

THE BULGARIAN HORRORS: CULTURE AND THE INTERNATIONAL
HISTORY OF THE GREAT EASTERN CRISIS, 1876-1878

by

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Abstract

In the wake of alleged Ottoman atrocities in Bulgaria, the new geopolitical order created at the 1878 Congress of Berlin was demarcated largely along Western cultural prejudices. Using a cultural approach that appreciates both “macro” material structures and “micro” cultural processes in Bulgaria, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire, this study offers an alternative framework for understanding this period. It employs community-level evidence (petitions, public meetings, provincial journalism) alongside the diplomatic record; moreover, it uses the diaries, writings, and the marginalia within the personal readings of important policy-makers as pivotal intermediaries between cultural discourses, material structures, and individual agency. Diverging from previous narratives, which hold that the Great Powers altruistically responded to barbaric atrocities perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against their European Christian subjects, I argue that solidifying conceptions of racially-based national self-determination and nonconformist evangelicalism were crucial within humanitarian protest, the diplomatic decision-making process, military objectives during the Russo-Turkish War, and the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis. Western cultural preconceptions, propagated, negotiated, and reified throughout this process, were thus transformative in the construction of the new, unstable Balkan geopolitical order that contributed to the outbreak of the First World War and the remaking of the modern world.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, C. Whitehead.

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For Sam

1. Introduction

The Great Eastern Crisis was a fulcrum for the creation of the modern world order. This period, between 1875 and 1878, marked a climax of the decades-long Eastern Question, or the process by which the European Great Powers (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary) responded to a perceived decline of Ottoman authority on the Balkan Peninsula. A number of Western-educated and ambitious Bulgarian elites organized a short-lived nationalist rebellion against the Ottoman Empire in April 1876. Its utter failure nevertheless spread news of alleged Ottoman atrocities against Christians, which was transmitted and circulated along clearly perceptible languages of cultural understanding. Events were framed as the “Bulgarian Horrors,” in which innocent and industrious Christian races were helplessly slaughtered by barbarous Muslim Turks. This perception, disseminated through newspapers, pamphlets, public meetings, petitions, and powerful public protest, interacted with and transformed the material, institutional, and geopolitical interests of Britain and supported a foreign policy based upon racial and religious ideals of civilizational progress and humanitarianism. Public dissidence, in limiting the scope of acceptable actions, prevented Britain’s traditional military support of the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the subsequent Berlin peace process in 1878. This conference, in partially adopting the principles of national self-determination with hopes of securing lasting peace in the Balkans, granted independence to the new Balkan states of Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro and represented a fundamental reordering of *fin-de-siècle* international relations. The compromise reached to satisfy Great Power imperial ambitions as well as the creation of new, “national” states frustrated irredentist Balkan nationalists. The inherent instabilities

of this compromise contributed to the construction of the infamous “powder keg” that precipitated the Balkan Wars, the triggering of the First World War, and the pernicious nationalist legacies that continue into the twenty-first century.

The Great Eastern Crisis was neither caused nor resolved simply through impersonal structural forces of macroeconomics, warfare, peace conferences, and high-level diplomacy as has been traditionally presumed. Cultural factors, particularly Christian evangelism, liberal moralism, and racial determinism, underwrote the construction and resolution of the international crisis, as these factors affected individual behaviours and also collective actions on a large scale. Bulgarian revolutionaries, capitalizing on increasingly entrenched notions of nationalism throughout European populations, adopted and effectively negotiated these cultural preconceptions to eventually secure their own political power and the ultimate autonomy of the Bulgarian state. A remarkably small number of Western-educated revolutionaries organized ambitious campaigns of rebellion against Ottoman authority, some hoping to spur international involvement and the liberation of the Bulgarian people from what they considered to be the unnatural “yoke” of Ottoman administration. While these revolts utterly failed in their objectives to remove Ottoman authority by popular insurrection, they nevertheless succeeded in attracting international intervention and in fostering a self-fulfilling prophecy of Bulgarian nationalism that has shaped subsequent historiographies.

In Britain, powerful cultural languages also served as major conduits of public dissatisfaction against the realist foreign policy of Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. During the so-called “Bulgarian Horrors” of 1876, it was widely reported that the

Ottoman Empire was barbarically massacring Christians in its European territories. Perceptions of atrocities against industrious European Christians by brutal Muslim Turks were fostered and solidified in the British public sphere by enthusiastic, evangelizing journalists and political dissenters who censured Britain for neglecting its duty to defend Western civilizational progress against degenerate Eastern tyranny. British civil society, including the newly expanded electorate, as well as women and other disenfranchised subjects, packed town hall meetings, drafted resolutions, signed petitions, wrote pamphlets, organized and supported aid campaigns, and publicly demonstrated against the traditional British foreign policy of supporting economic interests above all other concerns.

British community level political activism, promoted and enforced by the newspaper media and religious organizations and focused in meetings, petitions, and demonstrations, effectively overturned the traditional British support of the Ottoman Empire as a necessary bulwark against Russian expansion. Just two decades previously, Britain was allied to the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War in a costly war against the Tsar. Yet after the Bulgarian Horrors, the support of apparent Oriental oppression against its European Christian population became unacceptable in the eyes of a vastly expanded British electorate, even at the expense of British material interests. Public opposition pushed statesmen such as William Gladstone to harness such public indignation into powerful political dissidence and convinced the Foreign Secretary Lord Derby to drastically alter British foreign policy towards the partition of the Ottoman Empire's European territories despite his own Prime Minister's opposition. Conservatives as well as Liberals abandoned or resisted Disraeli and Queen Victoria's traditional imperial vision towards one which embraced the "principles of humanity"—an ideological foreign policy to

preserve the “moral superiority” of Britain as the defender of Western Civilization and Christendom. This unprecedented public outcry over the Bulgarian Horrors not only pressured Disraeli to call a formal inquiry into the massacre of the inhabitants of a foreign empire (a novel phenomenon at the time); it also forced Britain to stand neutral as Russia waged war on her traditional Ottoman ally; it persuaded her to support the independence of new Balkan states; and it contributed to the overwhelming defeat of Disraeli’s Conservative government in the 1880 general election.

The Great Eastern Crisis is an excellent microcosmic study of the intrinsic—yet only recently acknowledged—relationship between cultural forces and the course of international history. Underpinning the assumptions of Bulgarian nationalist revolutionaries, vocal British dissidents and statesmen, Ottoman elites, and European plenipotentiaries were powerful discourses of race and religion. Drawing from influential hierarchies of civilizational progress, religious enlightenment, and racial superiority, individuals based their opinions and actions on perceived ideals of injustice or righteousness. Bulgarian revolutionaries adapted Western ideals of nationalism to argue that their unique language, history, and religion necessitated an independent Bulgarian state to be obtained by any means necessary. Liberal Ottoman elites rejected what they saw as clear double standards in Western claims of their savagery, their inability to modernize or reform, their racial degeneracy, and their civilizational backwardness. Conservative Ottomans flipped these discursive dichotomies on their heads to favour Islam, Ottoman traditions, and the Ottoman administrative system. British Palmerstonian Conservatives emphasized material relationships, class hierarchies, fiscal discipline, and geopolitical strategies for the benefit of Britain’s Imperial Interests. Politically engaged British women

argued for the protection of helpless women abroad and lobbied their Queen to act on behalf of their sex in the realm of international politics. But it was the liberal, Whiggish, and evangelical nonconformist interpretations of events in Britain that caused the greatest changes to the course of international history during this period.

The emphasis on European Christian superiority versus Oriental Muslim degeneracy filtered information of the Ottoman suppression of the Bulgarian rebellion, embellished the scope of the crisis, and fostered the imaginative invention of a narrative of unnatural, unholy, and unsustainable oppression of Christians by vampiric Muslims in the Balkans. It resulted in major changes to British policy, the onset of the Russo-Turkish War, and the creation of the modern Balkans negotiated along nationalist principles at the Congress of Berlin. Although the Congress stopped short of wholly adopting national self-determination, its resolutions nevertheless reified self-fulfilling prophecies of Balkan national self-determination and encouraged the aggressive irredentism of the new Balkan states that contributed to the outbreak of catastrophic war in 1914. This international crisis also deeply entrenched an enduring, pernicious legacy of anti-Ottoman, “Turkophobe,” and negative “Orientalist” attitudes that shaped both lay and scholarly approaches to Ottoman and Middle Eastern histories well into the twentieth century.

The construction of the new, late nineteenth-century geopolitical order and the demarcation of the modern Balkan states, while precipitated and shaped by Balkan revolutionaries, were significantly shaped by Western cultural values. Both liberals and conservatives in Britain fundamentally agreed on the declining efficacy and the inherent degeneracy of the Turkish state as well as the need for increased autonomy for their

subject “Christian races” in Turkey-in-Europe—a conception increasingly built upon categories of supposedly scientific racial determinism and religious dogma rather than material and strategic values. On the contrary, this period actually highlights the role of non-rationality in the construction of foreign policy—a realm much more dependent upon cultural perceptions than material facts. Discursive categories of racial, religious, national, and imperial knowledge, gendered against the supposedly sexually-perverse Ottoman Empire, guided decisions and the influence of cultural and political agents. This is especially true of journalists such as William Thomas Stead, Januarius MacGahan, Eugene Schuyler, and Antonio Gallenga, community leaders and organizers such as Anthony Mundella, Joseph Chamberlain, Lady Strangford, and William Morris, as well as important policy makers such as Lord Derby, Benjamin Disraeli, Queen Victoria, Henry Elliot, Austen Henry Layard, and William Ewart Gladstone. The precise way that these discursive categories of knowledge influenced behaviour was neither deterministic nor predictable, yet they nevertheless normalized individuals’ understandings of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Considering the remarkably limited material significance of the April Uprising in 1876, Great Power reactions to the Bulgarian Horrors and their ultimately counterproductive solutions to the Great Eastern Crisis were thus precipitated and greatly shaped by vocabularies of cultural understanding. The application of an increasingly widespread Western principle of national self-determination—religiously and scientifically justified—divided imagined racial groups along national lines. In the heterogeneous ethnic landscape of Southeastern Europe, this self-fulfilling prophesy unleashed violence and

fundamental tensions that would survive into the twenty-first century. By focussing on the cultural production of international relations, we may unravel the tacit values that underwrote the way diplomacy was conducted, wars were fought, peace treaties were signed, borders were drawn, and national identities were constructed. This process offers the opportunity to fully understand, address, and eventually resolve, lasting tensions that threaten international security in the modern era.

Methodology and Historiography: Renovating the Practice of International History

In arguing for a transnational appreciation of cultural forces during the Great Eastern Crisis, this study emphasizes the need to re-examine this critical event and supports the ongoing renovation of the practice of international history. This study demonstrates that the international historiography of these events, constructed through out-dated historical methodologies that neglect critical cultural analysis, has been fundamentally distorted by the same cultural forces that shaped the resolution of the crisis. Bulgarian historiography has been infused with powerful nationalist mythology since its inception during the National Revival, a period of increasing national awareness from the late eighteenth century to Bulgarian autonomy in 1878. This ingrained nationalist mythology has stymied critical analysis of the April Uprising and the formation of the early Bulgarian state, as will be discussed in the following chapter. British historiography, discussed at length in Section 3, has similarly supported the liberal interpretation of events: that the British public responded to Turkish atrocities by rallying against unfeeling and venal conservatives to change foreign policy along moral lines in order to liberate Christian nations from the backward and barbarous Ottoman Empire. These

historiographies are as skewed as they are historically powerful. Both British and Bulgarian historiographies have overwhelmingly overlooked the frailty of Bulgarian national consciousness, the limited nature and the utter failure of the actual April Uprising, and the degree to which Western Europeans misunderstood and categorically denigrated the Ottoman Empire. They neglect the growing power of supposedly scientific racial determinism, the role of religious conviction and solidarity in the defence of fellow Christians, the limited British knowledge of Southeastern Europe (even amongst self-purported specialists) and the growing influence of nationalism within international relations. Perhaps most importantly, however, previous narratives have ignored the profound consequences to the international geopolitical order that these cultural processes had in producing the resolution of this crisis.

Neglect of culturally-constructed influences on international relations has characterized the study of the Great Eastern Crisis as it has the traditional practice of international history. From the 1970s until quite recently, international history as a sub-discipline has been in transition. When in 1980 Charles S. Maier lamented that the history of international relations “cannot, alas, be counted among the pioneering fields of the discipline during the 1970s... it has become a stepchild ... [without an] acknowledged master,”¹ his jeremiad both summarized a growing intellectual dissatisfaction with entrenched research traditions and marked a period of major self-examination for

¹ Charles Maier, “Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations,” in Michael Kammen (Ed.), *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980): 355–82. Maier was certainly not the first to express anxiety over the future of the discipline; see: Ernest R. May, “The Decline of Diplomatic History,” in George Billias and Gerald Grob (Eds.) *American History: Retrospect and Prospect*, (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

diplomatic history.² Maier echoed many who feared that the “methodological democratization”³ typical of other areas of the humanities and social sciences was especially difficult in a field so heavily tied to the state, elites, and “Rankean exegesis”⁴ as its basis of methodology. A reluctance to grapple with this quandary left a core of practitioners insulated and resistant to theoretical innovations that had proven so profitable in many other areas. Major works from outside the field scripted a turn away from a traditional focus on elites, politics and diplomacy,⁵ leaving the impression that diplomatic historians were seen by others as “something like ... the crocodile, the armadillo, and the cockroach ... still rather primitive and, for that reason, not very interesting,”⁶ raising fears that the purpose of the field was being eroded by a wider compass,⁷ and discouraging new research in areas perceived to be state-centric, Western-biased, and old-fashioned.

² This period marked several ideological crises across the historical discipline. The long Marxist and labour-centered traditions (particularly in the United Kingdom) feared redundancy with the collapse of the Soviet Union and fundamental challenges posed by poststructuralists who rejected any historical metanarrative. Canadian historiography was also abuzz with activity after the publication of J. Granatstein’s *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998), which singled out social historians (particularly Marxists and feminists, among a laundry list of co-conspirators) for fragmenting and distorting the study of history in that country over the previous three decades.

³ Maier, “Marking Time,” 356.

⁴ Maier, “Marking Time,” 357.

⁵ Including E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (London: Pelican, 1963), Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1978), and the publications of the third generation of the *Annales* School (such as Fernand Braudel *Civilisation Matérielle, Economie et Capitalisme XVe–XVIIIe Siècle* (“*Capitalism and Material Life*”) (Paris: Armand Colin, 1997 [1979])), the second generation of the Frankfurt School (Jürgen Habermas’s 1962 *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Trans. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Cambridge: Polity, 1989[1962])), and the first generation of the American “New History” (Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980). Also see: Peter Burke, “Overture: The New History, its Past and its Future,” in Peter Burke (Ed.) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, “New Conceptual Approaches to the Study of American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 14 (1990): 406.

⁷ For instance, Frank Ninkovich, “The End of Diplomatic History?” *Diplomatic History* 15, 2 (1991): 439-48.

Indeed, the Eastern Question was a topic left “to wither on the vine”⁸ for decades, with the assumption that everything that could be said about the topic already had been. The subject never regained its central political importance of the interwar period. In the context of Britain’s absorption of formerly Ottoman Middle-Eastern mandates after the First World War, the role of the British Empire in the region was of prime scholarly interest. R.W. Seton-Watson’s seminal *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (1935) continues to be the scholarly backbone of all diplomatic histories of the period. It is also the source material for contemporary international relations theorists, who have since used the Bulgarian Horrors as a critical example of developing norms of international humanitarianism and humanitarian intervention.⁹ Seton-Watson’s study exhaustively employs the traditional sources of history: diplomatic records and correspondences between statesmen, elites, diplomats, and plenipotentiaries. Yet Seton-Watson’s masterfully researched book is guided by the same cultural prejudices that manifest themselves during the period that he studied. Convinced of the “prophetic vision”¹⁰ of Gladstone for seeing that “the future lay with the nations whom Ottoman tyranny had so long submerged,”¹¹ Seton-Watson chastises Disraeli and Queen Victoria’s defence of Turkey and selfish “British interests” in contrast to Gladstone’s

⁸ Michelle Tusan, “Britain and the Middle East: New Historical Perspectives on the Eastern Question,” *History Compass* 8, 3 (2010): 213.

⁹ For example, Martha Finnemore’s chapter “Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention” in Peter Katzenstein’s formative 1996 volume *The Culture of National Security* cites the “Bulgarian agitation” as a central example of humanitarian action in the nineteenth century using Seton-Watson’s work (and other older publications) as cited evidence. According to Google Scholar, this book has been cited by at least 1982 subsequent publications.

¹⁰ Robert W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics*, (New York: Norton, 1972 [1935]), ix.

¹¹ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 570.

heroic appeal to “civilization and humanity.”¹² British mismanagement of the Eastern Crisis under Disraeli—more centrally the rejection of total national self-determination¹³—he argues, bears a “heavy moral responsibility for subsequent developments” in the region including further Ottoman decline, the Armenian massacres, and the ongoing “Balkan problem” that spiraled into the First World War.¹⁴ In adopting the normative framework of Liberal/nationalist righteousness versus Conservative/imperialist superciliousness, however, Seton-Watson is blind to the cultural constructions of nationalism and the material consequences of privileging such an ideology.

Richard Shannon resurrected the topic nearly three decades later in his 1963 book *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation* to address the subject of “public opinion” and this episode of foreign policy (a question first addressed by G. Carlslake Thompson’s 1886 book, *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield* and expanded by David Harris’s 1939 book, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876*). Shannon’s appreciation of the Bulgarian Agitation as a fundamental shift in British domestic politics around a question of foreign policy is entirely based on British archival sources (petitions, personal correspondence, and diaries) and the diplomatic evidence provided by Seton-Watson. Shannon’s research thus focuses exclusively on the British causes and consequences of the Agitation with little analysis of the subject’s international character and consequences. Shannon reproduces Seton-

¹² Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 178, 184, 566. Seton-Watson’s earlier book, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, directly echoes the Agitation in his condemnation of the Ottoman Empire as “essentially a barbarous Power cemented by military organizations and an insatiable lust for conquest”; whose people “have never shown a trace of creative genius”; and whose “savage and incompetent” government was “like a vampire... it could only flourish by draining the lifeblood of its [Christian] victims.” R. W. Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1918 [1917]), 6-24.

¹³ Seton-Watson was a passionate advocate for the national self-determination of Central and Southeastern European nations throughout his life, attending the Paris peace conference in 1919 as a private delegate to advise on the border between Italy and Yugoslavia.

¹⁴ Seton-Watson, *Nationality in the Balkans*, 84-86.

Watson's biases against Ottoman degeneracy and Disraelian malfeasance, while venerating Gladstone and the Agitation's visions of a humanitarian foreign policy.¹⁵ While Shannon's more recent books on Gladstone himself are more nuanced and authoritative, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation* propagates an Anglo-centric and triumphant version of the Great Eastern Crisis within English historiography.

Diplomatic historians confronted the challenges of the cultural turn in the humanities during the 1990s,¹⁶ yet these attempts to consolidate and renew interest in the field tended to merely justify a slightly-modified status quo.¹⁷ Treatises during this period, therefore, were almost as a rule separated between new "micro" and old "macro" studies, separated by local/cultural versus international/political emphases.¹⁸ Ann Pottinger Saab's 1991 book, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes*, for example, shifts focus from "high politics" and elites towards domestic social structures and collective behaviour. Utilizing Neil Smelser's sociological theory of collective action, quantitative analysis of petitions to Parliament and the Foreign Office, and an able appreciation of

¹⁵ Shannon, in a thoroughly negative 1991 review of Ann Pottinger Saab's *Reluctant Icon*, recalls how he wrote his first book "as a leftish young New Zealander convinced of Gladstone's greatness and Disraeli's villainy" (Richard Shannon, [Review], *English Historical Review*, 435 (1995): 230-1.

¹⁶ This includes Akira Iriye's "Culture and International History," in M. Hogan and T. Paterson (Eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991): 241-56. For a general history of the "postmodern" challenge to historiography, see: Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹⁷ In her keynote address to the 1997 *SHAFR* conference, for example, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman described inroads towards a "New Diplomatic History," but essentially remained within the state-elite macronarrative framework and traditional archival methodology in her call to "write a global American history" that is "flavo[ured]" by "cultural mores ... and social history" ("Diplomatic History and the Meaning of Life: Towards a Global American History," *Diplomatic History* 21, 4 (1997): 501). Also see the conclusion of Frank Ninkovich's "No Post-Mortems for Postmodernism, Please," *Diplomatic History* 22, 3 (1998): 451-66. Ninkovich recommends attention to postmodernism by diplomatic historians because it is, quoting Michael Walzer, "importantly wrong" (462), yet helpful in certain circumstances in viewing non-political episodes as "interesting, perhaps, though ultimately insignificant precisely because they were deviant" (465).

¹⁸ A notable exception has been the work of Akira Iriye; see: "Culture and Power: International Relations as Intercultural Relations," *Diplomatic History* 3, 2 (1979): 115-28 and *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

Victorian categories of race, gender, class, and religion, Saab concludes that the greatest significance of British protest over foreign policy “was domestic.”¹⁹ Saab, who prefaces the book with her disenchantment with “the classical tradition of diplomatic history ... [and its] narrow, artificially rational focus,” therefore inadvertently reinforces Shannon’s narrow focus with regards to the Eastern Question by exclusively addressing the British context.

Davide Rodogno, in his 2012 *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire 1815-1914*, attempts to transcend national boundaries in his study of British and French responses to humanitarian crises. Rodogno succeeds in addressing the long legacies of often-forgotten nineteenth century humanitarian impulses. It is an able account of the development of humanitarian norms that occurred more than a century before the so-called “humanitarian decade” of the 1990s, and of the political and legal statuses of the Ottoman Empire within European prejudices. But Rodogno’s ambitious study unavoidably relies upon the flawed or incorrect assertions of events relating to the Bulgarian Horrors constructed by his secondary evidence.²⁰ His conclusions therefore rest upon unstable foundations and are drawn towards the predilections of past historians towards the immediate material consequences of the crisis’s diplomatic history, as drawn exclusively from Western European sources. Conspicuously absent from Rodogno’s analysis are Bulgarian or Ottoman perspectives, a careful critique of previous historiographies, or an attempt to theoretically reconcile local histories with his international scope. This leads to Rodogno’s assumption of widespread Bulgarian national identity, which I problematize in Section 2. This also privileges Western sources such as

¹⁹ Ann Pottinger Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria and the Working Classes, 1856-1878*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 196.

²⁰ His account of the April Uprising is scant, for example, citing only the Baring’s Report as his source of “the British government’s official statistics” (147) that asserted the destruction of sixty villages and 12,000 people.

contemporary government reports, memoirs, and journalistic accounts, which I will show to be largely inaccurate. Rodogno's ambitious work perhaps unavoidably overgeneralizes complex cultural processes that occurred in multiple countries over one hundred years.

The historiography of the Great Eastern Crisis, therefore, has been characterized by its inability to move beyond insular "sectional identifications"²¹ and national boundaries, which reflects the struggle of the discipline itself to reconcile major theoretical changes in the last three decades. Elsewhere across the social sciences and humanities, on the other hand, a new generation of scholars has adapted to paradigmatic shifts and integrated theoretical innovation within their respective disciplines, which offers important lessons for the international historian. International relations theorists and political scientists, for example, have grappled with similar problems of how to adequately represent and reassess international relations' state-centric focus. Alexander Wendt's 1992 article in *International Organization* is the most frequently cited example of the budding idea of social constructivism in international relations theory, which criticizes the "realist" assumptions that "material interests," "security," or even "power politics" are straightforward and unproblematic.²² Wendt and other "constructivists" argue that these values are instead constructed of social realities such as cultures, identities, goals, fears, norms, ideologies, and other elements of a society expressed through language, discourse, and social

²¹ Tony Judt, *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 389. "We are all familiar with intellectuals who speak only on behalf of their country, class, religion, 'race,' 'gender,' or 'sexual orientation,' and who shape their opinions according to what they take to be the interest of their affinity of birth or predilection. But the distinctive feature of the liberal intellectual in past times was precisely the striving for universality; not the unworldly or disingenuous denial of sectional identification but the sustained effort to transcend that identification in search of truth or the general interest."

²² Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, 2 (1992): 391-425, later expanded into his book *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

practice.²³ While the theory of constructivism is essentially taken as a given by cultural historians, it took many years of impassioned argument within journals of international relations to establish its credibility and analytical usefulness.²⁴ This debate engendered a wider understanding of the relationship between cultural influences and the conduct of international relations that has been only recently—although profitably—adapted to the practice of international history, albeit overwhelmingly in the twentieth century context.²⁵

Several scholars have ambitiously addressed the fundamental debates about the practice of international history. This includes Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher's edited volume 2003 *Culture and International History* and Patrick Finney's 2006 collection of articles *Palgrave Advances in International History*. Some scholars have advocated a reinvigorated diplomatic history as the "Next Big Thing,"²⁶ and Society for

²³ A particularly important edited volume for constructivism is Peter Katzenstein's *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also: Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, (Eds.), *State Sovereignty As Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). The theoretical grappling with constructivism continued well into the new millennium: Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also the debate in *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004).

²⁴ For more on the differences between diplomatic historians and scholars of international politics, see: Robert Jervis "International Politics and Diplomatic History: Fruitful Differences," Keynote Address, H-Diplo Conference on New Scholarship in American Foreign Relations, 17-18 April 2009. Accessed 10 June 2010 at <<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/williams2009>>. See also: Beate Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2000). See also the chapters by Jervis, Gerhard Weinberg, Edward Ingram, John Lewis Gaddis and Paul Schroeder in C. Elman and M. Elman (eds.), *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists and the Study of International Relations* (London: MIT Press, 2001).

²⁵ Examples of this positive trend are SHAFR book-prize winners such as Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, The United States, and The Philippines*, Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, Penny Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*, and Joseph Henning's *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations*.

²⁶ Michael J. Hogan, "The 'Next Big Thing': The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age," *Diplomatic History* 28, 1 (2004): 1-21.

Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR)²⁷ scholars even questioned if diplomatic historians' new, often transnational, approaches should be reflected by changing the American-centric name of their society and narrow-sounding name of their journal *Diplomatic History*.²⁸ A lively debate ensued both in the 2009 SHAFR annual conference and on the forums of H-Diplo during the spring of that year, which highlighted both the prevalent terminological flexibility of key concepts and a lack of methodological standardization. It also generated a general consensus dismissing the idea of "crisis" within the field and expressing confidence in the current vitality of the subject.²⁹ The recent "transnational turn,"³⁰ for example, was viewed neither as irreconcilable with state-focused studies nor as anything particularly revolutionary. It was observed that the transnational concept was first developed in 1916 and much debated over the last century.³¹ Overwhelmingly, recent authors have been concerned with the quality of argument, sources, and subject of new works rather than a dogged fixation on theoretical frameworks or methodology, suggesting an acceptance of multiple research traditions and disciplinary approaches in the study of international history.

²⁷ Founded in 1967, SHAFR publishes the most prestigious journal in the historical field of international relations: *Diplomatic History*.

²⁸ The consensus that eventually emerged was that the society's statement of purpose already encompassed new theoretical and topical emphases, and that a change of name would be superficial. Sally Marks similarly asserted that "diplomatic history" and "international history" are "respectively the American and British terms for the same thing." Marks further asserted: "If those who apparently distinguish between the two mean that the first is bilateral and the second multilateral, I can only say that multinational history has been the norm among the diplomatic historians I have known for at least 40 years." S. Marks, "Terminology—Diplomatic History, International History, and Transnationalism," 19 March 2009, *H-Diplo*, accessed 1 June 2010 at <<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=0903&week=c&msg=RWOHObKQ1Y16VmJxi%2bOMXg&user=&pw=>>>.

²⁹ These responses may all be found on H-Diplo's monthly discussion for May, 2009 at <<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=lx&list=H-Diplo&user=&pw=&month=0904>>>.

³⁰ See: William I. Robinson, "Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies" *Sociological Forum* 13, 4 (1998): 561-594, and Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology," *International Migration Review* 37 3(2003): 576-611.

³¹ See: Akira Iriye, "The Transnational Turn," *Diplomatic History* 31, 3 (2007): 373-6 and Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America," *Atlantic Monthly*, 118 (1916): 86-97.

In order to contribute to the ongoing renovation of the field, this dissertation engages recent avenues of theoretical innovation while critically re-evaluating the international history of Great Eastern Crisis. It problematizes the use of cultural approaches without reciprocal attention to material structures or without critical appreciation of collective behaviour and the conceptual framework of “culture” itself. The most recent historiographical shift of emphasis towards a more pluralistic, humanistic, and eclectic version of international history comes with opportunity, but also challenges that must be addressed lest the change be one more erratic swing of the theoretical pendulum or simply a return to worn styles of historical inquiry with a glossy new veneer. The cultural turn amongst international historians may represent, as Patrick Finney suggests, “the means whereby the flesh wounds inflicted by postmodernism have been sutured and a return to business (more or less) as usual has been facilitated,”³² but without substantial critical reflection as to the purpose, objectives, and direction of future scholarship, the shift may simply be a new language for answering old questions for old reasons. In the historical study of international relations, critical appreciation of the culturally constructed yet reciprocal process of foreign policy and diplomacy replaces the “realist” theories of material power left over from the cold war. Cultural approaches to topics in international history, carefully examined and weighed in relation to other material and structural forces, have the ability to transcend one-sided research traditions to better reveal the breadth of human experience.

³² Patrick Finney, “Introduction: What is International History?” in Finney (Ed.), *Palgrave Advances in International History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19.

Analytical Frameworks: Constructivism, Culture, and Structuration

Cultures, identities, and belief systems are now intermingled and widely analyzed as equal to military prowess, state institutions, geopolitics, economic wealth, intellectual history, and political campaigns. While classic, “realist” theorists attribute cultural conflicts to humankind’s inherent differences of race, nation, religion, and “civilization”³³—as opposed to the materially-based, rational, and secular construction of states—recent “constructivist” theories of international relations (IR) assert that all actors, collective identities and their respective values are culturally constructed without such natural laws. As Alexander Wendt asserts, states and their interests are socially constructed; therefore, international “anarchy is what states make of it.”³⁴ If all international institutions are socially constructed and the actors and policies which guide international relations are bound by cultural structures such as race, religion, class, or gender, then “culture, here, is truly ‘part and parcel’ of the discipline of international relations; it is the defining characteristic of the discipline’s subject matter.”³⁵

Although historians have typically addressed traditional subjects through cultural lenses (such as “Americanization” or cultural diplomacy during the cold war) to broaden or problematize the historical record, political scientists and IR theorists have approached the cultural construction of international normative frameworks such as “security” as a major source of new research. As such, the diplomatic history of the Eastern Question may be utterly re-envisioned through a careful appreciation of the cultural frameworks that

³³ Most famous of these assertions is Samuel P. Huntington’s in his article, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3 (1993): 22-49.

³⁴ Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 391.

³⁵ Beate Jahn, “The Power of Culture in International Relations,” in Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (Eds.), *Culture and International History* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 28.

shaped behaviours, policies, and events: the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was hardly a result of some inveterate propensity for decline—it was forced upon the Ottomans by condescending and predatory Great Powers. The Bulgarian uprising was not an inevitable result of the “awakening” of nations nor was it materially significant within contemporary *realpolitik* international relations. Western cultural values, however, propelled the Bulgarian question to the forefront of international affairs: observers perceived that the suppressed Christian races were yearning to be free from Ottoman oppression. The Great Eastern Crisis, therefore, was not a *material* crisis dealing with Balkan revolutionaries and the collapse and partition of the Ottoman Empire; it was a *cultural* event that gave importance to perceived realities and created and sustained a diplomatic and material crisis.

The now ubiquitous use of culture as a broad category of analysis, however, is not without its own pitfalls. Culture is frequently employed unproblematically with little in the way of precise definition, yet the understanding of the term itself has drastically changed over time. In the nineteenth century culture denoted high civilization, literature, music, art, philosophy, or as Matthew Arnold explained, the “pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matter which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world,”³⁶ as opposed to anarchy, disorder, and “natural” states of being. The discipline of international relations, institutionally founded in the immediate aftermath of the First World War,³⁷ was formed with this humanist conception of culture. This understanding greatly shifted over the next few decades to a general understanding of

³⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994 [1869]), 5.

³⁷ The first department of international politics was founded in 1919 at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

culture in its anthropological sense, essentially that “we *are* our culture,”³⁸ or the amalgamation of a people’s history, language, customs, and beliefs. The meaning of the word, however, retained mixed connotations depending on the context and a multitude of sometimes conflicting denotations. By as early as 1952, Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn documented a list of 164 definitions of “culture.”³⁹ Clifford Geertz famously defined culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life,”⁴⁰ modifying the anthropological definition by including the dynamic methods by which cultural symbols are created, expressed, and renegotiated. But by the turn of the millennium, Julie Reeves noted that the humanist idea of culture had been almost universally replaced by a simplistic anthropological concept in international relations literature: that a culture is defined by the attributes of its people.⁴¹

In her thorough critique of this ubiquitous anthropological understanding of culture, Julie Reeves notes that, too frequently, a particular culture is defined by a list of *differences* and understood as if “there is something profound driving and determining these differences behind the scenes.”⁴² This idea, that culture is a “given” amidst a particular group within defined boundaries, and that each culture is in itself a source of difference presupposes an essentialist understanding of the concept. Maintaining that cultures create differences and that these differences are evidence of cultural difference is tautological.

³⁸ Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (New York: William Morrow, 1942/1943), 21. Emphasis in the original.

³⁹ Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

⁴⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 89.

⁴¹ Julie Reeves, *Culture and International Relations: Narratives, Natives and Tourists* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 5-6.

⁴² Reeves, *Culture and International Relations*, 76.

That there are differing behaviours between groups of people does not necessarily mean that they were caused by different cultural understandings—they may just as easily be caused by different political, economic, demographic, environmental, or a large number of other social circumstances. Using her hypothetical categories of “natives” and “tourists” to explore the logical conclusions of commonplace cultural understanding, Reeves observes that these essentialist notions of culture as pre-determined, irreconcilable with other cultures, and deterministic in terms of individual or group behaviour are “functionally equivalent with race theory” in that the tourist remains impure, unable to comprehend or assimilate fully into the pure, authentic native culture.⁴³ Thus, a simplistic, anthropological analytical framework of culture within international history has unpalatable consequences in that “we cannot become culturally otherwise and remain forever excluded from and isolated by the native culture”—something that Reeves, quite rightfully, finds “not only socially unacceptable but also politically disturbing.”⁴⁴

Reeve’s observations are critically important for analysis of cultural processes within the Great Eastern Crisis—as they are for all cultural topics of international history. International historiography of the period is almost entirely shaped by essentialist readings of national identity, derived from categories of race or culture. “Bulgarians,” “Turks,” “Circassians,” “Greeks,” and other collective identities have been homogenously conceived since the crisis, which has shaped historical narratives along nationalistic lines. The Bulgarian National Renaissance and the April Uprising, it follows, are foreign and

⁴³ Reeves, *Culture and International Relations*, 82.

⁴⁴ Essentially, the idea “that we cannot become culturally otherwise and remain forever excluded from and isolated by the native culture is not only socially unacceptable but also politically disturbing.” Reeves, *Culture and International Relations*, 12.

incomprehensible to the scholarly “tourist.”⁴⁵ English and Bulgarian historiographies would be similarly incompatible, with no possibility of meaningful integration and generalization given inherent and unbridgeable cultural differences. Without a thorough critique of such supposedly intrinsic racial, cultural, and national differences, future historiography will continue to reinforce such essentialism.

In order to rescue the concept of culture from such an essentialist, racial framework, Reeves promotes Brian Street’s attractive argument that “culture is a verb,”⁴⁶ not a static, passive noun. The influence of culture on history, therefore, is the active processes of meaning-making and contests over definitions over time amongst groups with dynamic conceptual boundaries:

Anti-essentialism is much more than a methodological shift; it is a profound epistemological and ontological shift. Anti-essentialists accept that there is no such thing as *the* culture, as in an underpinning essence or ‘authentic set of exclusive/discrete meanings’...‘culture’ is about strategies of interaction and intersubjectivity, which are necessarily open-ended, subject to a wide range of influences; none of which is predictable. *Otherness* and *meaning* are taken as constitutive elements in the same process; neither are presumed to be enduring—people can and regularly do learn new habits and tell new stories about themselves. In an anti-essentialist sense, we all have ‘culture’ no matter

⁴⁵ Bulgarian revolutionary historian and memoirist Zahari Stoyanov, in his *Materials of the Bulgarian Uprising* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1976[1884-1892]), supported this scepticism regarding the interest of foreign scholars: “Няма съмнение, че както по другите ни работи, така и по народните ни движения най-напред ще да се заинтересуват спекулантите чужденци ... Чужденецът- българофил ще кръстоса страната направо и наляво (гдето има само железници и шосе, забележете), ще да се срещне той със самохвалствующите се първенци, със заинтересуваните началници и кметове, както в турско време с мюдюрите и владиците, ще поразпита надве-натри, па за останалото: да живеят библиотеките и официалните статистики. Пътувание по славянските земи, Нова България или Три месеца в България титулира своята книга “скъпият ни гост”, пълна с лъжи и фабрикосани факти, написани тенденциозно за в полза на партията и на обществото, което е изпратило пътешественика от неговото отечество.” (“No doubt our popular movement will interest foreign speculators... This foreigner—Bulgrophile—will cross the country back and forth (only where rail and road will take him)... and visit only libraries and speak to relevant officials and mayors, the Turkish, and bishops half-carelessly and use only official statistics... Our dear guest will title his book... “Three months in Bulgaria”; full of lies and facts fabricated for the benefit of the party of society from which he came.)

⁴⁶ Brian Street, “Culture is a Verb: Anthropological Aspects of Language and Cultural Process,” In David Graddol and Linda and Mike Byram (Eds.), *Language and Culture* (Clevedon: British Association of Applied Linguistics, 1993), 25.

what has come and gone over the years and irrespective of where we actually are. Under anti-essentialism, 'the tourists' must be considered along with 'the natives.'⁴⁷

Historians of the Great Eastern Crisis must therefore disentangle and denaturalize cultural identities and constituent meanings previously taken for granted. It is therefore both possible and necessary to dissolve the sectional and national identifications that otherwise isolate the past from the present, others from ourselves, or "natives" from "tourists."

Aside from the frequently amorphous uses of culture and their worrying implications—namely the potential for reifying racist discourses—little has been written on the definite mechanisms by which policy is influenced by supposedly omnipresent cultural influences. While discourse analysis is frequently employed to understand the prejudices and predispositions of certain groups towards others, the methods by which this is employed are unsystematic and the relationships between these preconceptions and policy creation are typically unexplained.⁴⁸ It is widely assumed that cultural processes have a direct, linear relationship with policy formation at the domestic and international levels, with the implication that the study of culture on its own is sufficient to understand the rationale for policy decisions and the narration of history. Since the cultural turn, authors have followed the lead of Edward Said to define and critique pernicious "Orientalist" discourses that have long dominated Western perceptions of Middle Eastern and Balkan inhabitants since at least the late sixteenth century. In the Balkan context, Robert Hayden, Milicia Bakić-Hayden, and Maria Todorova have adopted Said's concept to the Balkan context as "Orientalist Variations on the Theme 'Balkans'" and "Balkanism"

⁴⁷ Reeves, *Culture and International Relations*, 84. Emphases in original.

⁴⁸ See: Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 30.

respectively, essentially arguing that Balkan inhabitants are characterized not simply as alien “other,” but more precisely as a primitive version of the “self”; as Todorova notes, “the Balkans are left in Europe’s thrall, anti-civilization, *alter ego*, the dark side within.”⁴⁹ Whereas these works have predominantly focussed on the discursive power of these pejorative analytical frameworks and their contemporary relevance—leaving the political implications unspecified—this dissertation investigates the conceptual origins of these frameworks and evaluates how they manifested into concrete policies that shaped specific events during the Great Eastern Crisis.

I argue that the linkages between cultural processes and international relations are by no means straightforward. In fact, institutional biases may have as much or more influence on policy creation, and individual understandings of cultural norms may vary widely from person to person and even from event to event with the same individual.⁵⁰ During the Great Eastern Crisis, Balkanist discourses actually helped the case for the creation of modern Balkan states. Images of struggling and downtrodden Christian races forced into servitude, susceptible to base instincts, coincided with a growing Western appetite for liberty against oppression, civilization versus barbarism, and Christianity versus Islam. In the eyes of Western observers, it was only after the creation of the new Balkan states—and the perceived failure of its liberated nations to be satisfied with what they had been given—that the region and its inhabitants became synonymous with violence, deceit, greed, depravity, and hate, most frequently symbolized by the “cauldron”

⁴⁹ Milicia Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme “Balkans”: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics,” *Slavic Review*. 51, 1 (Spring 1992), 1-15; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Todorova, “The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention.” *Slavic Review*. 53, 2 (Summer 1994): 453-482.

⁵⁰ See, for example: Cameron Whitehead, “Political Memoirs, Myth, Policy, and the Wars of Yugoslav Secession,” *Past Imperfect* 15 (2009): 154-192.

of stirring Balkan troubles ready to boil over or the “powder keg” ready to explode. I will challenge the prevailing assumption that by examining “micro” cultural or social history we may then easily translate our findings into a greater, “macro” understanding of political or diplomatic history—it is not that simple.

The adoption of Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of “constructivist structuralism,” or the relationship between language, myths, and symbolic systems and “objective structures, independent of the consciousness or the will of the agents”⁵¹ and *habitus*, or the “semi-conscious (though not innate) orientation that individuals have to the world”⁵²—essentially the “language” or “toolkit” of human action—provides a possible solution to the inadequacy of one-sided applications of cultural analysis. A balanced evaluation of all forms of power in the construction of foreign policy and the course of international history is thus possible. Actors such as Hristo Botev, Lyuben Karavelov, W. T. Stead, W. E. Gladstone, and Lord Derby negotiated their actions with respect to their *habitus*—or discursive toolkit of understanding the world—with reference to both their perceived material and cultural environs. Such a focus returns central emphasis on the individual subject that provides a navigable path between the Scylla of structuralist determinism and the Charybdis of poststructuralist fragmentation.

Cultural theorists may insist that traditional structures of power are themselves socially created and maintained, yet culture loses its analytical value should its definition be so broad as to include anything and everything. If historians were to use Mead’s anthropological definition of culture (that “we *are* our culture”), then any and all history

⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Choses Dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), 147.

⁵² As described by Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Transformation of the International Security Order* (London: Routledge, 2007), 27.

that addresses people is a history of culture. So delineating what “culture” includes—and what it excludes—becomes centrally important for its use as a conceptual framework. Cultural influences are non-state, non-material, and *non-individual* forces that derive from common languages, symbols, and discourses, belief systems and ideologies, religious and spiritual beliefs, and/or other categories of knowledge and behaviour. “Non-individual” is emphasized here in that cultural forces only exist when they are discernable amongst a particular group or community of people. How these forces crystalize into the thoughts and actions of individuals, however, is the essential element of culturally-based studies—an idea that is rarely identified. As Lynn Hunt has recently argued, “any account of historical change must in the end account for the alteration of *individual* minds.”⁵³ Traditional focus solely on social and cultural contexts neglects the agency of individuals to interact with each other and with the “reading and viewing”⁵⁴ of their surroundings to create new contexts. Telling the history of how individuals have negotiated and affected historical change within their surroundings gives a meaningful way to address these processes. The critical question of W.E. Gladstone’s intervention in the Bulgarian Agitation, within the context of his previous readings and with insights from his marginalia therein, is therefore explored at depth in Section 5. This section demonstrates that previous analysis of Gladstone’s political activities and correspondence fails to deal directly with his individual appreciation for cultural processes in relation to his institutional role as informal leader of the Liberal party and the symbolic head of a powerful social movement.

⁵³ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, (New York: London, 2009), 34. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Anthony Giddens's concept of "structuration," or the idea that historical causation is the interplay between agents and structures, is useful in determining a meaningful narrative of the actors and structures that shaped the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis. The dichotomistic, chicken-and-egg questions of ideology versus material context, individual versus group, culture versus state, and structure versus agency divert discussion into unresolvable debates. Giddens exposes the duality of action in society, succinctly noting that "social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution,"⁵⁵ and describing his theory of structuration as the process by which structures produce and reproduce systems through social interaction, or "the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space."⁵⁶ Giddens demonstrates that neither micro nor macro studies alone can account for structuration—or essentially any historical change—without falling into circular cause and consequence logical fallacies.⁵⁷ This is a crucial point. Understanding culture as an active process and its relationship to material structures and other social circumstances as similarly dynamic and contingent, we may progress from static, deterministic, and dichotomous conceptions of historical causation. Culture does not constitute an ideology, nor a script, nor a structure in and of itself. It is a vocabulary that provides guidelines for action amongst individuals and the groups that they form—guidelines that may be broken, ignored, or rewritten at any time. Pierre Bourdieu described this general framework of social practice as "regulated improvisation," whereby actors both create new meanings and actions but also generally follow the cognitive and motivating structures of a particular

⁵⁵ Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 121.

⁵⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 25.

⁵⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).

habitus.⁵⁸ It follows that Gladstone and others improvised their own unique actions shaped by both rational and irrational choices based on their particular circumstances within non-deterministic hierarchies of power, understanding, and therefore causation. These actions are simultaneously spontaneous and scripted, motivated both by individual decisions and unique structural layering of historical situation and discursive frameworks.

A central problem of international history has been the attempt to explain complex historical episodes simply through states, institutions, or broad groups of people. My view is that the history of these structures is made by individuals who interpret their circumstances in a multitude of idiosyncratic ways. Cultural and structural factors crystalize differently at each event for each person into actions, behaviours, opinions, and trends that may then be analyzed in their own unique contexts. While some theories may be extracted between events and topics in history more readily than others, no one theoretical framework on its own may account for the diversity of human expression and world history.⁵⁹ Marxist theory, for example, may be employed to ask questions that isolate material structures and influences, about relationships to the means of production, access to capital, wage-labour, alienation, or class identities. Yet within the context of the April Uprising and the Bulgarian Agitation, class relations had little bearing on the conceptual framework of contemporaries so the use of such a materially-determinate, Marxist analysis is generally inappropriate in this context.⁶⁰ Straightjackets of preconceived theory, to

⁵⁸ Bourdieu, *Choses Dites*, 72-78. This is not dissimilar from the conventions, trends, riffs, and prevailing acoustic aesthetics that guide the improvisations of a jazz musician.

⁵⁹ As Marc Trachtenberg rightly observes, established theories do not provide us with ready-made answers, but they do give historians sets of questions that may be applied to any historical circumstances or historiographical problem. *Craft of International History*, 32.

⁶⁰ That is not to say that labour relations and the organization of the working class did not have a structural influence upon the popular reaction to news of Turkish atrocities. Workingmen's organizations, as will be

borrow a phrase from Alfred Cobban, do unwarranted violence to the past in the selection of sources, the presentation of evidence, the interpretation of individuals' actions, and the importance given to the subject when presented out of context. Well-defined structures of causation can exist in history, just as sometimes they do not. This dissertation therefore employs a theoretically and methodologically pragmatic approach that appreciates history's contingent nature.

Scope and Focus: Britain, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1878

The overriding focus of this study is the process by which cultural processes in Britain shaped the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis—events which were pivotal in the creation of the modern Balkans. Traditional histories of these events have interpreted their unfolding as following material, structural, or “natural” frameworks. This would suggest that the supposedly unnatural rule of Muslim Turks over Balkan Christians eventually led to a modern national awakening and heroic revolt over backwards Ottoman feudalism. Provincial, working-class nonconformism and female activism have been seen to have functioned as natural structures of thought and action that compelled British citizens to actively oppose aristocratic, masculine, and imperialist foreign policy. Cultural and political attitudes are likewise seen to be wholly shaped by negative, “Orientalist” views of the East which directly translated into a conspiratorial front against the Ottoman Empire. Yet the evidence betrays these simplistic narratives. Supposedly determinate frameworks, both material and cultural, were instead unstable vocabularies of thought and action that

shown, were an important source of protest against the Conservative government in Britain. Also, the Reform Acts, arguably made in large part because of labour agitation, greatly increased public participation in questions of foreign policy during the 1870s.

individuals employed to coalesce rationale for actions, both individual and en masse, which actively sustained, negotiated, or dismantled these structures of thought.

The personal correspondence of Gladstone, Derby, Disraeli, and Queen Victoria to their many supporters and critics show that, even these often-caricatured figures adapted their own interpretations of their situations and unique justifications for their actions along different lines at different times. Diplomatic communiqués such as from Lord Derby to British or Russian officials (or from the Ottoman Grand Vizier to his European consuls) similarly reveal tensions between attributed cultural values and their institutional roles. Town hall minutes and petition resolutions in Britain demonstrate the active process of community-level political activism. Newspaper articles and editorials, political memoirs and even words written in the margins of contemporary publications show clear predilections for certain categories of knowledge and also how groups of individuals shaped their actions to address perceived problems along cultural values. Yet individuals' actions during this period were more complicated than the mere unfolding of fixed cultural structures that logically translated into certain behaviours or policies. Actions were contingent not only on an individuals' interpretation of common cultural vocabularies but also their personal understanding of their role within institutional structures of the state, the economy, and the international system.

Lord Derby and Disraeli (British Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister), for example, disagreed vehemently over the interpretation of Balkan nationalism, Ottoman tyranny, and exactly what constituted "British interests" during the crisis, so much so that Derby overruled Disraeli at several critical junctures. Gladstone was not immediately swept

up in the Bulgarian Agitation, and when he was finally forced to take over as figurehead, he was often a moderating and independent voice of the popular movement. “Orientalist” understandings of the Ottoman Empire and its population were adapted by Disraeli as a reason to support and defend the Turks against Russian aggression,⁶¹ whereas Derby, Gladstone, and many others felt that continued support for such a decadent and decayed empire would be an egregious affront to Western civilization and Christian morality. Women participants in the Agitation held that the worst violence was committed against their Bulgarian sisters-in-Christ and petitioned that their Queen intervene on their behalf, yet Queen Victoria herself was largely unmoved by this line of argument, as she saw imperial diplomacy as trumping international feminine solidarity. Many Agitationists believed that the only practical solution to the Eastern Question was the political independence of the “Christian races” in Ottoman Europe, whereas many others (including Disraeli) believed that support for Balkan nationalism would only encourage further disorder in the region as well as heightened demands from Ireland and other British colonies.

The scope of my research is necessarily limited for the most part to Britain and the Ottoman provinces comprising modern Bulgaria during the years 1876-1878. I have excluded a much longer history of the Eastern Question that extends at least to the late eighteenth century until its final resolution with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. This excludes the Ottoman bankruptcy and subsequent rebellion in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1875, often considered the beginning of the Great

⁶¹ Miloš Ković, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question*, trans Miloš Damnjanović (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 224 and William Mulligan, “[Review],” *Victorian Studies* 54, 4 (2012): 727-9.

Eastern Crisis. The Bulgarian Horrors of 1876, however, were the tipping point of the crisis that played out during the following two years in international relations. I have also intentionally avoided extensive treatment of Russia, as the popular reaction to Ottoman massacres of Orthodox Christians and subsequent push to war with Turkey did not in itself precipitate a major change in Russian foreign policy. Other Great Power reactions, including an interesting American missionary connection in the Ottoman Empire, are lightly treated for similar reasons. French responses to the crisis have been recently (although briefly) addressed by Davide Rodogno's *Against Massacre*.⁶² Konstantin Kosev's 1978 Bulgarian-language *Bismarck, the Eastern Question, and the Bulgarian Liberation 1856-1878* and several subsequent works have spoken to the German aspect of the crisis and the subtle politics of Bismarck during the Congress of Berlin.⁶³ Notwithstanding many important nuances, this study will show that the culturally-precipitated inversion of Britain's traditional support of the Ottoman Empire was a precipitating factor for the dramatic reshaping of international relations.

Inclusion of Ottoman and Bulgarian histories provides much needed context to the heavily Anglo- and Western-centric scholarship on the Great Eastern Crisis. As I will show, the April Uprising has been assumed to be the result of spontaneous and inevitable desires of Bulgarians to rid themselves of faltering Ottoman rule. English-language historiography virtually excludes even basic examinations of Ottoman internal politics, let alone the

⁶² Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁶³ Konstantin Kosev, *Бисмарк, Източният въпрос и Българското освобождение (Bismarck, the Eastern Question, and the Bulgarian Liberation) 1856 - 1878* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 1978); *Послание на Мидхад паша до Бисмарк от януари 1877 (A Message from Midhat Pasha to Bismarck, January 1877)* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2008); *Зад кулисите на Берлинския конгрес и родилните мъки на Третата българска държава (Behind the Scenes at the Congress of Berlin and the Birth Pangs of the Third Bulgarian State)* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2008).

development of Bulgarian nationalism, the course of the April Uprising, or the conduits by which information about the uprising was transmitted to the British public. Although there is extensive Bulgarian-language historiography of this period—as would be expected for such a critical period in the creation of the Bulgarian state—it is largely mired in nationalist discourses left over as legacies of the revolution and national independence, including many decades of historical self-censorship under Soviet control and a general reluctance to critically analyze modern Bulgarian collective identity and processes of nationalist mythmaking. In the Bulgarian and Ottoman contexts, my research is primarily based upon secondary sources—yet these historiographies themselves are treated as primary sources. I aim to deconstruct patterns of cultural perception that have shaded historical understanding since the Great Eastern Crisis. This work is not intended to be a reference for the “actual events” of the crisis. It is instead a contribution to understanding the history of how the crisis has been understood, and it suggests how these interpretations have themselves shaped international history.

The insight provided by a close and critical examination of Ottoman and Bulgarian historiography (provided in the following chapter) and recent research in the fields of nationalism studies fundamentally alters our perception of the Great Eastern Crisis. Rather than simply a case study of competing visions of British imperialism or of early international humanitarian impulses, such insights demonstrate that powerful cultural preconceptions shaped both the cause and the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis. Defying traditional explanations based upon long legacies of pejorative representations of the Ottoman Empire, this analysis shows that the Ottomans were hardly declining simply because of their own shortcomings. Predatory Christian European states and their

representatives worked in concert against Ottoman interests, geopolitically, economically, and eventually culturally. Analysis of the Bulgarian historical context reveals the remarkably limited nature of Bulgarian national identity prior to the outbreak of rebellion—it was only after the Russo-Turkish War and the creation of the Bulgarian state that Bulgarian national identity became widely established beyond elite circles. The limited material and geopolitical significance of the April Uprising reveals how determining foreign *perceptions* of the revolt were. Yet perhaps the most important revelation is that Western European ideologies, namely “scientific” racial determinism and national self-determination, were instrumental in creating the so-called Balkan “powder keg”—both in providing the rationale for overturning British foreign policy in the military support of the Ottoman Empire against Russia, but also in the conventions made at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The April Uprising was not symbolic of a widespread nationalist rebellion against the Ottoman “yoke,” but it was perceived to be so by Western observers. This precipitated the formation of the modern Balkan nation-states shaped along the inherently flawed and destructive principle of national self-determination. Of the many implications of this revelation is that Western Europe was itself responsible for the creation of the trigger that propelled them to war in 1914.⁶⁴

Britain is unavoidably the central focus of this study. The public reaction to perceived Ottoman atrocities was most remarkable and most vehement in Britain, and it overturned decades of Palmerstonian support for the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansion. But while the domestic causes and consequences of the Bulgarian Agitation

⁶⁴ This is not to suggest that the Great Eastern Crisis was directly responsible for the First World War. The crisis cannot account for the rise of German expansionism, the renewed Balkan ambitions of Russia after the Russo-Japanese War, the British and German naval arms race, or the cultural or geostrategic calculations of the Great Powers in 1914, among a multiplicity of other precipitating factors.

have been thoroughly explored, this dissertation centres on the international effects of political action at the community, regional, and state levels. The change in British foreign policy, achieved through an outpouring of popular revulsion towards alleged Ottoman atrocities, was decisive for a precipitous shift in international relations. As the largest and most influential power within the late nineteenth century international order, the British Empire's shift of regulating values towards biased perceptions of "principles of humanity" had immediate and lasting effects on the course of international history. The cultural legacies of the "Bulgarian Horrors" and the "Bulgarian Agitation," moreover, are evident both in common contemporary understandings of the Ottoman Empire (as the "Sick Man," uniquely prone to massacre) and the Balkans (as inherently unstable with a violent, deceitful population) and also within British historiography for well over a century.

The following study aims to contribute towards a transnational understanding of the Great Eastern Crisis. Although there is heavy emphasis on community-based politics and the production of foreign policy in Britain, my primary research also touches upon networks of Western expatriates centered in Constantinople and processes of memorialization and national memory in Bulgaria. I have sought to juxtapose isolated historiographies from multiple research traditions. This process helps subvert comfortable consensuses in each field—of which there are many in British, Bulgarian, and international scholarship. This dissertation makes reference to, yet has excluded in-depth discussion of, thematic topics that have been recently explored by other scholars. This includes the fascinating interplay of commerce and culture that underlines the financial history of the crisis, shaping the Anglo-French response to the Ottoman Default in 1875 and the

imposition of incompatible cultural values in exchange for financial aid⁶⁵—which arguably aggravated the domestic situation that precipitated revolts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The dissertation only briefly treats the development of Bulgarian nationalism and collective identity (before and after the April Uprising) and relies on specialist literature on that topic. The participation of women in this period of foreign policy and the events' influence on the organization of the woman's suffrage movement has been recently addressed by Anne Summers, among others.⁶⁶ I have partially addressed the early development of New Journalism in the British context; several studies further develop and supplement these points.⁶⁷ The minute details of the furious and constant diplomacy surrounding the Great Eastern Crisis has been exhaustively addressed by R. W. Seton-Watson, M. S. Anderson, A. J. P. Taylor, as well as Charles and Barbara Jelavich—I have consequently limited my analysis to aspects of diplomacy that were mostly significantly influenced by cultural factors. Yet this cultural lens gives us a better understanding how specific discursive understandings—particularly nationalist ideology, racial determinism, and religious conviction—shaped the trajectory of the Great Eastern Crisis and built fundamental tensions into the international geopolitical order that have yet to fully resolve.

⁶⁵ Jacques Thobie, *Intérêts et Impérialisme Français dans l'Empire Ottoman 1895-1914* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1977)

⁶⁶ Anne Summers, "British Women and Cultures of Internationalism, c. 1815-1914," in David Feldman (Ed.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 187-209.

⁶⁷ See, for example: Owen Mulpeter "W.T. Stead and the New Journalism," MPhil Thesis, University of Teesside, 2010; Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead, Britain's first Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2012).

Section Summaries

Section 2 applies an international cultural approach to the Ottoman historical context that led to the April Uprising in 1876. It demonstrates the profound misappreciation of Ottoman history in English and Bulgarian language historiographies that has dominated traditional historical understanding of the Great Eastern Crisis and the construction of a Bulgarian national mythology. Using the letters, newspapers, literature, and memoirs of Bulgarian revolutionaries as well as a synthetic rereading of international secondary sources shows that the April Uprising was not a widespread national rebellion and its impact was remarkably limited. It was precisely the rebellion's failure and swift, violent suppression that created a self-fulfilling prophecy of Bulgarian nationalism that aligned with powerful nationalist sympathies within Western Europe. The April Uprising engendered the symbolic power of Bulgarian revolutionaries as the vanguard of civilizational progress in the imaginations of outside observers who adopted their cause. Bulgarian revolutionaries effectively negotiated the cultural vocabulary of nationalism and the preconceptions of European and American onlookers, convincing them that Bulgaria and its inhabitants required liberation from Ottoman tyranny in order to preserve European peace. This section also evaluates the codification and evolution of the Bulgarian national narrative and argues that nationalist, Romanticized versions of the April Uprising dominate current Bulgarian historical consciousness. Recent historiographical shifts have both challenged this consensus and also provoked strong anti-revisionism in academia and a defensive nationalism throughout Bulgarian society.

Sections 3 and 4 use the above insights to re-envision the well-worn British perspective of the Bulgarian Horrors. These sections examine British community-level politics through the use of contemporary newspapers, town hall minutes, letters of correspondence, memoirs, and petitions addressed to parliament, statesmen, and the Foreign Office. It argues that during the Bulgarian Agitation of 1876, newspaper coverage in Britain tapped into distinct cultural languages of understanding, namely liberal moralism, nonconformist evangelicalism, provincial radicalism, proto-humanitarian compassion for fellow European Christians, and solidifying concepts of nationalism and “scientific” racial determination. New journalistic techniques and sensational editorial comments, most notably by W.T. Stead in the *Northern Echo*, shaped the public agitation in response to reports of atrocities in the Ottoman province of Bulgaria and directed widespread indignation by promoting public meetings, petition campaigns, and relief collections—all of which were widely popular and ultimately successful in achieving political and diplomatic change. Petition campaigns and their loci, the town hall and the pulpit, were concrete expressions of community-level political agitation. Nineteenth century petitions in Britain represent the intersection of private political action, public demonstration, the media, and the established political authority. Examining these episodes can not only help retrace how nebulous discourses of “public opinion” actually affected public policy, but it also shows processes of public participation in foreign policy and of increasing democratization. The Bulgarian Agitation also exposes powerful cultural frameworks of late-nineteenth century Victorian Britain along lines of religion, race, gender, sexuality, and nationality; it was a major impetus in the organization of women and the working classes; and it was also a key force in shaping the modern Balkans in the image

of the British popular imagination. Public agitation over the Bulgarian Horrors was therefore a fundamentally important event in the development of the “New Journalism,” in establishing community-level activism as a media event, in further developing popular interest and action for “humanitarian” causes, and in marking the growing political effect of the media and community-level activism in Britain.

Section 5 explores the marginalia found in the personal volumes of William Ewart Gladstone and the process of Gladstone’s “reading and viewing” of the Bulgarian question. It argues that, before the publication of his influential political pamphlet *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, Gladstone had read little about Southeastern European history, Bulgaria, or the Bulgarians. From his extensive and meticulous diary, we know that before the autumn of 1876 Gladstone’s understanding of the Eastern Question rested upon diplomatic reports submitted to parliament, polemical newspaper articles, his extensive knowledge of classics, theology, and the inner workings of government, and a handful of histories and travelogues. Gladstone’s marginalia in these latter volumes, as well as his extensive annotations in publications sent to him after his championing of the Bulgarian Agitation, expose his predispositions towards moral and racial understandings of the Eastern Question in broad terms, and they provide insight into his influential opposition to the government. Despite his championing of independence for the “Christian races” of Southeastern Europe, Gladstone’s knowledge of the region and its inhabitants was extraordinarily limited. As such, Gladstone’s marginalia provide a unique linkage between studies of cultural languages of understanding, individual decision making, and the mechanisms of political power and foreign policy, and it can help reveal the relationship between local histories of cultural production and major events in international relations.

Section 6 addresses the unfolding of the Great Eastern Crisis from the Russo-Turkish War to the signing of the Berlin Treaty in 1878. This section argues that these events solidified amorphous cultural perceptions into material consequences that had fundamental implications for both regional and world history. While the most critical instances of cultural predispositions shifting British foreign policy were made during the second half of 1876 (whereby the Agitation compelled William Gladstone's return to politics and demonstrably shifted Lord Derby's policies towards the region), the events of 1877-1878 demonstrate the critical importance of these shifts. In the support of the "Christian races" in Turkey-in-Europe against perceived outrages perpetrated by savage Muslims, British neutrality emboldened Russia to take advantage of the situation to wage a destructive war upon the isolated and vulnerable Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the Agitation continued and metamorphosed into a more controlled movement representing different and more institutionalized groups, away from community-based protest and entrenched within wider political and religious viewpoints. The war resulted in tens of thousands of military and civilian casualties, the violent dislocation of hundreds of thousands of refugees, huge financial and material costs on both sides, yet another European diplomatic crisis (based on another, opposite grassroots political movement in Britain) and the eventual reordering of major tracts of formerly Ottoman territories in the Balkans along a compromise between Great Power material interests and newly developed principles of national self-determination. As such, the Russo-Turkish War and the Congress of Berlin effectively reified the self-fulfilling prophesy of Bulgarian nationalism through the galvanizing process of war and the demarcation of borders along putative national identities.

A cultural approach to the Great Eastern Crisis has important implications for the historiography of international relations. While previous studies have appropriately noted the central importance of the Russo-Turkish War and the Congress of Berlin in pre-First World War diplomatic history, this dissertation asserts the central role of the cultural production of the crisis itself as well as its resolution through war and diplomacy. National self-determination was increasingly justified by religious, racial, and Whiggish understandings of international relations as the foremost factor of political legitimacy during the late nineteenth century. Conceived as a progressive ideology for political and social change to emancipate the “Christian races” from Ottoman subjugation in Southeastern Europe (as it had previously united Germans and Italians into their respective, “natural” nation-states), this principle was reified as the ideological basis of state sovereignty to be considered alongside Great Power politics. The imagining of the Bulgarian Horrors as the inhumane suppression of a Christian population yearning to be free underpinned the creation of the newly-independent states of Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania and the two autonomous provinces of Bulgaria. Far from securing a lasting peace, this settlement imposed the projected ideology of Romantic nationalism upon a widely diverse Balkan population with disastrous results. Ironically, this period heralded an unprecedented era of concern for morality and human rights within international relations while also setting up the geopolitical and ideological preconditions for the most calamitous period in human history.

2. The Bulgarian Revolution: Reconceptualizing the April Uprising

The April Uprising⁶⁸ is at the heart of Bulgarian national mythology. According to national mythology, after nearly five centuries of Ottoman “oppression”⁶⁹ and a period of national “revival,”⁷⁰ a national rebellion in the spring of 1876 was cruelly suppressed by Turkish forces. These Ottoman “crimes”⁷¹ prompted Russia, aided by Bulgarian volunteers, to “liberate”⁷² Bulgaria during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The signing of the Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and Turkey, which promised a fully independent state encompassing all Bulgarian territories, is celebrated as Liberation Day on 3 March. This agreement, however, was betrayed by the European Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin and Bulgaria was split into three separate territories under the continued control of the Ottoman Empire. The “restoration”⁷³ of an independent Bulgaria was only officially proclaimed in 1908 after nearly three decades of autonomous status. Despite some changes in vocabulary during the Soviet era, history textbooks published since 1878 have entrenched this national narrative as historical consensus in Bulgaria.⁷⁴

But despite its central importance to Bulgarian national identity, remarkably little is known for certain about what happened during the April Uprising. Much Bulgarian

⁶⁸ (Априлско въстание, *Aprilsko vastanie*) Using the Julian calendar (which was 12 days behind the Gregorian calendar during the nineteenth century), the uprising started on 20 April in Koprivshtitsa.

⁶⁹ (Потисничество, *potisnichestvo*) This also means “tyranny.”

⁷⁰ (Възраждане, *vŭzrazhdane*) This also means “Renaissance,” “rebirth,” and “renewal.”

⁷¹ (Престъпления, *prestŭpleniya*) The Bulgarian far-right nationalist party Ataka currently uses “crimes against humanity” and “genocide” to refer to the massacres, drawing parallels to the Armenian Genocide.

⁷² (Освобождавам, *osvobozhdavam*) Other meanings include “release,” “free,” “rescue,” and “unburden.”

⁷³ (Възстановяването, *vŭzstanovyavaneto*) Also: “recovery.”

⁷⁴ Studies of Bulgarian national history and its “cultural renaissance” were permitted during the Soviet period as Russia was considered as the great “liberator” of Bulgaria against foreign domination rather than as a conquering power. The verbs “to conquer” (побеждавам) and “to unify” (унифицира) were seen as “chauvinist” or “fascist” words until 1990. Albena Hranova, “Historical Myths: The Bulgarian Case of Pride and Prejudice” in Pål Kolstø (Ed.) *Myths and Boundaries in Eastern Europe* (London: C. Hurst, 2005): 297-324.

literature has been devoted to the study of its “National Awakening,” seeing the 1876 rebellion as the predictable, if not inevitable, outburst of national patriotic feeling against Ottoman oppression. Despite this scholarly attention, evidence of the uprising and its suppression is remarkably scarce, relying principally on memoirs published many years after the events or second-hand information. Yet in many ways this lack of evidence is immaterial. The cruel Ottoman massacre of heroic revolutionaries and innocent women and children is an article of faith in Bulgarian national mythology and as such does not require historical “proof” in order to be an extraordinarily powerful symbol. Indeed, it is precisely the *a priori* reinterpretation of events to reaffirm the “naturalness” and inevitability of the nation’s existence that characterizes modern nationalism.

Only a critical, international approach that is cognizant of multiple, insulated areas of inquiry and stifling historiographical quagmires can speak to events in Britain and Bulgaria. To assert a “truth” of the April Uprising that is incongruent with national mythology is to suggest its “falsity,” yet the assertion that Bulgarian national histories have “got it wrong” is not the aim of this study. This approach sets up a false dichotomy that unhelpfully dismisses the symbolic power of nationalist *perception* of events that do not match with the historical record.⁷⁵ In his introduction to a collective study of national myths and the creation of boundaries in Southeastern Europe, Pål Kolstø suggests that approaches to national mythology are typically either “functionalist” (in that they address the “function” of these myths through history) or “enlightenment” (seeking to debunk

⁷⁵ This is analogous to another false dichotomy: either accepting nationalism as the fundamental characteristic of human identity and condemning it as “false consciousness.” As Ernest Renan famously observed well over a century ago: “Forgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation” (“L’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation, et c’est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques.”) Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” Sorbonne Lecture, 11 March 1882, 9.

historical myths); I will follow his own approach with a combination of the two.⁷⁶ As Benedict Anderson has similarly (although less thoroughly) observed, communities should be distinguished “not by their falsity/genuineness, but the style in which they are imagined.”⁷⁷ In this case the Bulgarian national revolution is presently imagined as cultural renaissance, revolution, martyrdom, heroism, betrayal, and (eventual) liberation.

This section argues that an international, cultural approach fundamentally alters historical understanding of the international history of the April Uprising, the Bulgarian Horrors, the character of the international reaction, and therefore the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis. It does so by critiquing the long legacy of Eurocentric methodological nationalism within British, international, and Bulgarian scholarship with regards to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Christian uprisings, the Russo-Turkish War, and the formation of new Balkan states and the new international geopolitical order at the Congress of Berlin. The spread of revolutionary nationalism to the Balkans within the Ottoman historical context was not the result of an inevitable awakening of national consciousness due to the natural decay of an illegitimate Ottoman regime. It was instead a political ideology that was adopted (and adapted) by a limited circle of Balkan intellectuals in the context of more fundamental economic, political, and religious resistance to the embattled Ottoman state and other Orthodox Christians seeking the same concessions. The April Uprising itself was organized and carried out chiefly by Western-educated elites who represented a small fraction of the Bulgarian population; indeed, the overwhelming majority of Rumelian Christians opposed the rebellion. Outside observers, on the other

⁷⁶ Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries*, 32.

⁷⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 6. Frustratingly, Anderson did not indicate *how* styles were to be differentiated.

hand, received information through the cultural filters of revolutionary supporters and evangelizing journalists. Consequently, many observers perceived the revolt to be emblematic of oppressed Christian races yearning to be free of intolerable Muslim tyranny, which was situated within the cultural backdrop of Turkish political backwardness, religious heresy, and racial degeneracy.

While revolutionary nationalism was indeed remarkably limited amongst Rumelian Christians, motivated Bulgarian revolutionaries took advantage of powerful languages of cultural understanding that increasingly pitted Christian European industry, civilization, innocence, martyrdom, heroism, and racial superiority against Muslim Turkish decadence, barbarism, sexual depravity, infidelity, villainy, and primitivism. Despite the limited nature and abject failure to achieve its stated material goals, the nationalist-inspired April Uprising and its swift suppression thus crystallized European opinion against the Ottoman Empire. An international critical approach, therefore, underlines the fundamentally *cultural* nature of the Great Eastern Crisis. The crisis was constructed along powerful cultural values, not simply the material realities of the Ottoman domestic situation or even the supposedly straightforward material interests of the Great Powers. This culturally-formulated international crisis precipitated a major international geopolitical change as Ottoman authority in the Balkans was drastically reduced.

The Ottoman Historical Context and the Spread of Nationalism

The increasing influence of Bulgarian national identity amongst Rumelian Christians occurred over an extended period and for a complex hierarchy of reasons, material as well as ideological. A general unfamiliarity with Ottoman history frequently characterizes the

adoption of the traditional “decline thesis”⁷⁸ of the Ottoman Empire (originally theorized in the nineteenth century as the “Sick Man”⁷⁹) when approaching the concurrent upsurge of Balkan nationalism. In this view, vigorous Christian industry and nationalism inevitably followed Islamic decadence, stagnation, mismanagement, and decline. While the nuances of political and economic forces in the Western European context are studied in great detail with the assumption of complex relationships between material and ideological forces—as well as the social implications of wars and political upheaval—the unfamiliar Ottoman context is frequently treated as monolithic, insulated from European social and cultural movements, and constrained by innate conservatism and dogmatic religious beliefs.

Recent Ottoman scholarship has transformed this narrative, demonstrating the dynamic and “modern” nature of its history up to its dismantling in the early twentieth century, its economic situation, its clashes between religious conservatives and nationalists, liberals, and reformers, as well as the central importance of the Ottoman Empire to modern European history as a whole. Authors such as Suraiya Faroqhi, Caroline Finkel, Donald Quataert, and M. Sükrü Hanioglu emphasize the empire’s political and social dynamism even late into the nineteenth century, and its close diplomatic, economic, and cultural links to Western Europe; they also urge further integration of Ottoman history into

⁷⁸ The “decline thesis” is still the most common framework for understanding late Ottoman history amongst non-specialists, despite many texts arguing about its inappropriateness. See, for example: Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913: Trade, Investment and Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); M. Sükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁷⁹ Turkey as the “sick man” of Europe was a widely-used descriptor of the Ottomans in the British Press from the time the phrase was made famous by Tsar Nicholas I immediately preceding the Crimean War in 1853. See: “Last Kick of the Sick Man,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (London), 9 April 1876 and 2 July 1876.

histories of Europe.⁸⁰ When viewed in the temporal isolation of the late 1870s without greater historical consideration, the Ottoman Empire seems fiscally, administratively, militarily, even morally backward compared to Western Europe. Yet this new scholarship suggests that national uprisings should be seen amidst a *longue durée* history of widespread social and cultural upheavals in the Empire following traumatic wars with the European Great Powers.⁸¹ While a comprehensive study of the origins of Bulgarian nationalism within the Ottoman context is impossible here, it is nevertheless valuable to recognize that the preconditions for this national “revival” were created not simply by Ottoman “sickness” but by largely predatory wars and unequal financial relationships with European powers (both governed by the perceived categories of religious and racial difference) which had major material implications for the region and the development of local resistance to imperial authority.

The Ottoman Empire entered the nineteenth century reeling from a series of military disasters and their consequent political and economic difficulties. A particularly disastrous war with Catherine the Great’s Russia ended with the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kainarji in 1774, which ceded lands north of the Danube and Crimea to Russia, forced the Porte to pay an enormous indemnity,⁸² and granted many freedoms to Ottoman Christians. This humiliating defeat damaged the prestige of Ottoman rule, and it led to a

⁸⁰ See above footnote and Karl Kaser, *The Balkans and the Near East: Introduction to a Shared History* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2011). Mark Mazower’s *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Random House, 2000) dismisses the illusion of “Ottoman backwardness” or stagnation during this time; Mazower argues that the five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans were remarkably dynamic and for a large part more stable and prosperous in comparison to its Western neighbours.

⁸¹ See also: Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (London: Penguin, 1999).

⁸² The 7.5 million *gurushes* paid to Russia amounted to *half* of all state revenues for that year. Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*,

period of economic and military reforms known as the *Nizam-i-Cedid* or “New Order” under the young Sultan Selim III.⁸³ Further defeats during the Russo-Turkish and Austro-Ottoman wars of 1787-1792 marked the loss of the Crimean Khanate to Russia, increasing taxes, and further administrative and educational reforms that focused primarily on military effectiveness rather than social, political, or economic reform.

The Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 was a crushing blow, militarily, economically, and ideologically, with far reaching implications. Selim III had been an admirer of French culture and the new reforms were based on a French model. France’s betrayal therefore instigated powerful religious and military opposition to liberal reforms and Western cultural influence. A campaign against a large-scale Janissary⁸⁴ rebellion led by Osman Pazvantoğlu had to be diverted to repel foreign invaders in Egypt, which was an essential food source for the empire. Moreover, Napoleon and his armies spread the concept of nationalism throughout Europe and the Ottoman Empire, including North Africa and the Illyrian Peninsula, which proved “fertile ground”⁸⁵ for nationalist ideology against the seemingly bankrupt Ottoman state. A levy of new taxes to pay for the campaign against the French, food scarcity, unchecked open rebellion, and perceived weakness of the Porte led to fifteen years of turmoil, including the general breakdown of central Ottoman authority and widespread banditry in the Balkan provinces. Although the Ottomans allied with Russia to push France out of Egypt, skilful French diplomacy precipitated a war between the two by convincing Selim to depose two Russian-backed princes in the

⁸³ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69-71.

⁸⁴ Janissaries were the Sultan’s personal corps of elite military and civilian officials.

⁸⁵ Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 51. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 5-6. Napoleon cast himself as a “liberator” of peoples oppressed by monarchic tyranny.

Danubian Principalities in 1806.⁸⁶ The resulting Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 exacerbated the already tenuous situation; it corresponded with civil war in Constantinople, the forced abdication and murder of Selim III by the janissaries, and the first major uprising of Christians in Serbia. This trend of foreign intervention and war, economic instability, domestic turmoil, and rebellion defined the Eastern Question throughout the nineteenth century, beginning with Serbia in 1804 and again in 1815, then Greece from 1821-33, Egypt from 1831 to 1840, Vidin⁸⁷ in 1841 and 1850, Niš in 1850, Lebanon and Syria from 1860-1, Crete in 1866-9, Tunis in 1869, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1875, and finally Bulgaria in 1876. Revolt, therefore, was not unique to Bulgaria or limited to Ottoman Christians.

The global spread of capitalism to the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, combined with demographic change and urbanization, also upset the *status quo*, as it undermined the traditional arrangement between Balkan peasants and their foreign landowners, and highlighted the economic disparity between East and West.⁸⁸ Traditional Ottoman trade routes were increasingly in competition with expanding Western European trade and international markets, which forced change within the empire due to declining sources of imperial revenue. European mass production and a shrinking domestic market due to over-taxation devalued Ottoman textiles and manufactured goods. Modernizing reforms, aimed at increasing revenues and the effectiveness of the Ottoman military, gave more rights to land owners and diminished the land and property privileges

⁸⁶ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 122.

