revisions to the reforms or the granting of autonomy for Macedonia would be an executive affair carried out by the Russians and Austro-Hungarians. The British would have to influence the proceedings, while being on the outside looking in. Lansdowne would have known this would have required some diplomatic ingenuity.

While the British cabinet met during the week of September 14-18 and discussed Macedonia, amongst a host of issues, the other powers appear to have sensed that the British were considering making a move. The Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count Mensdoroff called upon Lansdowne twice during the week. He informed Lansdowne that his government wished to keep 'the question of the "atrocities"' separate from the reform scheme and stated that the other powers were fully committed to the existing reforms. He urged that the question of enlarging the reforms should be approached with caution lest it encourage the insurgents.⁵⁶⁷ Lansdowne responded that he felt the reforms in their present form were not adequate. Although he understood the need to be discreet, he reminded the ambassador that Great Britain's support of the reforms had been made with the condition that they could make alternative proposals. He suggested that the time had come "when we should consider whether the appointment of a Christian Government with some kind of system of autonomy had not become desirable."⁵⁶⁸ Lansdowne made the statement without any authority from his government. As cabinet had, at that point, yet to discuss the issue, he was probing the Austro-Hungarians, who, along with the Russians, were seeking "renewal of the approval and support of the four Governments for their remedial programme."⁵⁶⁹

To differing degrees, both Vienna and St. Petersburg indicated that enlargement of the reform program, if not autonomy, would be on the table at the upcoming meetings at Mürzsteg. The Austro-Hungarians ambassador returned two days later to report that

⁵⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 14, 1903, FO 421/198/384.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Scott to Lansdowne, September 16, 1903, FO 65/1661/282.

Goluchowski would be willing to discuss the matter, and he was happy to exchange ideas with Lansdowne.⁵⁷⁰ Lamsdorff stated that the Great Powers should not give the Ottoman and Bulgarians governments any indications that territorial alterations were in the offing and urged the powers to remain in concert, noting that the press stories in Britain and France had encouraged the rebels. Nevertheless, Ambassador Scott found that Lamsdorff was ready to welcome “any practical suggestions” and had some ideas of his own:

He [Lamsdorff] himself seemed inclined to favour the idea of a strong and independent Mussulman Governor, with some sort of international control. The Sultan’s sovereignty over the provinces should, in any case be maintained. A Christian Governor would, he thought, be undesirable, owing to the irreconcilable rivalry between the different nationalities and churches of the native Christians.⁵⁷¹

The political landscape for expanding the reforms looked favourable. There was also a growing rift between Sofia and Vienna that required attention. In Vienna, Ambassador Plunkett described the Austro-Hungarian response to the Bulgarian circular of September 14 as being “in marked contrast with the more diplomatic advice hitherto given to Bulgaria by the Austro-Hungarian Government, as it is couched in extremely strong language.”⁵⁷² Goluchowski said that it was a ‘gross exaggeration to speak in an official note of the “annihilation” of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia’ noting that “the loss of some thousands” was still a small proportion of the population, and that the rebels had knowingly provoked the massacres. He stated that the Bulgarians had failed to seal their frontiers and that if war were to break out, “Bulgaria must be prepared to stand the consequences if she provoked a war of which the Powers entirely disapprove.”⁵⁷³ The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister was somewhat cagey when asked whether the Russians had also made such a strong response, and Plunkett described him as being “under the influence of fatigue and irritation” and wishing for an end to the “Bulgarian-Macedonian intrigues.” In Sofia, General Petrov was incensed at the Austro-Hungarian reply to his government’s circular, calling the charges of exaggeration

⁵⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 16, 1903, FO 421/198/406.

⁵⁷¹ Scott to Lansdowne, September 16, 1903, FO 65/1661/282.

⁵⁷² Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 17, 1903, FO 7/1342/71.

⁵⁷³ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 17, 1903, FO 7/1341/280.

insensitive and lacking in foundation.⁵⁷⁴ Over dinner with Vice-Consul Elliot, Prince Ferdinand also lamented the unfairness of the situation for Bulgaria, accusing the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors in Constantinople of being “incapable” and mockingly calling Zinovieff a “Cretin” and Calice a “Gredin.”⁵⁷⁵ Elliot surmised that if such rhetoric continued, the Bulgarians government would be driven into war, a point which he made clear to his Austro-Hungarian and Russian counterparts.⁵⁷⁶

Lansdowne began by testing his ideas with the French. The French and the British were still in the midst of negotiating the imperial disputes, which would pave the way for the Entente Cordiale of 1904. Macedonia was another topic on which the two powers were to find common ground. On Wednesday, September 16, Lansdowne discussed the situation in Macedonia with the French minister, Mr. Geoffroy, explaining that Britain could not remain indifferent to the suffering being endured in the Balkans. Lansdowne explained that he thought the time had come to re-think the reforms. Geoffroy replied that he was unsure of the French government’s position, but mentioned that Pierre Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to Britain, was in favour of “the appointment of a Christian Governor with a large measure of autonomy for the disturbed provinces.” Lansdowne said he agreed with Cambon, whose views might carry some clout as he had served as ambassador to Constantinople prior to his appointment to London in 1898.⁵⁷⁷

In Paris, the Bulgarian circular had been printed in the press prior to its arrival at the Quai d’ Orsay. Ambassador Monson reported that Delcassé had nothing new to say on Macedonia, but that the pro-government *Temps* had published a lead article on Macedonia which argued that “the sole efficacious remedy is that Europe in its entirety shall take in hand the accomplishment of the reforms of which no one contests the

⁵⁷⁴ Bertie to Lansdowne, September 19, 1903, FO 45/875/65.

⁵⁷⁵ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), September 20, 1903, FO 78/5295/243. Elliot confided to Prince Ferdinand that he thought Austria-Hungary wished to expand southwards to Salonica. In response, Ferdinand asked why, if that were the case, did Austria-Hungary “do everything to repress the development of the interesting and intelligent population of Macedonia, which might be made an outpost of civilization.”

⁵⁷⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 19, 1903, FO 78/5296/38.

⁵⁷⁷ Lansdowne to Monson, September 16, 1903, FO 421/198/403.

necessity, and which no one expects Turkey herself will undertake.”⁵⁷⁸ Monson ventured that if Lansdowne pushed the issue, he would likely receive a response from the French government which was “in conformity with the humanitarian traditions” of the French nation.⁵⁷⁹ Further hints of French support came a week later when Delcassé expressed support for the autonomous solution floated by Lansdowne. While he did not wish to undermine the Austro-Russian leadership, he said he was weary of reform and would “rather hear of action than of programmes.”⁵⁸⁰ Lansdowne stated his desire to see the reforms widened to the Italian Chargé d’Affaires, but there was no immediate follow up with Italy.⁵⁸¹

After the week of cabinet meetings and putting out feelers on reform, Lansdowne took his first concrete step on Saturday, September 19 by renewing the British proposal to the Austro-Hungarians and Russians to deploy military attachés to accompany the Ottoman forces in Macedonia and Adrianople. While making it clear that Britain did not wish to withdraw its support for the reform process, Lansdowne reminded the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors that Britain’s acceptance of the Vienna Reform Program had been conditional. Acknowledging that the insurrection had impeded the implementation of the reforms, Lansdowne also blamed the “indifference and weakness” of the Ottoman government and evidenced the fact that only two foreign officers had been appointed to date. Changing circumstances now called for changes to the reform program. Lansdowne did not call for autonomy and lobbied only indirectly for a Christian governor, arguing that having a Muslim governor or inspector general would not win the confidence of the population. He disputed the prior Austro-Russian objection that military attachés could not hope to affect any influence on such a large number of troops in such a vast territory. As Lansdowne argued, the problem could be overcome by

deputing a larger number of officers, and by a careful selection of the districts to which those officers would be sent. Their presence, even if they were not able to cover the whole or the ground, could not fail to have

⁵⁷⁸ Monson to Lansdowne, September 18, 1903, FO 27/3623/489.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Monson to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 27/3623/499.

⁵⁸¹ Lansdowne to Bertie, September 16, 1903, FO 421/198/405. The conversation had come about when the Italians had sought Britain’s reply to the Austro-Russian circular of September 12.

a salutary effect within the region which fell within their personal observation.⁵⁸²

Lansdowne finished with assurances that the British had no intention of encouraging the Ottomans or the Bulgarians to resist the reforms already promulgated. He hoped that the message to the Ottoman Empire would be that more effective measures would be in store in addition to the Vienna reforms, and that news of forthcoming diplomatic action would have a calming effect on the domestic political situation in Bulgaria.⁵⁸³

Lansdowne telegraphed O'Connor with news of his meetings and sent along copies of his proposals the following day.⁵⁸⁴ He complemented O'Connor for his representations he had made to the Grand Vizier regarding the poor conduct of the Ottoman troops and recapped some of the past instances where he had been instructed to bring reports of excesses to the attention of the Ottoman government. Even with allowances for the provocations by the insurgents, Lansdowne condemned the conduct of the Ottoman government and its security forces as being "quite inexcusable" and stated that past warnings had not been heeded. The events had had a negative effect on "civilized opinion" and had alienated "the sympathy and support of this Government and country."⁵⁸⁵ For these reasons, Lansdowne, stated, the time had come to revise the reforms, and he announced the renewal of the British proposal of to deploy military attachés:

If it were adopted by the other Powers, and if the Military Attachés were provided with a sufficient staff of subordinate officers, it seems to His Majesty's Government that they could unquestionably exercise a very wholesome influence in preventing acts of brutality or unnecessary severity, while their reports would be a useful antidote to the exaggerated descriptions which may have in some cases, no doubt, obtained currency.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² Lansdowne to Mensdorff, September 19, 1903, FO 421/198/424; Lansdowne to Gravenitz, September 19, 1903, FO 421/198/425. The two letters are identical save for references to the respective recipient governments.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 20, 1903, FO 421/198/429

⁵⁸⁵ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 21, 1903, FO 421/198/440.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

To underline their concerns and to add support for their words, the British send a squadron of warships from the Mediterranean fleet to Suda Bay on Crete to stand in readiness to proceed to one of the Ottoman ports if directed.⁵⁸⁷ The move produced rumours in Constantinople that the British were considering “action” in Ottoman waters. This was likely an intended outcome.⁵⁸⁸

Lansdowne’s dispatch to Elliot primarily responded to the Bulgarian circular. He blamed both sides for committing excesses, criticizing the Ottoman government for its failure to restrain its men and chastising the insurgents. He assured the Bulgarian government that the British had repeatedly warned the Ottoman government to restrain its forces and had received assurances that action would be taken. Lansdowne stated that he did not see the build up of Ottoman troops on the Bulgarian frontiers as posing a threat, adding that the Ottomans had the right to defend their sovereign territory from rebel incursions. He commended the Bulgarians for avoiding action which would endanger the peace, but warned that any “aggressive measures” by Sofia would only worsen the situation. Lansdowne added that the British were engaged with the other powers to enact “remedial measures” and urged the Bulgarians to avoid provocative actions or language.⁵⁸⁹ A memorandum on the British representations to the Ottoman government and the response to the Bulgarian circular was communicated to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count Mensdorff.⁵⁹⁰ This was undertaken by Lansdowne after Mensdorff called upon him and “expressed great anxiety” with regards to Britain’s response to the Bulgarian circular.⁵⁹¹

Following cabinet meetings in mid September, the British government advanced calls for expansion of the reform scheme for Macedonia, taking a step, albeit a cautious

⁵⁸⁷ Admiralty to Foreign Office (confidential), September 17, 1903, FO 421/198/413. The Admiral of HMS Formidable, one of the ships sent to Suda Bay, was ordered to sail to Smyrna on September 23, but O’Conor advised against the move as rumours were circulating “of contemplated action of [the] British fleet in Turkish waters.” See: O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 421/198/464. In response to O’Conor advice, HMS Formidable was ordered to sail to Platea just north of Athens, where the ship would be in Greek waters yet would “be easily available.” See: Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 30, 1903, FO 421/198/538.

⁵⁸⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 421/198/464.

⁵⁸⁹ Lansdowne to Elliot, September 21, 1903, FO 421/198/442.

⁵⁹⁰ Memorandum communicated to Count Mensdorff, September 23, 1903, FO 421/198/465.

⁵⁹¹ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 23, 1903, FO 421/198/469.

one, which distinguished Britain from the other powers. Reports from British consuls in Macedonia and the growing clamour of public opinion provided impetus for action. Moreover, the growing regional unrest and the political signals emanating from the other Great Powers capitals indicated the other powers would be open to reassessing their policies toward Macedonia. The British did not want to tear up the Vienna Reform Program or unseat the Austro-Hungarians and Russians as the executives of the reforms. Mindful of not going to far, Lansdowne only mentioned autonomy and the appointment of a Christian governor informally and indirectly. The proposal to deploy military attachés was forwarded concretely. There were signs the other powers, notably France and Russia, were willing to consider autonomy and perhaps a Christian governor, but Lansdowne did not formally make the case for either. Perhaps he was testing his luck to see how far the growing momentum for intervention might move the process. He may have suggested these points with the hope of getting the other powers to reach a compromise by supporting the British proposal for military attachés. In making a much more diplomatic and sympathetic response to the Bulgarian circular, Lansdowne distanced Britain from the hard-line being taken by the Austro-Hungarians, which had incensed the Bulgarians and shocked British public opinion after Goluchowski dismissed the “slaughter of 2,000 Macedonians” as not being tantamount to the “the extermination of the Bulgarian race in Macedonia.”⁵⁹²

Amidst the regional destabilization and the complications and rifts between the executive powers, the Macedonian Committees, and the Ottoman Empire, Britain was presenting itself as a disinterested “honest broker” looking to secure peace in the Balkans. Lansdowne’s dispatch to O’Conor on September 20 reviewed Britain’s past efforts and presented a justifiable case for the deployment of military attachés. The dispatch was at set of instructions for Ambassador O’Conor, an exoneration of British policy, and a rationalization for sending military attachés to Macedonia. Lansdowne very likely wrote the dispatch with its public consumption in mind. It was one of the documents included in the forthcoming edition of the Blue Books: *Turkey No 4*.

A War Office intelligence memorandum on the military situation in Balkans likely only added to Lansdowne’s resolve to do something to stabilize the situation. Detailing

⁵⁹² “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 23, 1903, 3.

the current military deployments and capabilities of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia, and Bulgaria, the report suggested that the sense of mistrust expressed by the Austro-Hungarians towards Russia indicated that Russia might be preparing to intervene in Macedonia or in Bulgaria in the event of an Ottoman-Bulgarian conflict. The report evidenced Russia's long standing wish to inherit Constantinople, the improbability of any of the other powers being able or willing to stop the Russians, and the lack of an Ottoman fleet to oppose an amphibious Russian assault on the capital. Furthermore, the report provided information from Austrian intelligence that Russian forces in the south of the country were preparing "for a descent" into Bulgaria or Macedonia. The report concluded: "It is evident, therefore, that if Russia, one pretext or another—and a pretext may not be difficult to find—should decide to strike, no delay need be incurred as far as available troops are concerned."⁵⁹³

The War Office intelligence memorandum echoed the unease felt by Elliot and O'Connor about the possibility of Russian intervention not only in Bulgaria and Macedonia but an attack across the Black Sea to the strategic straits. This had been anticipated and discussed by Balfour and the Committee of Imperial Defence, so it was hardly surprising that the War Office would make a historically informed case for a Russian strike. Elliot and Plunkett also expressed their concerns that Austria-Hungary would use intervention as a pretext to extend its Balkan empire to Salonica, which also reflected a tendency of using historical suspicions interpret contemporary issues.⁵⁹⁴ Despite the growing influence of Germany in the region, the power which continued to concern British diplomats and intelligence experts the most was Russia. If the intelligence memorandum concerned Lansdowne at all, it would have only further affirmed the value of a multilateral deployment of military attachés. Not only would the men, ideally, have a calming effect on the Ottoman troops and the general population, the move would instill a concerted Great Power presence in Macedonia and Adrianople, making it less likely that Russia or Austria-Hungary would opt for intervention without the consent of the Concert of Europe.

⁵⁹³ Memorandum respecting the Military Situation in the Balkan Peninsula, September 19, 1903, FO 421/198/443.

⁵⁹⁴ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), September 20, 1903, FO 78/5295/243; Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), September 27, 1903, FO 7/1341/292.

The suggestions and proposals put forward by the British in mid September 1903 elicited a range of reactions. The Austro-Hungarians expressed satisfaction with Lansdowne's response to their communication of September 19. Goluchowski said "all the Powers" were against autonomy for Macedonia. What is more, he feared that any broadening of the reforms would run the risk of paving the way for autonomy. Ambassador Plunkett appealed for some change in the status quo and Goluchowski promised he would discuss the matter with his Russian counterpart when they met "during the three days of the Imperial shooting in Styria."⁵⁹⁵ Plunkett held out some hope that the Russians might be more amenable to the expansion of the reforms.⁵⁹⁶ He suspected that the Austro-Hungarian rejection of Macedonian autonomy signaled that Vienna still desired to "work her way down to Salonica."⁵⁹⁷ Furthering the web of conspiracy, Plunkett thought it likely that during Kaiser Wilhelm's recent visit, the German Emperor had urged his closest ally not to alter the status quo in the Balkans until such time as the current internal political conflict between the Austrians and the Hungarians had been resolved.⁵⁹⁸

True to Plunkett's estimations, the Russians were more receptive towards the British calls for broadening the reforms. Lamsdorff informed the British: "it will eventually prove indispensable to extend the reforms develop the original scheme on a wider basis."⁵⁹⁹ The Russian foreign minister was also in favour of pressing the Ottoman Government to restrain its troops.⁶⁰⁰ He expressed understanding for Lansdowne's call for military attachés but believed that "there was no prospect of the suggestion being adopted by the Powers."⁶⁰¹ Ambassador Scott gathered that Lamsdorff thought that attaching attachés to Ottoman units would expose them to the risk of becoming casualties in the fighting or of being targeted for assassination to provoke intervention. However, Lamsdorff "made some vague allusions to the possibility of utilizing the services of a certain number of foreign officers or civilians, with adequate topical

⁵⁹⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), September 27, 1903, FO 7/1341/291.

⁵⁹⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), September 27, 1903, FO 7/1341/292.

⁵⁹⁷ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 25, 1903, FO 7/1342/75.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid. Plunkett thought a southward expansion would increase the influence of Hungary and questioned why the Austrians would desire it.

⁵⁹⁹ Scott to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 65/1663/95.

⁶⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Scott, September 23, 1903, FO 421/198/470.

⁶⁰¹ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), September 23, 1903, FO 65/1661/293A.

experience and qualifications to be attaché to or to assist Hilmi Pasha, the Inspector General.”⁶⁰² He also promised to discuss the matter during the state visit to Mürzsteg the following week.

The others powers were moving, ever so hesitantly, toward the endorsement of a broadening of the reforms. From Berlin, Chancellor Bülow was quoted in the German press saying that Germany supported “any measures taken to improve the state of things in Balkans, but she has no wish to play a prominent part there.” However, he cautioned against “attempting a radical cure.”⁶⁰³ The Italians gave the strongest support, with Admiral Morin expressing approval of the British call for military attachés to accompany Ottoman forces provided that all the powers contribute and make it a multilateral force.⁶⁰⁴ In spite of their previous signals, the French were more tepid. Declassé acknowledged that the time was right to press for more reform, but feared that the Sultan might “turn sulky” or be recalcitrant towards implementation of new reforms. He offered no opinion on military attachés.⁶⁰⁵

From Bulgaria came defensive reactions and more pleas for assistance. Elliot sent copies of “*Autonomia*” with IMRO’s versions of the latest fighting and “the usual tale of pillage and outrage.”⁶⁰⁶ He was also furnished with a memorandum on Ottoman outrages in the Vilayet of Adrianople by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁰⁷ Elliot delivered Lansdowne’s response to the Bulgarian Circular to Prime Minister Petrov, who reacted defensively to most of the allegations against the insurgents and the Bulgarian government. He maintained that the Ottoman crimes far exceeded those of the insurgents in number and atrocity, complained that the criticisms for the failure to seal the frontier were unfair, and maintained that the Ottoman troops on the frontiers were a threat. However, Petrov expressed appreciation for the British push to realize “remedial

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Lascelles to Lansdowne, September 26, 1903, FO 64/1574/198.

⁶⁰⁴ Bertie to Lansdowne, September 26, 1903, FO 45/875/66.

⁶⁰⁵ Monson to Lansdowne, September 30, 1903, FO 27/3625/68.

⁶⁰⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 21, 1903, FO 78/5295/245.

⁶⁰⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 21, 1903, FO 78/5295/246.

measures” for Macedonia.⁶⁰⁸ Even with this criticism, the British response to the Bulgarian circular stood in marked contrast to the Austro-Hungarian rebuttal.

Amidst the discussions of possible autonomy, military attachés, and expanded reforms, the local actors were making moves to secure peaceful settlements of their own. As discussed, the Ottomans were making new assurances that they were implementing the terms of Vienna Reform Program. More importantly, talks were being held between the Bulgarian prime minister and the Ottoman Commissioner in Sofia, Ali Feruh Bey. The proposal was for a mixed commission of “Mussulmans and Bulgarian Macedonians” to be appointed by the Sultan with the Bulgarian Exarchate’s approval to “draw up a scheme of communal autonomy, comprising an assessment and collection of taxes and proposals for the organization of the police and gendarmerie, and for the security of roads and communications.”⁶⁰⁹ If the proposal were to be accepted, both sides were to withdraw their troops; Petrov hoped the insurgents would follow suit and stop fighting. At that point (September 23), nothing had been committed to paper. Petrov was skeptical as to whether the negotiations were just a means for the Ottomans to buy time and he questioned whether the proposals would be implemented following an *Irade* by the Sultan. Elliot expressed doubts that the Powers would support the move as it might undermine the reform process, referencing Russian rejection of the Natchovitch mission to Constantinople in the spring. The press was already reporting on the Ottoman-Bulgarian talks. Elliot reasoned that “if it comes to nothing, responsibility for the failure of it may be publically attributed where it is due.”⁶¹⁰ In other words, Russian rejection of a regional peace initiative (and presumably the other conservative powers) could be to Britain’s advantage.

In Constantinople, Ambassador O’Conor was waiting for the Sultan to recover from a cold. O’Conor saw the Ottoman proposal for a mixed commission as being a hasty reaction to the Lansdowne’s calls for wider reforms. The ambassador suspected the Sultan was delaying him because he was in discussions with the Vali of Yemen to iron out an offer of settlement on the Amiri frontier which he could offer to the British in

⁶⁰⁸ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/247.

⁶⁰⁹ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), September 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/248.

⁶¹⁰ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 26, 1903, FO 421/198/497.

hopes of softening British reform demands for Macedonia.⁶¹¹ Sultan Abdülhamîd issued a memo assuring the British that he was endeavoring to implement the terms of the Vienna Reform Program but had been unable to do so with any thoroughness due to the state of insurrection in Macedonia. The Sultan stated he hoped Great Britain would not lobby for “more sweeping reforms,” appealing to “the traditional friendship of England and the never-failing support afforded under so many circumstances.”⁶¹² However, Lansdowne was not be dissuaded.

Lansdowne was determined to push the envelope on reform before the emperors arrived at Müritzsteg. He told O’Conor that he wished to make it known that Great Britain was staking out a distinct position on the reform process which was not to undermine Austria-Hungary and Russia and would allow the executive powers to take as much credit for the ideas as they wished. He maintained the British were justified in referencing the reservations regarding the Vienna Reform Program. He rather ambitiously hoped O’Conor could convince the Sultan to put forward “a more liberal scheme” of reforms, thus making it unlikely the other power would object.⁶¹³

Lansdowne had become convinced that the interposition of military attachés amidst the Ottoman security forces in Macedonia and Adrianople was a key to curtailing the violence and stabilizing region. Hoping again that O’Conor could appeal to the Ottoman government’s liberal persuasions, he asked his ambassador if the Ottomans might accept a small deployment of British military attachés: “Is there any reason to suppose that the Turkish Government would object to us deputing our Military Attaché, with a few carefully selected assistants, to accompany the Turkish troops, even if the other Powers did not follow suit.”⁶¹⁴ Given the context, Lansdowne’s hope that the Sultan would be amenable to instituting liberal reforms and allowing a party of British officers exclusive access to accompany the Ottoman Security Forces does seem rather sanguine to say the least. Nevertheless, it provides further evidence of Lansdowne’s belief that he had found the ‘remedy’ for the troubles in Macedonia.

⁶¹¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), September 25, 1903, FO 78/5269/612.

⁶¹² Memorandum by Mr. Marinitsch, September 24, 1903, FO 78/5269/612.

⁶¹³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 14, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁶¹⁴ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 24, 1903, FO 421/198/478A.

There was still no shortage of intrigue surrounding the reform diplomacy. The same day Lansdowne wrote to O'Connor regarding the reforms and the request to send in British military attaches and "a few carefully selected assistants," the news arrived that the Russians had issued a communiqué that falsely maintained that the British had taken the "extreme anti-Bulgarian view" of Austria-Hungary and Russia. Lansdowne expressed his irritation in a letter to Balfour:

The Russians have played a shabby trick, and their communiqué does not at all correctly describe our attitude—I fear if it is left unchallenged we shall be accused of accepting the extreme anti-Bulgarian view which the two Powers have adopted, and of blissfully following their lead.⁶¹⁵

To Lansdowne, the Russian maneuver was further justification for staking out a position on the reforms which was distinct from the executive powers and making it known. He expressed his hope to Balfour that the British officers could be deployed. Not only would they "exercise a salutary influence on the Turkish authorities," they would show that Britain was taking on new responsibilities.⁶¹⁶ Still, he was under no illusions about the situation and Britain's position. In writing to O'Connor he referenced the "terrible" human suffering in Macedonia while acknowledging: "We are powerless unless we can move the other powers. In attempting to do this we must not overshoot the mark."⁶¹⁷ There were limits to what could be achieved; to take too strong a position could leave Britain isolated and forced to choose between initiating intervention or backing down.

O'Connor was quick to telegraph advising against approaching the Ottoman government regarding military attachés until after the talks at Müritzsteg.⁶¹⁸ O'Connor telegraphed again three days later, arguing that the "most pressing danger" could be removed if the Austro-Hungarians and Russians insisted that the Ottoman withdraw its *Ilave* and *Redif* troops and retain only regular *Nizam* forces in the conflict areas. This would allow the reform process to flourish and strengthen the position of the Bulgarian government towards the rebels.⁶¹⁹ Attachés would be a harder sell. In another dispatch,

⁶¹⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 24, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁶¹⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 25, 1903, FO 78/5272/178.

⁶¹⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), September 27, 1903, FO 78/5272/179.

O’Conor reported that the French and Italian ambassadors were sympathetic to the idea of military attachés, but he suspected the Russian ambassador was giving disparaging assessment of the British proposal to the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs.⁶²⁰ Nevertheless, he still expressed his hope that Lamsdorff—in spite of the intrigues of the Russian ambassador—would follow through on his promise to raise the issue of military attachés with the Austro-Hungarians at Mürzsteg.⁶²¹

In London, Lansdowne reviewed the information and advice from the diplomatic service, consulted with his colleagues, and considered the options. The upcoming Russian imperial visit to Austria-Hungary had gone from being a regal shooting party to a de facto summit on the future of Macedonia. Though it was to be strictly and executive summit, Lansdowne was determined to make Britain’s presence felt. He had lobbied for autonomy informally, made clear Britain’s wish to see the reform process expanded, and put forward proposals for military attachés, but he had another card to play. It was a delicate situation. Public opinion in Britain wanted action, while concerns over public reactions in parts of the British Empire suggested it would be wiser to do nothing. There were indications that some of the other powers were favourable to the British suggestions yet only cautiously and conditionally, and there were few signs that Austria-Hungary and Russia would make any fundamental alterations or additions to the Vienna Reform Program.

In an effort not to “overshoot the mark,” Lansdowne resolved to uphold Britain’s commitment to Austro-Russian leadership of the reform process while affirming its reserved right to suggest changes. In doing so, Britain would take a position on the reforms distinct from the other powers, and, importantly, it would do so publically. Lansdowne informed Balfour that he thought their views should be publicized, and they would be.⁶²² With public opinion at his back, Lansdowne drew up a list of proposals on the reforms which would be telegraphed to Ambassador Plunkett in time to have him present them to the Austro-Hungarian government during the Russian visit. Lansdowne would not be physically present to discuss the reforms with Lamsdorff and Goluchowski, but his memo would be timed to crash the shooting party. What is more, the British

⁶²⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 25, 1903, FO 78/5269/607.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Lansdowne to Balfour, September 24, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

proposals would be made known to the press and would be published, along with select diplomatic correspondence which would illustrate Britain's commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Macedonia. The British would show themselves to be the power most committed to making the reforms effective. As Lansdowne likely calculated, the move was diplomatically feasible, morally justified, and politically wise. The risks to Britain were minimal. If the Austro-Hungarian and Russians took issue with the British proposals or if they produced new reforms which did not go as far as the British proposals, they—and not the British—would be criticized for not doing enough to stabilize Europe's southeast.

Lansdowne's proposals (Appendix III) began with a preamble reiterating Britain's support for Austria-Hungary and Russia, stating that Britain did not wish to make matters difficult for them, only to present "some really effective measures to remedy the present condition of affairs in Macedonia." The British proposals called for the expansion of the reform scheme; the appointment of a Christian governor unconnected with the Great Powers or the retention of a Muslim Governor, who would be assisted by European Assessors; more European officers to supervise the reform of the Gendarmerie; the withdrawal of irregular Ottoman troops; military attachés from the Great Powers to accompany the Ottoman forces; and facilities for the distribution of relief, including the engagement of persons on the ground who would wear "some distinguishing mark and enjoy the same kind of immunity as the Red Cross."⁶²³

Lansdowne's proposals articulated many of the points the British had repeatedly lobbied for during the previous weeks and months. Lansdowne omitted mention of autonomy, but called for a considerable degree of European direction. Christians would either govern the territory or Great Power representatives would advise a Muslim governor. The number of European officers to reform the gendarmerie would be increased, military attachés would accompany the Ottoman security forces, and relief workers would be granted access to Macedonia. Effectively, this would place Christian Europeans in at or near the political executive and interpose three uniformed—or semi-uniformed—associations of Europeans on the ground in Macedonia, allowing them to establish a visible presence. The Europeans would not only perform specific tasks but

⁶²³ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

would deter violence simply by being the eyes and ears of the Great Powers. Importantly, Lansdowne continued to press for a force of military attachés to accompany the Ottoman troops that would be separate from the officers who were to reform the gendarmerie. The proposals again reflected the British conviction that the interposition of Europeans could help bring about peace simply by being present in the conflict zone. In addition, they hoped that this presence, coupled with the withdrawal of irregular Ottoman forces, would have the ripple effect of taking regular troops away from the Bulgarian frontier. This would allay the fears of the Bulgarian government and allow the Bulgarians to prevent the future incursions. The pacifying influence was to extend beyond the borders of the Macedonian vilayets. Though relatively ambitious, Lansdowne's proposals were carefully thought out. The document indicates engagement with the diplomatic correspondence and demonstrates acute awareness of the current political context of the day it was telegraphed to Ambassador Plunkett in Vienna. It produced a desired effect.

The arrival of the Russian imperial entourage in Vienna at the end of September marked the third imperial visit the Austro-Hungarians had hosted in the space of a month. Edward VII had followed up his less than secretive time at Marienbad with a visit to Emperor Francis Joseph at the end of August. The King and Emperor made each other field marshals in their respective armies and there were several friendly receptions and toasts.⁶²⁴ Edward did discuss Macedonia with Francis Joseph, stating he wished to see more pressure applied on the Ottoman Empire.⁶²⁵ It does not appear that the King acted at the behest or in coordination with the government. The King's interest in foreign policy and his presence in Austria-Hungary during the month of August presented the opportunity to have him discuss the crisis with the Austro-Hungarian government, but the discussions on Macedonia were strictly informal and appear to be at the King's initiative. The German Emperor Wilhelm II travelled to Vienna in mid-September, but the British had little to say about his visit with respects to Macedonia. Following the Kaiser's departure, *The Times* correspondent reported: "Germany holds fast to the Pomeranian Grenadier policy in the Balkans, and willingly leaves it to Austria-Hungary and Russia to

⁶²⁴ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 3, 1903, FO 7/1340/361.

⁶²⁵ Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh*, 395. The King also expressed his displeasure regarding the Belgian cruelties committed in the Congo. King Leopold had married an Austrian archduchess and their daughter was married to a Hungarian royal.

play the leading parts in the Near East.”⁶²⁶ Despite their growing interests in the Ottoman Empire, the Germans were not willing to undertake much lobbying on the Ottoman’s behalf. The Balkans were the sphere of Germany’s closest ally and they were content with the Austro-Hungarian policy.

When the Russians arrived in Austria-Hungary, Edward VII took the opportunity to make his feelings known to Lansdowne. In light of the situation, the King suggested that the British should follow the Russian example and send ships to Ottoman waters to create put pressure on the Ottomans.⁶²⁷ The King’s letter arrived on Lansdowne’s desk on either September 30 or October 1, after the discussions were under way at Mürzsteg and after Lansdowne had sent his proposals for Plunkett to present to the foreign ministers. Although the government had moved ships to the region, a sudden (and possibly unilateral) naval demonstration was not what Lansdowne had in mind, and he made that clear to King Edward.⁶²⁸ Indeed, it was precisely the sort of idea which would ‘overshoot the mark’ and it could not have come at more inopportune time. Thankfully for Lansdowne, the King did not make his ideas known publically. On October 1 Lansdowne responded with a long letter to the King arguing that unilateral intervention would only worsen the crisis. Shortly thereafter, he promised the King he would do more to inform the public of the government’s actions.⁶²⁹ This was not the first time Balfour and Lansdowne had classed with the King on Foreign Policy. Although King Edward had proven he could be an asset to Britain on the world stage, to a technician like Lansdowne, the King’s tendency to offer easy solutions to complex problems was, at times, unhelpful and inopportune. When it came to the intricate details of diplomacy, the evidence suggests Lansdowne preferred the King to stay out of his way.

As September neared its end, the eyes of Europe turned to Austria-Hungary, where an imperial shooting party had become an executive conference on the future of the Balkans. Ambassador Plunkett reported the itinerary a few days before the proceedings were to begin. The Czar was to arrive in Vienna on the morning of

⁶²⁶ “The Macedonian Rising,” *The Times*, September 22, 1903, 3.

⁶²⁷ Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh*, 396.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.* It fairness to the King, it is not absolutely clear that he was lobbying for Britain to act unilaterally with a naval demonstration, but the Russian action he mentioned was a unilateral undertaking.

⁶²⁹ Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh*, 396.

September 30. A heavy police presence would line the streets as he was to be whisked off to a lunch reception before boarding the train to the hunting lodge at Mürzsteg.⁶³⁰ As Plunkett soon learned, October 1 was to be devoted to shooting. The foreign ministers would discuss the Macedonian reforms on the morning of October 2 and, if necessary, on the morning of October 3, before the Russians' direct departure for Darmstadt, Germany in the afternoon.⁶³¹ Security was heavy with gendarmes patrolling the train route and a "mighty force" of police deployed in the vicinity of Mürzsteg. "Beaters" had been employed to drive the chamois and other game into areas where they presented easier targets.⁶³² In Sofia, James Bouchier linked the monarch's sporting instincts to those of the Bashi-Bazouks and remarked how "big game will be killed in the Styrian mountains while the *chasse a l'homme* proceeds in Macedonia."⁶³³

With his proposals ready to be telegraphed, Lansdowne planned not only to offer constructive advice but to do so in a way that would very publically crash what was a very secretive shooting party. Lansdowne telegraphed his proposals to Plunkett on September 29.⁶³⁴ Lansdowne told his ambassador that the time had come for measures to "remedy the present condition." He maintained the British only wished to offer support and constructive suggestions, and pointed out that Lamsdorff had assured them such input would be welcomed.⁶³⁵ The timing of the telegram was likely intentional as it would force Goluchowski and Lamsdorff to confront the British proposals together in the context of a mini summit on the future of Macedonia. Although Lansdowne stated that he did not wish provide "inopportune proposals," the timing and the publicity around the proposals were certainly opportune for the British.⁶³⁶

By the time Lansdowne's telegram arrived, there was no time for Plunkett to arrange to meet with Goluchowski.⁶³⁷ Plunkett hastily put the points on letterhead and presented a copy to the Austro-Hungarian ministry of Foreign Affairs and sent another to

⁶³⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 24, 1903, FO 7/1341/287.

⁶³¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 7/1341/294.

⁶³² "The Tsar in Austria," *The Times*, October 1, 1903, 3.

⁶³³ "The Macedonian Rising," *The Times*, October 2, 1903, 3.

⁶³⁴ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁷ Plunkett to Lansdowne, September 30, 1903, FO 7/1342/76.

the Russian ambassador.⁶³⁸ In a separate confidential letter, Plunkett reported that the senior official on duty at the foreign ministry, Mr. De Merey, read over the text and mentioned that his superiors would likely balk at a Christian governor and patrolling military attachés. Nevertheless, De Mercy saw to the immediate translation of the document and assured Plunkett it would arrive in Mürzsteg early the following morning, in plenty of time for the serious discussions which were to take place the following day.⁶³⁹ On the evening of October 2, Plunkett received a note from the Russian ambassador who informed him that Lamsdorff was reserving the right to respond to the British proposals by way of the Russian ambassador in London. Plunkett suspected the Goluchowski would do likewise. There was to be no immediate private communication with the British. It was announced that details of the talks would be made public within 48 hours.⁶⁴⁰

On October 5, the Austro-Hungarians presented the substance of the official communiqué which they and the Russians had sent to their respective ambassadors in Constantinople. Published that day in the press, the communiqué announced that the two governments had “agreed on a more efficient mode of control and surveillance.” While acknowledging the right of the Ottoman Empire to defend itself from the insurgents, the two powers deplored the cruel repression which had been meted out on the inhabitants. Humanitarian assistance was promised but no other details were included in the communiqué.⁶⁴¹ The ambassadors were told that they would receive more “precise instructions” in the near future.

Goluchowski and Lamsdorff were determined to downplay the British proposals. On the same day the communiqué was presented and published (October 5) the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London presented a statement from Goluchowski:

His Excellency had read this [Lansdowne's] Memorandum with interest, and was pleased to see that the ideas expressed in it were in accordance

⁶³⁸ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 7/1341/294.

⁶³⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 7/1341/295. De Merey thought the appointment of regional Christian (namely a Greek) as governor would create animosity within Macedonia. He also reasoned that a Christian from elsewhere would not understand the region well enough to rule effectively.

⁶⁴⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 3, 1903, FO 7/1341/296.

⁶⁴¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 5, 1903, FO 7/1341/298.

with the decisions which had already been adopted by the two Governments of Austria-Hungary and Russia before it was communicated to them, and which had been approved by the two Sovereigns at Mürzsteg.⁶⁴²

The ambassador added that as soon as the details had been “definitely formulated,” they would be presented to the signatories of the Berlin Treaty.⁶⁴³ The Russian Charge d’Affaires also made a similar communication to Lansdowne.⁶⁴⁴ Lansdowne urged rapid and steadfast implementation of the reforms, and pressed the executive powers on some of his proposals:

I pointed out that there was no reason why our proposals for the withdrawal of irregular troops and the appointment of officers to accompany Turkish forces should not be carried out at once. I also dwelt upon the necessity of affording effectual protection to the persons engaged in the repatriation of the Macedonian villagers.⁶⁴⁵

In Vienna, Plunkett was receiving similar details on the course of events at Mürzsteg and the resistance to the British proposals for military attachés. As Mr. Meroy had predicted to Plunkett, Goluchowski said the executive powers did not favour having a Christian governor and thought it would be wiser for the powers not to send military attachés but to select other officers. Goluchowski also thought the irregular Ottoman troops would need to be withdrawn gradually. When Plunkett inferred that the new communiqué had been inspired by Lansdowne’s proposals, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister “took pains to repeat that even before the English Memorandum reached Mürzsteg these points had been generally agreed upon between the two governments.”⁶⁴⁶ Another source informed Plunkett that the principal conference between Goluchowski and Lamsdorff had taken place on the train before they had even arrived in Mürzsteg. As the diplomats had informed Lansdowne personally, they were pleased that the British suggestions “coincided *grosso modo*” with what had been agreed upon during the train journey.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² Lansdowne to Plunkett (confidential), October 5, 1903, FO 421/199/28.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, October 5, 1903, FO 421/199/29.

⁶⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Plunkett (confidential), October 5, 1903, FO 421/199/28.

⁶⁴⁶ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 7/1342/49.

⁶⁴⁷ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), October 8, 1903, FO 7/1341/300.

To Plunkett, the timing did not make sense. If the agreement had been reached on September 30, why had it taken until October 5 for the communiqué to be sent to the ambassadors in Constantinople? If the time at Müritz had only been used to work out details, why were these details still not forthcoming?⁶⁴⁸ A week later, the terms of reform program were reportedly in the hands of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors in Constantinople, but they had still not been presented to the Ottoman government or released to the other powers. Plunkett called the delays “very unfortunate” owing to the state of public opinion in Western Europe.⁶⁴⁹ In an effort to, perhaps, placate or distract the British ambassador, Goluchowski pointed to a recent telegram from his consul in Monastir stating that the insurgents were disarming and a calm was prevailing, which he attributed to the effects of the conference at Müritz and its display of Austro-Russian solidarity.⁶⁵⁰ Appearances suggested the Austro-Hungarians and Russians were still working out more than a few minor details of the new reforms into mid October. Rumors and leaked information regarding some of the terms served to affirm this point.

In contrast to the guarded responses of the Austro-Hungarians and the steady hand of Count Goluchowski, reports from Russia and words coming from Russian diplomatic circles hinted at more sympathy for the British position. They also indicated there were internal divisions over Russian policy towards Macedonia. While Lamsdorff was at Müritz, two IMRO representatives appeared in St. Petersburg.⁶⁵¹ When the Austro-Hungarian Charge d’Affairs made inquiries, he was informed that the visit was purely for philanthropic purposes. But in interviews published in the Russian press, the two representatives spelt out IMRO’s political views. According to Prince Obolensky, the IMRO men had been granted permission to enter Russia by Bakhmetieff. Lamsdorff’s efforts to stop them arrived too late, leaving the government scrambling to punish publishers and threaten the men with expulsion if they did not curtail their political activities. In efforts to block what it considered undesirable news stories from reaching the Russian public, the Russian government had confiscated all incoming telegrams

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 15, 1903, FO 7/134/306.

⁶⁵⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 15, 1903, FO 7/134/307.

⁶⁵¹ The IMRO representatives were Professor Miletitch and Dr. Georgov.

from Russian journalists in Macedonia. This resulted in the departure of Russian journalists from Macedonia and Russian newspapers printing stories amenable to the Russian Foreign Office, which they found in German press agencies.⁶⁵²

In Constantinople, the delay deepened O'Connor's suspicions. After discussing the British proposals with the Russian ambassador, O'Connor noted that Zinoviev did not contest the British reasoning for the need for attachés as he had in the past, and "seemed to imply" that the Russian government concurred with the British.⁶⁵³ Nonetheless, on the same day in an assessment marked secret, O'Connor surmised: "Russia is, so far as I can see, dragging Austria in to her plan for Russianizing the Balkans, but I do not see anything that we can do to stop it."⁶⁵⁴ In St. Petersburg, Russian governmental officials were at pains to dispel any rumours of Russian intervention. Prince Obolensky described the 1897 Austro-Russian agreement as an understanding of a negative character: "it was strong on points where there was no action and weak as soon as action began."⁶⁵⁵ In spite of the suffering of "her co-religionists," Obolensky maintained there was no reason for Russia to disturb the status quo in the Balkans. He provided a list of reasons from European complications, to financial and military considerations, to an unwillingness to see Bulgaria profit from a change in the status quo in Macedonia.⁶⁵⁶ Even with the announcement that an agreement had been reached at Mürzsteg, rumours continued to circulate and the politics surrounding the future of Macedonia remained very fluid. In view of this, Lansdowne continued to press his proposals up until the day the text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program was released.

Lansdowne was not about to risk seeing this proposals be dismissed at Mürzsteg. He lost little time in soliciting support from the French. In the strictest of confidence, Ambassador Monson presented the proposals to Declassé on September

⁶⁵² Spring Rice to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 65/1662/310

⁶⁵³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 9, 1903, FO 78/5270/665.

⁶⁵⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 9, 1903, FO 78/5272/191.

⁶⁵⁵ Spring Rice to Lansdowne, October 15, 1903, FO 65/1662/336.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Obolensky provided some candid points. He said a successful Slav revolution might inspire rebels in Russia; reasoned that any intervention would be far easier if the sides were exhausted, which would make it more likely that the Slavs would accept Russian hegemony; and predicted there would be more important questions to address regarding the Slavs of the Balkans after the death of Emperor Francis Joseph.

30, before they were read by the Austro-Hungarians and Russians in Mürzsteg.⁶⁵⁷ As he had done previously, Declassé reacted cautiously. He suspected Sultan Abdülhamîd would either refuse to accept the terms, obstruct their implementation, or “turn sulky.” While acknowledging the need for more control from the European Powers, Declassé was not prepared to offer an opinion on the other points, including military attachés, and referenced the difficulty of settling the “bitter jealousies” of the Balkan nationalities.⁶⁵⁸ A week later, Lansdowne made his case to the French ambassador “earnestly” hoping that the French government would support the British demands. He argued that his proposals could be “adopted on their own merits without reference to any scheme of reforms which might be promulgated by the Powers, and that these proposals would, if adopted, render the situation much more favourable for the introduction of remedial measures.”⁶⁵⁹ Privately, the ambassador believed autonomy was the answer. However, the French had to consider their alliance with the Russians, which made it “impossible” for them to “dissociate themselves in a marked manner” from the Austro-Russian proposals.⁶⁶⁰ Lansdowne continued to press the issue with the French until the terms of the Mürzsteg Reform Program were announced, arguing the “immense importance” Britain attached to “obtaining practical measures of reform.”⁶⁶¹ Declassé would not stand with the British but indicated he would use his influence privately with the Russian government.⁶⁶²

Lansdowne also made his case to the two remaining powers, Italy and Germany. Conditional Italian support for military attachés had been written into the proposals and the Italians continued to confirm their support for British policy.⁶⁶³ The Italians only insisted that any force of military attachés be a purely multilateral endeavour as they feared that otherwise there would be “an appearance of discord, which it was essential

⁶⁵⁷ Monson to Lansdowne (confidential), October 2, 1903, FO 27/3623/517. The memorandum was presented to Declassé on the condition that he read as an absolutely private and unofficial communication and it was not to be quoted or copied in the French Yellow Books.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Monson, October 7, 1903, FO 421/199/54.

⁶⁶⁰ Lansdowne to Monson, October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/112.

⁶⁶¹ Lansdowne to Monson, October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/141.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Lansdowne to Bertie, October 5, 1903, FO 421/199/30; Lansdowne to Bertie, October 21, 1903, FO 421/199/143.

to avoid.”⁶⁶⁴ As he had with the French, Lansdowne urged the Germans to support his call for the immediate implementation of the British proposals.⁶⁶⁵ Like the French, the Germans approved of the British proposals but stated they did not wish to antagonize the executive powers.⁶⁶⁶

Although the British were initially secretive about the disclosure of Lansdowne’s proposals, anyone who followed the news regarding Macedonia in the British press would have been well-informed of the gist of the British proposals and the lobbying the British government was undertaking to realize them. As discussed previously, Plunkett’s delivery of “serious verbal representations” to the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and discussion of the “British suggestions” at Mürzsteg were publicized in *The Times*, which was, effectively, as good as communicating directly with foreign governments. The announcement of new reforms on October 22 led some to conclude that it was the result of British pressure, notably *Times* journalists. The news of more British warships moving to the Eastern Mediterranean also served notice that London was pushing the envelope on Macedonia. For insurance, the hastily produced parliamentary papers (*Turkey No. 4*) were released on October 16, 1903, six days before the Austro-Hungarians and Russians presented the terms of the Mürzsteg Reform Program.

Well aware that the winds of reform were blowing, the Ottoman government made its case that it was committed to the Vienna Reform Program, and that it was serious about dealing with those in its ranks who committed transgressions. During the talks at Mürzsteg, the Ottoman ambassador delivered a memorandum to Lansdowne making assurances that court marshals and commissions were in place and that the Ottoman authorities were actively pursuing and prosecuting soldiers accused of disciplinary violations and atrocities.⁶⁶⁷ The Ottomans maintained it had been impossible to implement reform in the ongoing security crisis and pleaded for time.⁶⁶⁸ Shortly before the announcement of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, an Imperial *Irade* was issued

⁶⁶⁴ Bertie to Lansdowne, October 7, 1903, FO 45/875/67.

⁶⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, October 7, 1903, FO 421/199/55.

⁶⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Lascelles, October 21, 1903, FO 421/199/142.

⁶⁶⁷ Musurus Pasha to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 421/199/8.

⁶⁶⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 2, 1903, FO 78/5269/637.

commanding the execution of reforms in view of the decline in fighting, with four Belgian officers en route from Brussels to join the two Swedes in reforming the gendarmerie.⁶⁶⁹ The Ottoman government also announced that a commission was on its way to Macedonia to investigate military operations and “exercise disciplinary supervision” over the Ottoman troops. The commission included two officers from the German army who were employed by the Ottoman military.⁶⁷⁰ By voicing their commitment to the reforms and employing more European officers to be on the ground in Macedonia, the Ottomans were likely hoping to lessen the severity of the impending Mürzsteg reforms. Upon reading the British parliamentary papers in *Turkey No. 4*, Sultan Abdülhamîd sent the Grand Master of Ceremonies, Ibrahim Bey, to try to persuade Ambassador O’Conor to convince Lansdowne that the demands were premature as they had not had the chance to implement the Vienna Reform Program.⁶⁷¹ Ibrahim Bey spoke of the damage that would be done to the “ancient friendship” between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire in creating negative effects throughout the country and encouraging the insurgents.⁶⁷² O’Conor was unmoved and maintained that the responsibilities of the Berlin Treaty signatories had been “brought home” by the “misgovernment and lamentable excess” of the Ottomans. He argued that execution of new reforms along the lines of the British proposals was the only way the insurrection would be stemmed and Ottoman Empire stabilized.⁶⁷³

Elsewhere in the region, the announcement of forthcoming reforms produced reactions which were positive if rather subdued. The King of Serbia expressed his hope that the Sultan would abide by the reforms while issuing a reminder that Serbia was ready to defend its interests and its kinsmen in Macedonia.⁶⁷⁴ The Romanians expressed their satisfaction with the situation.⁶⁷⁵ In Bulgaria, General Petrov accepted the news from the Austro-Hungarians with “pleasure and gratitude”⁶⁷⁶ but told the British

⁶⁶⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 22, 1903, FO 78/5270/695.

⁶⁷⁰ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 23, 1903, FO 78/5270/698.

⁶⁷¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 21, 1903, FO 78/5272/204.

⁶⁷² O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 22, 1903, FO 78/5270/694.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Thesiger to Lansdowne, October 16, 1903, FO 105/149/165.

⁶⁷⁵ Kennedy to Lansdowne (confidential), October 22, 1903, FO 104/155/66.

⁶⁷⁶ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 4, 1903, FO 78/5295/262.

he attributed the pending enlargements negotiated at Mürzsteg to Lansdowne's diplomacy.⁶⁷⁷ The Bulgarians urged the British to see to it that effective reforms were introduced in the coming months if an uprising was to be avoided in the spring.⁶⁷⁸ Bilateral peace talks between the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgaria continued. Back to try his luck again, Natchovitch returned to Constantinople to serve as Bulgaria's agent in the capital.⁶⁷⁹ After the announcement that new reforms would be forthcoming, General Petrov made overtures to the Ottomans for mutual demobilization.⁶⁸⁰ Concrete demobilization measures began before the announcement of the Mürzsteg Reforms.⁶⁸¹ For the time being, there would be peace between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire.

Although it would be a stretch to call conditions in Macedonia stable, October did see the curtailment of the insurrection and lulls in the fighting in most parts of the vilayets. The fighting in Razlog, which began in late September, quickly petered out. On October 5, Elliot reported from Sofia that rebels were moving away from the frontiers and a disjointed force of 4,000 men in the Kustendill area had "melted away."⁶⁸² It was reported that at least some of the rebels were willing to give the reforms a chance.⁶⁸³ An incursion into Bulgaria by a force of Albanians proved to be no more than a minor break in the gathering storm of peace. On October 11 Consul-General Graves reported "a decided abatement of activity on the part of the insurrectionary forces throughout the disturbed districts of Macedonia."⁶⁸⁴ The news of forthcoming new reforms produced "a state of suspended judgment" amongst all classes, and hope amidst the ruling classes of Salonica that the new system would be a truly European enterprise and not just an Austro-Russian venture. Graves added that the locals held out hope for a larger role to be played by the "disinterested powers," with "Great Britain in particular being specially trusted by all to hold the balance between the warring races and creeds."⁶⁸⁵ Even though they were not looking for it, evidence continued to accumulate to suggest that a British

⁶⁷⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne (confidential), October 10, 1903, FO 78/5295/271.

⁶⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Elliot, October 21, 1903, FO 421/199/144. Elections were upcoming in Bulgaria.

⁶⁷⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), October 9, 1903, FO 78/5270/660.

⁶⁸⁰ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5296/49.

⁶⁸¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 19, 1903, FO 78/5295/282.

⁶⁸² Elliot to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5295/268.

⁶⁸³ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 30, FO 78/5295/234.

⁶⁸⁴ Graves to O'Connor, October 11, 1903, FO 195/2157/279.

⁶⁸⁵ Graves to O'Connor, October 12, 1903, FO 195/2157/280.

ground presence in Macedonia would be welcomed across the ethnic and religious spectrum of the local population.

The intervening three weeks between the conference at Mürzsteg and the pronouncement of the reforms generated several rumours and leaks regarding the terms of the new reforms. Not surprisingly, the British diplomats were quick to report on any word of the terms of administration and what could be expected with respects to military attachés and the gendarmerie. O’Conor managed to procure a copy of the instructions communicated to the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors, which, he reported, contained few details. Press reports suggested the Russians wished to have an expanded body of consuls to supervise the reforms.⁶⁸⁶ The Austro-Hungarians were reportedly uneasy about the concept as it might amount to Russian predominance in Macedonia.⁶⁸⁷ More detailed intelligence came from Ambassador Plunkett who ascertained that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians objected to military attachés because they envisioned “an entirely different form of control, to be exercised by a number of foreign officers, each working singly within a small district.”⁶⁸⁸ Further confirmation came via the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in St. Petersburg. Military attachés were considered potentially problematic since they were usually plenipotentiaries and the death of one could not be dismissed. Foreign officers, with no such designation, would, it was assumed, be less exposed to risk.⁶⁸⁹ Despite assurances to the contrary by the Austro-Hungarians and Russians, the delayed release of details and the intelligence the British gathered suggested that the final terms of the reforms were still being worked out until at least the middle of October. Lansdowne had good reason to continue to press his proposals to other diplomats and with the media. It appeared his proposals had already had an impact. The longer the delay continued, the more it seemed the British were having a large influence on the new reforms for Macedonia.