⁸⁷ The Sanjak of Vidin was located in the Ottoman Danubian Vilayet; it is now the northwesternmost province of Bulgaria. The revolt was organized in Brăila by Serbian Vladislav Tatić in hopes of provoking general rebellion. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of Balkan National States* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), 135.

⁸⁸ Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*, 35-37.

of Balkan peasants, which in turn led to resentment and resistance.⁸⁹ In order to finance costly wars, the Ottoman treasury borrowed immense sums internally, with paid annuities on the internal debt amounting to over 25 per cent of state revenues by 1815.⁹⁰ Western powers were granted extraordinary concessions with the intent to encourage international trade. The 1838 Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty, for example, levied a mere three per cent duty on imported British products while Ottoman exports were taxed at 60 per cent—resulting in a negative net impact on the Ottoman economy and increased resentment by Christian merchants of the Ottoman economic system.⁹¹

Numerous recent studies on the rise of Balkan nationalism⁹² have undermined uncritical acceptance of national collective identity as well as the theory that increasing national awareness was the root cause of rebellion. The reaction of “modernist”⁹³ scholars to these “primordialist” assumptions has focused on the dismissal of persistent “myths” of the region amongst its inhabitants: namely, the traceable historical continuity of unified nations through history,⁹⁴ the “rebirth,” “revival,” “renaissance” or “awakening” of national identity,⁹⁵ or the existence of “ancient hatreds” between ethnic groups.⁹⁶ Yet both

⁸⁹ Mazower, *The Balkans*, 29-30.

⁹⁰ Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 192. (cited by Hanioglu, 23)

⁹¹ Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz İktisadî Münâsebetleri*, 1, 109-10. (cited by Hanioglu, 70).

⁹² Many such studies were authored in the wake of Yugoslavia’s violent disintegration and the subsequent *post hoc* interest in nationalism and ethnic conflict.

⁹³ Also sometimes labelled “instrumentalism.”

⁹⁴ Bulgarian revolutionaries and scholars unproblematically traced the origins of Bulgarian national identity from the ancient period through the two medieval Empires and Ottoman occupation to the modern period, yet these claims are fundamentally anachronistic. Medieval identity was hardly associated with the modern sense of “nation”; there was no “self-aware ethnic group” that purported to represent a Bulgarian nation that fits with modern definitions. The divide between the peasantry and the nobility, as it was elsewhere, was the deciding factor in identity during the two medieval Bulgarian Tsardoms; ruling houses were not apt to share their coat of arms or noble lineages with commoners. Pre-modern political organizations, whether tribal or village units, ancient empires, feudal kingdoms, or loose empires of religion, only coincidentally coincided with nationalist principles, as observed by Brendan O’Leary, “On the Nature of Nationalism,” 193.

⁹⁵ Modernists such as Ernest Gellner assert that “Nationalism is *not* the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force,” (*Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 48) but rather its artificial “invention” where it

“modernist” and “primordialist” approaches to nationalism are dichotomistic and unhelpful: either the nation is treated as the only legitimate basis for collective identity (and political sovereignty) or it is viewed as a false and dangerous ideology that has tragically misled historical actors. Both theories de-emphasize the agency of individuals and groups to choose their own motivations for action by focusing on ideological and structural frameworks of power rather than on the cultural languages of action to be negotiated by free historical actors. A more plausible approach is that perceived nations are indeed powerful, quantifiable identities, but they are also culturally constructed and historically contingent. The language and ideology of nationalism, that “Bulgarians” required a sovereign “Bulgaria” in order to be truly free, spread from Western Europe (which in turn received it from the Americas)⁹⁷ and adopted by revolutionaries in order to find meaning in their struggle against Ottoman rule, itself largely triggered by other material causes. Appreciating the fluidity of nationalism, its constant state of flux,⁹⁸ and its subservient position to the freewill of historical actors is therefore essential for understanding its role in the April Uprising and the formation of Bulgaria, as is the appreciation of the powerful legacy of inherent nationalist “primordialism” within international historiographies.

did not previously exist (*Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), 169). Nations are thereby constructed and “imagined” out of endless possible nations depending largely on geographic or material circumstances—especially the expansion of print-capitalism and processes of linguistic standardization (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46).

⁹⁶ The oft-used phrase “ancient hatreds” was first given wide use by British Prime Minister John Major with regards to the collapse of Yugoslavia (“Warring Factions Strike Bosnia Deal,” *The Times*, 28 August 1992:1). George H. W. Bush similarly described the region’s “age-old animosities” (Quoted in Jack Snyder, “Nationalism and the crisis of the Post-Soviet state,” in Michael Brown (Ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 79). Close historical attention asserts that this assumption is, as John Allcock succinctly argues, “claptrap” (*Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 8).

⁹⁷ Benedict Anderson, “Creole Origins,” in *Imagined Communities*.

⁹⁸ See Klaus Eder, Bernard Giesen, Oliver Schmidtke, and Damian Tambini, *Collective Identities in Action: A Sociological Approach to Ethnicity*, (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 13.

Nationalist ideology was therefore not only a powerful language of understanding that Bulgarian elites increasingly adopted to make sense of their own situation and to justify political actions, it was, and continues to be, the principle way in which the Bulgarian “Revival” and the April Uprising have been historically understood. Within the all-encompassing discourses of nationalism and civilizational progress that characterized higher learning from the earliest formation of the historical profession, rebellions over taxation, security, and livelihood have been traditionally characterized as natural nationalist uprisings against foreign oppression. Yet, as is the case in many modern revolutions, re-evaluation of this narrative suggests that material causes and geopolitics were at the root of early nineteenth century Christian rebellions throughout the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

Leopold von Ranke’s 1829 *Serbische Revolution*, for example, traced the “rise” of the “Servian Race” under Turkish control and their struggle for national liberation. Translated into English in 1853, Ranke’s translator summed up how he situated Serbia in “the seat of a protracted straddle between European civilization and Oriental despotism—between the Christian and Mahomedan religions” where “brave, hardy and simple people, contending for national independence and religious freedom” are “subjected to the cruel persecutions of their infidel oppressors.”⁹⁹ Yet ironically, the first Serbian rebellion in 1804 started as protest for the reestablishment of Ottoman law and order in order to punish the unruly janissary leaders who had murdered the well-loved Ottoman *pasha* Hacı Mustafa and

⁹⁹ Leopold von Ranke, *The History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*, Translated by Mrs. Alexander Kerr (London: Henry Bohn, 1853), *ii*.

massacred hundreds of *knezes* and peasants.¹⁰⁰ The fragmentation and defeat of the first rebellion led to vicious reprisals and the outbreak of a second under Miloš Obrenović, who opportunistically sold his loyalty to the Ottoman state for personal power and the lucrative control of the pig trade. Obrenović in turn became “more systematic in his economic exploitation of the Serbs than the Ottomans had ever been”¹⁰¹ and his reign until 1839 was beset by its own peasant rebellions. It therefore makes little sense to designate these rebellions as “national” in character, but educated opinion at the time perceived them as such.

Romantic nationalism’s increasing discursive power, spreading throughout educated, liberal Europe, increased dramatically during the War of Greek Independence. The West imagined the Greek rebellion as a revival of an ancient “Hellenic” nation amongst Philhellenes, who eventually convinced Britain, France, and Russia to intervene with what were claimed to be “humanitarian” causes.¹⁰² The Greek population, however, was violently divided with itself (fighting two concurrent civil wars) and only after a series of fortuitous events did the war against the Ottomans become a major rebellion, most importantly when the Ottoman governor himself, Ali Paşa, opportunistically sided with the Greeks. The Orthodox Church actually attempted to side with the Ottomans by excommunicating the revolutionaries, but the Sultan hanged the Constantine Patriarch anyway due to domestic pressure from hard line conservatives. The execution provoked outrage amongst Ottoman Orthodox Christians, including Bulgarians, and it enraged Russia. While the poet Lord Byron raised awareness of the Greek War and helped push through a

¹⁰⁰ Mustafa was referred to as the “Mother of the Serbs,” Glenny, *The Balkans*, 6. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 196.

¹⁰¹ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 21.

¹⁰² See Rodogno’s chapter, “Intervention on Behalf of the Ottoman Greeks,” In *Against Massacre*, 63-90.

much-needed international loan to the rebels, the importance of philhellenism is often overstated.¹⁰³ Formal British support of the rebellion was limited at first because of fear of increasing Russian influence, but they later saw the support of a strong Mediterranean power as a sound business investment.¹⁰⁴ Greek reliance on the Great Powers led to a dependence on international aid and increasing foreign involvement in the region, including a foreign monarch (Otto I, a Roman Catholic from Bavaria) and a constitution drafted in London. So while early nineteenth century rebellions have typically been cast as national revolutions, this narrative also does not withstand scrutiny.

From 1839, the Ottoman Empire entered a period of reforms known as the *Tanzimat* or “Reordering.” The *Tanzimat* attempted to radically reform the economy and centralize imperial power while preserving Islamic traditions and much of the *millet* system that administered religious minorities. The overall attempt at conciliation proved to be contradictory and ultimately impossible. Thus, somewhat ironically, Western-styled modernizing reforms themselves were responsible for a great deal of political, economic, and social upheaval that encouraged further resistance to the Ottoman state. Reforms met opposition at every turn, and the lack of government officials or financial resources to enforce the changes meant that tax reform actually reduced much-needed income.¹⁰⁵ Bosnian Muslims (*Begs*), for example, simply ignored the Porte’s demand for taxes because of debilitating poverty in the *pashalik* and the fear that reform would threaten their

¹⁰³ Much of it, in the words of Misha Glenny, was “characterized by incompetence, personal greed and witless pontificating” (Glenny, *The Balkans*, 35).

¹⁰⁴ Denis Hupchick, *The Balkans: From Constantinople to Communism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 225.

¹⁰⁵ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 239.

ownership of the land. The Bosnian revolt precipitated military intervention by the Porte in 1850-51, which devastated Bosnia and cost the Ottomans dearly.¹⁰⁶

Not until the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 did reforms become a central priority for the Porte. Even then, reforms were piecemeal and they did not address much needed agrarian reform. But the Crimean War also coincided with astronomically increasing foreign debt and international meddling which debilitated the empire for the next sixty years. The 1856 Treaty of Paris finally admitted the Ottoman Empire into the European concert of powers, but only in return for “civilized” reforms to their system of property, justice, and religious equality.¹⁰⁷ The victory over Russia thus prevented further territorial losses, but aggravated Ottoman conservatives who considered religious equality sacrilegious.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the staggering cost of the Crimean War for the Porte (they were required to host the British and French troops stationed there) led to huge foreign debts, the first taken out in 1854. Through the 1860s Russia expelled at least 600,000 Muslim Circassians from the Caucasus to tighten its rule after longstanding conflict since the late eighteenth century. The cost of resettling so many refugees throughout Ottoman Territories—both socially and economically—was enormous.¹⁰⁹ By 1875, the Porte was paying *half* of its national income into servicing foreign debts.¹¹⁰ These burdens crippled

¹⁰⁶ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 81-2. This was to become a central symbolic event for Bosnian Muslim identity in the nineteenth century. The Bosnia-Herzegovina uprising in 1875 certainly had its origins in the 1850-1 rebellion.

¹⁰⁷ Mazower, *The Balkans*, xxxvi. These freedoms were known as the *Hatt-i Hümayun*. The Reform Edict of 1856 granted non-Muslims equality in all aspects of life.

¹⁰⁸ This also aggravated the Orthodox Patriarch as it reduced his privileged position: “the state has made us equal with the Jews. We were satisfied with Muslim superiority,” quoted in Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 75.

¹⁰⁹ Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923* (New York: Basic, 2005), 467-8.

That a quarter of refugees were slaves prompted commissions to reform immigration policy and the practice of slavery, which was banned amongst Ottoman subjects under the *Tanzimat*.

¹¹⁰ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 285.

attempts at meaningful reform, and set the stage for the next round of rebellions and international involvement. The financial crisis of the Ottoman Empire, caused overwhelmingly by war with other European powers and frustrated attempts at modernizing reforms, was thus a crucial component of its “sickness.”

Origins of Revolutionary Bulgarian Nationalism

Richard Crampton notes that the early “pre-renaissance” period of Bulgarian proto-nationalism, whereby priests and scholars moved away from Old Church Slavonic towards the vernacular Bulgarian and other signs signified greater cultural self-awareness and self-confidence, was curtailed by the кърджалийство (*kŭrdjaliĭstvo*), or the period of domestic unrest from the mid-1770s to the mid-1820s outlined above.¹¹¹ Wars with European powers precipitated this period of widespread banditry and lawlessness, which pushed many Christians away from the Bulgarian plains into safer mountain towns such as Koprivshtitsa and to Romania (particularly Brăila and Bucharest). Both regions would later be hotbeds of Bulgarian nationalism and centres of revolutionary activity.¹¹² The relative stability of the 1830s marked the beginning of increasing Bulgarian national awareness, described as the възраждане (*vŭzrazhdane*) or renaissance. Nationalism as an ideology roughly coincided with class-based resistance as Balkan peasants sought better conditions from their Ottoman landowners. Balkan independence movements were vaguely nationalistic, but for them what counted was “not the Nation or other abstract political concepts, but [the peasants’] right to land, livelihood and fair taxes.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24-25. Кърджалийство is derived from the Turkish word for “plains” and does not have a comparable English translation.

¹¹² Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 36.

¹¹³ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans*, 30.

Importantly, the *Tanzimat* founded a modern, professional army, ended the practice of tax-farming, gave Christian peasants increased rights to their land, and allowed increasing trade with Europe and the rest of the empire—all factors that greatly benefitted Bulgaria and contributed to an economic boom in the region. Christian artisans and merchants, supplying the new Ottoman army with cloth and supplies through organized and powerful guilds, enjoyed increasing prosperity that in turn led to education and mobility.¹¹⁴ Regional and community loyalties, combined with international educations of wealthy sons in Odessa, Constantinople, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Paris, and London, translated into increasing national identification amongst educated, urban elites. By the 1850s, friction appeared between self-identifying Greeks and Bulgarians, organized by different guilds, over control of education and religion.

The difference between Greek and Bulgarian national identities was not entirely straightforward until at least the mid-nineteenth century. Western travellers to the region frequently observed a confused national identity amongst Christians in the region, and generally categorized them all as “Greeks.”¹¹⁵ Greek was the language of education amongst Rumelian Christians before the 1840s, and it was the language of Mediterranean trade. With Greek independence, however, the proselytizing, nationalist rhetoric of Philhellenism chafed against a developing Bulgarian intelligentsia who conceived of their own separate national identity. To counter increasing Greek domination, Bulgarians advocated

¹¹⁴ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 42-47.

¹¹⁵ John Hobhouse's 1813 travelogue, *A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia during the Years 1809-1810*. Vol. 1 (London: James Cawthorn, 1813) makes no mention of “Bulgarians,” “Slavs,” or any distinction amongst Christians in the region beyond “Greeks” (whom he distinguishes into several distinct races). In fact, he states how Christians “can fairly be called Albanians ... scarcely, if at all, to be distinguished from the Mahometans” (131). See also the discussion of James Baker's *Turkey in Europe* (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1877), in Section 5.

Bulgarian-language primary education to preserve and advocate political and cultural autonomy. The first Bulgarian school opened in Gabrovo in 1835; 53 more opened within a decade and eventually most Bulgarian communities offered primary education in their own language.¹¹⁶ Higher education was obtained either in Constantinople amongst foreign schools, such as in Robert College (founded in 1863) and the French Lycée and Catholic college, or in Russia or other European countries.¹¹⁷ Textbooks and educational materials, then newspapers, books, and other publications encouraged by increasing literacy, led to the codification of modern Bulgarian by the 1840s, pushing out Old Church Slavonic (the language of the Orthodox Church) and Greek.¹¹⁸ Printing presses (introduced to Bulgaria only in 1840) churned out fifty newspapers and forty periodicals in Bulgarian before 1878. Most did not last more than a few years, but each was published with the goal of promoting “civil commitment and national consciousness.”¹¹⁹ Echoing the replacement of Latin amongst educated Western Europeans via markets of print-capitalism, this process of linguistic standardization and the creation of a “national print language”¹²⁰ as well as increased literacy was a major impetus for increasing national awareness. Literacy, however, was limited to those able to afford private education, principally provided for

¹¹⁶ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 51-2. These schools were largely funded by expatriates in Russia, who provided teaching positions, textbooks, and scholarships for Bulgarians to study in Russia.

¹¹⁷ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 53. Roumen Daskalov found that out of 370 Bulgarians who graduated from foreign universities before 1878 whose careers were known, only 123 graduates returned to Bulgaria, 62 worked abroad more than they did at home, and 180 remained in foreign countries, citing: *Mezhdur iztoka I zapada: bulgarski kulturni dilemi* (Sofia: LIK, 1998), 233.

¹¹⁸ Achieved in the 6 volume *Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language* by Naiden Gerov, published in 1846. Only in the 1870s did the Gabrovo dialect of Bulgarian become the literary standard.

¹¹⁹ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 58.

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46.

male offspring¹²¹—Crampton notes that the literacy rate was only 27.91 per cent of the adult population as late as 1905.¹²²

A struggle for the independence of the Bulgarian Church coincided with the establishment of Bulgarian-language education. Greek bishops administered the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria and collected twice as much tax from Bulgarians than did the Ottoman state—refusal to pay the exorbitant taxes of one Greek bishop resulted in the execution of Bulgarian leader Dimitraki Hadjitoshev.¹²³ Russian intrigue secured the autonomy of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1831 and Greece received autocephalous status in 1833.¹²⁴ This prompted calls for Bulgaria’s religious independence, especially among Bulgarian-speaking Orthodox priests trained in Russian seminaries.¹²⁵ The following decades of antagonism between the Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox clergy increasingly solidified perceptions of national difference and solidarity as well as nationalist arguments for the self-determination of the Bulgarian Church. Bulgarian religious nationalists, who would later underpin revolutionary activity, including the famous “apostle” Georgi Rakovski, cut their teeth while in opposition to Greek ecclesiastical domination.¹²⁶ After decades of struggle, intensifying in the 1860s due to international instability and Christian rebellion in

¹²¹ Krassimira Daskalova, “Buglarian Women’s Movement (1850s-1940s)” in Saurer, Lanzinger and Frysak (Eds.) *Women’s Movements: Networks and Debates in Post-communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, 2006), 413.

¹²² Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 55.

¹²³ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 65.

¹²⁴ “Autonomy” of a church being one step short of complete “autocephaly,” or ecclesiastical independence. Autonomous churches had their head figure (Patriarch, Primate, or Metropolitan) appointed by a “mother church,” but were otherwise independent, whereas autocephalous churches were completely independent (although in full communion with other Eastern Orthodox churches). The Serbian Orthodox Church secured autocephaly in 1879.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ There was also much divide over whether autonomy or independence should be sought and how best to achieve it. Rakovski opposed Uniatists, who effectively achieved independence from Greek control by submitting to the Pope and Catholic doctrine.

Crete, a Bulgarian Exarchate was finally established in 1870s by *firman* (decree) and the first Bulgarian Patriarch was elected in 1872.

Although there were Bulgarian-centered histories before the 1860s, most notably the writings of cloistered Bulgarian Catholics,¹²⁷ it was the establishment of the Bulgarian Literary Society in 1869 (which became the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1911) by an émigré community in Brăila, Romania that marked the beginning of the professional practice of Bulgarian History. In the context of religious discord over the control and language of the Orthodox Church, primarily with Greece, Bulgarian authors concentrated efforts on recovering the past glories of the two medieval Bulgarian Empires in order to shape a national consciousness and self-esteem with respect to a perceived Greek hegemony.¹²⁸ Bulgarian historians, during the formative late-nineteenth century period of nationalist historical scholarship elsewhere in Europe, felt compelled to construct their own “respectable” record.¹²⁹ This self-conscious effort to coalesce a continuous national narrative in order to legitimate Bulgarian aspirations involved the general omission of centuries of Ottoman domination and the revival of continuity with the glorious medieval past.¹³⁰ Historians were therefore intractably linked with the process of “national renaissance” as they reified their political goals by plundering the past for a coherent and

¹²⁷ Including the eighteenth century works by the early “apostles” Spiridon of Gabrovo (*A Short History of the Bulgarian People*) and Paisii of Hilendar (also known as Paisij Hilendarski) (*A Slavonic-Bulgarian History of the Peoples, Tsars, Saints, and of all their Deeds and of the Bulgarian Way of Life*)

¹²⁸ Maria Todorova, “Historiographies of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Bulgaria,” *AHR* 97, 4 (1992), 1106. Prior to the independence of the Bulgarian Church, achieved through an Ottoman *firman* in 1870, all Ottoman Christians were managed under the same *millet* system of administration.

¹²⁹ Mark Mazower has noted this trend of nationalist histories that coalesce struggles of national resistance against foreign oppression, which characteristically ignore the Ottoman period and revive continuity with the medieval past—all in order to “produce the kind of historical pedigree once—if not still—required by Europe itself,” *The Balkans*, xli.

¹³⁰ Mark Mazower has observed that nationalist passions were seemingly caused by anxieties over the creation of “the kind of historical pedigree once—if not still—required by Europe itself.” *The Balkans*, xli.

continuous national identity. Moreover, they were also tied to the nationalist movement from the earliest stage; the Literary Society was formed in the same year and the same community as the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee.

Revolutionary Nationalism and the Origins of the April Uprising

Bulgarian cultural development and religious separatism easily translated into political nationalism. Elements of the educated intelligentsia, cognizant of national struggles elsewhere in the empire and throughout Europe, shifted efforts towards the military struggle against Ottoman rule. Georgi Rakovski, perhaps the most zealous Bulgarian nationalist, penned revolutionary poems and national histories, plotted the overthrow of the Ottomans, created militias (the First and Second Bulgarian Legion, in 1862 and 1867 respectively) to fight Ottoman forces near Belgrade, formed the Secret Central Bulgarian Committee in 1866 in Bucharest,¹³¹ and was instrumental in fostering early nationalist sentiment through the use of Western-styled journalism. His revolutionary newspaper, *Дунавски лебед* (“Danubian Swan”), was modelled on *The Times* and he sought an international audience by translating articles into English and mailing them to journalists in London.¹³² These articles were some of the first writings on modern “Bulgaria” and Christian “Bulgarians” in the English press.¹³³ Rakovski’s political pamphlets

¹³¹ The Secret Central Bulgarian Committee was actually formed by Rakovski’s secretary Ivan Kasabov, who became chairman. This short-lived committee was politically moderate, seeking autonomy of a Bulgarian Kingdom (on an Austrian model) rather than full independence and confining its activities to publishing the newspaper *Narodnost* (*Nationality*). Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček “Memorandum of the Secret Central Bulgarian Committee” in Trencsényi and Kopeček (Eds.) *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentaries, Volume 2* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 381.

¹³² Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 86.

¹³³ Certainly, ancient Bulgaria was known by educated Britons and the region was typically referred to as “Bulgaria” in the British press, particularly during the Napoleonic and Crimean wars.

“Memorandum to the Sultan”¹³⁴ and “Bulgaria before Europe” were printed in Bulgarian and French and circulated throughout Europe, boasting that if the Porte did not make immediate concessions to Bulgarians they would revolt and cause the demise of the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁵ Despite receiving support from Russia, Serbia, and Romania, Rakovski’s First Bulgarian Legion was quickly defeated by Ottoman forces in 1862; Rakovski himself died of tuberculosis in 1867 and the Second Bulgarian Legion was disbanded in 1868 after Serbian diplomat Jovan Ristić made peace with the Ottomans. Rakovski’s revolutionary legacy, however, was taken up by those he had inspired, including Vasil Levski and Hristo Botev.

The origin of the April Uprising begins with the formation of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC) and the Internal Revolutionary Organization (IRO) in 1869 and their unification in 1872. Lyuben Karavelov¹³⁶ and his revolutionary newspaper *Свобода* (Freedom) were instrumental in the founding of the BRCC amongst Bulgarian émigrés in Brăila, Romania under his chairmanship. Vasil Levski,¹³⁷ a founding member of the BRCC, shifted emphasis to foster revolution from within Bulgaria. Levski founded the IRO, which headed some 200 smaller committees throughout Bulgaria that each plotted armed rebellion. The two committees merged under the BRCC in 1872, with

¹³⁴ See text of Memorandum, addressed “To His Imperial Majesty, Sultan Abdülaziz Khan, our Merciful Father and Master, from the Secret Central Bulgarian Committee,” in Trencsényi and Kopeček, “Memorandum,” *Discourses*, 383-8.

¹³⁵ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 87.

¹³⁶ Lyuben Karavelov (1834-1879), born in Koprivshitsa and educated in Greek and Bulgarian schools, became a writer after studying History and Philology at the University of Moscow and participating in student riots in 1861. In 1867 he was sent as a correspondent to Belgrade for Russian newspapers. He was subsequently arrested for participating in revolutionary activity and spent time in a Bucharest jail until 1869.

¹³⁷ Vasil Levski (1837-1873) was born into a middle-class artisan family and became an Orthodox monk before joining Georgi Rakovski’s Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade in 1862. He ended up teaching in Voynagovo from 1864-1866, but moved after arousing suspicion. He met and briefly lived with Hristo Botev in Bucharest during 1868. His article “What do the Bulgarians Want?” asserted “пълна свобода” (“complete freedom”)

Levski focused on revolution from within and Karavelov and Hristo Botev¹³⁸ from without. That same year, however, a small group of revolutionaries robbed an Ottoman postal convoy in the Arabakonak pass near Sofia; after their arrest they subsequently exposed the widespread conspiratorial network and Levski's leadership of it. Levski, attempting to retrieve revolutionary archives in Lovech before escaping to Romania, was arrested in Kakrina, brought to Sofia to stand trial, and hanged on 6 February 1873.¹³⁹ Levski's execution demoralized the remnants of the IRO and effectively ended revolutionary activity in Bulgaria until the end of 1875, despite Botev's stirring elegy recounting his tragic martyrdom.¹⁴⁰

Karavelov and Botev subsequently quarrelled over the future of the BRCC. Botev, supported by Stefan Stambolov and Panayot Hitov, advocated immediate insurrection but Karavelov judged that it was too soon.¹⁴¹ Botev questioned Karavelov's commitment to the revolution and mocked his stance in the satiric newspaper Будилник (Alarm).¹⁴² The same

¹³⁸ Hristo Botev (1848-1876) is perhaps the second foremost revolutionary hero. He was the son of Botyo Petkov, a Bulgarian-language teacher and significant figure in fostering Bulgarian national sentiment and was educated at a high school in Odessa (apparently influenced by Russian Liberal poets) before becoming a teacher himself in Odessa. After briefly replacing his father as teacher in Kalofer in 1867, he left for Romania after speaking publicly against the Ottoman authorities (Trencsényi, Kopeček; 473).

¹³⁹ Dates are in the Julian calendar. Maria Todorova's *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria's National Hero* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2009) centres on this episode and its subsequent historicization as the martyrdom of Bulgaria's only uncontested national hero. Interestingly, the only accounts of his execution are contained in memoirs written in 1937-1938 to mark the 65th anniversary of his death. Current Bulgarian textbooks also blame the priest Pop Krístiu for betraying Levski, when it was almost certainly Levski's assistant Dimitar Obshti, who had carried out the robbery (12). This likely reflects the vehement rejection of the Bulgarian clergy as impediments to national liberation by the BRCC.

¹⁴⁰ Hristo Botev, "Обесването на Васил Левски" (The Hanging of Vasil Levski) (1875) "Dear Motherland / Why do you weep so mournfully? ... Because you are a dismal slave / Because your holy voice, Mother / Is a helpless voice – a voice in the wilderness." Revolutionary poetry, specifically the works of Rakovski and Botev, drew on a tradition of heroic folksongs amongst peripatetic Slav poets, which were important in the creation and stimulation of national belonging.

¹⁴¹ Duncan Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria, 1870–1895*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 23.

¹⁴² Будилник, 1 May 1873 (Julian Calendar).

issue published revealing satirical cartoons including one entitled: “Ottoman Empire going to the Vienna Exposition with his happy subjects, Antim I and Antim IV (the Greek and Bulgarian patriarchs)” [Figure 2.1].



Figure 2.11: “османската империя отива на виенската изложба със своите щастливи поданици, т. е. сь Антима IV и Антима I,” (“The Ottoman Empire Going to the Vienna Exposition with his Happy Subjects, Antim I and Antim IV”) Будилник (“Alarm”), 1 May 1873.

In this satirical illustration, the Empire is depicted as a scrawny rat carrying an infantalized, fez-wearing, and bound Antim I (symbolizing moderate Bulgarians) next to a helpless, platter-carried Antim IV, traveling with stolen goods and a caricatured black African and Greek fisherman. Beside this motley caravan is a Bulgarian patriot, next to a banner-wielding skeleton labelled “напредък” (progress), who is trying to get the attention of a

blinded Orthodox priest. Revolutionary Bulgarian racial and political perceptions are here revealed, as the Ottoman Empire is seen as a ridiculous amalgamation of degenerates controlled and robbed of prosperity by their sub-human overlord, aided by the helplessness or ignorance of Bulgarian leaders who have let the revolutionary cause wither away. Botev's uncompromisingly radical position and rhetorical animosity towards "чорбаджии" (collaborators)¹⁴³ eventually disillusioned Karavelov. Karavelov left the committee in 1875 and Botev assumed the chairmanship. At the following annual assembly on 24 August 1875, Botev and the BRCC dispatched a contingent to instigate rebellion at Stara Zagora to capitalize on the disorder caused by events in Bosnia.¹⁴⁴ Assuming that the Bulgarian people were ever ready for armed insurrection, the incursion was dispatched without careful preparations. Ottoman police simply arrested the bulk of the revolutionaries. Of the few shots that were fired during the revolt, most were revolutionaries shooting themselves to avoid capture.¹⁴⁵

The Ottoman Default (1875)

The Ottoman default on its foreign debt is frequently overlooked as a major impetus for internal destabilization. The foreign debt, owed mostly to Britain and France for loans during and after the Crimean War, was staggering. The impact of these massive state loans and their stipulations on the running of the Ottoman Empire has only recently been

¹⁴³ "Чорбаджии" (*Chorbadzhi*) were originally commanders within the Janissary corps. Later, Christian tax farmers, landlords, moneylenders, and others employed by the Ottomans were known by this term. It continues to be a derisive epithet in Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁴ BRCC Annual Assembly Minutes, 24 August 1875. Bulgarian National Library, Sofia.

¹⁴⁵ Zachary Stoyanoff, *Pages from the Autobiography of a Bulgarian Insurgent*, translated M. W. Potter (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), 54-61. Apparently the disaster did little to curb revolutionary enthusiasm. Nikolai Obretenov wrote, "Whatever happens we won't leave Turkey in peace. Either we shall all perish or we shall free Bulgaria."

addressed,¹⁴⁶ and it is only rarely mentioned in the context of the diplomatic history of the Eastern Crisis. The formal bankruptcy of the Empire in 1875 resulted in the collapse of its entire financial system in one of the most spectacular economic crises of the nineteenth century. Creditors in London (particularly Dent, Palmers & Co., the Rothschilds of London and the Office of the Council of Foreign Bondholders) were well-connected with the Foreign Office and Members of Parliament, and they exercised this influence to guarantee that friendly relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire were contingent on paying back their loans with at least nine percent interest.¹⁴⁷ Numerous committees and thousands of documents were compiled regarding the Ottoman Loans in the decades following the Crimean War, and such matters dominated correspondence between the Foreign Office and its consuls throughout the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁸

A particularly interesting example of the linkage between commerce, culture, and politics is British creditors' insistence after the Ottoman Empire defaulted on its foreign loans in 1875 to guarantee protection of Christian merchants and foreigners as equals to Muslims under Ottoman law.¹⁴⁹ Christian thrift and industry was assumed to be the only way to modernize the backward Ottoman economy. This equality, however, was completely unacceptable to the majority of Ottoman Muslims and it was seen as a major humiliation by

¹⁴⁶ Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Eds.) *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, FO/78 2436 (no 2 – 50) for the influence of Baron Rothschild.

¹⁴⁸ Entire volumes dedicated to the subject are preserved from Foreign Office Records at the National Archives at Kew: FO/78:2433 for the 1858 Ottoman Loan of £5,000,000; FO78/2435 and FO78/2436 for the Ottoman Default.

¹⁴⁹ Donald Blaisdell, *European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire: A Study of the Establishment, Activities, and Significance of the Administration of Ottoman Public Debt* (New York: Columbia, 1929), 81. The Ottoman Financial Mission of 1878 reported several "Turkish customs and preferences" that were continuing to be "particularly injurious to the credit of the state", including the guaranteeing of revenues from particular sources to back special loans, their aversion to paper currency and convertible notes ("which could be applied for the benefit of the public creditors"), and state confiscation of individuals' private property. Harrison to Salisbury, FO 78/3066 (October 1878).

exposing the weakness of Sultan Abdülaziz to resist foreign influences. Thousands massed in the streets around the Porte in early 1876 under the banner of the “Muslim Patriots” and, under the threat of violence, the sultan was deposed. This period of huge financial pressure due to foreign loans directly affected domestic policies and internal unrest in the Ottoman Empire which underwrote the rebellions of 1875 in Bosnia and 1876 in Bulgaria. The Ottoman Default also severely exacerbated European perceptions of the Ottoman Empire and fundamentally questioned its viability as a continuing world power—which caused a “backdrop of negative public opinion that severely constricted the freedom of action of Ottoman diplomats during the major international crisis over the Balkans then beginning to unfold.”¹⁵⁰ Moreover, this financial catastrophe reinforced Western beliefs that the Ottoman Empire was incapable of the moral fortitude required for fiscal restraint and modernization. This preconception shaped foreign observations of the rebellions as natural occurrences of industrious Christians struggling against the decaying and parasitic Ottoman regime.

Crop failure in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1874, aggravated by overzealous tax-farmers, led to open revolt in 1875. This conflict was the “prologue to the Great Eastern Crisis.”¹⁵¹ While it saw reports of Turkish excesses upon the Christian population similar to those that precipitated the Bulgarian Agitation—including impalement and violation of maidens—it did not engender support from the majority of the British public.¹⁵² Great Power interest, however, was provoked. Multilateral negotiations on how best to handle the situation, including the “practical” solutions of the Andrassy Note and the Berlin

¹⁵⁰ Hanioglu, *Ottoman Empire*, 92,

¹⁵¹ Glenny, *The Balkans*, 105.

¹⁵² Excepting those such as Lewis Farley, Rev. William Denton, and John Russell.

Memorandum that advocated further Ottoman reforms for the protection of its Christian population and territorial concessions to Austria and Russia, saturated foreign news in Western Europe under headlines such as “The War in the East.” The Bulgarian uprising (which would take place the following year) therefore appeared within the context of neighbouring rebellion; internal economic, political, and social turmoil; Great Power intrigue; and a developing narrative of heroic national uprising against barbaric Ottoman tyranny.

The April Uprising and the Bulgarian Horrors

The BRCC, undeterred by the disastrous Stara Zagora revolt, plotted for rebellion in the spring of 1876. Yet it was a poorly kept secret. The Bulgarian population, anticipating further disturbances, hoarded supplies, and revolutionaries bought weapons and ammunition with help from wealthy Bulgarian merchants and even fashioned several dozen makeshift cannon out of cherry wood.¹⁵³ Insurrection seemed imminent even amongst Western observers. Six months prior to the revolt the Russian consul in Rusé observed “It seems to me that the time is not far off when the whole of Bulgaria will rise up.”¹⁵⁴ Western newspapers routinely opined on the consequences that renewed fighting in Bosnia plus the rebellion in Bulgaria would have in the spring of 1876.¹⁵⁵ On top of this, the revolutionaries had been infiltrated by Ottoman agents who warned the authorities in

¹⁵³ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 91. These cannon were of course militarily useless, but they later symbolized the passion by which revolutionaries fought despite near certainty of defeat. See, for example, the account of Ivan Minchov Vazov, *Under the Yoke*. Trans. Marguerite Alexieva and Theodora Atanassova (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971).

¹⁵⁴ Konstantine Kosev, *et al. Aprilskoto Vustanie 1876*, 205.

¹⁵⁵ “The Turkish Insurrection: Warlike Preparations in Roumania” *The Star* (Saint Peter Port), 8 February 1876; “The Immediate future of Turkey” *Daily News*, 22 February 1876; “The Insurrection in Turkey (By Submarine Telegraph)” *Daily News*, 22 April 1876.

late 1875 that a rebellion was being plotted for the spring.¹⁵⁶ When the Ottomans dispatched a regiment to arrest revolutionary Todor Kableshkov in Koprivshtitsa, the insurrection triggered prematurely. The local committee, led by Kableshkov and Georgi Benkovski,¹⁵⁷ pre-emptively attacked Ottoman police and officials on 20 April, killing the *murdar* (local deputy), several *zaptiehs* (policemen), other officials, and, according to the memoirs of Zahari Stoyanov, a number of Muslim civilians.¹⁵⁸ Kableshkov, in the famous Кърваво писмо (“Bloody Letter”)—purportedly signed with the blood of the *murdar*—announced these actions to fellow revolutionaries and declared the outbreak of rebellion and the establishment of Koprivshtitsa as a revolutionary headquarters. The letter was then taken by Benkovski who rode around the area instigating rebellion with a group of revolutionaries that became known as the Хвърковата чета (“Flying Band”). Bloodshed in Koprivshtitsa quickly spread to surrounding villages and other areas of Bulgaria as local committees activated and detachments of émigré volunteers crossed the Danube from Romania.

What followed these events is historically unclear at best—yet the bloody aftermath of the April Uprising is little short of an article of faith in the Bulgarian national mythology. Contemporary Western sources (which will be discussed in depth in the following section)

¹⁵⁶ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 91.

¹⁵⁷ Georgi Benkovski (1843-1876), born in Koprivshtitsa with the name of Gabriel Hlutev, received only partial primary education in Bulgarian before becoming a tailor and travelling extensively throughout the empire. He participated in the 1875 Stara Zagora Uprising and joined a group of revolutionaries who travelled to Constantinople with the intention of murdering the sultan and setting fire to the city (Turkish political opponents themselves succeeded in the first of these tasks in the spring of 1876).

¹⁵⁸ Benkovski, depicted as a ruthless revolutionary, is described as having ordered the killing of rural watchmen despite the fact that they were almost certainly Cypriot, as well as Muslims bystanders in Koprivshtitsa. These acts, however, were justified by the historical ends sought by the revolutionaries: “Те бяха невинна жертва на пламналите страсти; но кой им бе крив? Историческите събития нямат милост” (“They were innocent victims of such flaming passions, but were we wrong? History will have mercy”), Zahari Stoyanov, *Materials [Notes] on the Bulgarian Revolts*.

transmitted news of horrific Ottoman atrocities perpetrated against the Bulgarian population. Later reports by American and European journalists and the subsequent, British government's official report confirmed that large-scale atrocities against the Christian population had taken place, that thousands of Bulgarians languished in prison, and that the Ottoman government had rewarded those responsible. These accounts assert that, at minimum, 12,000 people were killed during the massacres and approximately 60 villages were destroyed along with a great deal of Christian property. Even today, these graphic reports dominate scholarly as well as popular accounts of the April Uprising, both within and outside of Bulgaria. For Bulgarian nationalists, the April Uprising was the tragically-fated revolt of the Bulgarian people against Ottoman oppression, the revolutionary spark that triggered the liberation of the Bulgarian nation, while the Turkish atrocities in its wake represented the heroic martyrdom of its revolutionary vanguard and the tragic massacre of Bulgarian innocents by their cruel foreign oppressors. As is the case with national creation-myths around the world, subsequent critical historical appreciation of these events has been largely sidelined.

For example, Richard Millman's 1980 article, "The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered" re-examined the sources of apparently "objective" or "eyewitness" information of the atrocities that occurred during the Bulgarian "Horrors." Millman discredits the sources for these estimates as irrevocably prejudiced, second-hand, mistaken, or out of context. Journalists,¹⁵⁹ Western teachers and expatriates,¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Specifically: Antonio Gallenga, Edwin Pears, Eugene Schuyler, and Januarius MacGahan

¹⁶⁰ E.g., George Washburn, Albert Long

diplomats,¹⁶¹ and even Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli's official agent Walter Baring all gathered information with preconceived ideas of Turkish barbarism and guilt, primarily by interviewing Bulgarian students at Robert College in Constantinople. When Western sources travelled to the region they did so incompletely, visiting just a portion of the affected regions weeks after the uprising. They listened only to Bulgarian victims and wholly disregarded Ottoman officials, victims, or witnesses, and they also greatly overestimated the number of killed by simply multiplying the estimated number of destroyed houses by ten. After discrediting every known source of information about the massacres, Millman asserts that "the accepted reality of the massacres is largely myth"¹⁶² and suggest that the actual number of Bulgarians killed is probably closer to the contemporary, yet much less publicized, report of 3,694 killed.¹⁶³ Millman concludes, however, that "we simply do not know how many Bulgarians, innocent or not, were killed by Turkish regulars and irregular marauders, nor how much of the destruction of Bulgarian villages was due to them."¹⁶⁴ Millman does not speculate on the impact of this erroneous information, however, other than to suggest that exaggerated and sensationalist accounts precipitated virulent opposition amidst the Bulgarian Agitation and created a "Christian myth" (230) in both Bulgaria and Britain. British and Bulgarian historians, however, have lambasted Millman for challenging this consensus. In an unusually lengthy and savage book review,

¹⁶¹ Consul Depuis and Eugene Schuyler

¹⁶² Richard Millman, "Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered," *Slavonic and East European Review* 58, 2 (1980): 218.

¹⁶³ Millman notes that much of the population likely fled affected villages and returned later in the year, also following usual trends of migrating to Hungary and Rumania for agricultural employment in the spring and summer. A house-to-house investigation immediately after Baring's report by a Railway engineer named Stoney, familiar with this migratory process, indicated 3,694 Bulgarians killed. Investigators also overestimated the numbers of dead by arbitrarily assuming that ten Bulgarians were killed per destroyed house, without considering that revolutionaries might have destroyed dwellings themselves in order to "force more active participation upon quiescent or passive Bulgarians" (230-231).

¹⁶⁴ Millman, "Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered," 230.

Richard Shannon labels Millman as irredeemably “pro-Turkish and pro-Disraeli,” and his evidence as “thin and perfunctory.”¹⁶⁵ Roumen Genov criticizes Millman’s “ignoring” of Bulgarian eyewitnesses “who took great risks” to report the atrocities to British and American investigators and suggests a wider attempt of English authors to “deconstruct [our] national myth of trauma” to “deny the massacres as ‘Christian myth’ or downplay them.”¹⁶⁶

Critical attention to the April Uprising quickly reveals that there is remarkably scant evidence of these events despite their fundamental importance to Bulgarian national history. That which is accepted as fact, derived from prejudiced, second-hand sources, is recirculated repeatedly without close criticism. Although much Bulgarian literature has been devoted to the study of its “National Awakening,” seeing the 1876 rebellion as the predictable outburst of national patriotic feeling against Ottoman oppression, very little has focused on the April Uprising itself. Even the most recent English account of Bulgarian history, Richard Crampton’s 2007 book *Bulgaria*, accepts the natural trajectory of Bulgarian

¹⁶⁵ Richard Shannon, “Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878” [Review], *The English Historical Review* 96, 378 (1981): 170. In this decidedly Anglo-centric analysis, Shannon criticises Millman’s treatments of Disraeli, Derby, Gladstone, and other statesmen, suggesting that his dissonant “stance ... rather than the materials he has used ... defines the character of [his] book,” (170) and revealingly dismisses his re-evaluation of the Bulgarian atrocities as merely a convenience that allows him “to treat the Ottoman Empire as a state much like any other contemporary state and the Turks much like any other contemporary people.” (170). That Shannon sees this revision as a negative process, a judgement that defines the character of his scathing review, reveals his own prejudices. Despite Shannon’s thorough critique of Millman’s “lack of convincing familiarity” (171) with British sources, Shannon offhandedly rejects his contentions regarding the Bulgarian atrocities without investigating his claims. Shannon’s 1975 account, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, recycles the estimate of 15,000 Bulgarian men, women and children slain—undoubtedly he did not relish the possibility of making such a large overestimation considering his emphasis on factual accuracy.

¹⁶⁶ Roumen Genov, “Вимето на хуманността, националните интереси и империята: Политическите дебати в британското общество по време на Източната криза от 1870-те години” (“Teats of Humanity, National Interest, and Empire: The Political Debate in British Society during the Eastern Crisis of the 1870s”) *New Bulgarian University History Department Yearbook*, 3 (2008), accessed 6 July 2012 at: <<http://ebox.nbu.bg/hist/ne3/09%20Rumen%20Genov%20+%20r.pdf>>. At a 2009 conference at the New Bulgarian University commemorating the bicentenary of Gladstone’s birth, Genov also accused two Turkish presenters of “revisionism” for suggesting that the scale of the massacres were exaggerated.

self-determination from “half a millennium of foreign domination,”¹⁶⁷ and his well-intentioned adoption of Bulgarian sources incorporates similar findings, interpretations, and national biases.¹⁶⁸ Although 90 pages are devoted to the ancient origins of the Bulgarian nation and the “National Renaissance” (23), Crampton’s account of the April Uprising and the creation of the Bulgarian state are given merely five pages—suggesting a *fait accompli* reflecting a natural progression towards national self-determination.¹⁶⁹

The available sources that tell the story of the “Bulgarian Horrors”—the violence committed on Christians civilians after the revolution was crushed—are the purportedly eyewitness accounts of Bulgarians in Bulgarian newspapers, reports from English and American sources that predominantly filtered through Robert College in Istanbul, second-hand consular reports, the memoirs of revolutionaries authored and published many years after the events, and the official Turkish reports. Millman rightfully criticizes the objectivity of the accounts made by Pears, Consul Dupuis, Washburn, MacGahan, Schuyler, Baring, and other English-language sources, for reasons that will be made clear in the following section. Quite clearly their reports are prejudiced by religious and racial preconceptions and are wholly inadequate for basing accurate estimations of the devastation, let alone for assessing when the damage occurred (during or after the insurrection) or by whom it was committed (Turkish soldiers, Circassians, *başbozüks*, Bulgarian Muslims, or the

¹⁶⁷ Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 18).

¹⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, Crampton’s book was well received in Bulgaria; he received an honorary doctorate from Sofia University.

¹⁶⁹ Crampton paradoxically states in his chapter “Origins” that Bulgarian “national identity [had not] solidified entirely by the mid-twentieth century” (11) as he observes the “racial and religious complexity” (8) of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Crampton similarly notes that nineteenth century “Bulgarians living in the Balkan mountains” called where they lived “Romanéc” or “Romanjá” and that “in borderlands between Bulgaria and Serbia the languages and the cultures merged gradually and distinction between them was frequently difficult if not impossible” (11).

revolutionaries themselves). The supposedly objective account of the “unsympathetic” Baring was just as incomplete, unreliable and beholden to cultural preconceptions as were the others, merely with slightly different conclusions.

Official Ottoman reports produced by Adib Effendi in Edirne Vilayet¹⁷⁰ and by Chakir Bey of Danube Vilayet¹⁷¹ as well as official diplomatic statements downplayed the size and significance of the rebellion.¹⁷² Wholly disregarded as “entirely untrustworthy”¹⁷³ in Britain, these reports state that approximately one thousand rebels were killed after several hundred Muslim officials had been murdered, and that the majority of the fighting had been conducted by the local Muslim population.¹⁷⁴ Turkish officials repeatedly emphasized that revolutionaries murdered local officials, prayer leaders and other administrators, set up armed fortifications, repeatedly refused to surrender, and then set fire their own homes when retreating to the hills.¹⁷⁵ Ottoman Foreign Secretary Mehmed Rashid Pasha telegraphed his missions abroad to announce the end of all military

¹⁷⁰ Adib Effendi, *Traduction du Rapport Présenté par ... Édib Effendi ... sur L'enquête Ordonnée ... dans de Vilayet d'Andrinople* (Constantinople: 1876).

¹⁷¹ Chakir Bey, *Traduction du Rapport Présenté ... par Chakir Bey, Commissaire Impérial, Envoyé dans le Vilayet du Danube pour Procéder à une Enquête sur les Troubles dont cette Province a été le Théâtre* (Constantinople, 1876).

¹⁷² See for example the internal 14 May telegram from Mehmed Rashid Pasha to all Ottoman officials abroad: “Vous avez appris par la voie des journaux que des troubles ont eu lieu dernièrement du côté de Tatar-Pazardjik, district of Philippopoli. Quoique ces troubles fussent loin d'avoir l'importance que la malveillance a essayé de leur attribuer en les présentant dans la presse comme une insurrection Bulgare, le Gouvernement s'est empressé néanmoins de prendre, dès le début, des mesures énergique et efficaces, appropriées a la circonstance. Ces mesures ont, heureusement, produit le résultat qu'on était en droit d'en attendre. Les troubles ont été circonscrits tout d'abord, et maintenant ils tendent à s'apaiser; nos dernières informations sont satisfaisantes; elles portent qu'un grand nombre d'insurgés rentrent dans leurs foyers et les autres ne tarderont pas à les suivre. Veuillez communiquer cc [*sic.*] qui précède à M. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères,” In Sinan Kunalalp and Gül Tokay (Eds.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “The Eastern Question”: The Balkan Crisis (1875-1878)*, Part I (Istanbul: Isis, 2013), 416-417.

¹⁷³ Walter Baring's assessment: FO 78/2463 no. 1071. Schuyler referred to the Turkish account as “a tissue of falsehoods.”

¹⁷⁴ As reported in Baring to Elliot, Philippopolis (Plovdiv), 22 July 1876 (FO 424/43, no. 4), and Elliot to Derby, 9 August 187 (FO 424-43, no 85).

¹⁷⁵ Reported in Baring to Elliot, Philippopolis (Plovdiv), 27 July 1876 (FO 424-43, 114). Baring was “not inclined quite to accept this story,” yet he did confirm that the rumour circulating that 46 Bulgarian girls had been burned alive in a barn was a fabrication.

operations in Bulgaria on 29 May and that leaders of the insurgency had been given to civil authorities to be brought before the law, and to defend the “duty” of the Sultan to repress such an insurrection despite “malicious” foreign newspaper reports.¹⁷⁶ The local Ottoman commander, Ahmed Aga Barutanlijata, himself a Bulgarian Muslim or “Pomak”, was promoted for his swift suppression of the rebellion and received the Order of the Medijidieh¹⁷⁷ within this context—much to the consternation of westerner observers, who saw only wanton “barbarities” being perversely rewarded by a corrupt, deceitful, and “effete” regime.

What is clear from the available sources is that revolutionary violence committed by Christians provoked a quick and complete suppression. The Ottoman military responded to news of rebellion by mobilizing the army, reservists, and *başibozuks* (unpaid civilian militias)¹⁷⁸; mass arrests of suspected rebels and summary executions of revolutionary leaders soon followed.¹⁷⁹ From what historians do know, the April Uprising was poorly planned, poorly led, poorly supported, and poorly executed, and it utterly failed in its objectives to instigate a large-scale national rebellion.¹⁸⁰ Although it was expected that at least 70,000 people would rise in revolt, less than 10,000 actually did.¹⁸¹ Considering that the Ottoman province contained around 1,130,000 Christians (and 1,120,000 Muslims) in

¹⁷⁶ “Rachid Pacha aux Missions Ottomanes à l'étranger,” in Kunalp and Tokay, *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, 434.

¹⁷⁷ Kemal H. Karpat (Ed.), *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 192.

¹⁷⁸ Usually Anglicized as “Bashi-Bazouks”; literally: “damaged head,” meaning “leaderless.”

¹⁷⁹ Including Georgi Izmirliiev (1851-1876), assistant to Stefan Stambolov and Revolutionary leader of the Turnovo District (his last words before being hanged were: “Сладко е да се умре за свободата на Отечеството!” (“It is sweet to die for the freedom of the fatherland!”), and organizer Ivan Panov Semerdzhiev (1854-1876).

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Thomas Meininger’s article, “The Response of the Bulgarian People to the April Uprising,” *Southeastern Europe* 4, 2 (1977): 250-261.

¹⁸¹ K. Kosev, “Sotsialno-ikonomicheski prepostavki” in Kosev et al. *Aprilskoto vustanie 1876*, 98.

1876,¹⁸² the number of people participating in the rebellion was less than one half of one percent of the total population. Outside support—even from neighbouring Serbia, for whom thousands of Bulgarians volunteered for several uprisings—also failed to appear. Communication was poor, logistics for food, water, shelter, arms, and ammunition were unplanned, strategy was haphazard and military discipline was lacking. Isolated, outnumbered, and overpowered by aggravated Ottoman soldiers and Muslim militiamen, the Bulgarian insurgency was effectively suppressed just one month after it began. Hristo Botev's daring attempt to cross the Danube in a seized Austrian steamship¹⁸³ to foster rebellion ended in disaster and his death just days later on 20 May.¹⁸⁴ The uprising was so easily put down that observers—including many Bulgarians—concluded that there was no rebellion at all but simply indiscriminate massacre of innocent Christians by jealous and barbarous Turks.

Beyond poor planning, a lack of inspirational leadership, and bad luck, the failed attempt at revolution simply misread the desires of the majority of Bulgarian people for a rebellion. In fact, as Thomas Meininger argues, Rumelian Christians were much more likely to be hostile to the revolution as they had more to lose than to gain by revolution or because they saw rebellion as “naïve and dangerous” in that it would provoke a heavy-handed response from Constantinople.¹⁸⁵ Substantial divisions existed between émigré conspirators and local activists within Bulgaria, as well as major generational cleavages between youthful, educated revolutionaries and older, socially influential patriarchs who

¹⁸² Bilâl N. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)* (London: K. Rustem, 1988), 4.

¹⁸³ Bulgarian boatmen refused to move revolutionaries or their supplies across the river. Crampton, *Bulgaria* 91.

¹⁸⁴ Botev's death is commemorated each year on 2 June with air raid sirens sounding at noon for one minute.

¹⁸⁵ Meininger, “Responses of the Bulgarian People,” 260.

had little interest in ideologically-minded reforms.¹⁸⁶ Bulgarian-Ottoman officials, the clergy, and the overwhelming majority of other Bulgarians were ambiguous or openly hostile to the rebellion. It was supported nearly exclusively by the middle and petty urban bourgeoisie in villages that were materially better off than the villages that did not rebel, and by “rich families” whose sons were educated elsewhere in Europe.¹⁸⁷ Even these relatively rich and privileged revolutionaries turned out to be indecisive because of their reluctance to risk their property by joining a rebellion with such an uncertain fate. Meininger notes that while “curiosity drew them into the work of the revolutionary committees ... their minds were elsewhere, occupied with the daily concerns of their livelihood.”¹⁸⁸ After the revolt faltered, fear of reprisals spread throughout the Christians. Rather than stand and fight, many rushed home to hide valuable and protect their property¹⁸⁹ as well as attempt to bribe Ottoman officials for protection.¹⁹⁰ The relative prosperity of Bulgarians, Meininger argues, “seems to have been as much an obstacle to revolutionary commitment as an inducement to it.”¹⁹¹ Moreover, ethnic diversity and “longstanding personal relationships between Bulgars and Moslems served to restrain and limit the rebellion,”¹⁹² which broke out in predominantly homogeneously Bulgarian villages.

¹⁸⁶ Meininger, “Responses of the Bulgarian People,” 259-260.

¹⁸⁷ Meininger, “Responses of the Bulgarian People,” 255-6. Quoting Strashimirov, I, 326. Konstantine Kosev, Nikolai Zhechev, and Doyno Doynov’s *History of the April Uprising, 1876* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1976) corroborate this claim, asserting the “insignificant” (84, 104) contributions of peasants and the urban poor to the revolution.

¹⁸⁸ Meininger citing G. Dimitrov, *Kniazhestvo Billganta v istorichesko, geografichesko i etnografi-chesko otnoshenie*, II (Plovdiv: Georgi Dimitrov, 1896), p. 507, and Ivan Undzhiev and Ivan Peikovski, eds., *Grad Troian: Iubileen sbornik* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1968), p. 53.

¹⁸⁹ Meininger citing Nachov, Kalofer, p. 516.

¹⁹⁰ Meininger citing J. MacGahan, “The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria: Letters of the Special Commissioner of the ‘Daily News,’” (London: Bradbury, Agnew, 1876), 52-56.

¹⁹¹ Meininger, 256.

¹⁹² Meininger, 257. Meininger argues that these same interethnic relations restrained the atrocities that followed the insurrection. It should be noted that Meininger unexpectedly concedes to the broader narrative of Bulgarian liberation from tyranny. “The heroism of its leaders, the daring of many of its participants, and

Deliberately provocative revolutionary acts committed against Ottoman officials also sparked fear and panic in the Muslim population (nearly half of the population of that province)¹⁹³ many of whom joined the well-armed counter-insurgency. Circassians, Caucasian Muslims violently displaced by Russia who settled throughout the Ottoman Empire after the 1862 Russian-Circassian War, were particularly hostile to Christian rebellion that was thought to be masterminded and supplied by Russia. Unsurprisingly, given the political unrest in Constantinople, the dire financial situation of the Ottoman Government, and the continuing insurrection in Bosnia, much of the fighting and resulting excesses were carried out by *başibozuk* rather than by disciplined Ottoman soldiers—at least, according to Turkish sources. *Başibozuks* were armed and maintained by the Ottomans, but were unpaid, un-uniformed, and loosely organized volunteers who traditionally expected plunder in exchange for military service. Amidst the backdrop of regional rebellion, Ottoman vulnerability, a legacy of international intrigue, and reckless revolutionary calls for the violent overthrow of the Ottoman order¹⁹⁴ it is therefore

the suffering of those simply caught up in the maelstrom,” he concludes, “were not to be in vain” as they “galvanized progressive sentiment everywhere on behalf of Bulgarians and other Balkan people suffering under Ottoman misrule” that “finally brought the liberation of Bulgaria” (261). To paraphrase his conclusions: the April Uprising may not have been a national or nationwide rebellion, but in the end it accomplished the objectives of one—to admirable ends. In this respect, Meininger’s criticism of nationalist interpretations of the April Uprising are limited to those events; elsewhere, the historical narrative of (natural) national self-determination is unobjectionable.

¹⁹³ Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, 4

¹⁹⁴ Non-combatant revolutionary émigrés north of the Danube continued to proclaim united national revolution and brilliant strategic victories against the Ottomans despite news of limited support and overwhelming defeat, which caused confusion amidst both the Christian and Muslim populations, each believing that the rebellion was much larger in scope than it was. The wrongheaded stubbornness of revolutionary reports, as Thomas Meininger argues, displayed “paralyzed ignorance, treachery, flight, mutual invective, and desperate dreams of saving the situation,” and produced “confusions, hesitation, flight, and an overriding desire to step back from the precipice” amongst the non-revolutionary population, who “disavowed the rebels and denied that the Bulgarians had rebellion in their hearts. They pleaded with Ottoman officials to come see for themselves.” The resulting confusion caused a “sense of dread and passivity [that] not only meant the collapse of the insurrection,” Meininger argues, “it also paved the way for the Bulgarian ‘Horrors’” in that it greatly alarmed Bulgarian Muslims and the Ottoman authorities. (Meininger,

unsurprising that the suppression of Bulgarian rebels by numerous, well-armed, aggrieved and afraid—yet undisciplined and unpaid—members of a citizens’ militia was swift and severe.

Overlooked in English and Bulgarian historiography is that the Bulgarian revolution in Rumelia coincided with a Turkish revolution in Constantinople. The leaders of the Ottoman military, including the Minister of War Huseyin Avni Pasha, the president of the military council Redif Pasha, and the director of the military academy Süleyman Hüsnü Pasha, were in the midst of their own revolutionary conspiracy to dethrone Sultan Abdülaziz when news of the Bulgarian rebellion reached the capital and they issued orders to suppress it. In March, a “Manifesto for Muslim Patriots” circulated through Constantinople calling for liberal constitutional reforms and representative government (likely penned or promoted by the liberal-reformer Midhat Pasha)¹⁹⁵ and it prompted a massive demonstration of thousands of Young Ottomans in the streets and mosques of the capital.¹⁹⁶ Central to the demands of the protesters was the removal of the pro-Russian Grand Vizier and *Şeyhülislam*, two central positions in the Ottoman government. Despite the radical nature of the demands, this was eventually granted by the Sultan. Instead of quelling the discontent, however, the demonstrations intensified as the Sultan himself became implicated in the inability of the Empire to resist foreign intrigue. The Sultan backtracked, imposing press censorship and banning telegraphic communications, yet this had little effect. Sensing opportunity, the conservative military cabinet forced Abdülaziz’s abdication on 18 May (Julian calendar), imprisoned him in in Çırağan Palace, and likely

260. Citing Nachov, Kalofer, p. 517; Dechev, Minaloto na Chepelare, pp. 276-77 ; Iz arkhi- vata na Naiden Gerov, ed. T. Panchev, 2 vols. (Soma: Bulgarskata akademiia na naukite, 1911), I, 567)

¹⁹⁵ Davison, *Midhat Pasha*, vol. 4, 1033.

¹⁹⁶ Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 480.

ordered his assassination. The Sultan was found dead on 22 May—with both wrists apparently cut simultaneously with a pair of scissors—just two days after the death of Hristo Botev and the effective end of the April Uprising. Huseyin Avni Pasha, widely suspected in the Sultan’s death, as well as Mehmed Rashid Pasha, were themselves murdered by Çerkes Hasan (a Circassian army officer , brother of a former concubine of Abdülaziz, and the *aide-de-camp* to his eldest son) during a ministers’ meeting on 15 June.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the Sultan, the Minister of War, and the Foreign Secretary—the highest authorities ultimately responsible for the suppression of the Bulgarian revolution—were victims to the concurrent revolution in Constantinople. It is difficult, with hindsight, to ascribe meaningful guilt to the Ottoman central authorities for the Bulgarian massacres.

Revolutionary Bulgarian Sources

Bulgarian-language newspapers were in fact mixed in their responses to the April Uprising. This reflects wider social divides even amongst the literate, urban, and newspaper-reading Bulgarian population. As Stoyan Tchapravov observes, the Bulgarian press was split into three groups: those such as Hristo Botev’s *Нова България* (“New Bulgaria,” based in Bucharest, then Giurgiu) ¹⁹⁸ that wholeheartedly advocated and then supported the rebellion; the “liberal-bourgeois”¹⁹⁹ newspapers published in Constantinople such as *Денъ* (“Day”) and *Век* (“Century”) that refrained from taking a side

¹⁹⁷ Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 482-3.

¹⁹⁸ *Нова България* only produced one 8 page issue on 5 May 1876 in Bucharest before Botev’s departure for Bulgaria. Lucia Kerchova-Patsan and Luke-Francesca Velchova, *Свищовски възрожденци в Букурещ* (Shishtov Revival in Bucharest), (Sofia: 2009), 104. *Нова България* produced 65 issues in Giurgiu under the editorship of R. Blaskov (June to November 1876) and Stefan Stambolov (December 1876 to February 1877) St. Cyril and Methodius National Library (Bulgaria), Serials 1844-1878, no. 27. Dimitar Ivanov, *Стефан Стамболов - от перото до ятагана* (Stefan Stambolov: From Pen to Scimitar) (Sofia: TRUD, 2005), 52-7, 64, 72.

¹⁹⁹ Tchapravov borrows this term from Vūzvūzova-Karateodorova (see note below).

in the rebellion (yet reported on Turkish excesses); and “Turkophile” newspapers such as Едирне (“Edirne,” Adrianople) that “denied or diluted” Turkish cruelties.²⁰⁰ Despite Tchapravov’s insistence that “the cultural and religious arguments used in these newspapers are not as florid and aggressive as those of the British writers”—specifically citing Gladstone—revolutionary Bulgarian newspapers are in fact equally “as sweeping in their claims”²⁰¹—and are in some cases much more aggressive. The first issue of *Нова България*, published on 5 May 1876—the first and last issue edited by Hristo Botev ten days before his ill-fated Danubian sortie—calls for open revolution with a revealing manifesto under the headline “На Бой” (To War):

Братия Българе!

На бой срещу безверните тирани турци!

Ще чует до края на свта всичките велика народи как само съ помощът на Великата Бога ний изстребваме мръсното турско племе—никой до сега не ни смили, никой до сега не ни помогна при стръмните теглила които ни правиха злодеите азиатцил

Bulgarian Brothers!

To war against the godless Turk tyrants!

The rest of the world’s great nations will hear how we exterminated²⁰² the filthy Turkish race²⁰³ with only the help of our Great God—no one else has shown us compassion or helped free us from the villainous Asians who rule us²⁰⁴

This issue of the *Нова България* codifies the nationalistic rhetoric of the April Uprising amongst its revolutionary instigators. It poses clear racial and religious antagonism

²⁰⁰ Stoyan Tchapravov, “The British Empire Revisited through the Lens of the Eastern Question,” *Victorian Internationalisms* 48 (2007), accessed 25 March 2013 at: <<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/017443ar>>. A full list of Bulgarian newspapers and their locations may be found at:

<http://www.nationallibrary.bg/fce/001/0038/files/All_03_13%20-%201.pdf>

²⁰¹ Tchapravov, “British Empire Revisited,” 15.

²⁰² Изстребваме: also “annihilated” or “wiped out”

²⁰³ Племето: also “tribe.”

²⁰⁴ “На Бой” (“To War”), *Нова България* –5 May 1876: 2. Note that the Bulgarian language was not yet completely standardized in 1876 and it included a number of Russian words and now-archaic letters—thus “*Нова България*” became “*Нова Бжлгария*” after its first issue.

between European, Christian Bulgarians and Asian, Muslim Turks—with no exceptions made for Bulgarian-speaking Muslims—and a clear nationalist aspiration for national “liberty” and “independence”²⁰⁵ from Turkish “slavery.” Under the editorship of Rasko Blaskov, *Нова България* exclaimed defiantly: “We will stop being silent and shout until someone shows compassion on us; our heroes will grip their rifles until they free our dear fatherland, Bulgaria.”²⁰⁶ Such powerful and uncompromising revolutionary rhetoric, composed along discourses of race, nation, and religion, convinced some ten thousand self-identifying Bulgarians to rebel against the Ottoman “tyranny” under the banner “свобода или смърт” (“freedom or death”). The revolutionary banner proclaiming Botev’s slogan is now proudly displayed in the National History Museum in Sofia.

“Liberal-bourgeois” newspapers, while avoiding overt support of the rebellion, reported on the excesses committed by Turkish troops from self-described eyewitnesses. Undoubtedly, the reports were graphic in their accounts of Turkish abuses:

Circassians hordes and Bashi-Bazouks barged in and they turned everything into dust and ash; ... they killed and showed no mercy even to pregnant women, and removed living children from their wombs! All this was known to the authorities.²⁰⁷

Although these newspapers did not explicitly support the April Uprising, they did nevertheless adopt nationalist terminology in a more evolutionary struggle against Ottoman rule and description of the horrors and “torture” committed on the “Bulgarian

²⁰⁵ Самостоятелност (“independence”) was sought for “Bulgaria, Thrace, and Macedonia, for the majority of people there are Bulgarian.”

²⁰⁶ Ние няма да мжлчиме, и непрестанно ще викаме докътъ са намери кой-годе да ни чуе и са смилли зарадъ насъ; а и нашите решителни юнаци не щатъ да испустятъ оръжието отъ ръцете си дордето не освободятъ милото ни отечество, майка България. 17 July 1876, *Нова България*.

²⁰⁷ Черкезите и башибозуците, те направиха сичко на прахъ и пепелъ; те убиваха и непожалваха нито трудните жени, отъ които на някои изъ утробите живи деца изваждаха! И сичко това е правено съ знаяние на властъта. “турските зверства” (“Turkish Atrocities”) Денъ, 10 July 1876.

people.” Amongst the grisly accounts, moreover, it is clear that these sympathetic newspapers reprinted and circulated rumours about horrible atrocities without much investigation into their authenticity. The *Стара планина* (“Stara Planina,” the Balkan mountains), for example, attacked Lord Derby’s apparent ignorance of Turkish crimes including the fact that “Forty Bulgarian girls, after being raped, were burned alive by these monsters in Kalofera”²⁰⁸—an assertion that was later discredited by Baring, who visited the village himself with specific orders from Derby to verify this claim.²⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, many newspapers were closed down by Ottoman censors, including *Денъ*, which was shuttered by mid-June. Interestingly, much Bulgarian print was devoted to great power diplomacy, to foreign parliamentary proceedings (especially British and Russian), and especially to the speeches made by British statesmen—more than to the proceedings of the rebellion itself. According to Kirila Vŭzvŭzova-Karateodorova *et al.* approximately 1,000 reports, telegrams, announcements, and articles were published about the April Uprising in Bulgarian newspapers, and much was reprinted from foreign sources.²¹⁰

Most Bulgarian revolutionaries were keenly aware of the need for international publicity to succeed in their mission. While Levski optimistically believed that Christian Bulgarians could free themselves from Ottoman control without international help, the majority of others (particularly émigrés) recognized the need for a powerful benefactor. Todor Kableshkov, author of the “Bloody Letter” calling for further uprising, also wrote that

²⁰⁸ 40 злочести Български девойки откакъ претеглили последните обезчестения на своите нищожни джелати, са били живи изгорени от тези човекообразни чудовища при Калоферъ. *Стара планина*, 7 August 1876.

²⁰⁹ Baring to Elliot, 27 July 1876 (FO 424-43, no 114).

²¹⁰ Kirila Vŭzvŭzova-Karateodorova, Bozhidar Raïkov, and Aneliya Vălcheva, *Априлското въстание, отразено в българския и чуждия периодичен печат от 1876 г. (The April Uprising Reflected in Bulgarian and Foreign Periodicals from 1876)* (Sofia: 1973), 15.

“It is not in the musket ball that I place my hope, but in the noise of its discharge, which surely must be heard in Europe and in fraternal Russia.”²¹¹ As mentioned above, Botev regularly sent articles to be published abroad to spread knowledge of Bulgarians and their desires for independence. Some revolutionaries openly called for the provocation of Turkish reprisals with the intention of international attention and intervention.²¹² Yet the revolutionary public relations campaign within Bulgaria was hardly as large or as powerful as foreign champions of their cause. Newspaper reports in Bulgarian newspapers based in Constantinople fuelled speculation and rumour amongst its Christian population that was noticed by consuls, ambassadors, journalists, and expatriates living in the Ottoman capital.²¹³ Sympathetic correspondents in Vienna, Belgrade, and Istanbul further circulated these reports.

Robert College and Initial Reports of the April Uprising

Yet the most influential conduit of information to Britain regarding the Bulgarian uprising was through Robert College in Istanbul. Robert College, an elite school founded by American missionary Christopher Robert in 1863 (with Presbyterian and Congregationalist financial backing), boarded 33 Bulgarian students in the spring of 1876.²¹⁴ Teachers at the college were anticipating a Bulgarian rebellion, and once it began several teachers acted to provide information to diplomats and journalists obtained through their students, who obtained them from family members or friends. Dr. George Washburn’s memoir of his time

²¹¹ “Не в куршума на кремъклийката се надявах, а в гърмежа ѝ, който трябваше да стигне до ушите на Европа, на братска Русия.” Kableshekov (1851-1876) later fled the town, was captured, and eventually committed suicide in an Ottoman prison in June.

²¹² Konstantin Kosev, *Априлското въстание - прелюдия на Освобождението* (*The April Uprising: a Prelude to Liberation*), (Sofia: Hristo Botev Publishing House, 1996), 16-22.

²¹³ Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople, 1873-1915*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1916), 16-19.

²¹⁴ George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 102.

at the college recounts how the Turks “cut off all communication between Bulgaria and the outside world,” thereby allowing the armed Muslim population to unleash a “reign of terror” over the Christian Bulgarians, and that:

It was the most natural thing in the world that in their terror and helplessness the Bulgarians should have thought of us, who had no political interests at stake, as friends whom they could trust to help them, and they found means to communicate to us the details of what was going on from week to week. At the outset we alone had these details, and what we did with them is no secret ... We first of all gave them to Sir Henry Elliot ... We did this in hope that he could make the Turks see that they were making a terrible mistake. We also communicated the facts to powerful friends in England and to our friends Mr. [Edwin] Pears, correspondent of the *Daily News*, and Mr. [Antonio] Gallenga, the correspondent of the *London Times*.²¹⁵

Washburn, and his college Dr. Robert Long, were therefore instrumental in providing the English press with information regarding the Bulgarian Horrors, a detail confirmed by Edwin Pears’ memoir: both “furnished me with translations of a mass of [Bulgarian] correspondence from which I wrote a second and longer letter to the *Daily News*”²¹⁶ on 30 June. Pears’ letters were the first major news of the Bulgarian massacres to reach Britain, nearly one month after the end of the uprising, which prompted the start of the Bulgarian Agitation.

Washburn’s sympathies are clear throughout his memoir, published in 1909. He refers to Bulgaria as a “nation” that he hoped would gain independence in 1876,²¹⁷ and he took great pride in having many Bulgarian students go on to distinguish themselves as high-ranking officers in subsequent wars against Turkey.²¹⁸ His estimation of Bulgarian horrors, that “fifty or sixty thousand men, women and children were massacred in cold

²¹⁵ Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople*, 103-104.

²¹⁶ Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, 16.

²¹⁷ Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople*, 116.

²¹⁸ Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople*, 136.

blood, sold as slaves or judicially murdered,"²¹⁹ was thus unsurprisingly high. Pears' memoirs, published in 1916, reveals his own disgust with Turkish responsibility for Turkish massacre that was later confirmed, in his mind, by Schuyler, MacGahan, and Baring's "ghastly stories" describing villages and property wantonly destroyed, heaps of dead women and girls, dogs feeding on beheaded human remains, and children spiked on bayonets. All this, he opined, arose out of jealousy: "The principle incentive has been the larger prosperity of the Christian population; for, in spite of centuries of oppression and plunder, Christian industry and Christian morality everywhere make for national wealth and intelligence."²²⁰

Antonio Gallenga, an Italian born author, nationalist, and London *Times* correspondent, unequivocally despised the Turks. Gallenga published his personal account of the Eastern Question in 1877, noting Turkish mismanagement of their subject Christian races, their supposed racial incapability of liberal reforms,²²¹ and their "gross ignorance and superstition."²²² Turkish backwardness and obstinacy, he argued, led to the Ottoman's supposed lack of high culture, which provoked "jealousy of the superior thrift and intelligence of [their] subject people" that resulted in the "murder and robbery of the Christians."²²³ Turkey's "enmity of race, tyranny, and anarchy," he declared, "are decimating the Christian population, or at least, stunting it in its growth."²²⁴ Information reaching Britain, then, was filtered not only through Bulgarian students, who heard stories second or third hand, but also their sympathetic teachers and finally the Christian

²¹⁹ Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople*, 103.

²²⁰ Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, 18.

²²¹ Antonio Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, (London: S. Tinsley, 1877), 63.

²²² Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, 60.

²²³ Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, 370-371.

²²⁴ Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question*, 371.

moralism of Edwin Pears and Antonio Gallenga. As explained in the following two chapters, the information first relayed by these correspondents reverberated throughout Britain and intensified along lines of entrenched cultural preconceptions. MacGahan, Schuyler, and Baring approached their subject many weeks after the uprising with the foregone conclusion of widespread massacre and Turkish villainy.

Revolutionary Bulgarian Delegates in Britain

While widespread British indignation was largely provoked by information relayed by non-Bulgarian correspondents and eager newspapermen, two Bulgarian delegates also worked to foster sympathy in Britain in the autumn of 1876: Dragan Tsankov and Marko Dimitriev Balabanov.²²⁵ Their backgrounds were typical of Western-educated Bulgarian nationalists, and their careers were made by championing the Bulgarian national cause. Tsankov (1828-1911) was a graduate of the first Bulgarian-language school in Gabrovo and he later studied at the Odessa seminary, high school in Kiev, and then philology in Vienna. He then established the Community of Bulgarian Literature in Constantinople in 1856 (a forerunner to the Bulgarian Literary Society Brăila), the influential magazine *Български книжици* (“Bulgarian Booklets”) in 1858, and the journal *България* (“Bulgaria”) in 1859, then worked on and off in Ottoman administration and as a teacher.²²⁶ Balabanov (1837-1921) studied in Athens, Heidelberg and Paris before becoming a lawyer and editor of the Constantinople newspaper *Век* (“*Century*”) in 1870. There, he wrote in support of the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate (Bulgarian Orthodox Church) and autocephaly from the

²²⁵ Their names were Anglicised as “D. Zankof and Marco D. Balabanow” throughout contemporary British publications.

²²⁶ Tashev Tasho. *Министрите на България* (Ministers of Bulgaria from) 1879-1999. Sofia: Academic Publishing House/Ministry of Defense, 1999) 43.

Greek Orthodox Church, which was achieved in 1872.²²⁷ Although little evidence survives about their 1876 sojourn in Britain²²⁸—and virtually nothing is noted of this campaign in subsequent English scholarship—they were charged by their Exarchate to actively lobby important figures in Western Europe to support the Bulgarian case for independence.

Tsankov and Balabanov's arrival in Britain was noted by a number of newspapers as they called on important figures in London. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, describing the pair as “practicing barristers at Philippopolis,” recorded the profound sympathies paid to them by the Lord Mayor of London, who stated that the City was “ever ready to obey the calls of charity, and its purse was always open” and that “all the humane people of England were perfectly sincere in their denunciation of the terrible atrocities committed in Bulgaria.”²²⁹ A petition was subsequently drawn up by attendees (including Mr. Baring) that resolved sympathy for the Bulgarian nation and requested that parliament reconvene for a winter session; the Mansion House Relief Fund raised £9,400 that evening.²³⁰ The *Daily News* published a long letter thanking “the great English people for its warm-hearted sympathy” after the “miseries and the atrocities to which our wretched nation has been exposed to” by “the fanatical Turkish populace ... armed by order of the Turkish government.”²³¹ This letter was reprinted across Britain and cited as the official Bulgarian response to the British Agitation.²³²

²²⁷ Tasho. *Министрите* (Ministers). 43-44. This was despite vehement opposition from the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, who declared the move schismatic and excommunicated the Exarchate's followers.

²²⁸ Several periodicals noted their arrival and the meetings they had with British dignitaries: “Turkish Cruelties in Bulgaria,” *Punch's Pocket-Book for 1877* (London: Punch Office, 1877).