⁶⁸⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 7, 1903, FO 78/5269/645.

⁶⁸⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 13, 1903, FO 78/5272/194.

⁶⁸⁸ Plunkett to Lansdowne, October 9, 1903, FO 7/1342/87.

⁶⁸⁹ Spring-Rice to Lansdowne, October 15, 1903, FO 65/1661/340.

The Mürzsteg Reform Program

On October 22, 1903 the full text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program was presented to Sultan Abdülhamîd. The next day it was communicated to the other Great Power governments. The Mürzsteg Reform Program consisted of nine points (Appendix IV). Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha maintained his position as inspector general with Civil Agents from Austria-Hungary and Russian assigned to advise him. The project of gendarmerie reform was expanded to add officers from all the Great Powers to be led by a general “of foreign nationality.” The terms of the Vienna Reform Program were to be implemented without delay, and, when the country was pacified, the administration of the country was to be modified “in view of a more regular grouping of different nationalities.” Ilaves and Redifs were to be demobilized as quickly as possible and the formation of Bashi-Bazouk bands was to be prohibited. Other articles called for reconstruction measures, including mixed commissions to investigate alleged crimes; the allocation of funding to resettle refugees and reimburse their losses; tax exemptions for the inhabitants of burned Christian villages; and more inclusion for Christians in the civil service.⁶⁹⁰

Though it did not go as far as the British had wished, the nine articles of the Mürzsteg Reform Program did reflect some of the suggestions in the five points put forward in the Lansdowne proposals (Appendix III). Overall, the Mürzsteg Reform Program did articulate the sought after expansion of the Vienna Reform Program. The institution of two civil agents to accompany Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha related to point 1-B of Lansdowne’s proposals, which presented the option of retaining a Muslim governor “assisted by European Assessors.” Lansdowne called for European Officers to “take charge” of the reorganization of the Ottoman Gendarmerie, and this was stipulated in Article II of Mürzsteg. While the fourth British point calling for military attachés to accompany Ottoman forces did not factor in the Austro-Russian authored reforms, Article II regarding the reorganization of the gendarmerie indicated a compromise between static advisors confined to training grounds and intrepid military attachés with license to monitor troops in the field. Article II called for the supervising European

⁶⁹⁰ Identical Instructions sent by the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Governments to their Ambassadors at Constantinople.—(Communicated to Foreign Office by Austro-Hungarian Chargé d’ Affaires, October 24, 1903.), FO 421/199/157; Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 142.

officers to “act as supervisors, instructors, and promoters. In his way they would also oversee the behavior of troops toward the population.” Thus there was some interpretative latitude which would allow the European officers to make their presence felt while patrolling with the arm of the Ottoman security forces most likely to encounter the insurgents in the countryside, the gendarmerie. While Article II did not live up to Lansdowne’s recommendation, it was a promising advance from the token force of Scandinavian officers that had been lost amidst the turmoil of the Ilinden Uprising. Article IX largely matched the British call for the disbanding of irregular Ottoman troop formations. Articles VI and VIII addressed the short term need for aid and reconstruction and called for the Ottomans to procure the necessary funding. In contrast to point five of Lansdowne’s proposals, there was no direct call for the accommodation of a foreign relief organization, whose personnel would wear “some distinguishing mark” and be afforded immunity.

Some of the articles of the Mürzsteg Reform Program did not correspond to any of the points of Lansdowne’s proposals. The British did not call for changes to administrative divisions “in view of a more regular grouping of the nationalities.” There is a connection with respects to the British lobbying for an arrangement akin to Lebanon and Crete, which instituted ethnic and religious administrative units and, in the case of Lebanon, had evidently produced a lasting peace. The Russian foreign minister, Lamsdorff, had also referenced the success of the Lebanon Convention and it is likely Article III was his work. In any case, the British would voice no objection. Article V respecting the creation of “Mixed Commissions” to investigate crimes with the participation of Austro-Hungarian and Russian consular officials, and Article IV requiring the reorganization civil institutions to include Christians have no direct equivalent in the British proposals. The Mixed Commissions concept and the calls for more Christian inclusion in the Ottoman civil service mostly closely resemble the point which had been articulated by the Ottoman government in its negotiations with the Bulgarian government for a bilateral demobilization and peace.⁶⁹¹ If Goluchowski and Lamsdorff were co-opting

⁶⁹¹ Elliot to Lansdowne, September 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/248. The Ottomans began discussing the points with the Bulgarian government around September 20, 1903. The talks continued during the Mürzsteg discussions and into November.

British proposals when they discussed the term of reform at Mürzsteg, it seems possible that they also incorporated some Ottoman ideas.

The degree of influence the British affected on the final text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program is difficult ascertain. When the text of the reforms was released it was dated "October 2, 1903," indicating the points were finalized, save for minor details and wording, at Mürzsteg. After they received Lansdowne's proposals, the Austro-Hungarians were quick to answer that the British points largely corresponded with what the executive powers had committed to at the imperial hunting lodge, if not during the train journey from Vienna. The Russian indications to the British that they were more amenable to increasing the Great Power presence in Macedonia were legitimate. After the outbreak of Ilinden Uprising, the Russians suggested to the Austro-Hungarians that "delegates" should be sent from the Great Powers to assist Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha implement the reforms. Goluchowski thought such a move would be playing into the hands of the insurgents, though he thought the point worth examining after Macedonia had been pacified.⁶⁹² Baron Calice, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, thought an answer might be to have the Italian *carabinieri* train the gendarmerie as it had on Crete.⁶⁹³ Just prior to the Mürzsteg conference Calice made the suggestions to have Austro-Hungarian and Russian officers added to the gendarmerie reorganization in designated zones and to have Christians added to the civil service, both of these suggestions were included in the reforms.⁶⁹⁴

This evidence shows the executive powers had some ideas similar to the British proposals which arrived during the Mürzsteg conference. Lansdowne's proposals may have given more impetus to suggestions made by Lamsdorff and Calice that the time had come to expand the reform program and put officers from the Great Powers on the ground in Macedonia to assist with the reorganization of the Gendarmerie. The stipulation in Article II to allow the European officers to have a more dynamic role may very well have been an acknowledgement of the British suggestion for military attachés. Likewise, the British instance on the disbanding of irregular forces and the terms regarding aid and reconstruction may have influenced the drafting of Article IX and

⁶⁹² Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 139-140.

⁶⁹³ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 30.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Article VI. Nevertheless, the Mürzsteg terms did not go as far as the British proposals. Lansdowne called for three parties of Europeans (officers to train the gendarmerie, military attachés, and uniformed aid workers) to be present on the ground in Macedonia. The Mürzsteg Reform Program officially only sanctioned one.

Irrespective of the actual degree to which Lansdowne's proposals did or did not influence the Mürzsteg Reform Program, appearances were that it did. The fact that the British were pushing for more extensive reforms was well known by the time the Mürzsteg conference began. The communication of the Lansdowne's ideas to the other powers and the three week gap between the conference and the reforms gave observers cause to think that the executive powers were still wrestling with the British suggestions. The British did nothing to dispel such assumptions. Indeed, the hasty publication of the *Turkey No. 4* only fuelled the perceptions that the British were exacting more of an influence on the reform process than they actually were. Nevertheless, perception can count for a lot when it comes to diplomatic intrigue, political rumours, and the all important court of public opinion.

Britain's Response Considered

In the early days of the Ilinden Uprising, Lansdowne maintained that Britain had no wish to get involved in the Macedonian Crisis. Yet, by the time the Austro-Hungarians and Russians assembled at Mürzsteg to discuss the expansion of the reforms, the British were the most outspoken of the Great Powers in pressing for more far reaching reforms. Ultimately, what accounts for the decision by the British to undertake a more active policy toward Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising? The most significant 'push' factor would appear to be the groundswell of public opinion in Great Britain. As Samardjiev accurately notes, the instability of Balfour's cabinet meant the British government could not ignore the growing clamour for action on Macedonia led by the Balkan Committee.⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, Lansdowne's comments to O'Connor that they had no choice but to help the Balkans Committee establish an aid operation illustrates the sense

⁶⁹⁵ Samardjiev, "On the Role of Public Opinion," 22

of trepidation the government felt in dealing with public pressure.⁶⁹⁶ On the other hand, the British government was inclined to appease public opinion in part because the demands being commonly articulated were largely in line with its own views. As has been demonstrated, the relatively restrained calls by the general public for intervention in the form of diplomacy and reform as opposed to a military adventure were at least in part due to the government's preemptive efforts and its ongoing engagement with the general public. Most of those who spoke out in 1903 put their trust in the government and wished only to spur it towards a more assertive stand on Macedonia. Those of more radical persuasions, who desired a more aggressive policy, were left hankering for the ghost of William Gladstone. Public opinion did influence the shift in British policy, but much of the popular sentiment was privately shared by many members of the government.

Geopolitics also factored in the shift in British policy. Britain's influence in the Ottoman Empire and in the region was in decline. Germany's influence with the Ottoman government had eclipsed Britain's. The passage of the Russian torpedo boats provided a physical demonstration of Lansdowne's inability to galvanize the enforcement of the Straits Treaty. Diplomats voiced their concerns about a sudden surge (coordinated or otherwise) into the Balkans by Austria-Hungary or Russia, and not without some justification. The Imperial Defence Committee and recent intelligence estimates concluded that the Ottoman Empire could not defend against an amphibious Russian assault on the Bosphorus and Constantinople, and the British lacked the military resources in the region to stop such an attack. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Boer War, fiscal conditions called for restraint and contraction for an empire overstretched. These factors considered, a multilateral intervention in Macedonia was quite in keeping with recent shifts in British foreign policy. The alliance with Japan and the ongoing negotiations with the French were enabling tangible cuts in expenditure and providing the added security of foreign partnerships. This break in 'splendid isolation' could be furthered through more multilateral projects, which could, ideally, be geared to Britain's advantage.

Furthermore, the diplomatic climate was favourable. The British had detected cracks in relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary, which might make the two

⁶⁹⁶ Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 18, 1903, FO 800/143.

powers more amenable to a British initiative, especially since there were indications Russians were privately favourable to some of the British ideas. The Germans remained relatively quiet and the French and the Italians both indicated they were sympathetic. There were also signs that a British initiative would be welcomed by regional governments and the populations of Macedonia since Britain was respected as being a disinterested party and the manager of a nationally, ethnically and religiously diverse empire.

To be certain, there was opportunism at work in the British push for more reform in Macedonia. Any significant shift in the status quo was unlikely to work in Great Britain's favour. The deployment of a multilateral contingent of military attachés would assert at least a degree of coordinated Great Power influence—if not control—and make it less likely that any one power would act with haste. As Britain's influence was in decline and it did not wish act unilaterally, the move made perfect sense. It is not surprising that the British kept the French privy to their ideas and plans. There was hope the French could convince the Russians to favour the British ideas. Italian support and rumours of discord between the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians provided more indications that there was an opening on the diplomatic landscape. As pointed out by Radovich, the British may very well have lobbied for autonomy

not for the achievement of that precise goal but as a tool to achieve some of its own objectives within the revised scheme of the Austro-Hungarian reform program...Britain's object was to avert further crisis in the Balkans and subsequent disruption of the status quo. The object was hopefully to be allowed by procuring provisions for Great Power control in Macedonia.⁶⁹⁷

I would only add that the key provision the British sought was the deployment of military attachés. The realization of a Great Power presence in Macedonia would, ideally, stabilize the status quo by helping to quell the conflict in Macedonia and provide a calming presence in the region.

While opportunism factored in British policy, it would be a mistake to dismiss the British decision makers as cynics devoid of humanitarian concern. Balfour and Lansdowne, who had the final say on British foreign policy, were firstly statesmen who

⁶⁹⁷ Radovich, "Britain's Macedonian Reform Policy," 498

acted in the best interests of Great Britain and the British Empire. From what can be gleaned regarding Balfour's personal feelings toward Macedonia, he seems to have had some private sympathies for the Christians. In 1895 he said he would not mind going to war with the Ottoman Empire as he considered it a doomed entity and wished only to manage the empire's demise so it would not benefit Russia.⁶⁹⁸ Yet, practicalities came first. In January of 1903, Balfour said he felt that Christian officials serving in Macedonia would be more likely to fit the desired qualities of "honesty and resolution," but was prepared to accept suggestions for Muslim officials for the sake of compromise.⁶⁹⁹ It seems very likely that Balfour's public statements during the Ilinden Uprising regarding the 'balance of criminality' were made more out of political expediency than out of any deeply held conviction. Nevertheless, there are very few clues in his private correspondence that indicate much in regards to humanitarian conditions in Macedonia. Balfour considered Austria-Hungary and Russia to be lacking in "genuine humanitarian instincts" with respects to Macedonia and the Balkans, yet he did not express such sentiments himself.⁷⁰⁰

Lord Lansdowne's papers indicate he held stronger humanitarian values. He acknowledged the "very terrible" conditions in Macedonia and helped arrange the passage and establishment of humanitarian assistance.⁷⁰¹ This was an arrangement which was politically practical but there is nothing to suggest that Lansdowne thought Macedonia was unworthy of the charity. His only demonstrated concern was that the relief might not make it to the Ottoman troops: "I feel quite as much sympathy with the sufferings of the Turkish troops as with those of the villagers. They will be in dire straits when the winter begins, but I doubt whether any of the relief is likely to find its way to them."⁷⁰² Genuine humanitarianism may not be the most evident reason why the British government opted to pursue reform, but there is evidence to suggest it was a factor.

Finally, the British pressed for more reforms because they believed their ideas would work. They thought history supported them. The often referenced interventions in

⁶⁹⁸ Tames, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, 104.

⁶⁹⁹ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903, BP Add. MSS 49698.

⁷⁰⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, February 28, 1904, BP Add. MSS 49728.

⁷⁰¹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 24, 1903, FO 800/143.

⁷⁰² Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 18, 1903, FO 800/143.

the Lebanon and Crete provided regional evidence that the interposition of European officials into the conflict could have a pacifying effect on the combatants. What is more, the work of the vice-consuls in Macedonia gave further credibility to the concept. Much of the British documentation discussing these 'peacekeeping' ideas is marked 'secret' or 'confidential.' Clearly, the British felt they had a concept that could succeed. If given the green light, military attachés could be quickly deployed alongside the Ottoman security forces to provide a restraining influence while they reported on activities. Ideally, this intervention would be on three levels: aid workers, military attaches, and officers to train the gendarmerie. The British were convinced that such a highly visible intervention—ideally with a strong mandate—was the key to bringing peace to Macedonia.

Conclusion: Products of Crisis

The British government's response to the Ilinden Uprising was highly effective. The government averted the sort of disaster which befell the Disraeli government during the 1876 Bulgarian Crisis. By preempting a more severe crisis, controlling damage, and turning the situation to their advantage, the British executed a successful crisis management strategy.

Critically, they won the respect of several of their critics and influenced the expansion of the reforms through the Mürzsteg Reform Program, which, for all its faults, did bring some relative stability to Macedonia and the region for a time. It is unlikely that the expansion of the reforms would have been possible without the crisis since it created fluid political context which allowed the British to impose a degree of their will on the other powers. Unlike the Vienna Reform Program, the Mürzsteg Reform Program allowed Britain, Italy, and France to directly participate in the reform process. In 1904 European officers would deploy on the ground in Macedonia to train and supervise the Ottoman Gendarmerie in what was a prototypical peacekeeping operation.

Chapter 6. Producing a Prototype for Peacekeeping

Whatever its disadvantages elsewhere, the insularity which makes every Englishman feel himself the superior of any number of Asiatics, of whatever rank, is invaluable in Turkey.¹

Private Memorandum for the Balkan Committee

Introduction

After the Müritzsteg Reform Program was promulgated in October of 1903, the European powers could move on to negotiating the details of intervention and focusing on the reconstruction and reform of Macedonia. Seeing a potential humanitarian disaster in the making, relief workers and aid had begun arriving in Macedonia in October, sanctioned and supported by the British diplomats stationed in the region. While the humanitarian aid operation was established relatively quickly, the other components of the Müritzsteg reforms took more time to implement. It would take until late November for the Ottoman Empire to accept the reforms and another five months before arrangements had been negotiated for the deployment of European officers to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie. Once the British officers were on the ground, they proved themselves to be very effective at not only reorganizing the gendarmerie in their sector, but also at exerting a controlling influence over the local gendarmerie. This influence gave them access to the prisons and law courts and allowed them to be privy to the gendarmerie's communications. The success of the British sector was unique amongst the European officer deployments, and it gave the British the confidence to articulate and pursue more ambitious visions.

This chapter will examine the diplomacy surrounding the implementation of the Müritzsteg Reform Program. The central foci of this diplomatic endeavour were the

¹ Private Memorandum for the Balkan Committee, October 27, 1905, FO 421/212/200.

contributions of the work of the Macedonian Relief Fund during the autumn and winter of 1903-04, and the work of the British officers tasked with the reforming the Ottoman gendarmerie in their sector of the Sancak of Drama (in the eastern most corner of the three Macedonian Vilayets). The chapter will demonstrate that the success of the British aid workers and officers affirmed the long-advocated British view that the presence of European officials could indeed have a pacifying effect on the situation in Macedonia. To this end, the British were willing to compromise during the negotiations and accept a small force with reduced power for the sake of expediting the deployment of their men. The negotiations and the complementary reports and reviews of the British officers express a growing sense of confidence in a 'British Approach.' This extended beyond training and organizing gendarmes and also entailed what can be termed 'peacekeeping' practices. British confidence was heightened by regional precedents and British accomplishments on the ground, as well as the successful application of techniques and practices that had been employed in the British Empire. This success led the British to advocate the universalizing of their methods and practices throughout the other sectors. Furthermore it gave Lansdowne the confidence to present a plan that would have seen the size, power, and geographical scope of the European presence substantially increased and Macedonia become virtually autonomous. Although Lansdowne's plans were never realized, they provide a glimpse of what a larger and bolder reform program would have looked like and leave us to ponder the implications of the intervention that might have been.

As was the case in the previous chapter, a historiographical question exists regarding the intent of British policy. Radovich maintains that Macedonian autonomy was a British policy objective and Samardjiev argues that the British sought to use autonomy to "undermine" the Austro-Russian alliance. In addressing this question, evidence that the British were working to subvert the Austro-Russian partnership appears to be lacking. While the British sought to obtain more say for the four other powers in the Mürzsteg scheme, they were committed to the multilateral framework of the reforms and, ultimately, were not willing to pursue a strong position of leadership. As will be shown, Macedonian autonomy appears to have been less of a policy and more of a contingency plan to be implemented in the event of more a forceful intervention or a diplomatic ploy to help expedite the principal British objectives—the deployment of

British officers on the ground in Macedonia and the further expansion and empowerment of the reform mandate.

This chapter begins with an examination of the public-private partnership between the British government and its diplomats as well as the Macedonian Relief Fund, and the distribution of humanitarian relief in Monastir Vilayet during the autumn and winter of 1903-04. Next, the chapter will review the British role in the diplomacy to compel the Ottoman government to agree to the reforms, the rather tedious negotiations over the size and power of the European gendarmerie force, and the allotment of territorial jurisdictions. The focus of the chapter then shifts to the operations of the British officers assigned to Macedonia during 1904-05. Next, Lansdowne's 1905 proposals are examined, and this is followed by a counterfactual discussion that considers how the short term history of the southern Balkans might have unfolded had these plans been implemented. A brief epilogue precedes the conclusion of the Mürzsteg Reform Program after the Committee of Unity and Progress's July 1908 revolution.

“In Aid of the Sufferers”: The Macedonian Relief Fund in the Field, 1903-1904

The first wave of the Mürzsteg intervention effectively began before the reform program was made public. This was the relief effort to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Vilayet of Monastir. The American Missionary Board's station in Monastir administered what aid it could during the uprising. In October the British-based Macedonian Relief Fund brought its high profile support and freshly procured financial resources to Monastir. Working alongside American and French missionaries and employing local doctors and support staff, British aid workers coordinated a relief operation that helped provide food, shelter, and medical aid to the destitute and needy during the autumn and winter of 1903-04.²

The Macedonian Relief Fund did much more than just administering humanitarian aid. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the British government's

² In addition to the American Missionary Board and the Sisters of Saint Vincent De Paul, members of the Lazarist Mission to the Sisters of Charity, and the British Foreign and Bible Society were also active in relief effort in Macedonia during the autumn and winter of 1903-04.

decision to support the Macedonian Relief Fund served the political purpose of directing the energies of some of its strongest critics towards the practicalities of relief work. As was the case for the journalists during the crisis, British officials had a relationship with the workers which functioned as a sort of public-private partnership. British diplomats readily gave aid workers the necessary political support and the aid workers provided streams of intelligence from the Vilayet of Monastir area. The relief effort clearly addressed genuine needs and saved lives. As has been the case for aid operations in recent history, the Macedonian Relief Fund was confronted with various logistical, political, and cultural challenges from the Ottoman authorities, nationalist organizations, other aid groups, and the very people it intended to assist. For the British diplomats and members of the Macedonian Relief Fund, the experiences of the relief agents added to the view that the uniformed presence of Great Power officers in Macedonia—the details of which were being negotiated at the time—would be indispensable to bringing peace to Macedonia. As indicated, it was believed that the presence of these relief workers, functioning as the eyes and ears of the British government, had a pacifying effect on the population and restrained ‘evil doers’ from acts of violence and agitation. In many respects, the relief operation provided an example of the sort of clinically-administered intervention British officials envisioned for the whole of Macedonia.

The aid operation and the Macedonian Relief Fund itself had been made possible by the British government. Knowing they would need the support of the British diplomatic network, the leaders of the Balkan Committee approached Lansdowne in September and requested his assistance. In offering his support, Lansdowne suggested the establishment of a private agency to administer and distribute aid.³ The Balkan Committee agreed by creating the Macedonian Relief Fund. Subsequent meetings produced an unwritten understanding between the British government and the Balkan Committee that led the committee to channel its criticism of the government towards raising funds and awareness for its humanitarian mission. In turn, the government directed its diplomats to give the aid workers assistance and prevailed upon the Ottoman government to permit the aid workers to operate.⁴ This support came with conditions and the relief workers would be under the surveillance of Ottoman officials. Nevertheless, it is

³ Foreign Office to Bryce, September 24, 1903, FO 78/5289.

⁴ Lansdowne to O’Conor, September 30, 1903, FO 421/198/543.

unlikely that the aid operation could have been established as quickly and as effectively as it was without official British support.

The British government was not inclined to undertake a direct role in the provision of humanitarian aid, preferring to offer advice and support. Lansdowne felt the British government was duty bound to help facilitate relief operations, but he sought Ambassador O'Connor's advice on operational details and the role of British diplomatic officials:

What methods would your Excellency suggest for this purpose, and to what extent do you think that assistance can be counted on from the Turkish Government and officials? How far could British Consular officers take part in the actual distribution of relief or in assisting agents sent for the purpose?⁵

O'Connor urged caution. He advised that relief efforts be delayed until the onset of winter, when the need for relief would be greater and the countryside more secure. He said an "organized system of concentration camps, such as those used in South Africa" would not be practical and argued that relief centres be established in towns because those who had had their homes destroyed would naturally gravitate towards larger population centres. O'Connor maintained that British consular officials should limit their participation to giving advice to relief agents.⁶ Like O'Connor, most consuls in the region did not express much interest in getting involved in the administration of funds and the distribution of aid. Graves and Elliot had been part of the British government's effort to administer the relief funds of the Armenian Relief Fund in 1896-97. Elliot made it clear that he did not have time to get involved in such a similar operation.⁷ Regional experience had manifested its influence again. The only British official who expressed enthusiasm about devoting more of his time to the relief effort was Lieutenant Colonel Massy. At the time, Massy was serving as the acting vice consul in the Bulgarian city of Varna, on the Black Sea coast, where he was monitoring the conditions of the 10,000 refugees who had fled across the border from the Vilayet of Adrianople.⁸ 'Hands on' involvement in the administration of aid would also have made the British government

⁵ Lansdowne to O'Connor, September 24, 1903, FO 421/198/478b.

⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, September 25, 1903, FO 78/5272.

⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 5, 1903, FO 78/5295/265.

⁸ Massy to Elliot, October 3, 1903, FO 78/5295/267.

stand out as none of the other powers appeared interested in getting directly involved in a relief effort for Macedonia.

Resolved to limit their role, British officials sought to shape the terms and conditions of the relief operation as much in their favour as possible. Lansdowne again sought O'Connor's advice on the Macedonian Relief Fund's requests for government approval to send H.N. Brailsford to Monastir, accompanied by the academic Dr. Tatarcheff. Additionally, he wondered what level of support British consul officials could offer to help day-to-day relief operations and the protection of refugees.⁹

Again, O'Connor expressed his reservations. He hoped the Red Cross could become engaged and felt that Brailsford was too much of a political figure to be involved. He was decidedly against Dr. Tatarcheff being present, since the professor was the cousin of one of the leaders of IMRO. Although he was a British subject, he would lose his British protection as soon as he stepped on Ottoman territory. O'Connor said that the relief agents should receive "every assistance" the British consuls could offer and downplayed the fear that obtaining relief would expose the refugees to danger. O'Connor was more optimistic that the Ottomans would not obstruct the relief effort than he had been earlier.¹⁰ The Ottomans' change in tone was likely due in part to the "decided language" Lansdowne had impressed the view that the British government expected the Ottoman government to "give facilities to the agents by whom the work of distribution would be undertaken."¹¹ The Ottomans relented and the Grand Vizier instructed his officials to facilitate the relief agents' work. The relief workers work in the company of Ottoman officials, which O'Connor did not object to as this had been the case in Armenian relief operation.¹² Brailsford would make the trip to Macedonia without Dr. Tatarcheff. The relief agents were reminded that they were to distribute aid to all those who needed

⁹ Bertie to Lansdowne, October 7, 1903, FO 45/875/67.

¹⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 8, 1903, FO 78/5272/189.

¹¹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, October 7, 1903, FO 421/199/56.

¹² O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 26, 1903, FO 78/5272/208.

it regardless of “race or creed” and that they were not to engage in political activities.¹³ British consular officials were directed to behave likewise in assisting the relief agents.¹⁴

The relief operation had come together very quickly. In presenting the case for humanitarian relief, Brailsford had also advocated for his own leadership. He had administered relief for the Grosvenor House Committee during the troubles in Crete in 1898 and knew the Vilayet of Monastir and several of the consuls in Monastir well.¹⁵ Although O’Conor had reservations about Brailsford’s politics, there was not a man more suited the task of leading the relief operation. Brailsford journeyed to Salonica in mid-October with his wife, Jane, who proved herself to be a capable hospital manager. They were joined by Macedonian Relief Fund¹⁶ representatives Mr. Harris and Mr. H.W. Nevinson, who helped conduct a survey of the conditions of the Vilayet of Monastir in November. Other Britons who affiliated themselves with the Macedonian Relief Fund and joined the relief effort in Macedonia were Lady Thompson, Miss Kathleen Bruce, and Mary Edith Durham, whose memoir provides rich descriptions of the relief work.¹⁷

As demonstrations and public meetings regarding Macedonia continued in Great Britain during the autumn, the Macedonian Relief Fund worked on a fund-raising campaign with the goal of raising £100,000 for the relief effort. The organization quoted the latest Blue Book, *Turkey No. 4*, to illustrate the “distress prevalent” in the Vilayet of Monastir.¹⁸ By mid-November, the organization was able to further promote itself by publishing reports of its work in Macedonia in the press and by H.W. Nevinson’s public speaking tour, during which he recounted the relief fund’s recent experiences.¹⁹

¹³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 14, 1903, FO 421/198/111; O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 23, 1903, FO 78/ 5270/706; O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 11, 1903, FO 78/5270/748.

¹⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 23, 1903, FO 78/5272/706.

¹⁵ Brailsford to Lansdowne, September 28, 1903, FO 78/5289. The relief work for the Grosvenor House Committee involved distributing grains as well as sulfur for vineyards. See: Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter*, 36.

¹⁶ The organization is referred to as the British Relief Fund, the Macedonian Relief Committee, and the

¹⁷ See: Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, Chapters 5-8.

¹⁸ “The Macedonian Relief Fund,” *The Times*, October 27, 1903, 14.

¹⁹ “The Macedonian Relief Fund,” *The Times*, December 23, 1903, 3.

Although the Macedonian Relief Fund fell short of its fundraising goal, it managed to raise just shy of £25,000 by the end of January, 1904.²⁰

The establishment of the relief operation displayed coordination between the British consular officials and the agents of the Macedonian Relief Fund. This coordination was effectively a continuation of the relationship that the British diplomats enjoyed with the journalists during the Ilinden Uprising. This de-facto public-private partnership saw British consular officials providing advice and support to the relief agents, who in return adhered to an agreed upon code of conduct and shared the information they gathered with the British officials. Upon their arrival in Salonica in late October, the Brailsfords sought out Consul-General Graves to consult with him on the practical matters of their mission and learn about Graves's past experiences in the administration of the Armenian Relief Fund.²¹ Graves passed along the "harrowing" details obtained from journalists in the southern Monastir Vilayet and the Brailsfords were presented to the Vali, who facilitated their passage to Monastir and Kastoria. Graves also put the Brailsfords in contact with the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, two of whom volunteered to join the Brailsfords in the relief effort.²² In addition, the British officials secured customs duties exemptions from the Ottomans on the import of relief goods and free transportation for the goods from Salonica and Monastir (courtesy of the Oriental Railway Company)²³

The British also used their diplomacy to monitor the conditions of prisoners who had been sent to prisons in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. At the behest of Buxton, inquiries were made into the conditions of prisoners being housed in Diarbekir, who were reportedly dying in large numbers. As he had done previously, Ambassador O'Connor prevailed upon the Grand Vizier with a mixture of humanitarian and public relations considerations: "I urged the Grand Vizier to-day for the sake of humanity as well as for his own reputation, to take steps for their proper sanitary treatment, and thus avoid the just reproaches that would otherwise fall on the Ottoman government."²⁴ In response,

²⁰ "The Macedonian Relief Fund," *The Times*, January 30, 1904, 12.

²¹ Brailsford to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5289.

²² Graves, *Storm Centres*, 201.

²³ *Ibid*; O'Connor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1903, FO 78/5271/799.

²⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 9, 1904, FO 78/5329/79.

the Grand Vizier made inquiries and said the British were welcome to send a physician to inspect the conditions of the prisoners. It was arranged for Dr. D.M.B. Thorn, a member of the American mission in Mardin, to inspect the conditions of the prisoners, which he did in February of 1904. Dr. Thorn found the conditions to be satisfactory and concluded that most of the fatalities had been due to dysentery and fatigue suffered during the journey to the prison.²⁵ The prison inspection was another example of the effective partnership between British diplomats and American missionaries in the aid and relief efforts. To the British, it would have further affirmed the value and influence of having the support of a highly qualified Westerner invested with the authority to inspect, report, and make recommendations. The aid operation in Macedonia would produce still more evidence to support this point.

The British Consular officials in Macedonia continued to actively support the relief workers through the winter. Most of the Ottoman officials helped the relief effort. The exception was in Kastoria, where the Ottoman officials and the Greek community were “hostile and obstructive.” Upon learning of Lady Thompson’s complaints of this obstructionism, the British diplomats helped get the Kaimakam of Kastoria removed.²⁶ Vice-Consul McGregor also denounced 19 Muslim Beys and Aghas from the kazas of Ohrid and Kurshevo, whom he described as “notorious evil doers and tyrants.” In a move that was likely of benefit to the relief workers, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had the denounced men exiled to Adana.²⁷

For their part, the relief workers’ new network of eyes and ears for the British consuls penetrated into the more remote regions of the Vilayet of Monastir. Before the British arrived, the American missionaries were making relief trips into the countryside and passing along their reports to Vice-Consul McGregor. Harris, Nevinson and Brailsford surveyed much of the vilayet in November of 1903, providing British officials with a detailed picture of the humanitarian needs and the political situation. Brailsford came into contact with several IMRO leaders whom he said were “biding their time until

²⁵ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 5, 1904, FO 78/5331/244.

²⁶ Graves, *Storm Centres*, 201; McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157. Both Graves and McGregor took credit for this. Brailsford described the move a “useless precaution” as the replacement Kaimakam quickly fell under the influence of the bishop. See: Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 63.

²⁷ McGregor to Graves, December 30, 1903, FO 294/28/163.

next spring.”²⁸ The hospital in Kastoria was in the midst of the growing conflict between IMRO and the Greek pushback which was coordinated by the bishop Evangleois Karavangleis.²⁹ Furthermore, the relief workers reported that the Ottoman medical services had numerous shortcomings and were witnesses to the ongoing instability in the vilayet.

The intelligence and reports produced by the Macedonian Relief Fund’s agents were regularly received by the British consuls for the duration of the aid operation. Although the relief agents were not supposed to produce material for the press, their reports appeared in the newspapers on a fortnightly basis. One would assume that they enjoyed the security of the consular postal service provided to the journalists to ensure they got their messages out. For the British officials, the information provided by the relief agents gave more support to their view that a uniformed presence of European officers needed to be deployed as quickly as possible. This was an opinion several of the relief workers also came to share (if they did not already) by virtue of their experience.³⁰

The relief agents worked quickly to establish a network for the administration of humanitarian aid in the Monastir Vilayet. The American mission in Monastir had already established a depot in Monastir and had provided additional relief in the nearby town of Resna on Lake Prespa. Working in conjunction with Reverend Bond and the American missionaries, the British agents surveyed the vilayet and established nine depots in the principal towns, effectively creating an administrative grid that could serve the needs of the population. The reasoning was that the homeless, the wounded, and the ill were

²⁸ Maunsell to O’Conor, December 15, 1903, FO 195/2150/64.

²⁹ Marling to Lansdowne, December 26, 1903, FO 78/5295/324.

³⁰ Lady Thompson to Graves, March 1, 1904, FO 195/2182. Members of the Balkan Committee also undertook a tour of the Adrianople Vilayet in the early winter in an effort to corroborate Bulgarian reports. They found that some of the villages the Bulgarians claimed were burnt or abandoned were only partly so, and concluded that conditions were not as dire as those in the Monastir Vilayet. Nevertheless, they described the position of Christians as being precarious with murders having been “very common” in the preceding months and rape, theft, and pillage common. In reference to the vulnerability of Roman Catholic Sisters in the town of Mallion Tirnovo, the authors lobbied for a consular presence to deter possible attacks. “A most salutary influence would be exercised if some Consular Agent were established here, as at Kirk Kilissch by the French Government, which as the protector of the Roman Catholics, has interests in this district.” See: Report by Messrs. Hugh Law, M.P., Noel Buxton, and Leland Buxton, respecting the Adrianople Vilayet—(Received at Foreign Office, January 28, 1904), FO 421/201/101.

likely to congregate in these centres. Like O'Connor, Brailsford thought this would be the most sensible approach and would allow the relief agents to "corral" the refugees, construct shelters, and provide aid.³¹ Buildings were rented and outfitted as hospitals in Ohrid and Kastoria. The limited medical facilities that already existed in the city of Monastir included a state hospital and a Greek hospital, but the American mission wished to set up an orphanage there.³² Within a few weeks the nine depots were in operation, each cared for by either a British relief worker or a French or American missionary.³³

The relief operation was very much an international endeavour. In addition to coordinating with American and French missionaries, the British agents enlisted support from some Austrians, including Vice-Consul Kral in Monastir.³⁴ Local populations were also represented by newly hired Greek and Bulgarian doctors as well as a diverse support staff.³⁵ This staff included a former Albanian brigand who couriered large sums of money along mountain roads.³⁶

In terms of its practical execution, the relief operation collaborated with the Ottoman authorities where and when it could to meet what it considered to be the most urgent needs. These were identified early on by the American missionaries as bedding, clothes, flour, seeds, medical care, and disease prevention.³⁷ Given the scope of suffering and the funding at its disposal, the relief committee decided to forgo providing shelter and focus on obtaining and distributing food for the winter.³⁸ Flour was procured

³¹ Brailsford to Lansdowne, October 6, 1903, FO 78/5289.

³² Monastir "News Notes", February 6, 1904, FO 78/5360/39.

³³ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157; News Notes, January 9, 1904, FO 78/5360/3.

The depots were located in: Monastir, Ohrid, Kastoria, Resna, Florina, Klissura, Biglishta, Krushevo and Kitchevo.

³⁴ Memorandum by Mr. des Graz respecting affairs in the Vilayet of Monastir, October 22, 1903, FO 32/745/125.

³⁵ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157; Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, 180. Durham was impressed by an "Athens-trained" Greek doctor "whose untiring care the patients were very much more indebted than they had any idea of."

³⁶ Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter*, 50.

³⁷ McGregor to Graves, October 22, 1903, FO 294/28/141.

³⁸ Graves to O'Connor, November 14, 1903, FO 195/2157/291. Promises by the Ottoman authorities to provide shelter may have also contributed to this decision.

locally and distributed regularly to those documented as being most in need. Inhabitants of some of the hardest hit villages received as much as two 15 oke³⁹ rations of flour per month per person, while refugees in the towns were given 3.5 okes per week.⁴⁰ Levels of aid were lessened if the Ottoman authorities were providing support in a given district. However, although the Ottomans provided monthly monetary relief, some villages refused the charity for fear that they would be forced to use it to repay taxes. The relief workers were also unsure of how long the Ottoman funding would continue.⁴¹ The relief committee purchased blankets and clothing locally and distributed coats and heavy blankets shipped from England. Charcoal was also purchased and distributed to those most in need during the mid-winter months.⁴²

Given that large segments of the Monastir Vilayet's populations were malnourished and poorly clothed and housed, medical relief became much more focused on the treatment of disease and the prevention of epidemics than on caring for wounded. As the weather became colder in November, McGregor reported that "pleurisy, pneumonia, influenza, and gastric fever" were "working havoc" on the population.⁴³ While warm clothing and blankets mitigated the suffering to some extent, the misery was compounded by outbreaks of diphtheria, which were most prevalent in the western kazas. In Ohrid, Jane Brailsford equipped a second hospital to exclusively treat diphtheria patients and had a supply of serum ordered.⁴⁴ Mr. Brailsford discovered cases of small pox in the Kaza of Kastoria and alerted Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha. Once the Inspector-General was informed of this, he acted quickly, dispatching the Sanitary Inspector to the infected region and establishing a military cordon around it. At Brailsford's insistence, schools in the region were cleansed and set aside to house small pox cases, as there were no hospital facilities in the area. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha promised

³⁹ One oka (plural oke) equals 2.75 pounds or 1.24 kilograms.

⁴⁰ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157.

⁴¹ Extracts from "News Notes", November 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/319.

⁴² McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157.

⁴³ McGregor to Graves, November 29, 1903, FO 294/28/152.

⁴⁴ McGregor to Graves, December 6, 1903, FO 294/28/155.

to “deal severely with the officials to whose negligence and inefficiency the spread of the epidemic is due.”⁴⁵ The British were not impressed.

In many respects, the Ottoman authorities’ handling of the humanitarian and health crises in the Monastir Vilayet further affirmed British notions that the Ottomans could not properly manage the affairs of their own state, particularly in its troubled regions. The Ottoman authorities were credited for supporting the relief operation.⁴⁶ However, state attempts to provide aid were seen as unreliable and at best, supplemental to the more regular and thorough distribution methods administered by the international relief agents.⁴⁷ Ottoman medical personnel and infrastructures were harshly criticized. McGregor lamented the lack of hospital accommodations in the regional towns of the vilayet and claimed the civic hospital in Monastir was in a “scandalous condition.”⁴⁸ The municipal doctor in Ohrid was called “incompetent and untrustworthy” and Mrs. Brailsford opted to employ the services of a Bulgarian doctor.⁴⁹ In late December, Reverend Bond reported the following indictment:

The Government doctors both at Ochrida and Kastoria are reported as notably incompetent and inert. One of them was not able to tell the difference between diphtheria and small-pox. In a village of Kastoria the Turkish hospital—when visited by our agents—contained a half-dozen forlorn patients. For three days they had eaten nothing but bread, and during this time no doctor or nurse had been near them. One boy had small-pox, and no attempt had been made at disinfection, isolation, or cleanliness. Our neat, home-like hospitals, in contrast, are like heaven to the sick and wounded.⁵⁰

The way that the Ottoman authorities handled the small pox outbreak in the Kastoria was sharply criticized by Vice-Consul McGregor. The fact that was a British relief agent who discovered the small pox cases and to initiated the isolation and

⁴⁵ McGregor to Graves, November 29, 1903, FO 294/28/152.

⁴⁶ Extracts from “News Notes”, December 11, 1903, FO 78/5271/324.

⁴⁷ News Notes, December 19, 1904, FO 78/5360/3. According to Reverend Bond, the Ottoman authorities decided in December of 1903 to curtail flour rations to half of the then current level. Bond also described this flour as “cheap.”

⁴⁸ McGregor to Graves, December 6, 1903, FO 294/28/155.

⁴⁹ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157.

⁵⁰ News Notes, December 29, 1904, FO 78/5360/3.

housing of the sick likely only deepened his frustration.⁵¹ A week after the first reports of the outbreak, McGregor expressed doubts about the Ottoman Public Health Officer's statistics and the claim that the epidemic was not only "of a very mild nature", but also decreasing thanks to the actions of the authorities. McGregor reported that a "medical man" who he trusted claimed there were as many as 15 cases of smallpox amongst the refugees in Monastir town, some of which were severe, and that no isolation measures had been taken.⁵² Although Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had responded to McGregor's warnings, the vice-consul complained of his frustration regarding:

the deeply-rooted indifference of the Turks to anything in the nature of precautions against epidemics and notorious inefficiency of the municipal doctors do not justify much confidence in the ability of the authorities to cope with the many difficulties of the situation. Hilmi Pasha himself freely admits that the municipal doctors of Monastir, Kastoria, and Okhrida have not only been guilty of gross neglect, but are, moreover, entirely unfit for their position, but he does not seem to think it will be possible to find better men to replace them.⁵³

The relief workers were further frustrated and at times confounded by local cultural beliefs. In reporting the outbreak of small pox and spread of pulmonary diseases, McGregor added that the situation was exacerbated by the "enfeebled" population's ignorance of the "rudiments of hygiene."⁵⁴ Brailsford fruitlessly tried to get the Exarchate clergy to visit patients at the Macedonian Relief Fund's hospitals in Kastoria and Ohrid in order to offer "spiritual consolation" and kind words to the sick and wounded. Disconcertingly, the clergymen requested that the patients observe religious fasts, even if this was at the expense of their convalescence:

The only concern which the clergy displayed in our patients was a very keen anxiety lest we should encourage these miserable creatures, in need of every attention and nourishment, to break the terribly severe fasts

⁵¹ McGregor to Graves, November 29, 1903, FO 294/28/152.

⁵² McGregor to Graves, December 6, 1903, FO 294/28/155.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ McGregor to Graves, November 29, 1903, FO 294/28/152.

which the Church imposes for thirty days before Christmas as well as during lent.⁵⁵

Mary Edith Durham recorded several local superstitions that interfered with patient recuperation. When she connected the highly acidic diet and excessive consumption of alcohol with the numerous cases of dyspepsia, she advised the patients to change their diet, which only angered them.⁵⁶ While she attributed this to stubbornness, she had no explanation for the belief that it was fatal for a wounded person to taste fish.⁵⁷ More seriously, people devoutly refused amputation even when limbs had been reduced to

black and offensive lumps of suffering...When told death was the alternative, they cried, 'Let him die if it is his Kismet!' and the patient echoed the sentiment. The poor wretch had usually come a long day's ride on a pack animal, and the only thing we could do was to pay his fare back. He invariably preferred death to mutilation.⁵⁸

The relief agents' treatment of the ill and distribution of aid was also hampered by the deadly, ongoing political struggle in the Vilayet of Monastir. In some cases, this was due to problems with the coordination of aid distribution. Reverend Bond could not reach an agreement with a Serbian relief agency that gave flour to Macedonian Relief Fund recipients in Monastir. The Serbian agency opted out of an arrangement to distribute flour to designated villages in the Kichevo kaza, instead doling "out all their flour to so-called Servians in a so-called Servian village."⁵⁹ Bond also complained that the Bulgarian bishop of Monastir was "mortally slow" in distributing shoes and clothing that

⁵⁵ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 68. Brailsford also noted the "essential barbarism" and "abominable cruelty" practiced by the Greek Church in its monasteries towards the mentally ill, which included confinement in underground dungeons, starvation, and torture. He added that the hoped Anglican clergy who were promoting union with the Patriarchate could reform these practices and added: "The Turks are not the only authors of Eastern atrocities." See: Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 68, note 1. Vice-Consul McGregor and Reverend Bond both expressed concerns that Muslims would be more likely to commit violent acts during Ramadan, which took occurred in December-January. See: Extracts from "News Notes", November 23, 1903, FO 78/5295/319; McGregor to Graves (confidential), November 20, 1903, FO 294/28/151.

⁵⁶ Durham, *Burden of the Balkans*, 180.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 182. Some believed poultry could have the same deadly effect it fed to the wounded.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 181.

⁵⁹ Monastir "News Notes", February 6, 1904, FO 78/5360/39.

had been procured locally with cash sent from Sofia via the Bulgarian commercial agent.⁶⁰

Relief agents and consular officials expressed their disappointment when partisan politics interfered with aid distribution and medical care. One reason for the Bulgarian bishop of Monastir's slowness in dispensing aid was opposition from the Greek Metropolitans of the vilayet, who "not content with protesting to Hilmi Pasha against this invasion for their dioceses, have not shrunk from placing themselves at the head to mobs for the purposes of intimidating the representative of the Exarch."⁶¹ The Greek hospital in Monastir would not admit non-orthodox (Greek Orthodox) patients unless a fixed sum was paid.⁶² Reverend Bond did manage to use his influence to get a badly injured Macedo-Bulgarian admitted to the Greek hospital at half price.⁶³ McGregor accused the Greek Bishop Germanos Karavangelis of Kastoria of having a "hostile attitude," and described his manner as being "unworthy of a Christian pastor."⁶⁴ Brailsford accused Patriarchate and Exarchate bishops alike for having "incorrigibly Byzantine habits of thought."⁶⁵ He considered most bishops to be aristocratic despots who led sedentary lives in their "palaces" and were out of touch with the struggles of their peasant flocks because they preferred to concentrate on the struggle for territory and influence:

Their preoccupation is the incessant round of intrigue and violence by which each Christian in Macedonia retains its place against its rival. Their trade is intolerance and their business propaganda, and it leaves them little leisure time to concern themselves with the spiritual or material welfare of their flocks.⁶⁶

As winter moved towards spring, the relief agents picked up signs of impending IMRO activity at their aid distribution centres. Reverend Bond reported the murder of several Greek leaders and priests and claimed to have read IMRO documents related to the

⁶⁰ News Notes, December 19, 1904, FO 78/5360/3.

⁶¹ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157.

⁶² McGregor to Graves, December 6, 1903, FO 294/28/155.

⁶³ News Notes, December 29, 1904, FO 78/5360/3.

⁶⁴ McGregor to Graves, December 9, 1903, FO 294/28/157.

⁶⁵ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 65.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

murders.⁶⁷ In late February, Bond wrote: "The political horizon is exceedingly interrogational."⁶⁸

The Ottoman medical system, local cultural aversions to western medicine, and the escalating ethno-religious struggle were reflected in the descriptions of conditions in Macedonia recorded by agents of the Macedonian Relief Fund and the British consuls. These descriptions presented a picture of a region that appeared to be in dire need of European intervention and reform. As spring neared and public health conditions normalized, some of the relief agents believed that the rapid deployment of European officers to the region could stall the rumoured uprising in its tracks. Reverend Bond called for the newly appointed executive of the Great Power intervention force to interrupt their meetings in order to present themselves in the Monastir Vilayet:

If these gentlemen would come here accompanied by the fez-wearing Italian general and his European assistants, each in his own uniform, and if all would set to work on the reform scheme with but half of an Englishman's heart, I believe the committees would gladly keep quiet.⁶⁹

From Kastoria, Lady Thompson expressed similar sentiments in a letter she wrote to Consul-General Graves:

I don't know if my opinion is worth anything, but I have seen and talked to hundreds of peasants very openly these weeks, and I am sure that if there was one tangible proof of reform to be seen in this region, the villagers would not care to rise. If, for instance, a foreign officer, preferably an Englishman, could come here for the gendarmerie within the next fortnight, I believe the villagers would stay quiet, and without help from the villagers, food, shelter, &c., the Komitajis pure and simple could do little.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Monastir "News Notes", February 6, 1904, FO 78/5360/39.

⁶⁸ News Notes, February 23, 1904, FO 78/5360/44. Although not manifested violently, prejudices surrounding aid were also evident regarding the Bulgarian refugees on the Black Sea coast. Acting Vice-Consul Massey recorded a complaint from the relief committee in Varna that local Armenian and Greek communities in Varna were not making donations to help the refugees. A representative from the relief committee was upset with the Armenians as the Bulgarian community had done much to assist the Armenians who had taken refuge in Varna in the mid 1890s. The chief donors in Varna came from the Bulgarian and Jewish communities. See: Massey to Elliot, October 2, 1903, FO 78/5294/265.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Lady Thompson to Graves, March 1, 1904, FO 195/2182.

While the political forecast in the late winter of 1904 was unsettled, the Macedonian Relief Fund's aid operation had succeeded in the eyes of its leaders. As Lady Thompson reported from the hard-hit Kastoria kaza: "The public health everywhere is now normal, and it all looked like summer two days ago."⁷¹ As health conditions improved and relief resources were exhausted, the Macedonian Relief Fund wound down its operations by closing the hospitals in Kastoria and Ochrid in late March and ordering that distributions of flour were to cease by the end of April. In addition, a hospital that the relief agents had recently opened in Monastir was handed over to the American missionaries.

The fact that the relief workers themselves were showing signs of strain likely also factored in to the decision to cease operations. Jane Brailsford contracted typhus in Ochrid. In Kastoria, Miss Bruce and two of nurses from the Sisters Charity of the Order of St. Vincent had fallen seriously ill. All of the relief workers reached Salonica in late March, except Mary Edith Durham, who made her way to the Albanian coast.⁷²

Vice-Consul McGregor's report in late March imparted the results and statistics of the Macedonian Relief Fund's aid work over the previous five months; the report was based on information given to him by H.N. Brailsford and Lady Thompson (Appendix V).⁷³ In Salonica, Consul-General Graves lauded the aid operation as a success. He was satisfied with the assistance and protection provided by the Ottoman authorities, noting that the hostility endured at Kastoria was due to suspicion that the hospital would become permanent.⁷⁴ Graves praised the multi-national and multi-denominational make-up of the relief staff, which was evidence that their work had been strictly humanitarian and did not aim to seize opportunities to spread religious or political propaganda. He extolled the aid workers for their "unselfish devotion" to ease suffering and save lives in the face of sustained personal hardships. Furthermore, and significantly, he credited the relief workers for having a pacifying effect on the population.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Graves to O'Connor, March 26, 1903, FO 195/2182/44.

⁷³ McGregor to Graves, March 27, 1904, FO 195/2182/47.

⁷⁴ Graves to O'Connor, March 26, 1903, FO 195/2182/44.

Their mere presence in the disturbed districts acted as a check upon evil-doers and an encouragement the sufferers to have patience and hope for better times, and inclines one to augur well of the moral effects which may be expected from the arrival of European gendarmerie officers in the Macedonian provinces.⁷⁵

The relief effort did not end with the departure of Brailsford and company in March of 1904. The missionaries continued to provide aid and assistance to the sick, the wounded, and the displaced for the duration of the Mürzsteg Reform Program and afterwards (which they had done prior to the arrival of the Macedonian Relief Fund). The American Missionary Board continued to be the leading organization in the region and it received ongoing support from British diplomats in an enduring public-private working relationship that sought to ease the suffering in Macedonia and the wider region. Thanks in part to a financial donation from the formerly captive missionary Miss Ellen Stone, the American Missionary Board purchased some 500 acres of “barren” land near Salonica in 1902. Two years later, it built and opened a farm school on the land.⁷⁶ Several of the school’s first students were refugees who Dr. Haskall had brought from the interior. Dr. Haskall had previously coordinated with the British relief agents to inspect conditions and treat the sick and wounded in the more remote regions of the vilayet.⁷⁷ The orphans at the school were taught the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as schooled on agricultural techniques. Several went on to have careers as farmers.⁷⁸ The farm school would continue to take orphans from the regional conflicts in the years and decades to come and continues to train students in agricultural and farming techniques at the present time.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Charlotte Whitney Draper, *The American Farm School of Thessaloniki: A Family Album* (Thessaloniki: American Farm School, 1994), 15. Ellen Stone donated \$500 in appreciation of the efforts of the school’s founder, Dr. House, who secured her release from her kidnappers in 1902.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁹ For a history of the American Farm School see: Brenda Mardar, *Stewards of the Land: The American School and Greece in the Twentieth Century* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2004). The school has enjoyed a resurgence in enrolment in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity measures implemented in Greece. Unemployed Greeks from ‘white collar’ backgrounds have been signing up for farming classes as they look to utilize the agricultural potential of ancestral plots of land for revenue and sustenance.

In sum, the words and deeds of the Macedonian Relief Fund provided British officials with more evidence affirming the view that the deployment of Great Power officers could have a 'salutary effect' on the situation in Macedonia. This view was further supported by the work and organization of the Macedonian Relief Fund in the Monastir Vilayet, which served as a metaphor and in some respects as a working model for what the Great Powers hoped to achieve as they negotiated the working details of the Mürzsteg Reform Program during the autumn and winter of 1903-04. As the British officials saw it, the relief operation with its grid of depots manned by relief agents, journeys into the backcountry made by their intrepid investigators, and the regular tours undertaken by its doctors contained the problems and had a calming effect on the population. Furthermore, the relief workers provided valuable intelligence to consular officials, who in turn used their influence to help facilitate the smooth functioning of the relief operation. A multinational organization had used its energy and initiative to apply expert medical knowledge and implement sound organizational techniques, which arrested famine and the spread of deadly disease. This was poignantly demonstrated by the discovery of the small pox and diphtheria outbreaks and subsequent responses to them.

Such outcomes were precisely what the British and some of the other powers believed could be accomplished through the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The Great Powers believed that a small force of intelligent and highly motivated uniformed representatives from the Great Power nations would be able to contain the spread of political contagions in Macedonia and to implement reforms that would counteract the disorders at their points of origin. The fact that the relief agents confronted the medical problems of hunger, wounds, and disease with expertise and excellent clinical execution also impressed the proponents of reform. The relief effort of the Macedonian Relief Fund provided more evidence that Europeans could bring order and peace to Macedonia through intervention, which effectively dealt with 'Oriental' indifference and ineffectiveness as well as 'Balkan' chaos and superstition.