²²⁹ “Summary of this Morning's News,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 October 1876.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ “Address of Thanks for the English People,” *Daily News*, 2 October 1876.

²³² “The Bulgarian Address of Thanks to the English People,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 October 1876; “London, Saturday Oct. 7,” *Daily News*, 7 October 1876.

Tsankov and Balabanov presented Queen Victoria with a translated copy of a Bulgarian petition thanking the “great and magnanimous ... English nation” for its aid. The petition requested that the Queen “be the generous protectress of a people sighing for five long centuries under a degrading domination,”²³³ but Victoria mentions neither the meeting nor the request in her diary. The delegates also wrote to thank Fanny E. Albert for her work on the Women’s Memorial and another to the ladies of Edinburgh thanking for their generous support of their “sisters in Christ in Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Servia.”²³⁴ They also presented the House of Commons a Bulgarian petition signed by the inhabitants of Tatar-Bazardjik requesting the rejection of the Ottoman Constitution and the implementation of the protocols of the Constantinople conference, stating that “outside [of] the projects of the Great Powers there can be no reforms of a kind likely to make the Bulgarian population satisfied.”²³⁵ The Bulgarian delegates thus effectively marketed their case to a British audience by appealing to powerful ideals: British magnanimity, religious solidarity, (Western) Great Power consensus, meaningful and representative constitutional reform, international justice, and the protection of women abroad.

Tsankov and Balabanov also published a translated, adapted version of Tsankov’s 1866 *Българска История* (“*Bulgarian History*”) in October 1876 entitled *Bulgaria: By Her Two Delegates*, which was distributed to important British figures, including William Gladstone. (Gladstone’s short letter thanking the pair for the pamphlet is sadly

²³³ D. Zankof and Marco D. Balananow, *Bulgaria: By Her Two Delegates*, Translated by F. H. (London: 1877), 67. Note contemporary Anglicization of their names. Queen Victoria did not note this event in her diary.

²³⁴ Zankof and Balananow, *Bulgaria*, 71.

²³⁵ *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons* (British Parliament: 1877), 125.

unremarkable, and his diary does not mention the pamphlet at all.²³⁶ And somewhat surprisingly, Gladstone's original copy, which survives at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, is uncharacteristically unannotated, all of which suggests that he neglected to read it). The pamphlet explains the national history of Bulgaria through ancient times to the present, how her people were "abandoned to the excesses and outrages of the Turks,"²³⁷ the virtues, innocence, and intelligence of her inhabitants, the natural resources teeming in her mountains, and a carefully calculated call to appeal to British sensibilities to support their claims towards Bulgarian independence. Praising the "honour of human nature" among the "civilized world" (11) rising against the "tyranny, murder, pillage, persecution, forced labours, injury, violence, incessant assaults upon everything that his held sacred" (9) that characterizes "The Turks, the merciless tyrants of all the Christian peoples of the East (12), the pamphlet asserts how Bulgarians, "united in their hatred of Turkish tyrant, ask for nothing but their liberty; once set free their appreciation of the benefits of freedom will suffice to enable them to live on such a friendly footing as shall be fruitful to the progress of the East" (45). The flowery picture of Bulgaria, her people and their modest aims, and the utopian vision of the future of the region, however, strained the credulity of even their more passionate supporters. The *Northern Echo* noted that regarding the assertion that there were 5,000,000 Christian Bulgarians, "there is reason to fear that this is an exaggerated estimate"²³⁸—correcting the amount to 3,400,000. The delegates also optimistically asserted there were an additional 450,000 Pomaks, "who are true Bulgarians... and were it not for the Mohammedan authorities, who excite their

²³⁶ H.C.G. Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence: Volume Nine: January 1875-December 1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004 [1986]), 162 (10 October 1876).

²³⁷ Zankof and Balananow, *Bulgaria*, 7.

²³⁸ "Bulgaria, As Described by Bulgarians," *Northern Echo*, 27 November 1876.

religious fanaticism, they would ever live in perfect harmony with their Christian fellow-countrymen” (8) and that there were “no more than 350,000 ... Turks who are really of the Turkish race, and “were it not for the Turkish army and administration this number would be reduced by one-half.” Modern estimates place roughly 1,130,000 Christians and 1,120,000 Muslims in Rumelia during 1876.²³⁹ This was, of course, one of many glaring exaggerations within the pamphlet, yet the arguments circulated as a credible source of Bulgarian desires to be carried through international negotiations. Marko Balabanov and Dragan Tsankov eventually joined the first Constituent Assembly of Bulgaria in 1879. Balabanov was the first Bulgarian foreign minister. Tsankov served as the Bulgarian Prime Minister in 1880 and again from 1883-1884. During Tsankov’s second term Balabanov served as Tsankov’s foreign minister.

Codification of the Bulgarian National Narrative

Pressing the widespread lack of information about Bulgaria behind British support to their advantage, Bulgarian nationalists effectively guided foreign accounts of the Bulgarian insurrection. Since its outbreak, the history of the April Uprising has been muddied by its self-fulfilling prophesy. Bulgarian revolutionaries, who became the country’s first politicians, military establishment, and administration, also became the event’s first historians, understandably embellishing certain elements and downplaying others to support their political aspirations. The Western understanding of the Bulgarian Horrors as an inexcusable example of Turkish inhumanity inflicted on innocent Bulgarian Christians was instrumental in securing intervention from Russia and neutrality from Britain, which eventually resulted in Bulgarian independence. This (mis)understanding

²³⁹ Şimşir, *Turks of Bulgaria*, 4.

persists in various forms throughout both English and Bulgarian historiography. First in a long line of histories that codifies this perspective was Tsankov and Balabanov's *Bulgaria*, which goes so far as to dismiss the existence of a Bulgarian insurrection and to assert Turkish responsibility for:

the wholesale massacres of thousands of innocent and inoffensive human being, the wholesale plunder, the burning of villages, the profanation of churches and schools, the rapes, the forced conversions to Islamism, the carrying away of women, girls, and boys, the countless outrages, the arrests by hundreds of pretended guilty persons, the heavy chains, the bayonet stabs on the road, the unimaginable tortures in the prisons, the forced confessions, the hanging on a large scale, the systematic persecution of the school teachers, the insults given to venerable priests, peaceful men, and fathers of families, the ill-treatment of everything that was more or less instructed, educated, or rich in Bulgaria—for the instigators of all these abominations wanted to kill not only the body, but also the soul of the Bulgarian nation:—these are the means by which the Turkish government has thought fit to let this nation feel the effects of that new era which was opening for the Empire.²⁴⁰

“Is it possible,” the authors follow up rhetorically, “to imagine that this unfortunate nation must be condemned to remain any longer under the degrading yoke which has weighed on it for five centuries? What crime against humanity has it committed to deserve this cruel fate in Europe?”²⁴¹

In many cases revolutionaries themselves became historians. Letters, notes, telegrams, proclamations, memoirs, and other source were gathered and published after the Russo-Turkish War as “Materials from the Revival”²⁴² to provide “building blocks” for future histories celebrating Bulgaria’s national liberation.²⁴³ As Roumen Daskalov observes, a “hybrid” genre of memoir, historical scholarship, journalism, and historical

²⁴⁰ Zankof and Balananow, *Bulgaria*, 63.

²⁴¹ Zankof and Balananow, *Bulgaria*, 63.

²⁴² For example: Dimitur Stashimirov (Ed.) *Материали на Възраждането (Revival Materials)*, Vol 1. Sofia: 1908; Ivan Georgov, *Материали по нашето Възраждане (Materials of our Revival)* (Sofia: 1908).

²⁴³ Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Buadapest: Central European Press, 2004), 2.

fiction emerged during this period. Works such as Zakhari Stoyanov's *Notes on the Bulgarian Uprisings* (published between 1884-1892),²⁴⁴ Stoyan Zaimov's *The Past* (1884-1888),²⁴⁵ and Ivan Vazov's *The Epic of the Forgotten* (1884) and *Under the Yoke* (1894)²⁴⁶ had "an enormous, though non-avowed" impact on scholarship during the period because it "sanctified the epoch and its personalities and inspired a strongly emotional, truly pious attitude that excluded a distanced, many sided treatment."²⁴⁷ The solidification of national identity forged through war and the glorification of national liberation not only contributed to the drive towards unification and independence of Bulgaria, it also fostered irredentist sentiments that underlay Bulgaria's war aims in 1885, the Balkan Wars from 1912-1914, and the First and Second World Wars.

While British observers generally accepted these arguments—even amongst the Conservative government who only hesitated because of their fear of Russian expansion—Bulgarians codified their own heroic narrative of resistance and patriotic uprising. Far from downplaying the April Uprising and the provocative actions of Bulgarian insurgents, Zahari Stoyanov's *Materials on the Bulgarian Revolts* (1884-1892) recounts them in bloody detail. Stoyanov recounts how at Panagyurishte, in the boundless "admiration and joy" of victory, five or six Turkish corpses were mutilated and dismembered; "many [rebels] covered their

²⁴⁴ Zakhari Stoyanov, *Extracts from Notes on the Bulgarian Uprisings* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1976 [1884-1892]).

²⁴⁵ Stoyan Zaimov, *Миналото (The Past)* (Sofia: BZNS, 1986 [1884-1888]).

²⁴⁶ Ivan Vazov's *Под игото (Under the Yoke)* (Sofia: 1894). English translation: (London: William Heinemann, 1894). Vazov was born in 1850 and studied with Botio Petkov (Hristo Botev's father) and worked as his assistant. Vazov joined the revolutionary committee in Sopot, emigrated soon after, then moved to Plovdiv (Bulgarian capital) after the liberation to work in the new administration as the "main mediator between the romanticism of the 'National Revival' and the institutionalization of the national ideology in the modern state" (Trencsényi and Kopeček (Eds.), *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentaries. National Romanticism*, Vol. 2 (Budapest: Central European University Press), 87. Vazov is the second-most popular author in Bulgarian national literature, after Botev.

²⁴⁷ Daskalov, *Making of a Nation*, 5.

fingers in the blood and licked it, saying that it will serve them for the Eucharist.”²⁴⁸ Another “took his knife and drank blood from a wound like sherbet” which brought some “aversion” to other revolutionaries, “but there was nothing to be done ... He did this for fun, but out of a burnt soul. He poured the loathing and hatred that has weighed on the Bulgarian people for five hundred years.”²⁴⁹ These actions, and the many other abhorrent acts, were completely justified in the eyes of Stoyanov, who ridiculed the “gentle philanthropists of civilized Europe who might resent the actions of the Bulgarian rebels”: “We know the history of their revolutions ... their committees of public safety who killed their brother-citizens as dogs ... not like the tyrant infidels as it was with Bulgarians ... for the glory of the mitre, adorned with crosses and the holy gospel texts.”²⁵⁰ Indeed, Stoyanov exalts the actions of the Bulgarian “freedom fighters” (борците за свобода) despite his description of their killing of Turkish men, women, and children: “yes, but these [rebels] were as honest and blameless as angels, as perfect as Bulgaria will hardly bear a second such like.”²⁵¹ In the preface to an English translation of his work published in 1913, the translator notes that it is “only fair to point out that the insurgents during their few days of triumph committed many acts some of which are set out in the following narrative which

²⁴⁸ Възхищението и радостта нямаха граници. На земята се търкаляха 5-6 турски трупове, избити по разни махали в селото. Тия бяха накълцани и обезобразени като фурнаджийска четеля, защото кой как пристигнеше, за да си накървави ножа забиваше го немилостиво в отдавна изстиналия вече труп. Имаше мнозина, които си увираха пръста в кръвта и го облизваха, като казваха, че това ще да им служи за комка.

²⁴⁹ Той се наведе над един труп, грабна кръв с кривача си от раната, която изпи като шербет! Разбира се, че неговата постъпка докара болезнено отвращение на присъстващите там; но нямаше що да се прави ... Той не правеше това само за кеф, но че му беше изгоряла душата. Той изливаше оная ненавист и омраза, която е тежала на многострадалния български народ цели петстотин години

²⁵⁰ нежните филантропи от цивилизована Европа да се възмутят от действията на българските въстаници ... Ние познаваме историята и на техните революции, ... на пазителите им за публичната безопасност, които са убивали своите братя-граждани като кучета ... не към тирана друговедец, както ставаше това с нашите българи, ... за славата на короната, украсена с кръстове и текстове от свящото евангелие.

²⁵¹ Да, но тия бяха честни и непорочни като ангели, идеални, каквито България едва ли ще роди вече втори такива подобни на тях. Preface

cannot be described otherwise than as “atrocities” but this was overruled by the fact that “the ‘balance of criminality,’ or at all events the greater number of victims immolated, is doubtless on the side of the Turks.”²⁵² The episode regarding mutilated Turkish corpses and the drinking of their blood is notably absent from the English edition.

While Stoyanov, Zaimov, and Vazov codified and popularized the early national mythology, large numbers of personal memoirs written following the liberation until after the First World War rarely mention grand, national narratives. Vasil Manchev’s memoirs, for example, focus on his time spent teaching in Svishtov before being exiled to Ankara from 1867-1873 in the wake of the Serbian uprising. Manchev speaks of Bulgarian “subordination” by the Ottomans, but his letters do not speak to the April Uprising—only that he was deployed to fight alongside the Russians in 1877.²⁵³ Ioakim Gruev, teacher and textbook writer in Koprivshtitsa and Plovdiv (nationalist poet Ivan Vazov was his student), focuses his personal recollections on his childhood in Plovdiv and his experiences in prison and the Ottoman judicial system—his account of the April Uprising and the Horrors is very impersonal, citing only contemporary newspaper stories, the arrival of Western journalists (MacGahan and Schuyler), investigators (Baring) and philanthropists (including Lady Strangford’s relief efforts in Plovdiv), and the popular indignation in Russia and Britain aroused by Gladstone’s famous pamphlet.²⁵⁴ Even the memoirs of Tancho Shabanov, the cook and quartermaster of the Koprivshtitsa revolutionary committee has only a limited acknowledgement of the grand nationalist aspirations of the revolutionaries; he instead speaks to the excitement of the would-be revolutionaries, his “betrayal” and arrest, and his

²⁵² Stoyanoff, *Pages from the Autobiography of a Bulgarian Insurgent*, 3.

²⁵³ Vasil Manchev, *Спомени, Дописки, Писма* (“Memoirs, Correspondence, Letters.”)(Sofia: Fatherland Front, 1982 [1904]), 50-67.

²⁵⁴ Ioakim Gruev, *моите Спомени* (“My Memoirs”) (Plovdiv, 1906).

subsequent exile in Cyprus.²⁵⁵ As Roumen Daskalov's critically observes, "the actors [of these memoirs] act mainly out of pragmatic motives rather than being driven by great ideals," which is "quite at odds with the grand national narrative constructed by professional historians."²⁵⁶ Ironically, these memoirs, "With their localism, particularism, disparateness, pragmatic lowering and personalism," actually "generate scepticism towards the encompassing narrative with its generalizations, continuities, and the ascription of attitudes or actions to collective protagonists such as 'the people,' 'the nation,' or a certain class."²⁵⁷ Yet these nuances are obliterated by the accounts of later historians of the revolution, who either ignored the memoirs' inherent tensions or downplayed their historical significance because of their supposedly inherent partiality and inaccuracy that results from self-justification.

The argument against the historical use of memoir towards material structures was systematic across the international practice of history until well after the cultural turn. Only recently has the "poly-genre"²⁵⁸ of memoir been critically evaluated within historical theory—the field is in fact woefully underdeveloped. In light of recent criticism, memoirs are indeed critically useful in the recovery of individual-level decision-making processes and discursive influences that other sources can only generalize about.²⁵⁹ The tensions underlying Bulgarian memoirs in fact underscore the limited appeal of nationalist ideals

²⁵⁵ Ivan Veselinov Shabanov (ed) *Memoirs of Tancho Shabanov and the April Uprising of 1876 in Koprivshtitsa* (Sofia: 1965).

²⁵⁶ Daskalov, *Making of a Nation*, 3. See also: Nikolai Aretov, "Издателската съдба на възрожденските мемоари" ("Historiography of Renaissance Memoirs"), in Daskalov (Ed.) *История на книгата - начин на живот*. ("The History of the Book, a Way of Life") (Sofia: LIK, 2002): 182-198.

²⁵⁷ Daskalov, *Making of a Nation*, 3.

²⁵⁸ George W. Egerton, "Introduction," in G.W. Egerton (Ed.), *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1994), xii.

²⁵⁹ Whitehead, "Political Memoirs," 183.

during the April Uprising. The discrepancy between nationalist mythology and the voices of witnesses exposes the *post hoc* re-imagination of events by later historians who effectively altered the historical record towards a nationalist interpretation of events. A revealing cognitive dissonance amongst Bulgarian nationalist historians is that that the foreign “eyewitness” sources that verify Turkish atrocities are venerated and held as undoubted historical truth, but memoir accounts of the Bulgarian revolutionaries themselves are rejected as invariably inaccurate.

Early professional histories, including Dimitŭr Strashimirov’s 1907 three volume account of the April Uprising, based on many interviews with its participants, gave “pessimistic” interpretations of the uprising as it “was weak and would easily be crushed, much more easily than many expected.”²⁶⁰ This record of naïve failure, however, was turned into tragic heroism by later Marxist historians such as Hristo Gandev, who repudiates Strashimirov’s claims and asserts that leaders of the revolution, who were “neither dreamers, nor demagogues, nor madmen,” “led the Bulgarian people by the sole possible historical route to national liberty, with the clear and sharp consciousness of the absolute necessity of self-sacrifice.”²⁶¹ In this re-reading, the stultifying yoke of Ottoman imperialism could only have been broken by the sort of revolutionary vanguard led by these insurgents, just as capitalism could only be vanquished by well-disciplined Bolsheviks representing the proletariat. The interwar period, culturally shaped by

²⁶⁰ Dimitŭr Strashimirov, *История на Априлското въстание* (History of the April Uprising) Vol. 1 (Plovdiv: District Standing Committee, 1907), 344-52. 1920s Bulgarian historian Nikolai Nachov similarly argued that “in the final hour the apostles (апостоли) and chieftains (войводи) were deeply disappointed and with indescribable grief realized their great delusion” regarding the readiness of people for revolution *Христо Ботев: По случай петдесетгодишнината от смъртта му* (Hristo Botev: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death) (Sofia: State Printing, 1926), 49-53.

²⁶¹ Hristo Gandev, *Априлското въстание* (History of the April Uprising) 1876 (Sofia: Science and Art, 1976) 184.

Bulgaria's defeat alongside the Central Powers and the humiliation of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, led to another period of national revival through a new generation of professional historians at Sofia University. Mirroring trends in German scholarship after the First World War,²⁶² Maria Todorova notes that "there was no reevaluation of the basic goals and tasks of history"²⁶³ or indeed of the justness of irredentist national ambitions notwithstanding the horrors of war. History textbooks during the period propagated the notion that the previous wars had been thwarted attempts at national unification. The wars themselves were labelled in all textbooks as "The Wars of Bulgarian National Unification, 1912-1919" and the reasons for fighting were to "liberate and unite the entire Bulgarian nation."²⁶⁴ Bulgaria sided with Nazi Germany in 1941 with the hopes of territorial gain, which were dashed by Soviet occupation in 1944; these national catastrophes and the following Communist period shifted focus onto the more "heroic" Revival period.

The Communist period, while stifling some areas of research (particularly modern history), marked a continued development in the sense of national unity. Todorova notes a "significant degree of symbiosis between intelligentsia and [Communist] party" that propagated a "continuous escalation ... in national feelings"²⁶⁵ through the 1960s and culminated during the 1980s with the forced cultural assimilation of Bulgarian Muslims and Turks. "Historians," she argues, "took upon themselves the voluntary task of protecting and promoting the 'national interest' and the 'national cause,' which enabled them to

²⁶² The post-WWI period of German historiography was marked by government involvement and academic self-censorship with the aims of rehabilitating German national pride and repudiating Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles. Holger H. Herwig, "Clio Deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War," *International Security*, 12, 2 (1987): 7-42.

²⁶³ Todorova, "Historiographies," 1107.

²⁶⁴ Quoted in Hranova, "Historical Myths," 312.

²⁶⁵ Todorova, "Historiographies," 1108.

espouse the false but self-satisfying illusion that they were taking a dissident position”²⁶⁶ with respect to Soviet Communism. Bulgarian nationalism, therefore, was a bulwark against the stultifying effects of another type of foreign domination during the Communist period. But a direct result of the one-sided nationalist retrenchment was the insulation of many Bulgarian historians from major theoretical changes occurring elsewhere in the practice of history and other disciplines, including the linguistic and cultural turns.²⁶⁷

Given the long continuity of national historical narratives, the transition to the post-Communist period was not marked with radical transformation. Many scholars, including Todorova in 1992, Thomas Meininger in 1996,²⁶⁸ Ivan Elenkov and Daniela Koleva in 2003²⁶⁹ and 2006,²⁷⁰ and Roumen Daskalov in 2006 and 2011²⁷¹ have noted the sluggishness of Bulgarian historiography to come to terms with new methods and interests. Interestingly, subsequent scholarly debate between revisionists and anti-revisionists has focused on post-liberation controversies, particularly the legacy of Stefan Stambolov and Zhivkov, or those of Revival era,²⁷² including Todorova’s recent, masterful work on the

²⁶⁶ Todorova, “Historiographies,” 1108. Todorova contends, however, that while the history of the recent past deserves to be rewritten, the period before the turn of the century was on “a fairly sound base” (1110).

²⁶⁷ In 1992, Todorova summed up this effect, “Born in the age of nationalism, developing in the context of the nation-state and as one of its most important pillars, Bulgarian historiography has evolved almost exclusively according to the precepts of what was considered to be its duty to shape the national consciousness and thus fulfil an important social function. This overwhelming didactic character of Bulgarian historiography, alongside its obsession with national history, makes it a self-contained and parochial discipline, with clearly defined and limited functions” (“Historiographies,” 1117).

²⁶⁸ Thomas A Meininger’s “Troubled Transition: Bulgarian Historiography, 1989-1994,” *Contemporary European History* 5, 1 (1996): 103-118.

²⁶⁹ Ivan Elenkov and Daniela Koleva, “Historiography in Bulgaria After the Fall of Communism: Did ‘The Change’ Happen?” *Historein* 4 (2003-4): 183-198.

²⁷⁰ Ivan Elenkov and Daniela Koleva, “Changes in Bulgarian History after 1989: Outlines and Borders,” In D. Mishkova (Ed.) *Balkan 19th Century. Other Readings* (Sofia: Riva), S.46, 73-81.

²⁷¹ Roumen Daskalov, *Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian History from Stambolov to Zhivkov* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2006).

²⁷² See, for example: A. Anchev, Руската общественост и българското национално Възраждане през 30-50-те години на XIX в. (“The Russian Public and the Bulgarian National Revival, 1830s to the 1850s,” in Българското възраждане и Русия (“*Bulgarian Revival and Russia*”) (Sofia: Science and Art, 1981): 338-362.

contested memorialization of the revolutionary Vasil Levski.²⁷³ Yet the April Uprising itself has attracted much less academic discussion, except in the overwhelming defence of the national narrative when challenged by academic scholarship.

The 2007 Batak Massacre Controversy

In the Spring of 2007, for example, Professor Ulf Brunnbauer, Chair of Southeast and East European History at the University of Regensburg, collaborated with doctoral student Martina Baleva on a conference entitled *Batak ein Bulgarischer Erinnerungsort* (Batak as a Place of Bulgarian Memory)²⁷⁴ which was to take place at the Ethnographic Institute and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia on 18 May. Both scholars were scheduled to give papers. Brunnbauer's was entitled "'Mountains' as Mythical Places of the Struggle for National Liberation"²⁷⁵ and Baleva's paper addressed an 1892 painting of the Batak massacre by Polish artist Antoni Piotrowski.²⁷⁶ The conference was a part of a larger project at the Institute of East European Studies of the Free University of Berlin entitled "Demonizing Islam: Past and Present Anti-Islamic Stereotypes in Bulgaria Exemplified by the Myth of the Batak Massacre,"²⁷⁷ which was sponsored by a number of international partnerships.²⁷⁸ A few weeks before the conference took place, however, the Bulgarian

²⁷³ Maria Todorova, *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria's National Hero*. Budapest and New York: Central European Press, 2009. This 600-page book does not mention the April Uprising, yet is a helpful discussion of the social and political forces at work in Bulgarian historiography.

²⁷⁴ Martina Baleva and Ulf Brunnbauer, *Batak ein Bulgarischer Erinnerungsort* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2007).

²⁷⁵ "'Gebirge' als mythische Orte des nationalen Freiheitskampfes"

²⁷⁶ "Batak und die Rolle von Bildern bei der Konstruktion kollektiver Erinnerungen," *Batak als bulgarischer Erinnerungsort* Conference Schedule, Accessed 3 July 2012 at <<http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/geschichte/soe/termine/batak.html>>

²⁷⁷ *Feindbild Islam – Geschichte und Gegenwart antiislamischer Stereotype in Bulgarien am Beispiel des Mythos vom Massaker in Batak*, "Batak als bulgarischer Erinnerungsort," <http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/geschichte/soe/termine/batak.html>

²⁷⁸ Sponsorship of the *Geschichtswerkstatt Europa* (European History Workshop) included the Robert Bosch Foundation, *Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft* (EVZ Foundation), the Polish Institute in

media got wind of it and the event quickly exploded into an international controversy. Bulgarian-language Darik News and English-language Sofia News Agency²⁷⁹ ran a short story with the provocative headline “German Scientists Deny 5 Centuries of Bulgaria’s History” which stated that “Martina Baleva and Ulf Brunnbauer say that one of the most horrendous acts in Bulgaria’s history – the slaughter of thousands in Batak, has been a myth and the number of victims overrated.”²⁸⁰ The article quoted the reaction of the Mayor of Batak, Petar Paunov, who was “outraged” at the researchers, calling their work “a sacrilege and an insult to the memory of the people from the town” and noting that he had contacted the Bulgarian Vice President Angel Marin (also a native of Batak) for “assistance in resolving the matter.”²⁸¹ Within hours, the report generated a dozen comments likening the authors to Holocaust deniers who should be imprisoned, suggesting that “perhaps the German and the ‘Bulgarian’ have Turkish blood in their veins,” and asking readers to call and email the authors to “Let the f@#\$s know how we feel.”²⁸²

The following day, the controversy exploded as Bulgarian media outlets raged at the “denial of the Batak Massacre” and the “criminal mockery” of such a hallowed event in Bulgaria’s national history. The Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, a historian by training, declared that the project was a “terrible provocation against our national history” and the authors were attempting to re-write history on “delicate historical topics” which is

Bulgaria, the Eastern Institute of the University of Berlin, and the National Ethnographic Institute and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

²⁷⁹ Both owned by Novinite OOD.

²⁸⁰ “German Scientists Deny 5 Centuries of Bulgaria's History,” *Sofia News Agency*, 24 April 2007.

²⁸¹ “German Scientists Deny 5 Centuries of Bulgaria's History,” *Sofia News Agency*, 24 April 2007.

²⁸² Two counterpoints suggested that “Maybe we should wait until 18th May before judging these scientists?” and “We feel like arabs seeing Mohammed cartoons in a western newspaper. It will be good however to get some information about the project directly from the authors what if the media cited them incorrectly or exaggerated?” I do not intend to imply that Bulgarian (or any) society as a whole may be understood through comments left on online news sources, only to show how vitriolic some responses were. Comments were made in English, characters were as shown.

“not only deeply unacceptable but will also meet the repudiation of the whole Bulgarian society.”²⁸³ The Sofia daily *Монитор* (*Monitor*) erroneously reported that the researchers had been paid a “five-digit Euro amount” by two Turkish foundations²⁸⁴ in an article that dismissively described Baleva as “the woman with Bulgarian citizenship.”²⁸⁵ In the same issue, the *Monitor* included a “History” of Batak Massacre that tellingly labelled the Ottoman forces at Batak as Turkish “invaders” (поробители)²⁸⁶ and also a short interview with Ulf Brunnbauer (under the derisive headline “It is not appropriate to tell you how much money we have”), who stressed that the conference was not about denying the Batak massacre or re-writing history, stating “it is a historical fact.”²⁸⁷ Irrespective of Brunnbauer’s quick clarification, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAN) announced on 25 April that they were not partners with the project and that it would not allow the use of any space for the impending conference.²⁸⁸ BAN Chairman Ivan Yuhnovsky declared in a news release that their institution would not be used for such a “pseudo-scientific show”; Yuhnovsky further stated to Bulgarian National Radio that the authors’ request to use the

²⁸³ Paraphrased quotation from Olga Yoncheva, “Batak Massacre: Provocation against Bulgarian National History,” *News.bg*, 25 April 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at <http://international.ibox.bg/news/id_1380292856>. Parvanov also visited Batak to mark the anniversary of the April Uprising.

²⁸⁴ “Поръчката за Батак идва от Турция” (Order about Batak comes from Turkey), *Монитор* (Monitor, Sofia), 25 April 2007. Accessed 3 July 2012 at <<http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=118021>>.

²⁸⁵ (Берлинския свободен университет и представящата се за изкуствоведка жена с българско гражданство г-ца Мартина Балева)

²⁸⁶ Alternative definitions include “oppressors,” “conquerors,” or “enslavers.”

²⁸⁷ “Университетският асистент Улф Брунбауер: Не е уместно да ви казвам колко пари сме взели” *Monitor*, 25 April 2007. Accessed 3 July 2012 at <<http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=118021>>.

²⁸⁸ Olga Yoncheva, “Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: ‘Myth of Batak’ is Pseudo-scientific Show,” *News.bg*, 26 April 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://international.ibox.bg/news/id_448840909>. The BAN was listed as a funding agency in the conference schedule.

facility for the conference was “unacceptable because the expressed theses ... were primitive and groundless and could not be subject to scientific discussion.”²⁸⁹

Despite the cancellation of the conference and Brunnbauer and Baleva’s quick response that apologized for the misunderstanding and stressed that the uproar was based on mistaken information,²⁹⁰ the controversy spiralled out of control into what has been described as “one of the largest mass hysterias in the post-communist period.”²⁹¹ It quickly involved all major media outlets, historians and historical institutions, victims’ groups, nationalist groups, human rights and free speech advocates, city councils, Bulgarian politicians eager to capitalize on nationalist sentiment, and several members of the European Parliament. In Bulgaria, the agitation produced “frenetically repeated false public accusations,” special meetings whereby the authors were denounced and where calls were made to prosecute them for genocide denial, threats to the authors and Baleva’s parents, and public book burnings.²⁹² Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev and the Minister of Culture Stefan Danailov joined the Vice President and the President’s condemnation of the cancelled conference,²⁹³ and the Panagyurishte Municipal Council similarly protested against the conference organizers’ supposed goals to revise Bulgarian history.²⁹⁴ Some

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Ulf Brunnbauer and Martina Baleva, “Отворено писмо на Брунбауер и Балева” (Open Letter of Brunnbauer and Baleva to the Bulgarian Public), *Dnevnik*, 26 April 2007 Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2007/04/26/334653_otvoreno_pismo_na_brunbauer_i_baleva/>.

²⁹¹ Svilen Ovcharov, *Racism in Bulgaria: ENAR Shadow Report 2007* (Brussels: European Network Against Racism(ENAR), 2007), 20.

²⁹² Ovcharov, *Racism in Bulgaria*, ENAR, 21. See: <http://www.bulphoto.com/image.php?img=78667>, Accessed 4 July 2012, of Petyo Pashov burning Martina Baleva’s *Batak as a Place of Memory* in a public square.

²⁹³ Yavor Dachkov, “Very Patriotic Games,” *Vagabond*, 9 (June 2007), Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://www.vagabond-bg.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=792:very-patriotic-games&catid=61:bulgaria-politics&Itemid=12>. “The events are so brainless that it’s hard to relay them,” recounts the article.

²⁹⁴ Ovcharov, *Racism in Bulgaria*, ENAR, 21.

Bulgarian scholars were also quick to judge the intentions of the authors, including the Director of the National History Museum Bozhidar Dimitrov, who labelled Baleva and Brunnbauer's research as a "grand falsification,"²⁹⁵ as well as Sofia University Professor Dragomir Dragonov, who advocated a boycott of Bosch products since the conference was funded through the Robert Bosch Foundation.²⁹⁶

Certainly, condemnation of Brunnbauer and Baleva was not unanimous. Seeking to counter the escalating chauvinism of Bulgarian nationalists, 669 scholars posted an internet petition "against the political censorship and the administrative pressure on the free academic debate imposed by the state institutions and the academic leaders. We shall not accept a monopoly on the historic truth, least of all one that covers a rough manipulation with a political purpose."²⁹⁷ The President of the Centre for Minority Studies, Antonina Zhelyazkova, censured the "unprecedented barbaric censorship"²⁹⁸ of the BAN, and the newspapers *Дневник* (*Dnevnik*) and *Капитал* (*Capital*) condemned the "artificially whipped up hysteria" behind the controversy.²⁹⁹ In response to this counter-

²⁹⁵ (грандиозна фалшификация)

²⁹⁶ Ovcharov, *Racism in Bulgaria*, ENAR, 21. A far more muted controversy had been brewing since Baleva's article published in *Kultura* in May of 2006 on the same topic as her conference paper. A Bulgarian-language exchange between Baleva and Naum Kaychev (Assistant Professor at Sofia University) was made during the summer of 2006 that was republished as the controversy broke. In their responses, Kaychev and Baleva debated minor points over whether or not national focus on Batak had completely or mostly faded during the 16 years between the actual massacre and the production of Piotrowski's painting: Martina Baleva and Naum Kaychev, "Как Батак влезе в българския национален разказ" ("How Batak Entered the National Narrative"), *Mediapool.bg*, 26 April 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <<http://goo.gl/u8lwk>>.

²⁹⁷ Now defunct. Quoted in ENAR 21. Link <http://www.bgpetition.com/apel_na_bg_istorici/index.html> Accessed 2 March 2008. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2007 Annual Report, pp. 15-16.

²⁹⁸ (Безпрецедентна цензура, варварство)

²⁹⁹ "Баташки страсти" ("Batak Passions") *Dnevnik*, 26 April 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2007/04/26/334514_batashki_strasti/> and "Скандалът с изгонването на германските изследователи на българската история Батак или смърт" ("Batak or Death: Scandal over German Researchers and Bulgarian History Explodes") *Capital*, 27 April 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/redakcionni_komentari/2007/04/27/335041_batak_ili_smurt/>.

protest, however, a group of descendants of Batak victims rallied and called for the state to revoke Baleva's citizenship, and a group of citizens from Batak marched to Sofia to hold a protest in front of parliament.³⁰⁰

Bulgarian nationalists were enraged by the apparent attack on their national history, which emboldened the ultra-nationalist National Union Attack (Национален съюз Атака or Ataka) during the 2007 elections for the European Parliament.³⁰¹ The chairman of the party, Volen Siderov, called for violence against the two researchers, whom he described as "moral monsters" in front of 1000 supporters in Batak and with a banner behind him reading "Baleva to the guillotine, impale the Judean German!"³⁰² Ataka also proposed an amendment to the Penal Code in Parliament, which would make "professing of an anti-democratic ideology which calls into question or attempts to deny in any way whatsoever the genocide of the Bulgarians in the lands historically inhabited by them during the Turkish yoke" illegal and punishable by a one to five year prison term or a fine of 5000 to 50,000 leva.³⁰³ SKAT TV, often supportive of Ataka, offered a 1000 leva reward for anyone who could supply a recent photograph and the home address of Martina Baleva.³⁰⁴ As a result Martina Baleva filed a complaint to the Bulgarian National Council for Electronic Media over SKAT's offer and for "hate speech" directed against her and her family.³⁰⁵ Eventually, the German media group WAZ apologized to Baleva for the actions of its

³⁰⁰ Petar Kostadinov, "The Batak Massacre: A Sacred Subject," *Sofia Echo*, 7 May 2007, Accessed 12 June 2012 at: <http://sofiaecho.com/2007/05/07/653342_reading-room-the-batak-massacre-a-sacred-subject>.

³⁰¹ Bulgaria officially joined the European Union in January 2007.

³⁰² Albena Shkodrova, "Bulgaria: Patriotic Outrage Dominates EU Parliament Campaign," *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)*, 15 May 2007, Accessed 3 July 2012: <<http://birn.eu.com/en/84/10/2952/>>.

³⁰³ Kostadinov, "The Batak Massacre: A Sacred Subject," *Sofia Echo*, 7 May 2007.

³⁰⁴ Dimana Trankova, "Batak," *Vagabond*, 43-44 (April-May 2010), Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <http://www.vagabond-bg.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1123&Itemid=37&limitstart=2>.

³⁰⁵ "Historian Files Complaint Against Hate Speech," *BIRN*, 11 July 2007, Accessed 3 July 2012 <<http://birn.eu.com/en/1/130/3576/>>

Bulgarian dailies *Trud* and *24 Chasa* (which had labelled her a “traitor”) stating that it would “exercise better supervision of its East-European newspapers.”³⁰⁶ German MEP Verner Langen also secured an investigation into apparent threats to freedom of speech in Bulgaria by the European Commission.³⁰⁷

Nationalist Bulgarians, however, crowed that Baleva was “too scared” to come to Bulgaria and was hiding behind faceless commissions.³⁰⁸ Capitalizing on popular outrage, Ataka won 14.20% of the popular vote during the European Parliament election on 20 May, winning 3 out of 18 delegates sent to Brussels. Also as a result of the controversy, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church began collecting information on victims of the Batak and Novo Selo massacres³⁰⁹ and the Church ultimately canonized them in 2011, making it officially “sacrilege” to dispute the nature of their deaths.³¹⁰ As a Bulgarian journalist noted with only slight sarcasm, the moral of the media firestorm was that “one thing is clear: even the slightest deflection from the line of cherishing and venerating the memory of the Batak massacre in Bulgaria will eternally provoke a harsh and united reaction by Bulgarians.”³¹¹

³⁰⁶ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), “WAZ manager apologizes to Bulgarian scholar for conduct of WAZ-newspapers *Trud* and *24 Chasa*,” 21 November 2007, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <<http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/news/bg/single/waz-manager-apologizes-to-bulgarian-scholar-for-conduct-of-waz-newspapers-trud-and-24-chasa/>>

³⁰⁷ BHC, “MEP: Bulgaria must undertake to safeguard freedom of speech and research,” 21 February 2008, Accessed 4 July 2012 at: <<http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/news/bg/single/mep-bulgaria-must-undertake-to-safeguard-freedom-of-speech-and-research/>>.

³⁰⁸ As reported by Kostadinov, “The Batak Massacre: A Sacred Subject”

³⁰⁹ Ovcharov, *Racism in Bulgaria*, ENAR, 21.

³¹⁰ Silvia Nikolova, “Church Canonizes New Saints” (Църквата канонизира нови светци) *Монитор* (*Monitor*, Sofia), 28 February 2011, Accessed 3 July 2012 at <<http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=281757>>.

³¹¹ Kostadinov, “The Batak Massacre: A Sacred Subject.”

Worth noting is that while Roumen Daskalov's critical assessment of Bulgarian historiography has attracted a number of anti-revisionist critiques,³¹² he largely avoided the harsh public scrutiny levelled at Ulf Brunnbauer and Martina Baleva despite Daskalov's own scheduled presentation at the same conference in 2007.³¹³ Daskalov, however, received sharp criticism after the event from Elijah Todevs, Professor and Head of 15th-19th Century Bulgarian History at the BAN, who was tasked with responding to the "Brunnbauer Scandal." Todevs accuses Daskalov for being complicit in the "careless handling" of the "sanctuary"³¹⁴ of the Batak massacre. Todevs, in his condemnation of the "relativism"³¹⁵ and "creeping empiricism"³¹⁶ of Brunnbauer and other "arrogant dilettantes,"³¹⁷ revealingly lists the "eyewitness" reports of Schuyler and MacGahan, as well as the writings of Gladstone and the memoirs of Zakhari Stoyanov (published from 1884-1892)³¹⁸ and Angel Goranov (published in 1892),³¹⁹ as the primary documents for historical knowledge of the Batak massacre. The Baring Report, however, is cited as the chief source that "proves" the extent of the massacre since he was merely the "pollster"³²⁰ of Disraeli, "one of the greatest friends of the Ottoman Empire"³²¹ who wrote that the lowest estimate (from a

³¹² Daskalov's original, Bulgarian edition of *Debating the Past* (*От Стамболов до Живков. Големите спорове за новата българска история* [Sofia: Gutenberg, 2009]) provoked a skeptical review by Stefan Dechev, accessed 1 March 2013 at:

<http://www.hssfoundation.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=434:roumen-daskalov-review&Itemid=55&lang=en>.

³¹³ "Die Wiedergeburt als bulgarischer Nationalmythos" (The Rebirth of a Bulgarian National Myth) *Batak als bulgarischer Erinnerungsort* Conference Schedule, Accessed 3 July 2012 at <<http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/geschichte/soe/termine/batak.html>>.

³¹⁴ (невнимателни ръце пипат светините ни)

³¹⁵ (релативизъм)

³¹⁶ (пълзящ емпиризъм) – Presumably implying skepticism.

³¹⁷ (арогантни дилетанти)

³¹⁸ Stoyanov, *Notes on the Bulgarian Uprisings*.

³¹⁹ Angel P. Goranov, *Въстанието и клането в Батак* (*Uprising and Massacre in Batak*) (Sofia:, 1991 [1892]).

³²⁰ (анкетьор), also "interviewer."

³²¹ (един от най-големите приятели на Османската империя)

Turkish source) of those killed at Batak was 5,000.³²² Todevs, presumably unaware of Millman's challenge to Baring's accuracy, concluded: "With such a reliable witness as Baring, the Batak massacre cannot be called anything but '*history*'!"³²³ It is in Todev and other historians' reactions to the Batak massacre controversy, therefore, that the remarkably imperfect nature of primary sources regarding the April Uprising is most apparent.

The 2007 international controversy over the history of the Batak massacre highlights the central importance of the April Uprising in the contemporary national mythology of Bulgaria, the extremely sensitive nature of Bulgarian historiography to the media and general public, and also the relative popularity of conservative nationalism and xenophobia in Bulgaria that parallels contemporary trends in many European states. Its wider historiographical implications are also significant. The controversy resembles many other events of highly-charged political natures that have recently been the subject of political campaigns to prohibit genocide denial as a necessary limitation to freedom of speech and academic inquiry. The event most commonly associated with the Batak massacre and the April Uprising is the much larger Armenian Genocide. The town centre of Batak has a stone Armenian cross that was constructed by Bulgaria's Armenian community, meant to draw parallels to Bulgaria's own Turkish "genocide." Many commentators linked the two events as similar in terms of outrage that either should be denied by those who were essentially the same as Holocaust deniers. The conflated nature of genocide and massacre continues to complicate and confound historical inquiry across the world,

³²² Elias Todevs, "Батак клането - мит или история?" ("The Batak Massacre: Myth or History?") accessed 3 March 2013 at: <http://www.ihist.bas.bg/sekcii/CV/_private/Ilija%20Todev/Tezisi_Batak.htm>

³²³ (При наличието на толкова надежден свидетел като Беринг Баташкото клане не може да се нарече другояче освен "история"!)

especially so in instances of hyper-sensitive events so central to nationalist mythology.³²⁴ It is in this context therefore that I have addressed the international history of the April Uprising and the creation of the modern Bulgarian state.

Conclusions

The formation of a politicized Bulgarian national identity and the onset of revolutionary violence were the crystallization of increasingly entrenched cultural values and liberal, nationalist ideology. These organizing principles were adapted to the Bulgarian context by a new generation of Western-educated elites. Nineteenth century Bulgarian national identity was not a ubiquitous, intrinsic, materially quantifiable social structure that guided behaviour in predictable ways, but it was nevertheless a powerful discourse of understanding and action amongst its elite. Recent “modernist” interpretations of Bulgarian nationalism in favour of economic causes downplay the discursive power of nationalism as well as the agency of individual revolutionaries.³²⁵ Moreover, this approach anachronistically condemns individuals who adopted this artificial, “false,” or “evil” ideology despite their often progressive intentions. Despite being only a slim minority of the Christian population in Bulgaria, revolutionaries conceived their roles as educators and instigators of national revolution as *on behalf* of the greater population for everyone’s benefit. Additionally, the metaphor of “invention” explains neither the complex motivations that shaped individuals’ actions (religion, class, gender, etc.) nor the willingness of nationalists of all classes to die to achieve their ideological goals. “Invention” and

³²⁴ Examples abound of such controversies, characteristically marked by vitriolic disputes: including Armenia, Assyria, Greece (1914-1923), Circassia, Bulgaria, Early Soviet “Decossackization” and Holodomor, Scottish Highland Clearances, Argentina (Conquest of the Desert), American Indian Wars, French War in the Vendée, Philippine-American War and “pacification” campaign, Herero and Namaqua Genocides, Irish Potato Famine, to list only the most controversial.

³²⁵ For example, Glenny, *Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers* and Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*.

“awakening” are two sides of the same deterministic coin, where the actions of nationalists seem incomprehensible.³²⁶

This dissertation neither aims to discount the discursive power of Bulgarian nationalism nor deny the commitment or motivations of Bulgarian revolutionaries who fought to establish an independent Bulgaria. On the contrary, while the historical record does not contain evidence of a large, democratically supported national revolution or of a historically consistent and continuous Bulgarian identity from the mediaeval period, this merely speaks to the importance and power of nationalist discourse throughout Europe during the April Uprising. Although the uprising itself utterly failed because the majority of the population did not rally to the cause, it nevertheless succeeded in convincing important foreigners in Constantinople, in Russia, in Britain, and the rest of the world that the Christian races of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire were deserving of national independence—eventually resulting in international intervention and vindication of the nationalist dream. As such there are important, positive implications in this interpretation for a “patriotic” Bulgarian history. Revolutionaries were indeed vanguards of Bulgarian liberty as they adopted a nationalist framework for insurrection. They negotiated the powerful cultural language of national self-determination, adopted it to their own national context, and effectively persuaded foreigners to act on their behalf. Instead of modernist interpretations of Bulgarian revolutionaries as “manipulators” of the Bulgarian population or “pawns” of larger diplomatic history between the Great Powers,

³²⁶ Todorova’s “poetic” understanding of nationalism’s discursive power better accounts for the relative strengths and weaknesses of certain nationalisms (including the “strong” and “weak” Bulgarian nationalisms within Bulgarian civil society), yet she is still trapped in the modernist/primordialist dichotomy.

revolutionaries' agency is critical when nationalism is viewed as a vocabulary of action and ideology.

Within Bulgarian national mythology and the wider narrative of Western civilizational progress against Oriental tyrannical barbarism, the heavy-handed suppression of the April Uprising by a still-powerful imperial power, aggravated by domestic instability and international intrigue, was culturally transposed into the brutal martyrdom of Bulgarian "apostles" and innocents. Yet the exact number of people killed during and after the April Uprising is unknown, and the manner in which these people were killed is open to speculation. If the numbers of those Bulgarian Christians killed were deliberately or inadvertently overstated, this is certainly not a historically unique phenomenon.³²⁷ Remarkably little historical evidence survives of the April Uprising and its suppression, yet it is clear that despite the horrific violence associated with these events there was no planned "genocide" of Christian Bulgarians by the Ottoman military and no meaningful guilt can be attributed to the Ottoman government without also considering the provocative role of Bulgarian nationalists and the predatory foreign policies of the Great Powers. The evidence that does survive speaks to the cultural prejudices against the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish "race" and Islam in general. Western double standards were applied to Ottoman imperial governance, its domestic political situation, its foreign and economic policies, and its religious and military affairs.

³²⁷ Even in modern conflicts with the benefit of 24-hour eyewitness reporting and accurate statistical data, numbers of apparent victims of violence are often inflated. The death-toll from the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia was originally estimated to be 200,000 , but recent statistical research conducted by the ICTY and the Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo have put the figure at 102,000 (of which 97,200 can be named) with the possibility of a slight increase due to ongoing research. See: Ewa Tabeau and Jakub Bijak, "War-related Deaths in the 1992-1995 Armed Conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Critique of Previous Estimates and Recent Results," *European Journal of Population*, 21, 2-3 (2005): 187-215 and Research and Documentation Centre, Official Website: <<http://www.idc.org.ba>>

Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli pushed on the issue of Turkish atrocities in the British parliament in the summer of 1876, retorted that “Wars of insurrection are always atrocious” and noted Britain’s own violent suppression of rebellion in Jamaica in the previous decade where hundreds of people were killed or executed in response to the murder of two plantation owners by protesters.³²⁸ Another suitable historical analogy might have been the horrific acts committed by British troops during and after the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8 whereby rebels and suspected rebels were hanged and “blown from cannon” in huge numbers after the rebellion, all in the name of Britannic “Justice.”³²⁹ But in the longstanding, black and white narrative of barbarism versus progress, Western European actions were seen through entirely different lenses bound by the increasingly rigid cultural prejudices of religion and race. Disraeli’s comments were mocked not just by his contemporary opponents but by generations of historians, who saw Disraeli’s callousness in terms of his “Oriental sympathies.”

The information that prompted the British Bulgarian Agitation passed through just a handful of impassioned conduits and through contemporary cultural filters that shaped both the responses in Western Europe and the historical understanding of the event ever since. While the Bulgarian revolution during 1876 was by no means a “national” revolution of “Christian races” struggling against “tyrannical Mahometans,” it was perceived as such. Yet, while the historical record does not match subsequent Bulgarian national mythology, this discrepancy merely speaks to the durable influence of nationalism as an organizing force for political—and historical—legitimacy. It was precisely the abject failure of the

³²⁸ Hansard, 230: col. 1182.

³²⁹ “Justice”: a famous *Punch* cartoon by Sir John Tenniel.

Bulgarian nationalist revolutionaries during the spring of 1876 that speaks to the discursive power of nationalism and Christian moralism in convincing Britons that a Bulgarian race of Christians was struggling for—and ought to have—political independence from their traditional allies because of their national, racial, and religious differences. In this respect, “Bulgaria” became a self-fulfilling prophesy by which Christian Rumelians became reclassified as “Bulgarians,” first by Western-educated Bulgarian elites, then by Western intelligentsias and governments, and finally by Bulgarians themselves.

3. “What a Glorious Opportunity for Attacking the Devil”: Cultural Preconceptions, New Journalism, and the Origins of the Bulgarian Agitation

In the summer of 1876, sensational reports of Turkish atrocities against Christians splashed across newspapers throughout Great Britain. Accounts of atrocities in the Ottoman province of Bulgaria,³³⁰ replete with horrid and titillating details, were the mainstays of international news and of heated discussions in Parliament. W. T. Stead,³³¹ using his editorship of *The Northern Echo* to sensationalize the atrocities and to provoke indignation towards Disraeli’s conservative government, called for public meetings to be held across Britain and implored his readers to sign petitions and give generously to relief organizations. This plea for action fortified already existing community-level activism, spurred by early reports, as British subjects—both franchised and unfranchised—attended scores of crowded town hall meetings in order to draft and sign petitions to the Foreign Secretary (Lord Derby), the Prime Minister (Benjamin Disraeli), and Queen Victoria herself. This campaign, known as the Bulgarian Agitation,³³² ultimately transformed British foreign policy during the crucial years of the Great Eastern Crisis (1876-1878) with far reaching domestic and international consequences.

³³⁰ “Bulgaria” was by far the most frequent descriptor of the location of the massacres, although the label “Bulgaria” was itself a geographical invention that did not correspond to an actual Ottoman province (vilayet) but to an imagined region of presupposed “Bulgarians”. The Bulgarian insurrection took place in both Danube Vilayet (*Vilâyet-i Tuna*) and Adrianople Vilayet (*Vilâyet-i Edirne*) which were, along with the other European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, collectively referred to as “Rumelia” (*Rumeli*—literally “land of the Romans”) in Turkish.

³³¹ I recognize that W.T. Stead did not single-handedly create and direct the Bulgaria Agitation, but he was undoubtedly the dominant impetus for the large-scale campaign and as such deserves central emphasis as a central “cultural entrepreneur.”

³³² Each descriptor of the insurrection in Bulgaria and the resulting international crisis has its own connotations. The British press never settled on one descriptor of the crisis or the subsequent political protest movement now described as the “Bulgarian Agitation.” Originally the massacre was referred to as “Turkish” or “Moslem” “atrocities” or “outrages,” or simply as “the insurrection in Bulgaria”; eventually “Bulgarian Horrors” became common after the publication of W.E. Gladstone’s *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* in September 1876.

Examination of the British media during the Bulgarian Agitation suggests that both the discussion and the production of foreign policy were conducted as much in the public sphere and popular press as behind the closed doors of Parliament or the Foreign Office. While the legislative power for the creation and implementation of foreign policy ultimately lay with the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, their positions were largely beholden to a capricious British public whose numbers had much expanded since the 1867 Reform Bill. Facilitated by influential cultural entrepreneurs such as newspaper editor W. T. Stead, this public constituency collectively defined boundaries of acceptable practice while remoulding the rough national consensus that underwrote imperial policy. International news was widely covered in newspapers across Britain, and the so-called “Eastern Question” dominated discussion. An increasing number of newspaper-reading Britons³³³ were inundated with news from Southeastern Europe, analysis of Great Power diplomacy, and discussions of British policy. But, not unlike today, foreign affairs were reported through filters of “national interest,” often displaying a significant degree of historical ignorance within particular cultural framings. In fact, liberal and religious moralism underwrote expectations for British foreign policy. Christian “brothers” and “sisters-in-Christ”—nationally defined as “Bulgarian”—were seen as inevitable victims of Muslim Ottoman misrule, was characterized by bestial force rather than civilized laws. Cultural preconceptions of religious and political inferiority were reinforced by the evolving narrative of Turkish backwardness and villainy. Supposedly scientific racial

³³³ The 1870s marked both the expansion of literacy and also a nationally-based public sphere. These processes were aided by Forster’s Elementary Education Act of 1870, which created a “new national popular culture—a culture that evoked new market responses in the form of mass-circulation newspapers (which in turn began to reinforce the process of mass production of attitudes and cultural unification” (Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London: Penguin, 1993), 21.

explanations for Turkish malfeasance contributed to the widespread indignation against the Ottoman Empire. Combined, the racial, religious, and political expectations of the concerned British observer contributed to a widespread belief that only political independence for the “Christian races” of Turkey-in-Europe would secure lasting peace in the region.

A cultural approach to the early origins of the Bulgarian Agitation recognizes the period as a crystallization point for powerful languages of common cultural understanding, framed within wider traditions of political and religious activism. Awareness of contextual religious values (particularly evangelical and nonconformist Christian perceptions of world affairs), religious influences within the Liberal opposition, and religion’s significant role in polemical provincial British newspapers during this period is essential for making sense of Victorian cultural assumptions and the impact of the Agitation. It is particularly essential for appreciating the evangelical, humanitarian impulses stemming from British practices of “vital religion”³³⁴ and the new, activist Christian social conscience.³³⁵ National collective identity, increasingly entrenched in Western political ideology,³³⁶ perceived the “Christian races” of Turkey-in-Europe as forming distinct national groups demanding their own political sovereignty from foreign control. Hierarchies of racial determinism originated from firm belief in inherent Western—and especially British—superiority as well as

³³⁴ J. D. Holladay, “English Evangelicalism, 1820-1850: Diversity and Unity in ‘Vital Religion,’” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 51, (1982): 147-157; Stewart Brown, *Providence and Empire, 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), 2-3. Freeman, Froude, Gladstone, and other Liberal intellectuals were also influenced by the Anglo-Catholicizing trends of Oxford Tractarianism: Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 240-1.

³³⁵ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, 294.

³³⁶ Maurizio Viroli, *For Love and Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 14; Eugene Kumenka, *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 14

increasing confidence in the biological taxonomy of species and sub-species that theorized that different “races” were indeed different subspecies.³³⁷ Such deep-seated paradigms affected conceptions of right and wrong, and they instigated desires to take concerted political action with regards to otherwise indirectly-related international affairs.

This section examines the pre-existing values through which individuals framed their understanding of the Bulgarian Horrors and the role of the media in fostering, informing, mediating, and projecting these discourses. It does so through the re-examination of contemporary newspapers, letters of correspondence, and memoirs, and it seeks to re-evaluate this critical moment in international history from a new perspective.³³⁸ New digital archives comprising large databases of national and provincial newspapers provide excellent resources through which the dissemination of news and certain languages of cultural understanding may be tracked. The sporadic release of information and its reverberation over the course of days and weeks, a unique characteristic of telegraphy-based media, had a distinctive effect on newspaper accounts,

³³⁷ Charles Darwin’s lesser known 1871 book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, for example, applied contemporary advances in biology to human society, hypothesizing that humanity was not created by God in present form but descended from “some lowly-organized form” (404) within the same evolutionary processes that govern the natural world. Darwin, like others of his time, assumed that biological species and cultural species were the same, and that the level of “civilization” amongst a group of people was determinate of its evolutionary scale. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871). E. A. Freeman’s assumption of the predestined superiority of the “Anglo-Saxon” race was also prominent: Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination*, 241-244. In the preparatory notes to his preface to the second edition of Irby and Mackenzie’s *Slavonic Provinces*, Gladstone composed his own racial hierarchy to justify supporting Balkan national autonomy, as it was unnatural for the “inferior” Ottoman institutions to rule the “superior” Orthodox Christians—the inheritors of Byzantium (Gladstone Papers (GP) 44763, 96).

³³⁸ The entire historiography of the Eastern Question is too lengthy to discuss exhaustively in this study—I will nevertheless address the principle works in the field in the following section. Michelle Tusan’s historiographical essay, “Britain and the Middle East: New Historical Perspectives on the Eastern Question” *History Compass* 8, 3 (2010): 212-222 is a helpful review of the field. Incidentally, I aim to follow Michelle Tusan’s call for a renewed interest in the “New Imperial History,” based on an “integrative archival-based approach” (218), that shifts focus from the traditionally framed “Eastern Question” to regionally concerned studies that address the creation of the modern Middle East more generally.

public reactions, and governmental policy that has been previously underappreciated. Recirculation of old news and escalating patterns of speculation between cables, as well as more detailed examination of the journalists who authored them, provide an excellent opportunity for the researcher to show the cultural frameworks by which news stories became constructed and reconstructed based on the information available. As will be shown in Section 4, memoirs, letters, and diaries of policy makers, statesmen, journalists, and cultural entrepreneurs may be combined with media analysis to show how flows of information and patterns of language affected the unfolding of events and the creation of policy.

For British imperialists, merchants, and politicians strictly interested in the material interests of the empire and of international security, the Bulgarian Horrors were not a material crisis of any major importance. Disraeli and supporters in his government, along with a large portion of the British public, were not moved to action even by grisly accounts of Turkish massacres of Orthodox Christians on the Illyrian Peninsula, and instead downplayed their causes and significance. Disraeli as well as Queen Victoria and many other Conservatives abhorred the violent suppression of the Bulgarian population but remained staunchly against intervention for a variety of reasons, including opposition to Russian expansionism and disapproval of nationalist revolutions; they perceived national interests tied to the preservation of their alliance with the Ottoman Empire despite its propensity towards savagery and its Islamic faith. For others, British interests were projected from a normative framework derived from ensconced cultural values. To them, British interests were squarely on the side of defending these “Christian races” and in advancing civilization as a whole by expunging the Ottoman Empire from Europe in one

way or another. Agitationists conceived the foreign policy of Britain as an extension of their Christian faith, their belief and duty to uphold civilizational progress and defend against devilish encroachment. Eventually, even these political and moral lines became unclear, as the competing conceptions of Britain's role during the Bulgarian Horrors overlapped and conflicted in rowdy public debates that divided even well-established ideological fault lines such as religion, political party, and class association. The character of these shifting cultural perceptions, their reception by large groups of individuals, and their effect on British foreign policy would have profound, far-reaching consequences. The imagined responsibilities of the British Empire to uphold a liberal, moral foreign policy eventually translated into the concrete expression of national self-determination in the diplomatic creation of the modern Balkans—complete with bloody, unintended results.

British Historiography of the Great Eastern Crisis and the Bulgarian Agitation

Following paradigmatic changes in the discipline of history, the historical appreciation of these events has altered significantly since Robert William Seton-Watson's seminal treatise, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, first published in 1935. Seton-Watson's account of Disraeli and Gladstone's political jockeying and the minute details of British diplomacy during these events, while extensively researched and forcefully argued, essentially follows the Liberal, normative critique of Disraelian/Palmerstonian *realpolitik* (versus the supposedly prescient, humanitarian³³⁹ arguments of Liberals, Agitationists, and Gladstone) while adopting an Anglo-centric, top-

³³⁹ In the nineteenth century and earlier, the word "humanitarianism" referred not to the concern for human welfare but to the theological "doctrine that Christ's nature was human only and not divine" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). At this time, however, authors frequently invoked "the principles of humanity" (versus "inhumanity"), which loosely correlates with the modern usage of "humanitarianism." I use the word in its modern sense, aware of the anachronism.

down, racially deterministic, nationalist-sympathetic, and “Whig” approach to classic diplomatic history.³⁴⁰ Seton-Watson’s treatment of the events, still influential in present-day studies,³⁴¹ frames the Bulgarian Horrors as a case of progress, democracy, and humanitarianism against backwards Conservatism, unfeeling imperial interests, and massacre in the tottering Ottoman Empire, the “Sick Man” of Europe. This dichotomy is personified in the epic, superhuman struggle between “The Lion” (Gladstone) and “The Unicorn” (Disraeli), in which Gladstone—while being exceptionally dull—defeats the charismatic Disraeli because of his idealistic adoption of the moral high ground, prescient that international progress lay with national independence.³⁴²

The first major revision to Seton-Watson’s approach came nearly three decades later, with Richard Shannon’s *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation* (1963). Shannon criticized previous accounts, including tomes by Seton-Watson, Carslake Thompson, and David Harris,³⁴³ as treating the Bulgarian Agitation as merely a homogenous bloc of “public

³⁴⁰ This account was also made within the context of the geopolitical struggle for the newly-minted “Middle East” in the wake of the First World War, where the British and French Empire divided much of the remaining Ottoman Empire into imperially-administered “mandates.” R.W. Seton-Watson was involved in the Paris Peace Conference, where he advocated the independence of Balkan and Central European nations and the construction of Yugoslavia. Seton-Watson had an important role in the formation of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and he co-founded the *Slavonic Review* in 1922.

³⁴¹ Martha Finnemore’s chapter “Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention” in Peter Katzenstein’s formative 1996 volume *The Culture of National Security* cites Seton-Watson’s work (and other older publications) as evidence.

³⁴² This personal dichotomy as representative of two competing visions for empire is common in popular histories ever since the publication of John Tenniel’s illustration of the two within Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, most recently within: Richard Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs. Disraeli* (London: Hutchinson, 2006). Richard Scully, incidentally, argues that neither Carroll nor Tenniel intended that the illustration represent the two statesmen (but rather the heraldic supporters of the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom) nor did contemporaries interpret as such—this interpretation originated with the critic William Empson in 1935; Richard Scully, “The Lion and the Unicorn—William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli through William Empson’s Looking-Glass,” *International Journal of Comic Art*, 15, 1 (2013): 323-337.

³⁴³ G. Carslake Thompson, *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield, 1875-1880* (London: 1886); David Harris, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors of 1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) and *A Diplomatic History of the Balkan Crisis of 1875-1878: The First Year* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1936).

opinion” that influenced “real” decision makers. In his assessment of private papers as well as *Hansard*, Shannon asserted that the Agitation was “an entity with a life and character of its own,”³⁴⁴ thereby recasting the episode as one of overwhelming public pressure on Gladstone to act, rather than shaped by clairvoyant, superhuman actors merely within the political and diplomatic spheres.³⁴⁵ Shannon’s “bottom-up” political approach, on the other hand, left the Anglo-centric, racial, and Whiggish elements of previous accounts largely unscathed. Over fifty years after the publication of *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, Shannon’s detailed analysis of personal correspondence and newspaper articles, juxtaposed with traditional political and diplomatic sources, continues to be the most widely cited history of the Agitation.³⁴⁶

Ann Pottinger Saab’s 1991 *Reluctant Icon* was an attempt to replace Shannon’s narrative using a sociological theory of collective behaviour and a quantitative approach to the Bulgarian Agitation.³⁴⁷ In her book, Saab admirably juxtaposes a sweeping social history of the Agitation in Britain with tables and meticulously compiled statistics about the geographical and organizational origins of town hall meetings and their petitions within the larger questions of changes to British foreign policy. But while Saab makes a

³⁴⁴ Richard Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), v.

³⁴⁵ In this respect, Shannon adopts A. J. P. Taylor’s populist approach that suggests that such so-called “Great Men” were in fact responding to overwhelming social pressures.

³⁴⁶ Shannon’s subsequent publications, each centered on Gladstone, have also contributed to (and dominated) the study of the Eastern Question and British domestic politics. These include *Gladstone: 1809-1865* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985), *Gladstone: Heroic Minister, 1865-1898* (London: Penguin, 1999), and *Gladstone: God and Politics* (London: Hambledon & Continuum, 2007)

³⁴⁷ Saab criticizes Shannon’s treatment of the Agitation as merely “an affair of high-politics” (*Reluctant Icon*, 2) without consciousness of larger social movements or a firm theoretical framework, as well as his limited timeframe of May to December 1876. Shannon dismissed Saab’s criticisms in his wholly negative review: “I am not very willing to dissent from Professor Saab’s estimation of my book as ‘magisterial’ and ‘classic,’ but for all that, were I to rewrite it, it would be a somewhat different book. But it would still not be anything like her book” (“[Review]” *EHR* (1995): 230).

limited attempt to addressing popular reception to the Agitation and the production of foreign policy, her theoretical framing limits and shapes the evidence and the analysis presented. Her framework, provided by Neil Smelser's 1963 book *Theory of Collective Behavior*, simplistically describes collective behaviour as consisting of three attributes: it is mobilized, it consists of a "special belief" beyond mere facts, and it is not institutionalized;³⁴⁸ while accurate, this descriptive theory hardly exposes the origins or significance of such a social movement, the relationships between competing social movements and cultural understandings, or the individual decision-making processes that guide such a movement and its reception.³⁴⁹ Saab, like her predecessors, also assumes the natural origins of the cultural values that underwrote the Agitation without recognizing their production and constant renegotiation during these events, and she neglects the international origins, elements, and significance of the crisis.

Critically, Saab does not cite relevant scholarly material relating to Bulgarian history or the April Uprising, save two pages from Stanford and Ezel Shaw's general survey *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*.³⁵⁰ Saab's skewed evidence therefore leads to her conclusion that "although the protest was closely intertwined with foreign policy, its greatest significance was domestic" (196). Even domestically, Saab's emphasis suggests that the movement was primarily political in importance due to its impact on the organization, composition, and success of the Liberal party under Gladstone during the

³⁴⁸ Neil Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1963), 8-9.

³⁴⁹ Shannon similarly rejects Saab's optimistic adoption of a "new" approach to answer old political questions, and especially her use of a "sociological theory of collective behaviour which seems to me to be descriptive, lacking in explanatory power" "[Review]," 230. Shannon counters the use of homogenizing sociological theory by asserting the "supreme confidence in [Gladstone's] elective prerogative"—that Gladstone himself could overcome wider expressions of Britain's new social politics.

³⁵⁰ S. J. Shaw and E.K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976-7), 160-162.

1880 election and the famous Midlothian campaign. In this respect, Saab employs a novel theory that, while exposing the complicated nature of the Agitation and more fully tracking its composition over a greater length of time, essentially repeats the arguments of Shannon and previous authors that the Agitation was a powerful social movement that chiefly affected British domestic politics. Saab rightly questions the role of mythmaking, common languages, and public opinion in the production of foreign policy,³⁵¹ yet for all her able description of the Agitation, she is unable to give clear answers to these questions due to the homogenizing effects of her sociological theory and her limited, domestic scope.

The orthodox view of the Agitation is that British public opinion reacted to the Bulgarian massacres largely along party lines against the indifferent and “inhumane” foreign policy of Benjamin Disraeli. The Agitation propelled William Gladstone’s return to power in the 1880 general election and precipitated a major change to the British political landscape, but the changes to British foreign policy were less pronounced.³⁵² Lower level organizations, the media, and cultural predispositions play an intangible role other than to indirectly influence influential political figures, reflecting major ideological differences between the parties but not creating them. This chapter argues that previous historical discussions of the media and processes of cultural understanding in Britain inadequately acknowledge the impact of competing cultural preconceptions (and their constant renegotiation) on the construction of foreign policy and the international material effects of how the Great Eastern Crisis was imagined by the British public. Contrary to the traditional,

³⁵¹ Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 14-15.

³⁵² Davide Rodogno has most recently suggested that while the Agitation failed in its goals for humanitarian intervention on behalf of Ottoman Christians, the Agitation did have limited successes in altering British foreign policy along a “coherent and teleological history” of Ottoman inhumanity that shifted emphasis towards Christian autonomy and Ottoman reform (*Against Massacre*, 159). Rodogno does not, however, explain, critique, or discuss British assumptions of national identity that underwrote this shift.

mutually-exclusive dichotomy between international, political, “macro” (Seton-Watson) and domestic, socio-political, “micro” (Shannon, Saab) studies, this chapter gives new focus on the intrinsic interrelationship between the two. This dual focus, which avoids the unhelpful pitfall of debates over the role of “structure” versus “agency,” is along the lines of Anthony Giddens’s Structuration Theory that holds that neither focus is adequate.³⁵³ As such, perceptions of international affairs were critical determinants of domestic politics, and domestic politics created foreign policy (namely, British neutrality and support for Balkan Christian autonomy) that had major international effects. The Bulgarian Agitation was itself a coalition of likeminded individuals—who held that British foreign policy, liberal moralism, the advocacy of racially-determined civilizational progress, and national self-determination should be one and the same. It crystallized from diverse backgrounds of cultural expectations and both its membership and its impact transcended political, institutional, class, and religious structures.

Antecedents to Agitation: Patterns of Perception in British Newspapers, 1870 to June 1876

News of Turkish atrocities against Christians in their European provinces was not new in the summer of 1876. War and massacre had taken up much space in British newsprint due to the Herzegovinian Uprising that continued from the previous year. In most major newspapers, sections entitled “The War in the East,” “The Eastern Question,” or “The Eastern Situation” were consistent, daily features of international affairs columns including many editorial comments, letters to the editor, and other articles pressing for solutions to the crisis in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire. “Outrages” against

³⁵³ Anthony Giddens’s *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984). This sociological theory may also be described as “eclectic” in that it represents a “coming together” of theories from geography, history, philosophy, anthropology, and literature that does not “furnish the moral guarantees that critical theorists sometimes purport to offer” (16).

the Serbians, Montenegrins, and other fellow Christians were reported on numerous occasions; war and massacre had been dominant themes of international news during the previous decade.³⁵⁴ Those who followed foreign affairs were generally well informed about the unfolding situation in the East; so much so that, on 22 January 1876, *The Bristol Mercury* claimed that affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina were “well known to those who choose to interest themselves in the subject.”³⁵⁵ The Eastern Question and the “situation in the East” were thus familiar problems to informed sections of the British public. As a result, the Bulgarian Agitation would be framed by a background of common information and cultural understandings across the politically-informed population of Britain.

To knowledgeable British observers of international affairs, the unfolding of the Eastern Question was the dominant, seemingly intractable problem that had plagued world politics since the beginning of the century and that threatened to overturn the peace of Europe. The recent insurrections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were troublesome events seen in the context of Great Power rivalries and imperial anxieties. British observers, ever concerned about Britain’s place in world affairs and international trade, witnessed a succession of events that would have signalled a general decline in the stability of the international order. The War Scare of 1875, which was precipitated not by actual events but by the sustained effort of a spirited German press, sowed unrest and distrust among

³⁵⁴ As early as the Greek intervention, British policy makers acknowledged the significant upwelling of domestic support for British interventionism and did politicians use “public opinion” to support their interest and to build “moral capital” (Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 90). Massacres of Christians in Lebanon and Syria (described in horrid detail by the Louis Napoleon-directed French press) also prompted European intervention in 1860-61, as did the Cretan revolt from 1866-9. British opinion, however, was firmly opposed to intervention in Crete or Bosnia-Herzegovina, which rebelled in 1875, despite news of “impalements” and other atrocities against Christians. Hence the Bulgarian Horrors were a turning point where humanitarian impulses crystallized in popular protest, seemingly out of nowhere.

³⁵⁵ “The Eastern Question” *Bristol Mercury*, 22 January 1876.

the European powers.³⁵⁶ When the Ottomans defaulted on their large public debt in late 1875, European bondholders and financiers—especially financiers and stakeholders in London who collected 9.5% interest on the loan—were thrown into a state of panic and obliged the British Government to step in to renegotiate payment.³⁵⁷ Disraeli's surreptitious acquisition of the controlling share of the Suez Canal for the British Government (financed by Lionel de Rothschild, who was able to raise £4,080,000 from his bank almost overnight), while lauded by Queen Victoria and British imperialists, was received by others with astonishment.³⁵⁸ In the eyes of many, the Prime Minister had circumvented parliament, inflamed the French, and compelled the Empire to abandon its isolationist politics and embroil itself within middle-eastern affairs.³⁵⁹ The Herzegovinian Uprising, backed by Serbia and Montenegro and assumed to be fostered by Russia and Austria, inflamed the Eastern Crises further and highlighted to many observers the continuing weakness and “barbarity”³⁶⁰ of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing untenability of alliance with the Ottoman “sick man.”³⁶¹ The informed public's understanding of international affairs was therefore framed by a sense of increasing

³⁵⁶ The German Press' fear of French rearmament resulted in a number of articles about the warlike preparations of France, the dangers of *revanche*, and a 9 April 1875 article in the Berlin *Die Post* entitled “*Ist der Krieg in Sicht?*” (“Is War in Sight?”), which exploded into a flurry of diplomacy, orotundity, and suspicion; see: James Stone, *The War Scare of 1875: Bismarck and Europe in the Mid-1870s* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010).

³⁵⁷ Seton Watson, 17

³⁵⁸ See: *Hansard*, House of Commons Debate, 21 February 1876 (vol. 227 cc562-661562).

³⁵⁹ Stephen J. Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 107.

³⁶⁰ “Turkish barbarity” had been widely reported during the Greek War of Independence (see: *The Morning Chronicle* 28 June 1822) and during the Crimean War (see “Our Army in the Crimea,” *Daily News*, 17 August 1855), and was often taken as a “given” well into the 1870s (see: “The Doom of Turkey” *The Morning Chronicle* 15 August 1860; “Occasional Notes” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 July 1867; “This Evening's News,” *PMG*, 11 September 1875).

³⁶¹ Turkey as the “sick man” of Europe was a widely-used descriptor of the Ottomans in the British Press since the phrase was made famous by Tsar Nicholas I immediately preceding the Crimean War in 1853. See: *Reynold's Newspaper* (London), 9 April 1876.

international instability, imperial anxieties, and a tangible sense of emergency, despite the increasingly bombastic and militarist rhetoric of the “new imperialism.”³⁶²

With the Eastern Question as the principle international story of interest as a background, Bulgaria had also received a fair share of attention in early 1876. *The Bristol Mercury* contrasted “the far more civilized provinces of Bulgaria and Rumelia, where the Christian population, notwithstanding their numbers and intelligence, have not raised a hand against their masters,” versus the “oppressive and exacting Mussulman rule in the disturbed districts” of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁶³ Travelogues invariably included observations of Bulgaria as it was a main route of transit throughout the region. A letter published in the *Liverpool Mercury* wrote of Bulgaria from the perspective of looking out the train’s window while passing through it, observing that it had a “most disagreeable climate” (in January) and that it is “a very infertile district, not by nature so much as by the neglect of man. A few patches of Indian corn, with a few fields of tobacco were almost the only signs of cultivation. The villages, few and far between, consisted of most wretched habitations.”³⁶⁴ Another traveller writing for the *Daily News* commented that, north of

³⁶² Much more could be said about the paradoxical relationship of militarist “new imperialism” and urgency in international affairs coinciding with general fears of the decline and fall of the British Empire. See, for example, Rowena Hammal, “How long before the Sunset? British Attitudes to War, 1871-1914,” *History Today*, 22 November 2010, Accessed 22 January 2012 <<http://www.historytoday.com/rowena-hammal/how-long-sunset-british-attitudes-war-1871-1914>>

³⁶³ “The Eastern Question” *Bristol Mercury*, 22 January 1876. Interestingly, the report cites that the “rebellion [is] not much due to misgovernment... as to fanatical anti-Turkish incendiaries from without,” blaming Russia for giving moral and material support to the otherwise hopeless cause. This essentially conservative viewpoint sees “Slavonic Fenianism, mendacity, and bloodthirstiness [as] far more explicable than any other hypothesis” and that Britain had “nothing to gain and much to lose” when supporting insurgents against their financial and geopolitical ally.

³⁶⁴ “Letters from Eastern Europe” *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 Jan 1876. The traveller also lamented the fact that he was charged double for a ferry passage “because we were English. It is a way the Turks have of showing their gratitude. I found that we were not popular in Turkey. I suppose it is natural for people to hate their creditors.”

Constantinople, “The houses are so miserable that their tine glass³⁶⁵ windows appear quite incongruous.”³⁶⁶ The Bulgarian region was popularly known more as the “classical ground” studied by classically-educated Britons, who saw “the Balkan” mountain range³⁶⁷ as “no less a personage than the ancient Haemus”³⁶⁸ and its inhabitants as the distant descendants of the ancient Thracians. As will be discussed in depth in Section 5, Georgina (Lady Muir) Mackenzie and Adeline Paulina Irby’s extraordinary 1866 travelogue *The Turks, The Greeks, and the Slavons*,³⁶⁹ which decried “Mussulman” (Muslim) tyrannical oppression over their subject Christian nations, was widely popular and informed the mental map of statesmen such as William Ewart Gladstone.³⁷⁰ Thus, although little was actually known about Bulgaria before the insurrection, the region nevertheless evoked a set of cultural preconceptions before the onset of rebellion and massacre: specifically, that Christians of ancient ancestry were under the oppression of backward Turkish rule.

Coverage of the ongoing insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina prompted much discussion of the sustainability of the alliance between Britain and Turkey given Turkish moral and material weaknesses and “barbarous” behaviour. Conservative author H.A.

³⁶⁵ A type of inexpensively made (and usually stained) glass.

³⁶⁶ “Bosnian Relief Fund,” London *Daily News*, 29 January 1876.