Instituting Intervention

While the Macedonian Relief Fund did its work in the Vilayet of Monastir, politicians and diplomats slowly turned the words of the Mürzsteg Reform Program into

action. With the immediate humanitarian crisis contained, the diplomats shifted their focus to the implementation of articles I and II of Mürzsteg: establishing civil assessors to assist Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and creating a multinational force of officers from the European powers; it was hoped that the force would be deployed in time to arrest a possible renewed uprising in the spring. The gendarme officers were deployed by May 1904. However, the negotiation and implementation process was slowed by Ottoman obstruction and differences between the European powers, which were clearly reflected in the territorial zones assigned to each power.

The British persisted in being the most outspoken supporters of the reforms. They pushed to have the gendarme force created quickly as evidence continued to suggest that it would be integral to future peace and stability. Firm in their belief that the presence of European officers would have a pacifying effect on the population, the British favoured the rapid deployment of military attachés in advance of the gendarmes. As for the gendarmerie force itself, the British and some of the other contributing powers shared a belief that the force's few officers should possess special mental and physical fitness and have experience and knowledge relevant to the Balkan region. These traits and abilities would allow the officers to succeed in spite of their limited numbers. Conflicting interests and political circumstances had shaped the creation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. These circumstances would continue to influence the development of the gendarmerie force as its roles, duties, territorial allotments, and uniforms would require further negotiation. The result was the molding of an intervention force distinct from those that had preceded it in Lebanon and Crete.

To the British, the Mürzsteg Reform Program was a partial victory. It did not meet all the expectations articulated in Lansdowne's Memorandum but it was seen as an improvement to the Vienna Reform Program. Outwardly, the British were supportive. However, upon viewing the text of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, they also found reasons for reservation. Two days after the presentation of the reforms, the Austro-Hungarians and Russians sent representatives to Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office in order to obtain his reaction. Lansdowne responded with six points. He questioned the wisdom of retaining Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha as inspector-general; asked why attention was being primarily given to only the Christian population; requested more information on role of the European officers to be appointed to the gendarmerie; questioned whether it

was practical to wait for pacification of the territory before establishing administrative districts; asked how the Mixed Commissions were to be appointed, and; wondered why there was no mention of financial reforms. Lansdowne believed these reforms were “at the root of all Macedonian reforms.” He maintained that administrative reforms would be difficult to implement unless finances were placed in “thoroughly competent hands.”⁸⁰ Ambassador O’Conor’s principal question was why the Vilayet of Adrianople had been excluded from the reforms.⁸¹

Lansdowne’s critiques of the Mürzsteg Reform Program were consistent with the points he had previously expressed. He wished for the reforms to be more thorough and more detailed, and to have more European oversight and control. In addition, he voiced his concerns for the welfare of non-Christians. The Austro-Hungarians responded within a week, with Russian backing. They informed Lansdowne that they had no intention of lobbying for Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s dismissal; maintained that financial matters were adequately addressed in the Vienna Reform Program; defended the decision to aid only Christians based on the assumption that the Ottoman authorities would give aid to Muslims, and; said they had yet to appoint a general to reorganize the gendarmerie.⁸² Though Lansdowne and the British would remain critical, for the time being they kept their concerns private. Before Lansdowne had received the Austro-Hungarian reply to his concerns he telegraphed O’Conor, advising him that the British government supported the reforms and would do no more than offer suggestions as to how to further strengthen them.⁸³

Like Great Britain, the other Great Powers were quick to express their support for the Mürzsteg Reform Program and announce that they stood in solidarity with the other powers. The Germans stood quietly behind their Austro-Hungarian allies, while the French expressed their support and advised the Ottoman government to accept the reforms.⁸⁴ The Italians had reservations as to whether the Ottomans would accept the

⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Plunkett, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/168; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/170.

⁸¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 5, 1903, FO 78/5270/735.

⁸² Lansdowne to Plunkett, November 2, 1903, FO 421/199/197.

⁸³ Lansdowne to O’Conor, October 29, 1903, FO 421/199/189.

⁸⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 3, 1903, FO 78/5272/211.

reforms, as they “impaired” Ottoman sovereignty. Lansdowne urged the Italians to accept the reforms for the sake of maintaining unity and reserve criticisms for a later date.⁸⁵ The Italians concurred and Great Power unity was secure for the moment.⁸⁶

On the whole, the Balkan states were content to give the European powers a chance to make the reforms work. This was an understandable response, given the past months of conflict and the possibility of war between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. The Romanian government had expressed its satisfaction with the regional state of affairs.⁸⁷ Serbia had complained about not being able to play a larger role in Macedonia.⁸⁸ However, by late October, the Serbian government had become preoccupied with domestic politics.⁸⁹ Likewise, the Greek government had a more urgent matter to attend to as the International Commission of Financial Control was putting more pressure on Greece and Greece’s creditors were making new repayment demands.⁹⁰ Athens remained quietly supportive of the Ottoman government and reliant on the Ottoman security forces to protect its consuls in Macedonia.⁹¹

The Bulgarians, however, were not altogether pleased. General Petrov called the reforms “defective” and complained of the lack of an amnesty for the insurgents, which would give them confidence to put down their guns and allow refugees to return to their homes. Petrov worried about whether the Bulgarians would be fairly represented on the anticipated commissions and he saw the plans to have each of the proposed gendarmerie zones patrolled by a different European power as “another species of partition.”⁹² Petrov confided to Elliot that he was uneasy about Austro-Russian executive control and feared that the two powers would divide the territory into their own respective

⁸⁵ Lansdowne to Bertie, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/169.

⁸⁶ Bertie to Lansdowne, October 31, 1903, FO 7/45/875.

⁸⁷ Kennedy to Lansdowne, October 22, 1903, FO 104/155/66.

⁸⁸ Thesiger to Lansdowne, October 20, 1903, FO 105/149/167.

⁸⁹ Thesiger to Lansdowne, November 3, 1903, FO 105/149/171.

⁹⁰ Egerton to Lansdowne, November 16, 1903, FO 32/746/18. The German delegate of the commission issued such a strongly worded statement that the Greek prime minister threatened to resign. See: Egerton to Lansdowne, November 19, 1903, FO 32/746/19.

⁹¹ Egerton to Lansdowne, November 2, 1903, FO 32/745/128.

⁹² Elliot to Lansdowne, October 31, 1903, FO 78/5295/294. Elliot argued that the different zones would create beneficial rivalries between the gendarme groups

spheres of influence. Elliot also reported popular disappointment in Bulgaria about the omission of the Vilayet of Adrianople from the reforms.⁹³

In Macedonia, British consuls detected an appetite for “liberal” reform. In Uscub, a metropole of the Exarchate expressed similar sentiments to Petrov’s to Vice-Consul Fontana. recorded sentiments similar. The metropole stated: “For the sake of God let not Europe leave us to the mercies of Austria and Russia alone; let England and the other Powers step to the fore. If they hold back much blood will be shed before next summer is out, and that you will surely see!”⁹⁴ Reactions similar to the metropole’s were expressed by Christian and Muslim notables who communicated their hope that England, France, and Italy would play a larger role in the reforms, as they were “more disinterested and more liberal.”⁹⁵ Consul-General Graves reported similar sentiments in Salonica, where “Muslims and Christians alike recommend the Western European Powers as the true guardians of the interests of Macedonia, Great Britain in particular being specially trusted by all to hold the balance of power between the warring creeds and races.”⁹⁶ Such reports furnished the British with further evidence that their wish to increase the British, French, and Italian contributions to the reforms and to deploy military attachés were sound actions and would be well received on the ground. News of the Mürzsteg reforms had apparently already helped to ease tensions in the region. General Petrov may have found the terms of the reforms “defective”, but the Bulgarian government issued demobilization orders a few days after receiving the text of the reforms.⁹⁷ The Ottomans demobilized their Ilave forces in early November.⁹⁸

Although the Ottomans may have been content about the calming effects of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, they were not pleased with the terms. The Ottoman government’s initial “recalcitrant” response to the reforms in early November emphasized the point that it had not had the chance to fully implement the Vienna

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Fontana to Graves (confidential), November 30, 1903, FO 294/25/67.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Graves to O’Conor, October 12, 1903, FO 195/2157/280.

⁹⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 26, 1903, FO 78/5296/52.

⁹⁸ Maunsell to O’Conor, November 6, 1903, FO 195/2150/60.

Reform Program.⁹⁹ The Ottomans argued that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had not had the chance to fulfill his two-year reform mandate and that work could truly begin and the consuls could observe the reforms, given that order had been restored. They maintained that aid was being distributed, an amnesty was forthcoming, and a commission of German and Ottoman officers was conducting investigations and reorganizing the gendarmerie.¹⁰⁰ The latter point was one the Ottomans had been making for some time. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had often pointed out to the rather skeptical consuls that he had implemented reform measures in spite of the fighting¹⁰¹

In late October, the “hastily formed” Ottoman military commission toured the Vilayet of Salonica and sentenced some Ottoman soldiers accused of committing atrocities.¹⁰² At about the same time, four Belgian officers—two of whom had service experience in the Congo—arrived in Constantinople to assist the Swedish officers who were reorganizing the gendarmerie.¹⁰³ By late November, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha reported that the gendarmerie in the Vilayet of Monastir had been strengthened to 2,716 with the Christian quota almost filled, despite the absence of Macedo-Bulgarians in the ranks.¹⁰⁴ To the British, these “hastily formed” efforts were little more than desperate acts of damage control in the face of concerted Great Power pressure. The British were not prepared to afford any legitimacy to the Ottoman promises. McGregor called the lists of Ottoman accomplishments “illusory” and opined that “it is likely to remain so as long as the work is left in its present hands.”¹⁰⁵ O’Conor related the following to the Sultan’s secretary, Izzet Pasha: “His Majesty’s Government had had an unpleasant experience of Turkish assurances, and they were reluctantly complied to ask for execution rather than rely on mere promises”¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, November 2, 1903, FO 421/199/196.

¹⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Bertie, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/169.

¹⁰¹ McGregor to Graves, October 29, 1903, FO 294/28/144. In late September, Vice-Consul McGregor acknowledged that the insurgents were surrendering in great numbers, and a month later that some 1,425 watchmen had been appointed, the majority of them Christian, in accordance with the Vienna Reform Program.

¹⁰² Graves to O’Conor, October 30, 1903, FO 195/2157/285.

¹⁰³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 30, 1903, FO 78/5270/724.

¹⁰⁴ McGregor to Graves, November 28, 1903, FO 294/28/153.

¹⁰⁵ McGregor to Graves, September 30, 1903, FO 294/28/132.

¹⁰⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), November 19, 1903, FO 78/5271/774.

The fundamental reason for Ottoman displeasure with the Mürzsteg Reform Program was based on its infringement on the Ottoman government's sovereign rights to govern itself. Tevfik Pasha told O'Connor that the powers afforded to the European offices tasked with reforming the gendarmerie were "a direct infringement of the sovereign rights of the Sultan," and called the attachment of assessors to the Inspector-General "unnecessary."¹⁰⁷ Sultan Abdülhamîd feared the potential ramifications of the new and nationality-based territorial boundaries.¹⁰⁸ The Sultan expressed his disappointment with the British over the severity of the reforms, adding that he "could not believe" the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors' assertions that the terms of the Lansdowne Memorandum were "of a much less moderate character" than the Mürzsteg terms.¹⁰⁹ The Sultan expressed fear of a potential Muslim backlash and pleaded that "his acceptance of the reforms now proposed would inevitably lead to the ruin of his sovereign power, and ultimately the disintegration to the empire."¹¹⁰ He appealed to O'Connor

not as his Majesty's Ambassador but as a friend and, he believed, an advocate of the integrity of the Empire, to crave your Lordship to bring about some modification of the clauses respecting the appointment of Austrian and Russian Assessors, and of a foreign Commandant of the Gendarmerie.¹¹¹

In spite of the Sultan's personal appeal, O'Connor and the British were unmoved and remained united with the other powers in their commitment to see the reforms implemented. The Ottomans made other efforts to divide the powers in their view of the Mürzsteg, but they were unsuccessful as the powers remained united and correctly convinced that if they stood together, the Ottomans would eventually yield.¹¹² O'Connor wrote that he "utterly failed" to see why the Ottomans would raise any complaints about European officers reorganizing the gendarmeries since it was the "best means" of establishing peace and encouraging refugees to return to their villages.¹¹³ To O'Connor,

¹⁰⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 5, 1903, FO 78/5270/734.

¹⁰⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 20, 1903, FO 78/5272/221.

¹⁰⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 19, 1903, FO 78/5272/220.

¹¹⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), November 19, 1903, FO 78/5271/774.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Spring-Rice to Lansdowne, November 25, 1903, FO 65/1662/401.

¹¹³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 5, 1903, FO 78/5270/734.

Ottoman sovereignty would have to be compromised. The Austro-Hungarian and Russian assessors would not be able to achieve results if their roles were not clearly defined or if their authority could be vetoed.¹¹⁴ There was a sense of confidence that the Ottomans could be persuaded. Count Goluchowski deduced that the Sultan was merely trying to save face with his Muslim subjects by showing them he was only yielding out of necessity.¹¹⁵

Great Power unity and carrot-and-stick tactics did eventually secure Ottoman acceptance of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. When the German government began to exert its influence in mid November, it seemed the Ottomans would soon yield.¹¹⁶ The Austro-Hungarians and Russians threatened to impose the British suggestions if the Mürzsteg terms were not accepted.¹¹⁷ O'Connor asked for the Sultan to have confidence in Britain's good faith, which he supported by arguing that the British Empire provided just rule for its Muslim subjects, of which there were some 60 million in India alone.¹¹⁸ To clinch his argument, O'Connor extolled the virtues of a reformed gendarmerie:

I was convinced His Majesty could do nothing more calculated to restore and maintain his authority throughout Macedonia than to give his sanction and support to the establishment of a corps of gendarmerie well paid, well disciplined, able to maintain public tranquility and at the same time sure to inspire general confidence among the inhabitants from the fact of their being under the inspection and control of expert and experienced foreign officers.¹¹⁹

To the satisfaction and relief of Britain and the Great Powers, the Ottoman government accepted the Mürzsteg Reform Program on November 25, 1903.¹²⁰ This result showed the strength the Great Powers could command if they maintained a united front. The road to the Mürzsteg's acceptance again illustrated steadfastness in the belief that the presence of uniformed European officers could have a pacifying effect on the populations of Macedonia. Reports by the consuls continued to show that a presence of

¹¹⁴ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 5, 1903, FO 78/5270/735.

¹¹⁵ Plunkett to Lansdowne, November 19, 1903, FO 7/1341/337.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), November 19, 1903, FO 78/5271/774.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, November 25, 1903, FO 78/5272/224.

British officers would be welcomed by all the communities, adding to a collection of evidence in favour of the reform program. The appointment of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian assessors and the deployment of the European officers to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie would become the salient point of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. With the exception of Germany, which made a minimal contribution to the European force, all the powers considered it necessary to select officers to deploy to Macedonia to address the urgent security situation, and were prepared to do so quickly. This effort was in keeping with the articles of the Mürzsteg Reform Program (Articles I, II, and III) that most directly challenged Ottoman sovereignty and the Ottoman government was prepared to resist. Indeed, Ottoman 'recalcitrance' towards accepting the reforms and the ongoing opposition to the deployment of Great Power officers likely only heightened the British conviction that a larger-scale uniformed European presence was precisely what was needed. The British therefore showed no inclination to listen to Ottoman complaints, which they considered simply to be part of an obstructionist strategy. This left the British deaf to some of the Ottoman's well-founded concerns, specifically their reservations regarding the potential consequences of "a more regular grouping of different nationalities", as stipulated in Article III of the Mürzsteg Reform Program.

Once the Ottomans accepted the reforms, the way was clear for the deployment of the European officers. The Great Powers, and Great Britain especially, believed that the interpositioning of European officers could have the desired "salutary" influence in Macedonia. However, the powers needed to determine what sort of men would be best suited for the task. Documents reveal the view that the men chosen to partake in this 'peacekeeping' operation should be endowed with strong physical characteristics and equipped with language skills and cultural knowledge relevant to the region. Ideally, they should be men with experience negotiating the cultural and political terrain of their respective empires. It was thought men with experience in the management of their own country's empire would be better equipped for the challenges of providing the Ottomans with an example of how to manage their empire as well as providing a pacifying presence in Macedonia.

The conceptualization of this 'peacekeeping' force had been months in the making and begun long before the creation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. As discussed, the British had lobbied hard to send military attachés to Macedonia, and the

Russians had worked to increase the number of consuls in the region. Both Britain and Russia saw the need for a heightened Great Power presence in Macedonia and both expressed criticisms of the Scandinavians who had been brought in to reform the gendarmerie. The Swedes may have had the military skills and physical constitutions to perform their tasks, but they were seen as lacking comprehension of the realities of Macedonia and had no local language skills. They were a small force operating with a limited mandate in the midst of an insurrection, but they were seen to not be the right men for the job, by the Austro-Hungarian and Russians. The Grand Vizier feared the Austro-Hungarians and Russians wished to monopolize the reorganization of the gendarmerie with their officers.¹²¹ In what was likely a move to address this deficiency of imperial experience, two of the four Belgian officers who had served in the Congo rushed in to aid the Swedes in September.¹²²

The Russians were the most vocal advocates of officers with imperial experience. In discussing the possibility of deploying non-commissioned officers in early September, the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Lamsdorff, said officers should be of “nationalities more conversant with Eastern languages and customs.”¹²³ Just prior to the talks at Müritzsteg, Lamsdorff expressed “his entire disbelief in the ability of the Swedish or Belgian officers, who are quite unfamiliar with these new surroundings, to deal with the complicated situation in Macedonia.”¹²⁴ The Russian government reportedly favoured sending to Russian officers currently employed in the Caucasus and Austro-Hungarian officers or severing in Bosnia to Macedonia, since both were acquainted with Muslim customs.¹²⁵ Prince Obolensky suggested it would be wise to send officers to Macedonia who had served in Crete.¹²⁶ The Austro-Hungarians were inclined to agree. In drawing up the initial plans for the European officers, the Austro-Hungarian military attaché in Constantinople, Colonel Giesl, recommended men with relevant experience, such as Austrians who had served in Bosnia, Russians with experience in the Caucasus, and

¹²¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1903, FO 78/5271/795.

¹²² Phipps to Lansdowne, October 2, 1903, FO 421/199/26; O’Conor to Lansdowne, October 30, 1903, FO 78/5270/724.

¹²³ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), September 2, 1903, FO 65/1661/266.

¹²⁴ Spring-Rice to Lansdowne, October 1, 1903, FO 65/1662/313.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Spring-Rice to Lansdowne (confidential), October 1, 1903, FO 65/1662/337.

Italian *carabinieri*. The men were to be under the age of fifty and fluent in a Slavic language.¹²⁷ The Russians and the Austro-Hungarians also wished for the European officers to have consular jurisdiction.¹²⁸

In Constantinople, Ambassador O'Connor was suspicious of Russian intentions. Citing a press report, he expressed concern that the Russians and Austro-Hungarians were angling to create more consulates in Macedonia in order to ensure that the consuls could exclusively administer the reforms.¹²⁹ The Ottoman Grand Vizier had similar reservations, and reasoned that a desire for exclusive Austro-Russian control of the reforms was the actual reason why the Russians had been critical of the Swedish and Belgian officers' abilities.¹³⁰ The Italians were also worried that the Austro-Hungarians and Russians might act on their own accord.¹³¹ In London, the French ambassador expressed a preference for European control and saw the possibility of control of the reforms being in the hand of Austro-Russian consuls as "most unpracticable." He reasoned: "Everything would depend of the temperament of the Consul, and there would always be a chance that an energetic consul would incur unpopularity and thereby bring upon himself the fate of the Russian Consuls and Mitrovitsa and Monastir."¹³²

The thought that the Russians might make a move to have consuls supervise the reforms is not surprising, given that an increased consular presence had been part of the response to the troubles in the Armenian lands a few years previously. However, it was not a point the Russians were pushing openly through official channels. In spite of all his reservations about the Russians, O'Connor's own recommendations regarding the quality of the officers to be selected for service in Macedonia were not dissimilar to those made by the Russians. He said the men should be on active duty, "if possible with some knowledge of Turkish, Greek, or Bulgarian, and also French, and young hardy, and intelligent. The Staff Officer's appointment is a matter of much importance; it is, I think,

¹²⁷ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 35.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 7, 1903, FO 78/5269/645.

¹³⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, December 1, 1903, FO 78/5271/795. The Grand Vizier pointed out that if language abilities matters so much the Russians should have also been critical of Ottoman government's appointment of German officers.

¹³¹ Lansdowne to Bertie (confidential), November 20, 1903, FO 421/199/264.

¹³² Lansdowne to Monson (confidential), October 14, 1903, FO 421/199/112.

essential that he should know French, and he ought to have the brevet rank of colonel.”¹³³ Eager to help find suitable candidates, O’Conor contacted the High Commissioner of Cyprus for available officers, pointing out that a contingent of the Cyprus Gendarmerie had proved itself useful in Crete. The commandant of the Cyprus Gendarmerie, Major Kershaw, was reportedly eager to participate. O’Conor thought Cypriot gendarmes could perhaps be more effective than English officers, owing to their skills and experience:

These men are experienced, and have been trained to deal with both Turks and Greeks, which presumably implies that they speak both languages. I think that it is unlikely that the Ottoman Government would raise objections on the special ground of their being natives of Cyprus, although they possibly would possibly not have quite the same influence and authority as Englishmen; but for practical purposes they might in some respects be more adaptable.¹³⁴

As would be expected in light of Lansdowne’s advocacy of military attachés, the British were quick to initiate the selection of officers to be sent to Macedonia. Within days of the conclusion of the Mürzsteg talks, the Foreign Office contacted the War Office asking for steps to be taken to select “a sufficient number of officers qualified for the work indicated.”¹³⁵ The Foreign Office was acting on the assumption that Lansdowne’s suggestion for military attachés was in accordance with what the Austro-Hungarians and Russians had agreed upon. No specific instructions regarding physical or mental fitness, language knowledge and experience are made in the document, although the nature of the work and destination of the mission would have surely implied these qualifications. A limited number of officers who had served on Crete and/or Cyprus would have been available, and there was no shortage of men with experience in the recent South Africa. The latter would have been very much accustomed to fighting insurgencies. The British would also have had plenty of officers familiar with service in Muslim population areas, a point that O’Conor had already implied in his conversations with the Sultan. In any case, most of the men they selected were not familiar with the Balkan region. When the selection of the men was complete in November, Lansdowne telegraphed O’Conor requesting permission from the Ottoman Government for a few officers to be sent to

¹³³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 10, 1903, FO 78/5271/818.

¹³⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February 3, 1903, FO 78/5329/ 65.

¹³⁵ Foreign Office to War Office, October 7, 1903, FO 421/199/59.

Macedonia “for the purpose of acquiring a knowledge of the local conditions, if, as seems probably, there is considerable delay in arranging the details of this part of the scheme?”¹³⁶

Lansdowne was anxious to get started. His request to allow British officers to get accustomed to Macedonia was made before the Ottoman government had accepted the reforms. In an effort to expedite the process, Lansdowne made his case to the French and Italians, pointing out that Britain “attached great importance to sending out at the earliest possible moment to the Balkan Peninsula a certain number of British officers to assist in reorganizing the gendarmerie, and also in order that they might accompany the Turkish troops and watch the course of events.”¹³⁷ Evidently, Lansdowne wanted the British officers to do more than just get familiar with local customs and take language classes. The move was actually a continuation of his drive to send military attachés prior to Müritzsteg. In addition, a rapid deployment of British officers would deter any sudden Austro-Russian move to monopolize the intervention. However, this is not to suggest that Lansdowne and the British did not sincerely believe the British officers would have a positive effect. The work of the relief agents and the ongoing efforts of the consuls provided them with more proof of the benefits of having a formal British presence in the region. Vice-Consul McGregor continued to display the sort of constructive initiative that the incoming British officers would ideally exhibit. In early December, McGregor reported that he had convinced the acting Bulgarian Commercial Agent to prevail upon the Macedo-Bulgarian community to have its men sign up for service in the Ottoman Gendarmerie. As a result, more than 100 men made the trip to the Konak in Monastir to enlist, which filled all the vacancies and necessitated a wait list.¹³⁸

However, there was to be no early deployment by the British. In his response to Lansdowne’s request, O’Conor urged patience. He acknowledged that the early arrival of British officers could probably be arranged, but cautioned that it would be wiser to wait until the reforms had been accepted and the roles and duties of the European officers properly established. In his view, a premature deployment would not “be either

¹³⁶ Lansdowne to O’Conor, November 13, 1903, FO 421/199/246*.

¹³⁷ Lansdowne to Bertie (confidential), November 20, 1903, FO 421/199/264; Lansdowne to Monson (confidential), November 25, 1903, FO 421/199/288.

¹³⁸ McGregor to Graves, December 6, 1903, FO 294/28/156.

beneficial to the inhabitants or desirable from the point of view of the Government sending them out.”¹³⁹ In Vienna, Count Goluchowski said his government would be “delighted” to see British officers deployed, “but they consider it would be a mistake to send any officers out to Constantinople until the General for the organization of the gendarmerie had been nominated.” He reasoned that an early deployment might produce “great confusion.”¹⁴⁰ Likely sensing British impatience, Goluchowski assured the British that Austria-Hungary was determined to hold the Ottoman government to its commitment to the reforms.¹⁴¹ In St. Petersburg, Count Lamsdorff was pressing the ambassadors at Constantinople to expedite the reform process, and to see to it that the Ottomans nominated a general to command the gendarmerie in light of the fact that spring was only three months away.¹⁴² Lansdowne was also maintaining the pressure, arguing for a British staff officer to be appointed to represent Britain at Constantinople as soon as the General had been appointed.¹⁴³ He was resolved to continue his push to expedite the reforms in the new year.

In assessing their approach to the Mürzsteg Reform Program just prior to the Christmas of 1903, Balfour and Lansdowne were relatively content with their work to date. Although the shape and scale of the pending European force had not taken the form of a contingent of military attachés to be rapidly deployed, Balfour was nevertheless pleased:

Now that we have got our way about the foreign Military Attaches in Macedonia, and this without causing any friction with the two Eastern Powers, do you not think that the time is approaching when we might with advantage suggest some kind of financial control over the disturbed vilayets? The Oriental tax-gatherer is the root of all evil, and if Europe could establish some kind of decent fiscal administration it would enormously benefit the populations concerned, it would do more than anything else to tranquilize the district. Will you turn it over in your mind?¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 17, 1903, FO 78/5271/776.

¹⁴⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, December 5, 1903, FO 7/1342/352.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Scott to Lansdowne, December 16, 1903, FO 65/1663/157.

¹⁴³ Lansdowne to Monson, December 16, 1903, FO 421/199/371.

¹⁴⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 22, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 499728.

Lansdowne concurred with the prime minister that they should try to establish “some financial control mechanism in Macedonia.” Lansdowne reminded Balfour that he had “pounced upon” the absence of financial control in the Mürzsteg Reform Program and promised to keep the matter relevant in the future.¹⁴⁵

It is not surprising that the leadership of the British executive would deduce that the root of the trouble in Macedonia was a lack of proper fiscal administration. Financial ineptitude at the state level was seemingly chronic in the region. The Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Bulgaria were all facing ongoing struggles with European creditors and the British government was involved in attempts to solve these financial difficulties. Furthermore, the events of the preceding months had produced considerable documentation of the consequences of the Ottoman’s financial troubles. A lack of pay and proper rations had made some Ottoman troops vulnerable to the temptation of pillage. Financial constraints had motivated the mobilization of less paid or unpaid irregular troops, which had had disastrous results. The Ottoman state lacked the money to buy readily available flour in order to feed its starving, displaced or ill-housed subjects, and was reliant on foreign aid. This provided an ongoing reminder of the humanitarian corollary that stemmed from poor fiscal administration. It stood to reason that penetrating financial reform was the key to stabilizing the Ottoman Empire on a number of levels, including the security situation in Macedonia. However, achieving such reform would not be easy and pressing geopolitical issues also threatened to derail the course of the fragile reform process.

The emerging concern for the British was gathering storm in the Far East, which had set Russia’s and Britain’s ally Japan on course for war. Balfour told Lansdowne he did not think the war would end well for Japan. He did not think it likely that Japan could land troops on the Asian mainland and surmised that the Japanese were in a “very helpless position.”¹⁴⁶ War in the Far East might lead to a Russian attempt to send its Black Sea fleet through the Dardanelle Straits and into the Eastern Mediterranean. Such a move would be in contravention of the Straits Treaty and a direct challenge to Britain. The fact the Russian torpedo boats had passed through the straits recently without

¹⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 23, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 499728.

¹⁴⁶ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 22, 1903, BP, Add. MSS. 499728.

consequences presented more cause for British concern. The British were prepared to take a stand on the issue. The Russians were informed that no breach of the Straits Treaty would go unchallenged, and Balfour instructed Lansdowne to make sure the Mediterranean Fleet had adequate force at its disposal and instructions for engagement should it have to take action.¹⁴⁷

Another enduring British concern was a sudden occupation of the Balkans by Austria-Hungary and Russia. The British feared this possibility occurring if the reform process broke down or if the two powers saw fit to intervene in the event of war between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.¹⁴⁸ The Italians were growing increasingly fearful of an Austro-Hungarian advance in the Balkans. In November, the Italian foreign minister, Tommaso Tittoni, warned: "Italy will proceed with the tact and energy which this important problem demands without nevertheless forgetting that she also has in the East traditions, interests and rights to safeguard."¹⁴⁹ The Italians made overtures to form an Anglo-Italian strategy to meet an Austro-Hungarian advance, but the British were more circumspect. They preferred a multilateral response to Ottoman recalcitrance towards the reforms. The use of "European machinery" was also their preferred course of action in the event of an Ottoman-Bulgarian conflict. Such a war might present uncomfortable difficulties such as interventions to reverse Bulgarian gains, which Balfour called "difficult and impolitic."¹⁵⁰ There were advantages to the creation of a "Big Bulgaria" for Great Britain, but the risks outweighed the benefits. As Balfour literally underlined, the creation of a "big Bulgaria...could not and should not be the aim of diplomacy in existing circumstances" (underlined in original).¹⁵¹

The situation intensified with the Japanese attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet in Port Arthur on February 8, 1904. The possibility of Russia's Black Sea Fleet requesting passage through the Dardanelle Straits reverberated through British circles and was

¹⁴⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 19, 1904, BP, Add. MSS. 499728.

¹⁴⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 9, 1903, FO 78/5272/191.

¹⁴⁹ Rodd to Lansdowne, November 16, 1903, FO 45/874/232.

¹⁵⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, February 22, 1904, BP, Add. MSS. 499728.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Balfour also considered that an enlarged Bulgaria would create "international difficulties" (likely reminiscent of 1878) and hardships for Muslims and Patriarchists who found themselves with the borders of the state. However, he was complementary of the racial qualities of the Bulgarians and thought they would be more effective guardians of the Dardanelle Straits than the Ottomans.

raised in the House of Commons.¹⁵² However, in St. Petersburg, Ambassador Scott reported that there was “not the slightest inclination here of any such intension on the part of the Russian Government.”¹⁵³ In a meeting with Count Lamsdorff on February 15, the Russian Foreign Minister informed Scott that he had made it clear to the Ottoman Ambassador and the Bulgarian Agent that the Russians would remain vigilant to their commitments to the Mürzsteg Reform Program.¹⁵⁴

If Lamsdorff assured the Italian Ambassador of Russian vigilance to, the Italian government did not think much of it. The outbreak of the war caused the Italians to fears that Austria-Hungary would take the opportunity to exert itself in the Balkans and, possibly occupy Ottoman territory as far south as Salonica. Speaking to Ambassador Bertie in strict confidence, Foreign Minister Tittoni spoke favourably of his conversations with Lansdowne during a recent state visit. Tittoni pointed out that English and Italian interests in the Near East were identical and that both nations favoured status quo plus reform for Macedonia. In the event of an Austro-Hungarian advance into Ottoman territory, Tittoni asked whether the British Government would consider joint British-Italian naval action as a counter move which had with the potential to occupy “some Turkish ports on the West Coast of Macedonia.”¹⁵⁵ In addition, Tittoni said he was seeking French assistance and warned that Italy could not act alone.¹⁵⁶

The British, too, had concerns about a possible Austro-Hungarian foray into Ottoman territory. However, Lansdowne thought the Italian fears were not merited. The evidence looked rather flimsy, even though Tittoni maintained that he had received “authentic information” from sources in Berlin and Vienna and that the newly appointed Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Rome was known to hold anti-Italian views.¹⁵⁷ Lansdowne did not see corroborating evidence in Austro-Hungarian diplomacy and expressed his opinion to Ambassador Bertie:

¹⁵² *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 129 (1904): 1291-1292.

¹⁵³ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), February 4, 1904, FO 65/1678/47.

¹⁵⁴ Scott to Lansdowne, February 17, 1903, FO 65/1678/47.

¹⁵⁵ Bertie to Lansdowne, February 10, 1904, FO 45/889.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

As to the Italian apprehension of Austrian designs on Macedonia, I cannot help feeling some doubt whether there is really much group for them. Austrian diplomacy seems to me to be of a very haphazard description, and I see no indication that they have matured, and are ready at the proper moment to push a really ambitious scheme of territorial expansion.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, Austria-Hungary was still beset with internal difficulties that had had ramifications for its military. The Hungarian parliament had recently refused to vote on a motion to procure more funding for new military recruits. Five military riots related to this issue had taken place as of mid February. As The Earl of Lytton pointed out in the House of Lords, both Russia and Austria-Hungary were preoccupied with matters that drew their respective attentions away from Macedonia. The Austro-Hungarians appeared more poised to ignore Macedonia and the reforms than to launch a military venture into the territory.¹⁵⁹

With respect to British public opinion, the events of February produced some shortly lived excitement that was for the most part complementary to the British policy towards Macedonia. At the opening of the parliamentary session on February 2, 1904, the government formally presented its latest Blue Books: *Turkey No. 4 (1903)* and *Turkey No.1 (1904)*, which presented dispatches from March to October 1903.¹⁶⁰ Lansdowne was quick to remind the House of Lords that, “as the Papers which have been laid on the Table” show, the government had “spared no efforts” to make the Mürzsteg Reform Program as effective as possible under the circumstances, and had reserved the right to “take into consideration and propose alternatives and more far-reaching measures.”¹⁶¹

Spirited debate ensued in the House of Lords on February 15, but the tone towards the government was supportive. Most of those who spoke made references to the Blue Books. The sharpest critic, The Earl of Lytton, prefaced his words by acknowledging that: “I agree that the noble Marquess has shown himself throughout these negotiations to the Minister most in earnest in seeking for reform—a matter for

¹⁵⁸ Lansdowne to Bertie, February 16, 1904, FO 800/133.

¹⁵⁹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 129 (1904): 1274.

¹⁶⁰ As discussed in Chapter 5, *Turkey No. 4* had been hastily put together in October of 1903 and its contents made available to the press.

¹⁶¹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 129 (1904): 40.

which we owe him a great debt of gratitude. I only intervene, therefore to state the effect which the Blue-book has had upon myself.”¹⁶² The Earl of Aberdeen voiced his support: “We want to strengthen the hands of the noble Marquess in whatever action he may take on behalf of His Majesty’s Government in pressing for reforms.”¹⁶³ The Lord Bishop of Rochester expressed his hope that Lansdowne would be true to “the best instincts of English feeling and the noblest parts of British tradition” and prevail on the other powers to establish in Macedonia “a real rule, impartial, ordered, and strong, and so bring about the deliverance of these unhappy peoples.”¹⁶⁴ The only thing any of the Lords who spoke really demanded from the government was more information.¹⁶⁵ When his turn came, Lansdowne made a few points of rebuttal, often with references to the Blue Books. His first words expressed near delight about the sentiments being debated, as it was clear there was support for British policy:

My Lords, I feel sure that there can be but one opinion in this House as to the value of the debate to which we have just had the privilege of listening; and although there are, no doubt, some occasions when Ministers would gladly be spared the trouble of stating a Government case, I certainly feel that upon this occasion the speeches which have been delivered will strengthen our hands and give us courage in the course which we have been endeavouring to pursue, and I think also place us in a better position to pursue it with success.¹⁶⁶

Although the upsurge of concern about Macedonia in February of 1904 would prove to be short-lived, Lansdowne and Balfour considered contingencies in the event that the Balkans were further destabilized. On February 20, Lansdowne discussed the situation in Macedonia with the French Ambassador. He reasoned that in the event of the breakdown of the Mürzsteg Reform Program and the likely renewal of hostilities in Macedonia, Britain would be compelled to intervene. To that end, Lansdowne hoped to enlist French support. Lansdowne foresaw two possible outcomes: Macedonia would join a “Big Bulgaria” or Macedonia would be “given an autonomous regime under a Governor virtually independent of the Sultan.”¹⁶⁷ The French Ambassador concurred with

¹⁶² Ibid., 1269.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 1278.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 1282.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 1293.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 1282.

¹⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Monson (confidential), February 20, 1903, FO 421/201/217.

Lansdowne and considered autonomy to be a more likely outcome due to the likelihood that Austria-Hungary and Russia would block a “Big Bulgaria” and Russia might be happy to “be relieved” of its responsibility for Macedonia. The ambassador called for a conference and said he personally favoured an autonomous Macedonia with its own independent Governor and a financial system that gave the Macedonians financial control independent of the Ottoman government. He saw the support of a limited number of international troops on the ground as critical to the achievement of these goals.¹⁶⁸ Lansdowne quickly conveyed to his ambassador in Rome that he had been “led to suppose that it would not be unacceptable to the French Government” to pursue an autonomous solution for Macedonia in the event of the failure of the Mürzsteg reforms.¹⁶⁹ Ambassador Bertie sent a secret reply the next day reporting that Tittoni “entirely concurred” with the idea.¹⁷⁰

The British moves produced a quick response from the Austro-Hungarians. In a lengthy visit with Ambassador Plunkett in Vienna, Count Khevenhüller maintained that Austria-Hungary had no intention of advancing its interests in the Balkans at Russian expense, and would not stand for Italian moves against the Albanian coast.¹⁷¹ In a separate, secret dispatch, Plunkett stated that he believed Austria-Hungary and Russia “honestly desire the maintenance of the present *status quo* in the Balkans, and do not at all yet foresee that this cannot be preserved.” In his estimation, both powers would strenuously resist autonomy for Macedonia.¹⁷² Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, maintained a much more reserved stand on Macedonian autonomy than his ambassador in London. He stated that France, by virtue of its understanding with Russia, considered it premature to consider any policy other than the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans. Delcassé also said that the Russians thought a breakdown of conditions in Macedonia unlikely and “especially dreaded” the prospect of British intervention.¹⁷³ The Russian ambassador subsequently made it clear to Lansdowne that his government

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Bertie, February, 23, 1904, FO 421/201/237.

¹⁷⁰ Bertie to Lansdowne (secret), February 24, 1904, FO 45/889/30

¹⁷¹ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), February 25, 1904, FO 7/1551/41; Plunkett to Lansdowne, February 25, 1903, FO 7/1551/44. Plunkett knew Count Khevenhüller from a past posting in Brussels.

¹⁷² Plunkett to Lansdowne (secret), February 25, 1904, FO 7/1551/45.

¹⁷³ Lansdowne to Monson (very confidential), February 25, 1904, FO 421/201/253.

remained firmly committed to the Mürzsteg Reform Program and its resolve would not weaken in light of events in the Far East.¹⁷⁴

There is some evidence that the Austro-Hungarians, Russians, and French believed the British idea for the establishment of Macedonian autonomy was as much an alternative to the status quo as it was a contingency plan. The French said they would only consider alternatives to the status quo in the event that the failure of the reform appeared ‘inevitable.’ Otherwise, they thought “it was premature to take any action upon this assumption.” Lansdowne was quick to reply that Britain had no nefarious intentions:

I said that we certainly had no such designs, and that we also considered ourselves bound to give the scheme of the two Powers everyday chance of success. We ought, however, I thought, to be prepared for the emergency with which we might be confronted if the scheme showed signs of breaking down.¹⁷⁵

Likewise, Lansdowne affirmed Britain’s loyal support for Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the reform scheme to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, emphasizing that in the event an intervention became necessary, it should involve multilateral cooperation to reach “an effectual solution.”¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne also ensured the Russian ambassador of Britain’s support and made it clear that intervention and autonomy were strictly contingencies to be considered in the event of the imminent breakdown of the situation in Macedonia:

We believed...that should events render the intervention of the other Powers inevitable, we should, all of us, be found desirous of discovering a solution which, without a disturbance of the territorial status quo, would save the Balkans Peninsula from the disaster of a further conflict. It was with this object, and not with any idea of intriguing against the two Powers, that we approached the consideration of alternative measures.¹⁷⁷

The underlying motivation for the British plan for Macedonian autonomy is also a historiographical point that merits discussion. Radovich calls Macedonian autonomy a British policy.¹⁷⁸ Samardjiev goes further, arguing that the notion of autonomy was aimed

¹⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Scott, March 4, 1904, FO 421/202/21.

¹⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Monson (very confidential), February 25, 1903, FO 421/201/253.

¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Plunkett, February 24, 1903, FO 421/201/245.

¹⁷⁷ Lansdowne to Scott, March 4, 1904, FO 421/202/21.

¹⁷⁸ Radovich, “Britain’s Macedonian Reform Policy,” 502.

to undermine the “privileged position” of Austria-Hungary and Russia. According to Samardjiev: “Quite obviously, the main objective of the action launched by [the] Foreign Office was to undermine their alliance. Macedonia’s autonomy was largely used as the necessary pretext to challenge the political status quo in favour of Great Britain.”¹⁷⁹ Samardjiev cites a conversation in which the French ambassador informed Lansdowne that, “in his private opinion,” it had been a mistake for the other powers to commit themselves to Russia and Austria-Hungary on Macedonia.¹⁸⁰

Although the British certainly sought to influence the production of more effective reforms, it seems a bit of stretch to suggest they wished to “undermine” the Austro-Russian alliance. As mentioned, Lansdowne affirmed Britain’s support for Austro-Russian leadership of the reforms in his communication with the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors. While it would be expected that Lansdowne would withhold any ulterior motives in these conversations, it is significant that he made the same points in a documented conversation with the French Ambassador marked “Very Confidential.” In response to the French Ambassador’s remarks, Lansdowne said he did not wish to act prematurely and that any intervention measures that were under discussion should only be adopted “in the event of a catastrophe becoming imminent.” Lansdowne emphasized this point at the end of the communication:

I said that I hoped this Excellency would understand that I had not suggested any action inimical either to Austria or Russia. Both Powers had placed on record an admission that the scheme might prove insufficient and require to be expanded. If the other Signatory Powers intervened, I thought we should endeavour to do so as supporters of a policy in which we might all agree to take part.¹⁸¹

Lansdowne’s language does not indicate the intent to undermine Austro-Russian leadership or to initiate action outside the multilateral framework of the reforms. In fact, he goes to some lengths to deny any such intent in a conversation with the French ambassador, whose support for any such action would have been critical. While there may very well have been more to the conversation than was recorded, the private communication between Balfour and Lansdowne reaffirms that the British only

¹⁷⁹ Samardjiev, “On the Role of Public Opinion,” 23.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid; Lansdowne to Monson (very confidential), February 25, 1903, FO 421/201/253.

¹⁸¹ Lansdowne to Monson (very confidential), February 25, 1903, FO 421/201/253.

considered autonomy to be an option should the undesired need for intervention arise. Balfour articulated that he only wished for autonomy if the reform process broke down and after a European intervention had been required.¹⁸² In another letter, he envisioned a coordinated intervention that involved France and Britain taking naval action against the Ottoman Empire to prevent it from invading Bulgaria, while the Austro-Hungarians and Russian restrained the Bulgarians. Nonetheless, and in spite of his reservations about “A and R” and their lack of “any genuine humanitarian instincts,” Balfour reiterated that the British objective was status quo plus reform. He believed the reforms needed to be implemented to circumvent war and reasoned the Austro-Hungarians and Russians were dragging their heels with respects to the reform process for fear that the reforms would weaken their position.¹⁸³ In February of 1904, Macedonian autonomy was a not a British policy, it was a contingency plan. The policy remained status quo plus reform.

What seems most likely is that the British were raising the possibly of intervention contingencies and autonomy for Macedonia in order to reenergize the reform implementation discussions. By mid February, the talks had stalled somewhat over details and territorial allotments, and there were concerns that the European officers would not be deployed by the spring. The fact that Austria-Hungary’s attention was on domestic politics and Russia’s focus was on its war with Japan heightened these concerns. What is more, Great Britain’s alliance with Japan brought Macedonia into focus as the region was a potential contact point between British and Russian forces. This combination of factors attracted public attention in Great Britain and brought Macedonia into the parliamentary debates. The British government had public opinion on its side, but it could not afford to be complacent.

In parliament and in its diplomacy, the British government stated its faith in the Mürzsteg reforms while urging the deployment of European officers tasked to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie that was to be expedited. In affirming Britain’s support to the Austro-Hungarians ambassador, Lansdowne emphasized that he considered the most important matter to be the gendarmerie: “If satisfactory progress could be made with this I thought there was some chance of maintaining peace, but I owned that I felt something

¹⁸² Balfour to Lansdowne, February 22, 1904, BP, Add. MSS 49728.

¹⁸³ Balfour to Lansdowne, February 28, 1904, BP, Add. MSS 49728.

like despair at the slow progress which was being achieved.”¹⁸⁴ He also conveyed his hope that the Austro-Hungarians would be aware of the strength of British feelings on the reforms to the Russian ambassador: “There was a growing feeling of impatience in this country in regard to it, and unless we were soon in a position to announce that the reorganization was proceeding we should be confronted with an irresistible demand for stronger measures.”¹⁸⁵ Lansdowne’s message to the House of Lords was similar:

If the gendarmerie can be reorganized, it is not too much to hope that the people of the Balkan Peninsula who are watching these events with so much anxiety may be reassured, and may be content to abstain from any action calculated to produce a fresh crisis at the beginning of the spring. I may be too sanguine, but I do earnestly hope that the experiment which is not being tried, and to which we are to some extent committed, will be given a fair trial. If it be, and if, after having received such a trial, fails to produce the results which we anticipate then I think noble Lords will be amply justified in reminding the Government of the pledges which they have given, and in calling upon them to put forward more drastic and more thorough measures of reform for these long-suffering provinces.¹⁸⁶

The February crisis passed, and the reform talks proceeded. By spring, Lansdowne was satisfied that Russia’s Black Sea Fleet would remain beyond the Bosphorus and the European officers were arriving for duty.¹⁸⁷

The details of the intervention were established through negotiations that took place between January and April of 1904. The British were hopeful that the gendarmes would speedily deploy, but concerned that the reforms would not be implemented quickly enough and that the European assessors and officers would not be invested with sufficient authority to execute their tasks. The negotiation process gave reason for these concerns. As the terms of Müzzsteg called for Great Power administration to supersede select parts of Ottoman governance, the Ottoman government, understandably, saw Müzzsteg as a violation of their sovereignty. With the operational details and roles of the European officers yet to be established, the Ottoman resistance mounted. To compound matters, differences between the powers arose, especially over territorial allotments.

¹⁸⁴ Lansdowne to Plunkett, February 24, 1903, FO 421/201/245.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid; Lansdowne to Scott, March 4, 1904, FO 421/202/21.

¹⁸⁶ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates* 129 (1904): 1288-1289.

¹⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 11, 1904, BP. Add. MSS 49728.

Great Power unity had imposed the Mürzsteg Reform Program on the Ottoman state, but divisions would hinder its execution.

The first to arrive were the two assessors or civil agents who were tasked with accompanying Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha in accordance with Article I of the reforms. Both of these men had experience as diplomats in the region. The Russian, N. Demerik, was the current Consul-General in Beirut and had had a prior posting in Monastir. His Austro-Hungarian counterpart, Heinrich Müller, was currently employed in the foreign office in Vienna and was well-versed in Slavic languages thanks to diplomatic postings in Bosnia and Odessa.¹⁸⁸ After some pressure was applied on the Ottoman Government, an Italian, Lieutenant-General Emilio De Giorgis, was nominated to lead the European officers. De Giorgis had no experience in the Balkan region, but was said to be a very cerebral and diligent officer who had published a series of articles on infantry tactics.¹⁸⁹

The Civil Agents and De Giorgis made their way to Salonica in late January of 1904. Once in the city, they met regularly with Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha over the course of three weeks. Graves reported that “Turkish circles” in the city saw the role of the Civil Agents as “purely nominal” and lacking the authority of an Imperial Iradé, which would give them the right to interfere in Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s business.¹⁹⁰ After a fortnight of talks, the exact status of the Civil Agents remained unclear. Demerik informed Graves that their relations with Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha were “excellent,” and they were impressed by the Inspector General’s “intelligence, courtesy, and remarkable industry.” Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha reportedly spent much of the meetings extolling the reforms he claimed to have already accomplished.¹⁹¹ Müller was much less optimistic. He told Graves he considered that Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was evading the need to deal with important issues and had produced mostly “paper” reforms. While Müller reportedly appreciated the Inspector General’s “industry, intelligence, and conciliatory disposition, he did not find him the stuff of which great reformers are made.”¹⁹² The Civil Agents would struggle to

¹⁸⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, December 9, 1903, FO 78/5271/817; Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 150.

¹⁸⁹ Bertie to Lansdowne, January 4, 1903, FO 45/889/1.

¹⁹⁰ Graves to O’Conor, February 4, 1903, FO 195/2182/11.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Graves to O’Conor, February 6, 1903, FO 195/2182/13.

assert themselves against the boundaries of Ottoman power, which meant that much of what they saw, who they spoke to, and the information they received was controlled by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, if not the Ottoman government. The Civil Agents received hundreds of written and spoken requests from Christian peasants, but could only exercise a moral influence on Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, who was duty bound to report to them. Their presence did little to sooth the anxieties of the Christian peasants.¹⁹³ The intervention was off to a slow and uncertain start.

While the Civil Agents got to work in Salonica, details about the reform of the gendarmerie were being negotiated in Constantinople. De Giorgis arrived on February 1 and was hastily outfitted in an Ottoman uniform before being presented to the Sultan.¹⁹⁴ He was soon joined by select staff officers and military attachés from each of the Great Power nations. Meeting at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, General De Giorgis¹⁹⁵ and the assembled representatives from the six Great Powers formed a military commission that sought to turn Article II of the Müritzsteg Reform Program into reality. Lieutenant-Colonel Fairholme was the man the British selected to be their Staff Officer at Constantinople. Fairholme had been serving as military attaché at the British Embassy in Vienna. He would be accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell, the intrepid British military attaché in Constantinople. De Giorgis hoped to complete the proceedings before the end of February. However, it would take until April for the powers and with the Ottoman Government to reach a level of agreement that would allow the European officers to begin their duties.

The British priorities were—as they had been in the past—to expedite the process to allow the European officers to arrive and begin their duties quickly and to ensure the European officers would be invested with sufficient power to do their work effectively. From the outset, the British tended to compromise on some issues for the sake of getting the men on the ground quickly. Before the talks began, O’Conor advised that it would be unwise to lobby for the inclusion of the Vilayet of Adrianople in the reform program because it would stall getting the reforms introduced quickly into the

¹⁹³ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 154.

¹⁹⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February 1, 1904, FO 78/5339/15.

¹⁹⁵ Upon appointment to the Ottoman Gendarmerie, the European officers were temporarily had their rank raised one rank higher than what they held in their home country’s service.

Macedonian vilayets. He also advised against trying to include Albanian territories.¹⁹⁶ Lansdowne was concerned with “the financial side of the question” and he instructed O’Conor to have Fairholme pay attention to the matter during the talks. Like Balfour, his reading of the consular reports had led him to conclude that financial issues were at root of the malice:

It is clear that no police force can be expected to perform its duties satisfactorily, and fulfill the main objects of its existence, unless its members, whether officers or men, are punctually and adequately paid, and provided with the necessary rations, clothing, and accommodation in such a manner as not to become a burden and grievance to the population.¹⁹⁷

The starting point for the implementation talks was an outline plan that had been created by Colonel Giesel, the Austro-Hungarian military attaché in Constantinople. Giesel used the structure of the existing gendarmerie force, which was broken down in accordance with administrative geography of Macedonia, with regiments for each vilayet, battalions for each sancak, and companies organized at the kaza level. Giesel planned for European officers to assume command at the battalion level, with some 54 officers in command, supported by 140 sergeants and two non-commissioned officers for each company. The Europeans were to serve in the Ottoman force for three years in Ottoman military uniform and to assume a rank one level above the rank they currently held in their country. In the hope of finding men who would not be strangers to the region, Giesel suggested the recruitment of Austro-Hungarian officers with experience in Bosnia, Russians with service in the Caucasus, and Italian *carabinieri*, presumably those who had served on Crete. Ideally, the men would be fluent in a Slavic language. With regards to the Ottoman force, Giesel’s plan called for the recruitment of Ottoman army veterans who had an understanding of local language and were in sound metal and physical condition. Ideally, the religion of the gendarmes would correspond to the religions of the local population. Giesel looked to recent history in incorporating the regulations of the reformation of the Cretan gendarmerie, which were drafted in 1897 in order to elevate the status and morale of the gendarmes. The proposed annual

¹⁹⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, January 29, 1904, FO 78/5339/14.

¹⁹⁷ Lansdowne to O’Conor, January 19, 1904, FO 421/201/81. O’Conor assured Lansdowne that the financial question would be addressed in the course of the discussion of the administrative reforms. See: O’Conor to Lansdowne, January 29, 1904, FO 78/5339/14.

operating budget of 250,000 Turkish pounds would double officers' salaries.¹⁹⁸ After the Ottoman government had accepted the Mürzsteg Reforms Program, Giesel drafted a second paper suggesting that the terms of the deployment of the European officers be guided by three principles: "adherence to the provisions of Article II of Mürzsteg, use of existing gendarmerie organization for simplicity, and awareness of the Ottoman Empire's precarious finances."¹⁹⁹ Giesel also advised that the powers start to assert their influence modestly by concentrating on the gendarmerie units in the centres closest to the conflicts in Monastir, Strumica, and Uscub.²⁰⁰

British impatience with the process was evident even before the discussions began. In late January, Lansdowne telegraphed O'Connor requesting immediate notification of when the British officers would be needed and details of the terms of service and pay, as well as the ranks of officer required.²⁰¹ On February 5, O'Connor had an audience with Sultan Abdülhamîd, which he used to urge the speedy implementation of the gendarmerie reorganization and the procurement of the necessary funds for the force. As O'Connor elaborated, there was no better way in which the Sultan could demonstrate his desire to see the reforms succeed than "if he would interest himself personally in the prompt settlement of the financial question, the good effect of such action would at once be noticeable in Macedonia and Bulgaria and in Europe generally."²⁰² Lansdowne was wary of Ottoman explanations and given that spring was beginning, he asked his ambassador during the first week of the implementation talks if the British officers could be sent to Constantinople or Salonica as soon as possible.²⁰³ A week later, Lansdowne again requested information on conditions of service, as questions were forthcoming in parliament.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 33-34.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 36.