³⁶⁷ It was (incorrectly) understood that the Balkan mountain range spread across the Illyrian peninsula, giving the region its modern colloquialism (“the Balkans”) later in the nineteenth century. [See further discussion below]

³⁶⁸ John B. S. Morritt of Rokeby, *A Grand Tour. Letters and Journeys 1794-1796*, ed. G. E. Marindin (London: Century, 1985), 65. Recent work has focused on Western travel writing and cultural perceptions in Southeast Europe since Edward Said. This includes Maria Todorova’s “The Balkans from Discovery to Invention,” *Slavic Review*, 53, 2 (1994), 453-482 and *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden’s “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans,’” 1-15. Wendy Bracewell has in turn studied travel literature of the West authored by those from the East in several books and anthologies including *Balkan Departures: Travel Writing from South Eastern Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁶⁹ Georgina Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *The Turks, The Greeks, and the Slavons: Travels in the Slavonic Provinces in Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1867).

³⁷⁰ Gladstone read the book in 1867 and revisited it in 1876, after being asked to write the preface for the second edition, republished due to the upwelling of interest during the Bulgarian Agitation.

Munro Butler Johnstone (who published the book *The Eastern Question* in 1875) wrote in a February letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* that Turkey was “weak from the incapacity and corruption of its rules and the apathy and indifference of its people,”³⁷¹ but also because of the predatory actions of European powers. Johnstone noted that every neighbour of Turkey was scheming to dissolve the Empire for its own gain, and “every agency is set in motion—ignorance, corruption, ambition ... in the crusade” to partition the Ottoman Empire, and presciently observed that “Bulgaria might be ripe for revolt[,] and disaffection in that important province might be worth a dozen Herzegovinian insurrections.”³⁷² Speculation about the partition of Turkey was commonplace, frequently asserting the illegitimacy of Turkish, “Mussulman” rule over Christians in Europe, asserting the inevitability of violence from such an unholy arrangement, and questioning the morality of Britain’s alliance with such a power. Common sense dictated that such a backward power relied on force rather than liberty, barbarism instead of civilization, and savage conquest and carnal lust in the place of high culture, temperance, and magnanimity. Such understandings translated into the powerful assumption that the militarily, politically, economically and morally “sick” empire was destined to fall to the light of civilization and progress embodied by the Christian great powers.

News stories and contemporary articles increasingly approached the Eastern Question as a conflict between good and evil, or peace, progress and liberty versus violence, backwardness and tyrannical despotism. Historical understandings of texts published prior to 1960 indeed cite the linear decay of the Ottoman Empire from the failure of its armies to take Vienna in the seventeenth century to its collapse and partition after the

³⁷¹ H.A. Munro Butler Johnstone, “The Partition of Turkey,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 February 1876.

³⁷² Johnstone, “The Partition of Turkey,” *PMG*, 1 February 1876.

First World War. The lingering legacy of this “decline thesis” may be seen to have been built on the powerful cultural assumptions of the nineteenth century that skewed understanding of the Bulgarian insurrection and that continue into the present day despite much research showing that the Ottoman Empire was in fact economically, politically, and socially dynamic right up to its dissolution in 1918. In fact, such “Orientalist” understandings owe much of their existence and ubiquity to the events of the Eastern Question.

Attacking the Devil: W.T. Stead and the *Northern Echo*

No commentator and certainly no newspaper editor was so outspoken on the question of the Eastern Question as William Thomas Stead, the unusually young and radical editor of the *Northern Echo*. Much has been said about Stead’s contribution to the development of “New Journalism” during the late nineteenth century, yet authors have primarily focussed on his editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and his infamous series of articles on prostitution, “The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon.”³⁷³ Several recent authors, however, have argued compellingly that such emphasis misses the formative years of Stead’s radical journalism during the 1870s, specifically his years as editor of the *Northern Echo*, and underestimates his contribution to new forms and roles of journalism in Britain.³⁷⁴ A quick survey of Stead’s early career confirms this argument, yet these

³⁷³ Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette*, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1972); Hugh Kingsmill, *After Puritanism* (London: Duckworth, 1952); Deborah Gorham, “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ Re-examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late Victorian England,’ *Victorian Studies*, 21 (1978); Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977); Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London*, (London: Virago, 1994); Alison Plowden, *The Case of Eliza Armstrong: ‘A Child of 13 Bought for £5’*, (London: BBC, 1974); *W.T. Stead, The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, Antony E. Simpson (ed.), (New Jersey: True Bill, 2007); and Grace Eckley, *Maiden Tribute: A Life of W.T. Stead* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007).

³⁷⁴ See: Owen Mulpeter “W.T. Stead and the New Journalism,” MPhil Thesis, University of Teeside, 2010. Although credit is usually given to Matthew Arnold for coining the phrase “New Journalism” in the article “Up To Easter,” it was actually actively promoted by Stead for some time—Stead was responsible for capitalizing

insights have not been previously applied to the history of the Bulgarian Agitation and the Great Eastern Crisis.

Stead had made a name for himself as a radical Liberal by writing fervent articles against Henry King Spark, owner of the *Darlington & Stockton Times* and Tory candidate for Darlington who had contested the powerful Pease family in several local elections. The Peases were Quakers who made their fortunes in iron and coal, and they founded the *Northern Echo* in 1870 to counter the conservative *Darlington & Stockton Times* and the *Darlington Mercury*. After only a year in print, the proprietor, John Hyslop Bell, decided to replace his original, experienced editor with Stead—a regular, unpaid contributor of letters to the editor, who had probably never stepped foot into a newspaper office—to capitalize on his “blunt, uncompromising rhetoric” that seemed to be the strongest defence against Spark’s rhetorical attacks.³⁷⁵ Stead had been raised as the son of a Congregationalist Minister, and his Puritanical upbringing and “outsider”³⁷⁶ perspective has frequently been cited as a primary motivation for his intense fights against injustice and the perceived moral failings of the established order, which, as Owen Mulpetre argues, he “challenged with a combative pen and a style that owed as much to the pulpit as it did to the editorial chair.”³⁷⁷ Just before taking up the editorship at the *Northern Echo* in 1871 at the age of

the phrase and using “The” in front of “The New Journalism,” because, as Owen Mulpetre argues, he “instantly recognised the immense journalistic power in the catchphrase as a cultural and journalistic watchword, particularly in its association with a respected man of letters like Arnold” (23). Mulpetre notes that only Richard Shannon’s 1963 *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* extensively uses *Northern Echo* articles as sources.

³⁷⁵ Mulpetre, “W.T. Stead,” 53. John Henry Bell, proprietor of the *Northern Echo*, was particularly struck by his articles about Christianity in democracy, his critiques of Russia, and his praise of America. See: *Northern Echo*, 14 October, 1870, p.2

³⁷⁶ Simon Goldsworthy, “English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign: Including the Strange Case of W.T. Stead and the Bulgarian Horrors,” *Journalism Studies*, 7:3 (2001), 390.

³⁷⁷ Mulpetre, “W.T. Stead,” 64. Mulpetre notes the influence of American Poet James Russell Lowell on the young Stead, as he had, as a prize for an essay on Cromwell, received a volume of his work: “In Stead’s young

22—making him the youngest newspaper editor in the country—Stead excitedly wrote his friend and mentor, the Reverend Henry Kendall, ecstatic that he should be able to write whatever he likes, “only providing I am Liberal non conformist freetrade [*sic*]. All of which I am of course.”³⁷⁸ Revealing something of Stead’s religious motivation for his later tirades against the Ottoman Empire, he subsequently exclaimed: “what a glorious opportunity for attacking the devil, isn’t it?”³⁷⁹

The Eastern Question and the Bulgarian Agitation eventually came to define the early years of Stead’s infamous career and it propelled the *Northern Echo’s* circulation to unprecedented levels. But before the revelation of massacres in Bulgaria, Stead’s rhetoric was timid and he had not yet achieved a national audience. While Stead’s reputation had greatly increased locally throughout Durham and Yorkshire, it was only with the explosion of the Eastern Question and the struggle between Russia and Turkey that Stead became associated with leading statesmen of the Liberal party.³⁸⁰ Stead had rather cautiously developed innovative journalistic techniques that increased readership such as his “Fly on the wall” eyewitness reporting, focus on human interest stories, the “Housewife’s Corner” column that reported prices for food staples and other goods, and bold crossheads over the first years of his editorship;³⁸¹ perhaps the most important improvement to the paper,

and radical imagination, Lowell’s words were a call to Christian action, a divine decree to right the evils of Britain’s socially-divided population. ‘It was one of the decisive moments in my life,’ he later recalled. “The idea that everything wrong in the world was a divine call to use your life in righting it sank deep into my soul” (64).

³⁷⁸ W.T. Stead to Rev. Henry Kendall, 11 April 1871.

<<http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/letters/kendall.php>> Accessed 9 May 2011.

³⁷⁹ Stead to Kendall, 11 April 1876.

³⁸⁰ John Kensit, *The Life of Mr. W.T. Stead: Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette*, (London: John Kensit, 1885), 13.

³⁸¹ Mulpetre, “W.T. Stead,” 70. Stead first developed these techniques through the reporting of infamous murder cases, including the sensational trial and execution of Mary Ann Cotton, who poisoned up to 21 people including her mother, three husbands, a fiancé, and most of her 15 children and step children—in county Durham. When the famous Victorian executioner, William Calcraft, “misjudged” the drop in her hanging, leading to a slow death by strangulation, Stead reported, “Strangled! Yes. It might have been worse.

however, was that after 1873 it could be received in London on the 10am train.³⁸² As Darlington was situated along a major line of the national rail network, the *Northern Echo* occupied the advantageous position of a provincial newspaper that could directly compete with metropolitan editions.³⁸³ On the eve of his twenty-sixth birthday in July 1875, Stead reflected in his diary that he was “better satisfied with [the *Northern Echo*] than ever”:

We now reach [a circulation of] 13,000; we may reach 20,000. To address 20,000 people as the sole preacher is better than to be a tenth part of the preaching power on a journal with 200,000 circulation. There is no paper now in existence which can be to me what the Echo is. I have given it its character, its existence, its circulation. It is myself. Other papers could not bear my image and superscription so distinctly. I have more power and more influence here than on almost any other paper, for I work according to my inclinations and bias. ... I [feel] once more the sacredness of the power placed in my hands, to be used on behalf of the poor, the outcast and the oppressed.³⁸⁴

Stead was able to incite public interest and indignation over matters of the Eastern Question unlike any other. He did so by giving the story, as Richard Shannon observed, “a voice, a method, and a direction.”³⁸⁵ Stead repackaged the news and caricatured statesmen and dignitaries along clear lines of good and evil while speaking in the interests of a self-proclaimed true English nation. Stead invoked the evangelical passions of his readership to move to action in otherwise indirectly relevant issues as grand tests of their faith in God and duty to country. Unquestioningly, Stead saw his role as editor of the *Northern Echo* in messianic terms. Stead, soon after the agitation, recalled how “in God’s hands I have been instrumental ... for the Bulgarian agitation was due to a divine voice. I felt the clear call of

She might have been boiled alive!” noting the traditional English execution method for poisoning. “Mrs. Cotton,” *Northern Echo*, 24 March 1873.

³⁸² “Advertisements and Announcements,” *Northern Echo*, 23 March 1873.

³⁸³ Mulpetre, “W.T. Stead,” 60.

³⁸⁴ W.T. Stead Journal Entry (4 July 1875), quoted in John W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper: An Account of the Temperaments, Perturbations and Achievements of John Morley, W.T. Stead, E.T. Cook, Harry Cust, J.L. Garvin, and Three Other Editors of the Pall Mall Gazette*. (London: Methuen, 1952), 102-103.

³⁸⁵ Richard Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, pp. 49-50.

God's voice, 'Arouse the nation or be damned.' If I did not do all I could, I would deserve damnation."³⁸⁶

Simon Goldsworthy, in his article "English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign," notes the unique relationship between nineteenth century radical newspapermen, provincial nonconformity, patterns of worship and audience, and the evolution of journalism, of which Stead is perhaps the archetypal character.³⁸⁷ Whereas metropolitan newspapers were generally limited in their ability to report the news to simply recording and commenting on parliamentary affairs, provincial newspapermen were able to "exploit latent demand for a wider range of news material which meshed sensational detail with a strongly moral call to action," all the while replacing the traditional oral method of preaching at the pulpit with the more accessible, written sermon.³⁸⁸ Stead's characteristic heavy-handed editorial style was thus amplified and also given a vastly expanded, national audience during the excitement of the Bulgarian agitation, which in turn largely affected the stylistic development of the national press.³⁸⁹ By no accident, Stead frequently corresponded with, and reprinted articles from, *The Daily News*, originally founded by Charles Dickens in 1846 to support radical reform, which by

³⁸⁶ W.T. Stead, quoted in J. W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen, 1952), 104. Years later, on his thirty-first birthday, Stead recounted how "When I see the devil so strong and his assailants so timorous and half-hearted I long to be in a place where I can have a full slap at him. If, after having all along trusted in the Lord to guide my steps, He guides me to accept it, I think I shall be equal to the place, so long of course as I am amenable to the Divine Will and do, however feebly, my utmost to carry out what are revealed to me as the Divine purposes," quoted in Scott, 114.

³⁸⁷ Goldsworthy, "English Nonconformity," 387. Note that nonconformists were excluded from the establishment and many areas of employment favoured by Anglicans, making journalism a popular career choice. Goldsworthy describes the *Daily News*—upon which most of Stead's information was based—as "more or less run by a Unitarian clique" (389).

³⁸⁸ Goldsworthy, "English Nonconformity," 387.

³⁸⁹ Mulpetre, "W.T. Stead," 64. In his 2002 book *The Victorians*, Andrew N. Wilson has observed that "no visitant from another age who landed in the midst of our twenty-first-century would begin to make sense of our [British] popular journalism—prurient, self-righteous, spiteful and pompous—unless they were able to trace its origins to the chiefly North Country traditions of the nineteenth-century Nonconformists," *The Victorians*, (London and New York: Random House, 2011 [2002]), 463.

the 1870s was “more or less run by a Unitarian clique.”³⁹⁰ Although Unitarians often conflicted with other nonconformist denominations, Stead connected with the *Daily News's* inclination towards dissident, moralistic editorials, and exposés of perceived social injustice and immoral metropolitan decadence.

Competing Conservative Views of the Eastern Question, January to June 1876

The majority of preeminent newspapers, particularly *The Pall Mall Gazette* and other London-area publications, were unreceptive to the partition of Turkey before the summer of 1876. *The Pall Mall Gazette* reprinted an article from the *Allgemeine Zeitung* on 28 April critical of the aims of the Servian and Montenegrin rebellion and those that called for partition of the Ottoman Empire. Hypothesizing revolutionary victory, the article asked:

What would then happen? Does Prince Milan of Servia really believe that he would succeed in forming a state out of all the above provinces, and in making himself its king? ... The consequence of freeing all these provinces from the Sultan's rule would be a long period of anarchy; the various races and creeds would be in a state of incessant and savage conflict, and the slight germs of culture and civilization which have taken root among them would probably be far more decreased than multiplied.³⁹¹

Both Tory Government and Liberal opposition, as well as those acquainted with Britain's foreign policy, were largely unmoved by the insurrectionary cause of Pan Slavism or national independence, and instead saw both as powerful and dangerous tools easily manipulated by expansionist Russia and Austrians looking to divide and rule the European

³⁹⁰ Frank Harrison Hill, the editor from 1869-1886, “had trained for the Unitarian ministry in Manchester; his assistant, P. W. Clayden, was formerly a serving Unitarian minister; and the paper's manager, John Robinson, was a Unitarian who had worked for the denomination's journal”: Goldsworthy, “English Nonconformity,” 389.

³⁹¹ The article expands on this idea, positing that the only way such an arrangement would work is if they created a south Slavonian state with a Russian Grand Duke on the throne, but asks rhetorically “would Europe let this happen?” “The Eastern Question,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 April 1876.

possessions of Turkey.³⁹² As the above quotation hints, conservatives were fundamentally sceptical of the nature of popular rebellions, and had largely been so since the French Revolution. The Catholic Church, in particular, was wholly unmoved by reports of the massacres of Orthodox Christians. Its leaders would not support Russian interests, recalling that Russia had brutally suppressed Catholic Poland's uprising in 1863.³⁹³ No doubt many others were also aware that the British Empire itself contained many subject peoples who had rebelled on a number of occasions in their recent history—which usually resulted in swift and merciless suppression—and were reluctant to champion the side of the oppressed minority.³⁹⁴

As early as February 1876 speculation circulated about the potential of further rebellion in European provinces of Turkey, especially after the Andrassy Note was rejected by Herzegovinian insurgents.³⁹⁵ On 8 February, *The Star* (of Saint Peter Port) picked up a

³⁹² R.W. Seton-Watson, 28-9. Seton-Watson rationalizes the scepticism of the Government, arguing that much "was due to the consistently Turcophil reports of Sir Henry Elliot from Constantinople, and that he in turn was influenced by the views of our Consul in Sarajevo, Mr. Holmes." Holmes argued strongly that the "so-called rebellion in Bosnia" was "assuredly arranged by Serbian agitators" while there "was no particular reason or any excess of oppression" in that province (*Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey No. III* (1876), 40 and *Despatches from Mr. Consul Holmes Respecting Reports of Outrages in the North of Bosnia* (Foreign Office: Harrison and Sons, 1877), 2). That Holmes should write such an oversimplification, in contrast to his observation just four years before that "the universal ignorance, corruption, and fanaticism of all classes precludes all hope of an efficient administration of justice for at least a generation," (cited R.W. Seton-Watson, 29), is, to Seton-Watson, evidence of Holmes and the Foreign Office's gross incompetence. Seton-Watson blames him for having a "pernicious" influence on government policy until he and Elliot were recalled in early 1877.

³⁹³ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, 297. Cardinal Manning, in early October 1876, denounced the reports of massacres and the widespread agitation for intervention, blaming the atrocities on "agitators and secret societies," J.P. Rossi, "Catholic Opinion on the Eastern Question, 1876-1878," *Church History*, 51 (1982): 54-70.

³⁹⁴ The British responses to the Indian Mutiny (or First War of Indian Independence) in 1857 and the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, 1867, interestingly, were not contrasted with the Turkish suppression of armed rebellion.

³⁹⁵ "Count Andrassy's Note on Turkish Reforms," *The Belfast News-Letter*, 7 February 1876. The Note was a diplomatic protocol between the *Dreikaiserabkommen* (Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary), negotiated by the Hungarian diplomat Count Andrassy, establishing a common method for dealing with the Ottoman Empire with regards to the Herzegovinian insurrection. See also "London, Saturday February 5, 1876" *The*

telegram from Vienna that the “Roumanian army ordered 140 cannon and large quantities of uniforms and arms from Russia” and that “Russian agents are also actively endeavouring to excite an insurrection in Bulgaria.”³⁹⁶ “The great question,” reported The *Daily News*’ correspondent in Constantinople³⁹⁷ in later February, was “will the insurgents in Herzegovina and Bosnia be joined in the Spring by others in various parts of European Turkey?”³⁹⁸ The speculation smoldered through April, when a number of newspapers, including the *Manchester Times*, reported a wire that “The authorities in Bulgaria are preparing for a rebellion in the Balkan [*sic.*] Serbia has purchased 2,000 horses in Hungary, and is sending ammunition to the frontier”³⁹⁹ well into May.

Times (London), 5 February 1876, p. 9, which observes that “the conviction is general among the Christians that in the Spring Bulgaria and the Cretans will swell the movement.”

³⁹⁶ “The Turkish Insurrection: Warlike Preparations in Roumania” *The Star* (Saint Peter Port), 8 February 1876.

³⁹⁷ There were at least two correspondents for the *Daily News* in Constantinople throughout 1876, including George Augustus Sala and Edwin Pears. Although Sala went to Constantinople in response to the telegram “GO ODESSA SEE MOB [Russian mobilization] GO CONSTANTINOPLE” (Burnham, 1955, p. 34) and remained there until the winter of 1876-7, he does not make reference to the atrocities in his memoirs. Pears does not mention the atrocities in his books *The Fall of Constantinople* (1885) or *Turkey and its People* (1911), but in his memoir *Forty Years in Constantinople, 1873-1915* (1916), he briefly mentions the episode. Pears states that, after being told to give full explanations of reports of torture, he “saw various friends ... who furnished me with translations of a mass of correspondence, from which I wrote a second and longer letter to the *Daily News*” (16). Pears insists in his memoir that there “was no revolt in Bulgaria, though there had been considerable expression of discontent. The idea of the Turks was to crush out the spirit of the Bulgarian people, and thus prevent revolt” (17). The motivations for this, in his mind, were clear: “I elsewhere remark that, in all the Moslem atrocities, Chiot, Bulgarian, and Armenian, the principal incentive has been the larger prosperity of the Christian population” (19). Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople, 1873-1915*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1916), pp. 16-19, reprinted in Alfred J. Bannan and Achilles Edelenyi, eds., *Documentary History of Eastern Europe*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), pp. 191-194

³⁹⁸ “The Immediate future of Turkey,” *Daily News*, 22 February 1876. The correspondent’s own answer was that it was “not improbable,” considering that “the Christian populations are increasing in comparative wealth, in numbers, in influence, and in education and civilization. They cannot be kept back” whereas “the Turks ... are either stationary or retrogressive” because of the “enormous drain of their army” and public debts.

³⁹⁹ “Second Edition: Turkey, the Insurrection,” *Manchester Times*, 22 April 1876.

News of riots in Rumelia was mentioned in passing on 6 May 1876⁴⁰⁰ and the widely anticipated insurrection was reported two days later.⁴⁰¹ Yet in both of these first reports, the disturbances were noted to be minor in character. On 9 May, *The Morning Post* observed “signs of insurrectionary movements in Bulgaria,” but commented that “This is a strange place for such movements.” Displaying unfamiliarity with Balkan geography, the newspaper noted that Bulgaria was a poor place for a revolution, because, unlike Herzegovina, “It is a flat country accessible readily to troops, and in which rebellion would be put down with comparative ease.”⁴⁰² It further conjectured that there was no reason to believe that the Bulgarian rebellion was widespread as Turks and Christians have lived together well for centuries and authority is “maintained and respected” more so there than any neighbouring province.⁴⁰³ “Armed intervention,” it concluded sensibly, “might prove to be a remedy much worse than the disease.”⁴⁰⁴

Telegraphic news reporting was a relatively recent and novel feature of journalism in the 1870s.⁴⁰⁵ Although foreign news arrived fairly quickly, there were often substantial delays between cables from foreign correspondents and other newspapers. Thus, the *Daily News*’ first news of the Bulgarian insurrection on 10 May (quoting a cable from

⁴⁰⁰ “Foreign Intelligence (Reuter’s Telegram)” *Morning Post* 6 May, 1876 p.5 “Disturbances have broken out at Tatar-Bazardjik [*sic*], Roumelia, in consequence of disputes between some Bulgarian peasants and ten Mussulmans. The rioting is represented as not being of a serious character, but troops have been despatched thither to-day”

⁴⁰¹ “The Eastern Question” *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* (West Yorkshire), 8 May 1876. “Dispatches from Constantinople, dated yesterday, report an insurrectionary rising in Bulgaria. The Turkish authorities, however, do not attach any importance to the movement.”

⁴⁰² “Multiple News Items” *The Morning Post* (London), 9 May 1876, p. 4.

⁴⁰³ *Morning Post*, 9 May 1876.

⁴⁰⁴ *Morning Post*, 9 May 1876.

⁴⁰⁵ Reuter’s first telegraphy office was established in London in 1851 and began to provide metropolitan newspapers with digests of foreign news in 1858. Private news transmission available only in 1866 and the telegraph became managed by the state in 1870. Relatively quick access to foreign news ushered in a new era of journalism, which, combined with railways and the penny post, lowered the cost of news reporting and “enhanced the impact and even the reputation of journalism.” Martin Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History* (London: SAGE, 2004), 125.

Constantinople from May 8th) reported that the revolt was essentially over: “The Turkish villages which had been surrounded are now open again to traffic, and telegraphic communication between Bayudyid [*sic*]⁴⁰⁶ and Philippopoli⁴⁰⁷ has been restored. The rioters have fled into the mountains, and cordons of troops have been stationed to prevent the movement from spreading.”⁴⁰⁸ *The Pall Mall Gazette* reported on the official Turkish response to the insurrection, which “represent the reports ... as very much exaggerated. The insurgents in Bulgaria are stated to have met with serious defeats.”⁴⁰⁹ When few other reports regarding the Bulgarian uprising arrived (in fact the rebellion had nearly completely been suppressed by the middle of May),⁴¹⁰ W.T. Stead of the *Northern Echo* boisterously predicted that “The insurrection in Bulgaria was ominous, like a tremor before a great earthquake. “We stand around the Ottoman Empire,” continued Stead, “as men watch the crater of a volcano before an eruption.”⁴¹¹ The “earthquake” that Stead predicted, however, was in the large part created and intensified within his own interpretation of prevalent Victorian cultural values.

Between the Outbreak of Rebellion and its Fallout: June 1876

Coverage of the April Uprising in British newspapers, therefore, was remarkably limited. Yet rumours of a great massacre in the province of Bulgaria continued to circulate in Constantinople and Vienna for many weeks, and these rumours eventually took on a life

⁴⁰⁶ Possibly Bayezit, a mosque in Constantinople.

⁴⁰⁷ Plovdiv, the second largest city in modern-day Bulgaria; known as Filibe in Turkish, it was the *sanjak* centre of Edirne Vilayet.

⁴⁰⁸ “Latest Telegrams,” *Daily News*, 10 May 1876, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁹ “Summary of This Morning’s News,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 May 1876.

⁴¹⁰ It should be noted that the Bulgarian “April Uprising” refers to the Orthodox Julian calendar, which was 12 days behind the Gregorian calendar during the nineteenth century. The uprising broke out at Koprivstitsa on 2 May (or 20 April), was largely suppressed by the middle of May, and ended with the killing of Hristo Botev on 1 June (or 20 May). All dates in this text are from the Gregorian calendar.

⁴¹¹ “Recent Events in Turkey,” *Northern Echo*, 23 May 1876, p. 1.

of their own. With no new news to report and only a trickle of cables from correspondents who were only relaying trivial pieces of information, newspapers had to improvise from the information they had to fill the columns.⁴¹² Late May was punctuated by wild speculation about the “alarming state of affairs... the insurrection is gaining ground every day”⁴¹³ with “twelve thousand insurgents ... concentrated on the hills surrounding Sofia”⁴¹⁴ poised to attack the city. Large-scale massacre and destruction of property were also speculated, with some estimates as high as 118 villages with 100,000 inhabitants destroyed.⁴¹⁵ *The Northern Echo* ran the provocative headline on 27 May, “Is England Going to War?” with lengthy accusations levelled against “the unscrupulous premier” for making “warlike preparations in the name of England” by sending the fleet Eastwards,⁴¹⁶ and that “with Tories controlling our foreign policy, it would be criminal not to be on the alert” against the “ulterior motives” of such a war-like Prime Minister.⁴¹⁷ On 29 May, in a more typical, conflicted report, the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* from West Yorkshire quoted the *Daily News’s* coverage of a telegram from Belgrade dated 23 May, stating that “Serious fighting is reported from Bulgaria. The Turks are said to have hanged several chiefs and priests at Pasarick [Pazardzhik]. According to rumours current here, there was a general massacre of the Christians in that neighbourhood. The insurgents are retiring to

⁴¹² None more imaginative than the *Northern Echo* article “Recent Events in Turkey” on 23 May. “Although the official telegrams represent it as virtually suppressed,” Stead promises, “it is still sufficiently important to demand the presence of [Ali Pasha] and 20,000 men.” Pressure from the European powers, he assures, “is almost certain to provoke an outburst of Moslem fanaticism ... and force applied to Turkish fanaticism may set Europe in a blaze.” Interestingly, Stead predicts that “if the Sultan gives way he may be dethroned,” which occurred exactly one week later, although orchestrated by reformers, not by “fanatics.”

⁴¹³ “The Eastern Question: Alarming State of Affairs” *The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder*, 26 May 1876.

⁴¹⁴ “The Eastern Question,” *The Glasgow Herald*, 26 May 1876, p. 4.

⁴¹⁵ “The Eastern Question,” *The Glasgow Herald*, citing *Le Courier d’Orient*, 27 May 1876, p. 4.

⁴¹⁶ Disraeli, worried that the Russians would capitalize on further news of insurrection to declare war on Turkey, dispatched the Mediterranean fleet to the Dardanelles to dissuade Russian intervention.

⁴¹⁷ “Is England Going to War?” *Northern Echo*, 27 May 1876.

the mountains,”⁴¹⁸ and reported in the same issue that the “insurrection was completely subdued”⁴¹⁹ from another Reuter’s Telegram. Despite largely conflicting accounts, by June, nearly all newspapers agreed that the insurrection had ended and their attention shifted focus on to the dramatic overthrow of Sultan Abdülaziz on 30 May.⁴²⁰

The dethronement of Abdülaziz gave newspapermen further opportunity to speculate on the resolution of the Eastern Question, including the financial crisis. *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, with several other papers, reported that “the news of the revolution in Turkey is well received in both political and financial circles; and it is believed that this event will facilitate the solution of the existing difficulties in the East.”⁴²¹ Stead’s *Northern Echo* recounted the lamentable financial record of the deposed sultan, who took tens of millions of pounds in loans from England and France after Crimea and squandered it all “without a single war to excuse such extravagant expenditure,”⁴²² proving that the Sultan and his subjects cared only for worldly, sensual pleasures. No doubt intending the implication of divine justice, Stead noted that Abdülaziz was “whisked off the scene by an invisible agency” around the same time that Christians in Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Bulgaria rebelled, “and Destiny leaves to his successor the melancholy task of presiding

⁴¹⁸ “The Turkish Crisis,” *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* (West Yorkshire), 30 May 1876, p. 3

⁴¹⁹ “Foreign,” *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 30 May 1876, p. 3.

⁴²⁰ See “The Revolution in Turkey” *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 1 June 1876; “The Revolution in Turkey” *Northern Echo*, 1 June 1876; and many others. Stead was unrestrainedly jubilant upon the news, hinted at divine providence, and predicted it would “precipitate her doom... A new Sultan may do much... [but] it is more probably that the only result of such convulsive energy will be to hurl Turkey over the abyss towards which she has long been gliding”.

⁴²¹ “Revolution in Turkey: Dethronement of the Sultan” *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 31 May 1876. The same report, however, made mention of atrocities in Bulgaria: “according to intelligence derived from different sources, the repression of the insurrection in Bulgaria has assumed a character of the most atrocious cruelty. The Turks give absolutely no quarter; women and children are massacred without pity; and in the district situated north of Philippopoli and Fatar Bazardjik [Tartar Pazardzhik] 118 villages have been burned to the ground by the Sultan’s troops.” Note that despite being dethroned, the Sultan is still held directly responsible for the conduct of his soldiery.

⁴²² “The Turkish Revolution,” *Northern Echo*, 31 May 1876.

over the death throes of the Ottoman Empire.”⁴²³ Sceptical of optimistic reports from other newspapers, Stead questioned “whether it is indeed a new phase of Turkish history” and whether the new Sultan could get them “out of the mud.”⁴²⁴ “The Softas⁴²⁵,” he noted, “are the most bigoted Moslems in all Islam” and while “the fanaticism of the Softas may galvanize the Empire into apparent vitality... its regeneration by such means is an impossibility.”⁴²⁶

That the new Sultan and his close advisors were fighting to implement a radical liberal constitution based on Western ideals was derided by Stead as disingenuous. Stead predicted that “the absurdity of this delusion [that the Ottomans would adopt a liberal constitution]” would merely “mean the re-establishment of the old regime” while the “insurrection in Bulgaria, so far from being put down, is spreading daily, and is accompanied by unheard of atrocities.” “All the goals are emptied to suppress the insurrection,” he explained, adding that “the fighting is a ‘war of fiends’... Hundreds of villages have been given up to flame, and still the deadly work goes on”⁴²⁷ while Disraeli accepted platitudes and lies from the Turkish government. That 93 days later Murad V was himself deposed by conservatives after attempting to introduce a liberal constitution guaranteeing responsible government, religious freedoms, and constitutional rule undoubtedly reaffirmed Stead’s convictions and confirmed his prognostication that reform would be fruitless. When Abdülaziz was found dead in Feriye Palace of apparent suicide⁴²⁸

⁴²³ “The Turkish Revolution,” *Northern Echo*, 31 May 1876.

⁴²⁴ “The Turkish Revolution,” *Northern Echo*, 1 June 1876.

⁴²⁵ Students from theological seminaries, which Stead supposed to be the agents of the Sultan’s downfall.

⁴²⁶ “The Turkish Revolution,” *Northern Echo*, 1 June 1876.

⁴²⁷ “The Eastern Question,” *Northern Echo*, 5 June 1876.

⁴²⁸ The question of Abdülaziz’s death continues to be the source of debate. Officially, 19 physicians examined Abdülaziz’s body and unanimously found the death to be suicide, yet in recently published memoirs of Abdülhamid II he describes it as an assassination ordered by the former Grand Vizier Hüseyin Avni Pasha and

on 4 June, further speculation circulated about the revolutionary situation in Turkey and its implications for Britain.⁴²⁹ Noting the long history of suspicious suicides of many “Tartar-Germanic and Ottoman dynasties,” the *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser* warned that “It will be hard for the new Sultan, Mourad V. to convince the world that his hands are free from the blood of his uncle.”⁴³⁰ Other provincial newspapers, clearly influenced by the fiery rhetoric (and increasing circulation) of Stead’s *Northern Echo*, followed its lead. Taking the suicide of the Sultan as a sign of Turkish imperial degeneracy, *The North Wales Chronicle* firmly asserted:

It is not likely that England will again become the ally of the Porte. That rotten power is not worth defending again at the cost of British blood and treasure. Things ought to be allowed to take their own course in Turkey which, to all practical intents and purposes, is beyond being capable of reform on the old lines ... The feeling of England undoubtedly now is that the Sick Man should be left to his fate; at all events, that this country should not repeat the active assistance which brought about the Crimean War.⁴³¹

It is with this background of widespread, increasingly polemical anti-Turkish rhetoric, therefore, that news of the Bulgarian massacres came to light. Cultural modes of understanding were already well established by the summer of 1876. These themes would provide well-worn patterns in public discourse for the response to the perceived atrocities and to government actions. These patterns of perception were not created by Stead, but

the reformer Midhat Pasha (who was in turn executed by Abdülhamid in 1884) (Nadine Sultana d’Osman Han, *L’Heritage de S. M. Abdulhamit II, Sultan* (N. Dawson, 1989). The memoir argues that when Murad V began showing signs of mental instability the conspirators feared the return of Abdülaziz and arranged to have his death look like a suicide, and it argued that there was no way that the Sultan could have cut both his wrists at the same time with a pair of scissors (İsmet Bozdağ, *Sultan Abdülhamid’in Hatıra Defteri* (İstanbul, Pınar Yayınları, 2000), p. 223. Caroline Finkel supports the idea of suicide, suggesting that Abdülaziz’s life would have been unbearable in the fortress-like palace on the Bosphorus, and cites Fahri Bey’s memoir that described his guards as taunting him and refusing him and his household the bare essentials of life. Abdülhamid II, she hints, used the suspicious event to persecute his enemies by obtaining murder confessions using torture. Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream* (New York: Basic, 2005), pp. 482, 500.

⁴²⁹ The *Glasgow Herald* tersely commented his apparent suicide “has ended ingloriously an inglorious life” “The Turkish Revolution,” *Glasgow Herald*, 5 June 1876.

⁴³⁰ “Foreign Affairs,” *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 14 June 1876.

⁴³¹ “Eastern Troubles,” *North Wales Chronicle*, (Bangor), 3 June 1876.

they were certainly taken, reinforced, and exaggerated by *The Northern Echo*. This heightened language of “horror and indignation” eventually translated from words and opinions of private citizens into political influence and policy change.

“Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria”: 23 June 1876

Initially, the Turkish massacre of Bulgarians was not headline news. In the 23 June edition of the *Daily News*, one paragraph from the Constantinople Correspondent (Edwin Pears) summing up “Moslem atrocities” was immediately preceded by a discussion of the installation of 200 fire hydrants in the City of London, thunderstorms over North Scotland, and naval experimentation of the latest 38-ton gun reputed to be “the heaviest arm afloat”:

[The correspondent] has sent us a list of villages in Bulgaria which have, it is stated, been ravaged by the Turks. One of the most fertile and productive provinces of the Empire has been so completely devastated that, instead of yielding, as hitherto, an annual revenue of about eight hundred thousand pounds to the Government, it is not thought likely to yield, perhaps for years to come, more than a fourth of that sum.⁴³² One estimate puts the number of persons killed at 18,000, *but Bulgarians speak of 30,000*. Authentic information on the subject is very difficult to obtain. The perpetrators of these *outrages* were *bashi-bazouks, who are composed of the dregs of the Turkish and Circassian population*, and who were let loose upon Bulgaria under no responsible command to put down the insurrection in their own fashion. Their *cruelties* have made a deep impression in Constantinople, and it was believed that our Ambassador there had used his influence with the Government in order to put an end to them.⁴³³

The full letter from the correspondent and another article describing Disraeli’s eastern policy followed the summary.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Note the financial emphasis of the story before a discussion of the human toll.

⁴³³ “London, Friday, June 23,” *Daily News*, 23 June 1876, p. 4. Telegraph is dated 16 June. Emphasis added to show common refrains and statistics cited across numerous sources, essentially becoming accepted as facts.

⁴³⁴ “The Assassinations at Constantinople: Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Daily News*, 23 June 1876, p. 5-6.

The above letter was reprinted and cited at length in numerous metropolitan and provincial newspapers, and it became the factual basis for the public agitation that followed. Some information was inevitably twisted as it was removed from its original context and recycled from source to source. The reference to “the dregs of the Turkish and Circassian population ... gipsies and gaolbirds... let loose upon a large portion of central Bulgaria” was widely reused, as was a simultaneous (and conflicting) indictment of both the Sultan and the Turkish people in general for the actions of such leaderless ruffians. While the correspondent wrote “I pass over the stories of the burning of forty or fifty Bulgarian girls in a stable and the massacre of upwards of a hundred children in the village school-house ... because although they are repeated everywhere in Constantinople I have no sufficient authority to enable me to express an opinion on their truth,” other sources reprinted the allegation without the caveat concerning its veracity. The belief that the “Ambassador had used his influence with the Government to put an end to them” was also quickly forgotten as the extent of the atrocities (and the media frenzy) became greater and greater. The implications of the letter from Constantinople were felt to be clear: that the “depopulation of a province, and wholesale massacres and outrages are taking place... will go far to make the maintenance of Mohammedan rule over a Christian population permanently impossible.”⁴³⁵ Indeed much of this initial letter became the baseline of “fact” during the initial weeks of the agitation. As late as 1965, the figures given in this report were used and reused in academic study, particularly in Bulgaria and Serbia.⁴³⁶ According to his memoirs, Edwin Pears, the *Daily News* correspondent in Constantinople who

⁴³⁵ Note that a clear narrative of how this story would (and did) affect the government/British policy is clear here, despite the warning that the correspondent didn’t know how much of it was true.

⁴³⁶ Djordjević, for example, cites “200 villages” and “30,000 Bulgarians” killed; Dimitrije Djordjević, *Révolutions nationales des peuples Balkaniques, 1804-1914* (Belgrade: 1965), 134.

authored the above letter, drew his sources from friends, including Dr. George Washburn and Dr. Albert Long, director and professor at the American Robert College in Constantinople, founded by Congregationalists and Presbyterian missionaries in 1863.⁴³⁷ These friends had in turn received and translated their sources from Bulgarian friends and students, who transmitted stories from family members in the affected areas. Importantly, no news that had reached Britain was yet authored by any eyewitnesses. Instead it was passed along through second or third-hand sources who obtained their information from those with vested interests in portraying the Ottoman oppression in the worst possible light.

Despite the difficulty of obtaining “authentic” information, the 23 June letter in the *Daily News* provoked a heated exchange in the House of Commons—and a decidedly more reserved exchange in the House of Lords—when W.E. Forster raised the issue three days later when parliament resumed after the weekend. The response of Disraeli and his government was that there was “no information which justified statement, notwithstanding a quelled insurrection where ‘persons were murdered without regard to religion or race.’”⁴³⁸ The *Pall Mall Gazette* objected to the unfair questioning of the government on such matters, likely meant to “manufacture political capital against the Government,” stating that England’s duty to quell such insurrection was “purely a moral one—an obligation to humanity to which no English Ministry is likely to be insensible,” and

⁴³⁷ Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, 191. George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909). Washburn’s memoir is a rich source for the reconstruction of events in Constantinople among Bulgarian students and American Protestants that led to the Bulgarian Agitation in Britain. Washburn’s account of the insurrection (which he claims was provoked by Turkey as pretext to “terrorize” Bulgaria prior to war with Serbians) holds that “fifty or sixty thousand men, women, and children were massacred in cold blood, sold as slaves or judicially murdered” (103).

⁴³⁸ “House of Commons,” *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 27 June 1876.

any alleged atrocity notwithstanding “ought to exercise no influence upon our policy... they are natural incidents of a war of race and religion.”⁴³⁹ *The Standard* reported that 15,000 Russian muskets had been sent to the Bulgarian insurgents, that Austrian agents and “Greek Catholic schoolmasters and priests” were intermixed with Slav insurgents, and that their own correspondent (Dr. Heinrich Noé—a “notorious Slavophil”) had disproven rumours that “more than a thousand Christians had been impaled” and had “repeatedly found the heads of Turks in the woods,”⁴⁴⁰ suggesting that the insurgents had provoked such a response.

The parliamentary debates that followed greatly increased awareness of the “Moslem” or “Turkish” atrocities, as they were initially called,⁴⁴¹ as British newspapers closely covered parliamentary affairs. It was at this point when the issue of the Turkish massacres of Bulgarian Christians, building on months of reports considering the Eastern Question and other “outrages,” quickly became a national issue and a topic of discussion for Britain’s politically aware. The growing public agitation surrounding the Eastern Question coincided with a general decline in diplomatic relations between the Great Powers; on 23 June Queen Victoria noted in her diary that “the Eastern Question becomes more and more serious”⁴⁴²—not because of the *Daily News* article but because of failure of the Berlin agreements made the previous year that made conflict increasingly likely. On 30 June, Serbian forces joined Montenegrins and declared war against the Ottomans, which

⁴³⁹ “The Alleged Massacres in Bulgaria,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 June 1876.

⁴⁴⁰ “The State of Affairs in Turkey,” *The Standard*, 26 June 1876.

⁴⁴¹ The first headlines were: “Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876; A.P. Irby, “Turkish Atrocities,” *Daily News*, 1 July 1876. It took some weeks before the incident obtained a common descriptor. By September, petitions largely referred to “Turkish Outrages,” although “horrors” and “atrocities” were also common descriptors.

⁴⁴² Queen Victoria, *Queen Victoria’s Journals: Princess Beatrice’s Copies, Volume 65*, Royal Archive, 148.

threatened to draw Russia, Austria, and thereby Britain, into general war. As Sir Charles Dilke noted at a speech at Notting Hill some weeks afterward, “foreign affairs had suddenly risen out of complete obscurity into a position in which they overshadowed all other things, and left home politics in stagnation.”⁴⁴³ Nearly every newspaper had vastly expanded sections (including rare, full page spreads with multiple headlines) discussing all aspects of the Eastern Question. As Lord Salisbury similarly observed, “the country was roused.”⁴⁴⁴

The spreading news of atrocity against Christians in Bulgaria was met with further speculation and heavy handed rhetoric, despite there being no additional information from correspondents. In the vacuum between the initial report on 23 June and eyewitness reports weeks later, news stories drew upon well-established themes of Turkish barbarity to frame the developing narrative. In a letter to the *Daily News*, Adeline Paulina Irby (author of a popular 1866 travelogue *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*), related the horrific news to her own confrontation with Turks playing catch with Christian heads in a marketplace, which she claimed to have witnessed during her travels in 1862. Irby assured readers that she was “confident that official information does not reach England of the inhuman cruelties which are committed daily throughout the length and breadth of the land.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Sir Charles Dilke, Speech at Notting Hill, August 1876.

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted in Richard Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 271.

⁴⁴⁵ “Turkish Atrocities,” A.P. Irby, *Daily News*, 1 July 1876. Note that Irby did not travel to Bulgaria (the chapters of her travelogue are entitled “Bulgaria viewed from Salonica [Thessaloniki]” and her travels in the region were over a decade before the uprising. G. Mackenzie and A.P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-In-Europe* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866).

The *Daily News* published rumours that “Great numbers of Bulgarian children have been captured by the Circassians, and have been sold or now on sale as slaves. So large is the stock in hand ... that young girls may be bought for three or four liras at Philippopolis. ... A good many children have been also carried off, to be converted to Mahomedanism, and kept as drudges.”⁴⁴⁶ W. T. Stead felt it unnecessary to wait for further clarification beyond what was reported in the *Daily News* on 23 June, declaring that “A war of extermination is being carried out against the Christians in Bulgaria,”⁴⁴⁷ and sardonically described how “it is to Russia these unhappy persons seek aid, but not to Christian England—vaunt as we may our civilization, of our love of freedom, of our humanity and virtue... [because] England is Turkey’s friend... the Mussulmans are going about saying that England will not see the Empire broken up—that, if necessary it will help put down insurrections.”⁴⁴⁸ In making plain the hypocrisy of England’s support of the Ottoman Empire, which “exterminates” Christians desirous of freedom, Stead here framed the crisis as a defining moment in British self-definition. Stead appealed for Christian Englishmen to defend their honour from such misuse of Britain’s name, and he called to mind general anxieties about losing the moral high-ground to Britain’s Russian arch rival.

Reynolds’s Newspaper in London lamented that “when Sultan Abdul Aziz went to heaven—for of course we must not be so rude as to suggest that a royal prince could possibly go to what *Hamlet* delicately referred to as ‘the other place’—he did not take all his Turks with him.”⁴⁴⁹ This *Reynold’s* disparaging history of the Ottoman Empire is worth

⁴⁴⁶ “The Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Daily News*, 8 July 1876.

⁴⁴⁷ “Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876.

⁴⁴⁸ “Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876.

⁴⁴⁹ “Last Kick of the Sick Man,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (London), 2 July 1876.

quoting at length, as it found resonance amongst prominent Liberals—two months later many of its contentions would be reasserted by W. E. Gladstone:

At the best, [the Turks] are only squatters in Europe—like all squatters, living on the industry of others, or upon the appropriation of land *not lawfully theirs*. The Turks *came into Europe by conquest*, and have remained in it by forbearance on the part of the great Powers of the West; but that forbearance would have ended in an hour, could the Powers ever have agreed. *The conquering race has so far degenerated* as to be outnumbered by the conquered Christians, who to-day are exercising in some districts the sacred right of rebellion. The Turk, as a Mussulman, is a *fatalist* and merely looks upon this world as a caravansary where he has to be provided with board and lodging. *He has no principle except that of sensual enjoyment*, and no desire to procure the means of enjoyment except plunder. He carries plunder into government, so that government in Turkey only becomes a series of acts of oppression, *any one of which would sting Englishmen into rebellion...* The war in the East, when it breaks out, will be found to be a religious war. Apart from all political questions, the Turks and the Christians hate each other. ... *it is impossible for the Turks and the Christians to live together.*⁴⁵⁰

The emphasized phrases in the above passage were common refrains during the agitation and indeed the greater debate over the Eastern Question. Here, the Ottoman Empire falls on the wrong side of many important Victorian dichotomies. “Turks” (notably excluding Ottoman Christians), are constructed as foreigners, who illegitimately “squat” on European land—despite centuries of history in Southeastern Europe and having its capital city in Europe.⁴⁵¹ “Forceful” Ottoman rule and “plunder” of subject populations is here contrasted with “magnanimous” European rule and principles of free trade. Note also the insistence on the “degeneracy” of the corrupted masculinity of the “Turkish race,” reflecting new theories of social Darwinism on the international scale. “Sensual enjoyment” is seen as

⁴⁵⁰ “Last Kick of the Sick Man,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (London), 2 July 1876. Emphases added.

⁴⁵¹ The debate over Turkey’s place in Europe continues to this day with its application to be part of the European Union. Turkey has been an associate member of the EU since 1963, and negotiations to join as a full member began in October 2005 (they are expected to take a decade). On the long history of this debate, see Fikret Adanir, “Turkey’s Entry into the Concert of Europe,” *Academia Europaea* 13 (2005): 395-417.

the ultimate goal for Turkish existence in contrast to Western altruism through self-discipline; observers fixated on Eastern sexual perversity, immodesty, and unrestraint—of which the *harem* was a prime example as well as the “violation” (rape) of women and especially “maidens” (virgins).⁴⁵² “Englishmen” in the same position would inevitably find such oppression intolerable and would naturally revolt, just as the Slavs did against the Ottoman “yoke.” Finally, a strong sense of the impossibility of cohabitation of Christians and “Mussulmen” pervaded commentary, as did the idea that Christians and Muslims in the region “hate each other”—thus explaining the ferocious, barbarous violence. The growing conception of nationality as the fundamental basis for political independence, which fuelled the recent German and Italian drives for unification, fed directly into this line of thought— independence for Christians became the only viable option to secure the protection of their rights.

In the above passage, Turks are said live “on the industry of others,” suggesting idleness and a parasitic exploitation of the natural prosperity and fertility of hard-working Christians. Vampire narratives have recently been the subject of study by Matthew Gibson, who demonstrates that authors such as Bram Stoker, Polidori, Le Fanu, Prosper Mérimée, and Jules Verne developed their allegorical vampires with the Eastern Question and legacies of Turkish “inhumanity” as their cultural references, moving from the figuratively parasitic relationship between Ottoman rulers and their Christian subjects to the literally parasitic relationship between degenerate Eastern, aristocratic, male, sexually predatory

⁴⁵² Stead in particular recognized the importance of appealing to “a keen sense of female honour” as “a more potent force to arouse men to generous action than any other mere massacre,” *Stead Diary*, quoted in Robinson, *Muckraker*, 31.

vampires and their helpless, Western, female victims.⁴⁵³ Frequently cited in Agitation publications was the 14th century “blood tax” (Devşirme) whereby promising Christian sons were recruited into the Ottoman Government, which “consumed” their best and brightest (this practice was rarely used after 1568 and abolished in 1638). Impalement was seen as a manifestation of Eastern inhumanity whereby victims were literally penetrated to death. Imaginative clergymen such as Malcolm MacCall and Canon Henry Liddon insisted early in the crisis that Turks were impaling Christians along the Danube and the practice was frequently cited as an example of the Turkish atrocities throughout their European provinces.⁴⁵⁴ That Vlad “The Impaler,” Prince of Wallachia—the original “Dracula”—was a 15th century Christian fighting the Ottomans was inconsequential inasmuch as Dracula was representative of all Eastern cruelties, unrepressed sexual desires, racial degeneracy, and tyrannical rule.

As British interest in the atrocities in Bulgaria grew, so too did Stead’s reputation as an authority on the Eastern crisis. Before the parliamentary debate ballooned public interest, newspaper accounts tended to be uninspired and lacking clear articulation—that is, with the exception of Stead, whose pronouncements had consistently been unclouded by the inconvenience of restraint or self-doubt. Stead’s early focus on young women, children (specifically young girls and infants), race, history, religion, English identity, and the North Country’s role in defending the moral standing of the British Empire⁴⁵⁵ in his impassioned

⁴⁵³ Matthew Gibson, *Dracula and the Eastern Question: British and French Vampire Narratives of the Nineteenth-Century Near East*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴⁵⁴ H. P. Musurus, Malcolm MacCall and Canon Henry Liddon, “Alleged Turkish Atrocities,” (London) *Times*, 5 October 1876, 6; Malcolm MacCall, “Impalement,” *Times*, 7 October 1876, and “Alleged Impalements in Bosnia,” *Times* 23 January 1877.

⁴⁵⁵ “The North Country, we hope, will not be lacking in contributing to the Godspeed which the free men of England are about to send across the waters to the Slavonians, who are risking their lives for freedom from

narration of titillating violence gave the otherwise indirectly-related story on foreign affairs a human element with which his readership could sympathize. Only one day after the initial report of the massacre was published, in the same issue that declared the “war of extermination” being carried out in Bulgaria, Stead had already woven the horrific details into a passionate exposition of the wholesale “massacre of innocents.”⁴⁵⁶ Stead described the subject Christian population as merely “attempt[ing] to break the chains of an intolerable servitude” who can only “wish for deliverance” from Russia. England’s current Government, he opined, was supporting “ruthless murder” and risking a “general conflagration” and “sanguinary war” with Europe—all the while deliberately keeping the rest of the country “in the dark.”⁴⁵⁷

Stead harshly criticized Disraeli’s personal role in the crisis, noting that “Never was a self-governing nation left so entirely in the dark as to its role in a great world tragedy ... We stand in the crisis of our fate, without even a hint as to what is to be our destiny.”⁴⁵⁸ Disraeli himself, Stead clarified, was the prime villain; his ambassador, Sir Henry Elliot, was his lackey; and Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary (with known antagonisms with the Prime

the yoke of the oppressor. Our protest against the iniquity of lending support to the Ottomans ought to be clear and strong. North Countrymen, in spite of the diplomatists, who in every age have depreciated the emancipation of subject races, know too well that the Servian and the Montenegrin, the Bosnian and the Bulgarian, are fighting for the sacred rights of human beings, in obedience to one of the noblest instincts of humanity.” Stead, “England and the Eastern Insurgents,” *Northern Echo*, 13 July 1876.

⁴⁵⁶ “A war of extermination is being carried on against the Christians in Bulgaria! ... never did dogs pursue their game more mercilessly. A wide region of central Bulgaria has been laid waste. The names of thirty-seven villages are given that have been utterly destroyed. Men, women, and children have been ruthlessly murdered. Among the incidents mentioned is the burning of a stable with forty or fifty young women within its walls; and a massacre of innocents, to the number of a hundred, found in a school house. The details are sickening. The total slaughter can only be guessed at.” Stead, “Our Policy in the East,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876.

⁴⁵⁷ Stead, “Our Policy in the East,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876.

⁴⁵⁸ “The Government and the War,” *Northern Echo*, 10 July 1876.

Minister) was an honest member in the Cabinet that the premier refused to listen to.⁴⁵⁹ Disraeli, Stead announced, “is practically dictator of our policy in the East ... Mr. Disraeli favours a policy of supporting the Turkish despotism in Europe... this delusion, unless promptly exposed, may cost us hundreds of thousands of precious lives and hundreds of millions of money.”⁴⁶⁰ Stead’s consistent, gripping, and clearly articulated narrative that tied accounts of massacre with Government culpability and the increasing risk of general war by incompetent leadership found Stead many allies amongst powerful Liberals in the Opposition.⁴⁶¹ One of these allies, Edward Augustus Freeman, took particular interest in the enthusiastic young editor. Freeman forwarded *Northern Echo* articles to Russian writer and London socialite Olga Novikova,⁴⁶² who used her considerable influence to introduce Stead to influential figures, including Thomas Carlyle, Alexander Kinglake, and William Gladstone, and eventually to secure his editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1880.⁴⁶³ It may be noted, therefore, that the early discussions of the Bulgarian Agitation was largely uninformed, with few actual eyewitness accounts and a large degree of speculation based on whatever information was available, filtered and focussed through cultural

⁴⁵⁹ Unbeknownst to Disraeli, Derby and his wife shared Cabinet secrets with the Russian ambassador Pyotr Andreyevich Shuvalov with the intent to avoid war, thereby becoming “the only Foreign Secretary in British history to reveal the innermost secrets of the Cabinet ... in order to frustrate the presumed intentions of his own Prime Minister” (Robert Blake, *Disraeli*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 623). Derby later resigned from Cabinet twice in 1878 over the handling of the Eastern Question and in 1880 he crossed the floor and ran as a Liberal.

⁴⁶⁰ “The Government and the War,” *Northern Echo*, 10 July 1876.

⁴⁶¹ John Kensit noted in his contemporaneous biography of Stead: “The advent of the struggle between Russia and Turkey... and in antagonism generally to the course pursued by Lord Beaconsfield [Disraeli]’s Government—first brought Mr. Stead into recognition amongst the leading statesmen of the Liberal party.” Kensit, *The Life of Mr. W.T. Stead*, 13.

⁴⁶² Sister of Orthodox theologian and polemist Alexander Kireev, Novikova lost a younger brother during the Serbian insurrection in 1876 and passionately supported the Agitation and its Liberal supporters. Novikova was very close to Gladstone (particularly after 1876), Freeman, and Stead. Novikov stood at Gladstone’s side during his famous Blackheath speech, and it is likely that Novikova and Stead eventually became lovers (Robinson, *Muckraker*, 35). Novikova’s influence was viewed suspiciously by Conservatives, who saw her as either a Russian spy or “an extremely accomplished whore,” Sir Robert Morier to L. Mallet, 20 May 1880, quoted in Matthew, *Gladstone*, 323.

⁴⁶³ Robinson, *Muckraker*, 36.

preconceptions—particularly religious and racist historical understandings—which formed the framework through which subsequent details were fitted.

Racialized Discourses of the Agitation

It was reform-minded, Liberal, and well-educated men who advocated intervention on the bases of the “principles of humanity” who were often the most propelled by notions of racial and religious superiority. In a letter to the *Daily News*, Historian Edward A. Freeman, author of *History of the Norman Conquest* (1867-1876), who, incidentally, coined the phrase “history is past politics and politics are present history,”⁴⁶⁴ suggested that the Prime Minister’s “brutal mockery in the past and present deeds of his barbarian friends might make one blush for one’s country if one did not remember that he who uttered those words, though Prime Minister of England, *is not an Englishman*, and has never learned to understand the feelings of Englishmen.”⁴⁶⁵

Disraeli’s critics exploited his apparently dismissive and cold-hearted reaction to the crisis and used his flippant responses to demonstrate his apparent aloofness and lack of concern or Christians oppressed abroad, which built on a longer history of suspicion of Disraeli’s loyalties that occasionally escalated into anti-Semitism. Disraeli, once an orientalist dandy who had toured the Ottoman Empire in his youth, had written to his sister after meeting the Grand Vizier in Yanina, Albania in the 1830s of his “delight at being

⁴⁶⁴ Edward A. Freeman, “A Review of My Opinions,” *Forum*, XIII (1882), 154.

⁴⁶⁵ Edward A. Freeman, “The Debate on Bulgaria,” *Daily News*, 13 July 1876. Emphasis added. Freeman was in this sense the “quintessential” English scholar of the pre-professional historical profession according to Sydney Robinson, “churning out innumerable volumes ... without so much as deigning to visit an archive or examine a manuscript. His inspiration came not from facts, but from deep and burning prejudices, which owned more to the current political climate than the hard grind of historical research,” *Muckraker*, 32. Unsurprisingly, Freeman later declared the *Northern Echo* as the “best paper in Europe.”

made much of by a man who was daily decapitating half the province.”⁴⁶⁶ Disraeli’s novels, particularly *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* (1833), and *Tancred, or the New Crusade* (1847), although frequently cited as quintessentially “orientalist” works by postcolonial authors from Edward Said onwards, were in fact received as largely sympathetic to Islam and as vaunting the sublime magnificence of oriental life.⁴⁶⁷ Contemporaries considered Disraeli (as well as many of his ministers) a “Turkophile,” a term which was to become wholly pejorative after the Bulgarian Horrors.⁴⁶⁸ Some went further to declare that the British Prime Minister was not “English” at all, but merely masquerading as such—implying that Disraeli’s baptism into the Anglican faith from Judaism at the age of 12 was disingenuous and that he was a racial outsider.

Anti-Semitism had dogged much of Disraeli’s early political career, and it was quick to resurface in the heated passions of the Bulgarian agitation. John Bright, Quaker, Liberal reformer, and outspoken critic of Disraeli, pronounced “the betrayal of a Minister [Disraeli] who has not one single drop of English blood in his veins.”⁴⁶⁹ *Punch* frequently depicted Disraeli with oriental features;⁴⁷⁰ in one illustration, *Punch* portrayed “The British Lion” addressing Disraeli-as-Sphinx: “Look here, I don’t understand *you!* But it’s right you should

⁴⁶⁶ Quoted in Aldous, *Lion and Unicorn*, 18.

⁴⁶⁷ See the counterpoint to Said’s characterization of Disraeli as the archetypal Orientalist in Mark F. Proudman, “Disraeli as an ‘Orientalist’: The Polemical Errors of Edward Said,” *The Journal of the Historical Society*, 5, 4 (2005). Proudman, indeed, goes much further to argue a systematic misreading of Disraeli’s works by postcolonial scholars and how “it is a curious fate for a book [*Tancred*] that set out to destroy stereotypes in the name of the particularities of real, contextualized, detailed experience that it should become the standard and little-questioned textbook of its own imperious and misleading orthodoxies” (566).

⁴⁶⁸ Interestingly, “Turkomania” as a fashion for interior design—featuring “Turkish Corners” or rooms incorporating carpets, pillows, muslin, and scented tobacco smoked from hookahs—continued until the end of the century, which may be attributed to its alluring “sensual barbarism” and the attraction to exotic and forbidden pleasures. This fashion spread widely in the US after the American Exposition of 1876.

⁴⁶⁹ Quoted in Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (Random House Digital, 2008), 218.

⁴⁷⁰ See the collection: *Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, in Cartoons from the Collection of “Mr. Punch”* (London: Punch, 1881).

understand *me!* *I don't fight to uphold what's going on yonder!*"—referring to a massacre with several heads on spikes taking place in the background. (Figure 4.3)



Figure 4.3: John Tenniel. "No Mistake!" *Punch* No. 0, 25 November 1876.

After Disraeli's famous Guildhall speech (which inspired the original Jingoism), Edward Freeman countered that "I am sure we are a large enough part of the English people to make even the Jew in his drunken insolence think twice before he goes to war in our teeth."⁴⁷¹ Anti-Semitism was also noted to be one of Catherine Gladstone's "less endearing"⁴⁷² qualities although William Gladstone himself never publicly attacked Disraeli

⁴⁷¹ Robert Blake, *Disraeli*, 607.

⁴⁷² Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 29. When William lost the 1874 election, Catherine wrote her son Herbert, "Is it not disgusting after all Papa's labour and patriotism and years of work to think of handing over his nest-egg to that Jew?"

along racial lines.⁴⁷³ Freeman undoubtedly took the lead in public racial attacks on the Prime Minister (whom he referred to as the “loathsome Jew”), pronouncing that “blood is stronger than water, and Hebrew rule is sure to lead to a Hebrew policy.”⁴⁷⁴ Freeman generated some controversy when he censured the Queen for “going ostentatiously to eat with Disraeli in his Ghetto”⁴⁷⁵ at Hughenden in December of 1877, more so for criticizing the discretion of the Queen than for attacking Disraeli.

The historian and satirist Thomas Carlyle went much further, referring to Disraeli as the “Cursed old Jew, not worth his weight in cold bacon”⁴⁷⁶ while campaigning against Disraeli’s handling of the Bulgarian Horrors. Carlyle’s conception of racial hierarchy is especially apparent when juxtaposed with his ardent support of Governor Edward Eyre a decade previously after Eyre’s violent suppression of the relatively minor Morant Bay Rebellion of blacks in Jamaica.⁴⁷⁷ This double standard is revealing of the racial assumptions of former supporters of Eyre that transcended political allegiance—Carlyle and John Ruskin found themselves on the same side as former members of the Jamaica Committee (including Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, who called for Eyre’s arrest and trial for excesses) arguing against the “barbarous” use of force by (dark-skinned, Muslim) Turks against (light-skinned, Christian) Bulgarians seeking liberty from

⁴⁷³ Gladstone did, however, privately state to the Duke of Argyll a suspicion that “Dizzy’s crypto-Judaism has had to do with his policy,” Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, 550, and of his suspicions of Disraeli’s “Judaic feeling, the deepest and truest, now that his wife is gone, in his whole mind,” Gladstone to Negropontis, Gladstone Papers 44453 n. 18.

⁴⁷⁴ E. A. Freeman, *The Ottoman Power in Europe: Its Growth and Decline* (London: 1877), xx.

⁴⁷⁵ Quoted in Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (New York: Random House, 2008), 218.

⁴⁷⁶ Quoted in Robert Blake, *Disraeli*, 552.

⁴⁷⁷ The Eyre controversy split British society at every level, but particularly amongst the “educated” classes. Catherine Hall suggest that support or condemnation of Eyre’s actions was emblematic of different conceptions of “Englishness”—either as an exclusive, fixed racial identity of “us” versus “them” (Carlyle) or as a more inclusive understanding of national identity where “they” could, eventually, become like “us” through adoption of English laws and cultural practices (“civilization”) *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 209-264.

supposedly “unnatural” rule. Criticism of Disraeli along anti-Semitic lines (as well as disdain for the Ottoman Empire because of its intrinsic racial inferiority, incapacity to rule, and propensity towards decadence, decline, and devilry) was thus hardly an accidental quality of the Agitation. In fact, it reveals the racialized language of understanding that underpinned such vehement reaction to the Bulgarian Horrors and the Agitation’s particular indignation towards Disraeli’s “foreign” control of British foreign policy and Turkish rule of Balkan Christians.

In an open letter, Freeman echoed the concern of *Reynold’s* and Stead⁴⁷⁸ regarding the insufferable misuse of “the English name” “on behalf of [a] foul and tottering tyranny” and he averred that “something must be done ... if the name of England is not to be for ever dishonoured.”⁴⁷⁹ “We, as a nation represented by our Government,” he argued “have been giving a moral, or immoral, support to the foul despotism with whose deeds of unutterable wrong heaven and earth are ringing” and warned that “far blacker than the guilt of the brutal Turk is the guilt of the men who call themselves Christian and civilized, and still uphold [the Turk].” Freeman ended his open letter with a call to the English people, imploring them to rise up against their Government to uphold their principles:

One word more. Is there nothing that can be done outside the walls of Parliament? Can no meetings be held? Can no protest be drawn up, to declare in the face of Heaven and earth that there are still honest hearts in England; that there still are those who have not learned to call evil good and good evil; who are not willing that England should appear before the eyes of the world and should be branded in the pages of history as the accomplice of the foul and bloody despotism of the barbarian Turk?⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in W.T. Stead, *The M.P. for Russia: Reminiscences & Correspondence of Madame Olga Novikoff* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1909), 336.

⁴⁷⁹ Freeman, “Debate on Bulgaria,” 13 July 1876.

⁴⁸⁰ Freeman, “Debate on Bulgaria,” 13 July 1876.

In the above passages, we see Freeman developing the central themes of the Agitation: Disraeli as non-English, an outside agent, the “name” and “honour” of England being misused and stained by this outsider, the self-proclaimed “honest hearts” of the nation opposed to “evil” foreign policy, and the immutable wickedness of the Ottoman Turks.

Freeman’s “educated” opinions were hardly unique. Liberalism and racism were not mutually exclusive categories. As Colin Holmes argues, the exaltation of the individual in liberalism allowed its compatibility with racism as individuals were given “generous latitude for differences of opinion.”⁴⁸¹ The few histories concerning the Ottoman Empire ubiquitously referred to the degeneracy of its material and moral character in comparison to the inevitable march of European progress. Leopold von Ranke himself wrote extensively on Southeastern European history, tracing the “rise” of the “Servian Race.” Beating Samuel P. Huntington to the punch by nearly a century and a half, Ranke’s English translator summed up how he situated Serbia in “the seat of a protracted struggle between European civilization and Oriental despotism—between the Christian and Mahomedan religions” where “brave, hardy and simple people, contending for national independence and religious freedom” are “subjected to the cruel persecutions of their infidel oppressors.”⁴⁸² In a letter to the translator, Ranke wrote that he hoped that his “History of the Servians may excite in [Britain’s] mighty nation an interest for the Christians under

⁴⁸¹ E. Wallace, quoted in Colin Holmes, “Goldwin Smith (1823-1910): A ‘Liberal’ Antisemite[sic],” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 6, 5 (1972): 25-30. Holmes uses the example of Goldwin Smith, graduate of Eton, Christ Church, law professor, a Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford during the mid-nineteenth century Jewish Question wjp was outspokenly anti-Semitic. See also: Theodore Koditschek “Greater Britain and the ‘Lesser Breeds’: Liberalism, Race, and Evolutionary History,” in *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 206-262.

⁴⁸² Leopold von Ranke, *The History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*, Translated by Mrs. Alexander Kerr (London: Henry Bohn, 1853), *ii*.

Turkish rule.”⁴⁸³ Ranke wrote of the “ancient Bulgarian nation”⁴⁸⁴ whose people extend much beyond their official boundaries as a result of “the crafty policy of the Turkish conquerors to break down the distinct nationalities of the vanquished, and entangle them indistinguishably, by means of arbitrary changes in their territory.”⁴⁸⁵ Perhaps most revealing about Ranke’s *Servian Revolution* is the commentary of its translator, summing up the message of his book:

The Turks have been intruders in Europe from the first, grinding down the people, and impoverishing the countries which they overran; and warring alike against enlightenment, and Christianity. If we are to judge of a faith and a government by their fruits, we should all unite in hoping that the Mahomedan religion and the obstructive despotism of the ‘Sublime Porte’ should yield to the new swiftly-advancing tide of Christian civilization.⁴⁸⁶

R.W. Seton-Watson, long the authority on the History of the Eastern Question as well as a political activist who championed the foundation of Yugoslavia after the First World War, was undoubtedly within this historiographical trend when he wrote *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*. In a subsection entitled “‘Race is Everything’: the Return of the Conservatives” (referring to a “deliberate overstatement” in one of Disraeli’s novels) Seton-Watson noted Disraeli’s “restless energy and still more vivid imagination,” qualities which “he unquestioning owed to his Jewish blood ... whose significance can scarcely be exaggerated.”⁴⁸⁷ In his text, Seton-Watson sought to unravel the “myth” that Disraeli was a master of foreign policy during the Great Eastern Crisis and to assert that Gladstone’s role as champion of the principles of humanity, “helped end a corrupt and

⁴⁸³ Ranke, *The Servian Revolution*, iv.

⁴⁸⁴ Ranke, *The Servian Revolution*, 454.

⁴⁸⁵ Ranke, *The Servian Revolution*, 455.

⁴⁸⁶ Ranke, *The Servian Revolution*, vi.

⁴⁸⁷ Robert W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (New York: Norton, 1972 (1935)), 3.

altogether effete regime,"⁴⁸⁸ by arguing "with a voice from the twentieth century."⁴⁸⁹ Seton-Watson constructs this argument using normative, essentialist readings of history along racial lines:

If Disraeli possessed the oriental imagination and resource of his ancient race, Gladstone had the '*perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*' and a certain Celtic vision, tempered by a viking's fire. The Jew knew how to infect his royal mistress⁴⁹⁰ and his aristocratic followers with enthusiasm for a programme of self-interest seductively decked out in imperial trappings. The Scot, transplanted to Liverpool and Eton, with his innate Calvinism transfused with High Church training, cast a strange glamour over the nonconformist and middle-class mind by his dialectics and Biblical eloquence. Beyond these two extremes stand the two typical English patricians, Derby and Salisbury, with those qualities of calm compromise, distrust of resonant logic, and fear of emotionalism.⁴⁹¹

Note here that the statesmen are attributed racially-determined primary characteristics. Disraeli, "the Jew," is ascribed "oriental" powers of deceit, self-interest, and duplicitous seduction. Disraeli's influence on British policy is equated to contagious sexual deviance, used to "infect" his royal "mistress" (Queen Victoria) and his self-indulgent and corruptible "aristocratic followers." Gladstone is given heroic, Scottish attributes such as a far-seeing Celtic vision and a "viking's fire" combined with the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* (intensely earnest character of the Scots) and thus an innate sympathy for the downtrodden. This sincere passion was refined and given direction through his training at the English institution of Eton and his membership in the Anglican High Church. The result was a potent (and quintessentially British) combination of racial traits and religious righteousness that allowed Gladstone to "cast a strange glamour" over the otherwise unruly minds of nonconformists and the middle-classes. Derby and Salisbury, in contrast,

⁴⁸⁸ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 4.

⁴⁸⁹ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 563.

⁴⁹⁰ Referring to Queen Victoria. Note the implication of Disraeli's sexual deviance and deceit in the words "infect" and "mistress" and the contempt Seton-Watson has for Disraeli's self-interested "aristocratic followers".

⁴⁹¹ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 561-2.

served as the moderating influences of such “extremes” and were, as upper-class Englishmen, able to negotiate the rhetoric for practical compromise.

Conclusions

International news of the Eastern Question, for a growing segment of the educated British public sphere, was nearly ubiquitous. Reports of Ottoman massacres obtained through relatively new submarine and transcontinental telegraph wires were picked up and republished throughout newspapers in Great Britain. Telegraphy had peculiar effects on the news reporting of this crisis, which was marked by sporadic releases of new information, reverberation of conflicting accounts, and widespread recirculation of escalating speculation that became established fact. Sources were reported without much in the way of commentary or indication of whom is writing or when. This facilitated much second- and third-hand reporting and encouraged offhand conjecture between cables, which resulted in the creation of rumours and the dissemination of imagined events and contextual narratives. This is indeed what occurred with the Bulgarian Horrors; a large portion of the “established facts” were in fact self-supporting speculation, filtered through the prejudices of powerful cultural entrepreneurs. Zealous journalists within the radical, nonconformist tradition such as W. T. Stead and the *Daily News* used sensational editorials and eyewitness accounts of the massacres in Bulgaria to successfully promote general, grassroots agitation against the Conservative, *realpolitik* foreign policies of Benjamin Disraeli.

British newspapers, provincial and metropolitan, thus played an integral role in the Bulgarian Agitation. The Agitation demonstrates that developing trends of “New

Journalism,” a concept designed and maintained by Stead, was a powerful instrument for policy change along with more traditional forms of political activism, petition, and protest; so much so that Sidney Robinson argues that, “for the first time in British history ... the government lost its inherent monopoly on international news and its foreign policy was dictated by ‘the Fourth Estate.’”⁴⁹² Noting the central role of the British newspaper in the Bulgarian Agitation over and above powerful “lions” and “unicorns” of high-level politics, Stead himself noted that:

Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian speeches of 1879-80 would have fallen comparatively powerless if they had only been addressed to the people of Penicuik and West Calder. A great speech is now delivered in the hearing of all the nation. The orator ostensibly addresses a couple of thousand, who cheer and hear. He is in reality speaking to the millions who will read his speech next morning at breakfast.⁴⁹³

Community-level activism, debate, and protest were therefore central processes by which high-level British foreign policy was constructed and employed, and newspaper coverage—along with petitions as described in the following chapter—provided the essential media through which this was negotiated with established political authorities. Even after other Eastern events came to dilute coverage and discussion of these massacres, the “Bulgarian Outrages” provoked powerful responses from statesmen and citizens alike in Britain regarding the legitimacy and permanence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. As such, these events, discussed in parliament, in newspaper columns and in letters of the editor, in pamphlets, in public addresses, notices, and speeches, and in public meetings and in their resulting petitions, were fulcrums of discussion not only for the appropriate

⁴⁹² Robinson, *Muckraker*, 28, also S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London: 1990), 209-10.

⁴⁹³ Stead, “Government by Journalism,” 658.

reaction to perceived atrocities abroad, but also for the role and character of the British Empire into the era of high imperialism.

4. A Politics of Righteous Passion: Community Level Political Action during the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876-1877

The Bulgarian Agitation continued well after 1876, despite its relative decrescendo from October onwards. Thereafter, the Agitation is traditionally treated as a defeated movement that was subsumed by Disraeli's jingoist insistence on the primacy of "national interests" until after the Congress of Berlin, when there was a final upsurge in Gladstone's popularity during his Midlothian campaign prior to the 1880 general election. Orthodox accounts assume that the Agitation therefore failed in its ultimate goal to fundamentally alter British policy towards the support of new Balkan nations, and that Gladstone was heroically arguing a case for humanitarian concerns too far ahead of his time.⁴⁹⁴ I argue that this interpretation is missing several important components. Firstly, it neglects the role of the public meeting and petition campaign in increasing democratization, organizing resistance, and engendering feelings of political empowerment even amongst the unenfranchised during this period. Secondly, the Bulgarian Agitation was closely linked to the newspaper media, which generated large-scale, sometimes vitriolic discussion of the character of the British Empire and the values underlying (or those that should underlie) its foreign policies. These discussions formed and reformed understandings even amongst those most opposed to the Agitation—by the act of public protest the agitators shifted dialogues in the public sphere, indirectly forcing Conservative supporters to respond to these criticisms and justify their own positions either publicly or privately. One can discern this second effect of the Agitation in the diaries and memoirs of key policy makers.

⁴⁹⁴ Particularly R. W. Seton-Watson's *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, and A. J. P. Taylor's *The Trouble-Makers*.

A cultural approach to the Bulgarian Agitation demonstrates that although political elites certainly capitalized on this period of political upheaval, community-level political activism (facilitated and amplified by enthusiastic journalists and outspoken cultural entrepreneurs) created and propelled the Agitation. Newspapers, churches, missionaries, academia, town councils, petition campaigns, relief agencies, and religious, political, women's and workingmen's organizations—as well as many other community level organizations—collectively played important roles in the determination of public attitudes and public policy as policy makers found their vocabulary of decision-making narrowed and under escalating public scrutiny. This process of the cultural production of British foreign policy was a crystallization point for powerful languages of understanding—with circulating news of horrific atrocities in Bulgaria acting as the catalyst—that coalesced into a rough national consensus that Britain should no longer ignore Balkan national movements while continuing to support the ostensibly uncivilized Ottoman Empire's claim over European Christian populations. Individuals—decision-makers, protesters, figureheads, cultural entrepreneurs, clergy, academics, and other social commentators—each interpreted their own roles in the crisis in a multitude of ways, yet shaped their actions along a common understanding of cultural expectations.

The crucial role of the public meeting in Britain's wider process of democratization, moreover, has been overlooked by past historians of the Bulgarian Agitation. Contentious public gatherings are assumed to be merely a result of increasing democratization—not a cause of it. In fact, while the expansion of the British electorate was indeed a recent and somewhat radical political development (the electorate doubled in England in Wales due to

the Second Reform Act of 1867),⁴⁹⁵ the town hall had been expanding as a forum of public participation and political process for decades before the actual expansion of the vote. Public meetings and the drafting of petitions, therefore, are not only useful for retracing how nebulous discourses of public opinion affected Governmental policy and action; they are also important events themselves. The *process* of public meetings and petition campaigns is in itself an important engine of democratization as it organized ever larger networks of people—including the unenfranchised⁴⁹⁶—into political debates at the community level about topics of national and international concern. Public meetings and petition campaigns are therefore useful, concrete expressions of community-level agitation which were reflections of dissenting political views in 1870s Britain.