²⁰¹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, January 27, 1904, FO 421/201/97.

²⁰² O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 5, 1904, FO 78/5339/18. The Sultan was agreeable but complained of the one-sidedness of the criticism and defended the Ottoman Empire's fiscal and reform records. See: O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 5, 1904, FO 78/5329/68.

²⁰³ Lansdowne to O'Connor, February 13, 1904, FO 421/201/152.

²⁰⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, February 20, 1904, FO 421/201/215.

Once talks began they were riven by disagreements between the powers and resistance from the Ottoman Empire. Broadly speaking, the issues of contention revolved around two central points: the command and structure of the gendarmerie and the territorial jurisdictions of the European powers in Macedonia. The issue of command and control quickly brought the British into conflict with the conservative powers, particularly Austria-Hungary. The question was whether General De Giorgis was to “be in actual command” or was “to be merely the supreme officer for the reorganization of gendarmerie.”²⁰⁵ De Giorgis and the staff officers had debated the matter and resolved that the best way to ensure the success of the reforms was for the general to command the gendarmerie. However, matters were complicated when the Ottoman government appointed one of its own officers, Lieutenant-General Mustafa Hilmi Pasha, as commander of the gendarmerie. Fairholme had dissented from the initial consensus, arguing that it would be impossible to convince the Ottomans to be commanded by foreigners. Fairholme estimated that the goals of the reform could best be reached by “retaining the principle that our officers should merely control, instruct, and organize, than by attempting to introduce a system repugnant to Moslem feeling, without having at our back the means of really enforcing it.”²⁰⁶ O’Conor was in agreement, thinking it best not to risk the success of the reforms by pressing the point, and acknowledging the difficulty of placing Christian officers in command of a force which was 75 per cent Muslim. Furthermore, he considered that news of the reforms had “not unnaturally” provoked “the fanaticism” of the empire’s Muslim population.²⁰⁷

When the question of command came to a vote, the results were split with Great Britain, France, and Italy voting for control and General Di Giorgis expressing his willingness to renounce direct command. The result upset the Austro-Hungarians, and they sent their ambassador to discuss the matter with Lansdowne, who reiterated the points made by O’Conor and Fairholme and added that he did not wish to see the success of the reforms or the welfare of the European officers compromised.²⁰⁸ Given Britain’s repeated urgings to make the reforms as strong as possible, it is somewhat

²⁰⁵ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February, 17 1904, FO 78/5329/100.

²⁰⁶ Fairholme to O’Conor, February 16, 1904, FO 78/5329/100.

²⁰⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, February 17, 1904, FO 78/5329/100.)

²⁰⁸ Lansdowne to Plunkett, February 26, 1904, FO 421/201/261.

surprising that the British were prepared to opt for control instead of command.²⁰⁹ However, the first British priority was expediency: getting men on the ground as soon as possible, so Britain's decision is understandable. Moreover, the British knew very well there that the powers did not share the collective will to galvanize the coercive force necessary to secure powers of command for General Di Giorgis.²¹⁰ The British may very well have suspected that reason Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany supported the command position was because they knew the Ottomans would oppose it, which would slow down the progress of the reforms. However, there is no evidence to suggest this was the case.

Following the debate over command and control, the British were content to play a supportive role in the military commissions' negotiations with the Ottoman government. In late February, the commission prepared a six-point plan for the organization of the Ottoman gendarmerie in accordance with Article II of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The points included a call for financial guarantees from the Ottoman Bank that sufficient funds would be available for the reorganization; written guarantees that the Ottoman gendarmes and the appointed European officers would be paid according to regulations; the establishment of a general command and a school; the creation and distribution of uniforms, and; the stipulation that orders issued by the Ottoman authorities to its gendarmes would also be communicated to the European officers.²¹¹ Articles II and III were particularly controversial:

2. The recognition by the Porte of the executive power of the General and the Foreign Officers namely: (a) the power of transmitting orders and denouncing those who do not obey; (b) the power to remove officers from the gendarmerie of the three vilayets as well as Ottoman soldiers with insufficient physical, intellectual or ethical qualities, and whose behaviour or discipline would cause complaints.

2a. Ottoman officers and soldiers who for any reason are excluded from the gendarmerie in the three vilayets will be transferred elsewhere and leave the territory without delay.

3. Written consent of the Porte for the employment of foreign officers and non-commissioned officers that the Military Commission judges

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Fairholme to O'Connor, February 16, 1904, FO 78/5329/100.

²¹¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 26, 1904, FO 78/5329/128.

necessary for the reorganization of the gendarmerie, and the maintenance of these officers and non-commissioned officers in their duties for two years.²¹²

General Di Giorgis communicated the six points to the ambassadors before the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassador presented them to the Ottoman government on February 29, 1904. On March 3, the Ottoman government rejected the Military Commission's six points. The government maintained that the points were an infringement on its sovereign rights and prestige, especially since they would give General Di Giorgis the capacity to use his executive power to denounce and remove Ottoman gendarmes and facilitate the employment of foreign non-commissioned officers. Ambassadors Calice and Zinoviev responded quickly, insisting that the Ottoman government accept the points, but the Ottomans were defiant.²¹³

Once again, the implementation of reforms appeared to be in jeopardy. Rumours circulated that the Austro-Hungarians were considering a military demonstration in the Sancak of Novi Pazar. The Austro-Hungarian ambassador denied the rumour but pointed out that his country had the right under the Berlin Treaty to occupy parts of Novi Pazar, if it felt the action warranted.²¹⁴ In Sofia, General Petroff suspected that the Austro-Hungarians might be planning to occupy northern Macedonia in conjunction with a Russian foray into the Vilayet of Adrianople in order to monopolize the execution of the reforms. This possibility was not discounted by the acting Vice-Consul in Sofia or the British Military Attaché.²¹⁵ Not surprisingly, the rumour appears to have originally come via the Ottoman ambassador in Rome.²¹⁶

The wheels of diplomacy were soon turning. In London, Lansdowne notified the French and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors that Britain was prepared to join the other

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 5, 1904, FO 78/5330/147. The Austro-Russian note was presented to the Ottoman Government on March 5, 1904, at which time it was also circulated to the Great Power embassies along with the full text the Ottoman government's note. The document contains the full text of both notes in French.

²¹⁴ Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 9, 1903, FO 421/202/52.

²¹⁵ Buchanan to Lansdowne, March 12, 1904, FO 78/5362/15. Vice-Consul Buchanan referenced Ambassador's O'Connor's belief that a secret military clause existed in the Austro-Russian Agreement, which "may possibly have reference to this apprehended Austrian intervention in Macedonia."

²¹⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne (secret), March 8, 1904, FO 78/5330/153.

powers in imposing force upon the Ottoman government.²¹⁷ In Vienna, Count Goluchowski indicated that a naval demonstration “might possibly become necessary.”²¹⁸ In Constantinople, O’Conor engaged in a point-by-point discussion with the Grand Vizier on March 8, and, a few days later, was requested to inform the Sultan that Britain would not yield to the ongoing “dilatatory tactics” of the Ottoman state.²¹⁹ However, Great Power solidarity was broken when the German government sided with the Ottomans, arguing that the Military Commission’s demands were not in keeping with the spirit of Mürzsteg. They said it would be impossible for the Sultan to agree to terms that allowed Christian officers from foreign countries to command Ottoman troops and requested a modification of the points that took Islam into consideration.²²⁰

Hoping that a few modifications would be sufficient to attain Ottoman approval, the Military Commission produced a four-point explanatory note on March 15, 1904. The number of foreign officers was limited to sixty and they were to be deployed gradually, with foreign non-commissioned officers being excluded from the reforms. The foreign staff officers (adjoints) were to have their roles limited to being “inspectors, instructors, and organizers.”²²¹ They were:

not to give direct orders to the Ottoman members of the force, but will transmit their instructions to the latter through the foreign officers who are to enter the Ottoman service. Also it is made clear they there is no intention of getting rid of Ottoman officers and sergeants in order to fill their places with foreigners.²²²

²¹⁷ Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 11, 1904, FO 421/202/59; Lansdowne to Monson, March 11, 1904, FO 421/202/60.

²¹⁸ Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), March 9, 1904, FO 7/1551/60.

²¹⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor (confidential), March 13, 1904, FO 421/202/65.

²²⁰ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 165. Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 41. The Germans sent word to the Austro-Hungarians that they would not join in a coercion of the Ottoman Empire the same day the Ottomans issued their note of rejection (March 5) and sent follow up communications over the next few days. The British appear to have learned of the German representations rather late, with O’Conor only telegraphing news that the Germans had made “some sort of representations” at Vienna at St. Petersburg on March 15. See: O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 15, 1904, FO 78/5339/90.

²²¹ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 42.

²²² Fairholme to O’Conor, March 15, 1903, FO 78/5330/177. The full text of the document (in French) is enclosed in the document.

The foreign officers would not be given the power to dismiss Ottoman gendarmes. Instead, they would only be able to suggest that such men be transferred out of Macedonia.²²³

The Ottoman Government again registered its disapproval. It expressed determination to resist any executive powers being granted to General Di Giorgis and his staff officers and wished “to limit the operations of these officers to simply reorganizing the gendarmerie while subordinating them in every way to the Inspector-General Hilmi Pasha.”²²⁴ However, the powers showed greater resolve on this issue. O’Conor maintained that the powers could not compromise any further on executive powers “without emasculating the entire scheme and rendering it quite nugatory.”²²⁵ Calice expressed similar determination, noting that he did not wish to see the role of the foreign officers reduced to the status of “puppets”, which had happened to the Scandinavian and Belgian officers.²²⁶ Calice and Zinoviev strongly insisted that the Ottoman government accept the demands.²²⁷ Further negotiations reduced the number of foreign officers from 60 to 25, on the condition that the number would be increased.²²⁸

The Ottoman government’s response was rather ambiguous. Nevertheless, as far as O’Conor was concerned, it was tantamount to an acceptance:

Inasmuch as the Porte’s reply does not distinctly state that they accept the specific demands of the Ambassadors, it must be considered as more or less unsatisfactory. But, on the other hand, as it only takes formal exception to the number of officers, which are limited to twenty-five, it may be taken to imply that they gave way in regard to the other points, although they do not say so.²²⁹

While the Zinoviev was in agreement with O’Conor, Calice was hesitant and thought more discussion was warranted. O’Conor urged the two ambassadors to avoid further discussion and notify the Ottomans that Di Giorgis and the Staff Officers would

²²³ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 42.

²²⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 19, 1904, FO 78/5330/182.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 166.

²²⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 19, 1904, FO 78/5330/183.

²²⁸ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 166-167.

²²⁹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 26, 1904, FO 78/5330/200. The full text of the Ottoman note of March 24, 1904 (in French) is enclosed in the document.

be proceeding to Macedonia as quickly as possible. As O'Connor saw it, a reduced number of officers was better than no officers at all. He related, "From the news I get from Macedonia I am convinced that every day's delay now adds materially to the danger of the inhabitants losing hope of remedial measures and of the negotiations here being interrupted by the outbreak of a fresh insurrection."²³⁰ To O'Connor and the British, the important thing was to establish the European presence on the ground as soon as possible. They believed that this would stabilize the humanitarian and political situation in the Macedonia. Furthermore, the multilateral presence would make the possibility of a sudden move by Austria-Hungary and/or Russia much less likely.

While the Military Commission had been locked in a diplomatic struggle with the Ottoman government over the terms and conditions of the gendarmerie reform, the European powers had been waging their own internal struggles over which power would be allotted which zone and which parts of the three vilayets would be excluded from the gendarmerie reforms. It was clear from these debates that the powers considered the vilayets to be not only battalion areas, but also spheres of influence. The British maintained a relatively flexible approach to the negotiations. They were wary of the Austro-Hungarians and Russians. Although the British expressed preferences for zones that suited their geo-strategic interests, they were willing to compromise and mediate, and to avoid a hard-line position that would jeopardize the reforms. The British priority was to have the European officers deployed on the ground as soon as possible –the same priority they expressed in their discussions about terms of service for the European officers,

Political interests factored into the territorial allotments for the European officers right from the initial planning stages. When Colonel Giesl created the plans, he envisioned a strong Austro-Hungarian presence in the Vilayet of Kosovo, which was linked to the Sancak of Novi Pazar, which had been occupied by Vienna since 1878. Ambassador Calice foresaw Austro-Hungary and Russia taking advantageous positions that would allow these two powers to dominate the reform project on the ground. However, Count Goluchowski was critical of the approach, fearing that it would foster partition. He argued that it would be wiser if nationally-mixed bodies of European officers

²³⁰ Ibid.

were deployed in the zones to show that the powers were working side-by-side and thereby eliminate competition for particular districts. In revising his plans, Giesl assigned sancaks to a staff officer from each power, with the subordinate officers being drawn from other nationalities to undermine the perception that the zones were spheres of influence.²³¹

The revised plans and Goluchowski's visions were not accepted by the other powers and did not come to fruition. Giesl maintained that units below the battalion level should be homogeneous. The Russians expressed their wish to keep their officers together, arguing that problems would otherwise arise with respect to standards of duty, language, and discipline.²³² The French also thought that the revised plans would cause differences of opinion and worried that "the Turks might find an excuse for evading the reforms in the dissensions which the different systems, language, and customs would be sure to cause."²³³ While the Italian minister for Foreign Affairs was prepared to accept the plan, General Di Giorgis opposed it as did the British officers on the Military Commission and O'Connor, who considered it to be "quite impracticable."²³⁴ The European forces in the zones would be homogeneous and by mid-February, the struggle for desired territory at the negotiation table had commenced.

The exclusion of particular kazas and sancaks was an additional territorial issue. In Giesl's original plan, the predominantly Albanian populated areas on the northern and western fringes of the three vilayets had been excluded. This was for the express purpose of keeping the Italians out of these areas.²³⁵ So long as Austria-Hungary was granted the Sancak of Uscub, the omission of the remaining northern districts of the Vilayet of Kosovo would be inconsequential to Vienna. This was because the districts lay between Uscub and Novi Pazar. Southern parts of the Vilayet of Salonika were also omitted due to their being predominantly ethnic Greek.²³⁶ The Austro-Hungarians secured Russian support for excluding the Albanian populated sancaks in the west of

²³¹ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 35-6.

²³² *Ibid.*, 38.

²³³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 25, 1904, FO 78/5339.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 34.

²³⁶ Fairholme to O'Connor, February 4, 1904, FO 78/5329/90.

the Monastir Vilayet.²³⁷ Giesl's official reasoning was that only regions where the (Macedo-Bulgarian) insurgents had been active were to be subject to reform. When the British and the Italians asked for further explanation, Calice and Zinoviev answered that this reasoning was based on Article III of the Mürzsteg Reform Program.²³⁸ Presumably, these districts were considered sufficiently stable because they had a majority of ethnic Albanians and therefore did not require the presence of European officers. To the contrary, the British knew very well from the intelligence they had gathered that many of the irregulars and Bashi Bazouks who participated in the looting and pillaging in 1903 were ethnic Albanians who hailed from some of the excluded regions. Furthermore, they had reports that the Macedo-Bulgarian population in the Uscub vilayet was opposed to the anticipated Austro-Hungarian presence.²³⁹ However—and very likely for the sake of expediting the reform process—the British did not make further objections, although they would raise the issue of inclusion of the Albanian districts in future.

In mid-February, the question of the allocation of zones was addressed by the Military Commission. Austria-Hungary and Russia respectively made strong claims to Uscub and Salonica. The French expressed their interest in the Serres district to the east and Italy wished to be granted Monastir, leaving Britain with the district of Kochana in the middle of Macedonia, sandwiched between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian zones.²⁴⁰ The Austro-Hungarians had hoped to minimize Italian participation in the gendarmerie reform and keep the Italians housed in the eastern reaches of the three vilayets.²⁴¹ Even though most of the western and southern kazas were excluded from the Monastir sector, the Austro-Hungarians did not wish to see the Italians there, and did not

²³⁷ Fairholme to O'Connor, February 20, 1904, FO 78/5329/106. The areas on the Monastir and Uscub vilayets which were excluded from the gendarmerie reforms were: "The Sandjak of Koritza (except the Kaza of Kastoria). The Sandjak of Elbassan. The western part of the Kaza of Ochrida. Almost the whole of the Sandjaks Dibra and Prisrend. The south-west part of Ipek Sandjak. The Sandjaks of Tashlije and Sienitza."

²³⁸ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 160.

²³⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 26, 1904, FO 78/5339/36.

²⁴⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 15, 1904, FO 78/5339/25.

²⁴¹ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 36. According to Sowards, Giesl's original proposals saw the Russians in northern Sancaks of the Kosovo Vilayet with the Austro-Hungarians in Uscub and the British in Salonica. Since Britain was considered "a friendly Power largely disinterested in Macedonia," Giesl felt the British could be trusted with Salonica. He also envisioned the initial reorganization of the gendarmerie to being undertaken primarily by the British, French, and Austro-Hungarians.

want to see he plan to locate General Di Giorgis' headquarters in the city of Monastir realized. The mid-February allotments also displeased the British.²⁴²

The British quickly decided to make the eastern districts their priority in the allotment of zones. O'Connor reported that Austria-Hungary and Russia appeared bent on securing Uscub and Salonica for themselves. The British representatives on the Military Commission and O'Connor favoured Serres, since its "propinquity to Adrianople Vilayet offers possible advantages."²⁴³ The Italians offered to support the British claim to Serres if Britain backed the Italian claim to Monastir. Lansdowne was in favour of the idea and passed along the view of the Director of Military Intelligence, who expressed a preference for a district "with which we can communicate without being brought too much into contact with the Russia officers."²⁴⁴ Their preferences supported O'Connor's rejection of the landlocked Kochana district.²⁴⁵ With these points in mind, Lansdowne was content to leave the negotiation of territorial allocation to O'Connor and the British members of the Military Commission (Fairholme and Maunsell), because, as he saw it, the negotiations depended largely on "local details."²⁴⁶ O'Connor decided to make the east a priority. In discussions with General De Giorgis, he was able to get the Serres district split, enabling the British to be allotted the easternmost Sancak of Drama while the French got the remainder of Serres.²⁴⁷ Obtaining Drama circumvented a conflict with the French and allowed the British to eye a more strategic allotment in the future. As stated by O'Connor: "Our object is to keep Drama, which, if Adrianople vilayet is subsequently included in the reforms, will be a very important area."²⁴⁸

The French and British concerns were settled relatively quickly, but Austria-Hungary and Italy remained at loggerheads over Italy being allotted Monastir. Both were acutely suspicious of each other's territorial ambitions in the Balkans. Austro-Hungarian

²⁴² Ibid., 38.

²⁴³ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 13, 1904, FO 78/5339/21.

²⁴⁴ Lansdowne to O'Connor, February 16, 1903, FO 421/201/191.

²⁴⁵ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 15, 1904, FO 78/5339/25.

²⁴⁶ Lansdowne to O'Connor, February 16, 1904, FO 421/201/191.

²⁴⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne (confidential), February 19, 1904, FO 78/5329/102; Fairholme to O'Connor (confidential), February 17, 1904, FO 78/5329/102. O'Connor reported that the possibility of Britain getting the Sancak of Drama arose from the decision to abandon the principle of the European officers commanding the gendarmerie. O'Connor does not elaborate on the details.

²⁴⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 21, 1904, FO 78/5339/28.

suspensions were further compounded by the fact that the mission was being led by an Italian officer who had been in the field during the 1866 Austro-Italian War, and who had little experience in international operations. The Austro-Hungarians were therefore unsure whether General Di Giorgis put Italian interests ahead of the interests of the reform project.²⁴⁹

There were several attempts to break the deadlock. After Lansdowne agreed to support the Italian claim to Monastir in return for Italian backing of the Britain's wish for Serres, he looked to reassure the Austro-Hungarians by offering British support for Vienna's claim to Uscub in return for Austro-Hungary's support for Britain's wish to be allotted Serres.²⁵⁰ The Russians suggested France be given Monastir, but the French rejected this on the grounds that they had long coveted Serres and they did not wish to upset the Italians.²⁵¹ The French were also insistent that they would not accept an Albanian-populated district.²⁵² Calice suggested Russia be given Monastir with the French taking over Salonica, but the Russians declined due to understandable concerns for the welfare of their officers that had arisen following the death of their vice-consul six months previously.²⁵³ Logically, Britain came up next, and on March 15, 1904, the Russian Ambassador and the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires visited the Foreign Office to offer Monastir to Lansdowne.²⁵⁴

In his response, Lansdowne tried to initiate a solution to the deadlock. He questioned the fairness of Britain taking Italy's place at Monastir while Russia and Austria-Hungary remained ensconced in their districts, and wondered if Austria-Hungary could take a district other than Uscub.²⁵⁵ The following day, Lansdowne informed the Austro-Hungarian Minister that Britain could take Monastir if Italy willing abandoned its claim to the Monastir sector and Austria-Hungary abandoned its claim to Uscub;

²⁴⁹ Sowards, *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 40.

²⁵⁰ Lansdowne to Bertie, February 17, 1904, FO 421/199/197.

²⁵¹ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 161.

²⁵² O'Connor to Lansdowne, February 21, 1904, FO 78/5339/28.

²⁵³ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 162.

²⁵⁴ Lansdowne to Scott, March 15, 1904, FO 421/202/87; Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 15, 1904, FO 421/202/88.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Lansdowne called both actions “self-denying ordinance.”²⁵⁶ The Italians were amenable, as they had suggested each power be given a district “in which it could be suspected of a desire to exercise a political influence.”²⁵⁷ To facilitate a quick resolution, Lansdowne suggested the powers consider drawing lots.²⁵⁸ Lansdowne also pressured the Austro-Hungarians, asking why they did not share the Italian’s willingness to compromise, and even tried to shame them into shifting their position:

I told [Count Mensdorff] that there seemed to be some prospect of the Sultan’s opposition to the gendarmerie scheme being withdrawn, and that if this were to happen it would be simply scandalous that further progress should be arrested owing to the inability of the five Powers to agree as to a point which was after all of comparatively trivial importance.²⁵⁹

The Austro-Hungarians began to bend upon learning that the Ottoman government looked to be acquiescing to the deployment of European gendarmes. In Vienna, Ambassador Plunkett followed up Lansdowne’s questions in a meeting with Count Goluchowski on March 23, 1904. Goluchowski was evasive in his responses to questions about Uscub and maintained that the Austro-Hungarian government bore “no ill-will” toward the Italians. The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister said he had no objection to Italy receiving Monastir, but took great exception to General Di Giorgis having his headquarters in the same district.²⁶⁰ The statement was a breakthrough. On March 25 Ambassador Bertie in Rome reported that the Ottoman government and General Di Giorgis had arranged for the general’s headquarters to be in Salonica.²⁶¹ The Russians expressed their agreement, providing that the Uscub district be assigned to Austria-Hungary in its entirety.²⁶² Lansdowne quickly telegraphed his ambassador in Vienna echoing the Russian stance and adding: “Further delay would now be inexcusable and you should endeavour to bring about a settlement on this basis, and the

²⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 16, 1904, FO 421/202/93.

²⁵⁷ Lansdowne to O’Conor, March 17, 1904, FO 421/202/97. The Italians were also circulating their own revision of the allotment of zones, “Salonica would go to Russia, Serres to Italy, Monastir to England, western Uscub to France, and Eastern Uscub to Austria.”

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 21, 1904, FO 421/202/115.

²⁶⁰ Plunkett to Lansdowne, March 23, 1904, FO 7/1553/20.

²⁶¹ Bertie to Lansdowne, March 25, 1904, FO 45/891/18.

²⁶² Lansdowne to Plunkett, March 25, 1904, FO 421/202/35.

early dispatch of officers.”²⁶³ The Austro-Hungarians agreed, only insisting on the caveat that if the Ottoman government required General Di Giorgis’ headquarters to be moved to Monastir, the Italian officers would also be obliged to move elsewhere.²⁶⁴ The designation of the zones was finalized at a meeting of the Military Commission on April 5, 1904: Drama for Great Britain; Serres for France; Salonica for Russia; Uscub for Austria-Hungary, and; Monastir for Italy.²⁶⁵ Further, the Military Commission advised that the Belgians and the Scandinavians be sent to the kazas outside of the zones allocated to the five powers.²⁶⁶

The administrative plan finalizations came together quickly over the first two weeks of April. On April 1, the Ottoman government was presented with a final note insisting on its acceptance of the ‘Six Point Plan to Organize the Gendarmerie’ of February 29 and the supplementary note from March 16.²⁶⁷ The next day the Military Commission presented the draft contract for the employment of the European officers in the Ottoman gendarmerie. The Grand Vizier gave assurances that financial arrangements had been made for regular payment and that contracts and uniforms for the European officers were complete.²⁶⁸ As members of the Ottoman military, the European officers would wear Ottoman uniforms, but would have the choice of wearing the fez or the kalpak for headgear since the Russians and Austro-Hungarians had objected strongly to their officers wearing the fez.²⁶⁹

There were still outstanding points of disagreement. The Military Commission did not think 25 officers (5 per zone) was enough manpower for the task of reforming the gendarmerie and lobbying for more officers would continue after the first cohort of

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ O’Conor to Lansdowne, March 30, 1904, FO 78/5330/217.

²⁶⁵ Fairholme to O’Conor, April 5, 1904, FO 78/5330/238.

²⁶⁶ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 166.

²⁶⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 1, 1904, FO 78/5330/222.

²⁶⁸ O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 5, 1904, FO 78/5331/238.

²⁶⁹ Fairholme to O’Conor, April 2, 1904, FO 78/5330/225. The Austro-Hungarians and Russians had raised objections to wearing the fez in the early discussions of the reforms. Fairholme was concerned about the matter as he knew very well that it was a sensitive issue for the Ottomans. The Grand Vizier expressed his disappointment to O’Conor regarding the kalpak, adding that he hoped the difficulty could be overcome since the wearing of the fez by officials and officers “was in reality a very important matter to the prestige of Turkey.” See: O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 5, 1904, FO 78/5331/238.

officers had arrived.²⁷⁰ The Ottomans wished to limit the contract of the European officers to a duration of two years, a point O'Connor objected to, given that was the job at hand had not been fully assessed and lacked a timeframe for completion.²⁷¹ What is more, although the question of territorial allotments had been settled, the powers still had suspicions of one another. The heart of the matter remained the deep lack of trust between the Austro-Hungarian and Italians, which had dogged the progress of the Military Commission. For the most part, France and Great Britain supported the Italians, while Russia and Germany backed Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, these issues would not impede the implementation of the reforms. In mid-April, the European officers began to arrive in Salonica and the physical work of reforming the gendarmerie could finally begin.

After over two months of talks and several months of delays, the British finally helped break the deadlock in order to deploy the European officers. Timing likely factored into Goluchowski's decision to relent on his opposition to allotting Monastir to Italy. With the Ottoman government nearing agreement on the terms for the European gendarmes, the Austro-Hungarians may have feared losing their stake in Uscub via the drawing of lots or the Ottomans' acceptance of the Italian proposal. However, the initiative taken by Lansdowne also made a difference. By ensuring that the British acceptance of Monastir required the approval of the other powers, he created pressure for the issue of territorial allotments to be resolved. Warning the Austro-Hungarians that their recalcitrance was putting the entire project at risk was a final act of pressure that helped finalize the resolution of the territorial dispute.

Although it had taken longer and required a diminishment of authority, in April of 1904, the British finally saw the European officers deployed to Macedonia. The British had played an instrumental role in this process. They had become convinced that the interposition of military officers and officials from the Great Power nations into Macedonia would have a pacifying effect and amassed evidence to support their case. They had repeatedly lobbied for the rapid deployment of military attachés, and later, of select officers, long before the details of Article II of the Mürzsteg Reform Program had

²⁷⁰ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 168-169.

²⁷¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 19, 1903, FO 78/5331/288.

been finalized. The British had pushed for strong and empowered conditions for the European officers but had shown they were willing to compromise and cajole in order to fulfill the implementation of the gendarmerie reform. They were not willing to insist on powers of command for the European officers in the face of Ottoman opposition, and they did not wish to see the reform process derailed by 'trivial' disagreements over territorial allotments. This is why the British were willing to accept a less empowered force of fewer men. They were certain that even a few 'select' officers could make a difference and they had confidence in these men's (or at least the British officers) abilities and their capacity to take initiative in order to exert a salutary influence. Once the force was established, the numbers could be increased and the mandate strengthened. The important thing was to get the men deployed on the ground.

In the historiography of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, the negotiated nature of the gendarmerie reform program and the willingness to accept a small number of officers with fewer powers is considered a shortcoming of the Great Powers. Lange-Akhund states that the creation of the administration needed to realize the reforms was slowed by disagreements between the powers, Ottoman resistance, and the western military men's insensitivity to the Ottomans during in the negotiations. Lange-Akhund concludes that "the reform was complicated by its international character." Nothing could be decided quickly due to the ongoing need for multilateral consultation.²⁷² Similarly, Sowards cites the national divisions between the intervening powers as being detrimental to the reforms. Sowards sympathizes with the Austro-Hungarian objections in deducing that General Di Giorgis was a divisive and unpredictable figure who failed to unite the Military Commission and "acted as a Turkish apologist."²⁷³ Rodogno calls Mürzsteg a "nonforcible intervention," and his assessment of it is primarily negative.²⁷⁴ Yet, both Sowards and Lange-Akhund (and others) conclude the reorganization of the gendarmerie was the Mürzsteg Reform Program's once true success. Despite the

²⁷² Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 172-173.

²⁷³ Sowards, *Austria's Policy*, 46.

²⁷⁴ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 243-244, Rodogno posits that no intervention at all would have produced an even worse scenario.

limitations placed upon them, the European officers did improve the effectiveness of the Ottoman gendarmes patrolling the countryside.²⁷⁵

The question which must be asked is whether this limited success would have been possible if the European Powers had adopted a more hard-line approach. We can assume that a larger force with the power to command Ottoman gendarmes in the field would very likely have been more effective and may have been able to more effectively pacify the territory. However, even if the powers had been united in insisting upon having the power of command, the Ottomans may still have strenuously resisted. As the British discovered, there was no appetite amongst the powers for Macedonian autonomy (Italy being the exception). As O’Conor pointed out at the time, there was little indication that the conservative powers who favoured power of command for the European offices were prepared to use coercion in order to support their position. Furthermore, if the officers were deployed in hostile circumstances, they would have greater difficulty executing their duties and their physical well-being may very well have been in danger. By compromising, the European powers received more compliance from the Ottoman government than they might have otherwise. Rather than imposing a foreign system via gunboat, they worked within the administrative structures of the Ottoman Empire, which was much less of an affront to Ottomans. The result was not ideal, but the negotiated nature of the intervention made it more palatable and even more importantly, enabled the deployment of the European officers by the spring of 1904.

“Tranquilizing” Macedonia: “Proto-peacekeeping” in the Sancak of Drama, 1904-1905

In April of 1904, five British officers arrived in Salonica along with officers from Italy, Austria-Hungary, France, Russia, and Italy. Their collective mission was to reform and supervise the Ottoman gendarmerie in accordance with Article II of the Mürzsteg Reform Program and the contractual agreements established over the previous months in negotiations with the Ottoman government. In deploying to their respective zones, the officers of all five powers would face numerous challenges from Ottoman obstructionism,

²⁷⁵ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy*, 98; Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 195.

the volatile political and security situation, and the rigors of implementing a new program of reform in a foreign land. By mid-1905, all the powers were still encountering difficulties, but one power, Great Britain, was claiming it had succeeded in stabilizing its territory—the easternmost Sancak of Drama. In London, Lansdowne lauded the British officers for the “tranquilizing influence” they had affected.²⁷⁶ General Di Giorgis was also complementary, speaking in “eulogistic terms” of their work of the British officers.²⁷⁷ It appeared that the British had succeeded where the other powers had failed. Why was this?

British success in the Sancak of Drama can be attributed in no small part to the fact that their zone had seen the least violence during the Ilinden Uprising. The territorial was predominantly Greek and Turkish, with Macedo-Bulgarians making up only a minority of the population. Yet, there was more to the accomplishments of the British officers than a favourable territorial allotment. They came to enjoy a good rapport with the population and exhibited particular tact and initiative in their dealings with Ottoman officials. Importantly, the British officers enjoyed the full support of the British Embassy and the Foreign Office when they encountered obstacles.

The significance of the British success in Drama was the effect it had on British officials from the political executive down to the officers on the ground. In 1905 the British saw Drama as proof of the pacifying effect even a few experienced and energetic European officers could have on the conflict in Macedonia. It was validation of the point British diplomats and statesmen had repeatedly lobbied for over the preceding months. The fact that European officers in other sectors were not fairsing so well due to more challenging circumstances was acknowledged. Still, the sense existed that there was something unique about the temperament and approach of the British officers that made them better equipped to manage difficult situations and diverse populations than their counterparts. The British success story in Drama provided impetus for calls and plans from Lansdowne and others for further reform of the Ottoman gendarmerie and expand the Mürzsteg Reform Program into the Ottoman Empire’s other European vialyets, notably the Vilayet of Adrianople, which bordered the Sancak of Drama.

²⁷⁶ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/32

²⁷⁷ O’Conor to Lansdowne, June 27, 1905, FO 78/5295/440.

The British officers were well received upon their arrival in Salonica. Colonel Fairholme arrived in the city on April 12 from Constantinople. Major Anley, Captain Bonham, and Lieutenants Clarke, Hamilton, and Smyly came by train from Serbia, alighting in Salonica on April 14 and 15. The officers received “most friendly” receptions from Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the Vali, and the Mushir. Consul-General Graves noted the local Turkish community had a low opinion of being the Russian zone would have preferred that Salonica had been assigned to the British. He wrote: “It is very gratifying to observe the excellent impression created by the appearance and bearing of the British contingent. They have been the first to appear upon the scene, and I am confident that they will not suffer by comparison with the later arrivals.”²⁷⁸ Fairholme remarked that the reception was “much more friendly than the attitude of the Ottoman authorities at Constantinople had led me to expect.”²⁷⁹ Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha spoke of the benefits the Ottoman gendarmerie would gain from the foreign officers and pledged his full cooperation in adopting their recommendations and removing officials who obstructed their work.²⁸⁰

Following the receptions, Fairholme engaged himself with practicalities. He had his men take intensive Turkish lessons and requested the employment of interpreters. As Fairholme reasoned, with limited manpower and language skills, a sensible approach would be to have the British officers patrol individually with interpreters. He objected to requesting French-speaking Ottoman officers to serve as interpreters since, he reasoned, it would make those they interrogated less likely to speak freely.²⁸¹ Fairholme was also careful to consider the sensitive issue of uniform head-dress. The French, Russians, and Austro-Hungarians had opted for the kalpak while the Italians had chosen the fez. The Italian reasoning derived from the fact that General Di Giorgis already wore the fez, and they felt that by wearing it they would be able to have greater influence over the primarily Muslim gendarmerie. Furthermore, they believed the fez would make them “less exposed to the chance of outbreaks of fanaticism on the part of the Moslems,

²⁷⁸ Graves to O’Conor, April 8, 1904, FO 195/2182/57.

²⁷⁹ Fairholme to O’Conor, April 19, FO 78/5331/301.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Fairholme to O’Conor, April 16, FO 78/5331/303.

especially of the Albanians.”²⁸² Conversely, the case for the kalpak was that it would be more favourably received by the Christian communities. In weighing the pros and cons, Fairholme opted for the fez. He cited the Italian reasoning for improving rapport with the Ottoman officials and the Muslim majority of the gendarmerie. Drama’s predominantly Turkish and Greek demography also suggested the fez would be the better option.²⁸³

With his men busily studying Turkish in Salonica and their uniforms being prepared, Fairholme accompanied some of the other staff officers and General Di Giorgis on a tour of inspection to Uscub in early May. As had been the case during inspections in Salonica, the tour made the need for reform “abundantly clear.” Fairholme described the gendarmerie as being “neglected and inefficient in every respect, and will afford plenty of scope for the energies of the foreign officers.”²⁸⁴ He reported on the presence of a “considerable number” of unattached gendarmerie officers who only showed up to collect pay. The commander was not performing his duties and the non-commissioned officer and rank-in-file gendarmes had neglected appearances with ragged uniforms or cloaks which they also slept in. Fairholme’s descriptions of the gendarmes’ capabilities, performance of duties, and the current state of the Ottoman-led reorganization were also scathing:

They are illiterate, undrilled, and utterly ignorant of gendarmerie duties. In the districts the gendarmerie is scattered about in small posts, which are seldom, if ever, visited by their officers. No patrolling appears to be done.

Of late the force seems to have been regularly paid, but the pay is insufficient, especially as most of the men have families depending on them.

A so-called reorganization, initiated by Hilmi Pasha, is supposed to have taken place about three months ago, when apparently a considerable number of new members joined the force. These—especially the Christian element—are of very inferior quality.²⁸⁵

²⁸² Fairholme to O’Conor, April 27, 1904, FO 78/5331/326.

²⁸³ Ibid. Fairholme did note that he would have adopted the kalpak if the other four powers had done so. He felt that it was “regrettable” that the European officers could not all wear the same head-dress.

²⁸⁴ Fairholme to O’Conor, May 6, 1903, FO 78/5332/346.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

If anyone in the government or the Foreign Office needed updated confirmation of the reported deficiencies of the Ottoman Gendarmerie, Fairholme had provided it. With his men having been briefed on their responsibilities and with a crash course in Turkish to their credit, they began their duties. Clarke, Hamilton, and Smyly followed Fairholme to Drama, while Major Bonham remained in Salonica to instruct new recruits at the new Central Gendarmerie School being established under the direction of the only German officer party to the gendarmerie reform, Major von Alten.²⁸⁶

The British officers arrived in Drama on May 16, 1904.²⁸⁷ Fairholme called the Ottoman officials' reception "favourable," with the British officers eliciting the curiosity from some locals and neutrality from others.²⁸⁸ Fairholme established his headquarters in the town of Drama. In addition to leading his men, he was to report regularly to the British embassy and, when required, join his European counterparts on tours of other regions of Macedonia. As for the four junior officers, two British officers were to remain in Drama, the third was stationed at the inland town of Ropdjus, and the fourth was situated at the port town of Kavala.²⁸⁹ Their collective task was to reform the Ottoman gendarmerie to be report back to the Great Powers while covering a territory of 1,080 square miles with a population of 52,000.²⁹⁰

Fairholme's impression of the Drama gendarmerie was very much in concert with his views of their counterparts in Salonica and Uscub. In a report dated of May 28, 1904, he described the Drama gendarmerie as being in a "very neglected and inefficient condition—ill paid, ill clothed, uneducated, and uninstructed."²⁹¹ Nevertheless, the mission was off to a good start as the British officers had been welcomed by the Ottomans gendarmes, who were accepting their influence and advice to a degree just short of actual command. It was plainly evident to Fairholme that Drama had seen very little of the terror and carnage, which had afflicted other regions of Macedonia. Members of the small Macedo-Bulgarian population in the north of the sancak maintained they had

²⁸⁶ Fairholme to O'Connor, May 15, 1904, FO 78/5332/381.

²⁸⁷ Fairholme to O'Connor, May 19, 1904, FO 78/5332/399.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Answer to Question Asked in the House of Commons, August 11, 1904, FO 421/20/126.

²⁹¹ Fairholme to O'Connor, May 28, 1904, FO 78/5332/413.

only given support to the insurgents under duress. There was very little property damage to report. The only recent transgression they found directed against the Ottoman gendarmerie was a complaint by some Macedo-Bulgarian villagers who accused the gendarmes of stealing their firewood.²⁹²

Fairholme's reports indicate he had no shortage of energy and initiative. Not content to just write reports in his headquarters, he frequently patrolled the kazas (districts) of the Drama sancak with his men and joined General De Giorgis and his fellow staff officers on tours of other parts of Macedonia.²⁹³ In an effort to take on more territory to patrol, he inquired with General Di Giorgis as to whether the British sector could be expanded to include parts of the neighbouring French and Russia zones.²⁹⁴

Fairholme and his men encountered their first challenge in June when they attempted to make changes. Instructions from General Di Giorgis called for the weeding-out of the non-commissioned officers and gendarmes by dividing them into three categories:

- (a.) Those recommended for retention in the new gendarmerie, who will receive the full increase of pay and wear the new blue uniform.
- (b.) Those recommended for retention as good enough for "sedentary" employment: these will only get a small increase of pay and will retain in the present Crown uniform.
- (c.) Those recommended for removal from the reorganized gendarmerie either on account of physical unfitness or owing to bad character.

As regards to the officers, nearly all are quite inefficient and illiterate, and will have to be transferred elsewhere as qualified officers become available.²⁹⁵

When the British officers tried to implement these instructions, there was a notable change in attitude from the ranks of Ottoman gendarmes:

²⁹² Ibid. To put the Macedonian Committee's disregard for Drama into perspective, a British intelligence officer based in Sofia reported in August of 1904 that his informant within the insurgents claimed to have no idea where the British officers were deployed. See: Lieutenant-Colonel Du Cane to Intelligence Division, War Office, August 1, 1904, FO 421/204.

²⁹³ Fairholme to O'Connor, June 9, 1904, FO 78/5333/450.

²⁹⁴ Fairholme to O'Connor, May 28, 1904, FO 78/5332/413.

²⁹⁵ Fairholme to O'Connor, June 9, 1904, FO 78/5333/450. New rates of pay and clothing accounts for each individual gendarme were to come into effect in July.

When, however, it became apparent that the British officers meant business and were not going to content themselves with drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes with their Turkish comrades, something of a reaction set in in certain quarters, and a few of the Turkish officers began to obstruct the British officers in their preliminary investigations, and in two instances to adopt an insolent attitude towards them.²⁹⁶

Fairholme and men were not deterred. They identified four offending Ottoman officers and reported them to General De Giorgis in Salonica for “obstructive conduct,” “incapacity,” “insolence,” and “disobedience.”²⁹⁷ Much to Fairholme’s delight, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha responded swiftly by having the four officers removed from Macedonia and replaced by army officers who had recently completed a course at the gendarmerie school. Fairholme considered it an important victory:

We have won an important test case, and the incident has cleared the air. It appears an excellent effect has been produced in the Drama battalion, where I do not anticipate any further trouble of the same kind. His Excellency de Giorgis Pasha told me that he looks upon the occurrence as a proof of the activity of the British officers.²⁹⁸

The British officers were using energy, initiative and boldness in their work to produce results. By contrast, the French officers in the neighbouring sector of Serres were being refused access to access the courts and prisons. When O’Conor inquired as to whether Fairholme and his men were encountering any such difficulties, Fairholme informed his ambassador that his men had not been obstructed from visiting the courts or the prisons. His reports indicate that he had not waited for official sanction and boldly sent his men into the Ottoman institutions. Through these actions and their high profile presence, the British officers were establishing control, and, in their eyes, inspiring more favourable and accountable practices by the Ottomans:

There is no doubt that the presence of the British officers in this sanjak is producing an excellent effect in directions other than that of the gendarmerie itself, and that it is making the officials of the various Departments careful not be caught in the commission of irregularities.

²⁹⁶ Fairholme to O’Conor (confidential), July 19, 1904, FO 78/5334/582.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

I am happy to be able to inform your Excellency that our officers have been able to acquire a strong hold over the prisons, which they frequently visit, and that they receive lists of all the prisoners, showing how long they remain without trial, &c. This control has been quietly and gradually established, without the question being officially raised. I am informed that arbitrary arrests, made by the police for the purpose of blackmail, which were formally very frequent, have practically ceased.²⁹⁹

In another report from July, Fairholme warned of the need to remain vigilant. Although they were making progress with the reorganization of the gendarmerie, he advised that not too much should be expected from his officers, and pointed out that in Crete it had taken the Italians three years to reform the gendarmerie in conditions which were much more favourable. Still, he remained bullish on the results his men were obtaining through their work and the benefits of their mere "presence" in Macedonia:

There are unmistakable indications, at least in the Serres and Drama districts, that the presence of foreign officers is keeping the officials on their good behaviour, and I am satisfied that the influence of the British officers is quietly spreading in more than one direction.³⁰⁰

In order to keep spreading the influence of the European officers, the Military Commission established schools for the gendarme in Salonica. The first school for officers and station chiefs was designed to give instruction to existing gendarmes or army officers who wished to be transferred into the gendarmerie. These six week courses course were designed to acquaint attendees with new regulations, inform them of what was expected of them "under the new regime," and to "smarten them up" in general. A larger school was established for the training of raw recruits to become station chiefs and non-commissioned officers. The program of instruction was five to six months in length and instructed the recruits in basic literacy, drill, "discipline, new Gendarmerie Regulations, the Military Penal Code, care of arms, &c., musketry, duties of commander, elementary sanitation, and hygiene."³⁰¹ In order to avoid taking the best men out of the field, only illiterate men were initially taken. As reported in September, the recruit school had taken 90 men from the Chasseur Battalion, 160 Anatolian recruits, with some 250 Christians and Muslims from Rumelia to be enrolled in the future. The

²⁹⁹ Fairholme to O'Connor, July 27, 1904, FO 78/5334/630.

³⁰⁰ Fairholme to O'Connor, July 10, 1904, FO 78/5334.

³⁰¹ Supplementary Memorandum on Macedonian Gendarmerie Reform, September 23, 1904, FO 78/5335/765.

Recruits School was placed under the direction of the British officer, Major Lionel Bonham.³⁰² The Salonica schools were to train gendarmes for work in the Russian, French, and British sectors. The Austro-Hungarians and Italians opened schools for recruits in Uscub and Monastir respectively.³⁰³

The hope was these new cohorts of men could further the energy and expertise of the European gendarmes in making the force more effective. General Di Giorgis wanted the recruits for the six month program to be young, unmarried men of good repute who were physically fit and free of the bad habits he observed in the existing ranks of the Ottoman military. Therefore, he reasoned, it would be more beneficial in the long run if a “new class” of gendarmes was trained from the ground up. Fairholme agreed, concluding that a competent gendarmerie force could not be created any other way:

With careful supervision, and a more efficient body of officers and non-commissioned officers, the young gendarmes should soon acquire confidence, and the population, it is hoped, will discover that the nature of the force, from which they have had in the past to put up with much, has changed completely.³⁰⁴

Despite some difficulties, the Salonica recruit school advanced its first cohorts on schedule. In September of 1904, financial resources were reported to be in short supply for the schools, but the progress was described as “quite satisfactory” and the recruits’ improved behaviour and willingness to learn was noted.³⁰⁵ By October, two cohorts had completed their basic training and were slated to graduate by the end of the year.³⁰⁶ The members of the first class of gendarmes from the six month program were sworn in on December 31, 1904.³⁰⁷ The acting British Consul-General at the ceremony enthused: “The Turks present were deeply impressed by the conversion of these ignorant and

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 187.

³⁰⁴ Fairholme to O’Conor, July 10, 1905, FO 78/5334/581.

³⁰⁵ Supplementary Memorandum on Macedonian Gendarmerie Reform, September 23, 1904, FO 78/5335/765.

³⁰⁶ Fairholme to O’Conor, September 28, 1904, FO 78/5336/787. Under an Ottoman imperial decree, a second school was to be opened in Salonica to further bolster the ranks of the gendarmerie.

³⁰⁷ du Vallon to Mr. Townley, December 31, 1904, FO 78/5392/12.

stupid men from the depths of the country into more or less intelligent, educated and at all events, obedient gendarmes.”³⁰⁸ The Salonica schools trained some 750 gendarmes per year during the years of the Mürzsteg Reform Program with smaller numbers being trained by the schools in Monastir and Uscub.³⁰⁹

The graduates of the gendarmerie schools were to be part of a transformed gendarmerie when they were sent into the field in 1905. The structure of the gendarmerie was to change with units deployed across the countryside as part of an integrated grid. Small units under the command of a non-commissioned officer were assigned to a block of territory, each with its own centrally located guardhouse or *karakol*. Some buildings already existed, others were to be built. Patrols from each unit were timed to meet with patrols from neighbouring units at fixed positions, at which time they could check each other and exchange any necessary information, documents, and prisoners. A certain number of units constituted a section, which was commanded by a gendarme lieutenant. Several sections formed a company, under the authority of a captain, and a number of companies formed a battalion, the size of which varied according to the size of the sancak. As discussed in a report by Major Clarke, the integrated grid imposed by the European gendarmes stood in contrast to the Ottoman system, in which gendarmes stayed in the given region’s headquarters or dispersed to *karakols*, which were usually located on main roads or in the middle of towns. According to Clarke, in the Ottoman system, the gendarmes acted only act when needed. Senior officers seldom visited outlying *karakols* and there were no regular patrols. As a result

the greater part of the country was not visited at all, patrolling being practically non-existent. There was no sense of general responsibility either as regards the discipline of the force or as regards law and order. The members of the force only considered themselves responsible for the performance of any particular duty for which they might have been detailed.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 187. Lange-Akhund notes that although some European officers had reservations regarding the schools, most had positive opinions of the graduates who exhibited discipline and enthusiasm in their duties.

³¹⁰ Comparison of Gendarmerie System being introduced by General Degiorgis with the former Turkish Methods, FO 78/5394/265.

Clarke called the old system “passive” and new system “active.” In addition to the organizational grid, Di Giorgis was endeavouring to raise the prestige of the gendarmerie. Under the Ottoman system, Gendarmes were at times required to perform tasks unbecoming to gendarmes, such as being personal orderlies to civil servants, messengers, and watchmen for government buildings. Di Giorgis was trying to slowly change this by having all gendarmes employed as either first class or second class categories. Importantly, first class gendarmes would be given higher rates of pay and new uniforms which distinguished them from their second class colleagues. The second class gendarmes were deemed not fit for active service and were assigned “sedentary” duties, with the intention of having them eventually removed from the new gendarmerie.³¹¹

By the late summer of 1904, Colonel Fairholme’s experience had led him to articulate his own recommendations on the future needs of the gendarmerie reorganization. His opinion was directed at General Di Giorgis’ rather technical approach to the reform. Specifically, Di Giorgis was content to delay requests for more European officers until such time as sufficient numbers of Ottoman non-commissioned officers and gendarmes had been trained at the Salonica schools. In the general’s thinking, there was nothing for the European officers to do until there was a suitable body of men to instruct. Fairholme disagreed, and argued there was much more the European officers could do—and, in the British sector, had been doing—to foster peace and order:

General Degiorgis approaches the question purely from the point of view of what is required by the gendarmerie itself, and apparently does not take into consideration the general effect produced by the presence of the foreign military element in the country, in giving confidence to the inhabitants, in keeping the Turks on their good behaviour, and in supplying reliable evidence of what goes on—motives which would probably appeal with greater force to public opinion in Europe to the Governments interested in the reforms.³¹²

Fairholme cited the British zone in Drama where, unlike “the central and more or less technical reorganization being conducted by General Diegiorgis,” a more dynamic process was at work, which would produce the outcomes Fairholme believed had been

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Fairholme to O’Conor, September 2, 1904, FO 78/5335/718A.

expected of the European officers. He described the British approach as, “the establishment of the personal influence and control of our officers, directly over the personnel of the gendarmerie, and indirectly in many other directions.” Fairholme also took issue with Di Giorgis’ idea of possibly installing additional foreign officers as assistants to the Staff Officers. To Fairholme, it was the Ottoman uniform that mattered: “whatever influence the foreign officers are able to acquire over the personnel of the gendarmerie, depends absolutely on their wearing the Ottoman uniform—I had almost said the fez—and being in the service of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.” Fairholme also emphasized that only officers should be sent to Macedonia, as he thought it unwise to employ European non-commissioned officers since they might cause trouble and would be difficult to regulate.³¹³

Fairholme’s critique of Di Giorgis’ methods and plans illustrates a clear difference in the conception of the reform operation between the British and the Italian general in charge. To Di Giorgis, the mission was strictly to train the Ottoman gendarmerie. Fairholme learned that the Italian officers in Monastir had what he called a “deplorable attitude” toward their deployment. When the Civil Agents toured Monastir, the Italians had reportedly ignored them. The Italian officers “rigidly” limited themselves “to gendarmerie matters in the narrowest sense, depriving themselves of all local influence.” The limited interactions the Italians had had with the communities produced only bad impressions.³¹⁴ By contrast, the more energetic and proactive approach employed by the British was producing positive results. It was very much in concert with the ideas and opinions British diplomats and politicians had articulated over the preceding months. The Italians were training and directing gendarmes and little more. The British were overseeing gendarme duties and extending their influence into other state institutions and community networks. They were embodying the initiative showed by some of the vice-consuls, which combined the knowledge and tact of a diplomat with the energy and military training of an officer. In essence, the British were ‘peacekeeping.’

Fairholme articulated his case directly to General Di Giorgis, spelling out the virtues of the British approach and making recommendations for additional officers. He

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Fairholme to O’Conor, September 25, 1904, FO 78/5336/771.

argued that the general's view that no additional European officers were immediately necessary did not account for the "wider sphere of utility" and the "indirect influence" the officers could affect, which, as Fairholme saw it, was "in the Spirit of the Mürzsteg Scheme."³¹⁵ This, he pointed out, was what the European powers attached at least a degree of importance to, and the mission should not be confined to just the reorganization of the Ottoman Gendarmerie. Fairholme supported his points with the example of the work of his British officers in Drama:

In the first place I venture to claim that the four British officers now with the Drama battalion have found plenty of scope for their energies in making themselves intimately acquainted with the local conditions in the several cazas, especially with the personnel of the gendarmerie, in controlling the manner in which the everyday routine of the duty is performed, and in seeing to the application of the numerous instructions which are being issued by your Excellency. They are in very close contact with the whole of the personnel, and are consulted by the Ottoman officers about the smallest details. They keep a jealous eye on the local tribunals and on the prisons, and closely follow up any case in which the gendarmerie is, however remotely, concerned.