The Bulgarian Agitation reflected, renegotiated, and reinforced mid-Victorian understandings of world affairs, which altered British foreign policy during the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis and the diplomatic agreements made at the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Britain's initial non-intervention against Russia during the Russo-Turkish War (which overturned decades of pro-Turkish, anti-Russian policy) because of locally-based public opposition created volatile geopolitical circumstances. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was all but extirpated from Europe and new Southeastern European states were created by the subsequent military and diplomatic interventions of the Great Powers. The

⁴⁹⁵ For a recent account of the political processes that engendered the Second Reform Act, see: Robert Saunders, "The Politics of Reform and the Making of the Second Reform Act, 1848-1867," *The Historical Journal* 50, 3 (2007): 571-591. Saunders argues for a "reimagining of reform as a real and meaningful collision of ideas"—Liberal and Conservative—and echoes Jonathan Parry's statement that the Act created "the most unintentional revolution in the history of British politics" (*The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 216.

⁴⁹⁶ Linda Colley also makes this point, specifically with regards to 100 petitions from unenfranchised shopkeepers during the 1730s about the negative influence of peddlers to their business: *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009 [1992]), 52.

resulting Congress of Berlin essentially shaped the Balkans in the image of the Western popular imagination along relatively new concepts, including the so-called “the principles of humanity” (proto-humanitarianism),⁴⁹⁷ racial determinism, and national self-determination. The latter concept, nationalism, proved to be the most potent organizing political force amongst the new Balkan states—fairly described by Mark Mazower as a “recipe for violence”⁴⁹⁸—as it eventually culminated in the decline of Balkan stability that propelled Europe into the First World War. Better understanding community-level political activism during the Bulgarian Agitation, therefore, is critical not simply for understanding domestic processes of democratization in Britain and the cultural underpinnings of late nineteenth century British foreign policy. It demonstrates the global implications of community-level politics and political agitation during the Bulgarian Horrors. The reciprocal relationships between individuals, community organizations, the media, and policy-makers during the Great Eastern Crisis, moreover, illustrates the importance of dissolving sectional boundaries of analysis when approaching such episodes of international history.

Petitions Campaigns in British Historiography

Petitions, while not necessarily powerful in and of themselves, are nevertheless representative of the community movement or organization responsible for their creation, representing planning, meeting, discussion, consensus, and the ratification of this

⁴⁹⁷ This period makes for fascinating studies of the development of the ideas of human rights, humanitarianism, and the model for humanitarian intervention. See, for example, Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007); Martha Finnemore’s chapter “Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention” in Peter Katzenstein’s formative *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identities in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁴⁹⁸ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, (New York: Random House, 2000), 115.

consensus through the public act of signing the memorial. As I will explain in the following section, petitions and their usual birthplace, the public meeting, were powerful tools of political participation available even to the unenfranchised. They were as much engines of expanding democratization as they were symptoms of it. Public meetings produced—and reinforced—political opposition that policy makers were keenly aware of in their processes of decision-making, even if their policy did not always acquiesce to public opposition. Contrary to the assumptions of several historians of the Bulgarian Agitation, town hall meetings were central loci of Agitation well before political heavyweights became involved, and the petitions themselves were overwhelmingly composed of fully formulated arguments towards locally-adapted conceptions of British foreign policy. As such, they are a critical historical source for understanding the cultural frameworks through which the international history of the Great Eastern Crisis should be understood.

Petition campaigns and town hall meetings during periods of political protest were nothing new to British history in 1876. The right to petition without fear of retribution was included in the 1689 Bill of Rights after decades of political turbulence between subjects, parliament, and the Crown that culminated in the English Civil War.⁴⁹⁹ In the nineteenth century, petitions were also centrally important in the No Popery movement of 1828-9,⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹ Petitioning had been a crucial part of the political agitation before the English Civil War, and the petition was the central *process* of local political organization through which political dissent would be published from the pulpit or town meeting, disseminated, argued, signed, and submitted. See: John Walter, "Confessional Politics in Pre-Civil War Essex: Prayer Books, Profanations, and Petitions," *The Historical Journal* 44, 3 (2001): 677-701; and David Zaret, "Petitions and the 'Invention' of Public Opinion in the English Revolution," *American Journal of Sociology*, 101, (1996): 1497-1555. It should be noted that petitions are much older than the seventeenth century; see G.L. Harris, "The Commons' Petition of 1340," *The English Historical Review* 78, 309 (1963): 625-654.

⁵⁰⁰ G. I. T. Machin, "The No-Popery Movement in Britain in 1828-9," *The Historical Journal*, 6, 2 (1963): 193-211.

the sustained campaign for free trade in the 1820s,⁵⁰¹ the anti-slavery campaign,⁵⁰² and the Chartist movement. The Chartist movement, for example, organized petitions in 1838-39, 1842, and 1848 and each had over a million signatures.⁵⁰³ A veritable explosion of petitions occurred in the early nineteenth century, as “an enormous increase and transformation of popular participation in national public life”⁵⁰⁴—centring around public meetings—intersected with the right to introduce and debate petitions to the House of Commons before any other matters were attended to; this rule of order was exploited by Radicals to “exercise a harassing power of debate out of all proportion to their numerical strength.”⁵⁰⁵ The upward trend continued even after the Reform Act of 1832 where the right to introduce petitions to the House was severely limited, and all petitions were transferred to a Standing Committee. In 1843, the apogee of British petition writing, there were 33,898 petitions to parliament with over 6 million signatures.⁵⁰⁶ This trend resulted in a backlog of petitions that reached absurd proportions, and the unalienable right of petition became farcical.⁵⁰⁷

A change in Parliamentary rules of order in 1842 strengthened and solidified the limitations placed on the presentation of petitions, despite vociferous opposition to the so-

⁵⁰¹ William D Grampp “How Britain Turned to Free Trade” *The Business History Review* 61, 1 (1987): 86-112.

⁵⁰² J. R. Oldfield’s *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870*. New York, Routledge, 1992; J. R. Oldfield, “The London Committee and Mobilization of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade,” *The Historical Journal* 35, 2 (1992): 331-343.

⁵⁰³ Lex Heerm Van Voss (Ed.), *Petitions in Social History*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

⁵⁰⁴ Charles Tilly, “The Rise of the Public Meeting in Great Britain, 1758-1834,” *Social Science History*, 34, 3 (2010): 292.

⁵⁰⁵ Leys, “Petitioning,” 48

⁵⁰⁶ Colin Leys, “Petitioning in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Political Studies*, 111, 1 (1955): 52. The number of petitions and signatures only came close to 1843 levels again in 1893 with 4.9 million signatories.

⁵⁰⁷ “If an honourable Member attempted to read a portion of a petition in the House, he was instantly assailed with groans, and a noise was raised, which absolutely prevented him from calmly directing his mind to the complaints of the petitioners. If a Member said he would read any petition entrusted to him, he immediately found himself addressing empty benches—no one would listen to him.” Quoted in Leys, “Petitioning,” 52.

called “gag rule.” The numbers of petitions thus dropped substantially from the high mark year 1843 (33,898 submitted), yet numbers remained relatively consistent for the next seventy years, averaging 10,000 per year. Notably, the number of signatures per petition became much greater after this point—changing the nature of petitioning parliament from an individual or small group affair into a mass political exercise where the number of signatures themselves made the petition more powerful.⁵⁰⁸ Petitions submitted during the Bulgarian Agitation were neither the largest nor the most controversial petition campaign; in 1876 there were 10,000 petitions submitted to parliament with 2 million signatures—only a third of the petitions and signatures submitted in 1843.⁵⁰⁹ It is clear, however, that public petitioning dominated the British political landscape before the Bulgarian Agitation and petitions were a natural forum for public protest despite a relative decline in popularity.⁵¹⁰

It is surprising that, given vast numbers of petitions and their signatures throughout the nineteenth period, few studies have made petitions or their locus, the public meeting, the subject of careful analysis. Colin Leys’ pioneering⁵¹¹ 1955 article introduced the “considerable theoretical interest”⁵¹² of petitioning, as it contained the “proper sort of empirical reference of such notoriously dangerous expressions as ‘public opinion’ and

⁵⁰⁸ Van Voss, “Introduction,” *Petitions in Social History*, 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Leys, “Petitioning,” 52. Leys cites A.A. Taylor’s 1913 typescript *Statistics Relating to Sittings of the House*—note that these numbers do not include petitions submitted to the Foreign Office, individual statesmen, or Queen Victoria.

⁵¹⁰ “Petitions” formed a distinct sub-section of parliamentary news in several papers, including *The Morning Post*. See, for example, “Imperial Parliament,” *The Morning Post*, 5 July 1876.

⁵¹¹ A prior 1942 article, A.F. Pollard’s “Receivers of Petitions and Clerks of Parliament,” *The English Historical Review* 57, 226 (1942): 202-226, discusses the issue of petitions overwhelming parliament and the role of Clerks receiving petitions in the seventeenth century, but does not speculate on methodology or the role of petitions.

⁵¹² Leys, “Petitioning,” 45.

‘consensus,’”⁵¹³ which can, “tells us ... something about what we mean when we talk of ‘political’ activity’ itself.”⁵¹⁴ Decades before the poststructural turn and its interest in subaltern voices, Leys noted that petitions are particularly useful for discovering the “lack of consonance between some body of opinion and the parties” that is reflective of a dissidence in public opinion that is quite separate from party politics—something that plays a separate but important role of voicing politically “dangerous” sentiment that exists concurrently and discordantly with hegemonic views.⁵¹⁵ Ley’s argument appears to have been largely lost on his generation of historians. Petitions were much more likely to be used to attach quantifiable values to matters of “public opinion” on particular issues already being debated by high politics than to show underlying themes of popular dissidence.

An example of the trend to treat petitions as merely passive reflections of high-level debates is A. J. P. Taylor’s 1957 seminal tract *The Trouble Makers*.⁵¹⁶ Although Taylor was critical of traditional forms of diplomatic history⁵¹⁷ and he celebrated foreign policy dissenters, Taylor does not use petitions or public meetings as central foci of discussion or of argument. The book instead relies on heroic biographical accounts of “the Englishmen whom I most revere”: unpopular dissenters whose ideas eventually became policy such as the mid-century Turkophile David Urquhart and William Gladstone. Another later example

⁵¹³ Leys, “Petitioning,” 63.

⁵¹⁴ Leys, “Petitioning,” 45.

⁵¹⁵ Leys, “Petitioning,” 63.

⁵¹⁶ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011 [1958]) Taylor lauded this volume as “the most exciting and interesting book I have written” (Quote from back cover).

⁵¹⁷ A long-time proponent of a populist view of history, Taylor once commented derisively in a review of Victor Rothwell’s 1982 *Britain and the Cold War, 1941-1947* that the reader of “these types of [diplomatic] history” will not learn much about foreign policy or international relations other than “a competent précis of ‘what one clerk said to another clerk.’”⁵¹⁷ Taylor, “What One Clerk Said to Another,” *London Review of Books* 4, 18 (1982): 5-11.

is George Rudé's 1973 article "Protest and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Britain." Rudé uses the Chartist petitions to quantify popular dissent, but he considers early-century crime and violent action as the true benchmarks for social protest and dissent; using this logic, Rudé argues that by mid-century, "protest became more muted and lost its thrust"⁵¹⁸ since petition campaigns were not "real" protest.

Thus, until recently, petitioning was largely regarded as reflective of other more fundamental forces and not as a process by which these cultural structures were created, dissolved, or renegotiated. As late as the 1980s, several authors cautioned against the use of petitions in social history. David Underdown notes the propensity for repetitious or plagiarized "parrot petitions"⁵¹⁹ that lead to historians' exaggeration of the importance of grassroots politics, and he argues that "provincial" petitions were more often than not drafted in the City and their debate reflected cues from the metropole; essentially, petitions demonstrate values of the centre and are not reliable voices of authentic dissent. Underdown's argument contradicts that of Anthony Fletcher, who cautiously argued that although some petitions were drawn up in the City and the provinces were responding to cues from the metropole, they can nevertheless be used as general evidence of public opinion.⁵²⁰

Only recently have scholars treated petitions and public meetings as important historical sources that illuminate processes of community-based political activity and activism. John Walter, in his 2001 article, echoes Leys' distant advocacy of the value of

⁵¹⁸ George Rudé, "Protest and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Britain" *Albion* 5, 1 (1973): 23.

⁵¹⁹ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁵²⁰ Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London and New York: New York University Press, 1981).

petitions in the recovery of “public opinion” and argues for the expansion of Fletcher’s arguments and against Underdown’s findings. Walter frames the value of petitions as a means to recover such public opinion—at least in early modern England—and argues for further attention to the “politics and processes” of petitions’ production. Emphasizing “the critical role played by the middling sort” who created petitions and drafted their resolutions according to cultural values, Walter argues that petitions can further the agenda of a “new political history” by helping establish “enlarged social depth to the public sphere.”⁵²¹ In Richard Shannon and Ann Pottinger Saab’s treatments of the Bulgarian Agitation, petitions are treated as largely interchangeable and little more than statistical evidence for the geographical, organizational, and class composition of the Agitation, reflective of larger political trends and not generative of them. Neither Shannon nor Saab engage in detailed analysis of the contents of petitions beyond the composition of its authors and whether it was “for” or “against” the government. But a critical appreciation of these petitions can unravel the role of the “middling sort” in the public discussion over foreign policy and can speak to its international implications with much more depth.

Lex Heerma van Voss, in his 2002 edited volume *Petitions in Social History*, argues that petitions were a “normal way in which the unfranchised could make their opinions known,”⁵²² by moving political debate outside of the established political authority of parliament to where even those who are often considered “silent” or “subaltern” can speak. Andreas Würigler notes in his chapter “Voices From Among the ‘Silent Masses’: Humble Petitions and Social Conflicts in Early Modern Central Europe” that a major problem of

⁵²¹ John Walter, “Confessional Politics in Pre-Civil War Essex,” 677.

⁵²² Van Voss, “Introduction,” *Petitions in Social History*, 4.

social history has been to recover the voice of the “silent masses,” who too often are considered as “objects of economic structures [rather] than as subjects of historical processes.”⁵²³ Petitions, the authors argue, not only make “political opinion visible,”⁵²⁴ and show us how the right to petition “could easily develop into a crystallization point for other popular rights,”⁵²⁵ they also show us much about how petitioners perceived the role of government and their relationship with it by outlining their grievances to the central authority.⁵²⁶ Along these lines, British petitioners during the Bulgarian Agitation believed that parliament and the Foreign Office had certain duties and moral obligations that they felt were not being upheld. British petitioners clearly believed in the international role of the British Empire in the defence of “justice” in the face of “tyranny,” in the advocacy of “humanity” and “civilization” in the face of “inhumanity” and “barbarity,” and in upholding the “honour” of England by carefully monitoring what is done in “England’s name.”

Community activism through public meetings, while not a new phenomenon in British social history, coincided with, and encouraged expanding political engagement from, democratization. Charles Tilly’s posthumously published article on “The Rise of the Public Meeting in Great Britain” comes the closest to addressing the political context of public meetings of the Bulgarian Agitation although the boundaries of his study end more than four decades before 1876 (1758-1834).⁵²⁷ Noting the aforementioned expansion and

⁵²³ Andreas Würgler, “Voices From Among the ‘Silent Masses’: Humble Petitions and Social Conflicts in Early Modern Central Europe,” in van Voss, *Petitions in Social History*, 11.

⁵²⁴ Van Voss, “Introduction,” *Petitions in Social History*, 7.

⁵²⁵ Van Voss, “Introduction,” *Petitions in Social History*, 4.

⁵²⁶ From a pedagogical perspective, Damon Freeman echoes this argument as he advocates the importance of petitions as both sources and teaching tools for reconstructing the assumptions and core values of petitioners: “Using Petitions to Teach Slavery” *OAH Magazine of History* 17, 3 (2003): 44-50.

⁵²⁷ Charles Tilly, “The Rise of the Public Meeting in Great Britain, 1758–1834,” *Social Science History* 34, 3 (2010): 291-299.

transformation of political participation, Tilly recorded in detail a huge increase in “contentious gatherings,” which he defined as meetings of more than ten people making collective claims, from a handful in the late eighteenth century to hundreds per year by the 1830s. “Meetings,” Tilly asserted, “went from an elite privilege to a mass political right”⁵²⁸ during this period. Using a large-scale quantitative methodology (using broad categories of “verbs” for action against “objects”), Tilly attributed this transformation of political participation to the expansion of capitalism (bringing together more people of similar classes/interests), and a more powerful and more central parliament, noting how these first two reasons “multiplied opportunities for political entrepreneurs.”⁵²⁹ These “political entrepreneurs” were required in order to organize, draft, speak for, and publicize petition campaigns on a national scale—the struggle of organization itself “transformed repertoires of contention” that rallied a mass audience along popular cultural tropes and discourses. Based on these observations, Tilly observed:

Public meetings served thrice: to mobilize local people into national causes, to publicize those causes, and to coordinate direct appeals to Parliament. Perhaps we can conclude that the rise of Great Britain’s public meeting epitomized expansion of its public sphere. We can certainly conclude that it played a crucial part in British democratization⁵³⁰

Recent theoretical advances thus allow increased appreciation of the very public processes of foreign policy production. While petitions alone did not themselves coerce British policy-makers into altering their decision-making, the public process of petition creation, signing, and delivery to government officials was critical both in the propagation and the political impact of the Bulgarian Agitation. Rowdy, contentious gatherings of

⁵²⁸ Tilly, “Rise of the Public Meeting,” 295.

⁵²⁹ Tilly, “Rise of the Public Meeting,” 298.

⁵³⁰ Tilly, “Rise of the Public Meeting,” 298.

otherwise disparate people found a common voice through the well-established political tradition of public meetings and petition drafting. This voice reflected local and organizational concerns, and its language was drawn from a rough national consensus written from a lexicon of particular cultural expectations. This message was then transmitted through regional and national newspapers as well as delivered directly to the Foreign Office and reviewed by Foreign Secretary Lord Derby. Derby, it will be shown, was personally influenced by the supposedly common-sense resolutions of British petitioners, so much so that he directed important international protocols along these lines. In the case of the Great Eastern Crisis, therefore, British petitions and the processes by which they were created were a critical part of the international crisis's diplomatic history.

Horror and Indignation: The Bulgarian Agitation Petition Campaign, July to October 1876

Edward Freeman's impassioned call for public displays of protest came on the heels of a small number of fervid public meetings to discuss the Eastern Question, chiefly to denounce military support of Turkey after the news of further Turkish atrocities against Christians became widely reported. Perhaps the first such meeting was held in Dublin, reported by the *Freeman's Journal* on 4 July, where the MP for Meath chastised England for supporting "Mahometanism [*sic*—to back up the Crescent against the Cross" and asked that "no Irishman would so far forget his own self-respect and religion... [or] forget his country as to aid England in her nefarious attempt."⁵³¹ Ann Pottinger Saab notes how the Irish were particularly sensitive to Ottoman affairs since at least the Syrian/Lebanese crisis of 1860-1; contemporaries likened the Ottoman "massacres" of Catholics in the Holy Land

⁵³¹ "Latest News," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 4 July 1876.

and Northern Arabia to England's suppression of Ireland and the "notorious butcheries perpetrated by Cromwell" at Drogheda and Wexford, the suppression of the Irish rising of 1848, and the mishandling of the Great Famine.⁵³² Indeed, Derby and Disraeli opposed autonomy for Bosnia before 1876 as they noted that Ireland had a better case for self-government.⁵³³

The Birmingham Liberal Association held a meeting on 5 July, where the president, J. S. Wright, proposed a resolution "that no consideration would justify a Christian nation like England upholding by force of arms a degrading Mahometan despotism such as prevails in Turkey," which was passed in an open air meeting "attended by several thousand persons."⁵³⁴ The Manhood Suffrage League held a meeting to "consider the duty of the working classes in the event of their country being involved in war,"⁵³⁵ and similar public meetings opposing war to support the Ottomans were held in Wrexham,⁵³⁶ Bridport,⁵³⁷ South Shields,⁵³⁸ and Stockton⁵³⁹ in the first two weeks of July. Already, one large and several smaller memorials (petitions)⁵⁴⁰ had been drafted and signed by "members of Parliament, magistrates, and other influential persons as well as representatives of many associations in London and the chief cities in the United

⁵³² Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 34. Citing *Freeman's Journal* 4 September 1860, 3.

⁵³³ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 22.

⁵³⁴ "Local and District: Birmingham and the Eastern Question," *Manchester Times*, 8 July 1876.

⁵³⁵ "The Working Classes and the War," *The York Herald*, 8 July 1876.

⁵³⁶ "England and the Eastern Question," *The York Herald*, 10 July 1876.

⁵³⁷ "England and the Eastern Question," *Northern Echo*, 13 July 1876.

⁵³⁸ "Dublin," *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1876.

⁵³⁹ "The War in the East: Non-Intervention Meeting at Stockton," *Daily Gazette*, 14 July 1876. The resolution passed was identical to the Birmingham Liberal Association's resolution.

⁵⁴⁰ "Petition" has replaced "memorial" in modern usage, but in the nineteenth century a distinction was usually made between memorials, by which many signatories call certain facts to the attention of the addressed, and a petition, which set out individual wrongs to be redressed.

Kingdom,”⁵⁴¹ which were presented to Lord Derby in a “large deputation” on 14 July. Public meetings in cities and boroughs outside of London became more regular with increasing media coverage, including one on 15 July 1876 at Hope Hall in Liverpool where W.T. Stead was in attendance. Stead even proposed an amendment to a resolution that would have asserted the “criminal absurdity of a war in support of the effete and corrupt dominion of Turkey” in a resolution protesting Britain’s involvement in an upcoming war.⁵⁴²

Other meetings continued through the summer in small towns and larger industrial centres (notably organized by the Working Men’s Liberal Association, which reasserted the Birmingham Liberal Association’s resolution verbatim or with slight modifications⁵⁴³), attracting ever increasing numbers of participants. Typically, the mayor acted as chair of town hall meetings after he was requisitioned by local citizens to hold such a meeting to discuss foreign affairs.⁵⁴⁴ Although Freeman’s appeal actually came after a number of public meetings had taken place, his plea nevertheless called attention to the importance of extra-parliamentary means of protest, a point that was heeded by many, including W.T. Stead. Importantly, community-level protest preceded media promotion and evolved through already-established local organizations, indicating the reciprocal relationship between grassroots political organizations and the media during the agitation.

⁵⁴¹ “England and the Eastern Question,” *Daily News*, 15 July 1876.

⁵⁴² “England and the Eastern Question,” *Daily News*, 15 July 1876. In the same resolution, Stead maintained the justness of any “defence of Britain’s Indian Empire.”

⁵⁴³ In this case, Reading passed an identical resolution as Birmingham on 14 July. “England and the Eastern Question,” *Daily News*, 15 July 1876. Stockton’s public meeting also passed the same resolution.

⁵⁴⁴ It was typically noted by the mayor in the notice for public meeting or in the preamble of the drafted resolutions that he had called the meeting “in deference to an influentially signed requisition of his fellow townsmen” FO 78/2551, no. 35. Petition from Darlington Public Meeting, 28 August 1876.

Meanwhile, questions continued to be raised in the House of Commons well into the summer session of parliament. Rampant speculation and public indignation spread over the perceived inaction and indifference of the Disraeli government, who were unable to provide satisfactory responses in the House. Despite being depicted as the epic struggle between Lion and Unicorn in “the greatest setpiece drama of Victorian politics,”⁵⁴⁵ it should be noted that before the widespread grassroots agitation there was only very limited discord between the parties or their leaders on the Eastern Question, even when Disraeli overturned the Berlin Memorandum and sent the Mediterranean fleet to Besika Bay as a deterrent to Russian expansionism. The first parliamentary confrontation between Gladstone and Disraeli came surprisingly late, on 31 July—over a month after the original reports of massacre—when Gladstone supported a vague resolution by the opposition to “exercise all their influence with the view of securing the common welfare and equal treatment of the various races and religions which are now under the authority of the Sublime Porte.”⁵⁴⁶ Disraeli stated that such a resolution was an unnecessary and undiplomatic response to what amounted to “coffee house babble”⁵⁴⁷—making reference to a report from Consul Read who had cited his source as “a Bulgarian, who had heard [reports] from the mouth of a Mussulman in a coffee-house in Rustchuk.”⁵⁴⁸ With historical hindsight, Disraeli was perfectly entitled to be sceptical about the nature of information that fuelled the Agitation, yet his comments were interpreted to be heartless and wilfully

⁵⁴⁵ Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone: A Biography*, (London: Macmillan, 1995), 401.

⁵⁴⁶ *Hansard*, 31 July 1876.

⁵⁴⁷ *Hansard*, 31 July 1876.

⁵⁴⁸ Sedley Taylor, *The Conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers on the Eastern Question: A Statement of Facts Based on Official Documents*, (London: Liberal Central Association, 1877), 51.

ignorant of what protesters believed to be a clear case of Ottoman brutality against Christians.

Disraeli's strategy of dismissing the accounts of massacre, delivering witty rejoinders, and deferring answers until the publications of an official inquiry⁵⁴⁹ would later be described as "disastrously misjudged."⁵⁵⁰ Many famous John Tenniel *Punch* cartoons were sketched from this political episode, including one that depicted Disraeli as the Sphinx, unwilling to speak despite loud urging to do so (Figure 4.1).

⁵⁴⁹ *Hansard*, 26 June – 31 July 1876.

⁵⁵⁰ Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 269.

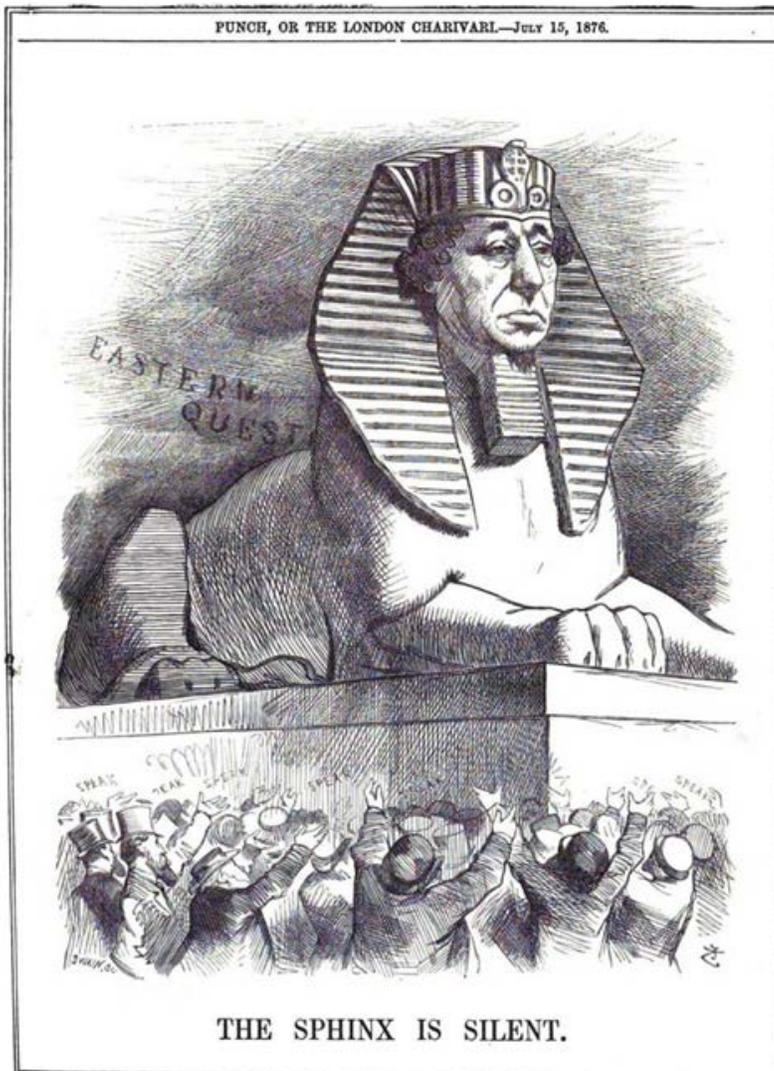


Figure 4.13: John Tenniel, "The Sphinx is Silent," *Punch*, 15 July 1876, Volume 71, p. 19.

Another cartoon depicted Disraeli sitting cross-legged on a wicker chair, reading a book, with Britannia gesturing towards a massacre going on behind him; Disraeli exclaims "Bulgarian Atrocities! I can't find them in the 'Official Reports'!" (Figure 4.2).

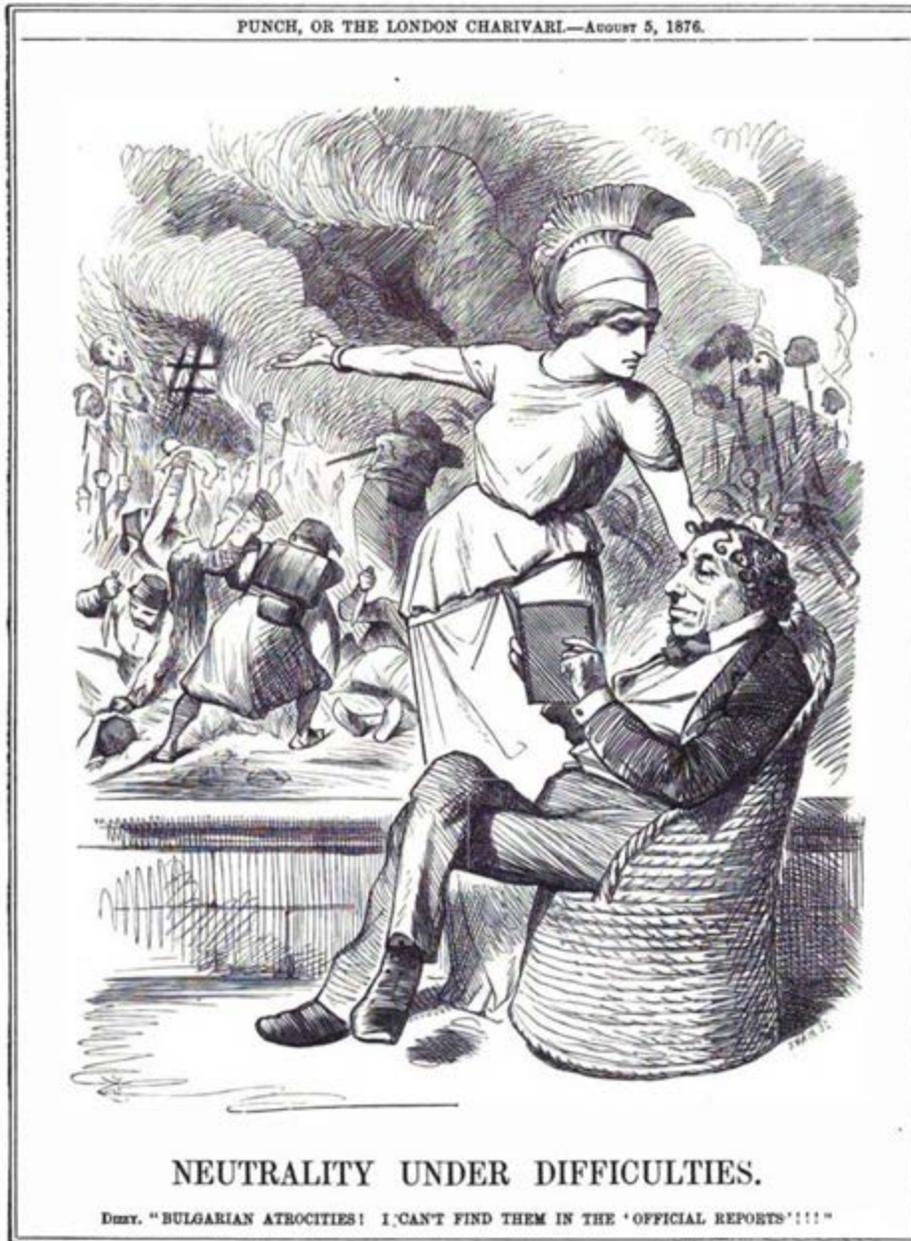


Figure 4.2: John Tenniel, "Neutrality Under Difficulties," *Punch*, 5 August 1876, Volume 71, p. 51

After weeks of questioning by the opposition and much coverage in newspapers, the Government laid the records of correspondence between the Foreign Secretary, the Ambassador, and consuls across the Ottoman Empire before the house on 24 July in a

published collection of sessional papers.⁵⁵¹ These papers omitted a report from the J. Hutton Dupius, British Vice Consul at Adrianople, who hinted at the “deliberate extermination” of the Bulgarian population—a source originally cited by Edwin Pears of the *Daily News*. This discrepancy led to the suspicion that Conservatives were covering up the massacres as Disraeli himself had denied any such reports from Adrianople just days prior.⁵⁵² Disraeli thus found himself in the uncomfortable situation of having official channels of foreign intelligence largely denying knowledge of any massacres while the British public was increasingly confident about their existence and their profoundly horrifying character. Far from reassuring the public, the publication of Foreign Office correspondence intensified criticism of the government’s apparent unwillingness or inability to obtain “reliable” international information. Questions arose over the competence of the Ambassador to Turkey, Sir Henry Elliot.

Conservatives in parliament and conservatives in the London press focussed largely on the role of Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks⁵⁵³ in the suppression of the rebellion, who “[entered] the country and [burned] the villages without reference to religion or race.”⁵⁵⁴ The *Pall Mall Gazette* noted that 150,000 Circassians relocated into the region after the Russians seized their lands in the Caucasus, and were “naturally” inclined to violence against Christians since they themselves had been the victims of Russian atrocity.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵¹ *Turkey No. 2. Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey, and the Insurrection in Bosnia and the Herzegovina*, Parliamentary Papers Volume 84, 1876. Also see several “*Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*” published in 1876.

⁵⁵² *Hansard*, 17 July 1876. Davide Rodogno notes that this report and other passages were “censored”—although it is not clear that these reports were actually transferred to the Foreign Office and, if they were, they very probably did not pass from the Foreign Office on to Disraeli.

⁵⁵³ Literally “headless” in Turkish, meaning leaderless, irregular soldiers.

⁵⁵⁴ Disraeli, *Hansard*, 26 June 1876.

⁵⁵⁵ “Correspondence: Enthusiasm in Difficulties,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 July 1876. The Russo-Circassian War of 1862 and the violent forced migration of large numbers of Circassians (Adyghe) from the Caucasus to the

Conservatives noted the larger forces of Great Power politics at play and the malignant designs of Russian provocateurs and expansionists seeking to exploit the latest developments in the Eastern Question; Disraeli had already despatched a squadron of British ships to Besika Bay in May to show support of British interests and their Turkish ally, much to the chagrin of the early agitators.

British Investigations into the Bulgarian Horrors

On 19 July, under increasing pressure from the House of Commons and increasingly extravagant media accounts,⁵⁵⁶ the Foreign Office directed a secretary of the embassy at Constantinople, Walter Baring, to make enquiries about the supposed atrocities in Bulgaria. Specifically, Baring was to investigate the numbers of killed Bulgarians and destroyed villages, the claims of beheading of women and children, the numbers of Bulgarians in prison and whether they were being tortured, and whether or not the widely reported rumour that 50 young girls had been burned alive in a stable was indeed true.⁵⁵⁷ American faculty members from Robert College, fearing a biased report (it was believed that neither Baring nor his translators could speak Bulgarian),⁵⁵⁸ requested that Horace Maynard,

Ottoman Empire by General Yevdokimov and 40,000 Russian troops was monitored by the British Foreign Office, who estimated migrants to be over a hundred thousand (FO 97/424). This episode of forced migration has largely been forgotten, as noted by Stephen D. Shenfield in his 1999 chapter "The Circassians: A Forgotten Genocide?" in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (Eds.), *The Massacre in History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 1999): 149-162.

⁵⁵⁶ Stead had reached full stride by the middle of July, producing headlines such as "More Mutilation and Murders by the Turks" that reported grisly details such as "Eighty young Christians ... have been sold as slaves. Girls are also sold from districts where no insurrection exists. The regulars, as well as the Bashi Bazouks and Circassians, mutilate and murder the Servian prisoners. On the battle-fields, Servians have been found without noses, lips, or eyes." *Northern Echo*, 22 July 1876.

⁵⁵⁷ "Mr. Baring on the Atrocities Committed upon the Christians in Bulgaria," *Turkey: Despatches Relating to the Atrocities in Bulgaria*, FO 881/2936B

⁵⁵⁸ *Daily News*, 24 July 1876. Baring himself spoke only halting Turkish.

American Minister to Turkey, conduct his own investigation.⁵⁵⁹ Maynard declined to conduct the investigation in an official capacity, but passed along the job to the American scholar and Russian expert Eugene Schuyler (incidentally one of the first three people to receive a PhD from an American university).⁵⁶⁰ Schuyler took Irish-American journalist Januarius MacGahan with him,⁵⁶¹ who had recently arrived in Constantinople to cover the Serb-Turkish War. Carl Schneider, a reporter from the *Kolnische Zeitung*, and Prince Aleksei Tseretelev, second secretary of the Russian embassy, accompanied the party.⁵⁶² *The Daily News* covered their departure on 24 July, noting that “his report, with Mr. Baring’s, will no doubt disclose the truth.”⁵⁶³

Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan’s Reports

Just days after his departure for the region, the *Daily News* printed a letter from MacGahan from Philippopolis that speculated that Baring “will report that in the districts about Philippopolis and Tartar Bazardjik alone ... nearly 15,000 people have been slaughtered ... [but] there are people who put the number killed at 100,000.”⁵⁶⁴ This report is revealing both of the preconceptions of the American mission before conducting their

⁵⁵⁹ George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (New York: 1909), 109-10.

⁵⁶⁰ Eugene Schuyler, *Selected Essays, with a Memoir by Evelyn Schuyler*, (New York: BiblioBazaar, 2010 [1901]). Schuyler received one of Yale’s first PhDs at the age of 21 in 1861, and was eventually appointed to be a consul in Moscow after learning Russian in New York well enough to translate Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*. Schuyler arrived in Constantinople on 6 July after exposing the massacre of civilians in Central Asia by a Russian general (although he did not condemn Russian rule). See: Ronald Jensen, “Eugene Schuyler and the Balkan Crisis,” *Diplomatic History* 5, 1 (1981): 23-37.

⁵⁶¹ In his memoirs, Edwin Pears takes credit for requesting that Schuyler take MacGahan with him (*Forty Years in Constantinople*, 192). MacGahan, after reporting on the Paris Commune in 1871, married Russian noble Varvara Nikolayevna Yelagina in 1872 and then reported on the Russian campaigns in Central Asia. Richard Millman notes that his enthusiastically positive accounts of Russian military campaigns led MacGahan to become “something of a favourite with the tsar’s court” (Millman, “Bulgarian Massacres,” 228).

⁵⁶² Jensen, “Eugene Schuyler and the Balkan Crisis,” 28.

⁵⁶³ *Daily News*, 24 July 1876.

⁵⁶⁴ MacGahan to *Daily Mail*, “The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1876.

investigation⁵⁶⁵ and also of the type of information that guided the Bulgarian Agitation in Britain, particularly in its early stages. The American investigation team of Eugene Schuyler and Januarius MacGahan filed reports as they travelled, unlike Baring who compiled his report and presented it many weeks later. The “eyewitness” reporting from an admittedly anti-Turkish delegation, transmitted relatively frequently via telegraphy to a readily receptive audience across Britain, resulted in wide circulation of a great deal of dubious speculation about the scope, scale, and character of the insurrection.

In MacGahan’s 28 July preliminary report—without having yet visited the affected region—he noted the details of the case that made it “too horrible to allow anything like calm inquiry”:

When you are met in the outset of your investigation with the admission that 60 or 70 villages have been burned, that some 15,000 people have been slaughtered, of whom a large part were women and children, you begin to feel that it is useless to go any further. When, in addition to this, you have the horrid details of the vilest outrages committed upon women; the hacking to pieces of helpless children and spitting them upon bayonets ... you begin to feel that any further investigation is superfluous.⁵⁶⁶

MacGahan’s imagined account reads as a confirmation of the worst fears of Liberal England: savage injustice upon Christians seeking liberty, white slavery, the violation of “young and beautiful” women, the desecration of Churches, and the butchery and impalement of the elderly, the clergy, innocent women, and helpless children—all themes repeated in his later, “eyewitness” reports. Added to the end of his report was the assertion of responsibility of the Turkish Government, who MacGahan claimed must have ordered

⁵⁶⁵ Richard Millman’s article, “The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 58, 2 (1980): 218-231, details the tangible anti-Turkish bias of MacGahan and Schuyler and its effect on their (shoddy) investigation, compared to Baring, who noted that he “started with no preconceived ideas” during his own (shoddy) investigation. “The difference is that Baring thought he was impartial ... a handicap under which the two Americans did not labour” (229).

⁵⁶⁶ MacGahan to *Daily Mail*, “The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1876.

and supported the savage repression since it had promoted Achmet Aga to the rank of Pasha despite his being a “low ignorant brute, who can neither read nor write ... who slaughtered 8,000 people at Batak and burned 200 women and children alive in the school.”⁵⁶⁷ MacGahan’s gruesome imagination coupled to predetermined Turkish guilt and to a contrived political narrative later unfolded in a series of grotesque, voyeuristic accounts thinly disguised as journalistic reporting.

Eugene Schuyler was apparently more concerned with the problem of objective information at the outset of his investigation, as explained in a letter to his friend Charles Dilke.⁵⁶⁸ After visiting Batak, however, Schuyler wrote that he was “burning with indignation and rage”⁵⁶⁹ and his writings unquestioningly accept Ottoman culpability. Schuyler’s sources are revealed in his full report three months later, stating that “much of what I shall state rests on the authority of Bulgarians who were often the only persons able or willing to tell what happened”⁵⁷⁰—wholly denying Ottoman accounts of events. Echoing Richard Millman’s critical analysis of these investigative journalists,⁵⁷¹ it is clear that Schuyler and MacGahan were predisposed to condemn Turkish rule and expose their catalogue of crimes in Bulgaria well before their travels in the region.

⁵⁶⁷ MacGahan to *Daily Mail*, “The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1876.

⁵⁶⁸ Schuyler wrote: “If I listen to Bulgarians I am accused of prejudice ... The Turks have nothing but smooth words, general denials ... The resident English are more Turk than the Turks themselves. The Greeks have an enmity to the Bulgarians. The Jews and Armenians, who are impartial, in general, confirm Bulgarian accounts. I am doing my best by cross questioning to arrive at the truth.” Quoted in *The Times* (London), 16 August 1876, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁹ Schuyler to J. Fiske, Philippopolis, “Saturday Evening” (5 or 12 or 19) August 1876, in Eugene Schuyler, *Selected Essays* (New York: 1901): 73-74.

⁵⁷⁰ *Mr. Schuyler’s Preliminary Report on the Moslem Atrocities, Published with the Letters by Januarius MacGahan*, (London, 1876); “Mr. Schuyler’s Preliminary Report on the Moslem Atrocities,” 29 August 1876.

⁵⁷¹ Richard Millman, “The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 58, 2 (1980): 229-30.

While Baring, Schuyler, and MacGahan were conducting their investigation in the affected region, new interviews consisting of graphic details of the Bulgarian atrocities were published by Edwin Pears and *The Times* correspondent Antonio Gallenga.⁵⁷² Stead reprinted these accounts the following week under capitalized headlines: “The Atrocities in Bulgaria: Official Investigation: Full Confirmation of the Outrages: Ghastly Scenes of Slaughter: Dogs Preying on Human Bodies: Horrible Details of Turkish Ferocity.”⁵⁷³ In the same edition, Stead threw doubt over the objectivity of Baring as he “is always accompanied by a Turkish escort, which frightens the peasantry,”⁵⁷⁴ and declared the responsibility of the Prime Minister in the same issue: “the fact remains that Mr Disraeli is largely responsible for these massacres. The blood of the slaughtered Bulgarians is on his hands, and in vain will he attempt to wash it away. It is true that he did not order the massacres, but they resulted immediately from his policy.”⁵⁷⁵ It seems clear that the wild rumours circulating amongst Bulgarians, American Protestant missionaries, and other Western expatriates in Constantinople were the primary source material for these initial “eyewitness” reports, and they came to dominate the media coverage and popular response of the British Agitation and shaped the popular reception to the following accounts.

On 2 August, MacGahan submitted a second, much longer preliminary report, which was published on 7 August in the *Daily News*. This report is the most famous account of the Bulgarian insurrection, and continues to be the most cited source for examples of the

⁵⁷² “The Atrocities in Bulgaria: From our Own Correspondent,” *The Times* (London), 1 August 1876.

⁵⁷³ “The Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 8 August 1876.

⁵⁷⁴ “The Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 8 August 1876.

⁵⁷⁵ “Mr Disraeli and the Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 9 August 1876.

horrors committed against the insurgents.⁵⁷⁶ At the time, it appeared to be the first trustworthy eyewitness account to circulate in England—yet it was authored over two months after the end of the uprising. MacGahan’s account was written as a grim travelogue, at once a voyeuristic account of grisly violence and an adventure story into a Hell-on-Earth, which detailed the search for and discovery of the devastated village of Batak:

As we ascended, bones, skeletons, and skulls became more frequent ... there were fragments of half-dry, half-putrid flesh still clinging to them. At last we came to a little plateau or shelf on the hillside... we rode towards this... but all suddenly drew rein with an exclamation of horror ... It was a heap of skulls, intermingled with bones from all parts of the human body, skeletons, nearly entire, rotting, clothing, human hair, and putrid flesh lying there in one foul heap... It emitted a sickening odour. We looked about us. The ground was strewn with bones in every direction, where the dogs had carried them off to gnaw at their leisure. At a distance of one hundred yards beneath us lay the town ... There was not a roof left, not a whole wall standing... we looked again at the heap of skulls and skeletons before us, and we observed that they were all small, and the articles of clothing, intermingled with the bones and lying about, were all parts of women’s apparel. These, then, were all women and girls. From my saddle I counted about a hundred skulls, not including those that were hidden beneath the others in the ghastly heap, nor those that were scattered far and wide through the fields. The skulls were nearly all separated from the rest of the bones, the skeletons were nearly all headless. These women had been beheaded.... The school is on one side of the road, the church the other ... Beneath the stones and rubble that cover the floor to the height of several feet, are the bones and ashes of 200 women and children burnt alive between those four walls. Just beside the schoolhouse is a broad shallow pit. Here were buried a hundred bodies two weeks after the massacre ... The water flowed in, and now it lies there a horrid cesspool, with human remains floating about or lying half exposed in the mud ... Little baby hands stretched out as if for help; babes that had died wondering at the bright gleams of sabres and the red hands of the fierce-eyed men who wielded them; children who had died shrinking with fright and terror; young girls who had died weeping and sobbing and begging for mercy; mothers who died trying to shield their little ones with their own weak bodies, all lying there together, festering in one horrid mass... We walked about the place and saw the same thing repeated over and over a hundred times.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ See, for example: “April Uprising,” Accessed 20 November 2013 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_Uprising>

⁵⁷⁷ *Mr. Schuyler’s Preliminary Report on the Moslem Atrocities, published with the letters by Januarius MacGahan* (London, 1876), 22. Originally published as “Latest Telegrams: The War in the East: The Atrocities in Bulgaria: Terrible Scenes,” *Daily News*, 7 August 1876

This Dantesque journey continues, cataloguing the Irish-like “keening” of widows and mothers of murdered children and their “fountain of tears,” the carrying-off of children and young girls, the promotion and decoration of Achmet Aga by the Turks, the jealousy of the Turks of their prosperous Christian neighbours, and finally, an estimation of the extent of the massacre. Importantly, MacGahan’s report did not expose new revelations about the massacre; instead, his travelogue is a checklist of confirmed rumours, namely, that Bulgarian Christian victims were wholly innocent—comprising mostly women and young children often killed en masse in schools and churches—that victims were violently raped, savagely beheaded, and left to rot and be fed upon by dogs, that murder, slavery, and imprisonment were ongoing, and that the Ottoman perpetrators were officially sanctioned. MacGahan’s unique contribution at that point was an estimate of the devastation in Batak and the wider region. Calculating that the village was a place of nine hundred houses, MacGahan estimated that Batak was a village of 8,000 or 9,000 inhabitants, MacGahan suggests that few survived and implies that scenes would be similar in each of the sixty to seventy villages that he estimates were destroyed.⁵⁷⁸

In the same report, MacGahan entreats his English readers to think of the Bulgarians as quintessentially European. Their language was such that “a Russian, a Bulgarian, a Servian, a Montenegrin, and Tchek may meet each other and talk, each in his own language, and all understand each other.”⁵⁷⁹ Physically, Bulgarians had the “same sort of family likeness [as Russians and other Slavs] about the eyes that may be always seen among

⁵⁷⁸ MacGahan mocks Turkish reports, noting that “Edip Effendi, in his reports, states that there were only about 1,400 inhabitants in the village, all told. A more impudent falsehood was never uttered, even by a Turk.” MacGahan, “The Atrocities in Bulgaria: Terrible Scenes,” *Daily News*, 7 August 1876, 24.

⁵⁷⁹ MacGahan, “Terrible Scenes,” 7 August 1876, 20.

brothers and sisters who are utterly unlike in other features.”⁵⁸⁰ Clearly aiming to win sympathy from the Western readership, MacGahan noted that the Bulgarian Christians lived in “solid stone houses” and that they were so educated that “the percentage of people who can read or write in Bulgaria is as great as England and France”⁵⁸¹—“the truth is that these Bulgarians,” wrote MacGahan, “instead of the savages we have taken them for, are in reality a hardworking, industrious, honest, civilized, and peaceful people”⁵⁸² who, he claims, did not kill a single Turk before the massacre. This observation of racial similarity to Western Europeans, tailored to fit within wider cultural perceptions of racial hierarchy and the perceived role of Britain as the world’s defender of morality, is undoubtedly used to support his scathing account of British indifference and his final exhortation for pressure against the British Government. Despite the continuing trials of the Bulgarian inhabitants:

Diplomatic help is, alas! very slow. While ambassadors are exchanging notes and compliments, inviting each other to dinner, making representations to the Porte, and obtaining promises which nobody believes in, these poor people are starving and dying... Mr. Disraeli was right when he wittily remarked that the Turks usually terminate their connection with people who fell into their hands in a more expeditious manner than by imprisoning them. And so they do. Mr. Disraeli was right. At the time he made that very witty remark, these young girls had been lying there many days.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ MacGahan, “Terrible Scenes,” 7 August 1876, 20. Notably, in the same issue of the *Daily News* as MacGahan’s report, was an ethnographic history of the “Sclavonians,” written largely to chastise William Forsyth, MP, for referring to “Roumanians” as “Sclavonians.” The article argues that although Roumanians “for the most part” have Roman noses, Sclavonians “cannot boast of possessing Roman noses; and it is general agreed that the nose is the weak feature of the Sclavonian countenance”—prefaced by the disclaimer: “Ethnological arguments are not of the highest value in connection with practical politics. Such importance however, as may belong to them is greatly diminished by inaccurate labelling of the races whose tendencies and aspirations are made the basis of speculation.” 7 August 1876, *Daily Mail*. The edition also included a banner advertisement for “The League in Aid of the Christians of Turkey”, patronized by the Right Honourable Earl Russell, Michael, Archbishop of Belgrade, Metropolitan of Serbia, with the object “to assist in relieving the Sick and Wounded in the Eastern War, and to aid the Christians of Turkey in obtaining their freedom from Mussulman oppression” (4).

⁵⁸¹ MacGahan, “Terrible Scenes,” 7 August 1876, 25.

⁵⁸² MacGahan, “Terrible Scenes,” 7 August 1876, 25.

⁵⁸³ MacGahan, “Terrible Scenes,” 7 August 1876, 33.

This sensational account mirrored speculation in Britain and the wild rumours circulating in Constantinople so closely that there is little doubt that MacGahan authored his report about the massacre in Batak using these imagined accounts as guidelines, with the intention to create the greatest indignation possible amongst his audience to be directed against the British government's support of the Ottoman Empire and for the support of Bulgarian independence.

Culturally Imagined Narratives into Perceived Material Facts

MacGahan's morbid imagination and journalistic panache thus transformed early rumours of the Turkish atrocities into apparently confirmed, witnessed, facts in the eyes of a large segment of the British population, which supported a particular set of political and diplomatic goals. That an objective, Western observer had visited the affected region and discovered far grislier crimes than were previously imaginable was to have an important effect on the onset of popular outrage and a long-lasting influence on the perceived factual basis that supported the Agitation. A few contemporary newspapers called MacGahan's accuracy into question (including one letter to the editor suggesting (erroneously) that the report was filed from the same journalist who had been convicted of making up a story out of Russia for the *Daily Telegraph* in 1873)⁵⁸⁴ but MacGahan's report was overwhelmingly taken as accurate.

Nearly a century would pass before MacGahan and Schuyler's "eyewitness" accounts would be scrutinized; it is hard to overstate their lasting impact upon subsequent historiography and popular conceptions of the Batak massacre, as illuminated above. Even

⁵⁸⁴ "War Against Turkey," *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 1 September 1876, 6.

Richard Millman's 1971 observation that MacGahan and Schuyler only visited ten or eleven out of the fifty villages that they listed as being "partially destroyed or worse"⁵⁸⁵—and even then the pair's accounting of Bulgarian death and destruction was farcically flawed⁵⁸⁶—Millman's account was rebuked by Richard Shannon and Bulgarian historians alike. Tetsuya Sahara's very recent, detailed account of the Batak revolt, massacre, and investigation has shown through the use of Bulgarian sources that the village did indeed belligerently rebel. Upon the outbreak of rebellion, revolutionaries in Batak indiscriminately murdered unarmed Muslims and Ottoman officials, declared open revolt against the Ottoman state "until their last drop of blood," and threatened to destroy neighbouring Muslim villages. The rebels rejected an ultimatum from Ahmed Aga to surrender before the rebel position was attacked, and, when the situation became desperate, the remaining rebels left the village's inhabitants to their fate.⁵⁸⁷ Sahara confirms that MacGahan and Schuyler's investigations were guided both by their profound anti-Turkish prejudices and their Bulgarian guides. MacGahan and Schuyler were led to Batak along an unnecessarily long and rugged path through the mountains by their guides and thus only had a few hours to investigate Batak, which helps explain their inaccuracy

⁵⁸⁵ Richard Millman, "The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 58, 2 (1980): 230. Millman also shows that Baring's travels in the region and observations were far from sufficient to report anything that could "approach a reasonable approximation to reality" (230).

⁵⁸⁶ Essentially, Schuyler, MacGahan, and Baring estimated the number of destroyed homes, and then multiplied that number by 10 as that was the estimated average number of inhabitants per household—then subtracted the number of Bulgarian survivors that they met. Consul Calvert later argued that 5 inhabitants per household was a more accurate figure in these towns (Calvert to Salisbury, 11 January 1877, FO 424/37, 219).

⁵⁸⁷ The two Bulgarian sources (Stoyanov and Angel Goranov) do argue, however, that the second peace-offering to the Bulgarian holdouts of Batak (after hours of fighting and up to 96 Ottoman casualties) was betrayed and a wholesale massacre of rebels and villagers ensued. Angel Goranov, *Въстанието и клането в Барак*, (*The Uprisings and Massacre in Batak*), (Sofia: 1892)

even with basic facts like the numbers of houses in the village.⁵⁸⁸ Given MacGahan's exposure to entrenched narratives of what occurred during the April Uprising, it is reasonable to assume that the evidence that they found of bloodshed in the region was placed within a preconceived chronicle of Turkish devilry and Bulgarian martyrdom, readily corroborated by Bulgarian witnesses, victims, and revolutionaries. By applying widely circulating rumours and the Bulgarian nationalist program to his discovery of festering Rumelian corpses, MacGahan's report simultaneously crystallized multiple, culturally imagined narratives into the perceived material realities that would inform and underpin the Bulgarian Agitation.

William Stead unsurprisingly accepted MacGahan's narrative in its entirety and embellished it where he saw the opportunity. Two days after the publication of MacGahan's report, Stead embarked on another round of wild prognostications while focussing on the next stage of the campaign against Disraeli's immoral policies. Stead declared that Disraeli had "betrayed the cause of humanity to pursue that glittering bubble of ambition, and sacrificed the lives of thousands to his 'spirited' policy in the East... He turned a deaf ear to the wail of the widow and the despairing cry of the violated maiden... As he has sown so shall he reap... as he closed his ear to the anguished wail wrung from the heart of a tortured race, in like manner will an indignant nation... exult ... when it hurls him from the pinnacle of power into the lowest abyss of degradation and contempt."⁵⁸⁹ Two days later Stead again lambasted Disraeli for inopportunistly stating that Bulgarians were "sufferers by imaginary

⁵⁸⁸ Tetsuya Sahara, "Two Different Images," in Sluglett, *Russo-Turkish War*, 498. MacGahan and Schuyler counted 900 houses, but Bulgarian sources and modern statistical analysis estimate the number of houses at less than 500 with a total population at less than 4,000.

⁵⁸⁹ "Mr. Disraeli and the Bulgarian Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 9 August, 1876, p. 3.

atrocities”⁵⁹⁰ just a day before MacGahan’s report was printed. Stead welcomed the “great effect” of MacGahan’s report, stating that “England is being roused at last. Even the most phlegmatic have been moved by the simple recital of the cruelties inflicted upon the inoffensive peasantry of Bulgaria. An outburst of horror and dismay is ringing through the United Kingdom ... A terrible sense of the reality of the outrages, like the nightmare grip of a nameless horror, is taking possession of the public mind.”⁵⁹¹ Framing the atrocities as the worst event in his generation’s history, Stead applauded the “courage” of Liberal parliamentarians who finally raised the issue in the House of Commons during the busiest week of the session and for the public meetings being held in the country to “protest in unmistakable terms against the conduct of those whom Mr Disraeli delights to term ‘our allies’—the Turks.”⁵⁹² Echoing the words of a letter from the Bishop of Manchester to one such public meeting, Stead reports “Never was there greater need for the people of England ... to speak their mind loud and clear.”⁵⁹³ In fact, as Stead knew very well, the people and politicians of England were already starting to do so.

Guided by the enthusiasm of the *Daily News* and the *Northern Echo* and shaped by their individual objectives, Pears and MacGahan’s early accounts of Turkish atrocities against Bulgarians reified wider languages of cultural understanding into increasingly clear evidence for political action and protest. Despite the hottest summer on record, and the resulting stench from the Thames making the air in parliament nearly unbearable, questions about the Government’s knowledge of the “Bulgarian Outrages” plagued Disraeli

⁵⁹⁰ “England and the Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 11 August, 1876, p. 3.

⁵⁹¹ “England and the Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 11 August, 1876, p. 2.

⁵⁹² “England and the Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 11 August, 1876, p. 2.

⁵⁹³ “England and the Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 11 August, 1876, p. 2.

in the House of Commons late into the summer session. Noting that the agitation was putting the Government and his own reputation in serious jeopardy, Disraeli reportedly confided to Lord Derby, "It is lucky for us that the session is dying."⁵⁹⁴ Parliament's last session was 15 August; it would not meet again until 8 February of the following year, undoubtedly as a strategy to avoid further embarrassing questions. Proroguing of Parliament, however, did not stop the flow of horrific news from journalists abroad or stem the increasingly vitriolic reaction of the British Public against the Government and its foreign policy.

Undoubtedly, MacGahan and others' reports greatly unsettled conservative opinion in London and Balmoral as the Bulgarian Agitation grew and horrific reports seemingly became more reliably confirmed. On 23 August, even Queen Victoria wrote in her diary, "More news of the horrors committed by the Turks, which seem to be more and more verified, and are causing dreadful excitement and indignation in England, or indeed in Great Britain. Constant telegrams arriving, giving most conflicting accounts. A mediation is most anxiously hoped for."⁵⁹⁵ Notable in the Queen's entry is the confused nature of news reports arriving by telegraph, especially when compared to the more traditional channels of information (the Foreign Office) that downplayed the scale and importance of the uprising.⁵⁹⁶ The apparent discrepancy between self-identifying eyewitnesses and the official accounts was in itself the source of much consternation and criticism during this

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 270.

⁵⁹⁵ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 65, 23 August 1876.

⁵⁹⁶ Victoria's observation of confused and conflicting reports continues late into the year: 4 October: "Conflicting news from the East ... Waiting anxiously for news." 11 October: "So many telegrams and letters, and of then the former are very conflicting."

period of conservative confusion—all lending towards the explosive expansion of political protest against the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria.

Explosion of the Agitation: Public Meetings and the Petition Campaign, August-October 1876

Community-level political protest was well under way since Pear's first report in June 1876. Through July, rumours of terrible atrocities by Ottoman troops against Christians gave way to the gruesome and apparently trustworthy eyewitness reports that appeared in nearly every British newspaper, greatly strengthening support for the growing Agitation. In August, simmering indignation across the country was channelled into hundreds of public meetings and into a widespread community-level petition campaign to protest the Turkish atrocities and the perceived indifference of the Conservative government. Although there were a handful of large-scale protests during this time, most notably Bishop Fraser's large public meeting in Manchester⁵⁹⁷ and Canon H. P. Liddon's influential sermon denouncing Turkish atrocities at St. Paul's Cathedral on 13 August, the majority were small in scale and uncoordinated by the political establishment. The minutes of these public meetings and the petitions that they produced fell along readily perceivable cultural frameworks—shaped by the information available and the opinions expressed by professed experts in the subject—which translated amorphous cultural preconceptions into a powerful, grassroots political force.

Although smaller public meetings had been held before August, it was W.T. Stead's promotion of them in *The Northern Echo* that made them widespread and widely attended. Months of acerbic editorials against the Turks and Disraeli had honed Stead's rhetoric into

⁵⁹⁷ Bishop Fraser does not mention his role in the Agitation in his posthumously published memoir, Thomas Hughes (Ed.), *James Fraser, Second Bishop of Manchester, 1818-1885* (London: MacMillan, 1887).

thunderous pontification by August. Stead then concentrated his energy on organizing popular resistance to the current British Government and its apparently “immoral and inhuman” foreign policies. With parliament prorogued, Stead pioneered what he later described as “Government by Journalism.”⁵⁹⁸ In a column entitled “The North Country and the Turkish Atrocities,” Stead implored his readers and fellow constituents of Darlington to attend a large public meeting chaired by the mayor at the end of the week, insisting that “The North Country would, indeed, be traitor to Humanity if, at this crisis in the history of Europe it failed to make known in unmistakable accents the sympathy with which it regards the men who are struggling for liberty against the intolerable despotism of the Crescent.”⁵⁹⁹ With the excitement building for the next two days, the Friday edition reasserted the significance of the meeting: “It is to be hoped that the working men, whose sympathies are heart and soul with the Christians who are fighting for liberty in the East, will attend in their thousands, and that this night’s meeting may strike the first note in a demand for justice which may yet re-echo in the palaces of the Sultan.”⁶⁰⁰ The urgency of the appeal aimed to produce an atmosphere of excitement and spectacle: “If every one in the town attends who has shuddered at the bare recite of the crimes committed by the

⁵⁹⁸ W. T. Stead, “Government by Journalism,” *The Contemporary Review*, 49 (1886): 653-674. He wrote this article a decade later while in Holloway prison after the infamous Eliza Armstrong case. Stead envisioned the role of journalists as facilitators of direct popular governance: “Government by kings went out of fashion in this country when Charles Stuart lost his head. Government by the House of Lords perished with Gatton and Old Sarum. Is it possible that government by the House of Commons may equally become out of date? ... Government tends ever downward. Nations become more and more impatient of intermediaries between themselves and the exercise of power” (656). Stead declared that “press as parliament” was more democratic, since even those without the vote could buy and support the particular views of a newspaper without age, property, or gender qualifications. Far from tainting the process of government by scandal and over-reaction, Stead asserted that the “sensationalism” of investigative journalism was essential to expose “abuses which would speedily perish in the light of day.” See Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

⁵⁹⁹ “The North-Country and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 23 August 1876.

⁶⁰⁰ “The North-Country and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 25 August 1876.

Turks, there will be no building large enough to contain them.”⁶⁰¹ While Stead built his excitement off of the real indignation caused by such horrific reports of Turkish atrocities, he effectively guided this anger into a coordinated, widespread protest movement from its infancy.

Following the perceived moral divide between the honourable countryside versus decadent and duplicitous London, Stead also framed the agitation as a great uprising against the corruption of the City—a place which he loathed, describing it “the grave of all earnestness” and later, more famously, as licentious “Modern Babylon.” Stead also positioned himself and *The Northern Echo* against metropolitan newspapers which he later described as “drivelling productions ... mere news-sheets, without weight, influence, or representative character.”⁶⁰² Quoting a foreign correspondent of Edward Freeman, Stead demonstrated the hypocrisy of the metropolitan press who supported Garibaldi but not Christians ruled by barbarous Turks.⁶⁰³ In calling for a campaign of protest against Britain’s policies in the East, Stead looked to cement what he saw as the moral superiority of the “North Country” and working men and women into the vanguard of English civilization⁶⁰⁴ against the corrupted influence of the city, the high church, aristocratic privilege, and the wily influence of the Oriental Prime Minister and his Turcophile stooges in the Cabinet and the Foreign Office. The day before the meeting was to take place, Stead ran several articles proclaiming the “Imminent Danger of More Massacres: Outrages Still Continuing,” and

⁶⁰¹ “The North-Country and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 25 August 1876.

⁶⁰² Stead, “Government by Journalism,” 655.

⁶⁰³ “England is emphatically the land of the strong opinions,” wrote the correspondent, “yet I cannot see, without amazement, a large and influential portion of your Press pronouncing itself in the harshest terms against the glorious self-sacrifice of the noble Servians and Montenegrins” (“The Turkish Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 25 August 1876).

⁶⁰⁴ Gladstone would also pander to this group in his pamphlet, declaring the “working men of the country” as the “great heart of Britain” (“The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East,” 10).

discussing “The Duty of Englishmen” to declare that “every town, every village, should have its meeting to declare that Englishmen will not be the accomplices of the devastators of Bulgaria.”⁶⁰⁵ Stead suggested that, quoting F. Renard, “petitions should provide for the immediate recall of the British Fleet; for the dismissal of the Ministry; for a dissolution of Parliament; for the appointment of another ambassador and English officials in Turkey; for concert with the other powers to take the government of all Turkish provinces out of the hands of the Turks; and for a Government grant to the sufferers to be immediately administered by English Commissioners.”⁶⁰⁶ While the suggestion to resolve to recall the British fleet was widely repeated in town hall meetings, the rest were not, suggesting the limits of journalistic influence over community protest.

The following public meeting in Darlington’s town hall on 25 August received a full page spread in the next day’s edition of the *Northern Echo* under the headlines “Great Indignation: Meeting at Darlington” and “Recall of Sir Henry Elliot Demanded.” Stead’s summary recorded the excitement of being part of such a large assembly of like-minded people, asserting that “No such enthusiastic meeting has been held in Darlington in years” and claiming that “not a single dissentient disturbed the unanimity of the meeting.” “The stronger the censure,” wrote Stead, “the more vehement the applause, the more sweeping the condemnation, the more eagerly was it welcomed by the crowded meeting.”⁶⁰⁷ Edmund Blackhouse, Liberal M.P. for Darlington, spoke at length at the meeting and introduced its first resolution:

⁶⁰⁵ “The Duty of Englishmen,” *Northern Echo*, 24 August 1876, 2.

⁶⁰⁶ “To the Editor of the ‘Northern Echo,’” *Northern Echo*, 24 August, 2.

⁶⁰⁷ “The North Country and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 2.

That this meeting—having heard of the awful atrocities practised upon the inhabitants of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Servia by Turkish troops, and that the Turkish Government, instead of punishing the authors of such inhuman barbarities, have promoted the leaders to higher offices—hereby records its feeling of deepest horror and indignation at the atrocities themselves and the conduct of the Turkish Government, in reference thereto.⁶⁰⁸

This resolution was seconded by the Rev. T. E. Hodgson, Vicar of Darlington, and it was unanimously adopted after a lengthy reading of MacGahan's letter to the *Daily News*.⁶⁰⁹

The next resolution, put forth by Henry Pease, was also adopted "without dissent":

That this meeting strongly condemns the culpable inactivity of Sir Henry Elliot at Constantinople, whilst such frightful atrocities were being committed in the Turkish provinces, and the supineness of Her Majesty's Government in not taking more prompt and energetic action on receipt of the first tidings of these unprecedented barbarities, in comparison with which what we have heard of Cawnpore and the incidents of the Indian Mutiny, that so greatly moved the people of this country, sink into insignificance, and would strongly urge the Government to prevent the repetition of such outrages by the strongest moral force available, to recall the fleet from Besika Bay, and that Sir Henry Elliot be recalled from Constantinople.⁶¹⁰

The third resolution was moved by the Rev. C. H. Gough, citing the great English tradition of the "defence of those oppressed" from William, Prince of Orange, to Cromwell, to William Ewart Gladstone, and that the name of England "had been dragged through the mud" and required rehabilitation:

That this meeting, deeply sympathising with the inhabitants of the Turkish provinces, who are now desolate and homeless, and with the sick and wounded of both armies, hereby resolves that a local committee be formed to collect and receive subscriptions, to be forwarded to the Treasurer of the Eastern War Sick and Wounded Relief Fund.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ "The North Country and the Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 3. Interestingly, this petition cannot be found in the 6 volumes of petitions submitted to the Foreign Office (FO 78/2551-2556) suggesting a somewhat inaccurate filing system for these petitions. Later petitions from Darlington, however, are found in these volumes.

⁶⁰⁹ "The North Country and the Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 3.

⁶¹⁰ "The North Country and the Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 3.

⁶¹¹ "The North Country and the Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 3. On 16 September the *Times* recorded that the committee had raised over £180 for the "destitute and homeless inhabitants of Bulgaria". "The Atrocities in Bulgaria," 16 August 1876, 10.

The next unanimous resolution called for the petition drafted by the meeting to be signed by the mayor and forwarded on to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, and the meeting ended “with acclamation.”

The excited atmosphere of this morally-charged meeting was palpable in every media account, although Stead’s was indeed the most dramatic.⁶¹² Entreating their listeners with speeches about the honour of the English name, the glory of English history, and criticism of the current government (which the crowded participants responded to with applause, cheers, and cries of “hear, hear”), the distinguished speakers, all local elites, created a sense of community solidarity against common evils: Turkish barbarity abroad and indifference to such devilry at home. Stead, no doubt ecstatic over the success of the meeting, called attention to the next great meeting in nearby Saltburn, where residents were “bestirring themselves anent the frightful outrages,” and where more distinguished speakers and celebrities would take part including M.P. Samuel Morley, the Rev. J. Leitch, and a descendant of “Rob Roy” Macgregor.⁶¹³ Stead later recalled his divine inspiration for harnessing the Agitation by organizing this first media-promoted public meeting at Darlington with typical grandiloquence:

It was like a Divine possession that shook me almost to pieces, wrung me and left me shuddering and weak in an agony of tears. I went out determined to do this and nothing else until such time as my mission was revoked. I knew not how it would be taken. Bell [the proprietor] fortunately was away in Switzerland and I threw myself heart and soul, and the paper’s heart and soul, into the movement. I knew I might perish by overstrained excitement. I felt that like Jacob I had met the angel of God and I did not know but that I might have a lifelong limp in consequence of the meeting. These were minor considerations. It

⁶¹² The meeting was recorded in other northern newspapers (it is likely that Stead sent out letters to their editors given the nearly identical accounts) but also by the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The latter noted the meeting and its resolutions yet tellingly put “atrocities” in quotation marks. “Summary of This Morning’s News,” *PMG*, 26 August 1876, 6.

⁶¹³ “Meeting To-Night at Saltburn,” *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, 3.

was with fear and trembling that I went to the first meeting at Darlington, but it was a great success. Others followed.⁶¹⁴

Indeed, from the meeting at Darlington onward, dozens and then hundreds of public meetings were held in towns, boroughs, and cities across Great Britain. From late August throughout September,⁶¹⁵ hundreds of petitions were received by the Foreign Office, addressed to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Foreign Secretary) Lord Derby. Coordinated with advertisement, promotion, and media coverage in *The Northern Echo*, the petition campaign began in the Durham area and quickly spread to towns and boroughs across the North. Citing only the Bs, Bangor, Barnsley, Batley, Bedford, Belfast, Bingley, Birkenhead, Birmingham, Boosbeck-In-Cleveland, Boston, Bradford, Bridgewater, Brighton, Bristol, Burnley, and Buxham each had their own meeting to discuss the Eastern Question in the following weeks. In all, there are approximately one thousand petitions addressed to the Foreign Office now catalogued in the British National Archives. As the majority of signature pages were not saved, it is not known exactly how many people signed the petitions, but it was not unusual for petitions to have several hundred signatures or (as was the case with the Women's Memorial) many more. Stead committed himself completely to the cause of the Bulgarian Agitation; he was in regular correspondence with major figures and statesmen from around the world regarding the situation in the East: as Albert, Fourth Earl Grey noted "Stead amused me to begin with. I found that this provincial editor of an obscure paper was corresponding with kings and emperors all over the world

⁶¹⁴ Stead, Journal Entry, 14 January 1877, Quoted in J. W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (1952), 105.

⁶¹⁵ Five of the six volumes of Foreign Office petitions held at the National Archives are dated from 1 September to 9 October (FO 78/2551-2555). The sixth volume is dated 9 October to 17 December (FO 78/2556).

and receiving long letters from statesmen of every nation.”⁶¹⁶ Stead boasted in the wake of the Bulgarian Agitation that he had increased circulation of the *Northern Echo* seven fold in less than seven years.⁶¹⁷ Stead’s role in the Agitation was thus crucially influential.

The Impact of Eugene Schuyler’s Report

Eugene Schuyler’s preliminary report was published in the *Daily News* on 29 August, which coincided perfectly with the outset of the public meeting and petition campaign. This report was reprinted widely, including in *The Times*, which described his report as detailed and complete: “We do not know that anybody denies the substantial accuracy of the darkest pictures that have been drawn of the atrocities in Bulgaria.”⁶¹⁸ Even the conservative-leaning *Pall Mall Gazette* conceded that Schuyler’s report “substantially confirmed” the veracity of Turkish atrocities such that there was “no shadow of doubt as to the substance of that hideous history.”⁶¹⁹ Notwithstanding these horrors, the *PMG* still generally approved of British policy in the East and warned about the potential for unintended consequences should the Agitation’s arguments be taken seriously: “We do not believe that the nation will in its reasoning moments approve of the wrong that is being done by this agitation to English statesmen, or of the support that is being lent by it to the [Russian] designs which threaten our Imperial interests and our civilizing influences all over the world.”⁶²⁰ Fundamentally, conservative Britons shared the broader cultural languages of understanding and thus accepted both the facticity of the Bulgarian massacres

⁶¹⁶ Joseph O. Baylen, “Stead, William Thomas (1849–1912)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2010). Accessed 19 January 2014 at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/36/101036258/>>

⁶¹⁷ *Hubbard’s Newspaper and Bank Directory of the World*, 1882, Advertisement, p. 1614

⁶¹⁸ *The Times* (London), 30 August 1876.

⁶¹⁹ “Turkish Atrocities and English Duties,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 August 1876.

⁶²⁰ “Turkish Atrocities and English Duties,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 August 1876.

and the nature of such egregious Turkish excesses. Yet conservatives argued that hasty, bold condemnations of Turkish rule in general emboldened Serbia's bid for national independence and Russia's territorial ambitions and therefore did more harm than good, which became the common argument of conservative, Disraeli-supporting metropolitan newspapers and of the Government itself. In October, Queen Victoria herself noted how the Lord Chancellor "lamented over the recklessness of the language at the so-called 'Atrocity Meetings,' which did so much harm. It will and naturally does encourage the Russians and Servians."⁶²¹ Revealing something of her personal reading habits and her own views on the subject, Victoria also described the "conflicting news from the East ... [yet] All along, there have been excellent articles in the 'Daily Telegraph' and in the 'Pall Mall.'"⁶²² Queen Victoria, then, was an avid consumer of international news, at least from newspapers whose content she agreed with.

Public Meetings and Petitions

Many factors therefore converged to encourage widespread participation in public meetings across Britain through September 1876. Immediately noticeable from the resultant petitions of these meetings is the common format of each document, reflecting established conventions of formality for submitting public resolutions to statesmen, and the similarity of language used to express their resolutions. Resolutions from one petition to another were nearly interchangeable; they were essentially variations on a few similar ideas. First and foremost, petitions recorded their "horror and indignation"⁶²³ with regards

⁶²¹ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, p. 3, 3 October 1876.

⁶²² Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, pp. 4-5, 4 October 1876.

⁶²³ By far, the refrain "horror and indignation" was the most common amongst the petitions. See FO 78/2552 no. 24. Petition from Marylebone Public Meeting, 12 September 1876.

to the “inhuman”⁶²⁴ and “uncivilized”⁶²⁵ “barbarities,”⁶²⁶ “outrages,”⁶²⁷ or “atrocities”⁶²⁸ committed by “the Turks.”⁶²⁹ A typical resolution read: “Resolved: That this Meeting desires to express its horror and indignation at the outrages upon civilization and humanity, which have been perpetrated by Turkish soldiers in Bulgaria, and its deep sympathy with the victims of their fiendish brutality.”⁶³⁰ Many petitions noted the extreme inhumanity of the massacres in that they targeted “innocent,” “unoffending,”⁶³¹ and “defenceless”⁶³² Bulgarian Christians, particularly the “women,” “children,”⁶³³ and “maidens”⁶³⁴ upon which the “grossest violations” had been committed—“as the Turks are prone to commit”⁶³⁵—and thus the Ottomans had “justly forfeited any claim to be regarded as a kindred European nation.”⁶³⁶ These resolutions clearly reflected the overwhelming preoccupations of early reports, namely those of Pears, Gallenga, Stead, Schuyler, and MacGahan, which demonstrating the profound impact of just a handful of enthusiastic and imaginative journalists. Resolutions reflected these reports in their assertion of absolute Bulgarian innocence, in their emphasis on the uncivilized savagery of the Ottoman Empire,

⁶²⁴ FO 78/2551 no. 15. Petition from Borough of Middlesbrough Public Meeting, 31 August 1876.

⁶²⁵ FO 78/2551 no. 81. Petition from Bradford Public Meeting, 4 September 1876.

⁶²⁶ FO 78/2551 no. 441. Petition from Launceston, Cornwall Public Meeting, 11 September 1876.

⁶²⁷ FO 78/2554 no. 219. Petition from Worchester Public Meeting, 8 September 1876. Rochester’s public meeting recorded the “horror and disgust it feels at the cruel and fearful outrages”: FO 78/2552 no 101, 14 September.

⁶²⁸ FO 78/2552 no. 7. Petition from Benfieldside, Durham Public Meeting, 11 September 1876.

⁶²⁹ FO 78/2552 no. 116. Petition from Chelworth Public Meeting, 15 September 1876.

⁶³⁰ FO 78/2551 no. 126. Petition from Llandudno Public Meeting, 7 September 1876.

⁶³¹ FO 78/2552 no. 88. Petition from Kettering Public Meeting, 13 September 1876.

⁶³² FO 78/2551 no. 205. Petition from Yeovil Public meeting, 8 September 1876.

⁶³³ “unarmed men, defenceless women, and helpless children,” FO 78/2552 no. 179. Petition from Huddersfield Public Meeting, 12 September 1876.

⁶³⁴ FO 78/2551 no. 31. Petition from Montacute, Somerset Public Meeting, 30 August 1876.

⁶³⁵ “The Turks have committed ... indiscriminate massacre of unarmed people of every age and both sexes, by the violation of women, and the butchery of innocent children, by the reckless burning of villages and destruction of property” FO 78/2551 no. 177. Petition from Sheffield Public Meeting, 5 September 1876.

⁶³⁶ FO 78/2553 no 15. Petition from Grantham Public Meeting, 14 September 19876. This statement of “forfeiture” of the “right” to govern appeared in several petitions, including FO 78/2552 no 34, Petition from Tyldesley, Lancaster Public Meeting, 7 September 1876.

and in the asserting that the atrocities was particularly egregious because it was Christian, European, women and children who were the principle victims of the carnal ferocity of the Muslim Turks.

Second, petitioners strongly condemned the actions and “indifference”⁶³⁷ of the British government in supporting Turkey. They urged official action to prevent further atrocities in that empire, to pressure the Ottomans to punish those responsible, and to provide “reparation to the injured.”⁶³⁸ A meeting in the town hall of Hackney likewise requested that the “Foreign Policy of Your Majesty’s Government may be based upon the dictates of humanity: that speedy and effectual measures may be taken to bring the perpetrators of those horrible barbarities to condign punishment.”⁶³⁹ Other common resolutions demanded: 1) the “immediate recall” of Ambassador Elliot from Constantinople⁶⁴⁰ 2) the recall of the British fleet from Besika Bay⁶⁴¹ 3) the compensation of Christians for loss of property 4) to reclaim the “honour of the nation”⁶⁴² by swift action 5) and to express “gratitude to the Special Commissioner of the ‘Daily News’ for the fearless and able reports he has given of the suffering inflicted upon Christians in Turkey”⁶⁴³ as well as to the editor of the *Northern Echo*.⁶⁴⁴ Despite the varying permutations and exact wording of each petition—few were directly “parroted” despite the assertions of David Underdown—the similarity of evidence, rationale, and the language used to craft

⁶³⁷ FO 78/2552 no. 173. Petition from Peterborough Public Meeting, 16 September 1876.

⁶³⁸ FO 78/2552 no. 135. Petition from Kidderminster Public Meeting, 13 September 1876.

⁶³⁹ FO 78/2551 no. 186. Petition from Borough of Hackney Public Meeting, 6 September 1876.

⁶⁴⁰ Citing Elliot’s “utter incompetence and partiality,” FO 78/2551 no. 144. Petition from Lofthouse, Yorkshire Public Meeting, 1 September 1876.

⁶⁴¹ FO 78/2551 no. 177. Petition from Sheffield Public Meeting, 8 September 1876.

⁶⁴² FO 78/2551 no. 198. Petition from Cardiff Public Meeting, 7 September 1876. See also Petition from Tyldesley.

⁶⁴³ FO 78/2551 no. 220. Petition from Newark Public Meeting, 6 September 1876.

⁶⁴⁴ FO 78/2551 no. 208. Petition from Stokesley Public Meeting, 5 September 1876.

resolutions across public meetings all over Great Britain suggests both a common network of available information that informed the national public sphere and also the deep permeation of certain patterns of perception. The Agitation derived much of its support from the countryside, but the number of petitions from within London also demonstrates that the Bulgarian Agitation was not simply a case of the “periphery” versus the “metropole.” The resolutions of petitions crafted across the country were widely re-printed in the British press, encouraging further, similar resolutions on specific topics.

Many petitions are extraordinary documents, far beyond unsophisticated protest diatribes, that coalesce politically dissonant opinions into fully articulated resolutions towards alternative foreign policies. The most frequent, “common sense” solution to the Eastern Question was that England could no longer justify its support of the Ottoman Empire in the light of such atrocious crimes, and that the peace of Europe and the character and reputation of the British Empire would only be preserved in championing the independence of the “Christian subjects”⁶⁴⁵ or “subject-races”⁶⁴⁶ of the effete Ottoman Empire. Despite little information in the British press about who exactly these “free, humane and Christian”⁶⁴⁷ “subject-races” were—let alone what territory these imagined “provinces” occupied—it was clear to petitioners (and later to boundary commissioners) that they all needed self-determination in order to finally break free of the cycles of “Turkish misrule and oppression”⁶⁴⁸ and to protect them against inevitable atrocity.

⁶⁴⁵ FO 78/2551 no. 169. Petition from Hastings Public Meeting, 7 September 1876.

⁶⁴⁶ FO 78/2551 no. 216. Petition from Chatham, Manchester Public Meeting, 4 September 1876.

⁶⁴⁷ FO 78/2551 no. 177.

⁶⁴⁸ FO 78/2551 no. 169.

The phrase “secure peace on the basis of the practical independence of Bulgaria and the other provinces”⁶⁴⁹ was common to many petitions, undoubtedly because of a letter published in the *Daily News* from Canon Henry Liddon (of St. Paul’s) suggesting to petitioners “What to Insist On” to achieve solutions to the Eastern Question; this article was widely reprinted.⁶⁵⁰ Some petitions noted the model for independence set by the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia already won by Russia from the Ottoman Empire during previous Russo-Turkish wars, declaring that Her Majesty’s Government should use its influence to secure independence for the provinces “north of the Balkan range.”⁶⁵¹ The large number of petitions that supported Bulgarian independence suggests a strong popular mandate to support the further dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the autonomy of Christian provinces. Notable also is that several of the resolutions called for by the *Northern Echo* and others were missing: petitions did not call for the dissolution of parliament, the dismissal of the Ministry, or the creation of a government grant to be administered by English commissioners. This discrepancy directly contradicts R.W. Seton-Watson and David Underdown’s assumptions that “elites” from the metropole were dictating the political aims of the Agitation to be blindly followed by the wretched masses—each petition was drafted to reflect the ubiquitous concerns of each public gathering, including those from each political party, and they avoided impractical schemes of disbanding the current government or forming a government-funded relief agency.

⁶⁴⁹ FO 78/2554 no 50. Petition from Donhead St. Andrew, Received 20 September 1876; and FO 78/2554 no. 21.

⁶⁵⁰ “Canon Liddon on Turkey: ‘What to Insist On,’” *Daily News*, 2 September 1876; reprinted, for example, in *The Belfast News-Letter*, 4 September 1876. This article also called for compensation for Christians, the revision of the 1856 Treaty of Paris, and the replacement of Henry Elliot “by a diplomatist of human rather than Turkish sympathies.”

⁶⁵¹ FO 78/2551 no. 188. Petition from Middlesbrough Public Meeting, 8 September 1876. Note that the Bulgarian insurrection largely occurred in or south of the Balkan Mountains.

Community organizations also delivered petitions to the Foreign Office in the autumn of 1876 with similar resolutions. Most common of these petitions were those from various nonconformist churches, especially Baptist, Congregationalist, and Methodist associations. Baptist petitions came from a variety of organizations, including the Baptist Union, the Conference of General Baptists, the North Wales Baptist College, the Northern Association of Baptists, and the Welsh Baptist Mission. Methodist groups included United Methodist Free Churches, the Methodist New Connexion, and the Primitive Methodist Ministers of Nottingham District. A petition submitted by the Conference of General Baptists, held at Long Sutton, represented the congregations of 26 churches,⁶⁵² who made resolutions in favour of the independence of the Christian provinces of Turkey; at the annual meeting of the Primitive Methodist General Committee—purportedly representing a church membership of over 170,000—called for the queen to summon parliament in a petition that was also delivered to the *Daily News*, which was published on 11 September.⁶⁵³ The Huddersfield Circuit of the United Methodist Free Church advocated “as speedily as possibly the liberty of these Christian people from all rule and authority of the Turkish Empire.”⁶⁵⁴ While in general, church organizations’ petitions called for the alleviation of suffering and the punishment of Turkish wrongdoers without a strong political bent, they most frequently resolved that the only lasting solution was independence for Christians from the Ottoman yoke. The Foreign Missionary Committee of the United Methodist Free Churches petitioned for the “adoption of such a course of action

⁶⁵² Including Nottingham, Stoke, Norwich, Halifax, Woolwich, Sunderland, Rochdale, Sheffield, Mile End, Devonport, Hartlepool, Aston, Oldham, Dundee, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Plymouth, Newport, Newark, Leeds and Southampton.

⁶⁵³ “London, Monday, Sept. 11,” *Daily News*, 11 September 1876.

⁶⁵⁴ FO 78/2551 no. 174. Petition from United Free Methodist Church, 9 September 1876.

in relation to the Eastern Question, as to secure permanently for the devastated provinces political liberty and self-government, thus effectually preventing the recurrence of the deeply deplored barbarities.”⁶⁵⁵ Religious organizational involvement in the Bulgarian Agitation, therefore, was—at least initially—reflective of a wider belief of Christian camaraderie with Bulgarian sufferers and that the non-political consensus for civilizational progress was to limit Turkish rule over European Christians. Richard Shannon closely followed the important influence of nonconformism during the Agitation and argues that, although many practitioners and clergy believed that it was the beginning of a “new dawn” of evangelical nonconformist influence over the British public sphere and politics, it was in fact the climax of such episodes that heralded the political and social decline of the nonconformist conscience.⁶⁵⁶

For many, news of Turkish Muslims massacring innocent Christians incited a visceral indignation that built upon a presupposed kinship between European Christians. Although Eastern and Western Christianity had split in the eleventh century Great Schism and a long, bloody history of religious wars followed until at least the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the seventeenth and eighteenth century saw loose collaboration of Christian states against the external threat of Islam.⁶⁵⁷ Well into the nineteenth century, however, “Christendom” was hardly a cohesive category of identity that would have inevitably provoked feelings of solidarity between persecuted Christians in other empires or nation-

⁶⁵⁵ FO 78/2555 no 20. Petition from Foreign Missionary Committee of the United Methodist Free Churches, Autumnal Session held at Rochdale, 27 September 1876.

⁶⁵⁶ Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, 168-71.

⁶⁵⁷ Such as the Holy League during the Great Turkish War which saw (Orthodox) Russia join a (Roman Catholic) alliance initiated by Pope Innocent XI. This Turkish defeat was followed with a series of Russo-Turkish Wars that debilitated the Ottoman Empire and set up the Eastern Question of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

states. Previous “humanitarian” disasters involving the massacre of Christians by the Ottomans did not elicit responses comparable to the Bulgarian Horrors amongst the British public.⁶⁵⁸ But the scope and scale of the perceived violence in Bulgaria collided with a “reawakened social consciousness”⁶⁵⁹ in Britain that was preached by powerful nonconformists such as Congregationalists James Guinness Rogers and Robert William Dale and Welsh Methodist Hugh Price Hughes.⁶⁶⁰ Clearly, not all British Christians reacted with a sense of kinship towards suffering Ottoman Christians. But common Christianity, very broadly conceived, was a crucial precondition for empathy towards Bulgarian victims. Christianity was a crucial difference in the conception of Western civilization that opposed Turkish barbarism alongside liberal principles of governance. Islam was frequently noted to be a closed-minded, “sensual” religion which dominated the thoughts, laws, and actions of “fatalistic” Turks in comparison to tolerant Christian values, emotional discipline, and the general separation of laws from religion.⁶⁶¹ For many Agitationists, the opposition to Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria indeed became “a religious crusade for international righteousness,”⁶⁶² as Brown argues, but this religious solidarity was largely contingent on overwhelming antipathy towards the perceivedly brutal regime of the barbarous, infidel Turk.

⁶⁵⁸ See: Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, on the Cretan and Bosnian examples.

⁶⁵⁹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, 296.

⁶⁶⁰ The Catholic Church declined to support the Agitation, as did many Anglicans. Archbishop of Canterbury Archibald Tait wanted “nothing to do with the ‘unholy alliance’ formed by Non-conformists and Anglo-Catholics” (Brown, *Providence and Empire*, 296). High Church Anglicans such as Canon Liddon, Malcolm MacColl, and R. W. Church, Brown argues, were long “attracted to the theology and liturgy of the Orthodox church, and this gave them a special sympathy for the suffering Orthodox Christians of Bulgaria” (296). Catholics would not endanger the Catholic population in the Ottoman Empire, nor would they support Russia against the Ottomans in the wake of their suppression of Catholics in Poland.

⁶⁶¹ “Last Kick of the Sick Man,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (London), 2 July 1876.

⁶⁶² Brown, *Providence and Empire*, 296.

Workingmen's associations were the next most common group organizations to submit petitions, with largely similar resolutions to those of general public meetings. An exception was the British Workmen's Peace Association, which delivered an anti-war pamphlet to the Foreign Office declaring that "standing armies are dangerous to peace and destructive to liberty"⁶⁶³ and advocating non-intervention in Eastern Affairs. A number of smaller independent associations also petitioned, such as the Literary and Scientific Institution of Ventnor, Isle of Wight, whose membership "strongly condemn[ed] the expenditure of British blood and treasure in the maintenance of Turkish despotism" and wished to obtain an "extension of political autonomy" for European provinces in order to secure "lasting peace."⁶⁶⁴ Thus, common to almost all petitions, from community organizations and public town hall meetings was the "common sense" solution of national self-determination for Bulgarian and other Christian populations of the Balkans. It was in the petitions submitted to the Foreign Office that we see the wide array of resolutions passed, within weeks or a few months of each other, that fall along widely held cultural assumptions—particularly that the Ottoman Empire was an obstacle to civilizational progress and that Balkan Christians should therefore receive national sovereignty.

Close attention to the petitions of the Bulgarian Agitation thus supports a synthesis of John Walter, Anthony Fletcher, Lex Heerma van Voss, Andreas Würgler, and Damn Freeman, and Colin Ley's hypotheses about the uses of petitions. It contradicts David Underdown and George Rudé's aversion to using petitions as historical sources. Petitions do indeed speak to a body of opinion that stood outside party politics, which can speak to

⁶⁶³ FO 78/2551 no 228. Signed Pamphlet from British Workmen's Peace Association, 2 September 1876.

⁶⁶⁴ FO 78/2556 no. 94. 20 October 1876.

fundamental processes of cultural production and the core values amongst the otherwise silent masses of petitioners. It also modifies Richard Shannon and Ann Pottinger Saab's treatment of petitions as simply static, reflective symbols of wider cultural structures and the battle of opposing political ideologies. In the case of the Bulgarian Agitation, petitions speak to the common-sense cultural values of large number of politically active Britons. Petitions and town hall minutes illuminate widely-held dissident positions regarding what they perceived as unfeeling British foreign policy. They speak to the motivating causes of their impassioned activism: anti-Turkish sentiment, sympathies for oppressed Christian races, opposition to Disraeli's premiership, support for upholding British "honour," and the desire to uphold the "principles of humanity" and civilization in Britain's imperial policies.

The Baring Report, September 1876

Walter Baring's government-sponsored report, over a month in the making, was presented in secret to the Cabinet on 1 September 1876.⁶⁶⁵ His report was scathing. Baring concluded that "there was undoubtedly a revolution which had to be crushed by armed force," but the "manner in which the rising was suppressed was inhuman to the last degree [with] fifty innocent persons suffering for every guilty one," and "the [Ottoman] Government is to blame for calling out the Bashi-Bazouks; for if it had sent the regular troops earlier, the Bashi-Bazouks would have been unnecessary." Although Baring dispelled a number of widely held myths, including the rumour of the burning of 40 young girls, the public selling of women and children, that cartloads of heads were paraded in the streets of Turkish towns (although he stated that some were paraded on the bayonets of Bashi-Bazouks in Sofia), and of widespread public torture, his report nevertheless

⁶⁶⁵ PRO, FO 881/2936B, Confidential Print.

confirmed that 12,000 Christians (as opposed to 15,000 estimated by Schuyler) had been killed, but “only” 200 Muslims. 58 villages had been destroyed and 2,000 Bulgarians remained in prison in terrible conditions, Baring confirmed, and he noted that the Ottomans had indeed not punished anyone for the massacres and rewarded Achmet Aga with a medal and promotion.⁶⁶⁶

Baring’s “balanced” report, which became publicly available just over two weeks after its presentation to cabinet, lent official credibility to MacGahan and Schuyler’s gruesome eyewitness reports and confirmed that the horrors had indeed taken place to even the most sceptical. This naturally poured fuel on the fire of the Bulgarian Agitation and caused uproar amongst Conservatives. Foreign Secretary Lord Derby was apparently appalled by the report as well as the apparent unresponsiveness of the rest of his caucus, signalling the beginning of discord in the Tory cabinet over the moral responsibility of Britain in indirectly supporting such horrors and over the wisdom of alliance with the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁶⁷

Despite Baring’s apparently damning report, Disraeli held that British policy should not change, whatever the character of the massacres, lest Britain let Russia and Austria carve up the Ottoman Empire for themselves. A week before Baring’s report was released, Diplomat Lord Augustus Loftus wrote to Derby, outlining the policy of Disraeli and the government: “Those who suppose that England ever would uphold ... Turkey from blind superstition, and from want of sympathy with the highest aspirations of humanity are

⁶⁶⁶ PRO, FO 881/2936B, Confidential Print. Richard Millman suggests that Baring’s Report was greatly flawed and merely used the lowest figure provided by Bulgarians and the American missionaries at Constantinople. “Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered,” 218.

⁶⁶⁷ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 149.

deceived. What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England.”⁶⁶⁸ After the report, Sir Henry Elliot, the ambassador in Constantinople, wired home in response to Baring’s Report on 4 September 1876, stating that British interests in the Turkish Empire were “not affected by the question whether it was 10,000 or 20,000 persons who perished in the suppression.”⁶⁶⁹ Elliot, previously under suspicion for incompetence for not knowing that massacres were taking place in Bulgaria, instantly became wildly unpopular and villainized by the British press as having “gone native”⁶⁷⁰ and a great many petitions called for his resignation or firing. This public pressure was so great that he was eventually moved to Vienna in early 1877 despite eleven years of service in Constantinople—a clear victory for the Agitation.⁶⁷¹ Disraeli and the Foreign Office were embroiled in negotiations with the Great Powers to obtain an armistice throughout August and September. Baring’s report divided Tories and made the political situation increasingly difficult for Disraeli. Things were to get even more uncomfortable for Disraeli, however, as Gladstone had decided just nights before to write a pamphlet on the Eastern Question.

“Gladstone to the Front!” Stead, Gladstone, and the *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, September 1876

By traditional accounts, Gladstone’s entry into the fray marks the “real” beginning of the Bulgarian Agitation. R. W. Seton-Watson, dismissing the “isolated” meeting at Darlington, states that the “real campaign” started with the working men’s assembly in

⁶⁶⁸ FO 65/939 no. 354. Lotus to Derby. 21 August 1876.

⁶⁶⁹ Quoted in Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876*, 23.

⁶⁷⁰ See: “Spy” (Leslie Ward), “Ambassador to the Porte,” *Vanity Fair*, March 1877. See also Christopher Meyer’s *Getting our Way: 500 Years of Adventure and Intrigue: The Inside Story of British Diplomacy*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2009). Meyer also portrayed Elliot as having gone “native,” and criticized him for opposing an “ethical” foreign policy.

⁶⁷¹ Despite Derby and Disraeli’s support of Elliot against the wishes of their Cabinet, Forster raised a motion in the House of Commons to have him removed that made them reconsider and replace him with A.H. Layard.

Hackney on 29 August,⁶⁷² to whom Gladstone addressed a letter containing his first public statement in support of the Agitation. Ironically, this letter actually emphasizes the role of the people to speak for themselves:

I should have been glad if the whole duty of expressing the views of the British nation could have been left with safety in the hands of the Government of the Queen, but the manner which it was treated by the head of the Ministry in the House of Commons was so inadequate and unsatisfactory that I cannot but think it well that the people should seek opportunities to speak for themselves.⁶⁷³

Despite this well feeling of popular protest, Gladstone wrote another letter that same evening to Lord Granville, outlining his political programme:

Good ends can rarely be obtained in politics without passion, and there is now, for the first time for a good many years, a virtuous passion. I am much struck with the indications of feeling that the post (as well as the newspapers) brings me daily ... I am in half, perhaps a little more than half, a mind to write a pamphlet: mainly on the grounds that parliamentary action was all but ousted.⁶⁷⁴

Gladstone's pamphlet, discussed in depth in the following chapter, should therefore be seen as a reaction to popular unrest rather than as the cause. Indeed, as both Richard Shannon and Ann Pottinger Saab argue, Gladstone was initially reluctant to speak on behalf of the Agitation (preferring retirement and ecclesiastical studies) and much of his subsequent political successes were thanks to the already well-established opposition campaign. Gladstone was urged to speak on the matter by his friend Ambrose Phillips de Lisle,⁶⁷⁵ numerous letters from diplomat Stratford de Redcliffe, the Duke of Argyll, clergyman Malcolm MacCall, Bishop Fraser of Manchester, Canon Henry Parry Liddon, and

⁶⁷² Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 72. Seton-Watson scarcely mentions W. T. Stead throughout his otherwise painstakingly detailed account, which narrates the "triumph" of Gladstone.

⁶⁷³ "Mr. Gladstone and the Atrocities," *The Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 30 August 1876.

⁶⁷⁴ Granville Papers, 29 August 1876, Gladstone to Granville.

⁶⁷⁵ Lisle had noted that Gladstone himself had given him a copy of Robert Fleming's *The Rise of Rome Papal* (1701) just months earlier, which prophesized the collapse of the Ottoman Empire—Lisle's own 1855 book labelled Muhammad as the Antichrist.

editor W. T. Stead⁶⁷⁶ (among others). Only after reading the grisly accounts published in the *Daily News* and the corroborating report by Eugene Schuyler did Gladstone finally intervene, after constant prodding by his friends and political allies.

Gladstone had not yet seen the Baring Report, so his pamphlet firstly called for its release and censured the government for such a delay when newspapers were able to report on events within weeks using the telegraph.⁶⁷⁷ Noting the powerful public movement after the proroguing of Parliament, he praised the “public vigilance” around the country and declared that “in default of Parliamentary action,” “we must proceed as we can, with impaired means of appeal.”⁶⁷⁸ Gladstone complimented the great number of working men of the countryside (who had been recently given the vote as a result of the 1867 Reform Act), stating that they “led the way, and shown that the great heart of Britain has not ceased to beat.”⁶⁷⁹ The importance of their public meetings “cannot be over-rated,” because Government was failing in its duty to “punish a gigantic wrong”—“the nation will have to speak through its Government: but we now see clearly that it must first teach its Government, almost as it would teach a lisp[ing] child, what to say.”⁶⁸⁰ That lisp[ing] child in government was of course Disraeli, who received an unsurprising amount of harsh criticism given Gladstone and Disraeli’s long history of political and personal antagonisms. Gladstone’s direct attacks on Disraeli were thinly veiled and uncompromising. Besides his “denials of knowledge” (20), “cynical remarks,” (19) and “misrepresent[ing] the sense of

⁶⁷⁶ “It is still the cherished hope of the North Country that you may one more lead us to victory.” Stead to Gladstone, quoted in Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 271. Gladstone Papers (GP) 44303, 230.

⁶⁷⁷ Gladstone, “Bulgarian Horrors,” 20-21. Gladstone singles out the *Daily News*’ foreign coverage as “most splendid” and “most weighty” compared even to the “great organs” of *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*.

⁶⁷⁸ Gladstone, “Bulgarian Horrors,” 10.

⁶⁷⁹ Gladstone, “Bulgarian Horrors,” 10.

⁶⁸⁰ Gladstone, “Bulgarian Horrors,” 10-11.

the British people” (58) Disraeli’s continued moral and material support of the Turkish regime signified nothing less than “moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man” (9). This extraordinary claim demonstrates something of the disproportionate historical understanding of Gladstone—an extremely well-read polymath—and other Liberals who selectively considered “good” acts of justice, such as Britain’s crushing of the Indian Mutiny in 1857, or “natural” acts of war, such as the Russian expulsion of 500,000 Circassians in the wake of the 1864 Russian-Circassian War,⁶⁸¹ versus “evil” acts of “inhumanity” committed by the Ottomans.

In one sense, Gladstone’s pamphlet is an impassioned call for “humanity” to guide British foreign policy, but clearly the pamphlet was designed to stir further indignation against Disraeli and the conservatives and propel him to the forefront of the already vigorous political opposition. Disraeli was furious to receive a complimentary copy of the pamphlet that was mailed to him hours before its general publication, and he wrote to Derby of Gladstone’s “impudence” in sending it “though he accuses me of several crimes”; of the pamphlet itself he wrote that the “document is passionate and strong; vindictive and ill-written—that of course. Indeed, in that respect, of all Bulgarian horrors perhaps the greatest.”⁶⁸² Queen Victoria privately agreed with Disraeli’s assessment that the agitation was emboldening Russian warmongering; two days after its publication she wrote amongst a daily update of high-level negotiation of the Eastern armistice in her diary: “Mr Gladstone

⁶⁸¹ On the Circassian expulsion, see Stephen Shenfield “The Circassians: A Forgotten Genocide?” in Levene and Roberts (Eds.), *The Massacre in History*; and Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Shenfield argues (controversially), that “The number who died in the Circassian catastrophe of the 1860s could hardly ... have been fewer than one million, and may well have been closer to one-and-a-half million.”

⁶⁸² Quoted in Blake, *Disraeli*, 602.

has most unadvisedly written a violent pamphlet on the 'Bulgarian Atrocities,' adding fuel to the flame, really too bad."⁶⁸³ W. T. Stead, however, was elated. "Mr. Gladstone has justified, and more than justified our most sanguine hopes," he wrote, "He has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, our loftiest anticipations. At the most important crisis of modern European history, Mr. Gladstone has risen to the full height of the situation, and expressed words of sustained eloquence, which have much of the terrible earnestness of the Hebrew Seer, the Anathema of Humanity upon the devastators of Bulgaria... At this moment, Mr. Gladstone is the real ruler of the land"⁶⁸⁴ Stead was happy to assume the lesser role of "practically Gladstone's lieutenant."⁶⁸⁵ "Achilles may sulk in his tent," he declared in an article entitled, "Gladstone to the Front!", but when "the most powerful of all living Englishmen" comes forth, "all recognise his supremacy."⁶⁸⁶

Gladstone started his publicity tour with a widely promoted public speech at Blackheath, Greenwich, after a visit with the local Liberal Association. The constituency, held by Disraeli for thirty years, was up for by-election after Disraeli had accepted his peerage to become the first Earl of Beaconsfield. Despite the torrential rain and the unfriendly turf, a huge crowd of approximately 15,000 gathered to hear Gladstone speak that Saturday afternoon.⁶⁸⁷ In the crowd was also William Stead, who recounted his experience many years later in the *Review of Reviews*,

As I came up from Darlington, which had honourably distinguished itself by the promptitude and vigour of its protest long before Mr. Gladstone had spoken, I watched the sun rise over the Eastern fens and thought that I had seen a day

⁶⁸³ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 65, page 227. 8 September 1876.

⁶⁸⁴ "Gladstone to the Front!" *Northern Echo*, 7 September, 1876, p.2.

⁶⁸⁵ Mulpetre, *W.T. Stead*, 362.

⁶⁸⁶ "Gladstone to the Front!" *Northern Echo*, 7 September, 1876, p.2.

⁶⁸⁷ "Mr. Gladstone on the Bulgarian Atrocities: Great Meeting at Blackheath," *Northern Echo*, 11 September 1876.

dawn destined to be for ever memorable in the annals of human freedom. A strange new sense of the reality of the romance of history came to me, a feeling that I was that day to take, however humble, a part in a meeting that linked the prosaic present to the great days of old. Mr. Gladstone seemed but the last of a long line of national heroes, stretching through the Lion Heart and Hereward and Harold and Alfred to the purple haze of Arthurian romance. I was only twenty-seven, and it was the first occasion I had ever been at the centre of things.⁶⁸⁸

Coinciding with hundreds of public meetings, Gladstone's speech was in many ways the pinnacle of public enthusiasm against the Bulgarian atrocities and the protest against Disraeli's handling of the situation. Dozens of newspapers carried full accounts of Gladstone's Blackheath speech the following Monday. None were more triumphant than the *Daily News* or the *Northern Echo*, but already some previously-supportive newspapers were sounding the alarm over the "Frankenstein feverish sentiment" that "may only subside in the greater convulsion of the colossal atrocity of European war" and thankful that Gladstone was preaching moderation compared to others.⁶⁸⁹

Disraeli was furious over what he saw as Gladstone's opportunistic pandering in his former constituency that had very real consequences for international relations, and he declared in a letter to Derby, "Posterity will do justice to that unprincipled maniac—extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy, and superstition; and with one commanding characteristic—whether Prime Minister, or Leader of the Opposition, whether preaching, praying, speechifying, or scribbling—never a gentleman!"⁶⁹⁰ Indeed, many commentators, at the time and subsequently, considered Gladstone's "principled" stance as nothing more than political grandstanding with entirely reckless consequences

⁶⁸⁸ W.T. Stead, "Mr. Gladstone," *Review of Reviews*, 5, 1892, p. 352.

⁶⁸⁹ "Mr. Gladstone's Speech," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 11 September 1876.

⁶⁹⁰ Quoted in Ian St John, *Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem, 2010): 237.

for Britain's foreign policy towards the Eastern Question as it made his position against Russian military intervention weaker. H. A. Munro Butler-Johnstone, in a counter-pamphlet addressed to Gladstone, forcefully criticized his command of Ottoman history, declaring "your picture is a caricature, and your history is a travesty, *its contents elaborated from your own inner consciousness*, without the shadow of a shade of foundation in fact."⁶⁹¹ Butler-Johnstone censured Gladstone's encouragement of passionate—but misguided—anti-Turkish sentiment. Predictably, Butler-Johnstone's pamphlet was disregarded as "Turkophile," and he was later described as "almost the only surviving worshipper of the Turks."⁶⁹² Noting the difficult diplomatic position Disraeli had found himself in, *Punch* depicted Gladstone as a brown-skinned attendant serving hot coffee to a hookah-smoking Disraeli, who was lying on pillows in a sudatorium, asking "how do you feel, after your bath, My Lord?" (Figure 4.1). Disraeli replies in an aside, "lost some weight I fancy. —You made it so confoundedly *hot* for me!!!"⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ H. A. Munro Butler-Johnstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East: A Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.* (London: William Ridgway, 1876), 4. Emphasis added.

⁶⁹² "Lord Beaconsfield's Silence," *Northern Echo*, 13 November 1879.

⁶⁹³ "The Turkish Bath," *Punch*, 5 October 1876.



THE TURKISH BATH.

ATTENDANT. "HOW DO YOU FEEL, AFTER YOUR BATH, MY LORD?"

LORD B. "PRETTY COMFORTABLE, THANK YOU!—(Aside. LOST SOME WEIGHT, I FANCY.)—YOU MADE IT SO CONFOUNDEDLY HOT FOR ME!!!"

Figure 4.4: John Tenniel, "The Turkish Bath," *Punch*, 5 October 1876.

Stead hoped to further cultivate the Agitation's widespread enthusiasm. In the week following the speech at Blackheath, Stead invented the publicity stunt "A Bulgarian Sunday," a call for "all England" to rise up, as Cromwell did after the Massacre of the Vaudois, against its government to join "the resolutions of a thousand meetings" and have "simultaneous collections on behalf of the victims in every Church throughout the land... to elicit from all Churches and Chapels throughout the land a hearty and unanimous response to the appeal of our fellow Christians in the East for sympathy and help."⁶⁹⁴ Despite

⁶⁹⁴ "A Bulgarian Sunday," *Northern Echo*, 14 September 1876.

amassing some indirect support from clergy and from some prominent Liberals including Edward Freeman,⁶⁹⁵ congregational divides limited the degree of fundraising cooperation. “A Bulgarian Sunday” was not repeated. That the stunt failed to inspire hints at the limits of journalistic direction over public participation—protest was the result of authentic grassroots “indignation,” not simply manipulated sentiment created by journalists. It also suggests the limits of Christian solidarity with regards to the Bulgarian Agitation and support of the Orthodox populations of Turkey-in-Europe.

Undeterred by the setback, the *Northern Echo's* coverage of public meetings became a full-page spread by October, with coverage of dozens of meetings across England under headlines such as “England and the Atrocities: The North Country and the War of Liberation in the East” with subheadings: “Meeting at Saltburn,” “Meeting at Stanhope: Speech by Mr Henry Pease,” “Working Men and the Eastern Question,” “Mr Freeman on the Crisis,” and “Mr. Price’s Solution.”⁶⁹⁶ Stead worked many different angles of the story, including the savage barbarities committed against the most vulnerable—“wives, maidens, children, being murdered in cold blood”⁶⁹⁷—discussed at a town hall meeting in Durham, reporting resolutions such as “The restoration of women and children that had been taken to Turkish harems.”⁶⁹⁸ In the same issue, Stead commended “Women’s Work for Bulgaria,” consisting of the Mayoress of Darlington and Mrs. Henry Pease’s advertisement for women to assist in a sewing meeting for the Bulgarians, to support Lady Stangford and the ladies

⁶⁹⁵ “I should rejoice in a Bulgarian Sunday ... your paper is vigorous indeed.” “A Bulgarian Sunday,” *Northern Echo*, 18 September 1876.

⁶⁹⁶ *Northern Echo*, 2 October 1876.

⁶⁹⁷ “England and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 19 September 1876.

⁶⁹⁸ “Demonstration at Blaydon,” *Northern Echo*, 2 October 1876.

associated with the American Eastern missions in providing the Bulgarians with warm winter clothing.⁶⁹⁹

Stead was also excited to report on “The Women’s Memorial,” which had been organized by a group of women around Frances [Fanny] Albert and promoted by the October Issue of the *Englishwoman’s Review*,⁷⁰⁰ that was acquiring signed sheets of vellum from Darlington, Ripon, York, Northallerton, Newcastle, and Gateshead: “The movement has been set on foot and carried thus far to completion in the short space of one fortnight. The vellum will bear signatures commanding the highest respect.”⁷⁰¹ This Memorial, addressed to Queen Victoria directly, obtained 43,845 signatures from women all over England⁷⁰²—the *Daily News* reported that it obtained 11,955 signatures in only nine days.⁷⁰³ On 7 October, the *Daily News* quoted Fanny Albert, who wrote that “Almost every letter I have received expresses relief at being able to turn to her Majesty at once as a Queen whose power for good can sway nations, and as a woman whose sympathy and compassion for every form of suffering have endeared her to all classes of her subjects.”⁷⁰⁴ On 26 October, the same paper reported that that Queen was “graciously pleased to receive” the Memorial, and it reported on the earnest gratitude given by two Bulgarian delegates, “D. Zankof and Marco P. Balabnow,”⁷⁰⁵ who declared their hope that “with the help of Englishwomen, God will also at last be able to bring to an end [Bulgarian women’s]

⁶⁹⁹ “Women’s Work for Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 19 September 1876.

⁷⁰⁰ This Women’s Memorial will be discussed further below. See also Anne Summers’ chapter “British Women and Cultures of Internationalism, c. 1815-1914,” in David Feldman (Ed.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 187-209.

⁷⁰¹ “The Women’s Memorial,” *Northern Echo*, 2 October 1876.

⁷⁰² *Englishwoman’s Review*, October 1876, pp. 452-5.

⁷⁰³ Cited in G. C. Thompson, *Public Opinion*, 422.

⁷⁰⁴ “The Eastern Question: Women’s Memorial,” *Daily News*, 7 October 1876.

⁷⁰⁵ “Women’s Memorial,” *Daily News*, 26 October, 1876. Anglicized versions of Dragan Tsankov and Marko Dimitriev Balabanov, future Bulgarian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, respectively.

sufferings and the miseries of their country.”⁷⁰⁶ That the Women’s Memorial collected such a vast amount of signatories amongst only women in such a short amount of time speaks both to the popularity of public protest amongst even the unenfranchised and also to the well-established organizational structure of women’s organizations throughout the country.

Gladstone’s Blackheath speech was, in Owen Mulpetre’s words, “the summit of Stead’s campaign.”⁷⁰⁷ After September, the agitation began to lose intensity. A counter-protest formed in opposition to the Agitation and increased in confidence. A growing minority of petitions sent to the Foreign Office resolved their “fullest confidence in Lord Beaconsfield and Her Majesty’s Ministers.”⁷⁰⁸ These petitions, composed by various conservative associations across the country, declared their “sincere sympathy and admiration of Lord Derby as exemplified in his masterly policy during the present Eastern difficulties.”⁷⁰⁹ At a speech in Aylesbury on 20 September, Disraeli publicly voiced his criticism of Gladstone’s opportunism in similarly uncompromising terms: “He outrages the principle of patriotism, which is the soul of free communities.... Such conduct [will cause] general havoc and ruin ... fairly described as worse than any of those Bulgarian atrocities which now occupy attention,”⁷¹⁰ and lamented how a “large portion of the people are ... absorbed by other objects than the desire to maintain the permanent interests of this country and the peace of Europe.”⁷¹¹ Despite a scathing attack on Disraeli by *The Times* the following morning, declaring that he had made “one of the gravest charges ever made by

⁷⁰⁶ “Women’s Memorial,” *Daily News*, 26 October, 1876.

⁷⁰⁷ Mulpetre, “W.T. Stead,” 93.

⁷⁰⁸ FO 78/2556 no .70. Barton-upon-Irwell Constitutional Association and Club, 17 October 1876.

⁷⁰⁹ FO 78/2556 no .70.

⁷¹⁰ Quoted in Blake, *Disraeli*, 602.

⁷¹¹ As quoted by “London, Thursday, September 21, 1876,” *The Times*, 21 September 1876.

one eminent English statesman against another,”⁷¹² the Conservative candidate nevertheless eked out a win in the Buckinghamshire by-election. Even though this riding was a Conservative stronghold for a generation, it demonstrated the upward limits of the public agitation—by no means was it unanimous nor was it entirely successful in its political goals.

On 9 November, Disraeli delivered another impassioned speech at the annual Lord Mayor’s banquet at Guildhall in London (also attended by Gladstone) that aggressively reasserted Britain’s vital national interest in defending Turkey against Russian encroachment: “Although the policy of England is peace, there is no country so well prepared for war as our own. If she enters into conflict in a righteous cause ... her resources, I feel, are inexhaustible.” This sentiment was the origins of a popular music hall jingle authored by G. H. MacDermott and G. W. Hunt soon after his Guildhall speech:

*We don't want to fight but by jingo if we do
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too
We've fought the Bear before, and while we're Britons true
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.*

The impending threat of war with Russia exposed the moral dilemma of the high-minded supporters of the Agitation. Although Stead openly welcomed Russian intervention to defend Christians in Turkey, many were less optimistic about Russian intentions, including the eventual socialist Henry Hyndman, who “could not see that the desire to emancipate

⁷¹² “Lord Beaconsfield at Aylesbury,” *The Times*, 21 September 1876.

Christian populations ... was sufficient justification for supporting the growing and aggressive despotism of Russia.”⁷¹³

Gauging the Importance of the Bulgarian Agitation

Queen Victoria was undoubtedly transfixed by the Eastern Question; her diary records many telegrams, letters, meetings and conversations with ministers, ambassadors, and statesmen discussing high-level negotiations between the Great Powers during the crisis of 1876-1878. The Queen, however, made no note of the Agitation until after the publication of Gladstone’s “violent pamphlet” in early September. Several times after, Victoria noted her vexation at Gladstone and the “mischievous” disturbances he was creating. On 1 October, she noted a letter from Disraeli that was “very indignant at Russia’s proceedings, which are, no doubt, greatly encouraged by the language held by Mr. Gladstone, Mr. [Lose], Mr. [Fawcett], and others.”⁷¹⁴ Two days later she poignantly noted how the Lord Chancellor “lamented over the recklessness of the language at the so called ‘Atrocity Meetings,’ which did so much harm.”⁷¹⁵ Noting the shift in public opinion away from the agitation to focus on the growing threat of war, Victoria quickly concluded on 4 October that “The people in the country beginning to come to their sense.”⁷¹⁶ several days afterward she deduced that “Mr. Gladstone’s agitations are now being understood and realised at their just value – all seem rallying around the Government and the papers are all writing in a very sensible way.”⁷¹⁷

⁷¹³ Henry Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 180.

⁷¹⁴ Queen Victoria’s Journals, Volume 66, p. 1, 1 October 1876.

⁷¹⁵ Queen Victoria’s Journals, Volume 66, p. 3, 3 October 1876.

⁷¹⁶ Queen Victoria’s Journals, Volume 66, pp. 4-5, 4 October 1876.

⁷¹⁷ Queen Victoria’s Journals, Volume 66, p. 8, 7 October 1876.

Remarkably, Queen Victoria made no specific mention of the Women's Memorial, signed by 43,845 female subjects, which was delivered to her residence in Balmoral in October during the middle of October. Although her secretary replied to the petitioners that the Queen had "graciously" accepted their memorial (as reported in the *Daily News* on 26 October), her diary during this week records only the weather, her walks with her daughters, exasperation over "So many Telegrams and letters, and often the former are very conflicting,"⁷¹⁸ "talk about papers, especially those referring to the Eastern Question,"⁷¹⁹ her candid exclamation regarding the 37th anniversary of her engagement day with Albert ("Oh! What a Happy Day!"⁷²⁰), and the preparations being made for the imperial Durbar to celebrate her coronation as the Empress of India.⁷²¹ Judging from her journals, we can see that the Agitation had a limited impact on Queen Victoria as she saw the campaign as little more than political mischief—excitable subjects manipulated by opportunistic Liberals who were ignorant of the real interests of her Empire. The Agitation, however, was an antagonist that did affect her actions; in one case the Queen threatened to abdicate should Britain "kiss the feet of Russia"⁷²² and give in to popular protests by abandoning a strategic alliance with the Porte.

Undoubtedly, Disraeli was keenly aware of the political implications of the Agitation. Disraeli made his impassioned Guildhall speech as a defence of his policies and to generate some of his own political momentum, while he also acquiesced to several of the Agitation's demands to deflate mounting criticisms. Disraeli carefully tiptoed around politically

⁷¹⁸ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, p. 12, 11 October 1876.

⁷¹⁹ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, p. 16, 16 October 1876.

⁷²⁰ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, p. 15, 15 October 1876.

⁷²¹ Queen Victoria's Journals, Volume 66, 23 October 1876.

⁷²² Quoted in Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 171.

damaging situations. This included avoiding war with Russia, despite his hawkish inclinations and willingness to use the threat of war to accomplish his goals (seen many times over at the Congress of Berlin). As we will later see, the discourses of the Agitation—and the responses to it—also shaped the negotiation of foreign policy from the Constantinople Conference onwards. As Davide Rodogno argues, “the greatest success of the protesters was the fabrication of a coherent and teleological history of massacre and atrocities of Ottoman Christians”⁷²³ that provided the context of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” solutions of the Great Eastern crisis, even amongst Conservatives and non-partisan diplomats.

During the following months, representatives of the Great Powers negotiated on how best to secure the general peace of Europe by securing the safety of Christians in the European provinces of Turkey. The reports of massacre from MacGahan, Schuyler, and Baring served as the factual bases for action amongst every Great Power. The Russian intelligentsia was linked to British society through its well-connected ambassadors (particularly Pyotr Shuvalov) and through the British media; unsurprisingly they reacted strongly to the reports of massacre in Bulgaria and campaigned for Russian intervention, either to unite fellow Orthodox Christians under Russian rule (Panslavists, led by Fyodor Dostoevsky) or to “liberate” Bulgaria along with other Slav states (led by Ivan Turgenev).⁷²⁴ Turgenev, in particular, engendered anti-British sentiment amongst Russian protestors in his satirical poem, *Крокет в Виндзоре* (Croquet at Windsor), which

⁷²³ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 159.

⁷²⁴ Although it is a fascinating topic, I am unable to devote adequate space to Russia’s own campaign of public protest. Russian historiography of their own “Bulgarian Agitation” is somewhat limited (typically rolled into discussions of Panslavism and coloured by decades of Soviet scholarship that sought to promote historic ties between Bulgaria and Russia).

juxtaposed Queen Victoria playing croquet while the heads of the women and children rolled at the feet of Turks in Bulgaria.⁷²⁵ This vehement (although altogether more elite-focussed) public protest campaign in Russia was similarly important in outlining “acceptable” resolutions to Russian statesmen during the following diplomatic negotiations. Perhaps the quintessential image of the Bulgarian Horrors is Konstantin Makovsky’s “The Bulgarian Matyresses,” painted in 1877 (Figure 4.4).

⁷²⁵ Turgenev also wrote a poem entitled “The Bulgarian” (1876), which told the story of Bulgarian women who were sent to the harem. Note the similar fixation on the suffering and sexual exploitation of women. Many other Russian artists produced works to support solidarity with the south Slavs, including Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who composed his famous March Slav in 1876.



Figure 4.5: Konstantin Makovski. *The Bulgarian Martyresses*. Oil on Canvas. 1877.

Although the painting was unlikely to be seen by a British audience until well after its composition, the image is nevertheless representative of a general Western imagination surrounding narratives of Ottoman brutality against European Christians. Makovski's painting depicts three dark-skinned Ottoman soldiers (a Circassian, a hook-nosed Turk,

and a black African) in the process of raping and murdering two half-naked, white-skinned young women—one of whom clutching at her infant—inside a desecrated Orthodox church. Through Russian eyes, the strategic goal of reaching Constantinople to allow access to the Mediterranean Sea here combined with fervent religious and racial irredentism and “humanitarian” grounds to provide powerful motivations towards war. Stead, in correspondence with Russian officials and agitators, pressed for the Russian declaration of war against Turkey and commended Russian volunteers fighting alongside the Serbians and Montenegrins, arguing that “negotiations will be much simplified now that the Turks have to negotiate with a Russian revolver pressed close to their heads.”⁷²⁶

Throughout the summer of 1876, British diplomats worked to keep Russia at bay during the Serbian and Montenegrin wars with Turkey. They hoped to preserve Great Power neutrality during the crisis and to avoid general war. This strategy was generally successful, but in November, Slavic defeats and the Ottoman advance on Belgrade led to a Russian ultimatum that it would recall its ambassador and declare war on the Ottomans if they did not immediately sign an armistice—citing fears of another Turkish massacre. Lord Derby, increasingly influenced by the Agitation (as will be discussed in depth next chapter), suggested that a conference be called to organize an acceptable settlement, including the implementation of order and reforms in Turkish territories, and forced the Ottomans to agree to accept the results under the threat of British neutrality during an almost certain war with Russia.⁷²⁷ Recycling the arguments of petitioners (whose petitions he read as a

⁷²⁶ *Northern Echo*, 1 November 1876.

⁷²⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 118.

part of his daily routine at the Foreign Office) and Gladstone's "voice of reason," Derby established the basis for negotiations to solve the Eastern Question permanently.

The resulting Constantinople Conference of the European Great Powers—which excluded Ottoman delegates from negotiations—demanded autonomy for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and two Bulgarian provinces under Western-drafted constitutions, laws, and tax codes all under international supervision to ensure implementation. On 23 December, the same day that the European Powers delivered their final agreement to the Ottomans, however, Sultan Abdul Hamid II (who had replaced Murad V after a mere 93 days), approved a new constitution that arguably made the European dictate redundant.⁷²⁸ Appreciation of the Ottoman domestic context demonstrates that the demands made by the European powers were wholly unacceptable to Ottoman officials, both reformers and conservatives, as they would have resulted in the further delegitimizing of Ottoman authority, additional instability in Constantinople, and very likely a coup d'état or the eruption of widespread civil chaos. Thus, on 18 January 1877, the Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha formally rejected the demands of the Constantinople Conference after unsuccessfully pleading to the British plenipotentiary Lord Salisbury to moderate demands or to reach an acceptable compromise.⁷²⁹ With British neutrality all but assured due to the Bulgarian Agitation, and Turkey unable to accept draconian European demands for reform, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 24 April 1877.

⁷²⁸ Gladstone mocked the achievement, sarcastically noting in his diary: "Turkish Constitution!!!" *Gladstone Diaries*, 183.

⁷²⁹ Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, "Midhat Paşa'nın Gizli Bir Siyasî Teşebbüsü," *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler* (Ankara, 1948), 473-4, quoted in Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 118.

Conclusions

In traditional accounts, the media coverage, the public meetings, the petition campaign, and the organized relief efforts of the Bulgarian Agitation have been seen as an ancillary sideshow to the “real” political and diplomatic history of the Great Eastern Crisis. Yet the Agitation did more than simply reflect “public opinion” and underlying social structures; through community-level activism, agitators were engaged in meaningful political participation that empowered and solidified opposition against “unfeeling” British foreign policy. Agitators used and negotiated well-worn patterns of perception through public meetings, media campaigns, the signing of petitions, and donations to relief organizations to create cultural discourses and material structures that shaped acceptable and unacceptable courses of action in response to the crisis. Although it can be argued that the petitions drawn by the Bulgarian Agitators were not influential documents in their own right because statesmen (and the Queen) were dismissive of them, these petitions nevertheless represent the community-level participatory political processes that swept across Great Britain. These processes involved hundreds of thousands of Britons and encouraged democratic momentum. This also intersected the divide between the general public (including women and the unenfranchised) and the established political authority through media debates, public speeches, volunteer work, and the drafting of signed resolutions addressed to policy-makers. The Bulgarian Agitation also galvanized Conservatives as the opponents to the Liberal agitation eventually found their voice against what they perceived to be “reckless” idealism. Yet both supporters of government policy and the opposition found common ground along certain ubiquitous assumptions, including the established “facts” of the barbarity of the Turks and the idea that peace in Southeast

Europe could only be preserved through the substantial autonomy of the Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

The campaign of public meetings and petition-writing outlined distinct veins of cultural understanding of the political crisis in the East. These included religiously- and racially-deterministic views of the Turks, their subject Christians, and the future of the Ottoman Empire; growing assumptions of national self-determination as the only feasible basis for international peace; highly sexualized perceptions of violence, the “carnal” brutality, and the “sensual fatalism” of the Muslim faith; and obsession over the reputation and “honour” of the British Empire. Each of these veins facilitated the “horror and indignation” that drove the powerful campaign of public protest towards a foreign policy that was supposedly based on the “principles of humanity.” Despite these ingrained prejudices, however, it is also possible to argue against the common assertion that all Balkan inhabitants were seen through “Balkanist” lenses espousing the contemporary pejorative connotations of deceit and violence.⁷³⁰ Late-1870s attitudes became dominated by anti-Turkish attitudes and general sympathy to their Christian subject populations. Even Balkanist discourses were as likely to support the case for Balkan self-government to counter the pernicious influence of Ottoman rule. Indeed, settlements at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 created modern Balkan states with the assumption of political legitimacy and national self-determination for “Christian races” in the Balkan Peninsula, something categorically denied to non-Christian and non-White subject populations elsewhere.

⁷³⁰ Milicia Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme “Balkans”: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics,” *Slavic Review*. 51, 1 (Spring 1992), 1-15; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*; Todorova, “The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention,” 453-482.

The Bulgarian Agitation of 1876 onwards demonstrates the interconnections between foreign policy, the media, and community based political action. Public meetings, petitions, and British newspapers were the intersections between “low level” popular protest and “high level” diplomacy and public discussions over the character and purpose of the British Empire. The under-explored historical territory of community-based political action demonstrates crystallization points of dissent amongst the nominally powerless and the tangible power of the media, public opinion and cultural entrepreneurs in the late 1870s—a model which may prove useful in many historical contexts. How British subjects perceived the roles and responsibilities of their government and Empire in the uncertain and unstable world of the late nineteenth century becomes clearer through our appreciation of their reactions to news of massacre in the faraway European provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Many Britons, increasingly empowered and concerned about the world around them, attended public meetings, wrote letters, became signatories to petitions, and gave time and money to relief organizations. This process shows us more about common preconceptions and worldviews of many ordinary and extraordinary people during this period. It helps us decipher the fascinating connections between prevalent languages of understanding and the crystallization points whereby individuals took action to shape the world around them.

5. Reading Beside the Lines: Marginalia, W. E. Gladstone, and the Bulgarian Horrors.

How can we recapture the mental processes by which readers appropriated texts? How can we avoid anachronism, the fatal sin of most historical research? One of the best strategies leads through marginalia.... "That is all very good," says the devil, "but the history of reading—in fact, the whole field of the history of books—never really got off the ground, because it simply isn't feasible. It promises a great deal, but it doesn't deliver."

Robert Darnton, 1992⁷³¹

Traditional forms of marginalia are virtually extinct.⁷³² Digital media are continually transforming readership and readers' responses away from handwritten scribbles in margins towards entirely different forms of note-taking and commentary.⁷³³ The medium of marginalia's transformation, however, has paradoxically given scholars powerful tools for its historical appreciation. Digitization has greatly expanded access to previously isolated archival material and allowed for previously unimaginable or impractical avenues of historical inquiry, including closer attention to the reading habits and note-making of certain historical actors. In certain areas and episodes of history, new technologies have made the study of readership and marginalia much more feasible than Robert Darnton's devil proclaimed; indeed, it has the potential to "deliver" traces of mental processes by which readers appropriated texts.

⁷³¹ Robert Darnton, "Seven Bad Reasons Not to Study Manuscripts," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 4, 4 (1992): 37-4. Quotation marks added.

⁷³² I use "marginalia" to refer to all types of readers' marks in a text (both verbal and non-verbal) and "traditional marginalia" as handwritten marks on the printed page.

⁷³³ While some software emulates the process of traditional marginalia, the added level of complexity creates barriers to the creation of handwritten marginal notes. New methods of digital note taking include highlighting or commentary that may be shared via social media or online book stores. While this process may actually increase the production of marginalia and reestablish social reading as the norm, it is entirely different to the self-reflexive and offhand processes of marginalia created in private or semi-private books.

The extraordinary collection located at Gladstone's Library⁷³⁴ in the small Welsh town of Hawarden is a case in point. This library houses the personal collection of William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), the larger-than-life British statesman and polymath whose unsurpassed political career spanned six decades and four separate terms as Prime Minister. Gladstone kept a meticulous diary throughout most of his life that recorded his activities, his myriad political and personal correspondences, and also the books that he was reading on each day.⁷³⁵ Gladstone was an avid reader in many subjects, his favourites being theology, classics, and history. At times he devoured several books a day, and he often made extensive marginalia upon the pages. Gladstone marked or underlined key passages, made corrections, approved and disapproved of statements, made indices for his own reference, and wrote brief passages in the margins. By the end of his life, Gladstone had amassed an enormous collection of 32,000 volumes. Between 2006 and 2009, Gladstone's Library and the University of Liverpool undertook a collective effort to identify his personal volumes housed within the library and digitally catalogue his marginalia throughout these texts.⁷³⁶ The resulting database (GladCAT) is now freely available online. By cross-referencing GladCAT with Gladstone's diaries, scholars can now not only identify *what* Gladstone was reading *when*, they can also easily search through each of these documents for Gladstone's marginalia. This process allows for unique insights into the

⁷³⁴ Until 2010, Gladstone's Library was known as St. Deiniol's.

⁷³⁵ Gladstone's diary generally did not provide much in the way of daily reflection as it was more a daily ledger of correspondences, activities, meetings, and readings. On his birthday (29 December), however, Gladstone typically wrote longer reflective passages that have frequently been cited as means for understanding his frame of mind in the preceding year.

⁷³⁶ Matthew Bradley, 2009, "GladCAT: An Online Catalogue of the Books and Reading of William Ewart Gladstone," <<http://www.st-deiniols.com/static/gladstones/uploads/documents/public/guide-to-gladcat.pdf>>, Accessed 11 October 2012.

thought processes of Gladstone at critical periods of his career as reflected in the margins of his books.

Gladstone's marginalia are particularly revealing in the context of the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878. In this chapter, I will show how Gladstone's intervention was critical in transforming British foreign policy with regards to the Eastern Question and, consequently, in the collapse of Ottoman authority in Southeastern Europe and the creation of new Balkan states. Contrary to long-lasting historical consensus that Gladstone correctly—and prophetically—understood that “the future [of the Balkans] lay with the nations whom Ottoman tyranny had so long submerged,”⁷³⁷ Gladstone's marginalia reveal that it was actually his *limited* reading about Southeastern Europe before the summer of 1876 that shaped his initial and most powerful response. It was a unique reaction based on popular cultural tropes and racial stereotypes yet tempered by his governmental experience and classical education. In *The Bulgarian Horrors*, Gladstone codified wild rumours circulating in the media engendered by the lack of reliable information—creating what became in effect a self-fulfilling prophesy of Balkan national self-determination within the context of intensifying Great Power rivalries. It was only in late 1876 that Gladstone did extensive reading into the subject to support his resolved opposition to Benjamin Disraeli's foreign policy, his vilification of the Ottoman Empire as “the one great anti-human specimen of humanity,” and his advocacy for the autonomy of Christian provinces of Turkey-in-Europe. As he read, Gladstone became increasingly convinced that he had made the right predictions.

⁷³⁷ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 570. A. J. P. Taylor, Eugenio Biagini, and Richard Shannon also venerate the Liberal statesman's opposition to Disraeli as prophetic to the new order that would govern international relations.

Gladstone's marginalia thus provide a unique link between relatively recent advances in the scholarly understanding of social history, cultural discourses, and community-based political action and the macro-level formation of foreign policy. Archival digitization, online archival access, and search engines allow researchers to rapidly explore vast quantities of historical evidence, which have become less isolated by institutional, disciplinary, and international boundaries. This allows for more precise tracking of influential ideas through print media, forceful personalities, and organizations as these ideas are conceived, dispersed, negotiated, and then reified through collective behaviour and historical change. Historians have increasingly powerful tools that may evaluate and challenge simplistic theories of social action and policy formation that may account for changes of behaviour at the individual level,⁷³⁸ and the complicated overlapping of seemingly contradictory ideologies, thus recovering a more accurate hierarchy of historical causation, significance, and meaning. It is through an appreciation of what Gladstone was reading when, and through analysis of his marginalia in those texts, that we can gauge how wider cultural predispositions were—or were not—effective in shaping Gladstone's powerful response to the Bulgarian Horrors. As such, this is a potentially attractive methodology for scholars of international history where the sources permit.

Adopting Methods for Marginalia

The methods of using marginalia in general historical studies are ambiguous due to marginalia's idiosyncratic nature. William Sherman, who in 2009 counted himself as a part

⁷³⁸ I follow Lynn Hunt in emphasizing "any account of historical change must in the end account for the alteration of *individual* minds." *Inventing Human Rights*, (New York: London, 2009), 34. Emphasis added.

of a number of scholars who recently “caught the marginalia bug,”⁷³⁹ speaks to the extraordinary difficulty of generalizing or locating any “easy answers” due to the vast quantities of marginalia found scattered throughout historical documents that are “resistant to grand theories and master narratives.”⁷⁴⁰ Different readers create marginalia for a variety of reasons, and different historical circumstances have either encouraged or discouraged the creation of it along contemporary cultural values of reading and ownership. In some areas and periods of history, there may not be any significant marginalia at all. Where it does exist, marginalia’s significance remains contingent on its historical context and the motivations of its creator (when authorship can be established), so it is very much a quandary for researchers and archivists in their respective areas. Appreciation for marginalia ranges from topic to topic: personal annotations can be seen as simply a quaint facet of the archive, such as bridge scores penned beside recipes for Sheep’s Head Broth in the *Aberdeen Cookery Book*,⁷⁴¹ or a source for amusing anecdotes of what so-and-so said about the work of so-and-so, such as Darwin’s evaluation of Wordsworth’s poem “Surprised by Joy” as “poignant,”⁷⁴² Sir Joshua Reynolds’ angry comment “Villain! did Christ seek the Praise of Rulers?” towards Francis Bacon’s *Essays*,⁷⁴³ or Vladimir Nabokov’s grading of authors in his copy of *Fifty-five Short Stories from The New Yorker, 1940-1950* (his own “Colette” received an “A+”).⁷⁴⁴ Or a researcher could go

⁷³⁹ William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), xii.

⁷⁴⁰ Sherman, *Used Books*, xvi.

⁷⁴¹ Quoted in Jackson, *Marginalia*, 11-12. Jackson suggests that this suggests habits of working-class readers.

⁷⁴² Quoted in Jackson, *Marginalia*, 14. See also: Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁷⁴³ Quoted in Jackson, *Marginalia*, 83.

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted in Mark O’Connell, “The Marginal Obsession with Marginalia,” *The New Yorker*, 26 January 2012, accessed 27 January 2012 at: < <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/01/the-marginal-obsession-with-marginalia.html>>

too far in the other direction by stating that an author's marginalia are somehow an unrestricted view into the mind of its creator.⁷⁴⁵ Along these lines, the use of marginalia in historical narratives beyond the history of the book seems scattershot at best; it seems to promise much more than it can actually deliver.

The case of Gladstone's marginalia, however, may be the exception to this rule. Not only is there an enormous amount of marginalia in his personal documents (some 11,000 annotated texts) and a detailed record of what he was reading each day in his diary, he also had a reasonably consistent code for the marks he left in his books. In the second volume of his complete works of John Locke, Gladstone wrote down the key to understanding the non-text marks in his books: underlining or lines in the margins signified "notice"; special notice was "NB"; "approbation" was "+"; "disapprobation" was "X," "XX," or "XXX" (depending on the level of disagreement); doubts were "?"; disbelief or surprise "at statement, or, manner of statement" was "!"; and reservations or qualifications to a point were marked "*ma*" (Italian for "but").⁷⁴⁶ His commentary, although often brief and sometimes illegible, was thoughtful and reflected critical engagement with the text. Gladstone was extremely self-assured, and undoubtedly knew—indeed promoted the idea—that his diaries and personal volumes would be read by others, even eventually by members of the public.⁷⁴⁷ Although these facts lessen the unselfconscious and private nature of his marginalia, they do not undermine its usefulness. Gladstone's unfailing self-

⁷⁴⁵ Jackson argues against the "common assumption" that "they are spontaneous, impulsive, uninhibited; that they offer direct access to the reader's mind; that they are private and therefore trustworthy," as they "fail to take into account inherent complexities of motivation and historical circumstance," *Marginalia*, 99.

⁷⁴⁶ Bradley, "A Guide to GladCAT," 9. Gladstone also used "v" or checkmarks to denote notice (usually connoting agreement) and also a backward "?" mark (⸮) with an unclear meaning.

⁷⁴⁷ "Gladstone and His Library," <<http://www.st-deiniols.com/gladstones-library/>>, Accessed 11 January 2013.

righteousness⁷⁴⁸ suggests that he was unashamed of his commentary and firmly believed what he wrote, at least at the time, whether it was a speech to be delivered in parliament, a letter to a friend, or marks in the margins of one of his books.

To my knowledge, no studies have made the marginalia of identifiable historical actors, policy makers, bureaucrats, dissidents, or statespersons the central part of their analyses. Scholars have, on the other hand, long used marginalia for additional insight into medieval manuscripts,⁷⁴⁹ literary figures,⁷⁵⁰ and pre-modern social history. Roger Stoddard's pioneering exhibition catalogue, *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (1985), can be seen as the precursor to a recent upward trend in marginalia studies, one that seductively tempts researchers by the "thousand little mysteries"⁷⁵¹ to be discovered in the margins of used books. In the last twenty-five years, the history of reading and the book has gained in popularity alongside the linguistic and cultural turns, and it has in turn generated a number of thoughtful pieces regarding the use of readers' marks in books and

⁷⁴⁸ Ian St John writes "If Hegel saw the state as the march of God through the world, then Gladstone came perilously close to claiming that he represented the deity's march through the nineteenth century ... whoever deigned to challenge him was by default doing the work of the Devil," *Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem Press, 2010), 401.

⁷⁴⁹ As early as 1934, Eva Matthews Sanford used anonymous comments in the margins of Lucan's epic *Bellum Civile* to show that it was actually venerated by its students and contemporaries, not scorned as was believed by scholars at the time, and that this discrepancy showed both the anachronistic assumptions of historians and a vague "clue to the workings of the mediaeval mind": Eva Matthews Sanford, "The Manuscripts of Lucan: Accessus and Marginalia," *Speculum* 9, 3 (1934): 278. This point certainly predates Robert Darnton's much more famous observation in *The Great Cat Massacre* (1985) regarding the usefulness of understanding unfamiliar perspectives in historical contexts in showing changes in societal attitudes.

⁷⁵⁰ For example, Merton M. Sealts authored *Melville's Reading* in 1966, which catalogued Herman Melville's annotated copies of Shakespeare, Deal's *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (1839), and Chase's *Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex* (1821), which gives insight into the life and thoughts into the author of *Moby Dick* and undoubtedly altered future readings of his work. The online database "Melville's Marginalia Online" (<<http://melvillemarginalia.org>>) provides access to the approximately 1,000 annotated personal volumes of Melville as well as books he was known to have borrowed.

⁷⁵¹ Roger E. Stoddard, *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Library, 1985). Stoddard recently compiled the 832 page *A Bibliographical Description of Books and Pamphlets of American Verse Printed from 1610 Through 1820* (2012) and included many notes regarding the marks upon these documents. Notably absent is a thorough analysis of the marginalia; it is used more to identify books than to understand them.

manuscripts in unpacking aspects of reading and readership, textuality,⁷⁵² and wider cultural understanding.⁷⁵³

Heather Jackson's 2001 seminal book *Marginalia* establishes some basic commonalities amongst readers' notes in texts, namely that they are guided by both conscious and unconscious responses and that they neither constitute a reader's passive reflections nor simply a "conversation" between the reader and the author.⁷⁵⁴ She instead favours the framework of Roland Barthes, who suggested that the reader is simultaneously constrained by structures imposed by the text but also free to pervert the text itself.⁷⁵⁵ Jackson also suggests the presence of "silent witnesses" in the interaction between the reader and author because of the enduring potential for the marginalia to be read by others.⁷⁵⁶ These "silent witnesses" are indeed critical when considering Gladstone's annotations; he was aware that his historical importance would mean that his notes would eventually be public. Gladstone read his adversaries' publications as much as he read those

⁷⁵² See, for example: Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink, "Introduction: The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, 3 (2010): 345-361 and Jason Snart's 2003 article "Recentring Blake's Marginalia" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66, 1 (2003): 134-153 and 2006 book *The Torn Book: UnReading William Blake's Marginalia* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵³ See, as a small sample: Anthony Grafton, "Is the History of Reading a Marginal Enterprise? Guillaum Budé and His Books" *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 91, 2 (1997), 139-57 and *Commerce with the Classics, Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), and Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Eds.) *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷⁵⁴ Jackson writes that "The essential and defining character of the marginal note throughout its history is that it is a responsive kind of writing permanently anchored to preexisting written words" (*Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 81) and she notes a substantial "difference between live social engagement and the enchanted mental space of reading" (85). Note that Sherman later takes issue with her use of the terms "marginalia" and "reading" (at least in the pre-modern context) as opposed to "marks" and "use" since the former terms are loaded with modern cultural assumptions (Sherman, *Used Books*, xi).

⁷⁵⁵ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 89, and Roland Barthes, "Sur la lecture," 40.

⁷⁵⁶ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 100.

of his allies, and his commentary and marks of “disapprobation” reveal the extent to which he was able to “pervert” the structures of those texts.

While Jackson makes brief reference to Gladstone’s “remarkable” collection housed in Hawarden, she also laments his “less engaged” system of marks and limited direct commentary. In the context of Victorian Britain’s greatly expanded reading population, Jackson further comments that “Gladstone’s example is not exceptional.”⁷⁵⁷ In her 2005 book *Romantic Readers*, Jackson explains that the availability of cheaper books in Victorian Britain reduced the social element of reading and annotation. As copies of books became “private property” in personal collections and libraries, marginalia were discouraged and the practice of long, engaged annotations (such as William Blake or Samuel Coleridge’s marginalia) diminished.⁷⁵⁸ While Gladstone’s minimalist marginalia may be unexceptional to a historian of the book, especially before it was so thoroughly catalogued, I argue that his example is indeed extraordinary when viewed with regard to the community-based political action occurring in Britain in response to pivotal international developments occurring in Southeastern Europe during the Great Eastern Crisis. Gladstone’s written annotations are indeed rare when compared to his coded marks, yet much can be gleaned from these non-verbal marks with respect to their location or absence, their approval or disapproval of this text, and—with the help of his diary—their temporal context.

The use of marginalia has been almost exclusively confined to the study of culture and literature and it remains almost entirely absent from the study of politics and international history despite its potential to connect cultural trends with prominent

⁷⁵⁷ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 74.

⁷⁵⁸ H.J. Jackson, *Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), *xiii-xiv* and 12-7.

historical actors and the production of foreign policy. Scholars have understandably focused on famous authors and celebrities instead of politicians and diplomats, or more recently on the “everyday” marginalia of anonymous readers in order to better understand larger cultural perceptions or indeed to give voice to the “silent” or marginalized in history.⁷⁵⁹ This chapter suggests the possibility of using marginalia to attribute widespread cultural perceptions to specific examples of political action using an appreciation of Gladstone’s decisive personal role during the Bulgarian Agitation.

An appreciation of Gladstone’s marginalia before and during the Bulgarian Agitation reveals the reciprocal and negotiated relationships between the British media, public town hall meetings and the drafting of widely-signed petitions, powerful dissidents such as Gladstone and his colleagues, and—critically—the government, the formation of foreign policy, and the course of international history. While other scholars have exhaustively researched Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation using evidence from his writings and diaries—almost exclusively in British context⁷⁶⁰—it is in his marginalia that we find some of the most revealing clues into Gladstone’s thoughts and actions. This includes the extent to which his background reading shaped his own interpretation of events along perceptible veins of cultural understanding. His marginalia confirm that Gladstone subscribed to Whiggish ideals of civilizational progress, Romantic nationalism, ethnography and racial hierarchy, Orientalist “Turkophobia,” Anglo-centrism, and his unique variety of

⁷⁵⁹ An example of this is William Sherman’s chapter devoted to uncovering women’s annotations in the Renaissance “Matriarchive” (Sherman, *Used Books*, 53-70). Another would be the use of marginalia in the end-pages of children’s books to reveal children’s “attitudes in a particularly raw state” of learning penmanship (Jackson, *Marginalia*, 19-24).

⁷⁶⁰ Exceptions include Robert W. Seton-Watson’s highly racialized *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (New York: Norton, 1972 [1935]) and Richard Millman’s *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1857-1878* (London: Clarendon Press, 1979), yet both retain Britain as the focus of study.

nonconformist influenced, evangelical Anglicanism. But, perhaps more revealingly, his readings also reveal Gladstone's preoccupations with fiscal policy, Irish nationalism, national classification, and classical and ecclesiastical studies and show his private, conceptual interactions with these topics in his marginalia immediately preceding his public, material interactions with matters upon which he had direct influence. Understanding how Gladstone's preconceptions translated into pressures on foreign policy that shaped the course of a major war and ultimately the formation of the modern Balkans demonstrates the sometimes profound international implications of local, domestic cultural codes of understanding. This study, therefore, not only expands the possible uses of marginalia in the digital age, it also demonstrates the potential for detailed study of the nexus between otherwise amorphous cultural discourses, individual decision-making, the production of foreign policies, and the conduct of international relations.⁷⁶¹

Before the Horrors: Gladstone's Background Reading

According to GladCAT and his diary, Gladstone read just three books specifically about Turkey-in-Europe or its constituent populations before the publication of *The Bulgarian Horrors*.⁷⁶² All three books were travelogues, written by affluent and

⁷⁶¹ This thus aims to answer the calls of several recent state-of-the-field works; for example: Patrick Finney, "Introduction: What is International History?" in Finney (Ed.) *Palgrave Advances in International History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jessica Gienow-Hecht, "What Bandwagon? Diplomatic History Today," *The Journal of American History* 95, 4 (2009): 1083-6; Jessica Gienow-Hect, "Introduction," in J. C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (Eds.), *Culture and International History* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004).

⁷⁶² The actual count is likely higher than the evidence suggests given Gladstone's prodigious reading on many tangentially related topics. Yet the remarkably small number of books does demonstrate the limited amount of reading devoted to the issue before 1876 and also its unavailability. Some texts consider Turkey-in-Europe indirectly, such as Samuel Baker's *The Albert N'Yanza, Great Basin of the Nile and Explorations of the Nile Sources* (London: MacMillan, 1867), which revealingly opines that "in the advanced state of civilization of the present era, we look with regret at the possession by the Moslem of the fairest portions of the world... and that such favoured places should, through Moslem rule, be barred from advancement that has attended lands less adapted by nature for development. There are no countries of the earth so valuable, or that would occupy so important a position in the family of nations, as Turkey in Europe ... under a civilized and Christian

adventurous British travellers.⁷⁶³ Many scholars have written about British perceptions of Ottoman Empire and travel writing during this period, most famously Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. Reinhold Schiffer's 1999 book *Oriental Panorama: British Travelers in 19th Century Turkey* gives a more balanced account regarding perceptions of travellers and observers of the Ottoman Empire, helpfully critiquing Said's oversimplified condemnation of all British travel writing as entirely imperialist, sexist, and hegemonic.⁷⁶⁴ In reality, before the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 made Turkish sympathies unacceptable, British writers were as likely to venerate the exotic and seductive Ottoman Empire in Romantic or nostalgic terms as to condemn it, alternating between "turkophile" and "turkophobe" perspectives. Although Schiffer succeeds in showing the diverse cultural preconceptions of nineteenth century British travellers to the Ottoman Empire, Gladstone's annotations in the books he read nevertheless reveal that his own Eastern conceptions were largely one-sided.

The myriad nuances of Gladstone's life, background, influences, and political motivations that shape these preconceptions are impossible to sum up adequately here. His life is the subject of numerous magisterial biographies written by scholars who have

government." (xxix) Gladstone made only limited marginal notes in *The Albert N'Yanza*, but did mark "Rates of progress" in his index on the rear flyleaf, referring to a section of text about African tribes, as well as the "Value of slave girl" and "African commerce".

⁷⁶³ While many travellers considered a sail up the Bosphorus a "must-do," Turkey-in-Europe proved nearly impossible terrain for all but the most adventurous British traveller. Hobhouse remarked that, at least before the Crimean War, "The uninterrupted barbarity of its inhabitants ... [has] caused such difficulties in the delineation of any charts." (Hobhouse, 9). Gladstone did not own (or keep) many books about the Crimean War and GladCAT records that he only annotated one short pamphlet about it before 1876: Thomas Mulock's *The War Destined to Convulse the World* (Stoke-on-Trent: 1855).

⁷⁶⁴ Reinhold Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama: British Travellers in 19th Century Turkey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 1-5. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978): "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was ... a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (204). Schiffer argues that British travelers saw Orient primarily through religious (Christian) terms first, then on a secular historical basis, then aesthetic grounds (82).

devoted their lives to studying the Victorian statesman.⁷⁶⁵ Much has been said about Gladstone's evangelical Anglican upbringing, Tractarian as well as nonconformist sympathies, and the predominance of religion in his thought process.⁷⁶⁶ To quote A. J.P. Taylor and to unavoidably oversimplify Gladstone's motivations, Gladstone was a part of a group of Victorian intellectuals including historians Thomas Carlyle, John Green, Edward Freeman, William Lecky, James Froude, Alexander Kinglake, and William Stubbs, who "all had in common ... [a] belief in Progress. They were all secular missionaries ... They were all, without exception, fervent patriots, eager to crush anyone who should challenge the moral code of their civilization."⁷⁶⁷ Gladstone, like many contemporaries, was obsessed with grand narratives of race, nation, religion, and civilization as much as he was convinced that he was an agent of God bound to uphold the march of progress.⁷⁶⁸ His readings and marginalia confirm this fixation and give insight into the benchmarks that Gladstone used to categorize societies: protection of property and Christian (specifically Protestant) worship, material wealth, manners, cleanliness and beauty.

⁷⁶⁵ Most comprehensive of which are Richard Shannon's *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1975), *Gladstone: 1809-1865* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985), *Gladstone: Heroic Minister (1865-1898)* (London: Penguin, 1999), and *Gladstone: God and Politics* (London: Hambledon & Continuum, 2007); Eugenio Biagini's *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Gladstone* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); and H.C.G. Matthew's *Gladstone: 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷⁶⁶ See Shannon, *Gladstone: God and Politics*, Ian St John, *Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem, 2010), Stewart Brown *Providence and Empire, 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), and David Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

⁷⁶⁷ Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939*. London: H. Hamilton 1957. Typical and most outspoken of these historians was Freeman, whose inspiration, it has been observed, "came not from facts, but from deep and burning prejudices, which owed more to the current political climate than to the hard grind of historical research." Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead, Britain's first Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2012), 32.

⁷⁶⁸ Neither Gladstone's diaries nor GladCAT mention Leopold von Ranke's *History of Serbia, and the Servian Revolution* (Translated 1853), which traces the "rise" of the "Servian Race."

According to his diary, Gladstone read his copy of John Hobhouse (Lord Broughton)'s 1813 book *A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia during the Years 1809-1810* at least three times (14 June 1848, 25 September 1862, and 8 November 1876). While his annotations are relatively light, including the waggish interjection “qy [why] not?” beside a derisive passage describing the “frequent and violent eructation [burping]” by the Turks after a good meal to compliment the host,⁷⁶⁹ some marks are nevertheless revealing. Gladstone marked the generalizing observations of Hobhouse regarding the “uninterrupted barbarity” of Turks and Christians in the region⁷⁷⁰ with a “v,” denoting interest and connoting approval. The Albanian Turks were born with a “grave politeness” (14) and “notwithstanding... their wild and savage appearance, we found them exceedingly mild and good humoured” (31, with a “v” next to mild), Turks “never say ‘Thank-ye’; and a Greek never cries ‘Enough’. No favours are ever granted in Turkey without hope, and expectation of reward” (37, with a notice line and “v” next to “reward”).