Although officially precluded from the interference in matters not strictly belonging to the functions of the gendarmerie, they have yet found the means of establishing a certain indirect, but none the less real, influence, and I am convinced that their presence in the cazas, besides giving confidence to the inhabitants, acts as a salutary check upon the local administration.³¹⁶

Fairholme conceded that he had been able to achieve results in Drama thanks to the fact that he was operating in a small jurisdiction, whereas his counterparts had been allotted much larger territories and had the same number of men (four or five) at their disposal. Still, Fairholme argued, it was important that the European officers not remain inactive until the upcoming spring. With rumours of another uprising in the making, it was important that the offices not become a "quantité négligeable," and that they work to "establish their authority" as soon as possible. More officers would certainly help the process.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Fairholme to O'Connor, September 14, 1904, FO 78/5336/752.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

Regarding additional officers, Fairholme made a number of specific recommendations. He felt that five officers were adequate for Drama, but larger areas needed more men: "In order to exercise a real control there should be a foreign officer permanently stationed in every kaza in which there is the headquarters of a gendarmerie company."³¹⁸ To Fairholme, a single European officer could be effective if accompanied by an interpreter paid for by his respective government. He argued for an immediate increase of the number of foreign officers with respects to local conditions, adding that he required no additional men for Drama. He emphasized that character mattered more than ability: "The additional officers need not belong to the gendarmerie services of their respective countries. They should be chosen rather for their personal than for their technical qualifications."³¹⁹ Finally, Fairholme outlined six points regarding the duties of the European officers, which suggested how they could establish "indirect" influence and control:

6. Their duties, whether in summer or winter, would be—

(a.) To become thoroughly acquainted with the personnel of the gendarmerie and with all local conditions.

(b.) To control in great detail the performance of all duties, whether routine or special.

(c.) To supervise the execution of instructions issued by your Excellency.

(d.) To impart such instructions and to introduce such improvements as are possible without prejudice to your Excellency's reorganization scheme.

(e.) To visit frequently the villages in their rayons and to keep in touch with all sections of the population.

(f.) To keep an eye on the proceedings of the local tribunals and on the prisons, and to watch the behaviour of the Government officials and of any troops who may be stationed in their vicinity, reporting to their adjoints any abuses which may come under their notice.³²⁰

Fairholme's comments and recommendations are candid. The success of his approach—let us call it "The British Approach"—hinged on energetic and bold tactics by officers whose diplomatic abilities and managerial skills mattered much more than technical knowledge. The ideal 'peacekeeper' needed to be more of a psychologist than a military technocrat. The approach is entirely consistent with visions articulated by British diplomats and politicians. Fairholme's work in Drama had produced results to

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

validate these views, and the success of “The British Approach” stood in contrast to the struggles encountered by the four other powers.

Nonetheless, was it fair to compare Drama to the other sectors? By Fairholme’s own admission, the small size of the British sector made it possible for the small number of men to exert more influence than would have been the case in a larger sector. Drama had not seen much violence during the Ilinden Uprising, so it would have been much easier to keep a peace that had—in most places—not been broken in the first place. What is more, the fact that Ottoman gendarmes and officials had not offered much resistance to the British officers—as opposed to the French officers in the neighbouring sector—may well have been because they had little to hide. Without question, the British officers found themselves in favourable circumstances.

A more thorough accounting of the progress by the European officers in the respective national sectors was made by Consul-General Graves in a six week tour he undertook in the summer 1904. According to Graves, the challenges in the other sectors were more formidable. The Austro-Hungarians faced hostility from Serbian propaganda; the Russians were distrusted by the Greek population; and the French had been prevented from entering prisons and involving themselves in non-gendarmerie matters by order of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha.³²¹ The “indirect” approach was a strategy the French staff officer, Colonel Verand, had employed from his experience in the French gendarmerie, but the approach had been limited by official resistance. Nonetheless, the French claimed to have exerted moral pressure on the regional IMRO units by condemning their “barbarous methods” with some success.³²²

As Graves reported, the British were not alone in exerting indirect power and moral pressure, and the British sector was not, in the consul-general’s words, “a typical Macedonian district.” He described Drama as being stable, prosperous and home to a large Muslim population and largely free of political agitation. As such, he did not think it fair to measure the other sectors in relation to “the Drama standard.” The area was much smaller. The Austro-Hungarians and Russians faced hostile elements, and the Italians

³²¹ Memorandum on the Progress of Macedonian Gendarmerie, FO 421/205/33.

³²² Ibid.

had limited their approach strictly to the technicalities of gendarmerie reform and did not seek to impart any moral influence.³²³

Nevertheless, Graves had no shortage of complements for the work of the British officers. He praised Fairholme for acting decisively in having obstructive Ottoman officers removed and credited the British officers for gaining access to administration of the Ottoman gendarmerie. The British received daily communication from the Ottomans regarding gendarmerie matters, and they had “established the right of access and control of the prisons.” They had intervened in the case of an unjustly accused gendarme, and this action had led to the dismissal of an Ottoman judicial inspector, creating a “powerful effect.” Beyond gendarmerie matters, the British had redressed grievances of Macedo-Bulgarians whose houses had been burned down and had distributed aid. Graves wrote that the “friendly advice” tendered by the British to the Macedo-Bulgarians made these villages “less accessible to revolutionary influences” in the future.³²⁴

Despite its caveats, Graves’ accounts suggested the British had effective techniques and had a much better disposition towards their work. The British officers worked alone, allowing them to extend their influence further, unlike the Austro-Hungarians and Russians who patrolled in pairs and had sporadic contact with the Ottoman gendarmes. The British were in frequent contact with the Ottomans and were privy to communications, others European officers did not enjoy such a level of access and rapport. While he acknowledged the constraints the Italian officers operated under, Graves, like Fairholme, was not impressed with the Italians’ attitude. Their approach had created an impression of inactivity amongst the Christian population, and some of the officers “had been indiscreet in expressing too feely their opinion of the native elements.” Even the Italian staff officer, Colonel Albera, apparently cared little for the operation: “Colonel Albera himself is very free-spoken in his pessimism, and openly expresses regret that he ever undertook such a hopeless mission.”³²⁵

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

Reservations aside, Graves's lengthy memorandum gave more credence to Fairholme's views on the state of the reforms. It was more evidence to British diplomats and politicians that 'The British approach' offered a blueprint for the improvement, if not the outright success, of the task of reorganizing the gendarmerie in the other sectors of Macedonia and perhaps beyond. Indeed, as Graves reported, General Di Giorgis had expressed his appreciation for the work of the British officers and there was hope he might be persuaded to sanction a universal application of 'The British approach. As Graves summarized:

If unity of direction can thus be given to the efforts of the foreign Adjoints—if they are supplied with a staff more proportionate to their task, and afforded the support now lacking owing in part to the want of co-operation which, unfortunately exists between the Civil Agents and General Degiorgis—a great deal may be effected by indirect means.³²⁶

General De Giorgis did come around to supporting the call for more European officers. When the staff officers met in Salonica in late September, Di Giorgis backed their calls for more officers. They requested 23 officers: six each for Russia and Austria-Hungary and five each for Italy and France. Fairholme applied for one additional major for the British sector, while reserving the right to ask for up to seven more up to a total of 12 in the future. As Fairholme pointed out, even with the addition of 23 officers, the new total of 48 was still less than the 60 the Military Commission had originally requested. Fairholme backed Di Giorgis in his insistence that they continue to exclude European non-commissioned officers for the reform mission. Like Fairholme, Di Giorgis thought non-commissioned officers could be a source of trouble; although Fairholme thought the services of one or two Turkish-speaking police sergeants from Cyprus could be of help to Major Bonham at the Recruits School in Salonica.³²⁷

Fairholme's opposition to European non-commissioned officers brought him into conflict with the Austro-Hungarians, French and Russians who wanted small contingents of non-commissioned officers to be deployed. Fairholme and Di Giorgis argued it would be more practical to direct the financial resources to the employment of more interpreters. The Austro-Hungarians were rather irritated by Fairholme's support of Di

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Fairholme to O'Conor, October 1, 1904, FO 78/5336/797; du Vallon to O'Conor, September 24, 1904, FO 78/5336/762.

Giorgis on the issue, and reasoned that since their men did not need interpreters, the mission would be better served by non-commissioned officers.³²⁸ With some reluctance and resistance, the Ottomans did accede to the employment of the 23 European officers in December, but only on the condition the number would not increase.³²⁹

These disagreements around the staff officers' table again exposed the differences between the powers. Suspicions between the Austro-Hungarians and Italians persisted as Vienna continued to suspect General Di Giorgis of putting Italian interests ahead of the international mission. British and Italian resistance to non-commissioned officers may well have stemmed from fears that a trickle of Austro-Hungarians and Russian junior officers might lead to the intervention of a flood of troops, which would alter the balance of the reform mission and, very possibly, turn it into an exclusively Austro-Russian operation. This possibility very likely influenced Fairholme's and Di Giorgis' fear of non-commissioned officers causing trouble. If a European officer were to be killed under any circumstances, there would be calls for decisive intervention. But the differences also illustrated the divergence in methodological approaches. Even Fairholme's most liberal visions only called for one European officer for each gendarmerie company—the third level up the new organizational structure. 'The British Approach' to 'peacekeeping' was to have a small number of highly able and energetic officers work at managing the administration of the gendarmerie in a highly visible fashion. There would be no need for European non-commissioned officers since the junior officer and the rank and file positions were to be filled by appropriately trained and motivated natives. As the British believed they had demonstrated, it was not necessary to command the gendarmerie if they could affect control through indirect influence. Once this was established, it was only necessary to manage their affairs effectively, make themselves visible and affable, and intervene where and when necessary. It was not unlike the way the British managed their empire.

How exactly did the British officers go about their work? The apparent ease with which they came to exert control of the Drama gendarmerie and the way they

³²⁸ Townley to Lansdowne, October 11, FO 78/5336/797; Plunkett to Lansdowne (confidential), FO 421/205/65. The Austro-Hungarians and French wanted 10 non-commissioned officers and the Russians requested 11.

³²⁹ Townley to Lansdowne, December 27, 1904, FO 78/5338/984.

seemingly breezed into the prisons and courts conjures images of über-officers from an order of Edwardian Jedi Knights, each of whom possessed the power of hundreds of imperial gendarmes. As mentioned, the British officers operated in favourable circumstances, but they had a particular way of doing things which, apparently, inspired good rapport and produced results. Three reports from 1905 provide some clues about the British officers assisted in resolving some of the few conflicts which erupted during their tenure in the Sancak of Drama.

The first incident was reported on January 7, 1905 at the village of Viscon north of Drama. Violence had broken out when a group of Exarchists (likely Macedo-Bulgarians) tried to enter a church which had been allotted to Patriarchists (likely Greeks). Physical scuffling had escalated to armed confrontation as rival groups clashed in the streets, mostly with sticks, stones and clubs, with some shots being fired. A Turkish gendarme officer and four mounted gendarmes were dispatched and arrived on the scene on January 8 during the ongoing fighting. With insufficient manpower to effectively intervene, the gendarmes enlisted the help of the local Turkish community, who assisted them in separating the two “factions.” Major Anley arrived on January 9 and noted the gendarmes had arrested the chief instigators. He praised the conduct of the Turkish community and issued the following warning: “I gave both the Patriarchists and Exarchists to understand that if either party reopened the quarrel they would be held to blame by the British officers, and they both promised to keep the peace.”³³⁰ When the situation had calmed two days later, the gendarmes withdrew. The arrested parties were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment by the Drama Tribunal.³³¹

Anley’s report was highly complementary to the Ottoman gendarmes, who proved themselves to be resourceful and professional in resolving the situation at Visocan. There is no indication that the gendarmes were products of the Salonica schools. The Turkish officer may have taken the officers course. The first graduates of the Recruit’s School joined the Drama battalion on January 7.³³² If any of them were amongst the men sent to Visocan, they performed very well. Anley’s appearance was a

³³⁰ Report by Major Anley on the Disturbances which took place in Visocan in January 1905, January 18, 1905, FO 294/20.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Fairholme to O’Conor, March 19, 1905, FO 78/5394/265.

display of authority. In issuing warnings that those who transgressed in future would be held to account by the British officers, he seems to have been serving notice to “the factions” that the British officers were the highest authority (or at least the highest moral authority) in the territory.

In another incident in Kavala in March of 1905, the British officers displayed a willingness to take an active role in resolving conflicts. On the morning of March 20, 1905, some 6,000 workers at two tobacco factories began industrial action. The strike very quickly became violent with as the workers began breaking the windows of the tobacco magazines and damaging the equipment. The angry crowd also smashed the windows of the Austro-Hungarian Vice-Consul. The multiethnic crowd then demonstrated in front of the Konack, where the Kaimakam promised to send a deputation of representatives of the national communities which would “endeavour to make a satisfactory arrangement after going into their grievances.” After the crowd moved back to the magazine of one of the tobacco companies, the situation escalated when a cavass fired a revolver from the offices and slightly wounded a boy in the crowd. The shooter was then trapped in an office by the crowd, who were intent on having him lynched. The Kaimakam and the hastily assembled delegation of community leaders pleaded to with the crowd, but to no avail.

The tense situation was resolved by the intervention of the British officers. Captain Hamilton and the newest member of the contingent of British officers, Major Martyn, offered to ascertain the wants of the crowd and disperse it. The British officers and a small party of gendarmes waded into the crowd and announced they would “see that the cavaas was apprehended and their grievances gotten to.” Their guarantee clamed the crowd and the gendarmes were able to have the cavass extracted from the office. Martyn, Hamilton and a few Ottoman gendarmes “kept the crowd at bay” while the arrested shooter was escorted to the Konak, at which point the crowd dispersed. Martyn then recommended additional gendarmes be sent from Drama to assist in patrolling Kavala as he expected the situation to remain tense.³³³

³³³ Major Martyn to Major Anley, March 20, 1905, FO 78/5392/195. According to Major Martyn, the workers went on strike for higher wages after rates of pay had been reduced in all the factories.

In passing along Martyn's report to Ambassador O'Connor, Fairholme had high praise the British officers:

It is evident from this report that the incident might well have assumed more serious dimensions but for the tact and firmness displayed by the two British officers on the spot, Major Martyn and Captain Gilbert Hamilton. The behavior of the Turkish gendarmerie appears to have been admirable.³³⁴

In his report, Martyn was also impressed with the level of respect the crowd showed towards himself and Captain Hamilton. He was also full of praise for the Ottoman gendarmes:

I would like to add that I was much struck by the confidence the crowd had in the British officers, who were able to go and come anywhere through the mob, and were received as friends, and appeared the only people the mob had confidence in. I should like especially to mention the work done by Yuz Bashi Hamilton, whose influence over the crowd was very marked, and in a great degree assisted in the dispersal of the crowd. The gendarmes also did good service, and did their work with marked tact and discretion; were firm, and yet not excited or angry.³³⁵

While Major Anley had only brought an authoritative presence to the aftermath of the incident at Visocan, Hamilton and Martyn in Kavala took an active role in resolving a volatile situation. There is certainly an air of triumphalism in Martyn's report, but the fact that the two British officers were able to move amongst a lynch mob does indicate that the Captain Hamilton was respected and had established a good rapport with the communities of Kavala during the course of his ten month deployment. The crowd's respect for the British officers stood in contrast to its attack on the home of the Austro-Hungarian vice-consul, although the attack may have had more to do with geopolitics and national reputation than relations at the local level. As they had at Visocan, the Ottoman gendarmes had performed very well at Kavala, by displaying the professionalism that was expected from reformed gendarmes. Perhaps even more importantly, in going about their work with "marked tact and discretion" and exhibiting

³³⁴ Fairholme to O'Connor, March 22, 1905, FO 78/5392/195.

³³⁵ Major Martyn to Major Anley, March 20, 1905, FO 78/5392/195.

firmness without anger, the gendarmes displayed the demeanor of the British officers with whom they served.³³⁶

As more graduates of the Salonica schools filled the ranks of the gendarmerie, the success stories mounted. March 1905 also marked the implementation of the new organizational system. Therefore, new cohorts of European-trained graduates would be entering a European-structured system. Fairholme proudly reported that the Drama battalion had received special commendation from General De Giorgis, and one gendarme had received a medal for chasing “a malefactor” into the French sector and apprehending him. Fairholme credited the work of Major Bonham at the Recruits Schools and the energy and “remarkable intelligence” being exhibited by the graduates: “The smart bearing of the new element is not without influence of the older gendarmes in the companies and some are even learning to read and write of their own accord.”³³⁷ Fairholme also held up a report by Captain Smyly from early March, where the gendarmerie had performed admirably in their pursuit of a band of 50 insurgents that had crossed the border from Bulgaria and were reported to be near the village of Volak. The gendarmes dispatched to Volak did not encounter the insurgents. They made inquiries and searched some houses, but did so in a cordial manner that did not give cause for complaints from the inhabitants. Smyly called the behaviour of the troops “excellent throughout: they were always well in hand and marched well. I was treated with the greatest courtesy, and my opinion and advice were asked on all points.”³³⁸

The successful performances of trained gendarmes, especially those under British tutelage in Drama, led the British to lobby for the establishment of more gendarmerie schools and for the reform mandate to be extended to other departments of the Ottoman security administration. In March, Fairholme described the state of the Ottoman police as “most unsatisfactory and will remain so until that force is also brought under effective foreign control.” He went further by adding that the police could only truly

³³⁶ Ibid. There is no mention of whether the Ottoman gendarmes present at Kavala had received training at the Salonica gendarmerie schools.

³³⁷ Fairholme to O’Conor, March 19, 1905, FO 78/5394/265. A British army standard rifle range had also been constructed at the Recruits Schools, which, Fairholme claimed, was the first of its kind in the Ottoman Empire, enabling “practical rifle instruction in musketry” to be added to the curriculum.

³³⁸ Report by Captain Smyly, March 15, 1905, FO 78/5394/265.

be reformed if control was also established over the Ottoman civil administration. Fairholme also called for reforms to the prisons. He described the prison in Drama as being overcrowded, unsanitary, and insecure. The British officers had been able to improve the state of cleanliness through their visits, but as the prisons were not officially under the supervision of the European officers, their influence was limited.³³⁹ O'Connor tried to persuade the Grand Vizier that the employment of gendarmes who had received training from European officers was to the Ottoman government's advantage. Referencing reports in the British press of Ottoman troops "employing provocative measures and torture" during house raids.³⁴⁰ O'Connor also made a case for more foreign supervision:

The supervision of the foreign officers on occasions of that nature would, apart from any restraining influence their presence might exercise, enable the Porte to furnish testimony which would obviate any misapprehensions in Europe of the manner in which the gendarmerie or the soldier—if their employment were inevitable—carried out the orders of the authorities.

I cited the lamentable occurrence at Kuklitch as a proof that there were officers in the Ottoman army on whom reliance could not be placed, and that the measure I suggested was very necessary.³⁴¹

The Ottoman response was to pushback. In April and May measures were taken to limit some of the activities of the European officers and curtail further growth of the reform program. Specifically, the Ottoman authorities instructed their gendarme officers not to allow the European officers to enter the prisons since it was not a concern of

³³⁹ Fairholme to O'Connor, March 19, 1905, FO 78/5394/265.

³⁴⁰ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 7, 1905, FO 78/5393/152.

³⁴¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, March 21, 1905, FO 78/5393/183. The village of Kuklitch, near Strumica in the Russian sector, had been the scene of a shootout between Ottoman troops and insurgents in mid-February. Despite the presence of a Russian officer, the Ottoman troops committed excesses and 36 villagers were killed in the fighting. In reviewing the Russian officer's report, Consul General Graves remarked about the "usual" accounts of poor tactics and lack of discipline displayed by the Ottoman troops. To Graves and others, the events at Kuklitch provided more evidence to support the case for more reforms: "We see the usual neglect of all reasonable precautions, the futile attempt to establish a cordon, the aimless fusillade going on for twenty hours in course of which the Turkish commanding officer's return to Strumnitza, leaving the troops to their own devices, the escape of the fifteen "comitadjis" unscathed and unpursued, and then the vengeance of soldiers and bashi-bazouks wreaked on the unarmed villagers, with the usual accompaniment of pillage, arson, and other excesses." See: Graves to Townley, February, 28, 1905, FO 78/5393/146.

theirs.³⁴² Fairholme reasoned that this action was aimed less at the British sector and more at areas where “racial questions” were more acute and the jails were stocked with political prisoners.³⁴³ He was more alarmed by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha’s assertion that the European officers should not be permitted to monitor the operations and movements of the army.³⁴⁴ Since the gendarmerie often worked in coordination with the army, such a measure could deal a blow to the influence of the European officers. The Ottoman government also informed General Di Giorgis in March that there was no funding available to pay the salaries of the newly hired European officers and that no money existed to fund the travel expenses of the European officers on their patrols through their districts.³⁴⁵ Finally, in May, General Di Giorgis was informed that his request for 600 recruits for the gendarmerie had been refused. Di Giorgis said that if the Ottoman government persisted in this refusal, he would “regard his task as hopeless and resign.”³⁴⁶

Support for Fairholme, the British officers, and General Di Giorgis arrived quickly from Lansdowne. The Foreign Secretary voiced his support for the powers of European officers, stating that the British government attached “great importance” to accessing prisons, arguing that it was “necessary for the efficient exercise of their duties and control.”³⁴⁷ Lansdowne also authorized O’Conor to give General Di Giorgis his full support.³⁴⁸ Given the success the European officers had attained in affecting the welfare of the population and developing a corps of effective gendarmes, Lansdowne found it inappropriate that funding cuts should be considered. His instructions to O’Conor were to the point:

I request that your Excellency will make renewed representations to the Turkish Government in the sense of this dispatch.

You will point out to them how important it is to avoid any measures which might tend to retard the progress of the reorganized gendarmerie, and

³⁴² O’Conor to Lansdowne, April 18, 1905, FO 78/5394/261.

³⁴³ Fairholme to O’Conor, April 14, 1905, FO 78/5394/261.

³⁴⁴ Fairholme to O’Conor, May 11, 1905, FO 78/5394/336.

³⁴⁵ Fairholme to O’Conor, March 19, 1905, FO 78/5394/265.

³⁴⁶ Fairholme to O’Conor, May 19, 1905, FO 78/5394/360.

³⁴⁷ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/30.

³⁴⁸ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/31.

you will especially insist on the necessity of affording the full amount of financial support which has been sanctioned by the Sultan for its maintenance.”³⁴⁹

O’Conor also acted quickly after meeting with the despondent General Di Giorgis on May 19 by appealing to the Ottomans to grant the 600 army recruits for the Recruits School.³⁵⁰

The pressure produced results. In mid-June General Di Giorgis reported that the Ottomans had conditionally relented on their opposition to allowing the European officers in the prisons, and stated they would not take a rigid position on the issue of gendarmes being accompanied by European officers during pursuits. In both cases General Di Giorgis thought “greater latitude” would develop in the future. The general also expressed his gratitude for O’Conor’s intervention regarding the procurement of recruits.³⁵¹ Other financial questions would remain.

The reversal of the Ottoman pushback against the jurisdiction of the European gendarmes and the call for more recruits again illustrated the power of decisive support. Though they differed on issues related to wider application of the reforms, the European Powers were united in their support for more empowerment of the European officers and the training of new cohorts of gendarmes. The attention and close support Fairholme and the British officers received from O’Conor in Constantinople and Lansdowne in London on these and other occasions also likely factored in the success the British realized in Drama. The British had lobbied hard for this deployment and they wanted to see it succeed.

The British continued to receive primarily positive reports from their officers in Drama sector through the remainder of 1905. In July Fairholme reported “very satisfactory results” and submitted reports from his men in the field.³⁵² The new organizational system was applied in the spring, implementing the integrated grid of karakols and timed patrols. The first reviews were positive. Major Martyn reported from Kavalla that the Ottomans were taking to the new system competently and

³⁴⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/32.

³⁵⁰ Graves to O’Conor, May 26, 1905, FO 78/5394/374.

³⁵¹ O’Conor to Lansdowne, June 13, 1905, FO 78/5395/402.

³⁵² Fairholme to O’Conor, July 5, 1905, FO 78/5395/463.

enthusiastically. The dispersed units in their allotted sections were maintaining regular patrols which saw them visit each village in their jurisdiction once a week and regularly exchange information and intelligence with neighbouring units at a designated “point de correspondance.” Martyn listed out five advantages to the new system:

1. Much labour is saved.
2. The regular visits of the gendarmerie are welcomed by the villagers themselves, who now recognize that the gendarmes are worthy of respect owing to the way they carry out their duties. They have undoubtedly established confidence in the villages. This has been brought to my notice by many of the Headmen of villages themselves.
3. The bad characters in each section become well known to the gendarmerie of the post, and thus the latter are more easily able to keep them under observation.
4. The perpetrators of any crime can much more easily be found and brought to justice.
5. All the gendarmes of a post become thoroughly acquainted with the country in their section, and are thus invaluable to troops operating there as guides.³⁵³

The other British officers reported similar success. At Doxat, half way between Drama and Kavalla, the construction of a new *karakol* had been funded entirely by public donations, proving, in Lieutenant Smyly's estimation, that the villagers were pleased to have the gendarmes around, “instead of dreading their appearance as in former times.”³⁵⁴ Likewise, Major Anley was satisfied with the “new gendarmerie” and noted that the population felt confident to report any poor conduct by the soldiers to the gendarmerie. As a result, Ottoman army officers were maintaining tighter control over their men.³⁵⁵

By November, seven months of the new organization scheme and 18 months of indirect influence had produced “most satisfactory” results. 33% of the gendarmerie personnel had been discharged and replaced; a full complement of unit posts had been established across the British sector; and political crimes had all but ceased. Such was the confidence of the population in the “new gendarmerie” that “inhabitants of every nationality” had promptly responded to request for money to build new *karakols*.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Martyn to Fairholme, July 2, 1905, FO 78/5395/463.

³⁵⁴ Smyly to Fairholme, July 3, 1905, FO 78/5395/463.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Hamilton to Martyn, November 17, 1905, FO 78/5399/832.

Drama sancak was not devoid of challenges. Nonetheless, in relation to most of the other sectors, it stood as an exemplary model for what the Mürzsteg Reform Program could achieve.³⁵⁷

Indeed, the work of the British officers in Drama continued to elicit an accumulation of complements throughout 1905. Lansdowne was impressed. In discussing changes to the Mürzsteg Reform Program in early January, he called the reforms largely a failure. The exception was the gendarmerie reform, which was only “working well” in the British sector.³⁵⁸ When Lansdowne responded to the Ottoman attempts to curtail the powers of the European officers in May, he referenced the achievements of the British officers and spoke of the “tranquillizing influence which they and the men whom they have trained exercise both with the official classes and the population.”³⁵⁹ He cited as evidence the incidents at Kavalla, Visocan, and Volak, in which the “tact and foresight” of officers and men had been highly commendable. He wrote of the achievements of the gendarme schools and pointed out that the British officers had earned wide praise:

It is a source of much satisfaction to His Majesty's Government that the work performed by the British officers has been appreciated by the Inspector-General, the Austrian Civil Agent, and several Turkish notables, all of whom have borne generous testimony to their services.³⁶⁰

General Di Giorgis also singled out the British officers for praise, speaking to O'Connor “in eulogistic terms of the work done by the British officers, and the tact and judgment shown by them in dealing with Ottoman officials.”³⁶¹

Praise for the British officers also came from outside observers. H.N. Brailsford of the Balkan Committee and the Macedonian Relief Fund offered his reserved approval for

³⁵⁷ Ibid; Fairholme to O'Connor, FO 78/5399/832; There was still some obstruction and resistance from the Ottoman administration and some of the officers who, Major Hamilton commented, were not comfortable with “elements of discipline and interior economy or the principle of decentralization of command.” Fairholme reported and increased in hostility from the Greek community in Drama. Still, other sectors faced far more serious problems, the common denominator being a lack of support from the Ottoman authorities.

³⁵⁸ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, January 6, 1905, FO 421/208/29.

³⁵⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, May 5, 1903, FO 421/210/32.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, June 27, 1905, FO 78/5395/440.

the officers for “making their presence felt,” and for transforming the Ottoman gendarmerie into a force that, at the very least, did “not much evil.”³⁶² Despite this rather tepid appraisal, Brailsford and the Balkan Committee continued to express their support for Lansdowne’s policy and his lobbying for the expansion and emboldening of the reform program.³⁶³ A more enthusiastic assessment came from John Foster Fraser, who visited Drama as part of a tour of Macedonia in 1905. In the Spartan space of the British headquarters (“Mürzsteg Mansion”) in Drama, Fraser met Major Anley and Captain Smyly and observed their work over a period of days. Fraser noted that the British officers were respected by Christians and Muslims alike, and, unlike other sectors, “The Turks appreciated them because, as the officials told me, the British officers treated them as equals.”³⁶⁴ Fraser wrote that in investigating “disturbances” and undertaking long patrols, the British officers exercised “a good effect” on the population “by their presence” and “put[] the authorities in awe” in the process.³⁶⁵ In Kavala, he found Captain Hamilton being “hard on smugglers and officials. There is death for one and dismissal for the other.”³⁶⁶

The descriptions provided by sources such as Fraser, and less so Brailsford, provided further validation of the credible work being undertaken by the British officers. The work of the British officers served as living proof to the British that their claim that even a small party of well-motivated and well-trained men could have a pacifying influence on the ground in Macedonia. European training and European organizational techniques were turning the Ottoman gendarmerie into a competent and respected force under the guidance of European officers, and no one was doing a better job of it than the British.

Still, some continued to caution that the success was due at least in part to the fact that the British had been granted the most passive of the sectors. As O’Conor pointed out in July in a comparison to the Uscub sector which had been given to the Austro-Hungarians, the job of the British officers

³⁶² Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 309.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, 160.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

is very much easier than that which falls to the lot of their Austrian colleagues, owing to the special local conditions, and the fact that the population with whom they have to deal with are much quieter and composed of less mixed nationalities than the inhabitants of the Uskub Sanjak.³⁶⁷

Indeed, if the British officers had been allotted Uscub or Monastir, it is unlikely their best efforts could have replicated the same 'tranquillizing influence' they exerted in Drama.

Nevertheless, there are some points to the 'British Approach' which stood in contrast to the other European zones. From the outset the British officers had endeavoured to do more than reform the Ottoman gendarmerie. They made their way into the courts and prisons and made themselves highly visible to the population. Colonel Fairholme was afforded latitude to act on his own initiative and the British expanded their presence by patrolling with local interpreters as opposed to patrolling in pairs. In time, they were privy to much of the communications of the Ottoman gendarmerie battalion and had established an authoritative presence within the gendarmerie and in the territory in general.³⁶⁸ In explaining his success, Fairholme and others spoke of the 'indirect influence' his men maintained and the 'fact' and 'discretion' with which they displayed in going about their business. As the British could attest, it was not strictly necessary to have formal command of the Ottoman gendarmerie if control could be established through influence.³⁶⁹

To be certain, the approach and the energy with which the British officers did their work earned them a good deal of respect in the Drama sancak. What is more, the British experience in Drama gave British officials and others the conviction that they were on the right track with the reforms. The efforts of the European officers in the other districts, supported by new crops of trainees, were making a difference if only by their presence alone. Even the Russian officer present during the incident at Kuklitch in February of 1905, who could only stand by and watch the events, proved his use by writing a detailed report. In doing so he provided exactly the sort of third party account

³⁶⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 17, 1905, FO 78/5395/487.

³⁶⁸ Fraser called Drama "the British sphere of influence" and called his chapter "Under the Eye of Britain." See: Fraser, *Pictures from the Balkans*, 160.

³⁶⁹ In this regard, the verbs in Fairholme's list of recommendations are telling of the intent to influence: "become acquainted with," "control," "supervise," "impart," "introduce," "visit," "watch," and "report." See: Fairholme to O'Connor, September 14, 1904, FO 78/5336/752.

Alfred Biliotti had cried out for when he was confronted with contradictory testimonies in the aftermath of the Gorna Dzhumaia Uprising. When Ambassador O'Connor spoke to Sultan Abdülhamîd about the events at Kuklitch, he did so with an authoritative and detailed third party account in hand. Whether in Drama or elsewhere, the European officers were seen to be providing a valuable service not just as trainers of the gendarmerie but as 'peacekeepers.' Though they disagreed on the priorities and methods, there was near unanimous agreement between the European powers that the terms of the mandate of the European officers needed to be strengthened.

The Intervention that Might Have Been: A Blueprint for a European Raj?

Lord Lansdowne resolved to try to expand and embolden the Mürzsteg Reform Program in 1905. As Lansdowne explained in private correspondence and in the very public setting of the House of Lords, he wished to continue to push the multilateral intervention forward by having the other powers pursue the standard the British had set in Drama. Furthermore, he wished to expand the size and scope of the reforms more European officers spread across more territory and enabling the Europeans to gain more control over the Ottoman administration. Lansdowne's vision was not to be realized. While the European powers did wrest some financial controls from the Ottoman government by way of military demonstrations, the results were far from what Lansdowne envisioned. By the end of 1905, Lansdowne and the Unionist government had fallen from and a Liberal government was in power in Great Britain.

The unrealized plans and ideas of Lansdowne and the British constitute a blueprint of an intervention that might have been. This section explores these unrealized plans and ideas. In so doing, it reviews motivational factors and discusses the various methods that the British favoured, some of which reflected strategies and techniques employed by British imperial rule. Finally, a counterfactual discussion will consider what this unrealized larger intervention might have looked like and what, if any, chance it would have had of succeeding.

In 1905, there were reasons to be concerned that the situation in Macedonia and the southern Balkans could deteriorate further. Before the end of 1904 ended, diplomatic

cables were again buzzing with rumours of a renewed uprising in the spring. Some 130,000 Ottoman troops had been deployed to the Vilayets of Macedonia and Adrianople in anticipation of a renewed conflict with IMRO and possibly Bulgaria.³⁷⁰ Violent incidents persisted even in the depths of winter, with the Bulgarian press publicizing reports of abuses by the Ottoman security forces in the Djumia district (near the Bulgarian border) in late 1904.³⁷¹ In addition, there were troubling reports from the Vilayet of Adrianople. The Bulgarian government circulated reports to the European Powers accusing the Ottoman troops of ongoing looting, sexual assaults, and the expropriation of Bulgarian property. Some 3,000 Bulgarian refugees from the Vilayet of Adrianople were still being housed in Bulgaria, waiting to return to their homes. The allegations were denied by the Ottoman government and questioned by American missionaries in the area.³⁷² It was difficult to verify the reports because there were no European officers patrolling the Adrianople Vilayet. Indications were that 1905 would see an escalation of conflict in the region. Lansdowne described the situation as “most precarious.”³⁷³

In Lansdowne’s view, the problems were interrelated and could be remedied by reform. He reasoned that IMRO had refrained from another uprising in 1904 because of the promise of reform. Therefore, strengthening and expanding the reforms would appease rebel disappointments.³⁷⁴ By expanding their mandate into the Vilayet of Adrianople, the European gendarmes would extend their pacifying presence; deterring guerilla activities and compelling Ottoman troops to restrain themselves from committing excesses. The European gendarmes could also presumably assist in the repatriation of

³⁷⁰ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, January 6, 1905, FO 421/208/29. The Bulgarians were in the process of rearming in 1904-5 and were estimated to be able to field a force of about 300,000 men.

³⁷¹ Marling to Lansdowne (confidential), December 23, 1904, FO 78/5361/161. Refugees who reached Sofia reported that the French Officer attached to the Ottoman gendarmerie in the district was indifferent to the events and was content to confine himself to his quarters and make no effort to get acquainted with the population.

³⁷² Townley to Lansdowne (confidential), December 27, 1904, FO 78/5338/977. Third party accounts were difficult to come by. Although some of the European powers maintained consulates in the town of Adrianople, less was known about happenings in the countryside. The British endeavoured to procure information from journalists and American missionaries delivering aid in the region.

³⁷³ Lansdowne to Bertie, January 11, 1905, FO 421/208/41.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

refugees and investigate alleged crimes. Lansdowne deduced that this buffering presence was particularly important, as it would enable of thousands of Ottoman troops to be removed from the region or sent home, thereby freeing up financial resources for “administrative improvements” – namely funding for the gendarmerie.³⁷⁵

Lansdowne sought to get to what he saw as the root of the matter. While acknowledging that the gendarmerie reforms had achieved some success, he argued that the number of European officers was still below the sixty originally considered the minimum requirement and that the mission had been hampered by Ottoman obstructionism. He called the gendarmerie reforms “ancillary” to administrative reform and pointed out that despite being part of the Vienna Reform Program, Ottoman administrative and judicial institutions had “scarcely been touched.” Reforming Ottoman institutions would produce more funding for “the reorganization of the gendarmerie or for the efficient administration of justice.”³⁷⁶ Citing the legal responsibility of the Great Powers in accordance with Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty to order ensure the vilayets of Ottoman Europe a degree of self-administration, Lansdowne outlined the following three-point plan:

- A) An immediate reduction of the military forces now maintained by Turkey in Macedonia and its neighbourhood to the number strictly required for the maintenance of internal order and security, this number to be fixed for a definite period of years.

It would be reasonable to expect that Bulgaria would, in this event, be willing to carry out a simultaneous and corresponding reduction, and to enforce measures to the satisfaction of Powers with the view of preventing the organization and equipment of insurgent bands in her own or in Turkish territory. Should it be found impossible to effect a satisfactory arrangement on this basis, the Powers might give a collective guarantee during the specified period Bulgaria would not be allowed to occupy any portion of Turkish territory.

- B) The appointment for a term of years of a Commission consisting of delegates nominated by the Powers and placed under the presidency of the Inspector-General. The Committee would be given administrative and executive power, and would in the first instance be instructed to frame, without delay, schemes for the effective control of

³⁷⁵ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, January 6, 1905, FO 421/208/29. He claimed that the cost of maintaining the current level of the Ottoman security forces in Macedonia was 3,000,000l per annum.

³⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Bertie, January 11, 1905, FO 421/208/41.

the administration of finance and justice. The financial reforms should include the communication of the tithes, and provide for a fixed payment to the Porte by each of the Macedonian vilayets, the balance of the revenue collected remaining available for local purposes. The Inspector-General, assisted by the Commission, might be intrusted with the command of such Turkish troops as it might be found necessary to retain in Macedonia.

- C) The extension of the above scheme of reforms in such a manner as to make it include some at all events of the districts, notably the Vilayet of Adrianople, to which the Mürzsteg scheme does not apply, but which were considered by the Porte to be included in the scope of the Vienna programme.³⁷⁷

Lansdowne additionally emphasized that if pressure were to be applied on the Ottoman government in order to realize the acceptance of these measures, it should be applied multilaterally under the leadership of Austria-Hungary and Russia.³⁷⁸

The three points are consistent with Lansdowne's aim of maximizing the effectiveness of the reforms without subverting the positions of Austria-Hungary and Russia. The reduction of troops would ease tensions along the Ottoman-Bulgarian frontier and free up revenue. The emphasis placed on extending the reform mandate into the Vilayet of Adrianople was to be expected, as it was one of the reasons why the British had accepted the allocation of the Sancak of Drama to begin with. The deployment of European officers into the Vilayet of Adrianople could serve as a buffering presence since the territory was likely to be the focus of an Ottoman-Bulgarian war. The proposed commission of five delegates elaborated in point (b) would effectively replace the Austro-Russian civil inspectors. These delegates would have the power to reengineer the Ottoman administration and ensure a stable revenue stream to fund the reform expansion. Given that more power would be granted to the Inspector General, power would be decentralized, giving the European commission more de facto authority.

Although the three points did not explicitly mention autonomy, Radovich points out that they were "a virtual proposal of autonomy." While the European vilayets would

³⁷⁷ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, January 6, 1905, FO 421/208/29. In this articulation of the three points to Ambassador de Bunsen in Paris, Lansdowne stated that "the new scheme of reforms should be extended certainly to the Vilayet of Adrianople, and, if possible, to the Vilayets of Scutari and Yanina, to which the Mürzsteg scheme does not apply."

³⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Bertie, January 11, 1905, FO 421/208/41.

remain under the Ottoman flag, the decentralized arrangement with an expanded presence of European officers and a European commission with power over the administration of finance and justice would severely undercut Ottoman sovereignty. Were Lansdowne's points to be realized, the European presence in Macedonia (and possibly in Adrianople, Scutari, and Yannia) would truly resemble the intervention in Lebanon or Crete, or, perhaps in future, the British presence in Egypt. At the very least, the points were a call for virtual autonomy, if not virtual occupation.

The British were still moving cautiously. In exchanging messages with Lansdowne, Balfour expressed favour for an autonomous solution in calling for "the establishment of a Macedonian Constitution on the lines of the Lebanon system." However, he cautioned that if they pushed too hard, they ran the risk of achieving nothing.³⁷⁹ Balfour was confused at Austria-Hungary's policy, which he thought was either part of a grand master strategy or a policy of deferment.³⁸⁰ In Lansdowne's view, it was "the latter motive." He reasoned that Vienna was "living hand to mouth" in its Near Eastern policy, its principle concern being that "no one else should take advantage of these events in order to reap an advantage to their exclusion."³⁸¹ After presenting the points to the Austro-Hungarians and Russians, Lansdowne quietly tried to enlist Italian and French support. His hope was that if the Italians, and particularly the French, lobbied the Austro-Hungarians and Russians, some, if not all, of the three points could be attained.³⁸²

Domestically, there was strong support for a more assertive policy towards Macedonia. In early January, Brailsford and Buxton visited Lansdowne and called for the reforms to be strengthened extended into the Vilayet of Adrianople, where they hoped a British consulate could be established.³⁸³ Autonomy was a recurrent theme in a collection of essays published in 1905 by leading journalists and advocates for Macedonia. While many contributors projected that the racial mix of Macedonia would eventually lead to territorial divisions, Luigi Villari pointed out that autonomy was a

³⁷⁹ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 30, 1904, BP Add MSS 49729.

³⁸⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 6, 1905, BP Add MSS 49729.

³⁸¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 8, 1905, BP Add MSS 49729.

³⁸² Lansdowne to Balfour, December 23, 1904, BP Add MSS 49729.

³⁸³ Lansdowne to Townley, January 10, 1905, FO 421/208/40.

means by which obstacles of national jealousy “might be obviated.”³⁸⁴ In discussing the possibilities of reform, E. Hilton Young argued:

A distinction has been drawn between reform and reconstruction, but a practical reform might be the basis of reconstruction. It has been shown that a reorganized gendarmerie, placed under foreign control and command, would have been a sound step in advance. The line of least resistance lies in extending this system to the other departments, by placing at all events the financial and preferably also the judicial and public works departments, under the full executive control of foreign administrators nominated by the Powers.³⁸⁵

According to Victoria Buxton, the case for autonomy could be validated by the historical record, the tourist literature, and the Blue Books:

Take only those provinces which still remain under the suzerainty of the Porte, while exercising autonomy in the internal administration. Every Cook’s tourist will confirm me in stating that to cross over from Palestine into Lebanon, where the Governor is ultimately responsible to the Powers, is to cross over to security for native and European, to thriving and cleanly villages, to good carriage roads, to abundant and developing cultivation. Eastern Rumelia, under the control of the European Commission, made rapid progress in civilization and order. Crete, we are informed by the latest Blue Books, is fast developing its institutions and its commerce...Under European control, and by officials not responsible to the Porte, Turkey can be successfully reformed and successfully administered.³⁸⁶

Although parliament was pleased to have the support of public opinion and influential journalists and activists, questions that arose in parliament did prompt Balfour and Lansdowne to warn against calls for unilateral intervention. On February 27, 1905, Balfour delivered the following word of caution to James Bryce:

The burdens which this country has already to bear are sufficiently great; and this Government, at all events, is not going to add them by an insane

³⁸⁴ Luigi Villari, “Races, Religions, and Propagandas,” in *The Balkan Question: The Present Condition of the Balkans and of the European Responsibilities by Various Writers*, ed. Luigi Villari (London: John Murrar, 1905), 164.

³⁸⁵ E. Hilton Young, “A Suggested Scheme of Reforms,” in *The Balkan Question: The Present Condition of the Balkans and of the European Responsibilities by Various Writers*, ed. Luigi Villari (London: John Murrar, 1905), 322.

³⁸⁶ Victoria Buxton, “A History of Turkish Reforms since the Treaty of Berlin,” in *The Balkan Question: The Present Condition of the Balkans and of the European Responsibilities by Various Writers*, ed. Luigi Villari (London: John Murrar, 1905), 118-9.

policy of philanthropic adventure in the Near East...Therefore let it not go forth to any part of the world that in certain particulars the schemes of the Powers are imperfect, we are going to separate ourselves from them and advance our own scheme by the strength of our own right hand. That would be no service to the Christian populations; it would be the greatest disservice we could do to the cause of European peace and all that is bound up with the cause of European peace. If your policy is to endure, and if it is to be fruitful of good, you must consider not merely what it is you would desire to do, but what means you have of doing it, and how those means can be adjusted to the desired.³⁸⁷

In the House of Lords, Lansdowne pleaded for patience and warned of the inherent dangers of Macedonia:

What the Powers are dealing with in Macedonia is not a mere temporary outbreak or effervescence; it is an inveterate trouble...You have a condition of things in which men of the same religion are ready to cut one another's throats on account of racial differences. That is not a state of things which, with any amount of goodwill and energy, you can put an end to in a few months.³⁸⁸

In March, Lansdowne presented a hypothetical scenario in which even a British naval demonstration could not compel the Ottomans to carry out reforms on the spot, and asked his fellow Lords what Britain's he next move would be:

I have imagined, there would be one way, and one way only, in which you could obtain the execution of the reforms on the spot, and that would be to send a British army to occupy the Macedonian provinces. I have only to ask your Lordships to consider the state of Macedonia, the magnitude of the military forces employed in that country and the adjoining countries, and then to ask you whether that is a task which any British Government, or any British Minister, could light-heartedly recommend to their country? Therefore, my Lords, we did not dissociate ourselves from the other Powers, and we gave to the two neighbouring Powers that mandate of which so much has been said.³⁸⁹

As was the case in 1904, Lansdowne's advocacy of autonomy for Macedonia in his diplomacy was not reflected in his public speeches. While the British government lobbied for virtual Macedonian autonomy and for Britain, France, and Italy to play a greater role in the reforms, it remained committed to the leadership of Austria-Hungary

³⁸⁷ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 141 (1905): 1394-95.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

³⁸⁹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 143 (1905): 1337.

and Russia. There was no appetite for a 'philanthropic adventure', but the British were still looking to obtain what they could through negotiation and politics.

When the Austro-Hungarians and Russians produced their own financial reform program in response to Lansdowne's points, the British tried to leverage for further concessions. The Austro-Russian proposals allowed the Ottoman Bank to retain most of the control of Ottoman revenues. The proposals called for budgets from each sancak and each kaza, but financial inspectors were to be selected by the Ottoman Bank in conjunction with the Inspector General.³⁹⁰ This was far from the British call to have delegates from the European Powers wield executive power over finance and justice. Lansdowne argued that the proposals did not go far enough in securing sufficient financial independence for the Macedonian vilayets.³⁹¹ The British had promised to keep their proposal out of public circulation, but, in early February, a report detailing Lansdowne's presentation of his three points to the French appeared in the press.³⁹² The European powers continued to discuss the financial reforms through the summer and into the autumn.

The geographical expansion of the mission was the other British priority for the reforms. In addition to the Vilayet of Adrianople, Lansdowne had asked for the vilayets of Scutari and Yannina to be included. The Vilayet of Yannina indicated that it needed reform when its gendarmerie went on strike over lack of payment in February.³⁹³ The Serbian and Montenegrin governments were also lobbying for the expansion of the Mürzsteg Reform Program in the northern kazas of the Kosovo Vilayet ("Old Serbia").³⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the principle British focus was the inclusion of the Adrianople Vilayet. In early 1905, the British established a diplomatic presence in the vilayet by appointing Captain Arthur Townshend to their new consulate in Adrianople. There were indications that the new consul would be usefully complemented by the 'tranquillizing' presence of a contingent of gendarmerie officers. Bulgarian refugees remained across the border in

³⁹⁰ Townley to Lansdowne, January 20, 1905, FO 78/5401/19.

³⁹¹ Lansdowne to Mensdorff, March 28, 1905, FO 421/209/95.

³⁹² Radovich, "Britain's Policy of Macedonian Reform," 506.

³⁹³ Townley to Lansdowne, February 16, 1905, FO 78/5392/118. The striking gendarmes had not been paid for five months. Civic officials in Yannia had also gone without pay for several months.

³⁹⁴ Buchanan to Lansdowne, June 10, 1903, FO 78/5361/75.

Bulgaria awaiting repatriation, and there were concerns that their property was being expropriated. American missionaries were still distributing food stuffs and clothing in the Vilayet of Adrianople Vilayet through the winter of 1904-05. The head of the American aid mission, Dr. Marsh, informed the British that although he was confident about the future, the Bulgarians still had some legitimate grievances and there was tension in the villages along the frontier.³⁹⁵ Summer brought more unrest in the south-west of the vilayet when a series of mass arrests followed the passage of guerrilla bands through the area. O'Connor reported that the details were sketchy and that reports from Bulgarian and Ottoman sources were conflicting; with Captain Townshend on leave, he had been deprived of dependable information.³⁹⁶

The reports emerging from Adrianople strengthened Lansdowne's resolve to have European officers deployed in the territory. In addition to providing a buffering element in the place most likely to be the main theatre of an Otto-Bulgarian war, the officers could assist with the refugee resettlements; investigate violent incidents and write third party reports; provide a pacifying presence, and; train the gendarmerie. They could do this while exerting influence on the Ottoman courts and civil institutions (just as the British had done so well in the Sancak of Drama. Lansdowne asked O'Connor to press the Ottoman government to reform the gendarmerie and to remind it that the British government considered this reform to be a very important matter.³⁹⁷ In April, Sultan Abdülhamîd asked the Italian government for officers to reform the gendarmerie in Adrianople Vilayet.³⁹⁸ The Italians did not agree reasoning that they did not want to arouse the jealousy of the other powers and were wary of the Sultan's intensions.³⁹⁹ Lansdowne suggested that the Vilayet of Adrianople be a joint Anglo-Italian project. The hope was that the Ottoman government would at least accede to allowing European officers to expand their reform of the Macedonian gendarmerie to Adrianople – or that the Ottomans might be forced into accepting this measure.⁴⁰⁰ In an effort to prepare for

³⁹⁵ Marling to Lansdowne, January 8, 1905, FO 421/208/50.

³⁹⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 7, 1905, FO 78/5396/542.

³⁹⁷ Lansdowne to O'Connor, March 28, 1905, FO 421/209/96.

³⁹⁸ O'Connor to Lansdowne, April 13, 1905, FO 78/5401/65.

³⁹⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, July 12, 1905, FO 421/211/23. The Italians initially called the Ottoman offer "an excuse for doing nothing." See: Egerton to Lansdowne, April 20, 1905, FO 421/209/192.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

this desired eventuality, the British military attaché in Constantinople, Francis R. Maunsell, was tasked with drawing up a plan for the reorganization of the Adrianople gendarmerie.

In September of 1905, Maunsell submitted his report detailing the strength of the gendarmerie forces in the six sancaks of the Vilayet of Adrianople, which included a proposal for the deployment of British officers. The Vilayet of Adrianople had a land area of about 68,000 square kilometers with some 900,000 inhabitants.⁴⁰¹ The gendarmerie consisted of 2,306 men. In Maunsell's estimation, it would be sufficient to have six officers (one per sancak) with two senior officers based in the town of Adrianople. Each of the six officers was to be attached to the local gendarmerie company and was to "travel about and supervise affairs." He also hoped that the British officers who had served in Macedonia could be transferred and their experience could be of use.⁴⁰²

Maunsell's report was thoroughly critiqued by Colonel Fairholme, whom Maunsell had consulted for the expertise Fairholme had gained in Drama. While Fairholme agreed that British officers would "be beneficial as a check," he considered the eight proposed officers to be inadequate and wrote that the project needed six senior officers and 19 junior officers. Referencing his experience, Fairholme was adamant that in order for the plan to be effective "there must be a foreign officer permanently residing in each Kaza in which there is the Headquarters of a Company of Gendarmerie" (underlined in original). He pointed out that the technique of having European officers "travelling about and supervising affairs" had been a failure in the other zones in Macedonia. The need for officers to be stationed at the company level had been one of the lessons learned from the Macedonian experience, and this lesson informed the argument for having more officers. Fairholme did not think that Adrianople was peaceful enough to merit a lighter deployment:

I cannot think that the conditions in the Adrianople Vilayet are so much more favourable than those in Macedonia that we could hope to affect a

⁴⁰¹ Maunsell, Proposed Additional Fortifications at Adrianople, May 3, 1905, FO 195/2200/20.

⁴⁰² Maunsell, Memo: Reorganization of Gendarmerie of Adrianople Vilayet, September 14, 1905, FO 195/2200/49.

real and through control and supervision with a relatively smaller contingent of foreign officers than has been found necessary [here].⁴⁰³

Drawing on his experience, Fairholme produced a list of problems and criticisms pertinent to logistics, funding, and the need for translators.⁴⁰⁴ In concluding his critique, Fairholme predicted that with only eight officers, the mission to reorganize the Adrianople gendarmerie would

not be much more successful than were the efforts of the six Belgian and Scandinavian officers appointed by the Ottoman Government in the 3 Vilayets in previous to our arrival there, unless some real powers were obtained for them of a very different nature to anything we have seen yet.⁴⁰⁵

Maunsell countered with a memo suggesting that the deployment could be limited to the three sancaks with Bulgarian populations, two of which (Adrianople and Kirk Kilissa) were sancaks that formed the frontier with Bulgaria.⁴⁰⁶ There is no immediate follow-up discussion of communication about the practicalities of reorganizing the Adrianople gendarmerie.

Fairholme's critical review of Maunsell's report is somewhat more candid than his official reports. It provides some insight into the challenges of day-to-day operations and frustrations with the bureaucracy, both of which are mostly downplayed in Fairholme's official reports. It would seem that organizing gendarmerie in the Sancak of Drama was more difficult than official reports indicated and that there were limits to what could be achieved indirectly. As Fairholme warned:

The British officers would certainly count upon the powerful and indirect support of His Majesty's Ambassador, but I fear that the resistance in detail of which the Turks are such masters, and of which we have had

⁴⁰³ Fairholme to Maunsell, July 16, 1905, FO 195/2200/49.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. Fairholme listed the following 11 points: "principle subjects" to be considered if a thorough reorganization of the Adrianople gendarmerie was to take place: registration of correspondence; logistical organization; elimination of unsuitable officers; communication of orders; gendarmerie schools; clothing; pay; arms and equipment; barrack accommodation; horses for officers; finances and budgets.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Maunsell, Memo: Reorganization of Gendarmerie of Adrianople Vilayet, September 14, 1905, FO 195/2200/49.

plentiful experience in Macedonia, would prove to be too strong for them.⁴⁰⁷

The relatively low number of British officers suggested by any party is a point which stands out in this exchange of communication. Fairholme's more liberal number of 25 still seems like a small number considering the size of the territory. In fact, an unknown official who wrote that "30 officers would constitute a veritable British occupation."⁴⁰⁸ Although Fairholme suggested including junior officers, he does not mention non-commissioned officers, let alone privates and corporals. Fairholme had resisted suggestions for the recruitment of non-commissioned officers from other powers. As was the case in Macedonia, the British officers who would have been sent to the Vilayet of Adrianople would have had at best a limited capacity to enforce their mandate, which was by no means strictly administrative. If we are to assume they would have taken the 'British Approach,' most of the officers would have supervising reforms and making their presence felt in their assigned regions. What accounts for this assurance that such small forces of men could accomplish so much?

The British certainly had confidence in the officers that they sent to Macedonia, who proved to be highly suited to their assignments and motivated to carry them out. The 'British Approach' had achieved results in Drama. However, long-term success depended on the reorganization of the gendarmerie. The key to this was the training of new cohorts of motivated gendarmes and officers. Obviously, when numbers are considered, the influence of the handful of British officers would have become much greater if the 2,300 Ottoman gendarmes in the field had received 'proper' training. Lansdowne spoke to this when he included the new generation of trained gendarmes in the "tranquilizing" company of the British officers.⁴⁰⁹ British confidence that the trainees could be molded into an effective force was based on the fact that similar forces had been created in the British Empire. It is, therefore, not surprising that some of the training practices used by the gendarmerie schools reflected knowledge that had been produced by British imperial rule and confirmed by observations of the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁰⁷ Fairholme to Maunsell, July 16, 1905, FO 195/2200/49.

⁴⁰⁸ Maunsell, Memo: Reorganization of Gendarmerie of Adrianople Vilayet, September 14, 1905, FO 195/2200/49.

⁴⁰⁹ Lansdowne to O'Connor, May 5, 1905, FO 421/210/32.

Two imperial practices were seen in the selection and deployment of the gendarme recruits: ideally, they would not patrol the regions they lived in and would be drawn from particular races. The concept that strangers should patrol strangers was a policing technique which had been utilized in the policing of the British Empire. The idea was that strangers would be detached from local politics and would therefore be less likely to be influenced by local patronage networks.⁴¹⁰ This practice had its origins in British policing in Ireland and had been employed on a larger scale when Indian ‘martial races’ had been deployed to places like Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore and East Africa.⁴¹¹ Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs were lauded by the British for being dependable and disciplined. In the 1890s, Sikh soldiers were sent to Britain’s East African colonies, where they served as elite shock troops and were praised for setting a good example of discipline and resolve for their African comrades.⁴¹² At the time of the Macedonian Crisis, some of these troops were involved in British actions against the forces of Mohammad Abdullah Hassan in Somalia.⁴¹³

The observations made by the British in Ottoman Macedonia led them to make conclusions and recommendation that could be substantiated these British imperial security practices. British officials had implored the Ottoman authorities not to use local Muslim militias and ethnic Albanians in counter insurgency operations before and during the 1903 Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia. They advised the Ottomans to use regular army troops and preferably Anatolian Turks, who had fewer local interests and were believed to possess qualities that made them more professional and more effective in executing their duties—as was much the case with the Indian ‘martial races.’⁴¹⁴ The British concerns were confirmed when survivors of Ottoman reprisals articulated the differences between the professionalism of “foreign” (likely Anatolian) troops and the thuggery of

⁴¹⁰ Robert Gregg, “Uneasy Streets: Police, Corruption, and Anxiety in Bombay, London, and New York City,” In Editors: Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan *Corrupt Histories* (Rochester: Rochester University of Rochester Press, 2004), 345.

⁴¹¹ Ibid; Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 111. According to Metcalf, the martial races theory only became “fully elaborated” in the 1880s, which coincides with Lord Lansdowne’s tenure as Viceroy of India (1888-1894).

⁴¹² Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 120.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 86-87.

⁴¹⁴ British Military Attaché’s Report, August 12, 1903, FO 78/5268; O’Conor to Lansdowne, September 4, 1903, FO 78/5268; Account of Christian villager, October 1, 1903, FO 78/5269.

local militias.⁴¹⁵ These observations were further supported by reports of Ottoman imperial practices in Yemen, where the Ottomans found that only Anatolians and Albanians were reliable.⁴¹⁶

British views on the gendarme schools and recruitment practices also reflected some of the knowledge that had been gleaned from British imperial practices. At the request of General Di Giorgis, the trainee gendarmes to serve in Macedonia came from Adrianople and Anatolia.⁴¹⁷ This produced no opposition from the British. However, the British disagreed with Di Giorgis' recruitment policy for the gendarmerie. The general had favoured a policy of having only single men in the gendarmerie. His reasoning was that single men would be "untrammelled by family ties."⁴¹⁸ The British had reservations about the policy and thought it best to allow married men to enter the gendarmerie. Maunsell reasoned it would improve the quality of the force since most well-adjusted Turkish males married by age 20. At the same time, Maunsell acknowledged that men under 25 in the Ottoman Empire, "as in other Oriental countries," do not command the respect of the population.⁴¹⁹ However, interest in allowing married men to enter the gendarmerie also reflected knowledge produced from the British imperial experience, which included the observation that attached Indian men in imperial forces were more disciplined and tended to dutifully save their money for their spouses.⁴²⁰ In mid-1905, General Di Giorgis gave high praise to the work of the British officers.⁴²¹ By late 1905,

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Maunsell to O'Connor, June 15, 1905, FO 195/2200/39. Although the British observers felt the Albanians had too many local interests to be effective, they still thought highly of the Albanians for their warrior qualities. Alfred Biliotti noted that the Albanians of the Ionian Islands had made splendid police officers thanks to the training and supervision they received during British colonial rule. See: Biliotti to O'Connor, December 1, 1902, FO 195/2133/207.

⁴¹⁷ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 185.

⁴¹⁸ Fairholme to O'Connor, December 4, 1905, FO 421/213/203.

⁴¹⁹ Maunsell to O'Connor, October, 13, 1903, FO 78/5398/725 Maunsell reported that most other foreign officer also opposed Di Giorgis non-married policy for the same reason. Maunsell remarked: "However good such a system may have been found in Italy, it seems unwise to transplant it to another country, such as Turkey, where the habits, customs, and religion are entirely different. "

⁴²⁰ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 108.

⁴²¹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, June 27, 1905, FO 78/5395/440.

the general was considering Britain's request to allow married men to enter the gendarmerie.⁴²²

Furthermore, the two chief architects of the proposals to extend the British presence into the Vilayet of Adrianople had both served in India. Lansdowne had been Viceroy of India from 1888 to 1894, and Francis Maunsell had served in India among his many imperial posts of call.⁴²³ It is revealingly to note that around the time Maunsell drafted the plans for the British deployment to Adrianople, he also produced a report on plans by the British engineer Sir William Willcocks for new irrigation systems in Ottoman Mesopotamia. Maunsell commented that it would be difficult to fully implement the project owing to Ottoman resistance and that the Ottomans would make poor administrators even if it were implemented. In contrast, he referenced the examples of India and Egypt, "where irrigation projects are marvellously productive and give a high rate of interest on their capital because of the settled and firm government of both countries. Unfortunately, the Turkish government of Mesopotamia is just the contrary."⁴²⁴ Maunsell wrote that the Mesopotamian irrigation project would be better served if it were administered by Britons and Indian Muslims.⁴²⁵

Indeed, the British could point to Egypt as a thriving example of the benefits of British intervention and rule in an autonomous region of the Ottoman Empire. The British had modeled their administrative system in Egypt partly on their institutions in India.⁴²⁶ Rather than annexing and directly ruling Egypt, the British ruled indirectly with British advisers being attached to ministries and influencing key decisions. Lord Cromer controlled the budget, and the British garrison controlled the security of the territory. Cromer had built up the Egyptian economy and oversaw the construction of irrigation projects and railroad infrastructure.⁴²⁷ Cromer himself enthused that within twenty years,

⁴²² Fairholme to O'Connor, December 4, 1905, FO 421/213/203

⁴²³"Obituaries," *The Times*, December 8, 1936. Maunsell also had eight years of experience in the Ottoman Empire having served as an intrepid vice-consul at three consuls in Eastern Anatolia between 1897 and 1901 before he became the military attaché in Constantinople.

⁴²⁴ Maunsell, Proposal for Irrigation Department in Turkey, June 25, 1905, FO 195/2200/39a.

⁴²⁵ Ibid

⁴²⁶ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 44.

⁴²⁷ William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder Colo: Westview Press), 100-101.

British rule had brought Egypt from a state of mutiny, bankruptcy, and “dislocated” administration to a state that could “almost be said to form part of Europe.”⁴²⁸ In his words: “The special aptitude shown by Englishmen in the government of Oriental races pointed to England as the most effective and beneficial instrument for gradual introduction of European civilization into Egypt.”⁴²⁹

In essence, Britain’s imperial experience gave the British more confidence in their approach to Macedonia. They could attribute the success the British had enjoyed in the Sancak of Drama to the application of policies, practices, and attitudes that had been derived from the British imperial rule. Furthermore, the new gendarmes were trained by a British officer at the Recruit School and in 1905, were performing well in the field under the tutelage of British officers. This further validated the ‘special aptitude’ of the British. When Lansdowne drew up his three-point plan in late 1904, he likely had India and Egypt in mind. As Metcalf explains, the British saw themselves as India’s saviors, given that they worked to bring order to a state of anarchy and rehabilitate one of history’s greatest civilizations.⁴³⁰ Likewise, the reforming benefits of British guidance were seen to be revitalizing Egypt.⁴³¹ It stood to reason that in the name of mending great civilizations, the British should lend their expertise and ‘aptitude’ to help bring an end to anarchy and build peace, prosperity, and good government in the land once ruled by Philip and Alexander.

What might the results have been if the British had had their way in 1905 and Lansdowne’s three-point plan had been implemented to the letter? The Vilayet of Adrianople would have been included in the Mürzsteg Reform Program and would have seen the deployment of roughly two dozen European officers, most, if not all of whom, would have been British officers. The Macedonian sancaks and kazas hitherto excluded from Mürzsteg would have been incorporated into the emboldened mandate, with the vilayets of Yanina and Scutari also coming into the fold. Although these territorial additions would not have happened all at once, eventually the entirety six Ottoman vilayets (Yannia, Scutari, Monastir, Kosovo, Salonica, and Adrianople) would have been

⁴²⁸ The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt Vol. 1* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1908), 326-327.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁴³⁰ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

⁴³¹ Cromer, *Modern Egypt Vol. 1*, 326.

included in the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The territory the vilayets occupied would have been almost all the remaining territory of Ottoman Europe beyond the walls of Constantinople, with the exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sancak of Novi Pazar, which were already under Austro-Hungarian military control.

The implementation of Lansdowne's second point would have effectively granted autonomy to Macedonia and all territory under the Mürzsteg scheme. If the Inspector-General had gained increased authority over finances and security, power would have been decentralized. The Inspector-General would have been "assisted" by a committee of delegates nominated by the European powers, which had "administrative and executive power."⁴³² This de-facto autonomous arrangement would have looked much like a multilateral European version of Britain's governance of Egypt. Lansdowne called for financial reforms that would make the territory solvent and enable the regular payment of state officials and the security forces. This was how he proposed to get at what he saw as the root of the region's problems. As Lord Cromer's financial reforms had created the foundation for a measure of stability and prosperity in Egypt, it was logical to assume that what had apparently worked in Egypt would also work in Ottoman Europe.

However, unlike Egypt, where a British garrison had been deployed, the British plan for security still envisioned modest numbers of European officers directing Ottoman gendarmes. Assuming that more gendarmerie schools would have been opened, non-commissioned officers may have been employed to train recruits. However, if the British vision had been adhered to, no Europeans below the rank of junior officer would have been assigned to the field. Assuming that one European officer was allotted per kaza, an expanded military commission was established, and non-commissioned officers were assigned to training schools, the total number of European military men required for the six vilayets would likely not have exceeded 500. The arrangement would have continued to put stock in the ability of the European-trained and reformed Ottoman gendarmerie to keep the peace. Reducing Ottoman military forces in the area in accordance with Lansdowne's first point aimed to strengthen the gendarmeries' power, prestige, and influence, allowing for the desired discipline and professionalism to radiate through the

⁴³² Lansdowne to de Bunsen, January 6, 1905, FO 421/208/29.

ranks of the Ottoman gendarmerie and further the European officers' 'tranquilizing' influences.

If it had been implemented, Lansdowne's points and the application of 'the British Approach' across an expanded territorial mandate would have turned what was left of the Ottoman Balkans into a something of a European Raj. A relatively small number of select European delegates with administrative and executive power and authority would have effectively controlled governance of the territory. Meanwhile, the peace would have been kept by elite European officers supervising a force of European-trained gendarmes drawn (ideally) from men of appropriate racial stock—a decidedly imperial security force. In fact, it was very likely their empire that gave the British the confidence in the capacity of such a small number of men to control a larger native population. If 30,000 Britons could rule some 271,000,000 Indians, it was logical to assume that a few hundred elite Europeans could bring peace, prosperity, and good governance to the people of Ottoman Europe, who numbered approximately four million. Ideally, it would have been a case of a ruling with a heavy hand while leaving a relatively light footprint.

If the British visions for expanded reform in 1905 have a contemporary equivalent, it would be Bosnia-Herzegovina since the 1995 Dayton Accord. Since 2000, NATO troops have withdrawn from Bosnia-Herzegovina, leaving international officers to oversee security arrangements. While the international community's military footprint has lightened, its hand of influence on Bosnia-Herzegovina's governance has remained strong as it has continued to try to stabilize the fractured country through methods that have included decentralized power arrangements. The arrangement has been dubbed an element of "Empire Lite" and some have called Bosnia-Herzegovina a "European Raj."⁴³³ One hundred and ten years after the Mürzsteg Reform Program, the European powers and the International Community are still trying to steer Europe's southeast towards peace, prosperity, and good governance.

⁴³³ Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 150. Knaus and Felix Martin made the "Raj" description in a 2003 article, in which they likened the foreigners in Sarajevo to the "benevolent despots" of nineteenth century Calcutta. "Empire Lite" was coined by Michael Ignatieff. See: Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2003).

If the Mürzsteg Reform Program had been expanded and emboldened along the lines of Lansdowne's points, would it have brought peace to Ottoman Europe? Peace might have been possible, although the odds would not have been in its favour. Imposing the new reforms would have been a considerable political and diplomatic challenge. As Lansdowne's points would have further undermined Ottoman sovereignty, a strident and sustained display of unity by the European powers would have been the only means by which the Ottoman Empire would have accepted them without violent resistance. This effort would have required more support from Germany. Given past disagreements between Italy and Austria-Hungary, allotting territory would have been a challenging issue. Perhaps some reshuffling would have taken place, which would have moved Britain and France to the western and northern regions. Maintaining unity among the powers would have been an ongoing difficulty, given the geopolitical shifts and alliance politics which played out over the course of the decade. A collective interest in a multilaterally-maintained peace and security operation would likely have continued to trump national interests and empire politics. This would not have been easy, especially considering the Austro-Italian conflicts over the Adriatic, Austro-Hungarian and Russian imperial designs on Ottoman Europe; Great Britain's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean; the burgeoning relationship between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, and; alliance politics. Even if unity had been maintained, the powers would have still have had to deal with administrators, gendarmes and military men who were loyal to the Ottoman state. Ottoman 'resistance in detail' and resistance in recalcitrance would have presented ongoing problems; although, administrative and executive power would presumably have given the European administrators the authority to benevolently override Ottoman resistance, just as their successors did a century later in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is possible that the Europeans would have enjoyed the support of most of the local populations, at least for a time. The British officers in Drama had a good rapport with the population and British consuls had received petitions and comments from local communities supporting a multilateral European presence. It is likely that most of the population and the various political organizations would have given a more robust European presence a chance, or would have quietly tolerated it for a time. The undoing of this hypothetical, more robust edition of Mürzsteg would have likely come from the same source that ended the actual Mürzsteg Reform Program—the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Part of the motivation for the revolution of July 1908 was a concern

held by the Ottoman officers who organized the CUP. This concern was that the European powers were going to embolden and expand the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The CUP's base was in Macedonia, and several of its leaders, notably Mustafa Kemal, were Macedonian Turks. They were willing to fight to keep what remained of Ottoman Europe. A strengthened Mürzsteg Reform Program in 1905-6 would likely have accelerated the CUP's efforts. If the Europeans had survived the challenge from the CUP, they still would have had to contend with the irredentist sentiments of the Balkan states, the ongoing national struggle, and the potential for guerilla activity to be aimed at them.

In order to address the question of nationality, the Europeans could have committed to good governance and perhaps tried to instate a nationality-based political structure. Alternatively, they could have tried to physically regroup the population. The British pointed to Egypt as an example of a religiously and ethnically diverse population thriving under the rule of an outside power. Given the broad diversity of the people of Macedonia—not to mention the ambiguities of identity that characterized many of these people—physically regrouping the population would have presented strong challenges and would have provoked resistance. Indeed, the announcement that Article III of Mürzsteg called for a “more regular grouping of the nationalities” had already sparked violence. However, Article III still reflected the prevailing wisdom of the time that national populations were better off apart. The Europeans may have initiated a program to move minority ethnic and religious populations into regions where their compatriots were predominant, if they had felt themselves in position to do so. Ideally these regions would be closer to the given populations' ‘parent’ countries. In order to be successful, such a program would have necessitated the agreement of the Balkan states, in order to minimize conflict. If implemented, a commission would have likely been established to manage the exchange and liquidation of non-moveable property, as well as compensation for it. The Ottoman rail network could have made large movements of people possible. However, given the political context, obtaining and maintaining an agreement for such measures would have been extremely challenging. Organized population exchanges did take place under international sanction subsequent to the Balkan Wars and the Greco-Turkish War, but these were largely made possible by the defeat of Bulgaria and Greece, respectively.

Any hope that an emboldened Mürzsteg scheme would allow the successful administration of Ottoman Europe would have been dependent on the enduring unity and commitment of all six European powers. Changes of government, revolutions, and the changing politics of alliances and empires, would have made such unity impossible to maintain in the long term. There were simply too many factors working against it. Nevertheless, if this emboldened scheme had lasted for a time, it might have resulted in some short-term good. The intrigues that led to the Bosnian Crisis of 1908 may not have occurred if there had been an international presence in the Vilayet of Adrianople. This may have at least delayed Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, even if the trajectory of historical episodes which produced the events of June 28, 1914 had been interrupted, the breakdown in Austro-Russian relations would have likely continued. It is rather ambitious to postulate that a European presence in Ottoman Europe could have averted the ignition of the political and military 'doomsday machine' that produced the First World War.

Where an emboldened Mürzsteg Reform Program might have succeeded would have been in pre-empting the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars. It would have been unlikely that the Balkan states would have united to attack Ottoman Europe if the European powers had been maintaining a presence in the region. The causes of Balkan Wars could very well have been mitigated by the establishment of a multinational governing arrangement like those in place in Lebanon or Egypt, or through the physical reorganization of populations. At the same time, it is difficult to determine whether anything this hypothetical European presence could have done would have significantly altered the course of history in the Southern Balkans in the twentieth century. However, when one considers the death, destruction, and violent displacement wrought upon the region between 1912 and 1949, even a few modest successes might have saved several thousand lives.

Epilogue: The Mürzsteg Reform Program, 1906-1908

Support for the geographical expansion of the Mürzsteg Reform Program did not materialize. The British had hoped to at least include the Vilayet of Adrianople, but the Austro-Hungarians and Russians rejected the idea, reasoning that the Ottoman government would resist and that it would be wiser if the powers directed their energies

towards strengthening the reforms in Macedonia.⁴³⁴ Lansdowne urged them to reconsider, but to no avail.⁴³⁵ The British hoped that the Ottomans could be persuaded to invite British officers into the Vilayet of Adrianople in the interest of making the gendarmerie more efficient. However, by mid-August, O'Connor was pessimistic. In his estimation, the encouraging communications from the Ottoman Government on the subject were "a maneuver to escape the pressure I was putting on the Ottoman Government, without giving any practical effect to the recommendations so earnestly made to the Ottoman Government on this matter."⁴³⁶ A new gendarmerie school was opened in Adrianople and Captain Townshend was granted permission to inspect it, but did not have the authority to effectively influence the operation of the school or the conduct of the gendarmerie.⁴³⁷ The Vilayet of Adrianople would remain out of reach for the British.

The European powers were able to find a measure of collective resolve about financial reform. Following months of Ottoman resistance, the six powers created a financial commission in August of 1905 without Ottoman approval. The six-member commission included the existing Austro-Hungarian and Russian civil agents attached to Inspector General and delegates from the four other powers. Britain nominated H.B. Harvey as their delegate to the commission. The delegates proceeded in spite of the Sultan Abdülhamîd's injunctions and arrived in Uscub on October 12 to formulate regulations for their work.⁴³⁸ The commission was able to agree on a 16-point Draft Regulation on October 20, although there were differences regarding the degree of control the commission should be granted. As the British delegate H.B. Harvey remarked at the time:

The meetings of the Commission revealed a marked distribution of its members into three groups: the Italian and British representatives uniting to propose measures calculated to establish an effective control of the finances of Macedonia, the Austrian and Russian Civil Agents doing all in

⁴³⁴ Schönburg to Lansdowne, April 12, 1905, FO 421/209/139.

⁴³⁵ Lansdowne to Schönburg, April 20, 1905, FO 421/209/162.

⁴³⁶ O'Connor to Lansdowne, August 15, 1905, FO 78/5396/557.

⁴³⁷ O'Connor to Lansdowne, October 8, 1905, FO 78/5297/701.

⁴³⁸ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 297.

their power to reduce the future Commission to impotence, and the French and German representatives steering a middle course.⁴³⁹

The Draft Regulation was ultimately a compromise. The British were able to get majority agreement to grant the commission control over the revision of budgets and the raising of taxes (Article 6). They were also able to obtain “the indispensable minimum of control over the personnel of the financial services of the vilayets, both as regards the protection of deserving employees and the punishment of those guilty of misconduct” (Article 13). However, this was the “minimum” and the majority voted against granting the commission the executive power to dismiss Ottoman officials. In addition, the Commission opted not to give itself the power to check irregularities regarding military contracts (Article 14). They also avoided regulating military spending (Article 6) on the grounds that it was “politic” to do so.⁴⁴⁰

Although the Draft Regulation fell short of British aims, the powers united around the 16 articles and resolved to use force to compel Sultan Abdülhamîd to recognize the Financial Commission. When the Austro-Hungarians and Russians refused to agree to the demands of the European Powers, they proposed that a multilateral naval demonstration be organized to coerce Ottoman compliance. France, Britain, and Italy agreed to take part in the naval demonstration, while Germany abstained. The international force assembled in Piraeus and sailed for the island of Mytilene, landing 617 sailors on the island on November 26, 1905, then seizing the customs building and the telegraph centre. With the Ottoman Government remaining defiant about the issue of financial control, the international force sailed to the island of Lemnos near the Dardanelle Straits.⁴⁴¹ On December 6, the British warship HMS Lancaster telegraphed that Lemnos had been occupied by 450 sailors. As had been the case at Mytilene, the Ottomans did not resist the landings.⁴⁴² On December 12 the Ottoman Government relented to the international pressure. The Financial Commission was accepted and the

⁴³⁹ Harvey to O’Conor, October 21, 1903, FO 78/5398/741.

⁴⁴⁰ Memorandum relating to the Draft “Réglement” of the International Financial Commission, October 20, 1905, FO 78/5398/741.

⁴⁴¹ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 62-63.

⁴⁴² Lansdowne to Grey, December 5, 1905, FO 78/5401/205.

tenure of the Inspector General, the Civil Agents, General Di Giorgis, and the European Officers in charge of reorganizing the gendarmerie was extended for two years.⁴⁴³

As had been the case with the initial acceptance of the Mürzsteg Reform Program in November of 1903, the European Powers were able to realize a diplomatic objective by remaining united and steadfast in their actions in the autumn of 1905. The establishment of the Financial Commission also marked the weakening of Austro-Russian control of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, as financial delegates from the other four powers joined the company of the Civil Agents.⁴⁴⁴ However, this display of resolve and the inclusion of all six powers on the commission did not translate into more effective financial control due to limiting stipulations, disagreements between the members, and the ongoing difficulties in Macedonia.⁴⁴⁵

December of 1905 also marked the emergence of a new government in Great Britain when the Liberal Party under Henry Campbell-Bannerman formed a minority government after Balfour's sudden resignation. The Liberal ascendancy was confirmed in early 1906 with a convincing electoral victory over the Unionists, which cost Balfour his seat. Edward Grey became Foreign Secretary under Campbell-Bannerman's prime ministership. The arrival of the Liberal government initiated a shift in British foreign policy, as Grey steered Britain closer to France and signed and settled outstanding disagreements with Russia in 1907. Initially, Grey and the Liberals took little interest in Macedonia. The British officers on the ground had begun facing challenges in the Sancak of Drama. In late 1905 Greek bands began agitating and some Turkish leaders began denouncing the British presence.⁴⁴⁶ Although no British officers were killed, keeping the peace in Drama proved to be more of a challenge than it had been in 1904-05.

⁴⁴³ Sowards, *Austria's Policy Macedonian Reform*, 63.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 300.

⁴⁴⁶ Graves to O'Connor, December 8, 1905, FO 421/213/202; *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print: Part I, Series B, Vol 19, The Ottoman Empire: Nationalism and Revolution*, Editors Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt. (University Publications of America, 1985), 274.

Through 1906 and 1907 consular reports continued to lament the ongoing violence and unjust state of affairs in Macedonia, and there were further recommendations to grant the Financial Commission and the European Officers stronger powers, and further calls for autonomy. In mid-1906 the British Foreign Office called the reform program a “patchwork system” and lamented that the gendarmerie lacked the manpower and the resources to cope with the insurgent bands.⁴⁴⁷ Another Foreign Office memorandum produced in August of 1907 highlighted calls to give the European officers executive command and more power over taxation and the judiciary.⁴⁴⁸

By mid-1907, Grey felt compelled to take action. O’Conor had been pressing the Ottoman Government to organize mobile columns of mounted gendarmes under the direction of European officers. Sultan Abdülhamîd responded by creating a “flying column” force of 10,000 men under the command of the German-trained officer Essad Pasha. The force inflicted heavy losses on several guerilla bands in the summer of 1907, but O’Conor was concerned that the members of the force might be The Ottomans reduced the size of the force and the British called for the doubling of the size of the gendarmerie. As Dakin points out, Grey began pursuing a policy akin to Lansdowne’s in early 1908.⁴⁴⁹ After consulting with the British cabinet, Grey submitted his own plan on March 9, 1908. The plan called for the appointment of a semi-independent Governor; an increase in the size of the gendarmerie and a decrease in the number of Ottoman troops in Macedonia; an increase in the number of European officers and granting them executive powers; expanded powers for the Financial Commission, and; guarantees that the Ottoman Empire would not be attacked once the plans were put in place.⁴⁵⁰ Grey’s proposal included much of Lansdowne’s 1905 three-point plan. However, unlike Lansdowne, Grey found a potentially willing and powerful partner in Russia. The Russian foreign minister, Count Isvolski, produced his own set of proposals, and these were close enough to Britain’s to give the two powers common ground. Given that Austro-Russian relations had deteriorated, there was potential for an Anglo-Russian imposed

⁴⁴⁷ *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 408.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁴⁹ Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 344.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 351-2.

solution to decisively address Macedonia with or without the consent of the other European powers.⁴⁵¹

News that the Anglo-Russian initiative was coming together set events in motion in the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Abdülhamîd renewed the existing mandate of the Müürzsteg Reform Program through to 1914 in a move to undercut the initiative. Most significantly, the news of the plan proved to be a propaganda windfall for the Committee of Union and Progress. The CUP proclaimed that the realization of the British proposals would lead to Macedonian independence and the loss of the Ottoman Empire's European vilayets.⁴⁵² In the name of saving the fatherland, the CUP was able to sign up several Muslims. As it gathered momentum, more Christian organizations either made deals with the CUP to join it or to remain neutral. The Committee of Union and Progress took over the Ottoman Empire and restored the Ottoman constitution on July 24, 1908, riding a wave of multidenominational popular support that included a faction of IMRO. A subsequent amnesty ended the guerilla fighting. With a revolution and an outbreak of a peace in Macedonia, the Müürzsteg Reform Program came to an end. The European officers and officials dispersed by the spring of 1909. However, the European officers' talents remained in demand and 27 of them signed new contracts to reorganize the gendarmerie throughout the Ottoman Empire (including Lionel Bonham).⁴⁵³

The end of the Müürzsteg Reform Program also marked the end of Austria-Hungary and Russia's concerted relations in the Balkans. The 1897 agreement had broken down in January of 1908, when Austria-Hungary received a concession to conduct railway surveys in the Sancak of Novi Pazar, which Russia considered a

⁴⁵¹ M. Şükrü Haniođlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 234-235; Dakin, *Greek Struggle*, 354-355.

⁴⁵² Haniođlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 236. Sowards shows that Austro-Hungarian diplomats understood that the CUP had been inspired by the displays of professionalism and competence exemplified by the European civil agents, financial delegates, and gendarmerie officers, and that the Müürzsteg Reform Program had afforded the structural protection required to allow the revolutionaries to build a power base and succeed. See: Sowards, *Austria's Policy*, 94-95. However, Haniođlu's examination of CUP documents suggests the revolutionaries were motivated more out of fear than of admiration of the Europeans powers and their men on the ground in Macedonia.

⁴⁵³ Sowards, *Austria's Policy*, 95; Graves, *Storm Centres*, 244. According to Graves, Bonham was stationed in Smyrna as a superintendent of the regional gendarmerie. He died of typhoid fever in Constantinople in January of 1910.

violation of the agreement. When Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, a fatal blow was dealt to relations between Vienna and St. Petersburg. Humiliated and smarting from defeat in the Far East and domestic unrest, Russia would turn its attention to the Balkans in an attempt to restore its honour.

With no European presence to restrain or deter them, the Balkan states formed the Balkan League and attacked the Ottoman Empire in 1912. The Macedonian vilayets and the Vilayet of Adrianople were the principal theatres of fighting as the Ottomans were forced to retreat all the way to the walls of Constantinople. The Second Balkan War in 1913 was fought mainly over control of Macedonia, leaving the three vilayets divided between three Balkan states and a state of conflict and war until 1949, when an iron curtain fell across the lands that once comprised the vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. The Cold War kept the peace for at least a few decades. One hundred and ten years after the proclamation of the Müzzsteg Reform Program, the region remains troubled by economic and security concerns, and the European Powers and the International Community remain deeply invested in the struggle to design and implement reform policies that will bring peace, prosperity, and good governance to the region.

Conclusion

The Müzzsteg Reform Program enabled the British to finally get the uniformed presence of European officers in Macedonia that they had repeatedly lobbied for. Two years later, they believed they had proof that their concepts worked. As the negotiations regarding the implementation of the reform program show, establishing the presence of European officers as quickly as possible was Britain's key priority. The British believed that this uniformed presence would have a pacifying effect and would provide the European powers with more accurate intelligence on the situation on the ground. To the British, the operation was always about much more than just physically reorganizing the Ottoman gendarmerie. When the British officers took to the field in the spring of 1904, they secured access to prisons, courts, and communications between local gendarmerie battalions. The British officers patrolled with interpreters and interposed themselves not only among the ranks of the gendarmerie, and also amongst the general population. While they trained and reorganized the gendarmerie, they were also keeping the peace.

The success of the British officers in the Sancak of Drama was a source of justification to the British. Along with the work of the British consular staff and the relief agents of the Macedonian Relief Fund, the British officers' work led British officials and many other observers to believe that they had found the formula for keeping the peace. While the British officers were known to have had an easier assignment than their European counterparts, the rapport the British officers established with the local gendarmerie and the population and their ability to access avenues of information and power indicated that the 'British Approach' or the 'British way' provided a model for future success in the Macedonian vilayets and beyond. This conviction was further supported by regional precedents and the application of techniques that reflected security doctrines and practices used by the British Empire. Confident that they had the solution to regional security concerns, the British pressed for stronger reforms and a wider territorial application.

The essence of the British approach to Macedonia was its conviction that the key to stabilizing the situation—if not the region—was to get uniformed men on the ground as quickly as possible. The British believed that even a small force of men with limited powers could still make a difference by providing a pacifying presence and a physical foothold from which to extend Britain's influence. Although the British discussed autonomy and sought greater authority, they were willing to compromise for the sake of getting men deployed. Establishing and maintaining a presence on the ground was what mattered since this was seen as the stabilizing basis on which gendarmerie reform, financial reform, and political reorganization would be built.

It is tempting to dismiss the Mürzsteg Reform Program as a failure. However, there are important points to consider that suggest otherwise. The negotiated nature of the reforms may have weakened the terms of the program, but this process also enabled the imposition of a program that was remained an affront to Ottoman sovereignty without necessitating the use of violence. Although the inability to strengthen the reforms amidst the ongoing violence has contributed to the enduring view that the Mürzsteg reforms were a failure, a more aggressive approach may have produced war with the Ottoman Empire or a war between the powers. While the violent struggle for Macedonia would continue, it remained contained to the three vilayets. The dreaded Ottoman-Bulgarian war did not materialize, the European powers remained at peace with one another, and

not a single European officer who served in the Ottoman gendarmerie reorganization perished in the field. To use contemporary terminology, this negotiated intervention produced a 'lighter footprint' that was more acceptable to the government of the sovereign country in which the intervention took place. For all its flaws, the Mürzsteg Reform Program also had many merits. Things could have been much worse. This point is highlighted by the fact that the Balkan crisis of 1914 is so actively remembered and the crisis of 1903 largely forgotten outside of the region, which is testament to the politicians, diplomats, and officers who helped keep the violence contained in three vilayets of Macedonia.

Chapter 7. Imperial Considerations and Final Remarks

The delegates who attended the Hague Peace Conference in the summer of 1899 would probably be disappointed, but not totally surprised, to discover the extent of conflict in the world exactly 100 years after their extraordinary attempt to impose international controls on the conduct of war.¹

Commodore Tim Laurence

The knowledge required for intervention is not theoretical knowledge—it is a form of practical wisdom: an activity in which there is no substitute for experience. The ideal instructors are those who have spent a long time getting to know a particular place and have seen it at very different times and under different conditions. The ideal education is through an ever more detailed study of the history, the geography, and the anthropology of a particular place, on one hand, and of the limitations of the West, on the other.²

Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.³

Michael Doyle

Introduction

This final chapter seeks to extend beyond the confines of 1902-05 by discussing British policy toward Ottoman Macedonia and the reforms in broader historical contexts. In particular, I am interested in further investigating the imperial influences examined in Chapter 6. The chapter is constructed around three questions: Where does Müzzsteg fit

¹ Commodore Tim Laurence, *Humanitarian Assistance and Peacekeeping: An Uneasy Alliance* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies, 1999), 1.

² Stewart and Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?*, 77.

³ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 45.

in the history of peacekeeping? What were the British and the other Great Powers hoping to accomplish through their intervention in Macedonia? And, how was the intervention imagined? In addressing these questions, my intention is to explore the questions with the use of sources from military history to biopolitics to popular literature. One unifying conclusion which emerges in these discussions is that imperial knowledge, imperial practices, and imperial understandings featured in influencing how the British utilized and produced knowledge and policies that they thought would neutralize threats and bring peace to Macedonia.

Mürzsteg and Peacekeeping

Where can the Mürzsteg Reform Program be situated in the history of intervention and, more specifically, peacekeeping? Whether they involve the force of arms or the force of diplomatic arm twisting, most interventions are followed up with the physical presence of peacekeepers, be it on a small or large deployment. According to Alan James, peacekeeping “is little more than a modern application of an ancient arrangement—that of the use of impartial and non-threatening go-betweens’ to resolve disputes.”⁴ In the *Historical Dictionary of Multinational Peacekeeping* Terry Mays begins with a brief description of the peace treaty in the twelfth century BC between the Hittites and the Egyptians.⁵ The word ‘peacekeeping’ is relatively new. As defined by Mays:

Peacekeeping is a broad term with a definition that has evolved over the years...The term itself evolved in the 1950s to describe military forces mandated, normally by the UN, and deployed to perform duties related to the peace process between countries or within a single country.⁶

May notes that the United Nations’ definition of peacekeeping has been modified to include operations in less than ideal circumstances. The 2008 *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* defines peacekeeping as an

⁴ Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990), 11.

⁵ Terry M. Mays, *Historical Dictionary of Multinational Peacekeeping* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

“action undertaken to preserve peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers.”⁷

Peacekeeping takes many forms and peacekeepers can be required to perform a variety of tasks. The use of the term is conceptually muddled. Without going through the subcategories of peacekeeping, it is useful to review the general characteristics of a peacekeeping operation. According to Paul F. Diehl, peacekeeping operations differ from traditional military operations in that they do not occupy a given territory and are non-coercive, with the given peacekeeping force having no offensive capacity and being strictly neutral. Peacekeeping is not mentioned in the UN Charter and peacekeeping operations are typically ad hoc. As summarized by Diehl:

Peacekeeping is therefore the imposition of neutral and lightly armed interposition forces following a cessation of armed hostilities, and with the permission of the state on whose territory these forces are deployed, in order to discourage a renewal of military conflict and promote an environment under which the underlying dispute can be resolved. Peacekeeping functions including observation, interposition, maintaining law and order, and humanitarian activity. These functions are not mutually exclusive; depending on the type of conflict, some or all may be part of the peacekeeping mission. In any case, peacekeeping operations are conceptually and operationally distinct from collective security and peace observation missions, although they may share some commonalities and have similar historical roots.⁸

Most historical studies of peacekeeping focus on UN led operations, with some including the work of the League of Nations. Mays' chronology of “modern peacekeeping” begins in 1920 when League of Nations Plebiscite Forces provided security in Central and Eastern Europe.⁹ In general, there is an established canon of events in the history of peacekeeping from 1920. The history of peacekeeping in the long nineteenth century is less well-defined. Operations exhibiting the characteristics of modern peacekeeping range from colonial gunboat diplomacy to humanitarian assistance. There are, however, some common denominators. As noted by Bellay et al., the Concert of Europe did influence the establishment of new ethical principles through

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 13

⁹ Mays, *Historical Dictionary of Multinational Peacekeeping*, xxxi.

humanitarian influenced interventions and treaties.¹⁰ Most of these interventions were directed toward the Ottoman Empire and were the regional forerunners of the intervention in Macedonia. These were: Greece, 1821-33; Syria, 1860-61; Bulgaria and Bosnia 1875-78, and Crete 1868 and 1898-1900. Relevant to this study, these interventions in the Ottoman Empire produced treaties that provided justification for Great Power intervention in Macedonia, notably the Organic Statute for Crete in 1868 and the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. Furthermore, the apparent peace, stability and prosperity generated in Lebanon following the *Règlement* of 1861, British rule in Cyprus since 1878, and in Egypt following the 1882 British occupation offered more evidence that Great Power intervention could produce peaceful, lasting results. The enduring plight of the Armenians and the instability in Macedonia stood in marked contrast.

These interventions and the 'peacekeeping' operations which followed them were each unique in their own ways. The intervention in Greece was forceful. In Syria, the Great Powers used the threat of force in 1860, with a multinational flotilla massing at Beirut before French troops swiftly intervened and departed. Crete was different in that the powers were divided in their sympathies. The powers looked to the Lebanon Statute in their hopes to create a lasting peace when they drew up the Organic Laws of 1868. In 1898, the Ottoman Empire invited the Great Powers to intervene and accepted the European Ambassadors' Four Point Declaration. The Ottomans' willingness to yield on Crete may well have been to distract the powers from the struggles closer to the imperial core with the Armenians.¹¹ Salisbury and the British had repeatedly lobbied for intervention to aid the Armenians of Anatolia, but, despite well documented massacres and the spectacle of atrocities in the streets of Constantinople in 1896, the diplomatic climate was never favourable and the British were unwilling to act unilaterally. As noted by Rodogno, in 1878 Salisbury had proposed establishing a European-led gendarmerie in Anatolia, with Europeans controlling the lower courts and European tax-collectors

¹⁰ Alex Bellamy et al., *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2004), 61.

¹¹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 215.

securing revenues.¹² In 1903, the next generation of British statesmen and diplomats would get the chance to put some of their old bosses' ideas into practice.

Where the Mürzsteg Reform Program stands apart from its predecessors is in its negotiated conception. The Great Powers were not interested in forceful intervention or landing troops as had been the case in Greece and Syria. The Ottoman Empire was not about to invite the powers to intervene as it had done recently in Crete. As we have seen, the implementation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program was negotiated every step of the way. The Great Powers struggled to maintain their unity and apply pressure, while the Ottomans resisted yielding their sovereign right to administer their territory and institutions in a core region of their empire. The elaborate nature of the intervention force from its uniforms to its duties and jurisdictions was also the product of negotiation.

The implementation of the Mürzsteg Reforms and the activities of the European gendarmes generally conform very well to the characteristics of peacekeeping as summarized by Diehl.¹³ The European officers deployed, with the begrudging consent of the Ottoman state, in the hope that their presence would have a calming effect and help cultivate peace. Though they cannot be considered entirely neutral as they were formally part of the Ottoman security forces, their primary purpose was to reform and observe the Ottoman gendarmerie, not to engage the rebels. The force was lightly armed and had no offensive capability beyond advising the Ottoman officers. As far as functions of peacekeeping presented by Diehl are concerned ("observation, interposition, maintaining law and order and humanitarian activity"), these were undertaken most energetically by the officers in the British sector. The British were not content to just train gendarmes. Employing their 'indirect approach,' they interposed and asserted themselves in the local gendarme force and the wider community, and were active in resolving disputes and overseeing rebuilding initiatives and the distribution of humanitarian aid.

When reviewing studies of peacekeeping during the 1990s, it is striking how the 'new' challenges faced by peacekeepers in the 'humanitarian decade' are similar to the

¹² Ibid. Salisbury did not think that special governing rights for the Armenians would be feasible owing to the fact that the Armenians were geographically scattered and intermixed with the Muslim populations.

¹³ Diehl, *International Peacekeeping*, 13

issues the European officers faced in Ottoman Macedonia some 90 years previously. Most post-1945 UN peacekeeping operations involved monitoring and upholding established ceasefires between two states. The UN operations in Palestine, Suez, Cyprus, and Iran-Iraq are the best known cases.¹⁴ Whereas pre-1990 operations involved keeping peace between states, post 1990 'second generation' peacekeeping operations usually took place within 'failing' states. The UN initiated "multidimensional operations" to respond to "complex emergencies," which Laurence states are "characterized by continuing conflict, large-scale displacements of people, famine, a serious breakdown of law and order and usually failures of the basic institutions of government."¹⁵ In the 1990s, peacekeepers were called upon to perform functions of government and policing, assist refugees, work with humanitarian aid agencies, deal with the international media, and enforce their will when necessary. These asymmetrical conflict zones, where civilians were often targets and combatants frequently did not abide by the rules of civilized warfare, demanded much more from peacekeepers than patrolling ceasefire lines. Peacekeepers had to show considerable dexterity and to be prepared to deal with the unexpected. In many cases they were confronting situations which confused them and for which they had no prior training. Knowledge of local culture and politics became as important as soldiering skills. As discussed by anthropologist Robert A. Rubinstein, "the importance of cultural understanding at the strategic levels of mission operations and for individuals and groups emerged in the late 1990s as a general area in which culture was important in peacekeeping."¹⁶ A good peacekeeper needed to be a diplomat as well as a soldier. The work the British officers undertook in Drama and the challenges they faced with respects to reforming the gendarmerie, patrolling, resolving disputes, reporting clashes, monitoring the courts, and overseeing the distribution of humanitarian aid and reconstruction bear resemblance to the challenges peacekeepers faced in the 1990s in places like the Former Yugoslavia, Zaire,

¹⁴ Laurence, *Humanitarian Assistance and Peacekeeping*, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶ Robert Rubinstein, *Peacekeeping Under Fire: Culture and Intervention* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 39.

and Haiti.¹⁷ Furthermore, like the Mürzsteg Reform Program, the better-known peacekeeping operations of the 1990s are synonymous with failure.¹⁸

The outlook and methods of the British officers in Drama also correspond to recurrent characteristics in modern peacekeeping that are distinctly British. Most notable is the belief in the importance of maintaining presence and establishing a favourable level of rapport with the local authorities and the population. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, British officials and diplomats lobbied continuously for the deployment of military attachés in the belief that their presence would have a pacifying effect. Echoes of this belief in the ‘tranquilizing influence’ of British troops can be found in British peacekeeping operations from the 1990s and 2000s. As noted by Richard P. Cousens, the “notion of presence does not exist in doctrinal terms in either NATO or national doctrines.” The term “is widely used but may not be fully understood.”¹⁹ The mission of the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) operation in Bosnia from 1996 to 2004 was to “deter” hostilities, “promote” a peaceful climate, and “provide selective support” for civilian organization through a military presence. During the UNPROFOR mandate in the 1992-95 war, General Sir Michael Rose, who commanded the UNPROFOR mission in 1994, wrote that the UN peacekeeping operation “sustained the people of Bosnia by its presence, reduced the slaughter and helped create the conditions for a political dialogue that was necessary to end the war.”²⁰ Similarly, Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Stewart, who commanded British peacekeepers in Central Bosnia in 1992-93, felt that his soldiers’ presence was reassuring for the local population. In his memoir, Stewart discusses situations where he hoped the presence of the UN could have a pacifying effect. In one

¹⁷ For discussions of the changing nature of peacekeeping and intervention in the 1990s written in the 1990s, and thus do not carry even the unconscious influence of post September 2001 events, see: Tom Woodhouse et. al., editors, *Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: Towards Effective Intervention in Post-Cold War conflicts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Edward Moxon-Brown, editor, *A Future for Peacekeeping?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

¹⁸ Zartman’s 2005 study examines missed opportunities in Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, Zaire, Former-Yugoslavia, and Haiti. All but Lebanon took place in the 1990s. See: William I. Zartman, *Cowardly Lions: Missed Opportunities to Prevent Deadly Conflict and State Collapse* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005).

¹⁹ Richard P. Cousens, OBE, “Amritsar to Basra: The Influence of Counter-Insurgency upon the British Perspective of Peacekeeping,” in *Major Powers and Peacekeeping: Perspectives, Priorities and the Challenges of Military Intervention*, edited by Rachel E. Utley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 52.

²⁰ General Sir Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace: Lessons from Bosnia* (London: Warner Books, 1999), 368.

instance, when asked by the mayor of the town of Tescanj in central Bosnia if Stewart's UN forces could do something to stop the advance of Bosnian Serb forces, Stewart explained that there was little he could do, but expressed hope that his soldiers could make a difference by remaining in the area: "However, I did hope that the presence of UN personnel and vehicles might go some way to convincing those attacking to cease or at least diminish their shelling. I remember saying that at least our presence should not aggravate the situation and it might help."²¹

This uniquely "British perspective of peacekeeping"²² went beyond patrolling and being seen. It was important to work in close proximity with local authorities and to establish a level of rapport with the local populations. The British officers in Drama moved quickly to not only train but work alongside the Ottoman gendarmerie. They gained access to communications and went on patrols with the gendarmes. The incidents at Visocan and Kravala indicate the British officers enjoyed a level of respect from the local populations. As discussed, this was very much in contrast to the other sectors where the European officers were either unable or unwilling to cultivate such relationships. Again, in Cousens' chapter we see echoes of this policy in the deployment to Afghanistan and Bosnia. Like the British and the Italians in Ottoman Macedonia, Cousens illustrates the differences in the British and American approach by showing the ways in which the respective armies chose to locate their troops in Kabul after the occupation in 2001:

Whereas the US contingent preferred to operate from heavily fortified contingents on the fringes of the city, the British opted for small company locations, co-located with the local police, within the heart of the city. This approach was high-risk but demonstrated an appreciation of the requirement to engage with the population on a daily basis in order to influence their opinions, perceptions, and eventually, their actions. The French too intuitively understood the need to engage with the populations at the local level, through a constant presence.²³

²¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 146.

²² Cousens, "Amritsar to Basra," 61. Cousens concludes: "The British perspective of peacekeeping is unique. It is a product of culture, history, tradition, doctrine and respect for one's fellow man—the elements that had their origin in 1919 at Amritsar."

²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

Similarly, in Bosnia, as described by Richard R. Caniliga, the British and the Americans of SFOR presented significant contrasts in the manner in which they patrolled the territory:

US troops wear helmets and body armor—hence their nickname, “ninja-turtles.” They travel in convoys with guns manned and ready. When they stop, they disperse to overwatch positions, ready to apply defensive force. At night most retire to fortified camps or outposts as Romans did on campaigns, cut off from the people they came to protect.

British troops wear berets and walk and talk with the locals. They travel in small groups, armed but with weapons slung. Some wear ammunition pouches; some do not; none wears body armor unless there is an immanent threat. Off duty they eat and relax in town; many live there. Single vehicles often travel the roads, identifiable only by their painted military patterns.²⁴

Even in the midst of the confusing and often brutal conflict in Central Bosnia, Bob Stewart often travelled in a Land Rover and made a point of visiting local commanders. Receptions and parties were often held, sometimes following well-attended football and rugby matches between locals and the British soldiers. Stewart also regularly granted interview requests from the local media in order to speak directly to the people.²⁵

Another component of the British approach which echoes across the century is the value the British place on the mental ability and conduct of their officers. In Ottoman Macedonia, the British expressed their preference for a small contingent of well-qualified officers as opposed to a larger deployment of soldiers, or even the modest addition of a few non commissioned officers. In many respects, peacekeeping is seen as “a deeply intellectual activity.”²⁶ Quality of personnel takes precedence over quantity. One of Stewart’s conclusions was the importance of an officer’s personality and the cultivation of personal relationships.

UN officers in such situations have to be highly professional in the way they handle themselves...Officers must get out on the ground and meet key personalities. This may not be easy but it is essential. Liaison officers have a duty to ensure their commander meet the key players in his area.

²⁴ Lt. Col. Richard .R. Caniglia, “US and British Approaches to Force Protection,” *Military Review* 81, 4 (2001): 73.

²⁵ Stewart, *Broken Lives*, 146-153

²⁶ Cousens, “Amritsar to Basra,” 59.

Impressing them with the strength of his personality is then up to the commander himself. Personal relationships are vital in a situation that has not established order and often a problem which seems impossible one moment can be solved almost instantly in a conversation.²⁷

As Cousens argues, the British approach to peacekeeping is more risky but more likely to gain consent from the local population. Ultimately,

security stems from human interaction and is not imposed or maintained by tanks or Fighting Vehicles....The British doctrine for peacekeeping is typical in that it identifies consent as the key determinant for conduct of operations...Consent is supported by the key peacekeeping principles of impartiality, legitimacy, minimum force, credibility and transparency.²⁸

In examining the history of the British approach to peacekeeping, Cousens sees parallels to the experiences the British gained in counter-insurgency warfare, where success was contingent on the “human dimension.” Cousens cites the tragedy at Amritsar in 1919, where British troops opened fire on Indian demonstrators, as a watershed moment for the British, which, along with the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21, they were determined not to repeat. Counter insurgency techniques developed during the inter-war period in India, Burma, and Palestine were furthered in confronting post-colonial insurgencies after 1945 in Kenya, Cyprus, Oman, Borneo, Northern Ireland, and Sierra Leone.²⁹ The “enduring themes” of the British approach to counterinsurgency are based on the principles identified by Robert Thompson:

Deal with the cause, not the symptoms; Have a coordinated strategy; Collaborate internationally; Prepare for a long campaign; Guard against an exit based on time rather than success; Centralize intelligence; Ensure that operations are both legal and proportionate; Conduct effective military operations with emphasis on effect; Achieve the highest standards of training.³⁰

Cousens’ argument is generally sound, but it does beg the question of whether similar influences and practices existed prior to 1919. As nasty as British imperial rule could be

²⁷ Stewart, *Broken Lives*, 319.

²⁸ Cousens, “Amritsar to Basra,” 53-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 57. See: Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (Studies in International Security)* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

at times, massacring civilian demonstrators was not standard policy in British India before Amritsar.

Part of Cousenes' reasoning draws upon an article by Thomas Mockaitis on the British army's experience with low intensity conflict. To Mockaitis, the long line of British experience which encouraged more restrained approaches to counter insurgency originated in part from the nature of the British army and British society. A principle of British common law was the application of minimal force, a principle the British army generally adhered to.³¹ Patronizing British racial attitudes also fostered restraint as the British viewed their subjects as children who, naturally, tended to rebel. "Just as it would be counterproductive to kill one's children in the process of disciplining them, it would be unwise to slaughter one's own colonial subjects in the process of suppressing rebellion."³² The nature and structure of the British army was also beneficial. With the British navy as the first line of defence, the British army's primary concern was usually internal security. The British regimental system promoted decentralization and the independent initiative of lower ranking officers. Furthermore, these regiments were often posted in different parts of the empire for long periods of time. "The British were thus used to deploying smaller units throughout the empire periods, which enabled these units to mesh with the civil administration and police within an area."³³ These influences and the experiences gained in the field led to the establishment of a counterinsurgency doctrine in the 1960s, which greatly influenced peacekeeping practices.³⁴

Through the studies by Mockaitis and Cousens, a convincing case can be made that the British approach to peacekeeping in the twentieth century descends from distinct cultural and structural characteristics and a long line of experience. However, they do not fully explain how and why the British officers who deployed to Ottoman Macedonia in 1904 had seemingly picked up many of these same skills and attitudes some fifteen years before the Anglo-Irish War and the events at Amritsar. Painful lessons learned from the Boer War and a heightened sense of vulnerability had given cause for a

³¹ Thomas R. Mockaitis, "Low Intensity Conflict: The British Experience," *Conflict Quarterly* 13, 1 (1993): 10.

³² *Ibid.*, 11.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 14; Cousens, "Amritsar to Basra," 57.

reassessment in British military thinking from 1902. However, in searching for connections to the British experience in Ottoman Macedonia, I think it is most helpful to return to nineteenth century India. Over sixty years before Amristar, the Indian Rebellion of 1857-58 had shaken the British Raj to its core and left the British administrators to look for new techniques to rule and police their imperial subjects on the subcontinent and beyond.³⁵ By the 1880s, the British faced the need for reforms in the police and criminal administration amid new fears of a Russia advance on the Northwestern Frontier. The task was made more difficult by the lack of revenue and chronic famines. Furthermore, the British government did not have anywhere near the number of soldiers available to stem a Russian advance and they were reluctant to impose conscription at a time when Indians were asserting themselves politically.³⁶ Such challenges were not new for British administrators. As pointed out by Mike Brogen in his examination of colonization through law, British administrators were often told rule with “minimum effort and the least expense.”³⁷

The man tasked to face this challenge in India was the new Imperial Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, who had just finished serving as Governor General of Canada from 1883 to 1888. Arriving at his new post in 1888, Lansdowne was ordered to implement “the forward policy,” designed to counter the perceived Russian threat by not letting the Russians settle in Afghanistan. As prior forays into Afghanistan had proved costly, the new emphasis of the forward policy was to improve communication points into Afghanistan should the British army be required to meet a Russian advance and to increase efforts to control the frontier tribes. Afghanistan would thus become a buffer state not requiring direct British rule.³⁸ Lansdowne already had a successful working model to reference in the Baluch Division of the frontier, which had been managed by a special agent to the Indian government named Robert Sandeman since 1877. Sandeman had won influence over the district’s tribes by endeavouring to understand their motives. In cultivating good relations he tried to convince the tribesman that British

³⁵ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 71-73. The application of the “Martial Races” theory was part of the reorganization of the Indian army which was undertaken after 1858.