Hobhouse's travelogue speaks directly to the classically-trained understandings of British observers who were apt to view the region and its inhabitants through the idealized lens of the ancient world. Hobhouse laments the degeneracy of modern Greek men⁷⁷¹ and

⁷⁶⁹ J.C. Hobhouse, *A Journey Through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia: During the Years 1809-1810. Second Edition, Vol. 1* (London: James Cawthorn, 1813), 34. This seemingly innocent comment actually plays into what Donald Quataert sees as the long-established Western propensity to see the Turk as either a “ruthless savage” or an “amorous buffoon” within a Gomorrah-esque land of sexual perversion. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

⁷⁷⁰ Hobhouse makes no mention of “Bulgarians,” “Slavs,” or any distinction amongst Christians in the region beyond “Greek” (whom he distinguishes into several distinct races) and “Christian.” In fact, he states how Christians “can fairly be called Albanians ... scarcely, if at all, to be distinguished from the Mahometans” (131).

⁷⁷¹ “Their faces are just as such as served for models to the ancient sculptors, and their young men in particular, are of that perfect beauty, which we should consider too soft and effeminate in those of that age in

the universal ugliness of Greek women⁷⁷² compared to the ancient sculptures that would have conditioned British expectations of Greek appearance. Gladstone's own notes and index printed on the rear flyleaf points to his own interests: five pages on "Turk + Christian" relations, a "v" next to observations of higher taxation amongst Christian traders, and many notice marks by discussions of the structure of and debates within the Greek Church. Gladstone's marginalia unsurprisingly reveal his fixation on fiscal policy (having served as the Chancellor of the Exchequer three times before 1876), administering racial tensions (undoubtedly with Ireland in mind), ancient Greece (Gladstone published three volumes on Homeric studies in 1858 and an article in 1879)⁷⁷³ and theological matters (perhaps the single largest focus of Gladstone throughout his life).⁷⁷⁴ While these marks do not greatly illuminate Gladstone's inner thoughts, they do speak to his own preoccupations and how he made notice of politically-relevant elements of a text.

Gladstone cherished another travelogue, first published in 1867 by Georgina (Lady Muir) Mackenzie and Adeline Paulina Irby: *The Turks, The Greeks, and the Slavons: Travels in the Slavonic Provinces in Turkey-in-Europe*.⁷⁷⁵ This extraordinary account of two patrician Englishwomen travelling through an isolated corner of the Ottoman Empire was noted in Gladstone's diary several times: in 1867, in December 1876 and in January

our more northern climate" (495). Note the gendered observation of Greek men as effeminate (and therefore degenerate).

⁷⁷² "I did not myself see any very pretty Greek woman during my tour, I can safely assert" (496); "Their appearance will not make any one entertain an exalted notion of the beauty of the Greek ladies of antiquity" (497).

⁷⁷³ W.E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1858), W.E. Gladstone, "On Epithets of Movement in Homer," *The Nineteenth Century*, 5 (1879), 463–87.

⁷⁷⁴ See, for example, Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: God and Politics* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

⁷⁷⁵ Georgina Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *The Turks, The Greeks, and the Slavons: Travels in the Slavonic Provinces in Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1867).

1877.⁷⁷⁶ The latter dates correspond to when he was asked to write the foreword to the second edition published in early 1877, no doubt because of the exploding interest in the region and because of Gladstone's assumed authority on the subject. Gladstone made extensive annotations in his 1867 edition and wrote in stark praise in his subsequent foreword that no one had contributed "such a valuable contribution to our means of knowledge ... [regarding] the normal state of life among the subject races, the standing relations both between them and their government, and likewise between them and those Mahommedans [*sic*], mainly descended from renegades, who are at once their fellow-subject and their masters."⁷⁷⁷

Irby and Mackenzie's "contribution" to British knowledge is an unambiguous lamentation that stalwart, thrifty, and industrious Christian races should be ruled by cruel, savage, and indolent "Mahometans" (Muslims). In their text Gladstone found ample evidence to support his later writings and speeches on the subject during the Bulgarian Agitation.⁷⁷⁸ He marked a "v" beside the ladies' opinion that "the exceptional misfortune of these conquered nations [the Slavs] lies in the character of their conqueror, in the stolid barbarism of the Mahometan Turk" (*xviii*). He similarly noted "NB" beside a passage stating that "the Osmanlee, or real Turk, is in a very small minority, and is profoundly detested by Albanian and Slavonic Mussulmans, who make no secret of the fact that self-interest alone has bound them to his cause" (*xxiv*), which indicates the presupposition that Christians—

⁷⁷⁶ For a more in-depth discussion of this travelogue, see: Dorothy Anderson, "Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe: Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby," in Sarah Searight (Ed.), *Women Travellers in the Near East*. Oxford: Oxbrow Books, 2005. It is likely that Gladstone returned to this volume more often than noted.

⁷⁷⁷ W.E. Gladstone, "Foreword," Georgina M. Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe* (London: Daldy Isbister & Co., 1877 [1867]), *ix*.

⁷⁷⁸ Including a speech, leaflet, and *Time's* article entitled "The Slavonic Provinces of the Ottoman Empire," based entirely on Irby and Mackenzie's travelogue, published in the *Times* on 17 January 1877, 10.

composed of distinct Slavonic races—would never willingly convert to Islam and would similarly never accept “foreign” rule.⁷⁷⁹ Irby and Mackenzie made many observations on the racial characteristics amongst the “Slavons” using an amorphous amalgam of qualities including physical attributes, dress, language, religion, history (especially Romantic readings of classic texts), geography, and demeanour. Following the contemporary obsession with territory and racial classification the authors provided a fold-out ethnographical map to label the location of each subjugated Christian race compiled by the publishers William and Alexander Johnstone in Edinburgh and London (Figure 5.1).

⁷⁷⁹ Interestingly, this belief has continued into modern nationalist historiography in Southeastern Europe. See, for example, Bojan Aleksov, “Adamant and Treacherous: Serbian Historians on Religious Conversions,” In Pål Kolstø (Ed.) *Myths and Boundaries in Eastern Europe* (London: C. Hurst, 2005), 158-190.



Figure 5.1: *Map of the South Slavonic Countries* [map]. In: A.P. Irby and G. Muir Mackenzie, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*. London: Daldy, Isbister, and Co., 1877. Fold-out flyleaf.

This map suggests a relatively neat division of national groups throughout the region, juxtaposed with the small pockets of “Turkish” spattering the region. In reality the Ottoman system of administering all Christians in the same *millet* (confessional community, not geographically bound), combined with general religious toleration and ease of movement led to ethnically and religiously diverse populations throughout the Balkan Peninsula with far less homogeneity than the above map suggests. Remarkably, this map labels nearly all territories from “Nish” [Niš] to Trieste (including all of the former Yugoslavia) as homogeneously “Servian.” Through their speculation and risibly unempirical observations,

Irby and Mackenzie contributed to solidifying British perceptions of racial divides among Balkan Christians that would shortly harden into national borders after the forced expulsion of Ottoman rule during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. Gladstone's attentive and approving marginalia and his outspoken praise for the book indicate that his own notions of separate Christian races, subjected to unjust Turkish rule, were similar.

In their revealingly titled chapter, "Bulgaria Viewed from Salonica [Thessaloniki, Greece]," Irby and Mackenzie added to the sparse British understanding of modern Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. Although previous Western travelogues rarely distinguished between Slav Christians until after the 1860s, Irby and Mackenzie noted the racial differences of Bulgarians as inherited from their mediaeval empires and the ancient Thracians and solidified by the "double pressure" (29) from Turks and Greeks. Gladstone made careful note of the tensions between Greek and "Slavonic Christians" marking both double interest lines beside the suggestion that Greeks were both "tyrant" over other Slavs and "slaves" to Turkish Rule (xxv) and "NB" beside the statement: "superstition, ignorance, and unseemly dissensions prevail under Phanariote prelacy" (xxv).⁷⁸⁰ Gladstone made notice of a number of their observations regarding Bulgarians, marking interest lines and a "v" beside the lines describing "their bravery and warlike disposition, the renegade Bulgarians evince the character of the nation before it was betrayed and disarmed, and they themselves adopted Mahometanism only to avoid falling into the position of reyahs

⁷⁸⁰ As H.C.G. Matthew notes in the introduction to *The Gladstone Diaries*, Gladstone's familiarity with Bulgarians came predominantly from his attention to the religious conflict between Greece and Bulgaria, in which he sympathized with Greece. This attention to ecclesiastical matters within the Orthodox Church may help to explain Gladstone's initial support of a political neutral solution to the Bulgarian Horrors—essentially a conception of "religious nationality" instead of "political nationalism" guided his early appreciation of the crisis. Gladstone, then, was much less sympathetic to the Bulgarian nationalist cause than he was aggrieved by the "moral failure of Turkish rule" (xlv). Later, Gladstone noted that the "lack of an organic union" between Muslim Turks and Bulgarian Christians led to the "racial" causes of the Eastern Crisis (*Slavonic Provinces*, 8).

[non-Muslim subject accorded fewer rights]" (24). Another mark of interest noted the appraisal of Bulgarians by foreign residents as "industrious, thrifty, moral, and clean" (35) and an "NB" on the page noting that "Bulgarians make excellent retainers, handy, faithful, honest, and are the only men in Turkey not slothful" (51). Gladstone also noted "It is very striking" beside a retelling of a "grotesque specimen of a quasi-religious Bulgarian Story" entitled "The Grudging Old Woman" and underlined both "grotesque" and "quasi" (103). That these passages were some of the very few observations of modern Bulgarians that Gladstone read before the summer of 1876 speaks to the cultural stereotypes that shaped his initial reaction to news of the Turkish slaughter of Bulgarians.

Through his marginalia, we see that Gladstone was a thorough reader with meticulous notes and was especially inquisitive on matters of race, nationality, and religion. It also appears that Gladstone accepted the stereotyping of the constituent "races" of the Ottoman Empire, convinced by assertions that ancient empires and bloodlines had a great bearing on the racial characteristics of nations in Turkey-in-Europe. Gladstone's preparatory notes for the foreword to the second edition of *Slavonic Provinces* demonstrate his own understanding of race, civilization, and progress. "No conquest can be legitimate unless it is marked by the introduction of superior laws, institutions, or manners among the conquered," he observed, noting the experience of Saxons and Normans in England, the Franks in France, and the Lombards in Italy, and "The very least that can be expected is that the conquerors should be able to learn civilization from the conquered as the Romans from Greeks."⁷⁸¹ Not only did the Turks have inferior laws, institutions, and manners to their subject Christians, they had not even learnt civilization from Byzantium;

⁷⁸¹ Gladstone Papers (GP) 44763, 96.

therefore, the Ottoman conquest of Southeastern Europe was inherently illegitimate and unnatural.

In early 1876, the Conservative MP William Forsyth published his own travelogue, *The Slavonic Provinces South of the Danube*, to remedy the “little” and “scattered” information available about the region and due to the growing concern over the rebellion in Herzegovina.⁷⁸² Gladstone read the travelogue on 19 July, during the crescendo of parliamentary debates on Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria⁷⁸³ and six weeks before the publication of his own pamphlet, yet he made relatively light annotations. Forsyth’s overall argument matches that of Irby and Mackenzie, as he centrally asks “how long is Christian Europe to endure the spectacle of an alien and infidel government oppressing Christian races?” (165). Despite Forsyth’s political opposition to Gladstone, the latter makes no marks of “disapprobation” and only three “ma” qualifications throughout the text. Gladstone indexed “Roastings +” on Forsyth’s description of Turkish “atrocities” (44) committed on Servian Christians during the 1814 uprising and made a number of notice lines through his chapter describing the onerous and inequitable Turkish policies towards Christians.

Regarding Bulgaria, Forsyth cautions that the province, or at least the train from Rustchuk to Varna, “is the most desolate line by which I ever travelled ... with no smiling villages, and hardly any population visible” (131) and that the “pure Bulgarian element had

⁷⁸² William Forsyth, *The Slavonic Provinces South of the Danube: A Sketch of their History and Present State in Relation to the Ottoman Porte* (London: John Murray, 1876), *i*.

⁷⁸³ Although rumours circulated through the British press since May, the first account of the crushed Bulgarian April Uprising was published on 23 June 1876 in the *Daily News* article “Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” by their Constantinople correspondent Edwin Pears. This account prompted W.E. Forster to raise the issue three days later in the House of Commons, where the issue quickly became a national topic of discussion.

long ceased to exist" (136). Forsyth then dismissively presents Gibbon's account of the Bulgarians as essentially part of the Slavonic race (131-135). Gladstone makes no special notice of this section, suggesting either disregard for Forsyth's account (in that it substantially differs from Irby and Mackenzie's positive appraisal of Bulgarians) or simply a lack of interest towards ethnological nuances during the height of parliamentary debate on Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria. That a rival MP should publish such similar general conclusions, however, suggests that the "common sense" British understanding of the Ottoman Empire was that its prejudicial treatment of its Christian subjects in its European provinces was an obvious and unnatural state of affairs that ought to be ended for the sake of humanity's progress. Even amongst the politically polarized press, the worst criticism of Forsyth's book was that he referred to "Roumanians" as "Slavonians" and that his title gave the impression that Slavs were only found south of the Danube.⁷⁸⁴ Conservative opinion hardly doubted the "cruel" nature of the Turks, but instead suggested that British imperial interests lay with preserving Ottoman sovereignty against an aggressively expanding Russia, whom they had recently fought against during the Crimean War, with the Ottomans as allies, and cautioned that championing national independence would set a dangerous precedent for their own possessions.

The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East

Having largely retired from the Liberal leadership after his humiliating defeat to Disraeli in 1874, Gladstone was engrossed in a speaking tour of England⁷⁸⁵ and declined

⁷⁸⁴ 7 August 1876, *Daily News*.

⁷⁸⁵ Gladstone gave out awards at King's College and lectured on the dangers of "being led away by the conceit of self-knowledge and urged above all else the necessity for allegiance to the principles of truth." "Mr. Gladstone on Truth," *The York Herald*, 8 July 1876.

the opportunity to discuss the Eastern Question in early July.⁷⁸⁶ Gladstone's diary similarly gives no hint that he was about to compose the most important document of his career. After 19 July, when Gladstone read Forsyth's *Slavonic Provinces*, Gladstone's readings were predominantly theological in nature. He read the Parliamentary Papers regarding Turkey on 24 July,⁷⁸⁷ but then engrossed himself in titles such as *The Christian Doctrine of Prayer*, *Hades or the Intermediate State of Man*, *The Christian Sabbath*, *A Few Thoughts on the Infallibility of the Pope*, *La Roma des Papes*, and *Disestablishment, a Duty*. Throughout July and August, Gladstone was writing a treatise on the principle of Future Retribution [Hell] and the Clarke-Dodwell controversy of 1706, the notes for which were bound together and famously inscribed: "From this I was called away to write on Bulgaria."⁷⁸⁸

It has been shown that the Agitation was an already well-established, media-fuelled, popular movement playing out in town hall meetings, public addresses, notices, and petitions to parliament and the Foreign Office by the time that Gladstone was "shamed"⁷⁸⁹ into participating. Writing from his bed at Hawarden, suffering from lumbago, Gladstone composed the most important political document of his career over just four days, using the parliamentary Blue Books,⁷⁹⁰ Stead's polemical articles in the *Northern Echo*, and the *Daily News* "eyewitness" reports of Schuyler and MacGahan as his references. Upon finishing his draft, he took the next overnight mail train to London, fact-checked at the

⁷⁸⁶ "Summary of this Morning's News," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1876.

⁷⁸⁷ Gladstone's Diary, 24 July 1876.

⁷⁸⁸ John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (Complete)* (London: Alexandria, 1903), 416.

⁷⁸⁹ Ann Pottinger Saab argues in her 1991 book *Reluctant Icon* that Gladstone was in reality very hesitant to take up leadership of the expanding popular agitation and only with constant encouragement did he finally embrace the cause. *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria and the Working Classes, 1856-1878*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁷⁹⁰ So named because of the blue binding of these sessional papers, most important of which is *Turkey No. 2. Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey, and the Insurrection in Bosnia and the Herzegovina*, Parliamentary Papers Volume 84, 1876. Also see several "Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey" published in 1876.

British Library the following day, and then delivered the manuscript to John Murray, his publisher, who put it to print on 6 September.⁷⁹¹ The response was overwhelming. Widely publicized and promoted as the “voice of reason” from the political colossus of Victorian politics, the resulting pamphlet, *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, sold 40,000 copies in the first week and 200,000 copies by the end of the month.⁷⁹²

Gladstone’s hastily composed pamphlet reads as a summary of the presumptions, arguments, language, and proposed solutions of the burgeoning Bulgarian Agitation. Although relatively moderate in tone, seeking “practical” solutions to problems with British eastern policy,⁷⁹³ Gladstone revealed major seams of popular discourse as he simultaneously summed up the rationale for, and pandered to, widespread public indignation. Most revealing about Gladstone’s fifty-four page pamphlet was its racial understandings of Ottoman Muslims and Bulgarian Christians and how these understandings informed his suggestions for British foreign policy. In a section entitled “Sketch of the Turkish Race and Government,” Gladstone outlined his belief that Turkish inhumanity resulted directly from their race and religion as evident in their entire history—yet this assessment was based only on Gladstone’s common sense historical and theological knowledge and his rhetorical imagination. Prudently distinguishing criticism of “Mahometanism” from his indictment of the Turks (undoubtedly with Britain’s Indian possessions and Muslim population in mind) he stated that Turkish barbarity was:

Not a question of Mahometanism simply, but of Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of race. ... They were, upon the whole, from the black

⁷⁹¹ Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 272.

⁷⁹² Shannon, *Gladstone*, 174; Blake, *Disraeli*, 598.

⁷⁹³ Shannon notes that Gladstone’s own advisors urged moderation. Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 174. Even Disraeli noted that the pamphlet was not “so ill-written as is his custom” (Blake, *Disraeli*, 602).

day when they first entered Europe, *the one great anti-human specimen of humanity*. Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view.⁷⁹⁴

The observations of Hobhouse, Forsyth, Irby and Mackenzie regarding the character of rule reflecting the savage nature of the Turk are here echoed and amplified by Gladstone. A “decay of martial energy” (14) in the Turkish Empire in addition to Islam’s fatalistic sensuality was to Gladstone’s eyes a recipe for racial degeneracy, inevitable imperial decline, and all kinds of sexual depravity including “fell Satanic orgies” (53). Gladstone, like many of his contemporaries, saw the “Christian races” of Turkey as a part of Christian Europe—labelled by Gladstone as “our brethren”(47)—whereas the Muslim Turks were classified as foreign, uncivilized, incompetent, duplicitous, and filled with jealousy and “abominable and bestial lust” (33) towards their more successful Christian subjects.⁷⁹⁵ According to Gladstone’s pamphlet, Disraeli’s continued support of the Turkish regime signified nothing less than “moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man” (9).

The implications of such Turkish “inhumanity” for British foreign policy were clear. Despite a new sultan pledging a new, liberal constitution and adherence to the Geneva Conventions, Gladstone mocked its futility given chronic Turkish degeneracy: “they might as well adopt the Vatican Council, or the British Constitution” (45). British policy, he generalized, needed to recognize that in European Turkey, “the Christian element is the growing, and the Turkish the decaying” (52), and that the “Councils of Europe” must meet

⁷⁹⁴ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors*, 12-13. Emphasis added.

⁷⁹⁵ Although Gladstone was unique amongst his peers, in that he fully appreciated the major theological and institutional differences amongst the Eastern Orthodox Churches (indeed his sympathies the Greek Church prohibited his support for full Bulgarian independence) and Western Christianity, Gladstone’s prior marginalia suggest that his category for understanding the Eastern Question was “Xtn” versus “Turkish.”

to secure meaningful autonomy from Turkey and protection from other predatory European powers. While Gladstone strategically left this point vague, stopping short of directly advocating full independence for the “Christian races,” he noted that the principle of territorial integrity that prevents Europe from saving their oppressed Christian brothers, leaves “(I fear) everything to the Turk, with his airy promises, his disembodied reforms, his ferocious passions, and his daily, gross, and incurable misgovernment” (55). Turkish territorial integrity should not be maintained “as of a thing paramount to still higher objects of policy. For of all the objects of policy, in my conviction, humanity, rationally understood, and in due relation to justice, is the first and highest” (51). Despite his characteristic circumlocution, Gladstone here makes a famous case for “the principles of humanity” overruling national sovereignty in international relations—in line with a developing trend of “humanitarianism” throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁹⁶ His nuanced position, however, was subsumed by his impassioned conclusion, which implored:

Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves ... one and all, bag and baggage ... This thorough riddance, this most blessed deliverance, is the only reparation we can make to the memory of those heaps on heaps of dead; to the violated purity alike of matron, of maiden, and of child; to the civilization which has been affronted and shamed; to the laws of God or, if you like, Allah; to the moral sense of mankind at large (61-62).

Gladstone’s pamphlet tapped into a rich vein of popular discontent. His widely-promoted speech at Blackheath, Greenwich attracted a huge crowd that he noted in his diary to be “the most enthusiastic by far that I ever saw”⁷⁹⁷ in his already long political career. While he may have been initially reluctant to abandon retirement to command the maturing

⁷⁹⁶ For an excellent account of this developing norm in nineteenth century international relations, see Davide Rodogno *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁷⁹⁷ *Gladstone’s Diaries, IX*, 9 September 1876, 153.

social movement, Gladstone eventually acquiesced to loud calls for him to lead the Agitation.⁷⁹⁸

Beyond the Lion and the Unicorn: The Agitation and International History

Much has been written about the subsequent period of British domestic history where the Agitation, spearheaded by Gladstone, clashed with Conservative supporters of Disraeli. The Bulgarian Agitation is generally framed as a popular social movement evoking progress, democracy, and “humanitarianism” against backward Conservative, unfeeling, imperial interests. The superhuman struggle between the Lion (Gladstone) and the Unicorn (Disraeli) is seen as a dichotomous clash between Liberal protesters and Conservative Jingoists whereby the character of Britain and her Empire in the late nineteenth century was decided. Undoubtedly, this is a critical period in British social and political history that demonstrates many important domestic themes: increasing democratization,⁷⁹⁹ the rise of New Journalism⁸⁰⁰ and New Imperialism,⁸⁰¹ the expanding organization and politicization of women,⁸⁰² patterns of community-level protest and collective political action,⁸⁰³ and the origins of the Midlothian campaign and Gladstone’s eventual victory in the 1880 general

⁷⁹⁸ W.T. Stead was the earliest and most vocal champion of Gladstone. See, for example: “Gladstone to the Front!” *Northern Echo*, 7 September, 1876, p.2.

⁷⁹⁹ See, for example, Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 52.

⁸⁰⁰ See: Owen Mulpeter “W.T. Stead and the New Journalism,” MPhil Thesis, University of Teeside, 2010; Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead, Britain's first Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2012).

⁸⁰¹ Much more could be said about the paradoxical relationship of militarist “new imperialism” and urgency in international affairs coinciding with general fears of the decline and fall of the British Empire. See, for example, Rowena Hammal, “How long before the Sunset? British Attitudes to War, 1871-1914,” *History Today*, 22 November 2010, Accessed 22 January 2012 <<http://www.historytoday.com/rowena-hammal/how-long-sunset-british-attitudes-war-1871-1914>>

⁸⁰² Anne Summers, “British Women and Cultures of Internationalism, c. 1815-1914,” in David Feldman (Ed.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 187-209.

⁸⁰³ Charles Tilly, “The Rise of the Public Meeting in Great Britain, 1758–1834,” *Social Science History* 34, 3 (2010): 291-299.

election. Yet the international effects of this clash of ideologies are underappreciated.⁸⁰⁴ Britain's domestic struggle over foreign policy reverberated through international relations with at least equally significant consequences for European and world history during the critical pre-1914 period.

While Gladstone read remarkably little on the subject of Southeastern Europe before the publication of *The Bulgarian Horrors*, he made up for it in the following months as he increasingly interjected himself into the conduct of foreign affairs. Gladstone read Eugene Schuyler's damning account of atrocities in the *Daily News* on 9 September,⁸⁰⁵ the Foreign Secretary Lord Derby's speech three days later, then a "powerful article" by Edward A. Freeman: "The Turks in Europe." Freeman's article describes the "course of rapine and bloodshed by which the Turks made themselves master of one of the fairest portions of Europe" and echoes Gladstone's assertion that it is the pernicious combination of the Oriental Turkish race and fatalistic Mahommedan religion that "exposes the hopelessness of reform" and the Turkish predilection towards fanatical violence.⁸⁰⁶ The same day Gladstone read John H. Newman's 1854 text *Lectures on the History of the Turks in Relation to Christianity*, which similarly reported in that "the Turks are simply in the way. They are in the way of the progress of the nineteenth century."⁸⁰⁷ Despite reporting

⁸⁰⁴ Previous accounts of the Bulgarian Agitation, most notably Richard Shannon's *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation* (London: Harvester Press, 1975 [1963]) and Ann Pottinger Saab's *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes, 1856-1878* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), focus exclusively on the British causes and consequences of this social movement. Despite its international origins, therefore, the greatest historical significance of Bulgarian Horrors is thus described by Saab as "domestic" (*Reluctant Icon*, 196).

⁸⁰⁵ "Letters of the Special Commissioner of the 'Daily News' in Bulgaria," *Daily News*, 9 September 1876.

⁸⁰⁶ Edward A. Freeman, "The Turks in Europe" *British Quarterly Review* 64 (October 1876): 441. Gladstone was sent this article before publication. Although Gladstone's Library houses Freeman's 1877 book *The Turks in Europe* (with no marginalia), Gladstone's copy of the original article did not survive.

⁸⁰⁷ John H. Newman, *Lectures on the History of the Turks in Relation to Christianity* (London: Charles Dolman, 1854), 273.

“Neuralgia ... from overpressure” in his 17 September diary entry, Gladstone continued to read on the subject and on 23 September he was forced to speak to a crowd in Staindrop, Durham “sorely against my will.”⁸⁰⁸ On 6 October Gladstone read a pamphlet sent to him by Leopold Glückstein entitled *The Eastern Question and the Jews*, which he responded to in *The Guardian* with the revealing statement: “I have always had occasion to admire the conduct of English Jews in the discharge of their civil duties, but I deeply deplore the manner in which I may call Judaic sympathies, beyond as well as within the circle of professed Judaism, are acting on the question of the East.”⁸⁰⁹ Undoubtedly Gladstone meant here the “Judaic” influences of Disraeli (and perhaps also the Rothschilds), whom he disparaged as having “Oriental” sympathies.⁸¹⁰

Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation’s main effects on British foreign policy were to coalesce politically dissonant opinions into fully articulated resolutions towards alternative policies and to force those in power to reconcile their own increasingly unpopular positions. Petitions were the principle method by which both enfranchised and unenfranchised⁸¹¹ Britons were able to influence public debate. At widely-attended public meetings across Britain, resolutions suggesting “common-sense” solutions to the Eastern Question were drafted, approved (usually “unanimously”), and then forwarded to parliament, Queen Victoria, and the Foreign Office. The most popular resolutions were statements of “horror and indignation” at Turkish atrocities, calls for justice and

⁸⁰⁸ Gladstone Diaries IX, 157 (23 September 1876). His unwillingness came from the fact that he had ceded the leadership of the party to Lord Granville and worried that “if this sort of thing goes on I shall seem a rogue and impostor.”

⁸⁰⁹ *The Guardian*, 18 October 1876.

⁸¹⁰ Gladstone to Negropontis, Gladstone Papers 44453 n. 18.

⁸¹¹ This included women, agricultural workers, and the poor, who were still excluded from the vote. One petition, the Women’s Memorial, attracted 43,845 signatures from women across Britain and was delivered directly to Queen Victoria with the request to speak on their behalf.

compensation for the victims, disapproval of the government and its actions, calls to recall the ambassador, and—significantly—calls for the “practical independence”⁸¹² of Bulgaria and other Christian provinces in Turkey-in-Europe. Resolutions were often parroted from other petitions or taken verbatim from important speeches by leaders such as Gladstone that were circulated by the media.

Newspapers, particularly those guided by enthusiastic editors,⁸¹³ were instrumental in provoking and sustaining popular outrage as well as channelling increasing indignation into the developing petition campaign. Even though petitions, letters, and impassioned newspaper articles on the side of the Agitation were scorned by Disraeli, Queen Victoria, and other Conservatives, they nevertheless succeeded in making Britain’s traditional alliance with the Ottoman Empire (with whom they had recently fought the Crimean War) untenable, which both forced a major change in British foreign policy and also forced Conservatives to reformulate their support of Britain’s “national interests” as paramount over other concerns, even massacres. This opinion was laid bare by Henry Elliot, Ambassador to Turkey, who wrote in response to the Government-sponsored Baring Report that seemingly confirmed reports from Bulgaria:⁸¹⁴

We have been upholding what we know to be a semi-civilized nation, liable under certain circumstances to be carried into fearful excesses: but the fact of this having just now been strikingly brought home to us all cannot be a sufficient reason for abandoning a policy which is the only one that can be followed with a due regard to our own interests.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹² “Canon Liddon on Turkey: ‘What to Insist On,” *Daily News*, 2 September 1876.

⁸¹³ Especially W.T. Stead’s *Northern Echo* and London’s *Daily News* edited by Frank Hill.

⁸¹⁴ As explained in the previous chapter, Walter Baring was commissioned on 19 July by the Foreign Office under Derby’s specific instructions to investigate specific rumours. “Mr. Baring on the Atrocities Committed upon the Christians in Bulgaria,” *Turkey: Despatches Relating to the Atrocities in Bulgaria*, FO 881/2936B.

⁸¹⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *Turkey No. 1* (1877), no. 21, 4 September 1876.

Unsurprisingly, this reformulation did not sit well with everyone in the Conservative caucus.

The Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, was appalled by newspaper accounts of massacre in Bulgaria and was alarmed when the Baring Report “confirmed a good deal of what the newspapers have said.”⁸¹⁶ Despite this personal reservation, however, Derby gave a lengthy speech at the Foreign Office just days after the publication of Gladstone’s pamphlet (which was sent to Derby “with the author’s compliments”) in defence of the Government’s cautious response to reports of Bulgarian massacre position.⁸¹⁷ Gladstone read his speech on 12 September and, according to his diary, Gladstone nearly wrote another pamphlet in response. He chose instead to write an article to the *Times* and the *Daily News*.⁸¹⁸ Gladstone’s open letter to Derby summarizes 16 counter-arguments to his “Ministerial manifesto” and mocks the goal to secure “firm resolutions ... against similar outrages” as woefully inadequate and useless when dealing with Turkey’s effete regime. “Let Great Britain be the guide of the chariot of Europe,” Gladstone implored, “and no longer the drag upon its wheel” by endorsing further constitutional change and securing “liberties” for local populations “such as what occurred in Roumania” (autonomy).⁸¹⁹ Derby

⁸¹⁶ The Baring Report was delivered in secret to cabinet on 1 September 1876. Even before the Baring Report, however, Derby was noticeably shaken by swirling rumours of “lamentable occurrences in Bulgaria” and noted the “indignation of all classes of English society has risen,” which would make it, in the case of a Russo-Turkish war, “practically impossible to interfere in defence of the Ottoman Empire.” Wire to Elliot, 22 August 1876, *Turkey No. 1* (1877), no. 159. Also see Derby’s despatch to Elliot, 20 September 1876

⁸¹⁷ Edward Stanley, Earl Derby, *The Eastern Atrocities: Lord Derby’s Defence* (London: Holmes’ Library, 1876). Derby recorded in his diary that Gladstone’s pamphlet was “the most violent, I think, that has been written... in which religious zeal appeals plainly under guise of sympathy for the oppressed races.” *Derby Diaries*, 7 September 1876.

⁸¹⁸ *Gladstone’s Diaries*, IX, p. 155 (14 September 1876).

⁸¹⁹ “Mr. Gladstone on the Eastern Question,” *The Times*, 16 September 1876, 5.

noted in his diary that Gladstone seemed “possessed” by the subject and anxiously perceived that he “threatens to return” to politics to “form a purely radical government.”⁸²⁰

On top of public pressure from Gladstone, Derby also received dozens of petitions sent to him throughout August and September urging the independence of Christian races as the only practical solution to the deepening Eastern Crisis. Derby, known for his meticulous attention to detail, marked each one with a “D” signalling he had read over the contents.⁸²¹ Despite his scepticism towards the Agitation,⁸²² Derby nevertheless recorded in his diary on two separate occasions that the “sympathy felt in England for Turkey” had been “destroyed”⁸²³ by the “useless & purposeless acts of murder”⁸²⁴ committed by the Turks against an innocent Bulgarian population. On 29 August and 16 September, Derby reveals in his diary that this “just indignation” translated directly into a policy of British neutrality. Should Russia declare war against Turkey, he noted, “It would be practically impossible for us to interfere. The position in that case would be humiliating for England, and unsatisfactory generally”; despite his nuanced understanding of the international implications of such a policy, “the strong and general feeling roused in England against Turkish administration makes it impossible for me, or for any one who might be in my

⁸²⁰ *Derby Diaries*, 20 September 1876.

⁸²¹ National Archives (UK): FO 78/2551-2556.

⁸²² Derby noted in his diary that many resolutions were “inadmissible, & not in all probability meant to be taken seriously: people always ask for more than they mean to accept” (*Derby Diaries*, 9 September 1876) and that the Liberals were “bent on making capital out of the Bulgarian massacres” (26 August 1876). On 11 September Derby received two large deputations of Agitators, who expressed disapproval of the situation but, according to Derby, “none of them seemed to have any clear idea of what they wanted” (11 September 1876)

⁸²³ *Derby Diaries*, 29 August 1876.

⁸²⁴ *Derby Diaries*, 31 August 1876.

place, to support the Sultan even against demands which in the abstract are hardly reasonable.”⁸²⁵

Mirroring the resolutions of these petitions (which Gladstone reiterated and reinforced) Derby wired the British ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Elliot, on 21 September with Britain’s demands to the Porte. Derby noted the “just indignation” of the “people of Great Britain” responding to the “most heinous [crimes] that have stained the history of our present century” and instructed Elliot to demand the immediate cessation of violence in Bulgaria,⁸²⁶ the punishment of those responsible, “ample reparation” for victims, immediate reforms to improve the treatment of Christians in those provinces, and plans for limited autonomy for Bulgaria and other Christian provinces to guarantee their “future security.”⁸²⁷ Elliot had previously disagreed with calls for Bulgarian independence, presciently warning that lack of clear geographic or ethnographic boundaries would mean that “large Bulgarian populations would be left in a state of perpetual discontent at their exclusion from the autonomic arrangements made in favour of their countrymen... and the future tranquillity of the province will be rendered more precarious than ever.”⁸²⁸ In the face of overwhelming public opposition, therefore, Derby overruled Elliot and Disraeli’s refusal to bend to the Agitation.⁸²⁹ He immediately publicized his orders to Elliot in order to undermine their positions and force a change in policy. Derby’s proposals, directly

⁸²⁵ *Derby Diaries*, 16 September 1876.

⁸²⁶ It was widely reported that fighting between insurgents and Ottoman troops was still taking place; in fact the uprising in Bulgaria had ended months previously.

⁸²⁷ Derby to Elliot, 21 September 1876, *Sessional Papers: Turkey No. 1*. (1877), no. 316.

⁸²⁸ F.O. 78/2463, no. 999, 13 September 1876.

⁸²⁹ The day before Derby’s instructions to Elliot, Disraeli gave a scathing account of Gladstone’s proposals at Aylesbury, stating that Gladstone “outrages the principle of patriotism Such conduct [will cause] general havoc and ruin ... fairly described as worse than any of those Bulgarian atrocities which now occupy attention.” “London, Thursday, September 21, 1876,” *The Times*, 21 September 1876.

influenced by the resolutions of public meetings, Gladstone's "vehement invective," and a general sense of public opinion, would form the basis of negotiations to solve the Great Eastern Crisis later that year and again in 1878.

The international situation was quickly deteriorating. By 21 October, Elliot reported that his meeting with the Grand Vizier resulted in only the "most unsatisfactory answer" regarding demands for punishment of perpetrators of massacre.⁸³⁰ Serbian and Montenegrin troops had been at war with the Ottomans since 30 June, yet a series of defeats threatened to embroil Russia, Austria, and thereby Britain, in a larger war. Thousands of Russian volunteers were already pouring into Serbia, and Russia's own Bulgarian agitation was compelling Tsar Alexander II to take an aggressive stance with regards to protecting Christian Slavs.⁸³¹ Many in Russia were demanding full-scale military intervention to "liberate" Bulgaria on behalf of their Slav "brothers." Gladstone's pamphlet unsurprisingly found a ready audience in Russia (as it did also in Bulgaria)⁸³²; on 6 October L. C. Alexander wrote that over 20,000 translated copies had been published in St. Petersburg.⁸³³ The pamphlet, as predicted by its detractors, emboldened Russian hawks by convincing readers that Britain could be convinced to stay neutral in the event of war. Facing overwhelming domestic pressure and sensing diplomatic opportunity, Russia partially mobilized its army and demanded an immediate truce, which the Ottomans accepted.

⁸³⁰ *Turkey No. 1* (1877), no. 847, 21 October.

⁸³¹ A right afforded to Russia by the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca.

⁸³² Gladstone is considered a national hero in Bulgaria and his pamphlet is venerated as a manifesto of national liberation. Gladstone's bicentenary was celebrated in 2009 with a conference and exhibition of letters and documents at the Bulgarian National Archives.

⁸³³ By Russian publishers K.P. Pobyedonostsev and K.N. Besuzhev-Ryumin. Gladstone's Diaries IX, p. 153 (6 October 1876).

Amidst the deepening Eastern Crisis, Gladstone continued to read widely to support open critiques of British policy. On 20 October, Gladstone read Arthur J. Evans' recently published travelogue *Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*.⁸³⁴ Gladstone inscribed a "v" and an interest line next to Evans' thesis: "to open people's eyes to the evils of the government under which Bosniacs suffer" (vi). Gladstone made careful note of Evan's distinction between Bulgarians and Croats; he placed interest lines and a "v" beside a passage describing Bulgarians as "not a Slavonic people ... [but] Mongolian ... true Ugrians, the ogres of our nursery stories."⁸³⁵ Gladstone marked an account of an ungentlemanly Zaptieh [Turkish policeman] who forced a Christian woman to carry him across a stream under the indexed section "Xtn [Christian] + Turk [relations]" as well as the "inhospitality" of Mahometan villagers in Albania. More seriously, Gladstone made many notice marks regarding Evans' account of Ottoman mismanagement and crimes against non-Muslims⁸³⁶, although he did not make special notice of Evans' conclusion that the insurrection was not based on any "*grande idée*" of national revolution.⁸³⁷ On 8 November, Gladstone read another travelogue by James

⁸³⁴ Arthur J. Evans, *Through Bosnia and the Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection, August and September 1875 with an Historical Review of Bosnia and a Glimpse at the Croats, Slavonians, and the Ancient Republic of Ragusa* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1876). Gladstone's copy is inscribed with a dedication "To the Right Honourable W.E. Gladstone M.P. with the Author's compliments."

⁸³⁵ Evans, *Journey Through Albania*, 31.

⁸³⁶ Crimes including "torture" (marked in Gladstone's index), and the "butchery" of "a few sick rayahs" (341). Gladstone also noted in his index the "Responsibility for crimes of the Insurgents," where Evans states he has no doubts that Christian insurgents forced other Christians to join their cause by burning their villages (338). Evans's account is primarily a history and travelogue, not an account of the insurgency.

⁸³⁷ Evans notes that "nothing shows a more hopelessly wrong conception of the whole character of the rayah [non-Muslim Ottoman] mind, than to suppose that the dull unlettered peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina took up arms as the champions of Pan Slavism or the 'Cosmopolitan Revolution.' ... He simply wanted to obtain a fair share of what he earned with the sweat of his brow" (336).

Creagh, *Other Borders of Christendom and Eslamiah*.⁸³⁸ Gladstone apparently gleaned little from Creagh's text; his copy is only lightly annotated and several of the pages are still attached together from the printer.⁸³⁹ Gladstone did, however, mark Creagh's account of Turkish "Impalings," the "Tenderness of men for children" amongst Slavs, and that "Muss. + Xtn Slavs [were] in unison" in his index. On the same day, Gladstone returned to both Evans and Hobhouse's travelogues, no doubt in preparation for the new article that he was writing on "The Hellenistic Factor in the Eastern Problem"⁸⁴⁰ that appeared in December just as international plenipotentiaries were meeting in Constantinople.⁸⁴¹

The Constantinople Conference, convened on 11 December, saw the "common-sense" demands of Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation become the basis of international diplomacy for the resolution of the Great Eastern Crisis. Prior to the conference, Russian Foreign Minister and Chancellor Prince Gorchakov suggested that Derby's 21 September proposals become the basis of peace negotiations, a proposal which was ultimately adopted.⁸⁴² Additionally, Disraeli sought to appease the Agitation by appointing Lord Salisbury, liked by both protesters and Conservatives and incidentally a lifelong friend of Gladstone, as the British plenipotentiary in Constantinople. The Conference, held amongst the six European Great Powers—excluding Ottoman delegates yet including the journalist-turned-US-Consul Eugene Schuyler—drafted sweeping changes to Ottoman territories in

⁸³⁸ James Creagh, *Other Borders of Christendom and Eslamiah: A Journal Through Hungary, Slavonia, Serbia, Bosnian, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Motenegro, to the North of Albania, in the Summer of 1875* (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1875).

⁸³⁹ Gladstone did, however, return to the book on 13 and 14 January 1877 to supplement reading on Montenegro.

⁸⁴⁰ Gladstone, "The Hellenistic Factor in the Eastern Problem," *Contemporary Review*, 29, 1 (December 1876).

⁸⁴¹ This article, also published as a pamphlet, did not reach a large audience like its predecessor. It explained Gladstone's hesitation to advocate full independence for Bulgaria since it would aggravate religious conflicts amongst Greeks and Slavs.

⁸⁴² Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 128.

Europe and demands for extensive Ottoman reform.⁸⁴³ Disraeli fumed to Derby that Salisbury had undermined Britain's position by proposing solutions supported by Gladstone and by the Agitation: "Sal. seems most prejudiced and not to be aware that his principle object in being sent to Const. is to keep the Russians out of Turkey, not to create an ideal existence for Turkish Xtians. He is more Russian than Ignatyev: *plus Arabe que l'Arabie!*"⁸⁴⁴ Disraeli was apparently oblivious to the fact that Derby—and Lady Derby—were also undermining his position by deliberately supplying Cabinet information to the Russian Ambassador Pyotr Shuvalov with the hopes of avoiding war.⁸⁴⁵

Just before the opening of the Constantinople Conference, Agitators convened their own "National Convention on the Eastern Question" that met at St. James's Hall in Piccadilly on 8 December. Figures such as Anthony Mundella, Joseph Chamberlain, and William Morris worked throughout the autumn to assemble a broad collection of supporters, which included numerous Workingmen's organizations, Nonconformist religious groups, and Liberal Associations grouped together with assorted literati, clergy, women, and parliamentarians. Gladstone's speech was reported as the sensation of the meeting in a full

⁸⁴³ Critically, these demands included the autonomy of all areas with a majority Bulgarian population, the autonomy of Bosnia, the disarming of Muslim populations, compensation for Christian victims of the wars at the expense of the "Mussulman population who took part in massacres and devastations," the implementation of a series of reforms including the introduction of Slavic languages in courts and local governance, proportional Slavic representation in local militias and police forces, and Slavic administration of the collection of taxes, and the resettlement of tens of thousands of Circassians to the "Asiatic provinces"—each point based on the universal assumption of Ottoman malevolence, the incapacity of Turkey to implement its own reforms, and the victimhood of Christian "races" that required large degrees of self-governance. *Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey*. No. 112, Salisbury to Derby, 22 December 1876 (received 31 December), Enclosure 1, Réunions Préliminaires, compte-rendu no. 1—Séance du 11 Décembre 1876. See Davide Rodogno's brief yet perceptive summary of the negotiations of the Constantinople Conference in *Against Massacre*, 160-164.

⁸⁴⁴ Disraeli to Derby. Disraeli Papers, 111 (28 December 1876).

⁸⁴⁵ *Derby Diaries*, 27-28. Disraeli's health was too fragile from bronchitis and asthma to notice his disobedience until April 1877, yet he escaped reprimand due to his high standings amongst the Agitation.

page spread of the next morning's *Times*.⁸⁴⁶ It was a thundering rebuke of Disraeli's aggressive stance on the Eastern Question outlined at Guildhall, and the evidence given in his speech was largely drawn from Evans' account of Turkish misrule in Bosnia that he read in October and again in November.⁸⁴⁷ Although Gladstone reported in his diary that his speech was "far from wholly to my satisfaction," he proudly observed that "the meetings were great, notable, almost historical."⁸⁴⁸ While others, including Liberal Leader Lord Hartington and Disraeli thought that this "intolerable assembly"⁸⁴⁹ exposed the extremist views of the Agitation and Gladstone, it was nevertheless successful in institutionalizing the protest.⁸⁵⁰ Out of the meetings came the Eastern Question Association, a new, formal body charged with Gladstone's goal to "regulate the foreign policy of the country by pamphlets and by meetings."⁸⁵¹

The failure of the Constantinople Conference to secure its demands from the Ottoman Porte reflected its lack of understanding of Ottoman internal politics. The proposals would have partitioned huge tracts of Ottoman territory amongst the Great Powers and its Christian subjects, which made it unacceptable to conservative and religious elements and nationalist reformers alike—groups who had already been instrumental in deposing two Sultans in the past year. To many Western-educated Ottoman reformers, moreover, the diktat represented a pernicious double standard that was framed by prejudiced assessments of Ottoman power and the Turkish race. Sultan Abdülhamid II, who

⁸⁴⁶ "The St. James's-Hall Confernce," *The Times*, 9 December 1876, 7.

⁸⁴⁷ The Contents of Gladstone's speech was reported by a number of newspapers, including the *Daily News*,

⁸⁴⁸ Gladstone's Diaries IX, 176 (8 December 1876).

⁸⁴⁹ Disraeli quoted in Blake, *Disraeli*, 613.

⁸⁵⁰ Saab, 121.

⁸⁵¹ "The National Conference on the Eastern Question," *Daily News*, 9 December 1876, 3. The EQA began publishing pamphlets and soliciting donations soon after.

had taken power just three months previously, introduced a new, liberal constitution on the same day that the Great Powers delivered their final resolutions to the Porte, which, it was argued, made the demands redundant. On 18 January 1877, the Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha formally rejected the demands of the Constantinople Conference after unsuccessfully pleading with Salisbury to moderate demands or to reach an acceptable compromise.⁸⁵² Ironically, the Great Powers attributed this rejection to Turkish churlishness instead of unreasonable demands, with Ignatyev declaring that it was “a slap in the face of Europe, and especially of England.”⁸⁵³

A war between Russia and the Ottomans was a near certainty for the spring of 1877; Gladstone and the Agitation worked on pressuring the government to stay neutral and to support a negotiated settlement that recognized the independence of Balkan Christians. Gladstone, basing his work largely on that of Irby and Mackenzie, published an article similarly titled “The Slavonic Provinces of the Ottoman Europe” in the Eastern Question Association’s newly established journal.⁸⁵⁴ Gladstone published another, much less successful pamphlet titled *Lessons in Massacre* on 27 March, which outlined Turkish culpability and asserted that the Bulgarian atrocities were the “key” to understanding the entire Eastern Question as they “exhibit the true genius of the Turkish Government ... and the entire mystery of iniquity.”⁸⁵⁵ The lesson for Turkey, given Britain’s timid response to

⁸⁵² Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, “Midhat Paşa'nın Gizli Bir Siyasî Teşebbüsü,” *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler* (Ankara, 1948), 473-4, quoted in M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 118.

⁸⁵³ Ignatyev to Shuvalov 19 January, Quoted in Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, 134.

⁸⁵⁴ “The Slavonic Provinces of the Ottoman Europe,” *Eastern Question Association Paper*, 5 (1877).

⁸⁵⁵ Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre*, (London: John Murray, 1877), 73-4.

the clear “proof”⁸⁵⁶ of “Violence and fury, fraud and falsehood” (9) and, was simply to “Do it again” (5). When a series of diplomatic documents were published in early 1877, Gladstone clashed with Elliot directly in a set of open letters to *The Times*. Gladstone, resenting Elliot’s public criticism of his pamphlet’s “idiotic” suggestion that “the civil and military servants of the Porte should be corporally ejected from Bulgaria,” facetiously wrote to thank him for “the distinguished compliment you have thus paid to my understanding.”⁸⁵⁷ Elliot responded the day after, diplomatically thanking Gladstone for his criticisms while highlighting that Gladstone had not impugned his character.⁸⁵⁸ Gladstone had, however, publicly reprimanded Elliot and suggested that he be unfit for the position of ambassador in light of his 4 September letter to Derby suggesting that British interests trump humanitarian concerns. Further revealing the influence of the Agitation, Disraeli eventually yielded to demands that Elliot had “gone native”⁸⁵⁹ and should be recalled despite eleven years of service in Constantinople, replacing him with Austen Henry Layard in early 1877.⁸⁶⁰

With Britain’s neutrality assured,⁸⁶¹ Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire on 24 April 1877. Gladstone mulled over the news and eventually decided to introduce a number of resolutions into the House of Commons, despite the near certainty

⁸⁵⁶ The “proofs” of massacre cited were diplomatic correspondences, Baring’s Report, and newspaper accounts.

⁸⁵⁷ Gladstone Papers, Gladstone to Elliot, 26, 27, and 28 February. Published 1 March 1877 in *The Times*.

⁸⁵⁸ 2 March 1877, *The Times*.

⁸⁵⁹ “Spy” (Leslie Ward), “Ambassador to the Porte,” *Vanity Fair*, March 1877.

⁸⁶⁰ Disraeli secretly urged Layard to provide context for opening a campaign against Russia, revealing that popular protest was restraining him from a more aggressive foreign policy. 6 August 1877, Layard Papers. British Library, 39136.

⁸⁶¹ Derby overruled Disraeli’s 21 April proposal to occupy the Dardanelles to prevent Russia from seizing Constantinople. Disraeli pleaded to Shuvalov that “To make war is not to provoke reform, but to produce the collapse of Turkey,” and Queen Victoria threatened abdication “if England is to kiss Russia’s feet” by allowing her a free hand against Turkey. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 159 and 171.

that they would be voted down by Liberals and Conservatives alike. Although his first resolution for the support of Derby's 21 September proposals did indeed fail by a wide majority (and he subsequently withdrew the rest), Gladstone nevertheless felt that "much good has been done, thank God."⁸⁶² Many others were discouraged that public protest did not directly influence parliament. Petitions from public meetings largely dropped off throughout 1877 although petitions from Liberal associations grew in number.⁸⁶³ Throughout most of 1877, the Agitation slowed while the Russo-Turkish War raged until the following spring.

Gladstone's Later Readings (1877-1878)

Gladstone's readings in 1877 are indicative of how information about the Eastern Question spread through Britain's educated elites as well as how this information channelled topics, themes, and languages of debate. The majority of texts regarding Southeastern European populations appeared during the following two years (following a similarly slow intellectual process in response to the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s) as authors and publishers rushed to fill the void of information on such urgent topics. Gladstone read many of these texts as they appeared—texts were often sent to Gladstone "with the author's compliments"—and many of the volumes that survive are extensively annotated. On 9 May 1877, Gladstone read James Baker's newly released travelogue *Turkey in Europe*,⁸⁶⁴ which sought again to describe the racial "stock" of the region's inhabitants in

⁸⁶² Gladstone's Diaries IX, 219 (14 May 1877).

⁸⁶³ See Saab's excellent quantitative analysis of petitions and town hall meetings, *Reluctant Icon*, 159-164.

⁸⁶⁴ James Baker, *Turkey in Europe* (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1877). Baker was a retired Lieutenant-Colonel in the 8th Hussars who had travelled to the region on a "nomadic impulse."

relation to each other in the context of Turkish persecution.⁸⁶⁵ Gladstone marked a disapproving “X” next to his suggestion that the “unhappy massacres [were] brought about *not* by the Bulgarian people, but by Russian intrigue” (37), which reveals the common assumption of Agitationists that the uprising was a spontaneous national rebellion. Gladstone also extensively noted Baker’s descriptions of Bulgarians as a distinct racial group, which were the most detailed to date.⁸⁶⁶ Importantly, Baker’s observations were taken from travel in 1874 and were filtered through the following three years of political debate about the proposed independence of Christian races. As such, Baker’s travelogue is an example of how books published in the wake of this international crisis were composed to suit the tastes of an audience looking to find answers and information to support their cause. Information was therefore distorted along Victorian racial preconceptions and political expediency.

Gladstone’s reading and marginalia reveals his hardening fixation on race.⁸⁶⁷ “The Slavonic Provinces of the Ottoman Empire” further unveils Gladstone’s framework for understanding the crisis by arguing that the absence of “an organic union” within the Ottoman Empire led to the “racial” (8) causes of inequity and oppression of Christians by

⁸⁶⁵ In a review of *Journey through Albania*, the *Guardian* observed that “a few months ago it would not have been easy to find anyone who knew where Bosnia, or even Serbia, was situated, or what was the character of their inhabitants, or the nature of their relation to the port.” Evans (2nd Edition) 449.

⁸⁶⁶ Ironically, Baker’s text suggests the complicated picture of national identity. Baker records the answers of Bulgarians in Macedonia who were asked what nationality they were: they “immediately replied ‘Roum,’ the generic name given to the Greek inhabitants of Asia Minor. They persisted that they were Greeks. ‘Why, then,’ I asked, ‘do you talk Bulgarian in your domestic life?’ ‘because our fathers did it,’ was the answer; and they added, ‘We have suffered trouble enough from being called Bulgarians, when were are Greeks’” (23-4, noted with a “v,” an interest line, and an underlined “NB” by Gladstone). Baker explains this discrepancy by stating that they had been long under the “domination” of the Greek Church and would be persecuted for asserting “their [actual] Bulgarian nationality” (24).

⁸⁶⁷ Revealingly, Gladstone rendered Giddon’s 1854 *Types of Mankind* as “Indigenous Races” in his diary entry for 9 September 1877.

Muslim Turks. Gladstone further compared Ottoman rule over European Christians to “the old system of negro slavery”:

There is, in fact, a great deal of resemblance between the systems which prevail in Turkey and the old system of negro slavery. In some respects it is less bad than negro slavery, and in other respects a great deal worse. It is worse in this respect, that in the case of negro slavery, at any rate, it was a race of higher capacities ruling over a race of lower capabilities; but in the case of this system, it is unfortunately a race of lower capabilities which rules over a race of higher capabilities.⁸⁶⁸

As Turks were racially inferior, they had no hope to move beyond the “government of force” to having “the restraint of law” which “human nature” requires. The profound corruption of the Ottoman Empire was a result of this racial incivility with the invocation of violence through religion.

Gladstone’s marginalia in Hadji Achmet Effendi’s 1878 pamphlet *The Cloud on the Crescent: A Word for the Turks by One of Themselves in Answer to Mr. Gladstone* are especially revealing in this context. Effendi’s translated publication argued that many in England were failing to “do justice to the Osmanli as a nation, whilst condemning its Government” and rightly observed that information regarding the massacres in Bulgaria was filtered through American missionaries and Bulgarian students at Robert College in Constantinople while Turkish reports were discarded. Schuyler, MacGahan and Baring “came out with foregone conclusions, not with an honest intention of examining various statements made in respect to Turkey and the Christian races, but to seek for evidence in support of their pet theories” (10) and “we were sentenced unheard” (7). Gladstone unsurprisingly made many cross-marks of disapprobation throughout this text, and he underlined and placed two exclamation points beside “unheard” in the previous passage.

⁸⁶⁸ Gladstone, “The Slavonic Provinces,” 8.

“X”s were marked beside passages suggesting that Turkey was civilized, dynamic, and powerful, having in 1876 risen “from its sloth, [to] depose a monarch who had done much ruin to his country, [to] bring a popular minister to power, and [to] wrest from the new rule a ‘Magna Carta’” (16) as well as the suggestion that Christian prosperity was a result of religious toleration in Turkey. An “X” is similarly marked next to the rhetorical statement “What necessity is there for a separate Bulgarian state?” His only approving observation was that Disraeli was “becoming a household word” (which he underlined and noted “NB”) suggesting dryly that he was in fact on the Turks’ side. The disapprobation that poured from Gladstone’s pen onto this pamphlet reveals the passionate contempt towards Turkish perspectives and the unreflective self-righteousness of Agitators.

Marginalia, on the other hand, also speak to limits of Gladstone’s acceptance of more extreme calls of protest and evangelical interpretations of events. In the pamphlet *The Russo-Turkish War and its Issues: As Revealed in Scriptural Prophecy*,⁸⁶⁹ which argued that scriptural prophecy predicted that Russia will be as “the Agent of Turkey’s destruction” (10), Gladstone made both approving and disapproving notes. Double notice lines were made by the sentence “There is a party for war and a party for peace ... the peace party have had their views carried out” (21) and a notice line and a “v” were placed next to the statement: “Both powers [Russia and Turkey] are inimical to the establishment of the Divine kingdom of righteousness on the earth. They are essentially world powers [underlined by Gladstone], full of evil and corruption [marked with a “mu” qualification],

⁸⁶⁹ There are a number of “prophetic” pamphlets in the holdings of Gladstone’s Library, some of which were annotated by Gladstone, but not heavily. It is noteworthy that Gladstone read these texts at all. In Moir’s *The Eastern Question in Relation to Prophecy*, Gladstone marked a notice line beside his observation of the “political power of God to antagonize the wicked confederacy and to trouble it even in its highest exultation (Ezek. xxxviii, 13; Dan. xi, 44, 45). And that Power we take to be none other than BRITAIN AND HER ALLIES” (14).

and must as powers be swept away ere the kingdom which is not of this world can come, and God's will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Yet beside the assertion of widespread "long[ing] for the arrival of some catastrophe which shall sweep from the earth demons in human form who are capable of doing such hellish deeds," Gladstone marked an "X" and underlined the phrase "demons in human form." While the influence of religion on Gladstone's writings, speeches, and decision-making has been widely asserted,⁸⁷⁰ his marginalia show the limits of these beliefs as juxtaposed to more polemical authors.

Conclusions

Gladstone's readings and marginalia demonstrate the extraordinarily limited nature of British understanding of the Bulgarian insurrection even amongst the most well-read and well-connected Victorian polymaths in the early stages of the Great Eastern Crisis. His notes also convey the preoccupations of Gladstone and other Liberals with categories of race and the progress of civilizations by which foreign affairs were categorized. A vacuum of contextual information existed throughout most of 1876, which was the most important phase of the Bulgarian Agitation, which speaks to the lack of available Western knowledge of the region. The crisis was also beset with a temporal lag in the spread of news despite recent advances like transcontinental telegraphs, which greatly encouraged the spread of rumours and vehement conjecture. Observers such as Gladstone framed their own individual responses by drawing on imperfect catalogues of information and their individual interpretation of wider cultural narratives. These initial responses were reinforced by repetition and given legitimacy to the point of becoming common sense even amongst opponents of the Agitation, who modified their own convictions as a result. By

⁸⁷⁰ Shannon, *God and Politics*.

convincing the Foreign Secretary that continued support of Turkey was unwise and immoral, Gladstone and the Agitation successfully forced British neutrality, ultimately allowing the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 and hastening the collapse of Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkan Peninsula. The resulting peace conference, the Congress of Berlin, codified Western preconceptions upon Southeastern European populations in the establishment of national self-determination as the foremost factor in political legitimacy.

6. The Russo-Turkish War and the Congress of Berlin, 1877-78

British neutrality—secured not by cynical imperial interests or *realpolitik* diplomacy but by domestic political agitation founded upon crystallized cultural values—precipitated the international circumstances whereby a major war and peace conference with profound and long-lasting implications occurred. Although the Bulgarian Agitation did not cause the eventual Russian intervention (it certainly encouraged it), the campaign did handcuff British policy-makers who had worked to prevent the outbreak of war since the beginning of the Great Eastern Crisis in 1875. The protest also directly shaped the peace process through the influence of its petition campaign that resolved support for autonomy of the Ottoman Empire's European Christian population. The Agitation's increasing influence eventually precipitated a backlash of Jingo counter-Agitation that brought the international crisis to a head in 1878. It shaped the Berlin peace process as a compromise of conservative, imperial interests and revolutionary national self-determination. Firstly, this chapter argues that the cultural origins of the Great Eastern Crisis and the role of cultural values in its diplomatic resolution have been underestimated. Secondly, it argues that this crisis provided fulcra for many transformative events and processes that created or exacerbated fundamental tensions within the Ottoman Empire, within Bulgaria and the new Balkan states, and within the international system itself. It is in the combination of these two arguments that the interplay between individual agency, cultural production, and material structures—the mechanism of international history—is revealed within these fundamental events for the creation of the modern international order.

Despite little historiographical attention, the Russo-Turkish War occupies a pivotal position as crystallization point of cultural values into the ideological and material structures that underlie the contemporary world order. The idea that the “Christian races” of Turkey-in-Europe inherently deserved national liberation from illegitimate Ottoman rule was a common resolution amongst petitions to the British Foreign Office. These sentiments were reified when Lord Derby introduced them as the protocols for diplomatic discussion in the autumn of 1876 and then when they were (partially) implemented under the Berlin Treaty. The self-fulfilling prophesy of national self-determination as the ideological basis of political legitimacy in the Balkans was therefore not the result of material, natural, or inevitable forces, but of new conceptions of human nature imposed upon the practice of international relations by powerful cultural movements and their effect on influential policy-makers. It follows that the so-called and much maligned “powder-keg” of frustrated national ambitions in the Balkans was created by the Great Powers themselves as the principle of nationalism was imposed upon the culturally heterogeneous Balkan landscape through self-interested diplomacy.

While this early episode of community-level humanitarian activism had profound international consequences (in and of itself an important revelation), these consequences were not as the Agitationists anticipated. Ironically, the powerful support of what was perceived to be the moral high ground during the Bulgarian Agitation resulted in profoundly negative international effects both in the short and the long terms. The Russo-Turkish War resulted in a vastly larger number of deaths and injustices than did the Turkish suppression of the April Uprising, and it enshrined forced migration and mass murder of civilians as practical methods of territorial expansion amongst both the new

Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Berlin, in partially reifying demands for national self-determination, caused lingering resentments and distrust, causing an instability that would plague international relations until the outbreak of the First World War. The best intentions of the evangelizing and high-minded protestors, optimistically hoping to liberate subjugated populations from the uncivilized Ottoman yoke, were conceived from largely inaccurate assumptions over the nature of Bulgarian national identity and the significance of the April Uprising, the character of Ottoman rule and the Ottoman domestic situation, and the benevolence of past and future European foreign interventions. Protestors' "deep indignation" and demands for a foreign policy founded upon "the principles of humanity" were fuelled by the inaccurate reporting and rampant speculation of an increasingly zealous British newspaper media. This episode thus simultaneously speaks to the power and influence of community-level political activism for changing large-scale international events, and it also warns of the potential for unintended consequences as a result of such vociferous—and self-assured—protest movements.

Recent Historiography

If the Great Eastern Crisis has received little international scholarly attention in the past half-century, the Russo-Turkish War and the Congress of Berlin have received almost none. Reflecting larger historiographical trends, the diplomatic history of the conflict and its peace process has been unfashionable, and the impact of the war itself is generally overlooked as merely the playing out of material interests and the natural result of Russian expansionism, Ottoman decline, and Bulgarian national revival. Primarily Soviet-era

Russian and Bulgarian historiographies dominate recent scholarly accounts of the war,⁸⁷¹ with Bulgarian-language sources emphasizing the heroic and nation-building nature of this revolutionary war of liberation. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAN)'s *History of Bulgaria* refers to the war as simultaneously a national “liberation war” and a “revolutionary war” that overthrew old “feudal” Ottoman system into a Bulgarian “bourgeois-capitalist” order within a Marxist, materially deterministic narrative.⁸⁷² Tsonko Genov's 1979 book *Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the Actions of the Liberators* similarly highlights the continuity between the heroes of the Revival, the April Uprising, and the Bulgarian volunteers within the Russian army who fought against the “decaying and semi-feudal Ottoman Empire” and “Muslim fanaticism” that “enslaved nations” for over five centuries.⁸⁷³ Other popular histories of the war note the heroic Bulgarian defence of the Самарско знаме (Samara Flag)⁸⁷⁴ at Stara Zagora while the rest of the army and the city were destroyed and the Ottomans committed “mass atrocities against the Bulgarian population,”⁸⁷⁵ as well as the heroism of Bulgarian volunteers during the four Battles of

⁸⁷¹ See: V. Vinogradov, *Русско-турецкая война 1877—1878 гг. и освобождение Болгарии (Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Liberation of Bulgaria.)* (Moscow: Мысль, 1978); Доунов Stefan, *Българската общественост и Руско-турската освободителна война* (The Bulgarian Public and the Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878) (Sofia: 1978). Post-Soviet Russian histories include: Nikolai Troitsky, *Русско-турецкая война 1877—1878 гг. // Россия в XIX веке (Russia in the 19th Century and the Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878)*, (Moscow: 1997); B. Guriev, *Письма священника с похода 1877—1878 гг. (Priests' Letters during the 1877-1878 Campaign)* (Moscow: Publishing House of the State Public Historical Library, 2007).

⁸⁷² BAN, *История на България, Том 6 - Българско възраждане 1856-1878* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), 458.

⁸⁷³ Tsonko Genov, *Русско-турецкая война 1877—1878 гг. и подвиг освободителей (The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Actions of the Liberators)*, (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1979), 31.

⁸⁷⁴ A revered battle standard of the Bulgarian militia comprised of a Slavic tricolour and embroidered holy icon.

⁸⁷⁵ (са извършени масови зверства спрямо мирното българско население) Georgi Georgiev, *Освободителната война (Liberation War) 1877-1878* (Sofia, Beron, 1986), 55. Popular websites state 15,000 Bulgarians were massacred and 10,000 young women and girls were abducted and sold as slaves after the surrender of the Stara Zagora by Albanian Bashibazouks, Circassians, Gypsies from Chirpan with “logistical support of Jews and under a Jewish commander.” “Stara Zagora” *Wikipedia*, Accessed 28 June at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stara_Zagora

Shipka Pass.⁸⁷⁶ In Russo-Bulgarian historiography, the war is thus characterized as the cathartic culmination of the Bulgarian Revival that followed an inevitable trajectory of national deliverance from Ottoman tyranny.

William Medlicott's *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880*, first published 1938, forms the common factual basis of English-language historiography of the peace process and its aftermath. Medlicott rectifies a perceived fixation on the *causes* of the Russo-Turkish War (excepting his teacher, R.W. Seton-Watson), and thus focuses on the diplomatic history of the Berlin Congress and its implications for international relations. It is a quintessentially "diplomatic" history in that it only examines British diplomatic sources and is notably silent over the impact of the treaty upon the inhabitants of the new Balkan states or the Ottoman Empire. The material nature of the crisis (and the resulting Bulgarian Agitation) are taken for granted and the Ottoman Empire is held as the natural villain of international relations—the failure of the Berlin Treaty, therefore, is not that it applied national self-determination, but that Disraeli and Bismarck compromised that principle and subordinated it to old-styled imperial interests.⁸⁷⁷

Other more recent accounts, including M.S. Anderson's 1966 *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*,⁸⁷⁸ Michael Milgrim's 1978 article "An

⁸⁷⁶ Georgi Valkov, *Българското опълчение (Bulgarian Volunteers)*, (Sofia: 1983) and Doynov Stefan, *Българската общественост и Руско-турската освободителна война (The Bulgarian Public and the Russo-Turkish War) 1877-1878*, (Sofia: 1978).

⁸⁷⁷ William Norton Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880* (London: Archon, 1963 [1938]).

⁸⁷⁸ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1966).

Overlooked Problem in Turkish-Russian Relations: The 1878 War Indemnity,”⁸⁷⁹ and Richard Millman’s 1979 *Britain and the Eastern Question*⁸⁸⁰ only indirectly address the Russo-Turkish War and its peace conference, and each assume the material characteristics of the crisis and analyze its surrounding events from a top-down perspective that overgeneralizes cultural processes and lacks Ottoman or Balkan perspectives. Similarly, a massive volume of thirty-three papers published in the wake of an academic conference held in Berlin marking the Congress’ centenary in 1978, *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik der Grossmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der Zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhundert* (including the contributions of Richard Shannon and Barbara Jelavich) provides a top-down analysis of the diplomatic history of the war rather than of the treaty itself, its consequences or its cultural origins.⁸⁸¹ Ömer Turan’s 2007 volume, *The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78*, deals only with short term causes of war and conduct of diplomacy during the war with little on its social origins or consequences.⁸⁸²

Only in the last few years has scholarly interest focussed directly on the Russo-Turkish War and its consequences for the inhabitants of Southeastern Europe and the

⁸⁷⁹ Michael R. Milgrim, “An Overlooked Problem in Turkish-Russian Relations: The 1878 War Indemnity,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9, 4 (1978): 519-537. This article does, however, rightly assert that the war indemnity, agreed upon four years after the Congress of Berlin, was critical in shaping relations between Russian and Turkey for decades, and it was used as a “financial instrument of [Russian] foreign policy” (521).

⁸⁸⁰ Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

⁸⁸¹ Ralph Melville and Hans Jürgen Schroeder, *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik der Grossmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der Zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhundert* (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982). Kemal Karpat’s article on the social and political bases of nationalism within Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire after 1878, however, was deemed “bold” by the book’s reviewer, as it argued that the process of “Balkanization” was caused by “outside meddling and not by the alleged decline of the Ottoman Empire,” Roy Austensen, “[Review]” *Journal of Modern History* 55, 4 (1983): 783.

⁸⁸² Ömer Turan, *The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78* (Ankara: Middle East University Press, 2007).

Ottoman Empire. Peter Sluglett and M. Hakan Yavuz's large, edited volume, *War and Diplomacy: Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, published in 2011, contains the profitable scholarship of eighteen scholars responding to the overall goals of Ottoman inclusion, the origins of modern ethnic cleansing and the problem of refugees in Europe and West Asia, and the impact of the war and its peace process on identity politics.⁸⁸³ Each author, with the possible exception of Frederick Ansecombe,⁸⁸⁴ speaks to the important social, economic, and cultural implications of the Russo-Turkish War and its subsequent peace settlement. Essentially, the editors argue that, despite the stark deficiency of interest in the topic, the Russo-Turkish war was a "watershed" (451) for a multitude of cultural, political, military, and diplomatic processes in international history. In short, the contributors argue that widespread ethnic and religious mobilization during the war (including Pan-Slavism, Pan-Islamism, and racialized nationalism) "enhanced ethno-religious fault lines and politicized them, with tragic consequences" (5) and the Berlin Treaty was based on the "paradoxical foundations of progress (recognizing national self-determination) and destructive regression (ethnically cleansing multicultural communities)" (4). This section builds upon this collection of recent scholarship and its aims of exposing the critical position of the Great Eastern Crisis in the international history of the Balkans, the Middle East, West Asia, and global international relations. My study contributes a critical appreciation of the cultural origins of the conflict itself and the

⁸⁸³ Peter Sluglett and M. Hakan Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).

⁸⁸⁴ Frederick F. Ansecombe argues in the concluding chapter that processes, policies, and geopolitical situation of the Ottoman Empire were neither created nor made substantively worse by the war, "On the Road Back From Berlin," in Sluglett and Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy*, 535-560.

conceptual foundations for the partial application of the “common sense” ethnic principle within this international agreement.

From the Bulgarian Agitation to the Descent into War

The immediate causes of the Russo-Turkish War, in the context of competitive imperial expansionism across the Great Powers, were to be found in earlier stages of the Great Eastern Crisis. The Bosnian and Herzegovinian revolts and the internal wars between Serbia and Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire created the circumstances by which revolutionaries chose to revolt in Bulgaria within a program of national liberation. The Bulgarian rebellion was quickly and violently crushed, yet news of alleged massacres—filtered through Bulgarian revolutionaries and students and a select few European and American journalists and diplomats—sparked a major grassroots political agitation in Britain against the unfeeling defence of imperial interests. This popular Agitation affected major British politicians and diplomats, both Liberal and Conservative, as it discursively outlined the acceptable and unacceptable perceptions, arguments, and solutions to the growing crisis. This quickly and formatively shifted British policy towards neutrality, which permitted the Russo-Turkish War to take place. This culturally-constructed foreign policy and the solutions proposed by advocates of new “principles of humanity” and national self-determination within the international system became the discursive ideological baseline for Great Power negotiations during the Congress of Berlin.

While the most critical instances of cultural predispositions shifting British foreign policy were made during the second half of 1876 (when the Agitation compelled William Gladstone’s return to politics and demonstrably shifted Lord Derby’s policies towards the

region), the events that followed demonstrated the critical importance of these shifts. In support of the “Christian races” in Turkey-in-Europe against perceived outrages perpetrated by savage Muslims, British neutrality emboldened Russia to take advantage of the situation to wage a destructive war upon the isolated and vulnerable Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the Agitation continued and metamorphosed into a more controlled movement representing different and more institutionalized groups, away from community-based protest and entrenched within wider political and religious viewpoints.

Sensing opportunity to exact territory and imperial prestige from the beleaguered and isolated Ottoman Empire, Austria and Russia negotiated the Reichstadt agreement in June 1876. This agreement permitted Russia to wage war on the Ottomans without Austrian involvement, in return for territory, while asserting that Balkan Christians should achieve some degree of autonomy.⁸⁸⁵ The Constantinople Conference, based on the principles laid out in Derby’s 21 September communiqué to Henry Elliot, assured Russia of British neutrality should the Ottoman Empire reject the resolutions. Despite the new Sultan’s adoption of a liberal Constitution and the appointment of progressive reformer Midhat Pasha as Grand Vizier immediately preceding the Conference, the powers rejected the argument that the Porte was capable of meaningful reform or able to protect its European Christian populations; as British Ambassador Henry Elliot himself reminisced: policy and public opinion was “formed and guided by men animated by a blind hatred of everything Turkish, who represented the new constitution as a sham or ‘paper’

⁸⁸⁵ This agreement was concluded in private with no written minutes or signed protocol, leading to confusion over what exactly was agreed upon. Austrian notes claim Bulgarian “autonomy” was agreed, whereas Russian notes full “independence.” That Austria was promised annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was unclear. The clarified agreements were later reaffirmed at the Budapest Convention, concluded on 15 January 1877.

constitution.”⁸⁸⁶ The Porte’s unwillingness (or rather incapability, given the state of Ottoman domestic politics) to accept the Conference’s dictates was interpreted as an insult to Europe, and Alexander II’s resulting declaration of war on 24 March 1877 asserted his empire’s intentions to enforce the stipulations of the Constantinople Conference.

The Russo-Turkish War and its Consequences

Balkan Geopolitical Implications

The Russo-Turkish War—the eleventh of its kind since the sixteenth century and fifth in the nineteenth century—raged from 24 April 1877 until the spring of 1878 as Russia slowly pushed outnumbered Ottoman forces towards Constantinople, despite several major military setbacks. Of Russia’s enormous army consisting of over one million soldiers, over 700,000 were mobilized during the campaign, bolstered by approximately 40,000 Bulgarian volunteers, against just 280,000 Ottoman soldiers.⁸⁸⁷ Despite a nearly three-to-one numerical advantage, Russian armies were badly defeated at the battles of Stara Zagora and Pleven that summer due to poor planning, logistical problems, and an unexpectedly capable Ottoman military. The losses incurred during these battles and the embarrassment of such a slow advance against the “Sick Man” widened the scope of the war, as it prompted Russia to effectively bribe Romania into supporting the war against Turkey with 60,000 additional soldiers. Prince Carol of Romania⁸⁸⁸ was offered personal command of the Russian offensive at Pleven—a great symbolic concession—which overturned his reluctance to support Russia militarily despite accurate suspicions of

⁸⁸⁶ Henry Elliot, “The Death of Abdul Aziz and of Turkish Reform,” *The Nineteenth Century and Age*, 23, 132 (1888), 276. Elliot had been replaced by Austen Henry Layard in April due to overwhelming public pressure.

⁸⁸⁷ A. A. Spector, *Всемирная история войн (Wars in World History)*, (Minsk: Harvest, 2006)

⁸⁸⁸ Born Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Carol is often Anglicized as “Charles.”

ultimate Russian aims of retaking southern Bessarabia.⁸⁸⁹ Romania had already taken advantage of the war by declaring independence on 21 May, and after their entry into the actual conflict, Romania pushed for territorial gain in Dobrudja and along both sides of the Danube and for a financial indemnity from the Ottomans.⁸⁹⁰ Eventually, Russian, Romanian, and Slavic forces outmanoeuvred and wore down Ottoman defenders, haltingly moving towards Constantinople both in the Balkans and in the Caucasus.

Serbia largely avoided war with the Ottomans after the settlement of their own costly Serbo-Turkish War in March 1878. Serbian forces were exhausted and there was little promise of territorial gain since Bosnia had been promised to Austria and all territories to the south had been promised to Bulgaria by Russia. Serbia thus resisted Russian pleas for support until after the fall of Pleven in December and in exchange for Russian payment.⁸⁹¹ Greece also took advantage of the situation to push for territorial gain, specifically: Crete, Thessaly, Epirus, Thrace, and Macedonia. Its traditional policy of neutrality with regards to Balkan conflicts, enforced by Britain, created large scale unrest amongst the Greek public who perceptively feared that a Russo-Slavic victory would create a powerful and irredentist Bulgarian state that would compete against Greece's own territorial ambitions. In June 1877, Alexander Kououndouros's pacific government was overthrown by the pro-war Admiral Kanares, who readied the Greek military for eventual participation in the conflict. After the fall of Pleven and then Edirne in January 1878, enraged public protests in support of military involvement became so intense that King George feared that he may be deposed—whereupon he unilaterally (and

⁸⁸⁹ Carol I, *Reminiscences of the King of Roumania* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1899), 275.

⁸⁹⁰ R. Rosetti, "Roumania's Share in the War of 1877," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 8 24(1930): 548-77.

⁸⁹¹ Jelavich, *Establishment of Balkan National States*, 151.

unconstitutionally) mobilized the army to the Ottoman border and another new government was formed while riots took place in Athens.⁸⁹² Greek forces were authorized to foment rebellion amongst Greek populations in Macedonia, Thessaly, and Epirus and then Greece declared on 2 February that they would occupy those regions in order to protect Christians from the disturbances that they had themselves created. Only on 3 February did the Greek government learn that Russia and the Ottoman Empire had signed a cease-fire on 31 January.