³⁶ The Indian National Congress was established in 1885.

³⁷ Mike Brogen, “An Act to Colonise the Internal Lands of the Island: Empire and the Origins of the Professional Police,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 1987, 15, 188-190.

³⁸ J.P. Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne (1888-1894)* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1975), 10.

guidance was in their best interest. He avoided using force or coercion, and appointed tribesmen to guard mountain passes.³⁹

Lansdowne moved to use Sandeman and his techniques to win the loyalty of more tribes in the frontier divisions. In 1890 Sandeman succeeded in opening the Gomal Pass after a month of political negotiations with the Waziri tribes. Money was distributed and Waziris were employed to guard the pass. Road construction projects were soon initiated. The one tribe that resisted, the Sheranis, were brought under control after a punitive expedition. Lansdowne then extended the “Sandeman system” into the Pathan district, arguing that the British needed to exercise their influence constantly and intelligently.⁴⁰ In 1891 and 1892 the British gained more influence through this mixture of negotiation accompanied by financial carrots and military sticks. Whether negotiation prevailed or force was necessary, a key feature of the British advance was the role of political agents to conduct talks and, if necessary, organize governance following “pacification.” Ideally the process functioned without the need for coercion. Influence was first established, followed by the establishment of communications and military posts, which, in some cases, amounted to virtual annexation.⁴¹ In time, this method established British influence as far north as the Hindu Kush.⁴²

Sandman’s work on the Northwestern Frontier was an extension of the role of the pan-imperial District Officer (DO). The DO was literally the ‘head of the district,’ upon whose initiative and character the Indian government depended.⁴³ In British India, the DO was responsible for fiscal matters, law and order, and anything related to the government’s administration of the district.⁴⁴ Much more than a desk-bound bureaucrat, the DO was expected to maintain a mobile presence and acquaint himself with the

³⁹ Ibid., 12-13.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 18.

⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

⁴² Ibid., 23.

⁴³ According to Sinha, the district officer system in India pre-dated British rule, with features of “single administrator-based administration” being developed by the Mughals. The Indian system of territorial administration can be traced back to the Mauryan era. See: Chandan Sinha, *Public Sector Reforms in India: New Role of the District Officer* (London: Sage Publications Inc., 2007), 23-25.

⁴⁴ Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain’s Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 111.

social, political, and economic life of his district, and to represent imperial authority. In his study of British imperial administrators, Anthony Kirk-Greene presents three “classic vignettes” of the British DO in India:

One is of him presiding over the magistrate’s court, overwhelmed by heat and contradictory witnesses, yet determined that British justice shall prevail over all knavish tricks. Another of is of him ‘galloping over sunlit fields in the invigorating air of the cold weather in northern India, with a highly supportive retinue, and among a friendly if not subservient peasantry.’ The third is of the DO, unarmed and sporting a solar topee, fearlessly standing between a mob of shouting, sweating, swearing rioters in front and a thin line of nervous policemen armed only with *lathis* and the odd rifle well behind him, striving by his personality to keep the communal groups from tearing one another apart and loudly (if unheard) calling on the crowd, in the name of the King-Emperor, to disperse before the police are ordered into action.⁴⁵

The third vignette is reminiscent of the scene with the British officers in Kavalla found themselves in 1905.

There was an element of policing in the job description of the DO. Policing practices in British India, as elsewhere in the British Empire, had been heavily influenced by the Irish Constabularies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Tasked with bringing order to the Irish counties, the Irish Constabularies had endeavoured to halt ‘factional’ violence and to maintain law and order in the countryside by frequent patrols of the collection of sub-districts. These patrols were timed so officers’ paths would cross at various crossroads, thus facilitating meetings and the exchange of intelligence.⁴⁶ The methods of the Irish Constabularies applied very well to colonial environments such as Australia and Canada, where nascent police forces were established to assert imperial sovereignty in regions which were confronted with fluid political situations or high degrees of lawlessness. Several high-ranking officers from the Irish Constabulary migrated to the British colonies and applied administrative changes to these new police forces. Established in the 1860s, the Indian police force was also modelled on the Irish Constabulary.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁶ Donal J. O’Sullivan, *The Irish Constabularies, 1822-1922: A Century of Policing in Ireland* (Dingle. Co. Kerry, Ireland: Brandon, 1999), 96.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 189.

Yet, the role of the District Officers, like that of the 'peacekeepers' in Ottoman Macedonia, extended well beyond police work. The DO was an administrator who carried a high degree of authority in representing British power in more established zones of British power in India and in regions where British authority was weaker like East Africa. In his study of District Officers in Edwardian-era East Africa, Michael Thompson describes the District Officers as "Little Tin Gods." They worked as policemen and tax collectors and saw themselves as "secular missionaries" to the Africans.⁴⁸ Kenya and Uganda had only come into British control in 1888 through the charter of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The District Officers were tasked with asserting British control over vast swaths of land. The procurement of information and the establishment of a level of understanding of the land and its people became essential to the success, if not the very survival, of the District Officers.⁴⁹

In regions of the Sudan, the District Officers asserted more of a military presence after the territory came into British control in 1898. In the Bahr al-Ghazal region of the southeast of the Sudan, the British established a network of government posts and worked to win the support of suspicious locals through a mixture of gifts, negotiation, displays of force, and offers of protection, threats, and applied military force.⁵⁰ In the volatile context of the Sudan, the district officers were usually military officers and were at their posts for the long haul. As described by Collins:

Known affectionately throughout the British Empire as the 'Bog Barons', they remained in the southern provinces, and usually in the same district, for many years, spoke English or an African language rather than Arabic, and closely identified themselves with the people they ruled. They trekked throughout the countryside visiting chiefs, villages and tribal gatherings. On occasion they were accompanied by a well-armed escort, but a lonely district officer tramping through the bush with a butterfly net and few porters frequently made a greater impression than companies of well-disciplined troops. With or without arms, however, the purpose was the

⁴⁸ Michael Thompson, "Little Tin Gods: The District Officer in British East Africa," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer, 1975), 145.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵⁰ Robert O. Collins, "Introduction," in *The British in the Sudan, 1898-1956: The Sweetness and the Sorrow*, eds. Robert O. Collins and Francis M. Deng (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1984), 12.

same – to establish the authority of the Sudan Government, hopefully by peace, but if necessary by war.⁵¹

In the East Africa context, the district officer exhibited a forward capacity like that Sandeman had demonstrated in the Northwestern Frontier. Like the “Sandeman system,” the work of the British officers in the Sudan presented a contemporary success story to British administrators and the British government at the time of the crises in Ottoman Macedonia. It is very plausible that they believed that the methods, which had succeeded in the notoriously fierce tribal regions of British India’s Northwestern Frontier and the southeastern Sudan, would be suitable to pacifying and, potentially, extending British influence in Crete and Macedonia. An intelligent and persuasive British officer could have far reaching effects at minimal expense. Lansdowne left India in 1894 and went on to become Secretary of War under Salisbury before being appointed Foreign Secretary in 1900. His India experiences would have very likely influenced his thinking towards Macedonia, and he would have been well apprised of events in East Africa. The success of the political officers on the Northwest Frontier and military officers in the Sudan can help explain his belief that military attachés could have a ‘tranquilizing’ influence in Southeastern Europe.

Even if they were not many in number, it was believed that a few good officers could have a strong influence. As discussed in Chapter 6, some of the British officers and diplomats who served in Macedonia and the Ottoman Empire had previously been posted to India or had served in Africa. It stands to reason that some of them would have been familiar with the methods of District Officers and the “Sandeman system” even if they had not served in the Northwest Frontier districts or places like the South Sudan. The imperial experience may also help explain why the British officers moved swiftly and confidently to influence not only the gendarmerie but political life in the Sancak of Drama. Moreover, Salisbury had already advocated for the application of policing methods from Imperial India to be applied in the Ottoman Empire.⁵² In India as in Macedonia, Lansdowne was the technician who implemented Salisbury’s strategy. While the immediate objective in Macedonia was to keep the peace, the British advocacy for the inclusion of the Vilayet of Adrianople and the strengthening of the reforms indicates

⁵¹ Ibid., 12-13.

⁵² Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 189.

Lansdowne and others, ideally, may have seen the potential to turn a strategic corner of the Ottoman Empire into a buffer zone against Russia, just as they had done in the Northwest Frontier.

Finally, the Mürzsteg Reform Program has a place in the history of peacekeeping for being the first of several multilateral interventions in Geographic Macedonia and the Southern Balkans during the twentieth century. Under the terms of the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest following the Second Balkan War in 1913, Great Power troops were deployed to stabilize the borders of the nascent Albanian state. Regional instability continued following the First World War. The League of Nations was active in facilitating the settlement of Greeks and Bulgarians and compensating non-movable property.⁵³ The League continued this work following the Treaty of Lausanne when the Muslims of Greek Macedonia were part of the population exchange which saw Christians from Asia Minor, Pontus and the Black Sea moved into mainland Greece, many of them into the homes of departing Macedonian Muslims. The League also successfully arbitrated a border dispute between Greece and Bulgaria in 1925.

The region was also the site of one of the first United Nations peacekeeping operations. Although the post war operations in Gaza and Palestine are better-known, the United Nations intervened in the Greek Civil War in 1947 through the introduction of the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB). This was an observer force created with the intent of promoting reconciliation between the combating sides and publicize the conduct of the war. The United States hoped that if violations of Greek sovereignty by the neighbouring states of Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria were reported and publicized by a UN force the Communist bloc would be embarrassed into suspending aid to the Greek Democratic Army.⁵⁴ UNSCOB was a relatively small force of officers of mixed nationalities deployed in six territorial zones across Northern Greece. Qualified candidates were to have knowledge of Greek, be unmarried (preferably), be physically fit, and possess the necessary mental toughness to patrol long distances in

⁵³ For the work of the League of Nations and politics and individual choices which surrounded minorities and refugees in Inter-War Greece and Bulgaria, see: Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*.

⁵⁴ Amikan Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War: The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, 1947-1952* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 37.

rough terrain in any weather. The men chosen were all officers of the rank of major and lieutenant colonel.⁵⁵ Though limited in number, the expectation existed that the presence of the UNSOB force and the power of publication could have a deterring effect.⁵⁶ Nachmani provides an account from an interview with an observer who encountered an offending group of men and literally stared them down until the men turned away and “desisted from their wrong doing.”⁵⁷ As the observers were deployed in the midst of a civil war, the UNSCOB mission was “unparalleled” in relation to other contemporary UN peacekeeping operations, since “there were no cease-fires to arrange and observe, no agreed demilitarized zone to supervise, no mediatory roles to fulfill, and no Mixed Armistice Commissions to chair as there were in India, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Indonesia.”⁵⁸

While unparalleled the UNSCOB mission was not unprecedented. The UNSCOB’s mandate and the observer’s approach have several similarities to the gendarmerie reorganization under the Mürzsteg Reform Program. Both operations took place in much of the same geographical space and in the context of a civil conflict with forces infiltrating from neighbouring states to the north. In both cases, a relatively small group of officers sought to not only to document and observe but to maintain a ‘tranquilizing’ presence. While UNSCOB was not training the Greek security forces, the observers served to legitimize the integrity of the Greek state by monitoring its frontiers and supplying intelligence to the Greek National Army.⁵⁹ Furthermore, as was the case nearly half a century earlier, the presence of this multinational force also served to ease tensions between regional nations, the Cold War Powers, and forestall a larger conflict. The deployment of a multinational force with the consent of the International Community made it less likely that one power would make a sudden mover to intervene. In 1903-04, the ‘peacekeepers’ helped ease tensions between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire and allay British concerns of a sudden territorial grab by Austria-Hungary or Russia. UNSCOB kept the Cold War cold. As noted by Nachmani: “It is possible that a world war was avoided thanks to the availability of a U.N. option for Washington to pursue and

⁵⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 157.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

Moscow to tolerate. What more could have been expected from a young international organization and a few hundred observers?”⁶⁰

Since the early 1990s, several peacekeeping operations have taken place in the land that was once Ottoman Macedonia. In 1995 the United Nations established the United Nations Preventative Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) mission in the Republic of Macedonia to monitor the country's northern frontier with Yugoslavia and to deter a possible invasion or incursion by Yugoslav troops. The UNPREDEP forces also provided a stabilizing presence within the Republic of Macedonia amid ongoing interethnic tensions. Following the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, British troops were deployed in Kosovo as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) as Kosovo was placed under the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK). Two years later, British and NATO troops were rushed to the Republic of Macedonia to help stabilize the northern and western regions of the republic after a six month insurgency by ethnic Albanian rebels.⁶¹ Although the NATO and UN military presence in the region has diminished in recent years, the international presence and influence in the Southern Balkans remains strong amidst an ongoing lack of political stability and economic prosperity. Like the European officers who deployed to Ottoman Macedonia in 1904, the peacekeepers in the 1990s and 2000s have endeavoured to implement reform and provide a pacifying presence in the region. As true stability remains elusive, peacekeepers may yet again be deployed to perform multidimensional tasks in the territory which was once comprised of the three vilayets of Ottoman Macedonia.

In conclusion, the Mürzsteg Reform Program stands as a small and rather underappreciated chapter in the history of peacekeeping. It was a diplomatic intervention which was a product of negotiation as opposed to force.⁶² Unlike the regional interventions which preceded it in Greece, Syria, and Crete, the European officers had to

⁶⁰ Ibid., 147. The Soviet Union would not sanction attacks on the UNSCOB observers as they feared that doing so would result in the intervention of United States troops.

⁶¹ Phillips, *Macedonia: Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans*, 144. The British troops were deployed as part of Operation Essential Harvest to oversee a weapons handover by the Albanian rebel forces. Although the operation ended within three months, 1,000 NATO troops remained as peacekeepers through the winter of 2001-02.

⁶² Rodogno references the analysis of the French legal scholar Antione Rougier, who called the Mürzsteg Reform Program “a non-forcible intervention (or *intervention diplomatique*). See: Rodogno, “The European Powers’ Intervention in Macedonia,” 218.

rely much more on their personal skills than force of arms to assert their influence. In this sense, Mürzsteg was much more of a truly peacekeeping operation than a peace enforcement operation. Having not thoroughly researched the origins of the League of Nations, I hesitate to declare there is a direct continuum between the gendarmerie reforms in the Mürzsteg Reform Program and the new international policing initiatives created with the League of Nations. Indeed, in the British case, it seems many of the lessons from Macedonia and elsewhere in the late Victorian and Edwardian period were forgotten after the war when it came to confronting unarmed protesters in India or gunmen in Ireland. I do feel that the evidence is strong, if not explicit, that imperial practices implemented in India and elsewhere played a role in how the British viewed Macedonia and how they approached their deployment in the Sancak of Drama. If the 'peacekeeping' undertaken in Ottoman Macedonia can fit into a contemporary category of peacekeeping, it would be "strategic peacekeeping," which involves the interposition of peacekeepers into a conflict zone in the anticipation that their presence "might generate the conditions for a peace process."⁶³

The challenges which confronted the European officers in Ottoman Macedonia are very similar to those which faced the peacekeepers of the 1990s in the same regional setting. In reading the literature of peacekeeping in the 1990s, I have found no evidence that suggests that any of the peacekeepers knew—let alone sought—historical lessons from Ottoman Macedonia. Given the relative dearth of literature, this is hardly surprising. In the British case at least, I consider the similarities to be the product of the British army and its traditions confronting similar contexts some 90 years and several generations apart. In this sense, Mürzsteg can stand as a prototype for modern peacekeeping, specifically the 'second generation' peacekeeping of the post Cold War era. With this in consideration, it suggests that modern peacekeeping has a distinctly imperial genealogy, and we must ponder what this tells us about contemporary peacekeeping.

⁶³ Stuart Gordon and Francis Toase, "Introduction." In D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase editors, *Aspects of Peacekeeping* (Portland, OR: Frank Kass, 2001), xxiii.

Understanding Intervention: Establishing Order and the Teleology of Reform

Ultimately, what were the British and the other Great Powers hoping to accomplish through their intervention in Macedonia? National agendas aside, the simple answer is some variation on the policy the British repeatedly articulated: 'status quo plus reform.' The powers did not wish to see liquidation of Ottoman rule in Europe in 1903. Yet what was the desired objective of reform? The reforms were never fully realized owing to differences between the Great Powers, Ottoman resistance, and ongoing instability in the Macedonian vilayets. The CUP Revolution in 1908, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and the outbreak of the First World War altered the political landscape of the Ottoman Empire and the geopolitics of the Balkans and Europe to such a degree that the Mürzsteg reforms have, to a large extent, been dismissed to the proverbial historical dustbin. However, I feel two points in the reforms provide us with some important understanding of how the Great Powers believed they could solve Macedonia's problems and bring about peace and stability. These are Article III of the Mürzsteg Reform Program regarding the grouping of nationalities, Article VII of the Vienna Program respecting financial administration, and the 1905 Financial Commission. Although conflict continued in Macedonia for the duration of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, attempts were made to grapple with Macedonia's population politics and the Ottoman Empire's finances through these terms of the reforms.

To most European observers, Macedonia's heterogeneous population was at the root of its problems.⁶⁴ '*Salade Macedoine*' is still the French term for mixed vegetables, and those who journeyed to Macedonia were alternately fascinated and appalled with the "ever-changing kaleidoscopic pageantry" which they encountered.⁶⁵ Those who looked more closely detected the bitter struggle for hearts, minds, and tongues being waged by competing *agent provocateurs*. George Abbott recounted in his memoir of his research in Macedonia, which he conducted just prior to the crises of 1902-3, that

⁶⁴ Keith Brown, *The Past in Question, Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 58; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 118-121.

⁶⁵ A.J. Mann, *The Salonika Front* (London: A&C Black and Co., 1920), 13.

national divisions ran through families and loyalty could be bought. In an often-quoted passage, he wrote:

Verily no country ever was in such sore need of a herald's office, or a lunatic asylum, as Macedonia. It may be described as a region peopled by new-born souls wandering in quest of a body, and losing themselves in the search. Roumanian, Servian, and Bulgarian agents are all scrambling for the appropriation of these erring spirits, while learned professors at St. Petersburg and Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia, are busy manufacturing genealogical trees and national appellations for all and sundry of these bewildering apostles of emancipation.⁶⁶

To help the Great Powers in their management of Macedonia and bring order to this perceived chaos, Article III of the Mürzsteg Reform Program stipulated:

As soon as an appeasement of the country will be noted, the Ottoman Government will be asked for a modification in the administrative division of the territory in view of a more regular grouping of the nationalities.⁶⁷

The intention behind Article III was certainly not malicious, but the consequences which flowed from its publication were disastrous. Some local agents seized upon Article III and took measures to create more regular groupings to suit their political aims. In early 1904, the IMRO chief Damien Gurev enacted a campaign to forcibly convert Patriarchists to the Exarchists.⁶⁸ The 1903 Ottoman census, which had been planned long before the Mürzsteg reforms, became further politicized as new census data would legitimize political claims. Intimidation tactics to influence census registration became commonplace and fueled the conflict in Macedonia. Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, pointed the blame squarely at Article III.⁶⁹

What accounts for the reasoning by the Great Powers to include this article in the reforms, which added fuel to the fires of conflict already burning in Ottoman Macedonia? The answer seems to be based on prevailing theories and approaches to race and historical precedents with some imperial influences. The reasoning behind Article III and other treaty interventions by the Great Powers in the Ottoman Empire can be partly explained by the prevalence of the 'biological approach' modern European states had

⁶⁶ Abbott, *The Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, 81.

⁶⁷ Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question*, 143.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁹ Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies," 63.

developed toward populations. As articulated by Michel Foucault, it was in the late eighteenth century that techniques of power were manifested that were centred on the human body. These techniques insured the health, productivity, and economization of bodies through “a whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and reports—all the technology that can be described as the disciplinary technology of labor.”⁷⁰ This is what Foucault calls the “biopolitics” of the human race: “Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.”⁷¹ Foucault argues that an important ramification in the emergence of biopolitics is the inscription of racism into the modern state. Distinctions among races such as racial hierarchies and positive and negative characteristics separate groups in a population, allowing “power to treat that population as a mixture of races, or to be more accurate, to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls, into subspecies known, precisely, as races.”⁷² As Foucault continues, this biological paradigm shaped understandings of enemies as threats to the population. Like a virus, the threat must be eliminated; killing becomes acceptable.⁷³ Racism, he reasons, “broke out” in modern societies functioning “in the biopower mode” during moments of privilege, namely colonization. “Racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide. If you are functioning in the biopower mode, how can you justify the need to kill civilians? By using the themes of evolutionism, by appealing to racism.”⁷⁴

The biopolitical approach to understanding the modern state’s control over its citizens has been extremely influential. More recently, Giorgio Agamben has further illuminated the theory and significance of biopolitics, although Agamben argues that political exclusion dates back to Classical Greece.⁷⁵ Foucault and Agamben’s approach to biopolitics has contributed to the field of genocide studies, particularly to those who argue that genocide is not unique to German Nazism. Rather, it is argued, genocide

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”*: Lectures at the College de France (New York: Picador, 2003), 242.

⁷¹ Ibid., 245.

⁷² Ibid., 255.

⁷³ Ibid., 256.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 257.

⁷⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 2-9.

should be considered in “the longer-term context of colonial genocide.”⁷⁶ Still, as pointed out by historian Dan Stone, most of the literature on biopolitics has focused on the negative side of modernity, overlooking “the fact that biopolitics led not only to genocide, but to advances in social welfare, public health, and family policy, even as the aims and advances in social welfare, public health, and family policy were indistinguishable.”⁷⁷ Perhaps in an effort to counteract this prevailing tendency, Niall Ferguson’s recent publication and televised series, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, balances its chapter on western medicine with benevolent work of the French in West Africa in tackling tropical diseases and improving the health of the indigenous populations with the genocidal actions of Imperial Germany in Southwest Africa.⁷⁸ Whether in Europe or its colonies or for good or bad, biopolitics became an approach for confronting population problems. Therefore, it stands to reason that biopolitics influenced European thought in confronting crises in the ‘Near East,’ especially since these crises appeared to stem from the mistreatment or mismanagement of populations, which European observers considered to be ethnic, national or religious minorities, who lived an existence which differentiated them the Islamic, Turkish mainstream of the Ottoman Empire.

Europe’s biopolitical view of populations developed through the nineteenth century as Europe spread its influence and its colonies to the farthest reaches of the globe. In Great Britain, the empire became a source of great pride for Britons. Statistics, taxonomies, records, surveys, and maps provided the British government and ordinary Britons with a means of understanding empire and of asserting power over their empire from flora and fauna to economic resources to human populations. High profile fairs and exhibitions brought the empire and the world to British cities and demonstrated “beyond doubt the technological progress that the British were making across the world.”⁷⁹ The 1851 Great Exhibition in South Kensington consciously reflected economic liberalism

⁷⁶ Dan Stone, “Biopower and Modern Genocide,” in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York; Oxford: Berhahn Books, 2008), 163.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷⁸ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London; New York: Allen Lane, 2011), 168-184.

⁷⁹ Jacqueline Yallop, *Magpies, Squirrels & Thieves: How Victorians Collected the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2011), 18.

and free trade, the raw materials garnered by the East India Company, the Church of England's sense of charity, and "the conviction of the liberal classes that the exhibition should assert the British political and social model to the rest of the world."⁸⁰ As Jacqueline Yallaop shows in her study of Victorian collecting, new galleries and museums opened up across Britain in the mid-nineteenth century. "Inextricably associated with education and enlightenment, with order and stability and self-improvement, these offered a perfect outlet for both civic pride and visible philanthropy."⁸¹ Collecting became fashionable in nineteenth century Britain and it was no longer a hobby reserved for the elite. All these collections of plants, pinned butterflies, fossils, cultural artifacts, and the labeling, explanatory material and guidebooks which came with them furthered biological understandings of the world at a time when European empires were expanding and improvements in communication and transportation were creating an age of globalization. European societies increasingly became knowledge societies through a gradual process which broke down distances while maintaining boundaries. In sociologist Nico Stehr's words: "The world opens up and creeds, styles and commodities mingle, yet the walls between convictions of what is sacred do not come tumbling down. The meaning of time and place erodes while boundaries are celebrated."⁸²

Towards the turn of the twentieth century, the ascendancy of eugenics and notions of racial superiority and 'degeneration' gave further credence to biological understandings of the world and boundaries. Social and political problems, whether at home or abroad were described with the 'language of empire' and cast in medical terms. In his examination of the transnational work of the Salvation Army, Harald Fischer-Tiné presents the comparison between the William Booth's 1890 book *From Darkest England and the Way Out* and the explorer Henry Morgan Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*. As Stanley recounts his journey into the "hostile" African wilderness where he finds "uncivilized and degraded specimens of the human race," Booth draws direct comparison to "Darkest Africa" in describing the repulsive, unclean, diseased, vice-ridden, streets of urban England. Booth's descriptions of the slums are carefully detailed with "a meticulous

⁸⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁸¹ Ibid., 33.

⁸² Nico Stehr, *Knowledge Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 6-7.

categorization of its populace.”⁸³ Fischer-Tiné notes that the sociologist Mariana Valverde has connected Booth’s descriptions to the “impact of imperial technologies of knowledge production on the emerging metropolitan discipline of urban social studies.” Disease and disorder are mapped and human types are classified and placed in taxonomies. As Fischer-Tiné points out, Booth’s “tropicalization of London’s East End...shows that these imperial technologies of exploration, far from being objective scientific methods, were shot through with presumptions laden with value judgments.”⁸⁴ Booth endeavoured to help the poor while maintaining—if not widening—the distance between the middle class explorers and the urban poor, who are placed on par with the “savages” of the colonies.⁸⁵

Controversial as it was, Booth’s *From Darkest England* sold hundreds of thousands of copies and established Booth as an expert on urban poverty. When problems arose, people turned to experts for advice. Such was the case with Macedonia. The escalation of the conflict in Macedonia coincided with the publication of *Macedonian Folklore* by George A. Abbott, who had been trained and commissioned by Cambridge University to undertake a study of the folklore in the Greek-speaking regions of Macedonia. Abbott describes Macedonia as land governed by cycles of the seasons and human life. He devotes chapters to spirits and witches’ spells, the legacy of the Macedonian kings in folk tradition, and bird legends. The impression the book gives is not entirely negative but Macedonia is presented as a ‘primitive’ land, where little has changed over the centuries. Having dedicated the book to Sir James George Frazer, the author of pioneering anthropological work *The Golden Bough*, Abbott makes several references to Frazer’s and other studies of ‘primitive’ folklore. He compares the customs he encounters to those of Russians, Zulus, Maoris, Japanese, and the peasant English among other places.⁸⁶ Macedonia is placed in decidedly archaic company. Abbott also published a memoir of his experiences in Macedonia in which he discusses the political

⁸³ Harald Fischer-Tiné, “Reclaiming Savages in ‘Darkest England’ and ‘Darkest India’: The Salvation Army as Transnational Agent of the Civilizing Mission,” in *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, edited by Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann (London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, 2011), 133.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁸⁶ For example, see Abbott’s note on the interpretation of dreams. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, 226.n1.

climate just prior to the uprisings of 1902-3. He calls the patriotism amongst the majority of “these people” a “form of national disease.” Abbott depicts the animosity between “Slav and Hellene” as “a struggle as old as the hills.” The enmity felt between the two nationalities even exceeding that which they feel towards “the Turk.”⁸⁷

A Greek will on no account speak to or shake hands with a Bulgar. Nor will a Bulgar patronise a shop kept by a Greek. The antipathy between the two nationalities amounts to almost physical repugnance. It far exceeds any feeling of enmity that either of them may entertain towards the Turk, who has ground them both to the dust during the most unmitigated oppression imaginable.⁸⁸

However, in other passages Abbott sees nationality, particularly amongst the Slavs, as being hard to define, noting that many peasants lacked “any national soul, or, for that matter any soul at all.”⁸⁹ It is in depicting this atmosphere of confusion and competition that Abbott remarks that Macedonia is a country in need of “a herald’s office” or a “lunatic asylum.”⁹⁰

Abbott’s views were hardly atypical of academics and journalists who wrote about Macedonia at that time. As noted by Todorova, by the turn of the twentieth century, the “geographic discovery was going hand in hand with a simultaneous invention of the region,” which was facilitated by literature and travel writing.⁹¹ The significance of Abbott’s books to this study is their timing—both were published in 1903. Thus Abbott provided the latest in British academic study and memoir at the hour of a crisis in Macedonia. Those seeking understanding of Macedonia beyond the newspapers would certainly have been drawn to his books. As Lansdowne was known to have consulted a wide variety of periodicals for news on Macedonia, it is very likely he would have read Abbott’s books and may have sought Abbott out for consultation.

If the foreign secretary had consulted Abbott’s works, he would have found justification for the ‘more regular grouping’ of Macedonia’s nationalities. Abbott’s descriptions compare well with the aforementioned works by Stanley and Booth for an

⁸⁷ Abbott, *The Tale of a Tour in Macedonia*, 156-7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹¹ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 116.

academic explorer's use of the language of empire. What is more, the influence of biopolitics is evident in the medical references Abbott employs. Yosmaoğlu refers to Abbott's use of "lunatic asylum" as an example of an emerging "discourse of pathology" regarding Macedonia.⁹² We see peasants depicted as living naturally by ancient life cycles. The hatred depicted between 'Greek' and 'Bulgar' and 'Turk' has an almost animalistic quality to it, as though it was more a product of biological instinct than culture or politics. The described climate of competition and confusion cries out for the clinical intervention of Europeans to bring order to the 'asylum' and enact pacification through proper classification.

Considering the influence of biopolitics towards populations, the power of empire and its language, and the timely contributions of a folklorist and newspaper contributor trained in one of Britain's finest universities, it should not be a surprise that the British government and diplomats gave their consent to Article III of the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The orderly European metropolises with their enlightening museums and rationalized organization of the world stood in stark contrast to the racial, religious, and political chaos which reigned in Macedonia. The root of the malady appeared to be Macedonia's mixed population. Part of the cure could be to 'un-toss' the *Salade Macedoine*.

While concepts and discourse of biopolitics and empire can explain support for Article III, the other part of the explanation comes from the concrete examples derived from past interventions in the Ottoman Empire. The case most frequently referred to in the weeks and months prior to the establishment of the Mürzsteg Reform Program was the *Règlement* the powers created for Ottoman Lebanon in 1861. Under the terms of the *Règlement*, civil procedures and local governance were under the control of an appointed Christian governor. The territory was divided into cantons and districts along sectarian lines, and all governance and representation was to reflect the sectarian make up of the given administrative region. Henceforth sectarianism was to dominate the political and daily life on Mt. Lebanon.⁹³ The European commissioners who had created the plan reasoned that the Druze and Maronites had existed as separate societies.

⁹² Yosmaoğlu, "Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," 165.

⁹³ John P. Spagnolo, *France & Ottoman Lebanon 1861-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), 41-44. Also see: Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*.

Furthermore, the commissioners had drawn up plans to transfer and exchange populations for the sake of preventing future massacres and establishing a lasting peace. Differences between France and Great Britain and a lack of will to oversee these population transfers meant many refugees returned to their homes before they could be sent to new destinations.⁹⁴ The segregation plan was abandoned but sectarianism was to dominate the political and daily life of Lebanon for decades to come. Importantly, over forty years later, the peace was still holding and Lebanon was, according to observers, “cleanly” and enjoying prosperity.⁹⁵

Whether by intent or not, population movements had been a consequence of the Great Power interventions in the Ottoman Empire through the nineteenth century. After their occupation of the Peloponnese during the Greek Revolution, the French navy had transported some 2,500 Muslim refugees to Smyrna in 1828.⁹⁶ During the Lebanon intervention, the French minister of war had suggested transferring Maronites to French Algeria, arguing that they would fit in well since they spoke Arabic and would be more industrious than the native population.⁹⁷ The 1868 Organic Statue for Ottoman Crete was frequently mentioned in the same sentence as the Lebanon *Règlement* and was influenced by the Lebanon arrangement. However, the British and French made it very clear that they were opposed to population transfers or exchanges and that they wanted the Christians and Muslims of Crete to live in peace.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, wars and interventions continued to write one way tickets of exodus for unfortunate populations. The establishment of the Bulgarian Principality and Austria-Hungary’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 resulted in the influx of thousands of Muslims into the Ottoman Empire. Though the French and the British tried to reverse the ethnic displacement on Crete during the fighting in the late 1890s, Crete’s Muslims migrated to other parts of the Ottoman Empire in their thousands, leaving many to conclude that population transfers and exchanges may be the only way to secure a lasting peace.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 114.

⁹⁵ Buxton, “A History of Turkish Reforms,” 118.

⁹⁶ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 85.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 306, n87.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁹⁹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 224.

Despite the trouble in Crete and the plight of the Armenians in Anatolia, in 1903, Lebanon still stood as a shining example of successful political and population management. In early February, Russian Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamsdorff, spoke of measures “akin to the arrangement in the Lebanon” as a means of remedying what he called the “maladministration” of Macedonia by removing the causes of the discontent without altering the status quo.¹⁰⁰ The Austro-Hungarians had similar assessments with their ambassador to St. Petersburg, Baron d’Aehrenthal expressing his opinion that “an arrangement somewhat similar to that of Lebanon” would insure the Great Powers would control the appointment or dismissal of the governor.¹⁰¹ However, the terms of the Vienna Reform Program fell far short of the Lebanon *Règlement*.

After the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising, the Lebanon *Règlement* began to circulate in official British communication as a solution to the crisis. On August 18, O’Conor reported that he thought Sultan Abdülhamîd might be amenable to autonomy for Macedonia similar to that of Lebanon.¹⁰² Ten days later, O’Conor submitted a confidential report, recommending the British let the Russians take credit for the idea of autonomy for Macedonia, which he was sure would be similar to that of Lebanon’s “only with a dash of foreign control” to make it more acceptable.¹⁰³ Balfour objected to letting the Russians take credit for the idea, but he favoured pressing for “something like the Lebanon Constitution” and suggested to Lansdowne that he discuss the matter with the Austro-Hungarians.”¹⁰⁴

It is worth noting that in this correspondence—some of it confidential—there is no mention of definite ideas regarding what O’Conor and Balfour specifically thought regarding the population arrangements, although it is safe to assume they favoured, at the very least, a political system based on sectarianism or nationality. Interestingly, the liberal critics of the Balkan Committee also referenced the precedents of Lebanon and Crete as a solution for Macedonia, and they did foresee Macedonia’s “territorial

¹⁰⁰ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), February 4, 1903, FO 65/1659/28. Most of the correspondence indicates the diplomats considered one of the root causes of the conflict to be the lack of representation for the Christian populations powers assumed

¹⁰¹ Scott to Lansdowne (confidential), January 7, 1903, FO 65/1659/7.

¹⁰² O’Conor to Lansdowne (confidential), August 18, 1903, FO 78/5268/491

¹⁰³ O’Conor to Lansdowne, August 28, 1903, FO 800/143.

¹⁰⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, September 10, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 49698.

divisions” being “rectified” and “normal racial tendencies” asserting themselves under the tutelage of the Great Powers.¹⁰⁵ Given that it was well-known that the Christian population of Macedonia was itself mixed, the Balkans Committee’s sentiments reflect the conclusion that a political system based on sectarianism or nationality—if not outright physical separation of populations—in places like Macedonia and Crete would create more peace and stability in the future. After all, the recent history of Lebanon proved it.

There was opposition to Article III from the country most affected. Sultan Abdülhamîd informed the French ambassador that he was “determined to resist the demands as to a new territorial delimitation, and other possible reforms contained in paragraphs 3 and 8.”¹⁰⁶ A related concern was articulated by the Bulgarian Prime Minister, General Petrov, who expressed his unease at the prospective gendarmerie zones being under the control of different nationalities, which he saw as a potential prelude to a partition of Macedonia.¹⁰⁷ Apprehension was also expressed by Count Goluchowski, who argued for bodies of mixed European soldiers to be deployed as examples of cooperation, thus circumventing clashes between the powers over territorial allotments which suggested partition.¹⁰⁸ The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister also apparently had little to say regarding Article III, which, it seems, came about more at Lansdowne’s behest. Goluchowski was the only Great Power statesman to express caution regarding the principle of administering territory on the basis of nationality. His ideas were quickly quashed and the gendarmerie officers were deployed to national zones, which Lansdowne called “a practical and business-like arrangement which ought to work well.”¹⁰⁹ Considering the importance the British placed on finding knowledgeable solutions, it is somewhat ironic that they, and the other powers, were not willing to listen to the foreign minister of the European power with the most experience in administering

¹⁰⁵ The Balkan Committee, *The Macedonian Crisis*, 6-7; H. N. Brailsford et. al., “Views of English Observers,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 1, 1903, 7; H. N. Brailsford et. al., “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 9.

¹⁰⁶ O’Conor to Lansdowne, November 20, 1903, FO 78/5272/221.

¹⁰⁷ Elliot to Lansdowne, October 31, 1903, FO 78/5295/294.

¹⁰⁸ Sowards, *Austria’s Policy of Macedonian Reform*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 129 (1904): 1288.

a part of the Balkan peninsula, and from a man who was himself a minority nationality (Polish) in a delicately balanced multinational empire.

When it came to the diplomacy of establishing Mürzsteg, British officials did not openly advocate sectarian or national political structures or an administered population displacement for Macedonia. Nevertheless, they did not express any objections to Article III either and they supported gendarmerie zones based on nationality. The documented increase in nationally and sectarian-based fighting in Macedonia in 1904-05 did not give the British pause to consider any more than the reservations expressed by the Ottomans. Before Lansdowne tabled his three point plan for Macedonia in 1905, Balfour called for a Macedonian Constitution “on the lines of the Lebanon system.”¹¹⁰ Writing in early 1906, the very progressive and perceptive H.N. Brailsford issued a critic of the Mürzsteg Reform Program in which he gave some qualified approval for the gendarmerie reorganization. However Brailsford was otherwise negative in his evaluation. He pointed out that most of the terms of the reforms had not been implemented, including Article III:

A rearrangement of administrative area was promised, doubtless with the object of disentangling the rival races whom the Turks have sedulously confounded. Nothing has been done to give effect to this, beyond the exclusion of the purely Greek and Albanian districts from the scope of the reforms.¹¹¹

Brailsford recommended a “satisfactory scheme” for the equal treatment of minorities.¹¹² He called for administrative districts run by Turkish, Bulgarian or Greek pashas appointed on the basis of each districts’ population, a point which very much resembled the Lebanon *Règlement*.¹¹³ Brailsford also went further in recommending administered population movements and the redrawing of borders. He advocated for the creation of a “Land Commission” which would oversee the sale of non-movable property and the placement of immigrants in the likely event that many people would not want to live as minority populations. He suggested this system might be applied throughout

¹¹⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 30, 1904, BP Add MSS 49729.

¹¹¹ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 305.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 322.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 324. This was not strictly to be on the basis of the district’s national majority. Brailsford reasoned that in districts where there was a strong Muslim minority, “it would be wise to appoint a Turk.”

“European Turkey” and the “more advanced” parts of Asia Minor where Armenians were clustered.¹¹⁴ Brailsford suggested Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia might purchase bordering regions of the Ottoman Empire and the remainder of “European Turkey” would be divided “into three great areas, [Macedonia, Albanian, and Thrace] in each of which the population would be fairly homogeneous.”¹¹⁵ As Brailsford was amongst Britain’s leading and most vocal left wing intellectuals, his views are a powerful indicator of not only the historically-informed credibility of the Lebanon *Règlement*, but of a more fundamental belief in British society that national, religious, or linguistic minorities were an inherent hindrance to peace and prosperity in the Near East. A belief, it can be reasoned, that was rooted in the acceptance of principles of biopolitics and the influence of empire over at least the course of the nineteenth century in Britain in particular, and in most of Europe in general.

Another key point which grants us insight into the teleology of reform is the subject of the Ottoman Empire’s finances. Faced with a lack of investment capital to facilitate modernization of the empire’s transportation and communication infrastructure and move the imperial economy away from its base of subsistence, Sultan Abdülhamîd issued the *Muharrem* decree in 1881. This created the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA), an institution controlled by Europeans which collected payments the Ottoman Empire owed to its European creditors and helped assist companies investing in the Ottoman Empire. In time, the OPDA became large enough and powerful enough to make investments of its own in the Ottoman Empire. Murat Birdal argues that the OPDA was beneficial for the Ottoman Empire in helping to secure investment capital which, otherwise, would not have existed.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Birdal notes that the OPDA enabled the Ottoman Empire to have a greater degree of control over its finances than it would have had under some of the alternative options considered at the Berlin Congress of 1878.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 329.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 331. He envisioned Macedonia being predominantly Bulgarian, Albanian being, obviously, Albanian, and Thrace being made up mostly of Muslims.

¹¹⁶ Murat Birdal, *Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt, Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

Nevertheless, for nationalists and opponents of the sultan (namely the CUP) the OPDA was synonymous with foreign control. Most Europeans considered the Ottoman Empire, and its neighbours, to be inherently corrupt and incompetent when it came to matters of finance. Indeed, during the period I have examined in this study, there were regular communications between the bond holders and investors and the British Foreign Office regarding the troubled finances of the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Bulgaria. Therefore, it is not surprising that British officials believed that there was a better chance for the reforms to succeed if there was a higher degree of European control over reform finance.

The British repeatedly made the case for stronger financial reform. Prior to the Gorna Dzhumaja Uprising in mid 1902, Consul General Biliotti had identified the state of the Ottoman Empire finances as the root cause of the injustices and corruption that made the messages of the Macedonian Committees so appealing.¹¹⁸ The Austro-Hungarians and Russians concurred and made reform of the financial administration part of the Vienna Reform Program (See Appendix III). Although finance had not been part of the recommendations Lansdowne had submitted to the Austro-Hungarians and Russians at Mürzsteg, the absence of an article in the Mürzsteg Reform Program concerning finance caught Lansdowne's attention and he called for the reforms' finances to be put in "thoroughly competent hands."¹¹⁹ For Balfour, the establishment of the European gendarmes in Macedonia was an important first step, and he hoped the other powers could be convinced to impose European financial control over Macedonia. He saw finance as the source of the problems and reasoned that the "Oriental tax-gatherer" was "the root of all evil."¹²⁰

The experience of the first year of the reform only deepened the British conviction regarding finance. When Lansdowne presented his three point plan in 1905, the second point called for the creation of a Great Power appointed commission with administrative and executive power over justice and finance in Macedonia. Although the Austro-Hungarians and Russians opposed the British suggestions, the powers were in

¹¹⁸ Biliotti to O'Connor, April 11, 1903, FO 195/2133/51.

¹¹⁹ Lansdowne to Plunkett, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/168; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, October 26, 1903, FO 421/199/170.

¹²⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 22, 1903, BP, Add. MSS 499728.

agreement that stronger financial reforms were necessary, and they agreed to the 16 point Draft Regulation on financial reform. What is more, the powers were willing to impose their collective will on the Ottoman Empire in order to establish the financial commission. When Great Power warships sailed to the eastern Aegean and marines occupied Mytilene and Lemnos in the autumn of 1905, it was for the sake of a creating a financial commission, not to save refugees.

While the Mürzsteg Reform Program fell far short from being fully implemented, from the evidence presented here, the conclusion can be drawn that the teleology of the reforms was not merely reform but European control. Though unwilling to act unilaterally, the British pushed the envelope on the reforms the farthest. Ideally, the British would have liked to have seen European control of the gendarmerie and the police, the administration of justice and finance, the geographical expansion of the reforms, a constitution in accordance with the Lebanon *Règlement*, and, very possibly a European administered movement and resettlement of Macedonia's population in view of creating more nationally and religiously homogeneous regions. Macedonia, if not all of Ottoman Europe would have become a European protectorate that likely would have born more resemblance to a European colony than a European nation-state. Paternalism, it seems, was considered necessary, at least in the short term. The people of Macedonia would have ended up trading Ottoman rule for European rule, although evidence suggests that a good deal of the Christian population, and most certainly the Macedonian Committees, would have welcomed such a development.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the European reformers needed only to look around the region to find success stories which supported the need for reform in Macedonia. Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Crete, and Egypt all appeared as positive examples of the benefits of European intervention and reform in contrast to the recurrent insurrections and massacres that plagued the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the impetus to impose Macedonian autonomy under European direction was lacking. The implementation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program remained a slow process. The powers stayed largely divided over how best to conduct the reform, though none of them suggested terminating the reforms.

During the course of this study, I have argued that the Mürzsteg Reform Program has, in some respects, received unfair criticism for its failure to halt the violence in

Macedonia. The fact that the conflict remained contained and an Ottoman-Bulgarian war was avoided is testament to the reforms being a short term strategic success. However, the long term implications of Müritzsteg were mostly negative. Article III gave impetus to what is now known as ethnic cleansing as the competing parties endeavored to create more homogeneous territories. Although not fully implemented, the terms of reforms indicated to the Muslim population and the Ottoman authorities that the Europeans wished to degrade their power. Ottoman officials and diplomats did actively read the British press and it is virtually a certainty that some of them would have read H.N. Brailsford's book with his recommendations for redrawn borders and a commission to oversee a controlled exodus of Muslims from Macedonia in the name of creating more homogenous spaces. Renewed interest in Macedonia and Müritzsteg by the British and Russian governments from 1907 was one of the catalysts for the CUP's revolution in July of 1908. The CUP leaders knew that emboldened reforms would likely spell the end of Ottoman rule in Macedonia, and they had the historical evidence to prove it.

Though the Müritzsteg Reform Program was not fully realized, the implications of its articles and politics went beyond the borders of Macedonia and the time frame of 1903-1908. The revolution of July 1908 by the CUP brought a brief euphoria to Macedonia as many of the rival guerilla forces rallied around the CUP as it restored the Ottoman constitution. There was substance to this sentiment. Deputies from across the national spectrum participated in the Ottoman parliament, some of whom called the parliament "the protector of their future."¹²¹ Furthermore, when counterrevolutionary forces seized power in Constantinople in 1909, an 'Army of Action' rallied in Macedonia, which contained within its ranks the prominent IMRO leader Yane Sandanski.¹²² But while the Army of Action swiftly restored the CUP's power, more hard-line elements within the CUP were already pushing for a stronger national policy. Fearing the northward spread of this Ottoman euphoria, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in October of 1908. In addition, Bulgaria declared its full independence and Greece annexed Crete. According to Kirakossian, these events "were heavy blows to the

¹²¹ Emre Sencer, "Balkan Nationalisms in the Ottoman Parliament, 1909." *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (March 2004): 60.

¹²² MacDermott, *For Freedom and Perfection*, 394. According to MacDermott, Sandanski and his men were involved in frontline fighting and were later showered with flowers during the victory march through the city.

prestige of the nascent constitutional government in Turkey and led to serious protests around the country.”¹²³ British attempts to compensate for the territorial losses by removing Articles 23 and 61 from the Berlin Treaty and doing away with the capitulations system in exchange for Ottoman recognition of Bulgaria and the loss of Bosnia were rejected.¹²⁴

For the Ottomans, this was another in the long line of irreversible territorial amputations, which were sanctioned, if not instigated, by one or more of the European powers. Each successive loss of territory came with an influx of Muslim refugees, altering the demography of the Anatolian core of the empire and putting more pressure on the Armenian and Greek populations who lived there. The loss of Bosnia and Bulgaria prompted the CUP to create a ‘national economy’ in which Christian economic influence was diminished. The CUP was voted out of office but returned via coup on January 22, 1913; a day after Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha relented to British diplomatic pressure and agreed to surrender the city of Adrianople to Bulgaria.¹²⁵ The terms of the Treaty of London following the first Balkan War saw the loss of almost all of the Ottoman Empire’s European territory. Parts of Thrace were taken back from Bulgaria during the Second Balkan War in 1913, but the Macedonian and Albanian Vilayets were lost to the Ottoman Empire for good. According to Bloxham, the result of the Balkan Wars “signified the death of any vestige of CUP pluralism.”¹²⁶ The Ottoman Empire became not only more Muslim but more ethnically Turkish, and led by men who espoused an ethnic Turkish nationalism. When the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War, the government moved to annul the reforms imposed by the Great Powers, and do away with the OPDA and the capitulations. Foreign influences were to be eliminated.¹²⁷ The ensuing decade saw the region ravaged by war, expulsion, and genocide in the name of creating ‘national security’ through ethnic homogeneity.

¹²³ Araman Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question from the 1830s to 1914* (London: Gomidas Inst, 2003), 302.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁶ Donald Bloxham, “Internal Colonization, Inter-Imperial Conflict and the Armenian Genocide,” in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (New York; Oxford: Berhahn Books, 2008), 333.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

To be clear, I am not suggesting a causal link between the Mürzsteg Reform Program and the Armenian Genocide. It was Ottoman officials, not Great Power diplomats, who issued the orders to march columns of Armenians into the Syrian Desert to their deaths. Mürzsteg did not contain the seeds of the Armenian Genocide but it added another layer to the stratum of the process which legitimized European notions of national and racial classification and political organization. These notions undermined Ottoman political structures and 'horizontal' relationships between members of different national communities. Through Article III, the reforms further fostered exclusion and difference based on nationality and ethnicity. As illustrated previously, Article III exacerbated the situation in Macedonia as guerilla forces and agents of the state sought to intimidate people into proclamations of loyalty. Indeed, this played into the hands of the rebels and *agents provocateur* who had been trying to enlist Christian peasants under national banners over the previous decades. Even without a movement of populations, the administration of the territory by nationality would have further imposed political structures which emphasized difference. In short, Mürzsteg helped make race and nationality matter more. Furthermore, the Mürzsteg Reform Program produced measures which many Ottomans considered were affronts to their country's sovereignty. With the loss of territory having become a regular occurrence over the course of the nineteenth century, the reforms had the appearance of being a prelude to another loss of territory, which, in some respects, they were.

In fairness, it is easy to be critical in hindsight. Economic liberalism had brought wealth to Europe and had enabled economic and medical developments in the colonies, at least as far as most Europeans were concerned. In pushing for 'more regular grouping of nationalities' for the administrative divisions, the British and the Great Power governments were only using the latest in 'imperial technology.' They had regional historical precedents, notably Lebanon, to support their plans. Ethnographic maps and surveys, demographic studies, and censuses were how modern European nations and their empires were ordered, and how their leaders projected power. If these methods had brought peace and prosperity to the European empires and to other parts of the 'Near East' why should they not enable the realization of peace in Macedonia? But as Stone reminds us, although this power and knowledge could be used for benevolent

means, it could serve sinister ends as well.¹²⁸ In 1913 the Ottoman Interior Ministry under Talat Pasha produced detailed ethnological and demographic surveys and maps of the populations of Anatolia, Cilicia, and the Ottoman Empire's Arabian vilayets. Ethnicity and "ethnic security" had come to matter a great deal to the Ottoman government, and it would be directorates in the Ottoman Interior Ministry which would oversee many of the deportations of Armenians.¹²⁹

On a related point, it is worth considering the teleology of the reforms in the history of world organization, particularly with regards to the British Empire. In his recent brief examination of the ideological origins of the United Nations, historian Mark Mazower argues that the international organization was largely based on the League of Nations and was much less American in its genesis than popularly thought. Mazower connects the origins of the League of Nations to "the question of empire and the visions of global order that emerged of the British Empire in particular in its final decades."¹³⁰ Mazower cites South African statesman Jan Smuts as being instrumental in influencing the creation of the League of Nations and later the UN. What makes this something of a revelation is that fact that Smuts was an unabashed believer in the racial superiority of whites, a proponent of white rule in Africa, and a believer that international institutions should be led by whites.¹³¹ Smuts' vision grew out of the ashes of the Boer War, in which he had led Boer guerillas against the British army. Nevertheless, Smuts revered the British Empire, which he considered to be a model for international governance since it fostered both the notion of nationality and international cooperation.¹³² This spirit of internationalism gained popularity in British circles after the British Empire had been humbled by the Boer War. It was a popular idea as "even the most radical of British internationalists accepted the imperial framework of world politics."¹³³ By the time peace

¹²⁸ Stone, "Biopower and Modern Genocide," 168-169.

¹²⁹ Bloxham, "Internal Colonization," 334. The orders for the "reception area" for Syria stipulated that the Armenian population was not to exceed 10% of the population, with the goal of assimilation or marginalization. See: Bloxham, "Internal Colonization," 338.

¹³⁰ Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 14.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 37.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 32.

was being discussed during the First World War, “imperial self interest was grafted into Wilsonian rhetoric.”¹³⁴

Mazower’s thesis presents some thought provoking points with regards to Britain’s policy toward Macedonia and the Müritz Reform Program. As discussed previously in this study, the Boer War exposed Britain’s vulnerability, making the British government more unwilling to pursue intervention operations. The multilateral approach to the Macedonian crises reflected the newfound interest in internationalism. With the Macedonian reforms, the British could be seen to be feeling their way forward in an international framework. Britain was not the foremost power in the reform process, but Lansdowne did succeed in securing places for Great Britain, France, and Italy in the gendarmerie reform operation and in establishing a multinational Financial Commission. Classification by nationality and race and the promotion of nationality-based governance were trademarks of British imperial rule as was economic liberalism. In advocating these notions through the multilateral framework of the reforms, the British were—however slightly—endeavouring to sway the reforms towards a system of management more closely resembling British imperial rule. Another example can be found in the attempts by the British to influence the other powers with their ‘peacekeeping’ methods. If the teleology of the reforms was a ‘*Pax Europea*’ administration of Macedonia, the British would most certainly have argued it was logical that such a project should employ British imperial practices. They needed to look no further than Egypt to demonstrate their power to pacify and manage diverse populations and create conditions for prosperity. Though not in Macedonia, after the First World War Smuts’ vision of “territorial oversight” came to pass in other parts of the Ottoman Empire with the creation of the mandate system, which saw the French and British assume control of tracts of territory.¹³⁵ As noted by Mazower, the British thought the outcome to be highly justified:

Meanwhile, the Ottoman lands were divided up between the British and the French; so were the German colonies in Africa. The Italians, Belgians, and Portuguese were sidelined. In British eyes, *they* were the imperialists, unable to separate their own selfish economic interests from the greater good of humanity. Territories had been allocated in the proper fashion, through a diplomatic conference, and the work of civilization could

¹³⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹³⁵ Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 41.

proceed. The British Empire had never been so large, and much of this was thanks to the new international organization that Smuts had been so influential in bringing into being.¹³⁶

Finally, it is worth noting that some of the leading British politicians and intellectuals who were involved in Macedonia in 1902-08 were in positions to influence the peace conferences of 1919. It appears Macedonia did cast its influence on some of them. With an eye on the post war settlement, H.N. Brailsford penned *A League of Nations* in the summer and autumn of 1916. Referencing his experience as the addressed the future of Macedonia, Brailsford cautioned the Entente powers about awarding the territory to Serbia, arguing that it would unwise to let “the principle of weakening the enemy” override the principle of nationality.¹³⁷ He concluded: “The past teaches two lessons. One of them is that there is small hope of happiness for these Macedonian Bulgars under alien rule. The other is that there is little prospect of tranquility in the Balkans while its frontiers violate nationality,”¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Brailsford had moderated his position on national minorities somewhat since 1906. While pointing out that mixed population areas were prone to racial strife, Brailsford argued that minorities would always exist and the key was to construct a durable peace and give nations recourse to internationalism and security of an international governing body:

There must be some system of guarantees and safeguards by which international organization of Europe will watch over the rights of these minorities. That is to say, however complete our victory...we must still, even for this limited problem of nationality, have recourse to some Concert of League of Peace.¹³⁹

The lack of a stronger international governing body, Brailsford argued, was a reason why Macedonia could not enjoy stability in the face of Ottoman recalcitrance towards reform and intrigues by the Balkan states.¹⁴⁰ While he thought the idea “infinitely difficult to realize” Brailsford believed the people of the Balkans would benefit the most from a Balkan Federation.¹⁴¹ Although *A League of Nations* was brought to Woodrow Wilson’s

¹³⁶ Ibid., 46.

¹³⁷ H.N. Brailsford, *A League of Nations* (London: Headlet Bros. Publishers, 1917), 96.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 99.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 105-06.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 104-06.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 142.

attention, Brailsford's biographer, F.M. Leventhal, states that there is no evidence it had any influence on the British government of the day.¹⁴² Brailsford was not pleased with the peace of 1919. He considered the terms to be unnecessarily punitive and was very critical of the redrawn borders which placed large numbers of Germans outside the borders of Germany.¹⁴³ Hopes he placed in the Soviet Union were soon disappointed.¹⁴⁴

J.D. Bouchier, Britain's most longstanding Balkan correspondent, also articulated his advice for a post war settlement in a detailed essay in *Quarterly Review* in October of 1917. Like Brailsford, Bouchier advocated for a settlement adhering to the principle of nationality. The article laments the lack of reliable statistics, maps, and demographic data, and dismisses local and Ottoman sources. Only the works of "highly competent and scientific writers" (Europeans) are deemed credible, along with the valuable information produced by the European consuls and the officers who served in Macedonia during the Mürzsteg Reform Program.¹⁴⁵ Bouchier proceeds with a detailed review of the physical and human geography of the Balkans, in which he draws borders on national boundaries as he sees them. Like Brailsford, he considers most of central Macedonia to be ethnically Bulgarian and extended Bulgaria's western border to Lake Ohrid.¹⁴⁶ To Bouchier, homogeneous states were stronger states: "What is needed in the Balkans is healthy homogeneous politics, not pinchback empires."¹⁴⁷ At the Paris Peace Conference, Bouchier authored a memorandum to Woodrow Wilson calling for "the observance of two main principles: (1) The Balkan Lands for the Balkan peoples, and (2) No Balkan race shall be subjected, in whole or in part, to the domination of another."¹⁴⁸ Regarding Macedonia, Bouchier produced seven points of recommendation which called for an autonomous government "under the care of a Mandatory Power, America for preference, during the early years of its existence."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter*, 139.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁴⁵ Lady Grogan, *The Life of J.D. Bouchier* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1926), 267.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 188. The memorandum was also signed by Sir Edwin Pears and Mary Edith Durham.

As for the men who had governed British foreign policy in 1903, Lord Lansdowne was unable to attend the Paris talks in 1919 owing to severe rheumatic fever, which limited his activity for two years. James Bryce sent several letters of support. He felt Lansdowne could have had a moderating influence on the allies at Paris, who produced a peace which he considered “ignorant” and “vindictive.”¹⁵⁰ As for Arthur J. Balfour, the former prime minister went to Paris as Foreign Secretary. Admired for his wit and intellect and loathed for his forgetfulness and tendency to sleep late, Balfour had already lent his name to the post war settlement through the 1917 Balfour Declaration granting British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.¹⁵¹ Though overshadowed by other personalities at the conference, Balfour was alert to drawing borders that corresponded to nationality. He sought population statistics to help arbitrate claims to the Banat by Yugoslavia and Rumania.¹⁵² When he learned of plans to establish mandates in Anatolia, Balfour reacted angrily, calling the idea ignorant and urging Lloyd George not to partition what remained of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵³

If the experience of the Macedonian crises and the Mürzsteg Reform Program had had any influence on the British intellectuals and statesmen who participated in or wrote about the creation of the post-war world, it was to affirm the principle of nationality and the preference for homogenous states as a means to guarantee peace. Yet, Brailsford and Brouchier both modified their positions somewhat by articulating concepts that sought to avoid population movements and to support minority rights. Perhaps the complexity of Macedonia and the suffering they witnessed in the name of nationalism during the years of the Macedonian Struggle and the Balkan Wars made them consider arrangements which would foster security and cooperation without the upheaval of population displacements. Issues and dilemmas surrounding minority rights and population migrations had dogged the Great Power diplomats since they had attempted to stabilize Macedonia in 1903. With the end of the First World War, the victorious powers would have to confront these same issues and dilemmas on a much wider scale.

¹⁵⁰ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, 485.

¹⁵¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 413.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 435.

In conclusion, the teleology of reform in Macedonia was for a greater degree of European control. The British believed that through this process stability, peace, and, in time, prosperity could be realized. 'Peacekeeping' and reforming the Ottoman security forces were the first steps in this process. Reorganization of the population along national lines, control of the judiciary, and the liberal economic reforms were to follow in order to build peace. These concepts reflected imperial practices and understandings and were supported by successful regional precedents of European reform and administration in Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus and Crete. Indeed, the reforms in Macedonia were part of a continuum of regional reform and oversight by the European powers (the British and the French in particular) which had begun in the 1830s and continued well into the twentieth century. Thus peacekeeping can be seen as the salient point of a reform process which was decidedly influenced by imperialism. As with many applications of biopolitics, it is a mistake to assume the architects and administrators of this peace imperialism were acting in bad faith. They demonstrated an understanding of history and were looking for the latest in imperial practices and technology to help stabilize a volatile situation. Yet, the application and even the discussion of these ideas and plans carried value judgments and had significant consequences for the people of region. For some, these supposed pathways to peace were roads that led more to ruin than prosperity.

Imagining Intervention: Literature, Discourse, and the Imperial Imagination

How was intervention imagined in Great Britain? For the sake of brevity and to focus on the context of the Macedonia and *fin-de-siècle* Europe, I will begin by examining Vesna Goldsworthy's assertion that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was a "(subconscious) fictional expression" of the Great Powers' attempt to "impose peace" on the Balkans.¹⁵⁴ I also feel it is important to address Goldsworthy's association since she

¹⁵⁴ Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, 84.

makes direct mention of the Mürzsteg Reform Program as an attempt by the powers to “bury the problem of Macedonia” as though it were an unclean corpse.¹⁵⁵

Were the British diplomats moved or influenced in their approach to Macedonia by Stoker’s *Dracula*? The direct answer is no. Try as I have, I have not come across any mention of Stoker’s bestseller in the diplomatic documents, memoirs, and private papers I have consulted in this study. However, this is not to suggest, the literature of *fin-de-siècle* Europe was not consumed or consumed without influence by politicians, statesmen, and diplomats. For example, Thomas Metcalf notes a case from Africa where the explorer and colonial administrator H.H. Johnson requested Sikh and Gurkha soldiers for the conquest of Nyasaland. He wrote that he was impressed with their martial qualities, though he admitted that he based most of his knowledge of India on the works of Rudyard Kipling.¹⁵⁶ Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes series was also widely read. The audience for the eccentric sleuth reached into the upper classes and royalty far beyond the British Isles. In his diary, Ambassador O’Conor recorded that Sultan Abdülhamîd told him he had read all the Sherlock Holmes stories and that he would be grateful if O’Conor could obtain for him any similar stories.¹⁵⁷ Clearly, transnational mysteries and horror novels attracted international audiences. While concrete evidence for the influence of *Dracula* on the makers of British foreign policy is lacking, there is evidence that certain themes in period literature reflected British foreign, and perhaps indirectly influenced foreign policy in return.

The influence of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* cannot be underestimated. Carol Snef claims that only the Bible has been more influential in shaping perceptions.¹⁵⁸ *Dracula* struck a chord with audiences in *fin-de-siècle* Britain. As a mysterious and evil entity that can take many guises, Dracula threatened to infect the well being of Great Britain. As Robert Gregg notes, strong fears existed that a plague from a distant land would arrive

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 85.

¹⁵⁶ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 117.

¹⁵⁷ John Burman (editor) *Notes from Constantinople: The Political Diary of Sir Nicholas O’Conor, Britain’s Ambassador to the Porte, 1898-1908* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010), 268. According to O’Conor, the Sultan said having the tales of Sherlock Holmes read to him helped him fall asleep. O’Conor promised to obtain Arthur Griffiths’ *Mysteries of Police and Crime* and the *Chronicles of Newgate*.

¹⁵⁸ Carol Snef, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 7.

to devastate the metropole. Gregg maintains that Stoker played on these fears when he created Dracula, a figure who “emerged out of Transylvania, a place in the East with some characteristics of an Indian principality, and arrived at the heart of the empire, thereby wreaking havoc (just as many envisioned the bubonic plague or an outbreak of cholera might do).”¹⁵⁹ *Dracula* also played to fears of reverse colonization, which were becoming increasingly prevalent in the late Victorian and Edwardian era.¹⁶⁰ Simpson illustrates how the attention grabbing ‘yellow press’ increased readership by running sensational stories about the growing influx of ‘aliens’ and the negative effects they were having on Britain’s cities, particularly the Russian Jews who fled the pogroms of 1903-06.¹⁶¹ The book *Dracula* spoke to the feelings of vulnerability of an empire entering decline. The character Dracula was the literary embodiment of the forces that would weakened the health of the empire and bring about its downfall.

Dracula was not the only book to adopt these themes. Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) takes its protagonist up the Congo River to a land of violence and madness to confront Mr. Kurtz.¹⁶² Anthony Hope’s *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), set in the fictional nation of Ruritania, tells the romance story of an Englishman, Rudolf Rassendyll, who falls in love with a princess and then rescues the King (the princess’ husband to be). Rassendyll becomes a hero but his love must remain unrequited.¹⁶³ With Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, made a career out of writing mysteries where Holmes and Dr. Watson thwart threats to the security of the realm, among other criminal conspiracies. In the story “The Final Problem” Holmes journeys to the continent for the fateful showdown with his nemesis Professor Moriarty, locked in combat, the two rivals both plunge to their fates into Switzerland’s Reichbach Falls to the eternal delight of the local tourism industry.¹⁶⁴ *In den Scholuchten des Balkans* by the German writer Karl May also features protagonists journeying into the Balkans to confront threats.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Gregg, “Uneasy Streets,” 37.

¹⁶⁰ Snef, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, 37.

¹⁶¹ Simpson, *Unreliable Sources*, 50.

¹⁶² Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).

¹⁶³ Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (Bristol and London: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1894).

¹⁶⁴ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (Indianapolis: Gasogene Books, 1999). “The Final Problem” is one of the stories in this volume.

¹⁶⁵ Karl May, *In den Scholuchten des Balkans* (Zürich: Haffmans Verlag, 1996).

The commonality between these books is intervention. Whether the mission is to rescue an imprisoned friend or vanquish an evil foe, the English protagonists travel across borders to accomplish their tasks. In order to succeed they utilize knowledge, science, technology and bravery. This is what sets them apart from their opponents and enables them to succeed in their objectives. In story after story, Sherlock Holmes solves crimes with his superior faculties of reasoning and his intimate knowledge of forensic science. When necessary, he proves himself physically capable of subduing opponents with his fighting skills. When medical knowledge is required, Dr. Watson is there to provide it. After all, Arthur Conan Doyle was a physician. In *Dracula*, the protagonists are guided by the medical knowledge and intellectual prowess of Doctor Gabriel Van Helsing, who studied the history and characteristics of the vampire and is able to diagnose the symptoms of infection and show the others what they must do to eliminate the contagion at its Transylvanian source. Goldsworthy notes that the story's heroes, the Englishman Jonathan Harker, the Dutchman Abraham Van Helsing and the American Quincy Morris are representatives of the West uniting to face a decidedly eastern foe, much as was the case with the Mürzsteg Reform Program.¹⁶⁶ She indicates that the multinational nature of this hunting party might have been a sign that Britain was not strong enough to accomplish the task itself.¹⁶⁷ It is also worth noting that the intervening protagonists are all from predominantly protestant countries, thus the most western (and modern) of the western countries. Stoker's follow up to *Dracula*, *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) again takes an Englishman to the mysterious and violent setting of the Balkans.¹⁶⁸ The English protagonist, Rupert Sent Leger, journeys to the Blue Mountains (a play on the Black Mountains of Montenegro) to live in a castle he has inherited. Sent Leger falls in love and marries the daughter of a local leader and later rescues her after she is kidnapped by 'the Turks.' Sent Leger uses the latest technology to rescue his bride, employing an aircraft and donning a bulletproof jacket. As Goldsworthy notes, Sent Leger not only rescues his beloved, he becomes leader of the principality and modernizes the economy through mining radium and increasing trade with Europe. In addition, he also settles the Eastern Question by establishing a Balkan federation.¹⁶⁹ In

¹⁶⁶ Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, 84-85.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶⁸ Bram Stoker, *The Lady of the Shroud* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

fiction, British intervention succeeds in bringing the order, peace, and economic prosperity to the Balkans that eluded the diplomats in real life.

There are certainly parallels between Stoker's work and British policy toward Macedonia and the Mürzsteg Reform Program. The diplomats were trying to bring order to what they considered to be a dangerous problem in decidedly pre-industrial land. The preemptive measures and intervention initiatives the British enacted and envisioned were conceived with the aim of confronting the problems at their source before they metastasized into something larger that could threaten the peace of Europe and the security of the empire. Like the heroes in *Dracula*, the British and the Great Powers sought to use knowledge and science to understand and confront the problems at their origin. While Stoker's protagonists pursue a vampire to Transylvania, in Macedonia, the reformers confront demons which take the form of substandard security forces, corruption, a lack of economic development, and a tangled and unclear demography. As in *Dracula*, great faith is placed in the ability of a small group of men who, though few in number, are seen to possess the necessary knowledge and bravery which will enable them to succeed in their mission. The heroes in *Dracula* hail from Protestant nations, and, coincidentally, it was the 'liberal' Great Powers of Great Britain, France, and Italy who provided the impetus for more effective reform in Macedonia. Balfour once remarked that Austria-Hungary and Russia were not "moved by any genuine humanitarian," suggesting a moral schism separated Europe's east from its west.¹⁷⁰

Another notable similarity between *Dracula* and Transylvania and the crises in Macedonia is the choice and use of discourse. To return to Yosmaoğlu's point, the British had embraced the "discourse of pathology" to describe Macedonia.¹⁷¹ In both fiction and diplomacy, scientific and medical terms and metaphors are used to describe the problem and the solution. In rallying his fellow vampire slayers, Dr. Van Helsing gives a portrait of their nemesis, describing not only Dracula's manners and instincts but his sources of sustenance and feeding habits, providing a biological sketch of their adversary.¹⁷² While acknowledging they are up against a formidable foe, Van Helsing urges his confederates to take heart, pointing out that they have powers the vampire

¹⁷⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, February 28, 1904, BP Add MSS 49728

¹⁷¹ Yosmaoğlu, "Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," 165.

¹⁷² Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Signet, 1965), 243-244.

does not—scientific knowledge, freedom of will and action, and the ability to work during the day and the night.¹⁷³ They have the knowledge and the means to subdue the vampire: “Thus when we find the habitation of this man-that-was, we can confine this to his coffin and destroy him.”¹⁷⁴ As Goldsworthy points out, the final attack on Dracula is a clinical assault on parts of the vampire’s body: “Even before the moment of his death, Dracula is depersonalized: he becomes ‘*the throat*’, *the heart*’, ‘*the body*.’”¹⁷⁵

Though not nearly as bloody and graphic, British diplomats, politicians, and writers repeatedly described Macedonia and its troubles as though the three vialyets were suffering from a medical condition. In the House of Lords, Lord Cranborne spoke of the “disease” of misgovernment in Macedonia.¹⁷⁶ In drawing moral equivalency between the rebels and the Ottoman security forces, Balfour called the “complicated” problems in Macedonia “great aggravations of a deep-seated disease,” implying that the violence was the manifestation of a chronic condition.¹⁷⁷ The view that Macedonia suffered from a ‘disease’ seems to have gained fairly widespread acceptance. Many spoke of the need for a ‘remedy’ to cure Macedonia’s ills. When Consul-General Biliotti put forward his plan for the department of European officers, he called it a “remedy” which would easy to apply.¹⁷⁸ The Balkan Committee criticized the government for saying there was no “practicable remedy” for the trouble in Macedonia before proceeding to lay out its “simple” solution.¹⁷⁹ In an interview with *The Manchester Guardian*, James Bryce stated that the “obvious remedy” to the Macedonian malady was to end Ottoman rule on the European continent.¹⁸⁰ Asquith called the reforms a “homeopathic scheme.”¹⁸¹ A French observer remarked that fifteen years previously Macedonia would have undergone a “surgical operation.” However, as it was the twentieth century, the cure was medicinal:

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁷⁵ Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, 85. Goldsworthy notes that when they kill Dracula, Jonathan Harker uses a kukri knife which symbolized British imperial power, and Quincy Morris uses a bowie-knife, the trademark of the American pioneers and frontier fighters.

¹⁷⁶ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 120 (1903): 1377-1378.

¹⁷⁷ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Papers* 127 (1903): 695.

¹⁷⁸ Biliotti to O’Conor, December 1, 1902, FO 193/2133/207.

¹⁷⁹ H. N. Brailsford et. al., “Views of English Observers,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 1, 1903, 7; H. N. Brailsford et. al., “The Macedonian Outbreak,” *The Times*, September 1, 1903, 9.

¹⁸⁰ “Interview with Mr. Bryce,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 16, 1903, 5.

¹⁸¹ “Mr. Asquith in Fife,” *The Times*, October 15, 1903, 5.

“Simple ointments, poultices, pills, and drugs, but no operation.”¹⁸² Vice-Consul Fontana reported that the Albanians of Kosovo had submitted a petition to him in which they appealed for autonomy under British protection, a solution which—in Fontana’s words—Europe would thank England for “finding a Western remedy which would help to convert a sick Macedonia into an eventually sound constitution without surgery, and without risk of dire hemorrhage.”¹⁸³ In his memo to the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians at Mürzsteg, Lansdowne wrote in the preamble that he hoped Britain could provide “some really effective measures to remedy the present condition of affairs in Macedonia.”¹⁸⁴

The word ‘remedy’ has several synonyms and does not necessarily have to be used in a medical context, but the frequency with which it appears in the documents and the medical metaphors it is sometimes couched in speaks to a particular conceptualization of Macedonia and the other ‘trouble spots’ in the ‘Near East’ and how the European powers should approach them.

Was there a Dracula-like figure in the Macedonian crises? The maladies the Great Powers were attending to through the reforms were more political and institutional in nature than the nefarious actions of one individual. Still, certain individuals and groups did appear as the ‘face’ of the crises. References to the habits and works of ‘the Turk’ were often accompanied with descriptions of bloodthirstiness, laziness, corruption, or incompetence. Indeed, Sultan Abdülhamîd had been nicknamed the ‘Red Sultan’ after the Armenian massacres in 1894-96.¹⁸⁵ The organization “Armenian Relief Work” appealed for the British government to rescue Armenians and Macedonians from “gueule da le Bete Rouge.”¹⁸⁶ Yet, while the Ottomans were certainly responsible for their share of bloodletting, it was not their objective to be agents of instability, who would threaten the health of empires. That was the role of the Macedonian Committees. IMRO and the SMC received their share of negative publicity, thanks in part to the British government. The revolutionaries were described as being equally as fanatical as the

¹⁸² “The Eastern Question: A French Official View,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 2, 1903, 5.

¹⁸³ Fontana to O’Conor, September 4, 1903, FO 195/2157/260.

¹⁸⁴ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

¹⁸⁵ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 211-12.

¹⁸⁶ Friends of Armenia to Foreign Office, May 30, 1903, FO 78/5288.

Ottomans for their willingness to provoke reprisals against civilians.¹⁸⁷ Perhaps stories of blood sacrifice conjured up images of the sort of primitive Slavic rituals which caused such uproar in Europe when Stravinsky debuted *The Rite of Spring*.¹⁸⁸ In any case, the callousness of the rebels and the willingness of some of their leaders to be candid about their intentions to provoke massacres appalled western observers who may have thought themselves hearing and reading of real life Gothic horror.

The individual who best embodied a real Macedonian Dracula would have been Boris Sarafov. Unlike most of the contemporaries who undertook grassroots organizing in the villages of Macedonia, Sarafov was a cosmopolitan diplomat. His fundraising efforts took him across Europe from St. Petersburg to the heart of London. As discussed in Chapter 2, Sarafov attracted attention wherever he went, and British diplomats were alert to his whereabouts. What seems to make Sarafov all the more dangerous was his ability, like Dracula, to take on different guises, including that of a civilized European. In pictures he appears as bearded guerilla, an officer in Bulgarian uniform, and as a politician and socialite in a western suit. The story that Sarafov seduced an English woman so completely that she compelled her father to make a substantial financial donation to the rebel the cause could make one think he had supernatural powers. Like Dracula, he was not only intelligent and strong, he had the powers of an incubus. His reputation even reached across the Atlantic. In November of 1902, *The Washington Post* ran a feature on Sarafov in which he was presented as a man genetically disposed to terrorism: "Insurgent by Nature, Europe's Peace Threatened by Boris Sarafoff. Patriot, Fanatic, Brigand"¹⁸⁹ Sarafov became the international face of Macedonian Committees, unfortunately for rebels, his reputation was much more that of a vampire than a warrior poet.

In sum, the act of intervention in *fin-de-siècle* Great Britain had come to be imagined as a knowledge-based practice to be executed with clinical precision. This was a sentiment felt across the political and social spectrum. Conservatives and realists instinctively avoided interventionist adventures, but they knew them to be necessary at

¹⁸⁷ Moore, *The Balkan Trail*, 251.

¹⁸⁸ Orlando Figgs, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 280.

¹⁸⁹ "Insurgent by Nature," *The Washington Post*, November 16, 1902, 26.

times. Liberals and interventionists believed Britain and the Great Powers had a responsibility to protect civilian populations (especially Christians), yet many also believed that war could be and should be banned. They were much less sympathetic to the romantic notions which had inspired philhellenes and panslavs. Commonly held humanitarian convictions and shared faith in the British Empire ordained that Macedonia was worthy of Britain's attention for strategic and altruistic reasons. But experience dictated an intelligent response; a responsibility not to recklessly intervene but to manage the problem wisely. The solution was intervention in the form of knowledge-based reform to be overseen by highly skilled qualified men who could remedy the situation as a surgeon would proficiently operate on a body. The interesting point is that they were, so to speak, using imperial surgical procedures on a European patient.

There is merit to Goldsworthy's association of Stoker's *Dracula* as a fictions expression of the interventions by the Great Powers in the Balkans. Stoker certainly would have been familiar with the 'Bulgarian Horrors' and the book was published (1897) following the Armenian Massacres of 1894-96. *Dracula* was certainly a case of art imitating life and perhaps of art influencing life, if only on a subconscious level. Little, it would appear, has changed over the decades. The remainder of *Inventing Ruritania* shows how the Balkans continued to be a destination for adventurers, heroines, and spies through the twentieth century. Stories of brave Western Europeans confronting nefarious opponents in the Balkans and Eastern Europe have continued to feature in literature, notably in some popular works aimed at young adults. Two of the well-loved Tintin books by Belgian cartoonist Hergé have stories set in the Balkans, which involve rescue missions. In *King Ottokar's Sceptre*, Tintin navigates exotic frames of the fictional state of 'Syldavia' and recovers the Syldavian King's sceptre.¹⁹⁰ In *The Calculus Affair*, Tintin rescues his friend Professor Calculus, who has been kidnapped and held captive

¹⁹⁰ See: Hergé, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* (London: Methuen Children's Books, 1972).

in 'Borduria,' a state with all the hallmarks of a 1950s Soviet bloc country.¹⁹¹ More recently, Wolfgang Hochbruck, Elmo Feiten, and Anja Tidedmann have examined representations of the Balkans and Eastern Europe in Joanne Rowling's Harry Potter series. While Rowling's stated intention with the books has been to foster tolerance, the images of the East in the books are often crude stereotypes.¹⁹² In Harry Potter's world, a civilized England still stands in opposition to an East "still closely related to Gothic parameters." Since the books have been very carefully researched, the authors argue that these constructions cannot easily be dismissed:

Her treatment of Albania, Germany, Hungary and Romania shows that the civilized frontier Rowling's magic empire lies just beyond the English Channel and at best east of France. A hazy wide blue yonder starts geographically with the Black Forest and houses vicious and oversized but underbrained giants. The ultimate English answer to the dangers originating from this "East" lie in the Arthurian roots of British heroism as exemplified by Harry Potter, Neville Longbottom and Hermione Granger.¹⁹³

It would seem that from books and films such as those featuring Tintin, Harry Potter, and Dracula, these images of Western European (if not English) heroes bravely confronting Eastern villains have become so thoroughly established in adolescent minds that they slip easily into the subconscious of adults.

To give a detailed example, this sense of superiority and bravery and themes of intervention can be seen in the very adult context of Ian McEwan's *Saturday*. Set in London in the year 2003, the novel presents an atmosphere of foreboding and pessimism in the wake of September 2001 and amidst the pending invasion of Iraq. The

¹⁹¹ See: Hergé, *The Calculus Affair* (London: Methuen Children's Books, 1973). Tintin and his friends return to the Balkans in *Destination Moon*, to prepare for an attempt at lunar exploration. The top secret program is set in the 'Zmyhpathian' Mountains which resemble the Carpathian Mountains in name and the stark Dinaric Alps in appearance. When one character questions why the atomic research centre has been built, "in this land of savages", Professor Calculus responds that large uranium deposits have been found in the area. See: Hergé, *Destination Moon* (London: Methuen Children's Books, 1974), 9. It is also likely that Hergé chose the setting in part because the relatively lightly populated rural Balkans offer some of the only space in Europe truly remote enough to accommodate such an operation.

¹⁹² Wolfgang Hochbruck, Elmo Feiten, and Anja Tidedmann, "'Vulchanvov! Volkov! Aaaaaaad Krum!': Joanne K. Rowling's "Eastern" Europe," In Barbara Korte et al. editors, *Facing the East in the West: Images of Eastern Europe in British Literature, Fiction, and Culture* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 242.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

protagonist, Henry Perowne, is a successful neurosurgeon, who supports the invasion and reifies the achievements of the British nation and the harmony of London which he considers “a biological masterpiece.”¹⁹⁴ In her examination of *Saturday*, Lynn Hunt calls Perowne “the obvious embodiment of this imperial authority.”¹⁹⁵ He is convinced that Western power and progress will triumph over attacks by “less sophisticated peoples, and that reason, which he values over imagination, will prevail over religious fanaticism.”¹⁹⁶ Following a minor traffic accident, Perowne confronts Baxter, a domestic thug with erratic and violent tendencies whose threatening posture parallels the danger of Islamic terrorism.¹⁹⁷ Baxter is the antithesis of Perowne’s world of civilized order. His friends are repeatedly described in “animalist terms.”¹⁹⁸ Knowledge saves Perowne in his initial encounter when he recognizes Baxter has Huntington’s disease. The humiliated Baxter returns to terrorize the Perowne family in their home, but, in time, he is mentally outmaneuvered and then physically overpowered by the Perowne family. Sometime later, Perowne ends up operating on Baxter to remove blood clots sustained during the physical struggle at the Perowne home. In the operating theatre, Perowne’s knowledge and prowess as a surgeon are on display. With Bach’s Goldberg Variations playing in the background, he takes pleasure “in knowing precisely what he’s doing.”¹⁹⁹ With skill and precision, Perowne enters his assailant’s brain and carefully removes the clots. Watching the exposed brain in case more bleeding occurs, Perowne reviews the terrain, pondering its parts and mysteries, noting the areas damaged by Baxter’s disease. With the power of a god, he touches the cortex before completing the surgery.²⁰⁰ The intervention is a success.

Once again, knowledge, technology, and bravery enable the Western protagonist in *Saturday* to triumph. In Wells’ words:

Perowne’s brutal encounter with Baxter inside his home, like everything about his perambulation around London, establishes his ultimate sense of

¹⁹⁴ Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Random House, 2005), 5.

¹⁹⁵ Lynn Wells, *Ian McEwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 113.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁹⁹ McEwan, *Saturday*, 250.

²⁰⁰ McEwan, *Saturday*, 254-55.

mastery over all that is disorderly, irrational and counter to the city's middle-class prosperity. This power to subdue the threatening other is clearly associated by McEwan (ironically or otherwise) with an attitude of British nationalism and imperialism reified in aesthetic terms by both art and the sublime beauty of the city itself.²⁰¹

Is McEwan being ironic? Given the author's reputation and the character Perowne's sensibilities and views, which are unabashedly arrogant at times, it would appear to be the case. Wells notes that Perowne's namesake is the diplomat Stewart Henry Perowne, who served in several British embassies in the Middle East in the 1930s and 1940s, including Baghdad.²⁰² Still, McEwan does not attempt to send any overt message regarding the stark inequality between the privileged surgeon and the marginalized street thug: "There is no direct indictment of Henry's Perowne's vision of things, and if McEwan's famous irony is at play here, its subtlety has obviously been lost on readers and critics alike, who hail the book as a masterpiece of British fiction."²⁰³

Perhaps little has changed in over a century of British literature. The one difference may be the possibility that some authors are using irony in presenting relationships between the privileged and the 'others.' Nevertheless, if this is the case, the point is being missed by those who see threats to health of the nation emanating from foreign lands and reverse colonization. Threats that need to met with knowledge, skill, and bravery to keep the homeland safe.

Conclusion: Intervention/Altruism/Peace Imperialism

In this chapter I have sought to address questions of the Mürzsteg Reform Program's place in the history of peacekeeping, the teleology of points I consider of special significance in the reforms, and how intervention was, and still is, imagined. In discussing these questions I have endeavoured to explore the epistemological foundations of aspects of the reforms, and the relationship of the reforms to the broader currents of history. What has emerged more clearly in this examination is the common thread of imperialism. Imperial worldviews influenced by understandings rooted in

²⁰¹ Wells, *Ian McEwan*, 113.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 123.

biopolitics, imperial management practices, and successful precedents of intervention in the Ottoman Empire combined to produce knowledge which provided ‘remedies’ in the form of reforms for the violent ‘asylum’ that confronted Britain and the Great Powers in Macedonia. It would seem that in the case of Ottoman Macedonia, this peace imperialism was very much a case of bringing worldviews and methodologies of empire home to the European continent to keep the peace and build stability and prosperity.

This consideration is troubling. If the most overly humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations are encoded with a decidedly imperial DNA, then even those who act with the best of intentions may inadvertently be doing more harm than good. This is all the more significant because the ‘international community’ is operating today in the same region (the ‘Near East’) and operating with many of the same assumptions as the Great Powers did over a century ago when it comes to the key matters of security force reform, population politics, and economic reforms. Some observers like Michael Ignatieff readily acknowledge the imperialistic nature of these nation building projects.²⁰⁴ One can argue that the alternatives to democratic and economic liberalism are much worse than ‘Empire Lite.’ However, a radical critic like Andrej Grubačić—a self confessed Yugoslav—reasonably asks the question: ‘Who are these people to think they can come and “build our nations?”’²⁰⁵ Grubačić takes a historical view, arguing that the Great Powers became obsessed with eliminating “the threat of autonomous political spaces that lack any specialized and permanently constituted coercive authority separated from society, as well as of eliminating the region’s memory of its anti-modern and anti-statist struggles.”²⁰⁶ He sees the 1878 Congress of Berlin as the starting point for this process: ‘It is my argument that the modern history of the Balkans properly begins in the Berlin Congress—home to the “carve up of the Balkans,” “the Great Game” in Central Asia, and the “Scramble for Africa.”’²⁰⁷ Grubačić references Goldsworthy’s conflation of Dracula to intervention and notes the prevalence of medieval references to the Balkans in literature and documentation which made the Balkan region seemingly beg for intervention and direction from the Great Powers: “Reading contemporary

²⁰⁴ See: Ignatieff, *Empire Lite*.

²⁰⁵ Andrej Grubačić, *Don’t Mourn Balkanize! Essays after Yugoslavia* (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2010), 257.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

documents it is easy to see how the supposed violent nature of the Balkans was used as an alibi for the future interventions of always-benevolent European powers.”²⁰⁸ He continues his essay by articulating a vision of a Balkan Federation based on anarchist principles where there would be no states and no nations.²⁰⁹

Grubačić’s critique of intervention drives at the core of European imperialism and its worldview. Are his criticisms fair? Perhaps. There is an insinuation in the essay that interventions have been the products of conspiracy, which is rather harsh. To present all interventions in the same light is to copy the practice of making reductionist statements about the Balkans. Many interventions have been reactions to events and their architects were not necessarily acting exclusively out of national or imperial interests. Gary J. Bass makes the point that humanitarianism and imperialism should not be “casually blurred together.”²¹⁰ Even if it requires the use or threat of force, Bass argues that humanitarian intervention is motivated by empathy, not by an imperial will to dominate. For an example, Bass references the American civil rights movement: “It took the federal marshals to enforce integration in Arkansas and Mississippi, but that does not make the civil rights movement an act of police brutality.”²¹¹ Macedonia in 1903 faced a humanitarian crisis and the threat of regional war. The work of the Macedonian Relief Fund, supported by the British diplomatic service, helped save lives, and the implementation of the Mürzsteg Reform Program and the deployment of European officers offered a multilateral solution to the crisis which helped ease regional tensions. In the short term, the results of the intervention were positive. What is more, as I have demonstrated, the British statesmen were motivated, at least in part, by altruistic intentions. There is merit to Bass’ point that liberalism at home promotes liberalism abroad.²¹²

However, even if it comes with the most altruistic of intentions, the export of liberalism can have undesirable consequences. If we assume that the imposition of liberal democracy and democratic values will have a positive impact on a target state in

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 259.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 267.

²¹⁰ Bass. *Freedom’s Battle*, 378.

²¹¹ Ibid., 378-79.

²¹² Ibid., 6.

the long run, we must also ask what the consequences of the liberal economic reforms will be, since they tend to accompany democratic reforms. What Bass calls the “empathy of humanitarianism” can be embedded with the seeds of potentially destructive forces.²¹³ In this respect, Grubačić has a point when argues that the history of the Balkans post-1878 needs to be considered within “the new global hegemonic model and technology of power, in place since the Conquest of the Americas, that articulates race and labor, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of European peoples.”²¹⁴ The Great Power reforms in Ottoman Macedonia did address a humanitarian and a security crisis in the short term, but, in the long term, key points of the reforms addressing the security forces, the economy, and the management of populations produced damaging consequences. A liberal interpretation could consider the reforms to be well-intentioned initiatives designed to modernize Macedonia and produce economic prosperity through liberal economic reform. A radical view would see them as part of structural program designed to supply the needs of capitalism and European imperialism. Either way, in the long durée of modern history, some of the reform measures imposed on the Late Ottoman Empire through intervention, diplomacy, and direct rule bore the stamp of European imperialism, and did not help put the region on solid foundations for the twentieth century. For much of the ‘Near East,’ including the territory which was once Ottoman Macedonia, political stability and economic prosperity remain as elusive in 2013 as they were in 1903.

Future Research

There is still much to be written on the European intervention in Ottoman Macedonia. Nadine Lange-Akhund and Stephen Sowards have covered much of the French and Austro-Hungarian involvement, but more remains to be written regarding the domestic politics and public opinion in France and Austria-Hungary during the reforms. The history of the Russian and Italian involvement has yet to be written. The Ottoman history of the reforms is emerging, thanks to the work M. Şükrü Hanioglu and İpek Yosmaoğlu, who has recently broken new ground on the conditions of the Ottoman

²¹³ Ibid., 179.

²¹⁴ Grubačić, *Don't Mourn, Balkanize!*, 261.

gendarmerie. There is still more to be done on the counterinsurgency operations, the image management, and diplomacy of the Ottoman Empire. More remains to be written on the roles of the regional states, the various organizations involved, and the people of Ottoman Macedonia—the ‘peace kept’—and how they viewed these early peacekeepers in their midst. The historiography of the events of 1903-08 in Ottoman Macedonia would be well-served by more collaborative projects that utilized multiple archives from the various nations and organizations involved.

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Appendixes

Appendix I: The Vienna Program, February, 1903

Preamble:

The Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary, animated by a sincere desire of the removal of the causes of the disturbances which, for some time, have been taking place in the Vilayets of Salonica, Kosovo, and Monastir, are convinced that this object can only be attained by the introduction of reforms calculated to improve the condition of the inhabitants of the aforesaid vilayets. It appears, from communications recently addressed by the Sublime Porte to the Ambassadors residing at Constantinople, that the Imperial Ottoman Government has itself recognized the necessity of adopting measures to strengthen the action of the laws and to punish abuses. All the authorities of the vilayets in question have been instructed, *inter alia*, 'to assure and to maintain confidence and tranquility within the provinces, to adopt the most effectual measures to prevent the committal of injuries and misdeeds by any individuals to hurt of their neighbours, to insure the safety of the property, lives, and honour of the Christians inhabitants as well as the rest, to arrest those who may commit acts contrary to these principles, and inflict on them without delay the punishment to which they may be legally liable, and to do all in their power to bring about the immediate dismissal and trial of any official who may show negligence or want of energy in the performance of their duties.'

An Inspector-General, of the rank of Vizier, has, moreover, been appointed to see that the different authorities perform their duties in every particular, and that the measures recently ordered are put in force. His authority will extend to all civil, financial, and other matters with which the administration of the vilayets is concerned.

While taking note of the measures mentioned above, the Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary consider it of the highest importance with the view to the preservation of order and peace, that the Regulations recently issued should be completed, and that simultaneously such improvements should be made in the administration of the aforesaid vilayets as would insure the more regular and effective working of the local machinery of government. With this object in view, the Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary have agreed that it is necessary for them to recommend to the Imperial Ottoman Government the adoption of the following measures:--

I.—Inspector-General.

To insure the success of the Mission with which the Inspector-General has been intrusted, it is of the highest importance that that functionary should hold his appointment for a period of three years. In view of the interest attaching to his Mission, the

Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary desire to obtain from the Ottoman Government a promise that they will not dismiss the Inspector-General before the expiration of three years without previously having consulted the two Governments on the subject. It is not less important that the Inspector-General should received authority to employ, if necessary, the Ottoman troops throughout the three vilayets, without being obliged to refer to the central Government on each occasion.

II.—Valis.

It should be thoroughly understood that the Valis of the three vilayets will be bound to obey implicitly the instructions given by the Inspector-General, and to do everything in their power to make this Mission successful.

III.—Police and Gendarmerie

The reorganization of the police and gendarmerie undertaken by the Ottoman Government, cannot be carried out successfully unless foreign specialists are employed to assist in the work of reorganization, and to settle the principles on which it is to be carried out. These specialists would be under the orders of the Ottoman Government. The Ottoman Government appears to have decided that Christians are to be admitted to serve in the gendarmerie only in the proportion of 20 per cent. While taking into account the local circumstances by which is sought to justify this restriction, the Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary are of the opinion that it cannot be maintained as a permanent rule, and that the proportion of the Musslumans to the Christians in the gendarmerie shall be the same as that of the Mussulman to the non-Mussluman population. The persons selected to be heads of the gendarmerie in the vilayets should, in future, be officers whose previous service has shown them to be capable and of good moral character. The same principles should be applied to the reorganization of the police. According to Article 8 of the 'Instructions of European Turkey,' commissaries of police and constables, both Mussulmans and Christians can fulfill this condition the rule should be abolished.

IV.—Rural Police (Gardes champêtres)

The rural policeman will be chosen from the inhabitants of the villages. Where the majority of the population are Christians, Christians will be appointed.

V.—Arnauts

As the persecutions and outrages from which the Christians suffer only too frequently at the hands of the Arnauts, and the impunity with which the latter are able to commit crimes and offences, are one of the chief cause of the disorder and insecurity prevailing in the vilayets, it is absolutely necessary that the Ottoman Government should take immediate steps to compel the Arnaut population to respect the laws.

VI.—Amnsety

Numerous arrests having been made in the European vilayets, in connection with the disturbances which have occurred in those vilayets, it is absolutely necessary that the Imperial Ottoman Government, in order to put an end to the prevailing excitement, should, without delay, grant an amnesty to all persons accused of and sentenced for political offences who are not convicted of direct complicity in crimes at common law, as well as to all Ottoman subjects who have left the country in consequence of the events referred to. All proceedings against persons who are charged with crimes or offences at common law, and whose cases are at present being examined or tried, should be brought to a conclusion without delay.

VII.—Financial Administration

In order to insure the regular working of the local Administration, and to lighten the burdens which oppress the people, without adding to the revenue of the State, it would be desirable to make the following arrangement:

At the beginning of the year a Budget of revenue and expenditure will be prepared in each vilayet. The produce of the taxes will be devoted, in the first place, to providing for the requirements of the local Administration, including the pay of the civil and military services. The tithes of each village will be assigned to the highest bidder, in the name of the inhabitants. In case of difficulties, the latter may appeal to the Courts. If no one makes an offer for the tithes of any particular village or if the sum offered is less than the real value of the tithes, they will be administrated *en régie* in accordance with the Regulations on the subject. All the revenues of the vilayet must be paid to the Cassie of the vilayet, kept at the Agency of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, in the chief town to the vilayet. Payment of the funds appropriated by the Budget for the expenses of the vilayet will be made in accordance with special Regulations to be framed for the purpose of insuring the regular employment of these funds.¹

¹ *Project for Reforms in Macedonia—(Communicated by Count Deym, February 17, 1903), FO 421/196/178.*

Appendix II: Lord Lansdowne's Seven Points as Communicated to the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, February 17, 1903.

1. His Majesty's Government have for a long time past been deeply convinced of the necessity for the introduction of measures of practical reform in Macedonia. They have constantly urged the adoption of such reforms upon the Turkish Government.
2. The present situation in the Balkan Peninsula is such that any further delay in the introduction of such reforms might be fraught with the most disastrous consequences.
3. His Majesty's Government have obviously not had time in which to examine with the care it deserves the scheme put forward by the two Powers. If, however, they were to put forward an alternative scheme of their own the discussions which would arise would certainly involve delay for which His Majesty's Government would, in some measure at all events, be responsible.
4. The scheme of the two Powers so far as we understand it, contains some features which would probably find a place in any scheme of reform which the Powers would be likely to support.
5. His Majesty's Government are therefore prepared to accept it in principle, and, subject to the reservations which follow, to recommend it to the Sultan for his acceptance.
6. They reserve, however, to themselves the right of recommending to the Powers any modifications which may suggest themselves after the scheme has been further examined and discussed.
7. They desire in particular to have it understood that their provisional acceptance of the scheme will not, in the event of its disappointing the expectations of its framers, and proving inadequate as a remedy, be regarded by His Majesty's Government as precluding them from putting forward or supporting, either during the three years' tenure of the Inspector-General or at any future time, alternative proposals with the same object.²

² Lansdowne to Plunkett, February 17, 1903, FO 421/196.

Appendix III: Lord Lansdowne's Proposals to the Austro-Hungarian and Russian governments, September 29, 1903

The points which, in our view, the two Powers would do well to consider, are the following:--

1. Whether the original scheme of reforms should not now be placed upon a broader basis. As to this, Count Lamsdorff's language to Sir C. Scott shows that his Excellency does not exclude the idea of expanding the scheme. In our view, no scheme is likely to produce satisfactory results which depends for its execution upon a Mussulman Governor entirely subservient to the Turkish Government and completely independent of foreign control. We suggest for consideration two alternatives:
 - (a) Appointment of a Christian Governor unconnected with the Balkan Peninsula or with the Powers signatory to the Treaty of Berlin, or
 - (b) Retention of a Mussulman Governor assisted by European Assessors.We should be content that these should be selected by the two Powers.
2. Whether Turkey should not be required to proceed at once to the appointment of European officers and non-commissioned officers in adequate numbers to take charge of the reorganization of the gendarmerie. If, as it is to be hoped, some diminution of the prevailing disorder is to be expected, advantage should be taken of this period at once with the proposed reorganization.
3. Whether the Turkish Government should not be required to withdraw from Macedonia the undisciplined troops, whether Redifs or Ilaves, now employed there, and to retain only the regular troop. If this were done, the latter might be transferred from positions at which their concentration has led to apprehensions of the invasion of Bulgaria by Turkey. The two Powers might in this case undertake that Bulgaria shall not send troops across the allow bands to cross it.
4. We heard we regret that the two Powers do not regard favourably our proposal that the Powers should send their Military Attaches to accompany the Turkish forces. We adhere to this proposal, which has received the conditional support of the Italian Government, and we propose that each of the Powers should depute, say, six officers for this purpose, with the object of exercising a restraining influence upon the Turkish troops and obtaining trustworthy information.
5. We trust that the Powers will unanimously agree to obtain facilities for the distribution of relief to the persons, now numbering my thousands, who have are now scattered deprived of their homes in consequence of recent operations, and are now scattered over the country in a condition of the greatest misery. Could it not be arranged that the persons engaged in the work shall wear some distinguishing mark, and enjoy the same kind of immunity as the Red Cross?³

³ Lansdowne to Plunkett, September 29, 1903, FO 421/198/508.

Appendix IV: The Mürzsteg Reform Program

1. In order to establish control of the activity of local Ottoman authorities concerning the application of reforms, Civil Special Agents from Austria-Hungary and Russia are appointed to the office of Hilmi Pasha, and obligated to accompany the General Inspector everywhere, to call his attention to the needs of the Christian population, signal him to the abuses of local authorities, transmit their recommendations to the Ambassadors in Constantinople, and inform their Government of all that happens in the country. As aides to the Agents, Secretaries and Dragomans could be appointed and charged with the execution of their orders and are authorized to tour the districts in order to question the inhabitants of Christian villages, supervise local authorities, etc.

The mission of the Civil Agents is to watch over the introduction of reforms and the appeasement of the population; their commission will expire in two years from the day of their nomination. The Sublime Porte will prescribe to the local authorities to grant these Agents all the assistance so that they can fulfill their mission.

2. Since the reorganization of the gendarmerie and the Turkish police constitutes the most essential measure for the pacification of the country, it is urgent ask the Sublime Porte for the introduction of this reform

Taking in consideration, however, that the Swedish officers and other people employed until presently, who not know the language or the local considerations, and did not render themselves useful, it would be desirable to introduce modification and supplements in the initial project as follows:

- a) The reorganization of the gendarmerie in the three vilayets will be entrusted to a general of foreign nationality, in the service of the Imperial Ottoman Government, to whom could be added Deputies, among the military personnel of Great Powers, who would share the circumspections between them and who would act as supervisors, instructors and promoters. In this way they would also oversee the behavior of the troops towards the population.
 - b) These officers will ask, if it appears necessary to them, for the addition of a certain number of officers and under-officers of foreign nationality
3. As soon as an appeasement of the country will be noted, the Ottoman Government will be asked for a modification in the administrative division of the territory in view of a more regular grouping of different nationalities.
 4. Require simultaneously the reorganization of administrative and judicial institutions, and it would be desirable to open their access to indigenous Christians, and to encourage local autonomy.

5. Establish immediately in the principal centers of the vilayets Mixed Commissions formed of an equal number of Christian and Moslem Delegates for the examination of political and other crimes perpetuated during the troubles. The consular representatives of Austria-Hungary and Russia should participate in these Commissions.
6. Require the Turkish Government to allocate special funds for:
 - a) Reinstatement, in the localities of their origin, the Christian families which took refuge in Bulgaria or elsewhere.
 - b) Help the Christians who lost their wealth and homes
 - c) Restore houses, churches and schools, destroyed by Turks during the insurrection

Such commissions will decide the distribution of these funds with the participation of notable Christians. Austro-Hungarian and Russian consuls will supervise their use.

7. In the Christian villages burned by Turkish troops and Bashi-Bazouks, the reinstated Christian inhabitants will be free of payment of all taxes during the year.
8. The Ottoman Government will reintroduce with no further delay the reforms mentioned in the project formulated in February of the current year as well as those which become subsequently necessary.
9. As most of the excesses and cruelties were perpetuated by the *Ilaves* (Redifs of II class) and Bashi-Bazouks, it is urgent that the first are laid off, and that the formation of gangs of Bashi-Bazouks be absolutely prevented.⁴

⁴ Nadine Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question, 1893—1908* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 142-144.

Appendix V: Report on the Relief Work, March 27, 1904

With reference to my dispatch No. 157 of the 9th of December, 1903, I have the honour to report that the work of the Balkan Relief Committee has now been brought to an end, the agents having left Monastir and the temporary hospitals at Okhrida and Kastoria having been closed.

In order to give an idea of what has been accomplished by the Committee, I think I cannot do better than subjoin the following details supplied to me by Mr. Brailsford, and supplemented by some notes from Lady Thompson, who was more immediately responsible for the distribution of relief in the Kastoria district.

1. Flour was bought at Monastir and distributed in the town, as well as at Resna and Okhrida to the value of 6,041/
2. Value of grain distributed at Resna, 703
3. Native blankets distributed, 10,755 pieces, value 5,072 /
4. 3,000 second-hand English army blankets were distributed.
5. Quilted jackets, 7,045 were distributed, value 741 /
6. 3,026 miscellaneous garments, worth 116/., were distributed.
7. Knitting-wool was distributed to the refugee women at Klissura, Monastir, and Okhrida; also second-hand clothing from England, and some bales of English cloth (value unknown).
8. Charcoal was given to all refugee families in Monastir, during December and January.
9. Money was spent to the following extent at the branch depots, partly in doles of 10 piastres a-month a-head, and partly in purchasing grain:--

	£
Monastir	900
Resna	569
Okhrida	2,292
Florina	1,732
Kastoria.....	1,782
Kircheovo	727
Total.....	9,156

Flour was distributed at the rate of 15 okes per head per month in the poorer villages, and in the others at the rate of 10 to 12 okes.

A few unburnt but looted villages received flour at the rate of 5 to 7 okes. The oke is equal to about 2 3/4 lbs, avoirdupois.

The few Moslem villages which required help were also assisted, such as Zherveni in the Kastoria district, which received blankets, and the Presba and Kaloonia villages, which got money.

Hospitals and Medical Service

Okhrida.—57 cases, including 3 wounded, were treated in the hospital and there were 6 deaths. There was a free dispensary for out-patients, and inoculation against diphtheria was carried out in three villages.

Kastoria.—269 cases, including 196 cases of influenza, were treated, and there were 6 deaths. The doctor made weekly visits to eleven burnt villages, and proceeded to others as occasion required. There was a free dispensary for all the villages.

Monastir.—About 30 patients, including 20 wounded, received treatment

Klissura.—The Society's doctor was sent to villages and dispensed graits for all refugees.

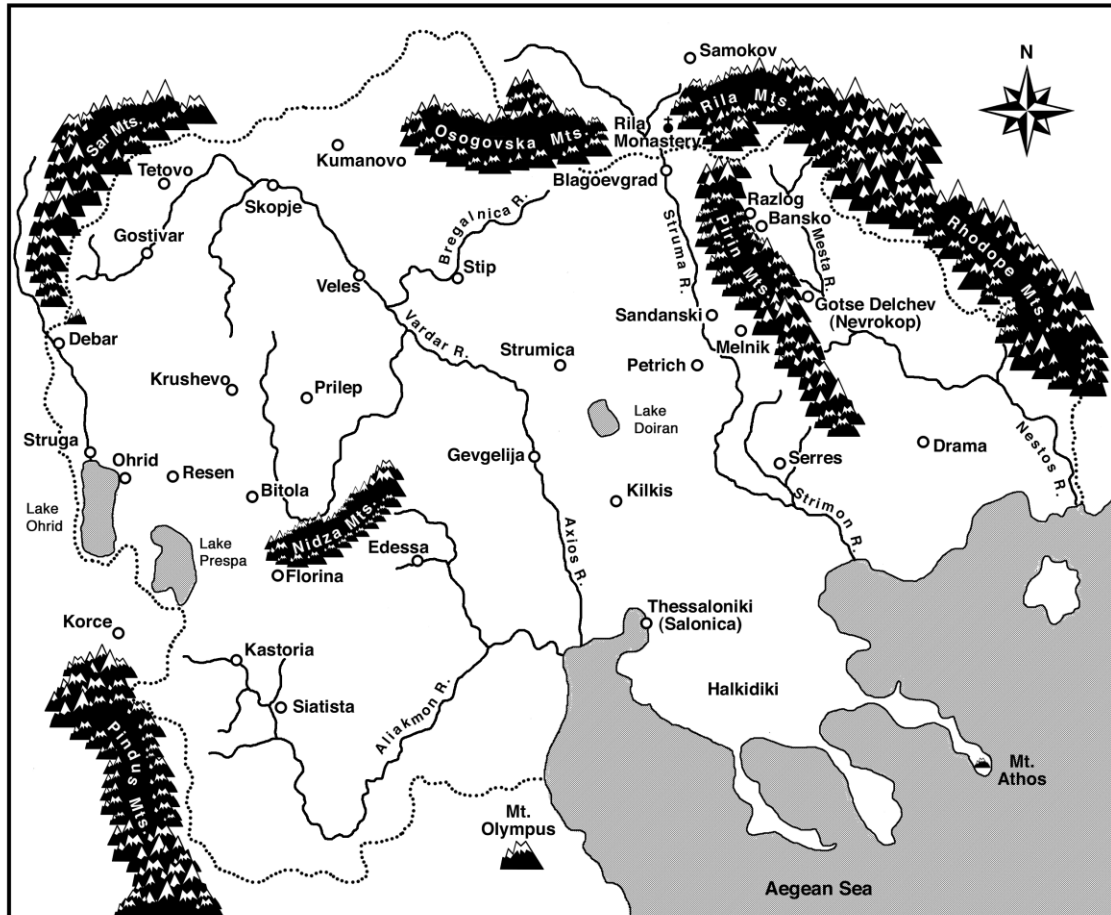
Presba district.—A doctor was sent to the villages during the smallpox epidemic and vaccinated generally.

The last distribution of relief took place in March, and was calculated to suffice for the needs of the population until the 15th April (N.S.)

According to the data available pending the presumable publication of the Relief Society's Report, the total amount expended in this vilayet was 22,203 *l.*, of which 2,422 *l* came from the United States and almost 60 from Denmark.⁵

⁵ McGregor to Graves, March 27, 1904, FO 421/202/224.

Appendix VI: Geographic Macedonia



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