Unquestionably, the war had the largest effect on Bulgaria. The majority of fighting occurred on what would later become Bulgarian soil, and the war was ostensibly fought over the protection of Bulgarian Christians and the emancipation of Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke. Although Bulgarian revolutionaries achieved national autonomy because of Russian intervention, they were nevertheless disappointed that Ottoman rule was replaced by another form of Russian control. The Temporary Russian Governance in Bulgaria operated as an interim legislative body from the onset of war in April 1877 to May 1879 under Imperial Commissioner (an ardent Pan-Slavist) Vladimir Cherkassky until his death on 3 March 1878⁸⁹³ succeeded by Alexander Dondoukov-Korsakov. Cherkassky, in particular, conceived the boundaries of Bulgaria encompassing all Bulgarians south of the Danube, including Thrace, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Salonika,⁸⁹⁴ which was indeed the boundary imposed by Russia at San Stefano. Russian control thus demarcated the initial

⁸⁹² Jelavich, *Establishment of Balkan National States*, 152-3.

⁸⁹³ The Moscow Slavonic Committee lamented his death greatly as he “freely gave his life to serve the sacred cause—the liberation of oppressed Slavs. ... [his] fame will ever be remembered in connection with one of the most notable deeds in the history of modern Christianity,” quoted in Olga Alekseevna Novikova, *Russia and England from 1876-1880: A Protest and an Appeal* (London: Longmans, 1880), 98.

⁸⁹⁴ “Bulgaria According to Prince Tscherkasky (1877),” *The Russian Administration of Bulgaria in the Years 1877-78-79*, Vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1906).

administrative borders of Bulgaria as part of its wartime administration—territorially delineating the newly imagined Bulgarian nation-state. Russian influence also controlled early Bulgarian governance and wholly shaped its political and administrative appointments, laws, and expenditures in order to further Russian military and strategic objectives and to cement ties between the new state and Imperial Russia. Russia largely supported Bulgarian Liberals whose ideas for the future state most closely matched their own, including former revolutionaries and future dominant Bulgarian politicians such as Petko Karavelov, Stefan Stambolov, Petko Slaveykov, Marko Balabanov, and Dragan Tsankov. The costs of Russian temporary governance were transferred to the new Bulgarian state, which was required to make annual payments to Russia until 1902.

In short, the Russo-Turkish war had significant geopolitical implications for Southeastern Europe. The new Balkan states, given official political independence under the Berlin Treaty, were carved out of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire through Russian military intervention. The violent beginnings of these new Balkan states, coupled with unrealized war-time territorial promises as well as Russian military, political, and financial domination, instilled both a competitive, militarist drive for expanded territory and national prestige as well as widespread social disorder in the region.

National Identity and the War of Bulgarian Liberation

Oddly, few researchers have addressed the Bulgarian national experience during the war, despite its principle role in the creation of the Bulgarian state. National identities are instead assumed to be natural, homogenous, solidified, and uncomplicated, therefore leaving little for historians to write about other than the conduct of the war, the heroic

deeds of its volunteers, and the resulting peace treaties. In this vein, Richard Crampton's 450-page *Bulgaria* covers the Bulgarian experience of the Russo-Turkish War in just one sentence.⁸⁹⁵ Given the largely agrarian and illiterate Christian population in these provinces (reflected in the widespread reluctance to rise up during the April Uprising), it stands to reason that the trauma of war and the national organization of government should act as a major catalyst for the crystallization of national identity, perhaps along the lines of the Franco-Prussian War or the First World War's effect on French identity.⁸⁹⁶ But, in the eyes of the literate, self-identifying Bulgarians who wrote memoirs of the period, the national identity of Bulgarian-speaking Christians was unquestioned—memoirists typically skipped over the Russo-Turkish War to detail their experiences during the Revival, revolutionary activities, the April Uprising, and political activities in the new Bulgarian state.⁸⁹⁷

S. Dimitrova's 2002 article "My War is not Your War': The Bulgarian Debate on the Great War" notes that even during the First World War, Bulgarian memoirists, almost exclusively educated, middle-class reservist officers, hardly represented the experience of the majority of Bulgarians. In fact, educated Bulgarian memoirists routinely derided the "pre-modern local attachments to family and village that prevented [the peasant] from becoming truly 'national-minded,'"⁸⁹⁸ nearly 40 years after the Russo-Turkish War and the

⁸⁹⁵ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 93. "Bulgarians from throughout the Balkans rushed to join volunteer detachments to fight alongside the tsar's soldiers and they performed valuable services, particularly during the battle of the Shipka Pass in August 1877."

⁸⁹⁶ Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

⁸⁹⁷ See, for example, Vasil Manchev, *Спомени. Дописки, писма (Memoirs, Correspondences, Letters)* (Sofia: Fatherland Front, 1982 [1904]); Ioakim Gruev, *моите спомени (My Memoirs)* (Plovdiv: 1906).

⁸⁹⁸ S. Dimitrova, "'My War is not Your War': The Bulgarian Debate on the Great War: 'The Experienced War' and Bulgarian Modernization in the Inter-War Years," *Rethinking History* 1, 1 (2002): 15-34.

creation of a “modern” Bulgarian state apparatus. That remarkably few Rumelian Christians volunteered for service against the Ottomans (40,000 out of 1,130,000—just 3.5%) also speaks to the tensions in the national narrative and hints at the remarkably limited appeal of Bulgarian nationalism amongst the Christian population until after the creation of the independent Bulgarian state. Contrary to the assumptions of Bulgarian historiography (supported by Cold War Russian scholarship), then, the Russo-Turkish War speaks more to the symbolic power of Bulgarian nationalism, which was not widely representative of collective identity and political ideology within the Bulgarian population.

The Ottoman Empire: The Birth and Death of the First Constitutional Era

Traditional diplomatic accounts, limited in their appreciation of Ottoman history, assume that Ottoman resistance to European demands at the Constantinople Conference represented naïve belligerence and the incorrect belief that Russia would not carry through its threats, and if it did, Disraeli would support their cause as Britain had in the Crimean War.⁸⁹⁹ These accounts imply that Ottoman diplomats were incapable of understanding the geopolitical situation and therefore relied on deception, denial, and misinformation as their foreign policy. They characteristically neglect to see the Turkish diplomatic position as severely constrained by Western bias. In fact, the Porte was keenly aware of the precipice upon which their empire rested. Midhat Pasha, a liberal reformer elected as Grand Vizier immediately preceding the Constantinople Conference, took office facing the impossibility of reconciling Western European demands—which would gut Ottoman sovereignty in its European provinces, expand the influence of their predatory imperial neighbours, and

⁸⁹⁹ See: R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, 168, 203. In 560 pages of detailed analysis of Russian and British diplomacy, Seton-Watson mentions “Turkish Calculations” or Ottoman diplomacy just a handful of times.

undermine its recently introduced constitution—with domestic pressures that furiously opposed concessions to foreign powers and had already overthrown two sultans and led to the assassination of various government figures in the past year. Midhat Pasha thus responded to the Great Powers' ultimatum fatalistically, stating that “he resigned himself to the will of God, if it was decreed that the Empire should fall, but no Turk would yield”⁹⁰⁰ to such unworkable demands. Facing this dilemma with resigned determination, the Porte prepared for a defensive war against Russia and its own Slavic insurgents with the hopes of international or divine intervention—both would have seemed about as likely.

Sultan Abdülhamid II similarly saw his empire's diplomatic isolation and vulnerability during the war and the peace processes as a conspiracy against the Turkish Empire and Islam.⁹⁰¹ Abdülhamid reached out for Islamic support across North Africa and Central Asia against what he saw as a modern Crusade; that the newly-established International Committee of the Red Cross flew a flag similar to flags of the Holy Crusades alongside the Russo-Slavic armies unintentionally aggravated this perception.⁹⁰² Ambassador Austen Henry Layard, nervous about the geopolitical implications of politicized Islam rallied around the Ottoman Caliphate, notified Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, that the sultan was “trying to get up a kind of Mohammedan league or confederation

⁹⁰⁰ As quoted in Salisbury to Derby, 1 January 1877, Confidential Correspondence, FO 424/37 no. 78.

⁹⁰¹ F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878-1888* (Istanbul: 1996), 61-62.

⁹⁰² The Red Crescent, an inverted-colour adaptation of the Ottoman flag, was eventually adopted later in the war, but it was only recognized as an international emblem of protection by the 1929 Geneva Conventions. The Turkish Red Crescent received much of its funding from British Societies such as the Stafford House Committee and the National Aid Society: R. B. MacPherson, *Under the Red Crescent in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78* (London: Hamilton Adams, 1885). The *Pall Mall Gazette*, incidentally, lauded Russia's Red Cross organization along categories of civilizational progress: this “noble action so enriches her record and so justly elevates her in the scale of civilization and humanity,” Cited in American National Red Cross, *History of the Red Cross: The Treaty of Geneva and its Adoption by the United States* (American Association of the Red Cross, 1883), 87.

of states in defence of Islam & [against] Russia. It is anxious to send envoys to Central Asia for this purpose.”⁹⁰³ This deputation left Constantinople on 12 July 1877 and had only limited short-term success, but the war and the subsequent mission to Afghanistan heightened Britain’s desires to secure its hold on Central Asia,⁹⁰⁴ and, perhaps more significantly, it marked the genesis of political Pan-Islamism.⁹⁰⁵

In the context of European scepticism of Turkish reform as well as Russian invasion, the Ottoman Empire implemented its newly adapted liberal constitution and held its first-ever election campaign for the deputies of the new Ottoman parliament. While these elections were hurried and beset with fundamental problems, they nevertheless represented a major step forward in the modernizing process of the *Tanzimat* along liberal European ideals.⁹⁰⁶ The first Ottoman parliament thus convened on 19 March 1877, just five days before Russia’s declaration of war. Ironically, Russian intervention, ostensibly to protect Slavic Christians from Turkey’s inveterate backwardness and cruelty, eventually strangled these initial steps during the Ottoman Empire’s first constitutional era—preventing a system which in fact overrepresented Christians in the Chamber of deputies.⁹⁰⁷ As his appointment failed to placate Great Power demands and irritated Ottoman conservatives, Midhat Pasha was exiled by the Sultan in February 1877. Parliament, which had held only two sessions, was “temporarily” prorogued on 13

⁹⁰³ Layard to Lytton, 27 June 1877. Lytton waged the Second Anglo-Afghan War from 1878-1880 that wrested control over the country’s foreign policy and prevented Russian encroachment.

⁹⁰⁴ Ram Lakhan Shukla, *Britain, India, and the Turkish Empire, 1853-1882* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973), 94-120,

⁹⁰⁵ Dwight D. Lee, “A Turkish Mission to Afghanistan, 1877,” *Journal of Modern History*, 13 (1941): 335-56; “The Origins of Pan-Islamism,” *AHR* 47 (1941-42): 278-87 and S. Tanvir Wasti, “The 1877 Ottoman Mission to Afghanistan,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30, 4 (1994): 956-62.

⁹⁰⁶ For a more detailed description of this aborted attempt at Ottoman democracy and constitutional parliamentarianism, see: Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 118-121.

⁹⁰⁷ Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 119.

February 1878 (for three decades) after the collapse of the Ottoman military position and the mobilization of the British fleet. While it is impossible to gauge exactly how effective Ottoman reforms would have been without Britain's neutrality and the Russo-Turkish War, it is nevertheless possible to assert that the war resulted in the untimely death of the first era of Turkish constitutionalism and the termination of nearly forty years of *Tanzimat*.

Civilian Casualties, Forced Migration, and a Herald of Modern Warfare

Another tragic irony of the war—over and above the hundreds of thousands of military casualties on both sides⁹⁰⁸—was that in the fervent, racially and religiously charged calls for revenge, Russian and Slavic massacres of non-Christian non-combatants far exceeded the massacres of Christians during and after the April Uprising in Bulgaria. Russo-Slavic forces purged many non-Christian residents, forcing Muslim-Bulgarians (Pomaks⁹⁰⁹) and Jews to uproot as they advanced. An American Lieutenant, F. V. Green, was attached as an observer to the Russian Army from 18 July 1877 to July 1878. Green published his account of the campaign in 1879, which detailed a number of massacres including one between Plovdiv and Harmanli where, he noted, Bulgarian soldiers attacked and plundered an “immense caravan (over 20,000 wagons, containing 200,000 people) ... left the old, the sick, and the babes to perish in the snow ... [and] massacred the helpless

⁹⁰⁸ Estimated at 300,000 casualties between the Russian-Slavic armies and 120,000 within the Ottoman military, Department of Medical and Statistical Information, *Военно-медицинский отчет за войну с Турцией в 1877–1878 гг* (*Military-Medical Report for the War with Turkey*) (St. Petersburg: 1886). The Correlates of War project estimates 285,000 military deaths during the war: Meredith Reid Sarkees and Phil Schafer, “The Correlates of War Data on War: An Update to 1997,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 18, 1 (2000):123–44.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ethnologue* recorded 300,000 Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks in Turkey in 2005, with Bulgaria recording just 131,531 in 2001.

Turks who had not strength enough to flee to the mountains.”⁹¹⁰ As several contributors to Sluglett and Yavuz’s 2011 edited volume argue, the war precipitated massive population transfers (primarily the expulsion of Muslims from new Balkan states, but also Christians from Thrace and Macedonia to these states under conditions of the Berlin Treaty), ethno-religious ethnic cleansing,⁹¹¹ the evolution of Ottoman counterinsurgency practices (which would be later used in the Armenian context),⁹¹² and widespread instability throughout the region because of the heavy-handed imposition of ethno-religious nationalism onto the Balkan political order.⁹¹³ Entire enemy populations were attributed dehumanizing racial and religious characteristics, and they increasingly became the targets of military campaigns.⁹¹⁴ The Russo-Turkish War, therefore, was a herald of the changing nature of warfare as state violence and modern weaponry became enmeshed with religious and nationalist hatred.

Romantic Bulgarian nationalism conceived the nation as primordial and homogeneously Christian since ancient times; converts to Islam were viewed as traitors, Turks were foreign occupiers and Asiatic tyrants, while Jews were untrustworthy, Oriental collaborators. Certainly, the war created the opportunity for Christian soldiers and civilians to overthrow relatively privileged Jews and Muslims for personal gain under the veil of national liberation. The Jewish communities of Kazaniuk, Svishtov, Stara Zagora, Vidin, and

⁹¹⁰ F. V. Green, *The Russian Army and its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877-1878* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 360.

⁹¹¹ Mujeeb R. Khan, “The Ottoman Eastern Question and the Problematic Origins of Modern Ethnic Cleansing, Genocide, and Humanitarian Intervention in Europe and the Middle East,” in Sluglett and Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy*, 98.

⁹¹² Edward J. Ericson, “Template for Destruction: The Congress of Berlin and the Evolution of Ottoman Counterinsurgency Practices,” in Sluglett and Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy*, 351-381.

⁹¹³ See “Part II: the Emergence of the Balkan State System,” Sluglett and Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy*, 123-269.

⁹¹⁴ James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 354.

Nikopol, according to Vicki Tamir, thus “fled en masse, while their property was plundered by rampaging mobs run amuck. The arsenal of horrors visited upon an unsuspecting Bulgarian Jewry included the destruction, by Russian cannon fire, of the newly-built synagogue of Vidin [and] the total liquidation of the community of Nikopol.”⁹¹⁵ Yet virtually no reference is made to the destruction or expulsion of “foreign” elements during the “War of Liberation” in Russian and Bulgarian historiography. Instead, the “liberation” of Bulgarian Jews during the Russo-Turkish War is listed as an achievement of Bulgarian broadmindedness, along with the “heroic rescue”⁹¹⁶ of the Bulgarian Jewry during the Holocaust⁹¹⁷ and the equal civil rights given to Jews during the 1878 Treaty of Berlin and subsequent Bulgarian Tarnovo Constitution.

Muslim civilian deaths have been estimated anywhere between tens of thousands, as suggested by Mark Levene,⁹¹⁸ to upwards of 250,000 as suggested by the controversial American historical demographer Justin McCarthy.⁹¹⁹ Richard Crampton strategically avoids stating any firm numbers of civilian deaths, but suggests that the large waves of

⁹¹⁵ Vicki Tamir, *Bulgaria and Her Jews: The History of a Dubious Symbiosis* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1979): 95.

⁹¹⁶ See, for example, Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* (Molbrook, MA: Adams, 1998).

⁹¹⁷ Despite Tsar Boris III's 1941 Law for the Protection of the Nation that severely restricted Jewish rights, he forced Jews to pay 20% of their net worth to the state and banned them from voting, participation in government or the military, marrying or cohabitating with Bulgarians, using Bulgarian names, or owning land, telephones, or radios. Approximately 48,000 Bulgarian Jews were saved, but 11,500 were deported and murdered at Treblinka from Bulgarian-occupied and administered lands in Thrace, Macedonia, and Pomoravlje (under German orders). Bruno De Wever *et al.* (Eds.) *Local Government in Occupied Europe, 1939-45* (Gent: Academic Press, 2006): 206. Nearly all of the Jewish population emigrated after the Second World War, leaving just 1,162 Jews in Bulgaria according to the 2011 Census.

⁹¹⁸ Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State: The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 225.

⁹¹⁹ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995): 64, 85. McCarthy has engendered much controversy for likening these events with the Armenian massacres and forced migration, and for consequently arguing that neither should be labelled “genocide.” Other scholars have cited his “less balanced” evidence (Mark Mazower, *A Short History of the Balkans*, 159) and leveled charges of being “defensively pro-Turkish” (Aviel Roshwald, 2001) and of using similar arguments used in the denial of the holocaust (Samuel Totten and Steven Jacobs, 2002).

Muslim emigration during the war (which he estimates at 130,000-150,000, compared to McCarthy's 515,000) occurred more as a result of fear of reprisals by those deciding to avoid "the unpredictable and random violence of war and conquest."⁹²⁰ Crampton argues that the post-war repatriation and emigration was far more orderly, involving the sale of 600,000 hectares of Muslim land to Christians by 1900.⁹²¹ Violence against civilians was occasionally documented by the British press (particularly the Russophobic *Evening Standard*) and others, but typically with qualification or justification depending on the sides involved. The *Daily News*, upon reports of Bulgarian atrocities against Turks during the Russian advance and the burning of "five or six" Turkish villages, published a cabled response from MacGahan. MacGahan downplayed the reports and stated that the Russians "have done nothing to justify the assertion that they are as bad as the Turks" and that the Russians "have proved their innocence by independent witnesses that are above suspicion."⁹²² Here again, estimates of the resulting deaths and dislocations are hugely varied, imprecise, and subject to considerable controversy. It seems clear, however, that the scope of this violence was significantly greater than that of the April Uprising and its resulting suppression.

The newly appointed Ambassador in Constantinople, H. Austen Layard, warned Disraeli as early as 1877 of Russian plans "to exterminate and drive out the Mohammedan population of Bulgaria. A mixed Mussulman and Christian population would give too much trouble."⁹²³ Layard submitted a scathing report to Lord Derby consisting of Russian and

⁹²⁰ Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 426.

⁹²¹ Richard Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 426. Crampton argues that of those civilians forcibly removed, half returned after the war.

⁹²² "The Charges Against the Bulgarians," *Daily News*, 30 October 1877 [Dated 24 October, Bucharest].

⁹²³ Layard to Disraeli, *Layard Papers*, 18 July 1877.

Bulgarian atrocities that included 30 photographs of “wounded Mussulman women and children” at Adrianople relayed from Ottoman sources.⁹²⁴ Somewhat unsurprisingly Derby failed to mention Layard’s report or these photographs in his otherwise comprehensive diary. One month before, Derby had mused that the “telegrams are full of details, real or alleged, of Russian ‘atrocities’” that, he reckoned, were “part no doubt invented and improved upon by the Turks.”⁹²⁵ “There is some truth at the bottom of it,” he opined, yet it was hardly a cause for real concern. The only irony he saw in these accounts was that the “journals which in 1876 screamed the loudest [were] now discovering that all such reports, in time of war, must be received with caution.”⁹²⁶ Gladstone himself wrote a letter to Derby asking for an official investigation into the alleged atrocities, yet Derby merely forwarded the matter to the cabinet with the recommendation that it was not “especially the business of the English govt to verify or disprove these stories.”⁹²⁷ Despite the apparently alarming news of atrocities committed by Russian and Bulgarian forces, no actions provoked anything that resembled the furious outcry over Turkish outrages of the Christian population after the Bulgarian revolt, even during the British counter-Agitation of the spring of 1878.

Layard’s reports (described as “much exaggerated” by R.W. Seton-Watson seeing as they were contradicted by newspaper accounts and those of other European ambassadors)⁹²⁸ complained that “the old ‘atrocities party’” of Pears, Schuyler, and American

⁹²⁴ “Mr. Layard, photographs.” FO 78/2583, dated 23 August 1877.

⁹²⁵ *Derby Diaries*, 422 (21 July 1877).

⁹²⁶ *Derby Diaries*, 422 (21 July 1877).

⁹²⁷ *Derby Diaries*, 428 (5 August 1877).

⁹²⁸ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 283. Seton-Watson generally declares that “military operations had produced terrible devastation and suffering for all races throughout Bulgaria” but the “Turkish population fled in large

missionary teachers at Robert College were entirely controlling the information that reached the rest of Europe.⁹²⁹ Certainly a racial and religious double standard applied: Muslim deaths, whether soldiers and citizens, were viewed as punished perpetrators rather than as innocent victims. In Bulgarian historiography, the apparent Turkish massacre of innocent Bulgarians at Stara Zagora has received much attention, whereas Russo-Slavic excesses against Pomaks, Jews, or Turkish civilians are characteristically unmentioned.⁹³⁰

Britain: the Bulgarian Agitation, Jingoism, and the “War in the East,” 1877-1878.

Britain sat on the sidelines of the Russo-Turkish War, yet closely observed events. The British press continued its central headlining of the “The War in the East” and interest in the subject remained paramount to all other affairs, both foreign and domestic. As such, the war, protest, and the production of foreign policy was a critical focus of British politics and social dynamics throughout the Great Eastern Crisis. Nothing less than the British imperial identity was at stake: was Britain’s empire to be based on cold material interests or would its moral and religious compass guide its actions around the world?

The relatively new position of “war correspondent,” the insatiable demand for news, plus the connivance of both Russia and Turkey in their respective attempts to vindicate their actions led to what was described in 1957 as “the highest point ever reached in

numbers before the advancing Russians [out of] fear lest the Bulgarians might wreak vengeance for the horrors of the previous year” (283).

⁹²⁹ Layard to Consul Blunt, *Layard Papers*, 2 August 1877.

⁹³⁰ The topic of Russian excesses was certainly off-limits during Soviet control; however, I have not run across any self-critical Bulgarian or Russian accounts of these events before the Second World War or after 1991 either. See, for example: Tsonko Genov, *Русско-турецкая война 1877—1878 гг. и подвиг освободителей (Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Actions of the Liberators)* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1979).

unrestricted, international news coverage.”⁹³¹ Not only were there some eighty correspondents covering the war for various European and American newspapers, but an overwhelming majority of them were not from the belligerent powers nor censored in any meaningful way by their host militaries.⁹³² Popular British interest in the conflict created a lucrative book and map making market that was keenly exploited by publishers and journalists; editions such as Edmund Ollier’s *Cassel’s Illustrated History of the Russo-Turkish War*⁹³³ were widely successful and reprinted several times during the conflict.

The now-famous journalist Januarius MacGahan and other correspondents of the *Daily News* eventually published their own edition of war correspondence, revealing the extent to which their war reporting was reprinted throughout Britain with their boast that “these letters were reprinted by daily and weekly Journals throughout the kingdom, and may, without exaggeration, be affirmed to have been more widely reproduced than any communications ever despatched from fields of battle.”⁹³⁴ MacGahan, who was married into an old Russian noble family and had made friends with the Russian General Mikhail Skobelev while he was just a Lieutenant Colonel during the 1873 campaign in the Khanate of Khiva,⁹³⁵ used these connections to be embedded within the senior officer corps of the Russian Army in order to cover all the major engagements from the crossing of the Danube to the signing of the armistice at San Stefano. Given his celebrity from his graphic accounts

⁹³¹ Joseph James Mathews, *Reporting the Wars* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1957), 141.

⁹³² Mathews, *Reporting the War*, 142-4.

⁹³³ Edmund Ollier, *Cassel’s Illustrated History of the Russo-Turkish War* (London, New York: Cassel, Petter & Galpin, 1877-79)

⁹³⁴ Archibald Forbes, Januarius MacGahan, *et al. The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,” 1877: With a Connecting Narrative Forming a Continuous History of the War between Russia and Turkey*, (London: MacMillan, 1878), *i*.

⁹³⁵ Heroically recounted in his 1874 book, *Campaigning on the Oxus and the Fall of Khiva* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1874).

of the Bulgarian Horrors and his Russian connections, his vivid accounts were widely circulated throughout British newspapers; undoubtedly, he was the most well-known correspondent during the war. MacGahan, however, died of typhus in Constantinople on 9 June 1878 during preparations to travel to Berlin to cover the upcoming congress; ⁹³⁶ this brought “unashamed tears to the eyes” of his good friend, General Skobelev.

Gladstone’s defeated resolutions in April 1877 marked the end of the first and most influential phase of the Agitation. The war, which Gladstone and others had hoped to avoid by forcing Turkey to accept Derby’s 21 September protocols, eventually raised traditional concerns regarding the intentions of Russia, the prime antagonist of the British Empire. Counter protest, the original “Jingoism,”⁹³⁷ grew apace as Russia neared Constantinople. Supporters of Disraeli directly—sometimes violently—clashed with attendees at Agitation meetings, which changed the nature of protest throughout early 1878 towards fewer, larger meetings with controlled access. Public meetings therefore played a declining role within the Agitation; as Saab observes, 70 percent of petitions to the Foreign Office came from public meetings throughout 1876, but only 1 percent of petitions in April of 1878. Nonconformist religious groups came to dominate petitions submitted to parliament and the Foreign Office, reflecting a turn of focus towards peace that appealed to non-political

⁹³⁶ MacGahan is still widely memorialized as a central participant in the liberation of Bulgaria, including a square in Plovdiv and a street and school in Sofia named after him and a large monument on his grave in his hometown of New Lexington that proclaims him as the “Liberator of Bulgaria” as well as an annual festival and memorial service. See “US hometown Honors Journalist MacGahan – ‘Liberator of Bulgaria’” *Novinite*, Accessed 20 June 2013 at <http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=129152>.

⁹³⁷ Based on the popular music hall jingle authored by G. H. MacDermott and G. W. Hunt soon after Disraeli’s Guildhall speech on 9 November 1876 that argued “Although the policy of England is peace, there is no country so well prepared for war as our own. If she enters into conflict in a righteous cause ... her resources, I feel, are inexhaustible.” For information on the development of this counter-protest, see Hugh Cunningham, “Jingoism in 1877-78,” *Victorian Studies*, 14, 4 (1971): 429-53.

groups and denominations of New Dissent in particular.⁹³⁸ Large scale open-air meetings, demonstrations, and speeches by influential personages became the focus of protest and counter-protest in the middle to late stages of the Agitation.

Jingoism and “Jingoes,” Gladstone complained to W. T. Stead, were representative of a “stirring up of all the foul dregs of the coarsest and rankest material amongst us”⁹³⁹—British civility’s licentious *alter ego* fuelled by beer, Chauvinism, and gaudy music hall singing. Liberals, of course, suspected that the Conservatives (whom they dubbed the “War Party”) were actively encouraging counter-protests amongst not only the working classes but also “every gambler on the Stock Exchange, every toady of Baron Rothschild, [and] every Jew pedlar”⁹⁴⁰ to prepare the country for the unfolding of Beaconsfield’s nefarious desires for war against Russia.⁹⁴¹ Yet as quickly and as organically as the Agitation itself had crystallized during the summer of 1876, Jingo counter-protest formed in January of 1878 with little organization from the Conservative party or major conservative groups.⁹⁴² Humanitarian concerns had been raised about the Russian treatment of civilian populations, but the overriding concern was with the position of the British Empire with regards to the growing power of Russia in the Balkans and Central Asia. Large public meetings were held in early 1878 discussing the security of India, which invariably cast

⁹³⁸ 68% of petitions from January and February 1878 were from religious groups and individual congregations, with virtually none from Anglican sources. See Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 160-163. Saab argues that Samuel Morley’s Nonconformist Vigilance Committee “played a key part in setting the example of protest by religious groups” (160).

⁹³⁹ Gladstone to W. T. Stead, 5 February 1878, Gladstone Papers MSS 443303 f. 284.

⁹⁴⁰ H. R. Grenfell to W. T. Stead, 31 January 1878, Stead Papers.

⁹⁴¹ “Great efforts have been made and are still making to induce the working classes to declare for war, and a great deal of money is circulating in promotion of this object... Working class districts are everywhere placarded with inflammatory appeals against Russia,” A. J. Mundella to Gladstone, 26 December 1877, Gladstone Papers, 44258, 150. Cunningham, “Jingoism,” 431.

⁹⁴² Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 170.

Gladstone as the traitorous villain who had betrayed British interests for his own political gain; Gladstone was burned in effigy and he received a deluge of hate mail.⁹⁴³

January to May 1878 thus marked an invigorated wave of protests and counter-protests and a deluge of petitions to parliament and the Foreign Office.⁹⁴⁴ Gladstone and Disraeli's personal feud culminated alongside this upswing in public agitation, and their actions were swayed by or made in response to popular demands. Buoyed by growing support from his party's base and certainly fearful of Russian advances towards Constantinople after the fall of Plevna in December, Disraeli finally intervened by ordering the Royal Navy to the Dardanelles. Gladstone's enthusiastic rhetoric surged as the crisis deepened and as Disraeli moved towards military intervention against Russia. Gladstone inflammatorily characterized Disraeli's orders as nothing less than "an act of war, a breach of European law."⁹⁴⁵ Disraeli's deployment of the Royal Navy in fact caused the Russo-Turkish war to come to an abrupt end on 31 January 1878 with Russian forces just thirteen kilometres outside of Constantinople at San Stefano.⁹⁴⁶ This calculatedly aggressive step to force a peace to Britain's advantage, however, also precipitated a war scare throughout the British media (and the Russian high command) and coerced the high-profile resignations of Derby and Lord Carnarvon (the Colonial Secretary). Despite Disraeli and Victoria's personal wishes, the cabinet convinced Derby to remain in office since he was respected by

⁹⁴³ Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 168-9; Cunningham, "Jingoism," 448; "A Conservative" to Gladstone, Glynne-Gladstone Papers, MSS 702. Many angry letters are preserved at Hawarden.

⁹⁴⁴ Including over 1376 documents submitted during the week of 4 February alone (Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 177)

⁹⁴⁵ "Gladstone's Speech at Oxford," *The Times*, 31 January 1878.

⁹⁴⁶ Word of the Russian cease-fire with Turkey did not reach Britain for some time—a rumour circulated around London that Russia had taken Constantinople, causing the stock market to crash and frenzied crowds to protest the lack of decisive action by Disraeli. Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 178.

the Agitation and it was feared his departure would split the Conservative party⁹⁴⁷—demonstrating the continuing, powerful influence of the Agitation. As the British fleet entered the Dardanelles in February, Gladstone and 90 other Liberals voted against the bill to provide funds for the British expedition after one of his most famous speeches delivered to the House of Commons, which he subsequently revised and published as the pamphlet *The Paths of Honour and Shame*.⁹⁴⁸ Gladstone therein outlined his own, alternative strategy for the Berlin negotiation, based largely on the Anglican Evangelical principles of “humility,” “discipline,” senses of “sin” and “obligation,” and “atonement,”⁹⁴⁹ which railed against Britain’s seizing of Cyprus and the return of much of Bulgaria to Turkish rule under the Treaty of Berlin.

The largest public meetings during the entire Great Eastern Crisis assembled during February and March—both for and against the government. *The Times* opined that “everybody has taken sides... and there is a degree of heat and passion on the subject such as has not been developed for a very long time.”⁹⁵⁰ Animosity between the two opposed groups started out as disruption, intimidation, and petty mischief, but eventually discourteous behaviour descended into violence between the two. This served to further cripple the Agitation by the perception that the movement was full of rowdy ne’re-do-

⁹⁴⁷ Disraeli to Victoria, 26 January 1878. Quoted in Seton-Watson, 301.

⁹⁴⁸ In which he described his role as “the part of an agitator. My purpose has been ... to the best of my power, for the last eighteen months, day and night, week by week, month by month, to counterwork as well as I could, what I believe to be the purpose of Lord Beaconsfield [Disraeli]” *The Times*, 31 January 1878.

⁹⁴⁹ On Evangelicalism and Gladstone’s pamphlet, see: H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 284-6. His birthday diary entry on 29 December 1877 stresses his conviction that his life and political career “carry the marks of the will of God.”

⁹⁵⁰ J. C. MacDonald quoted in Marvin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

wells.⁹⁵¹ After the largest public meeting yet held by Agitators in Hyde Park on 24 February, attracting some sixty to seventy thousand attendees, Jingo counter-protesters vandalized Gladstone's London apartment and sacked the headquarters of the *Daily News* before moving on to serenade Disraeli with "Hail Britannia." Subsequent meetings were even more violent, which discouraged the organization of public protest meetings from March onwards. At the beginning of April, Disraeli mobilized the Indian Army to Malta, precipitating yet another war scare. Daunted by the spectre of violence, the Agitation responded with privately organized petitions and elite-based political opposition rather than public meetings.

The origins, composition, and numbers of petitions (and the number of petitioners they attracted) had changed several times from the early stages of the Agitation to its climax in the spring of 1878. Numbers of petitions declined, but increasing national organization of the Agitation by Liberals and nonconformist religious groups meant that the numbers of signatories was much greater. After large public meetings proved to be too hard to manage, strategy shifted to creating mass petitions, supported by advertisements in friendly newspapers and volunteers at the local and regional levels, to be submitted by a deputation to Parliament and the Foreign Office.⁹⁵² One such monster petition, sponsored by William Morris and John Bright, circulated from mid-April until 18 May; it ultimately received over 220,000 signatures of various regional and institutional backgrounds.⁹⁵³ Lord Salisbury, the newly appointed Foreign Secretary, however, was far less sympathetic to petitioners than was Derby. He refused to meet with the deputation bearing such a huge

⁹⁵¹ This perception of the Agitation's increasing "rowdyism" worked for the benefit of the government. Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 173.

⁹⁵² Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 188.

⁹⁵³ *Daily News*, 13 April 1878, 4. Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 189.

roll of signatures and suggested instead that their concerns would be better raised in Parliament.⁹⁵⁴ The impact of petitions on policy-makers, then, may be seen as quite contingent on that individual's disposition—requiring careful attention to their reception.

Another effect of the Russo-Turkish War in Britain was the development of relief societies, fundraising organizations, nursing corps, and other organizational structures that overlapped with and strengthened the women's suffrage and moral reform movements. Building on the anti-slavery movement and the protests over the treatment of women during the Italian Unification as well as against the Contagious Diseases Acts, the Agitation involved a great many women as campaigners, fundraisers, letter writers, organizers, secretaries, and petitioners. Yet, as Anne Summers argues, for many women, "philanthropy was not enough: many of those who threw themselves into a frenzy of fundraising and bandage-rolling were aware that relief measures were only palliative."⁹⁵⁵ Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Agitation revolved around the Turkish "outraging" of Christian women and young girls or their sale into sexual slavery within the harem; frustration mounted in Britain that women had no voice in matters of foreign policy in order to protect their sisters in Christ around the globe. Women were therefore drawn towards more overtly political actions such as participation in town hall meetings and the signing of petitions, including the aforementioned Women's Memorial in 1876. Another such large scale women's petition was organized in May 1878 and promoted by the *Daily News*; it received 11,955 signatures of women in just nine days.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵⁴ *Daily News*, 24 May 1878, 2. Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 189.

⁹⁵⁵ Anne Summers, "British Women and Cultures of Imperialism c. 1815-1914," 200.

⁹⁵⁶ Saab, *Reluctant Icon*, 188.

Female participation within the Agitation and relief efforts transferred a variety of organizational skills and political aspirations to the moral reform and suffragette movements. Lady Strangford, well versed in Eastern affairs and sympathetic of Balkan national causes,⁹⁵⁷ founded the Bulgarian Peasant Relief Fund in 1876 and administered its operation both in Britain as well as in Edirne, Sofia, and Constantinople.⁹⁵⁸ Among her volunteers and organizers was Margaret Freeman (daughter of Edward Freeman), Baroness Bourdett-Coutts (the wealthiest woman in Britain), and two of Judith Butler's close associates: Elizabeth Malleson (née Whitehead) and Sarah Sheldon Amos.⁹⁵⁹ British women volunteered as Red Cross nurses during the war, including authors Emma Maria Pearson and Louisa MacLaughlin,⁹⁶⁰ as well as many others who had attended Florence Nightingale's School for Nurses.⁹⁶¹ Author Paulina Irby contributed alongside long-time campaigner Priscilla Johnston to found the Eastern War Sick and Wounded Fund.⁹⁶² Irby republished her 1867 travelogue *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces* with Gladstone's introduction in 1877 whereupon it quickly became a best seller and the basis of much political discussion and several of Gladstone's tracts and speeches. Fanny Albert, organiser

⁹⁵⁷ Her father-in-law had been a famous Ambassador to Constantinople during the 1820s and her husband was an accomplished philologist and ethnologist who lived in Constantinople and wrote articles on the Ottoman Empire for British newspapers until his death in 1869. His posthumous book, *A Selection from the Writings of Viscount Strangford on Political, Geographical and Social Subjects* (London: R. Betley, 1869) was compiled and edited by Lady Strangford, wherein he suggested that the future of the Balkans lay with Bulgarians, who were "the most numerous and promising body of Christians in Turkey" (quoted in Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 99). Lady Strangford was also the author of *The Eastern Shores of the Adriatic* (London: R. Bentley, 1863).

⁹⁵⁸ Lady Strangford, *Report of the Expenditure of the Bulgarian Peasant Relief Fund* (London: Hardwicke and Bogue, 1878). Strangford was convinced of the Bulgarian worthiness for nationhood.

⁹⁵⁹ Elizabeth Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 2013), 456.

⁹⁶⁰ See Emma Pearson and Louisa MacLaughlin, *Service in Servia Under the Red Cross* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1877). The authors cite Leopold von Ranke's treatise as an excellent antidote to British ignorance of Serbian history.

⁹⁶¹ See: Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses 1854-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988), 125-153.

⁹⁶² Summers, *Angels and Citizens*, 144.

of the Women's Memorial to Queen Victoria in 1876, went on to work with the Social Purity Alliance and to co-found the Moral Reform Union—and was a source for W. T. Stead's exposé during the infamous "Maiden Tribute" articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.⁹⁶³ In fact, women's experience during the Bulgarian Agitation and the Russo-Turkish War suggests that British women obtained their own cultural criteria for evaluating foreign affairs that focused on the impact of war on women—in contrast to the lack of women's voice on issues of foreign policy—that was largely fuelled by feminism; reciprocally, women's discussion of foreign affairs and participation within relief work and activism solidified the organization and inspiration for the feminist movement.⁹⁶⁴

The Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878)

Disraeli's calculated gamble to send the Royal Navy to the Dardanelles to prevent the Russian seizure of Constantinople—despite massive domestic opposition—effectively ended the Russo-Turkish War. Even though the Ottoman army had nearly completely collapsed, exhausted Russian forces were compelled to sign a ceasefire on 31 January 1878 out of fear of war with Britain.⁹⁶⁵ Throughout February, however, Russian Ambassador Nikolay Pavlovic Ignatyev negotiated one of the most punitive peace treaties in history with Ottoman plenipotentiaries at the village of San Stefano (now Yeşilköy) just outside the Ottoman capital. Besides greatly rewarding Russia in territory and reparations, the treaty trumpeted the liberation of subjugated nations from Ottoman domination. Upon the

⁹⁶³ W. T. Stead, "The Truth about our Secret Commission," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 July 1885.

⁹⁶⁴ See: Summers, "British Women and Cultures of Imperialism," 187-190.

⁹⁶⁵ Russian commander Grand Duke Nikolay (Nicholas, 1831-1891) was extremely hesitant to risk a war with Britain by taking strategic locations around Constantinople—as ordered by his brother Tsar Alexander II. After the ceasefire, Nikolay argued with Ignatyev over strategy, "almost shouting: 'Are you going to saddle us with another war with England? It is time to stop all military operations and go home'" (quoted in Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 330).

signing of the Treaty of San Stefano on 3 March 1878, Ignatyev telegraphed Tsar Alexander II, brimming with pride, that “on the day of the liberation of the peasants [3 March 1861] you have liberated the Christians from Moslem yoke.”⁹⁶⁶ The treaty forced Ottoman recognition of Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and the autonomy of an enlarged Bulgaria along the same borders of the Constantinople Conference of late 1876.

A long delay followed the signing before it was transmitted to the rest of the Great Powers, which greatly aggravated diplomatic tensions and resulted in wild media speculation. The treaty was unacceptable to the rest of Europe for vastly expanding Russian influence in Europe and in Central Asia, for reneging on secretly-agreed Austrian claims to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for demanding that a massive indemnity (1.4 billion roubles) be paid to Russia before other creditors. Balkan powers felt betrayed by Russia’s support of a huge Bulgarian state much larger and more powerful than their own. After Russia hesitated to abandon the San Stefano treaty in favour of a Great Power congress, Britain called out the Reserves and began mobilization of Indian troops to Malta on 27 March—the second deliberately aggressive move in spite of major opposition from the Agitation. This action prompted Derby’s second and final resignation, as he feared that Britain was “drifting into war”⁹⁶⁷ and that Disraeli was “indifferent to war or peace” and only cared “not to forfeit public favour.”⁹⁶⁸ Derby was immediately replaced by Salisbury—an appointment designed to placate the Agitation. Furious negotiations between Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Britain under the threat of war continued until Russian diplomats

⁹⁶⁶ Quoted in Genov *Liberation of Bulgaria*, 74.

⁹⁶⁷ Derby to Hardy, quoted in Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 364.

⁹⁶⁸ *Derby Diaries*, 531 (24 March 1878).

finally agreed to rework the peace treaty to be more favourable to the rest of the Great Powers.

The Congress of Berlin (13 June to 13 July 1878)

German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in an effort to mediate the escalating crisis, preserve the *Driekaiserbund*, and to shape the agreement in Germany's favour, offered to host an international congress in Berlin to be held during the summer of 1878. Plenipotentiaries from Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Germany soon after met at Bismarck's chancellery to discuss the partition of the Ottoman Empire's European holdings. While Ottoman diplomats were officially in attendance, unlike representatives from Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro, Bismarck's short patience during the hot summer sessions greatly restricted Turkish and Balkan participation in actual negotiations.

Disraeli and his hawkish new Foreign Secretary Salisbury secretly organized a strong international coalition against Russian interests in advance of the Congress: Austria was wooed with support for their claim of Bosnia and Herzegovina; France by promising increased influence in Palestine and Egypt; and Britain's support of the Ottoman Empire was secured by the occupation of Cyprus. Another protocol between Russia and Britain was also arranged whereby Salisbury plainly threatened war should the Tsar not agree to a shrunken Bulgaria divided into two in exchange for significant Russian territorial gains—the Russian Ambassador, Shuvalov, accepted, writing to Prince Gorchakov that “the English are beginning to understand that they have conceded too much to us. The situation is critical, and I must sign at any moment or risk seeing the promises [of territory]

withdrawn. ... the Congress could be compromised and war imminent.”⁹⁶⁹ Their acceptance of the protocol as explained by this communiqué reveals the extent to which Russian foreign policy gave primacy to its own expansion far over their stated justification for war as the liberation of Bulgarians. That Disraeli and Salisbury threatened war over an enlarged Bulgaria and that Russia took it seriously speaks to the increasing confidence given to the Premier and the Foreign Office by Jingo counter-protest.

Having secured prior agreements with the major powers over the major questions at hand, Disraeli thus dominated the Congress. He secured the repeal or major revision of two thirds of the provisions of San Stefano at the expense of Russia and the new Bulgarian state. As the representative of the British Empire during a time of growing confidence in the empire, Disraeli broke international precedent by addressing the Congress and other delegates in English—marking the beginnings of English’s replacement of French as the language of international diplomacy. Disraeli and Bismarck struck up an immediate liking for each other, as both were largely sceptical of Panslavism, Russian Balkan aspirations, and liberal visions of a supposedly humanitarian foreign policy. Bismarck and Disraeli enjoyed private dinners and “recklessly frank” conversation that lasted well into the night, which included ridiculing Gladstone on at least one occasion.⁹⁷⁰ Disraeli’s grandstanding and “theatrical brinkmanship”⁹⁷¹—including leaving the Congress and boarding a train ostensibly to prepare for war when Russia tried to renege on a commitment to reduce the

⁹⁶⁹ Shuvalov to Gorchakov, telegram 27 May 1878, Unprinted Russo-British Documents, quoted in Seton-Watson, *Disraeli*, 417.

⁹⁷⁰ Disraeli suggested that Gladstone would either die in a monastery or a madhouse; Bismarck added that his next political demise would probably lead him to espouse Catholicism to cause another sensation, and that the Pope would probably make him a cardinal. Aldous, *Lion and the Unicorn*, 284.

⁹⁷¹ Aldous, *Lion and the Unicorn*, 285.

size of Bulgaria—secured major concessions from Russia and famously caused Bismarck to remark: “that old Jew, he is the man.”⁹⁷²

Disraeli’s performance during negotiations at Berlin worked against the underlying adoption of national determination as a basis of international relations, something which he viewed merely as a thin rhetorical veneer concealing Russian expansionism and an obviously dangerous precedent for Ireland and British colonial rule.⁹⁷³ Riding the increased support from his conservative base in Britain, Disraeli’s efforts focussed on the shrinking of the so-called “Big Bulgaria” and the military defensibility of the Ottoman Empire against future Russian, Slavic, or Greek attacks. While the new states had certainly been conceived within frameworks of national identity and represented with a variety of ethnographic maps showing the racial composition of Balkan territories, agreements at the Congress of Berlin were largely interested in the *realpolitik* implications of the new political and military frontiers.⁹⁷⁴ The result was a paradoxical compromise between the imperial interests of the European Great Powers and the idea of national liberation against imperial oppression. The proposed boundaries thus redrew national boundaries along lines of military defensibility, imperial expansion and power politics in Boundary Commissions established on 28 June to work out the smaller details of national demarcation, all with little regard for the religious or national identity of the populations

⁹⁷² “Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann,” quoted in Andrew Dickson White, *Seven Great Statesmen in the Warfare of Humanity with Unreason* (1912), 482. Also translated as “that old Jew really means business.”

⁹⁷³ Miloš Ković, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 100.

⁹⁷⁴ Todorova writes that “the size, shape, stages of growth, even the very existence of the different Balkan states were almost exclusively regulated by great power considerations following the rules of the balance-of-power game” and that “neither historic rights ... nor issues of self-determination were, in the final account, instrumental in delineating frontiers” (*Imagining the Balkans*, 169). I argue that these issues *were* indeed important in the conception of Balkan nationality and the existence of these nations, but their territorial boundaries were applied under Great Power interests and principles of military defensibility.

that the new boundaries divided in favour of expedience.⁹⁷⁵ The liberal idea of Christian national liberation, however, was preserved and even Salisbury agreed that “as a governor of European Christians, the Porte has failed”⁹⁷⁶—that the Ottoman Empire was excluded from this new imperial order was based upon persistent cultural prejudices that had irrevocably changed British foreign policy.

Legacies of the Treaty of Berlin

The Treaty of Berlin rewrote international relations along a new order of Great Power interests, both materially and culturally. Its articles proclaimed the independence of Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro while granting autonomy for Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, which marked the termination of five centuries of Ottoman rule in large portions of the Balkans. The treaty was symbolic of a formative change in international relations whereby cultural and humanitarian concerns—specifically conceptions of race and religion—interplayed with the military and strategic interest of the Great Powers. Sluglett and Yavuz note how it transformed the political landscape of the Balkans and the Caucasus by introducing the concept of the unitary nation-state and national self-determination as the principle basis for political sovereignty—while the borders between these states were indeed malleable and shaped to imperial concerns, the existence and intrinsic legitimacy of these states were essentially uncontested. This concept, they argue, “planted the seeds” of future unrest and conflict in these regions, including the Balkan Wars (leading to the First

⁹⁷⁵ Border Commissions were comprised of Great Power military officers who demarcated boundaries along principles of military defensibility and strategic interest, based upon the general guidelines provided by the Articles of the Berlin Treaty under instructions from respective governments. See: FO 78/2922 “Bulgarian Boundary Commission (Col. R. Home)”, FO 78/3051-55 “Commission Europeene de la Roumelie Orientale” (Protocols), FO 78/3056 “Eastern Roumelia Boundary Commission, Major R. Gordon,” FO 78/3059 “Bulgarian Boundary Commission,” FO 78/3060 (“Dobrudscha”), FO 78/3063 “Asiatic Boundary Commission,” FO 78/3061 (Montenegro), FO 78/ 3062 (Serbia).

⁹⁷⁶ Salisbury to Layard, 2 May 1878, *Layard Papers*.

World War) and recent ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, and also killed the possibility of effective liberal reforms in the Ottoman Empire and generated its own nationalistic response inside Anatolia.⁹⁷⁷ Indeed, following the legacies of the Congress of Berlin demonstrates the wide implications of the Great Eastern Crisis—including its cultural origins.

From “Peace with Honour” to the Midlothian Campaign: Britain 1878-1880

Disraeli returned to Britain with a hero’s welcome. He proudly proclaimed that he had achieved “a peace I hope with honour, which may satisfy our sovereign and tend to the welfare of our country”⁹⁷⁸—eventually shortened by satirists to “peace with honour—and Cyprus too.” The treaty was ratified by Parliament by a majority of 143 and passed without division in the House of Lords. Gladstone, of course, railed against what he perceived to be the recklessly aggressive posturing of his arch rival and return of much “Christian” territory to Ottoman rule. He pronounced that the *de facto* annexation of Cyprus in exchange for support of the Ottoman Empire was “an insane covenant,” yet Disraeli famously swatted down this accusation by noting his popular mandate and disparaging Gladstone as merely a “sophistical rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity,”⁹⁷⁹ set only on his own political gain. Yet, although Gladstone considered the peace wholly inadequate in that it represented to him the craven imperial interests of

⁹⁷⁷ Peter Sluglett and M. Hakan Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 1-5.

⁹⁷⁸ “Return Of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury,” *The Times*, 17 July 1878, 5.

⁹⁷⁹ Full quote: “Which do you believe most likely to enter an insane convention, a body of English gentlemen honoured by the favour of their Sovereign and the confidence of their fellow-subjects, managing your affairs for five years, I hope with prudence, and not altogether without success, or a sophistical rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign an opponent and to glorify himself?” Speech at Knightsbridge, Quoted in William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. Volume II. 1860-1881* (London: John Murray, 1929), 1228-9.

“Beaconsfieldism,” it was, as his biographer observed, a “virtual ratification of the policy of bag and baggage”⁹⁸⁰ that was a *fait accompli* partition of the Ottoman’s European territories. In this respect, Agitationists’ arguments adopted by Derby in his 21 September memorandum proved instrumental in the Great Eastern Crisis and they helped shape the creation of the modern Balkan geopolitical order.

Gladstone was, as usual, utterly convinced that right was on his side. Liberals had won ten by-elections since the start of the Agitation and Gladstone had witnessed and participated in what he considered to be the greatest upwelling of popular feeling against the government that continued well after the triumphant return of Disraeli from Berlin; “The pot is beginning to boil,” he noted, “I hope it will not boil too fast”⁹⁸¹ before the next general election. From 1878 to the next general election in 1880, Gladstone embarked on a whistle-stop tour of Britain, concentrating primarily on the north, where the Agitation found its initial and greatest support, as well as Scotland. The resulting Midlothian campaign (Gladstone relocated his riding from Greenwich to Midlothian, Scotland due to almost certain defeat in the former) consisted of a scathing account of “Beaconsfieldism” and Britain’s imperial identity, role in global affairs, and moral duty to defend civilization. That the economy was still languishing during the Long Depression and a series of imperial misadventures (including Lytton’s financially costly Afghan War and the embarrassing defeats of British soldiers at the battles of Isandlwana and Intombe during the Zulu War) and conservative spending scandals certainly aided the reception to Gladstone’s message of foreign policy transformation and fiscal discipline. The Midlothian campaign is largely cited

⁹⁸⁰ Morley, *Gladstone*, 474.

⁹⁸¹ Quoted in Shannon, *Heroic Minister*, 224.

as the first modern political campaign.⁹⁸² British popular reaction to the Bulgarian Horrors thus not only dragged Gladstone reluctantly out of retirement to lead the Agitation, but it also directly resulted in the majority victory of the Liberals in 1880, three more Gladstonian premierships (1880-1885, 1886, and 1892-94—overseeing the 1884-5 Reform Acts and the defeat of two Irish Home Rule bills), and the transformation of the British political process.

“A Rickety Sort of Rule”: The Dismembering of the Ottoman Empire⁹⁸³

The Treaty of Berlin marks an obvious landmark in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The final settlement undid some of the more draconian provisions of San Stefano, but it nevertheless sustained the effective partition of much of the Empire’s European provinces. The Ottomans were obliged to forfeit eight percent of their most fecund territory to European powers: Kars, Ardahan, Batum, and South Bessarabia to Russia; Bosnia, Herzegovina and Novi Pazar to Austria; Thessaly to Greece; Cyprus to England; and Bulgaria, Montenegro, Roumania, and Serbia to their respective populations.⁹⁸⁴ This lost territory included nearly twenty percent of its population, the majority being Christian. A result of this major demographic shift was a vastly decreased Christian minority population and decreased ethnic diversity, which was now over three-quarters Muslim.⁹⁸⁵ In this context the liberal-inspired, *Tanzimat* policies of patriotic “Ottomanism” no longer made sense as an ideology of political cohesion. Sultan Abdülhamid subsequently favoured his

⁹⁸² For example: Robert Kelley, “Midlothian: A Study In Politics and Ideas,” *Victorian Studies* 4,2 (1960):119-40; David Brooks “Gladstone and Midlothian: The Background to the First Campaign,” *Scottish Historical Review* 64, 1(1985): 42-67; H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone*, 293-313.

⁹⁸³ Salisbury remarked upon returning from Berlin: “We shall set up a rickety sort of Turkish rule again south of the Balkans. But it is a mere respite. There is no vitality left in them,” quoted in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1954): 253.

⁹⁸⁴ Akarlı, “The Problem of External Pressures,” 191; Karpát, *Ottoman Population*, 28.

⁹⁸⁵ Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 491.

title of Caliph on the Earth (*khalife-i ru-yi zemin*) and focused on Islam as the unifying source of imperial loyalty.⁹⁸⁶ Although Frederick Anscombe rightly points out that many processes within the Ottoman Sultanate were trends from even before 1877 (including territorial losses, the increasingly despotic rule of Abdülhamid, and the growing influence of political nationalism), the war aggravated and entrenched the increasingly dire situation of Ottoman rule.

Turkish nationalism, moreover, was born in the defeat of 1878 and the suspension of the parliament and constitutional rule. The huge financial burden imposed on the empire, through wartime expenditures, foreign loans, and a massive indemnity to be paid to Russia precipitated yet another disastrous debt crisis in 1879 (this also coincided with the global Long Depression of 1873-1896), which resulted in the establishment of the Public Debt Administration and the foreign reorganization of the Ottoman economy. This economic collapse and heavy-handed reordering reverberated throughout the empire, delegitimizing imperial authority on the periphery, stifling trade and modernization, and embittering the new generation of Turkish students and reformers.⁹⁸⁷ On 20 May 1878, radical journalist and member of the Young Ottomans Ali Suavi attempted to lead 250 soldiers uprooted from Bulgaria to restore the liberal Murad V as Sultan; however, the conspiracy was uncovered, put down with a heavy hand, and Young Ottomans faded out of existence until their cause was picked up by the secular and nationalistic Young Turk movement after the turn of the century.⁹⁸⁸ Turkish nationalism and the Young Turk movement thus found their origins in the crippling tax burdens imposed by the Public Debt

⁹⁸⁶ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 492.

⁹⁸⁷ Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 136.

⁹⁸⁸ Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 142-144.

Administration against the religiously inspired imperial identity of Abdülhamid and the suspension of the parliament and the first constitutional period in 1878. Eventually, calls for reform and Turkish nationalism would culminate in the 1908 Young Turk Revolution that deposed Abdülhamid the following year, along with his vision of a conservative, Islamic empire.

Deeper instability of the Ottoman economy meant military weakness and further vulnerability to predatory European expansionism. Diplomatic isolation continued, and it coincided with the era of high imperialism and the scramble for easy territorial acquisitions. As such, the Ottoman Empire was unable to prevent the establishment of the French Tunisian protectorate in 1881, the British annexation of Egypt in 1882 (which resulted in *de facto* control of the Sudan, later formalized in an Anglo-Egyptian condominium), the Italian invasion of Massawa and Eritrea in 1885 (which Italy took as colony in 1890) and annexation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica in 1911, or even the Bulgarian annexation of Eastern Rumelia in 1885—in direct contravention of the Treaty of Berlin. Even a successful war with Greece caused by a rebellion in Crete ended with an internationally imposed agreement that in fact expanded the autonomy of Cretan Christians. Obvious tensions with both Liberal Britain (headed by Gladstone from 1880 to 1885, 1886, and again from 1892 to 1894, then Lord Rosebery from 1894 to 1896) as well as Conservative Britain (Lord Salisbury in 1886, from 1886 to 1892, and again from 1895-1902) and a redefinition of British foreign policy placed far less strategic weight on the preservation of Ottoman sovereignty above the protection of Egypt and the Suez Canal.⁹⁸⁹ Prime Minister Salisbury argued against further support of the Ottoman Empire and indeed

⁹⁸⁹ Matthew, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, 261.

formed a contingency plan for its partition within the context of the Armenian crises of 1895 and 1896, later stating that “sympathies with Turkey have completely changed and [Britain] would never again make great sacrifices for a government which she so thoroughly distrusts.”⁹⁹⁰ Culturally and strategically dispossessed by the British and scrambling to sustain the empire after the ruinous Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire sought alliance with Imperial Germany at the onset of the First World War. The ultimate demise of the Ottoman Empire was precipitated by reverberations from the legacies of Berlin: defeat at the hands of her vengeful former Balkan subjects, another brutal war with Imperial Russia in the Caucasus, British and French invasion at Gallipoli and their support of Arab revolts and the partition of the Middle East,⁹⁹¹ and increasingly powerful Turkish nationalism—all of which culminated in the Turkish War of Independence and the abolishment of the Ottoman Sultanate.

Frustrated Nationalism and the Creation of the Modern Balkans

The Balkan implications of the Treaty of Berlin are profound. It effectively laid the foundations for the geopolitical and cultural composition of the Balkan Peninsula, including the inherent instabilities that came to plague the twentieth century. Berlin established the independence of Romania, Montenegro, and Serbia, and it gave autonomy to much of Bulgaria. At the same time, however, the compromises made at the Congress of Berlin in order to accommodate Great Power imperial interests managed to alienate and aggregate

⁹⁹⁰ Quoted in Hanioglu, A Report Regarding the Marquis of Salisbury’s Reponse to Graf Deym, Royal Archives (M) H 39, 23 January 1897.

⁹⁹¹ The dissolution of the Ottoman Sultanate and the partition of Ottoman territory was an Allied war aim from the beginning of the war. See: Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conferences of 1919-1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974).

each new Balkan state.⁹⁹² Balkan delegates to Berlin were able to present their respective claims for territory and compensation, yet none were successful in altering the decisions already made by the Great Powers.⁹⁹³ Britain and Russia, moreover, partitioned territory for themselves at the expense of Balkan states: Russia took Southern Bessarabia, much to the chagrin of Romania, and Britain took Cyprus, despite a large Greek population. Austria-Hungary took over administration of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Novi Pazar, claimed by Serbia. Greece received no territory from the divided European Ottoman holdings until after sustained protest the philhellenic Gladstone intervened as newly elected Prime Minister to reward Greece with Thessaly and part of Epirus. Berlin thus secured national independence for Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania (and eventually Bulgaria), but simultaneously frustrated nationalist political and territorial demands that sowed the seeds of virulent irredentism and international intrigue that would grow to dominate subsequent Balkan history.

The “Stillborn Child” of San Stefano: Bulgaria

Bulgarian revolutionaries-turned-politicians were bitterly disappointed by what they perceived to be a conservative conspiracy against the tide of history and progress. The Bulgarian Exarchate (established 1870) and the Temporary Russian Governance in Bulgaria (1876-79) claimed all territories occupied by Bulgarian Christians and provided an administrative precedent of nominal “Bulgarian” control that was reaffirmed by the Treaty of San Stefano. That Russia “betrayed” Bulgaria by making a secret deal with Britain before the Congress of Berlin frustrated and angered Bulgarian officials, intellectuals, and

⁹⁹² See: “Part II: The Emergence of the Balkan State System,” in Sluglett and Yavuz (Eds.), *War and Diplomacy*, 123-269.

⁹⁹³ Jelovich, *Establishment of Balkan National States*, 156.

other patriots, causing long lingering nationalist resentment and determined irredentism. San Stefano Bulgaria is still considered the “true” boundaries of the country (particularly with regards to Macedonia),⁹⁹⁴ and 3 March, the date of the signing of the unimplemented Treaty of San Stefano, is nationally celebrated as the Day of National Liberation from Ottoman Rule.⁹⁹⁵

Under the Treaty of Berlin, however, San Stefano Bulgaria was divided into three: one autonomous province immediately south of the Danube was to be named “Bulgaria,” another semi-autonomous region named “Eastern Rumelia” was to be semi-autonomous with a Christian governor approved by the Porte (and the Great Powers), and the last third connecting Thrace to Bosnia through Macedonia was returned to Ottoman control. That all Bulgarian territory should be completely returned to *de jure* Ottoman sovereignty after such a bloody war of liberation is typically seen as a vicious and reprehensible stab in the back by an imperialist conspiracy. Tsonko Genov’s 1978 *War of Bulgarian Liberation*, for example, describes Bulgaria under the Treaty of San Stefano as “a stillborn child,” that was “annihilated by tremendous diplomatic pressure ... [which was] an inconceivable plot.”⁹⁹⁶ The Balkan instabilities that followed are characteristically blamed not on the championing of national self-determination in a region of extensive cultural heterogeneity but instead on the “complex contradictions” that arose from doing so only incompletely and betraying this

⁹⁹⁴ See, for example: D. Rizoff, “The Bulgarians in their Historical, Ethnographical, and Political Frontiers. Atlas with 40 Maps,” accessed 12 June 2013 at: <http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_en.htm>

⁹⁹⁵ (Ден на Освобождението на България от турско робство)

⁹⁹⁶ Genov, *Bulgarian Liberation*, 77.

natural principle of international order, “in which the imagination of the imperialist Powers ... did so flagrantly and disastrously turn Balkans into a genuine ‘powder keg.’”⁹⁹⁷

The new Principality of Bulgaria, moreover, was hardly a beacon of national independence and self-sufficiency. Under the Berlin Treaty, the principality was appointed a new Prince determined to be acceptable by the Great Powers: the twenty-two-year-old German-born Lutheran-raised Alexander of Battenberg, Prince of Hesse and nephew of the Tsar Liberator, Alexander II. The aristocratic background of the new Prince of Bulgaria was therefore set in opposition to liberal Bulgarian revolutionaries, who struggled to bring in a highly liberal constitution and parliamentary representation.⁹⁹⁸ Alexander II’s assassination in 1881 saw the coronation of Alexander III, who treated his cousin’s principality as a Russian satellite that must submit to his authority.⁹⁹⁹ All military ranks above captain, for example, were reserved for Russian officers, and a great deal of money was transferred to Russia in repayment of the “occupation debt” incurred during the war. Ottoman control was thus replaced with Russian domination. The international administration of Eastern Rumelia was nothing short of a farce. The 495-article “Organic Statute” of 1879 that formed the province’s constitutional framework was drafted separately by each of the respective Great Powers: Britain created the electoral laws, Austrians created the legal system, Italians founded the tax and financial regime, the French copied their governmental apparatus, and Russia and the French organized the militia.¹⁰⁰⁰ That this convoluted system was administered by a variety of multi-national

⁹⁹⁷ Genov, *Bulgarian Liberation*, 77.

⁹⁹⁸ Jelavich, *Establishment*, 161. Jelavich notes that Alexander had little regard for the constitution or Bulgarian liberals; Alexander wished to impose autocratic rule such that of Carol of Romania.

⁹⁹⁹ Jelavich, *Establishment*, 162.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Jelavich, *Establishment*, 168.

figures at all levels created unworkable inconsistencies and massive inefficiencies within the political, economic, legal, and military structure of the Eastern Rumelian government.

Conclusions: “Some Damned Foolish Thing in the Balkans” and the Origins of the First World War

Popular discussions of the origins of the First World War typically refer to the Balkan “powder keg” as a principle cause of imperial rivalries, deepening tensions, and the ultimate spark that ignited the July Crisis and the descent into war.¹⁰⁰¹ Yet this stereotype overlooks the extent to which the Great Powers themselves were responsible for creating such an unworkable situation in the Balkans. When viewed with careful attention to internal Ottoman dynamics, self-interested predatory imperial expansionism, Balkan social history, and the advent of nationalism as the basis for political legitimacy, it is clear that Balkan instabilities, Ottoman decline, and their corresponding geopolitical implications were the direct result of Western European policies and short-sighted diplomacy that wholly ignored local populations.

The new geopolitical situation affected by the Berlin Treaty resulted in a strengthened relationship between Austria-Hungary and Germany under the Dual Alliance of 1879, which was expanded to include Italy in the Triple Alliance of 1881. Also in 1881, Bismarck successfully negotiated the *Dreikaiserbund*, an alliance between the Russian, Austrian, and German Empires, who had each settled their major territorial aspirations in

¹⁰⁰¹ See, for example, the argument of former British commander of the UN in Bosnia from September 1992 to May 1993: “Historically, relations between the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims have been appalling for centuries. Rivalries between each group had frequently led to wars and massacres. The place has always been considered a powder keg.” Colonel Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*, (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 6. As American scholar Carlton J. Hayes opined: “If before 1878 the ‘Eastern Question’ concerned one ‘sick man,’ after 1878 it involved a half-dozen maniacs. For the Congress of Berlin drove the Balkan peoples mad,” *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), 33.

1878. The signatories also made firm provisions for the future division of the Balkans, including the closure of the Dardanelles, the unification of the two Bulgarias, and support for Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The playing out of these new international arrangements made in the wake of Berlin greatly aggravated imperial rivalries and antagonisms.

The weakness and further dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire set the stage for several major international incidents, up to and including the First World War. The Fashoda Incident in 1898-1899 nearly resulted in war between France and Britain as the former contested the latter's control of the Sudan. A Bulgarian-organized rebellion and coup in Plovdiv, Eastern Rumelia resulted in the declared unification of Bulgaria—a flagrant (if not expected) violation of the Berlin Treaty. The resulting Bulgarian Crisis of 1885-1888, while avoiding another war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire due to personal friction between the Prince of Bulgaria and the Russian Tsar sparked a war between Bulgaria and Serbia and Greece, dissolved the alliance between Austria, Germany, and Russia, replaced the Bulgarian King, and caused lingering tensions between Balkan states. Additionally, after years of occupation and administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina since the Treaty of Berlin, Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina following the Young Turk Revolution and the Bulgarian declaration of independence in 1908. These events contravened the Treaty of Berlin, and it sparked the Bosnian Crisis of 1908-1909 that narrowly avoided spiralling into a large scale international conflagration, at least until the Serbian-backed terrorist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife on the streets of Sarajevo in 1914.

The two Balkan Wars from 1912 to 1913 were directly related to the peace process of 1878 and the partial reification of nationalist aspirations. Following the guidance of Russia, fervent Balkan irredentism collaborated to form the Balkan League of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia to partition the remainder of Ottoman territory in Europe. The Italian-Ottoman War over Libya exhausted Ottoman finances, toppled the Young Turk government in a military coup, demonstrated how weak the Ottoman diplomatic situation was, and left Turkish holdings in the Balkans largely undefended; the Balkan League seized this opportunity to further “liberate” their respective populations in 1912. The subsequent First Balkan War quickly pushed out Ottoman forces from its European holdings—yet the conflict inflamed international tensions both regionally and globally. The subsequent Treaty of London awarded Ottoman territories to the Balkan League, but mutual suspicions and competing territorial claims tore the alliance apart over the division of Macedonia.

In favouring nationalist irredentism and national honour, hawkish Bulgarian policymakers overturned immediate strategic and material concerns in their subsequent declaration of war upon Serbia and Greece in order to seize Macedonia, which triggered the Second Balkan War. Macedonia had been part of the temporary Russian administration in Bulgaria during the Russo-Turkish War and was promised to that country under the Treaty of San Stefano, which pushed Bulgarian nationalists to reclaim the entire territory. The war was thus largely the result of the nationalist desires to fully fulfill the vision of a unified Bulgarian nation-state that was seen to have been betrayed in the Berlin Treaty. In so doing, Bulgaria destroyed the Russo-Bulgarian alliance, as Russia required a united Balkan League to counter Austro-Hungarian expansionism, and also caused Montenegro, Romania, and Turkey to declare war to punish Bulgaria’s unilateral aggression, all the while aiming

to divide Bulgarian territory amongst them. Incorrectly assuming that Russia would adhere to their alliance and overestimating their military strength, Bulgaria lost a series of battles against Greece and Serbia before suing for peace in face of further Ottomans advance in Thrace and just before the quickly-advancing Romanian army captured Sofia.

The Second Balkan War was a disaster for Bulgaria, in that it lost its territorial gains from the First Balkan War, and it again greatly aggravated international tensions: Russia dispatched its Black Sea fleet to Constantinople in order to stop the Ottoman advance in Thrace, which forced Britain to intervene. It also frustrated Bulgarian nationalists, who sought revenge and brooded over capturing the lost territory at the next available opportunity. Besides the approximately 200,000 military casualties and the systematic targeting of civilian populations in captured territories, the Balkan Wars also resulted in a number of forced population exchanges between Bulgaria and Greece at the end of the war. This was a significant precedent in international law that would be the basis for policies adopted by the League of Nations Commission for Refugees after the First World War.¹⁰⁰²

Laurence Lafore correctly observed in his 1971 book *The Long Fuse* that late nineteenth century European statesmen and diplomats, in their utopian attempts to remake the world order along scientific and natural laws, ended up creating the international circumstances and mentalities that would lead them into catastrophic war in 1914.¹⁰⁰³ The embryonic concept of national self-determination, albeit along racial and religious limitations, was increasingly adopted by intellectuals as an ideology of positive

¹⁰⁰² Alexander Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 35. Also see the *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1919), 97-99.

¹⁰⁰³ Lawrence Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1971), 25.

change in the face of imperial intrigue, expansionism, and war. Self-satisfied nation-states, so the argument went, would wholly reflect the fundamental differences between the respective races, thereby providing national strength, liberty, prosperity, and security from the inevitable oppression of other national groups. This idea was imported to the Balkans, first by Western European educated Balkan elites and then nominally enforced by soldiers and European diplomats during the Russo-Turkish War and the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. Yet legitimized revolutionary nationalism was faced with the complicated nature of collective identity as well as imperial interests in the Balkans; it immediately ran into inherent contradictions and rival claims and quickly resulted in an outpouring of death, destruction, and displacement. The introduction and advocacy of the principles of national self-determination in the Balkans necessitated a violent reordering of populations in the attempt to match reality to utopian nationalism.

The later course of the Great Eastern Crisis was thus largely an unfolding of events along the lines established by decisions made earlier on, decisions which were shaped by politically powerful cultural discourses. Perceived Turkish atrocities against Bulgarians provoked popular outrage in Britain, which caused a major shift in British foreign policy. Not only was the British Empire to remain neutral while Russia waged war on her former ally, but Britain and the Great Powers recognized the political legitimacy of nationalist desires amongst the Balkan Christian races against the backdrop of tyrannical Ottoman rule. This profound, culturally-based shift in foreign policy rewrote the fundamental basis of international relations towards the principle of national self-determination that dominated the twentieth century. Five centuries of Ottoman sovereignty in large sections of Southeastern Europe was unravelled in favour of the political sovereignty of apparently

awakening Balkan nations, which was perceived by most as the common-sense solution to the troublesome Eastern Question. Yet the attempts to control the escaping contents of this Pandora's Box proved only to aggravate the violent implications that this shift would have within the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire, and the international system itself.

7. Conclusion: Making Meaning out of the Great Eastern Crisis

A critical re-evaluation of the Great Eastern Crisis reveals the interplay of cultural values and material structures that guided individual decision-making during this crucial period. Western-educated Christian revolutionaries adopted nationalist conceptions of Bulgarian national history and identity, which to them necessitated armed rebellion against Ottoman rule towards their eventual liberation from supposedly foreign and illegitimate oppressors. The Ottomans, as well as the majority of Rumelians—both Muslim and Christian—contrastingly perceived the April Uprising as a violent provocation encouraged by international provocateurs that threatened existing social, religious, political, and diplomatic orders. Agitators in Britain believed that the advancement of human civilization would be best achieved through the condign punishment of the Ottoman Empire for its ostensibly barbaric treatment of Balkan Christians—which they predominantly assumed to be a direct result of their civilizational (political, economic, social, and religious) backwardness and racial inferiority. This cultural judgment was accepted by those in powerful political positions both in the government (Lord Derby) and the opposition (Gladstone), and ultimately restricted the realm of possible actions by even those who wholly rejected Agitatorist arguments (Disraeli and Queen Victoria). Later, an upwelling of Jingoist support that vaunted British interests over other concerns allowed Disraeli to intervene against Russian expansionism, an almost equally important episode of popular agitation influencing foreign policy during this period. Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Berlin, working from protocols influenced by Lord Derby's 21 September 1876 memorandum and guided by their own understandings of international diplomacy, ultimately agreed that the peaceful future of Southeastern Europe could only be assured

through the granting of independence or autonomy to large portions of formerly Ottoman subjects, and that state borders should at least in theory correspond with national identities.

Such an approach demystifies and denaturalizes the cultural origins, structural mechanisms, and the consequences of this period of international crisis, war, protest, and Great Power diplomacy. The Great Eastern Crisis was neither precipitated nor resolved simply through material or structural determinants, clashes of great political ideologies, Romantic nationalism, skilful diplomacy, imperial scheming, Balkan revolutionaries, or by the political pressure brought to bear by groups of agitators in Western Europe. Nor can it be adequately understood by rigid international, regional, or local frameworks or within a dichotomous theoretical model of structural versus individual determinism. It was an imagined crisis with profound material, political, and cultural consequences stemming from sporadic releases of information and guided by powerful vocabularies of cultural and spiritual understanding. The international geopolitical crisis may be seen to have started not in the Ottoman provinces of Bulgaria, but in the town hall meetings and newspaper editorial boardrooms of Great Britain. It was in these locations that cultural entrepreneurs and a significant portion of the British public decided that the ostensibly egregious crimes perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against innocent Bulgarian Christians necessitated a fundamental shift in the strategic interest of the British Empire. Fully-articulated alternatives to this policy were enthusiastically proposed, discussed, ratified, and publicly delivered to representatives of the British government, who were persuaded to remain neutral in the advent of a Russo-Turkish War and to pressure the Ottoman Government for additional reforms. Furthermore, Lord Derby's acceptance of these "common sense"

positions, largely against the will of his Prime Minister, directly translated into the diplomatic resolution of the ensuing crisis. Petitioners, in widely demanding the practical independence of the “Christian races” of Turkey-in-Europe, codified an increasingly popular understanding of national self-determination as the normative basis for international relations—one which directly influenced the protocols of the Constantinople Conference that later served as a critical basis for the Berlin Treaty and the construction of the new Balkan political order.

This approach also promotes the recognition of human agency during this monumental period of history. It shifts historical focus onto individual subjects’ interaction with their *habitus* and material circumstances. While high-level policy-makers’ roles were indeed critical, other “ordinary” individuals also formulated behaviours that coalesced into powerful collective action. Indeed, the principally elite-sponsored April Uprising failed to spur the majority of Rumelian Christians to revolt, and the British Bulgarian Agitation began well *before* the interference of high-level political figures such as William Gladstone. Both high politics and grassroots activism were largely contingent upon powerful vocabularies of cultural understanding, available information, and each individuals’ own personal experiences and positions. The collective behaviours of the Agitation, its Jingoist counter-protest, and Bulgarian revolutionary nationalism thus represent the crystallization of nationalism, and religiously and scientifically justified racial and civilizational hierarchies, within the material contexts of Ottoman political and economic instability and British imperial hegemony. These cultural discourses and material circumstances elevated the April Uprising from what a realist would have deemed a naïve and insignificant revolt into a heroic national uprising. To the Agitation, the Bulgarian Horrors were similarly

transformed from a violent suppression of insurrection into “the basest and blackest outrages upon record”¹⁰⁰⁴ that required a fundamental realignment of Britain’s foreign policy. Perceptions created the Great Eastern Crisis, just as much as they affected its resolution. Individuals at all levels were guided by social and material structures yet free to interpret them in often unpredictable and unanticipated ways.

In order to derive meaningful generalizations from the Great Eastern Crisis and to suggest an alternative path for the general practice of international history, this study proposes a coalescence of “new” micro, social/cultural and “old” macro, political/diplomatic approaches towards one that demonstrates the irreducible linkages between the two. This dissertation critiques previous assumptions that cultural factors affected policy making in a straightforward manner. Cultural discourses, individual decision-making, and material and institutional frameworks must be understood in reciprocal relation in order to speak meaningfully about historical causation, or it risks falling into the common pitfalls of overgeneralization or parochialism. Information passed through the cultural filters of Western journalists, pedagogues, and philanthropists in Constantinople whereupon it was magnified by zealous British newspaper editors and political commentators and the vehement reactions of ordinary Britons at the local level, which in turn influenced British policy-makers and the course of international history. In critically analyzing such episodes of the solidification of cultural preconceptions into collective action, I suggest that historians may cut through simplistic theories of social action to recover more accurate hierarchies of historical causation and meaning. This

¹⁰⁰⁴ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors*, 9.

process recovers the contextually contingent decision-making of the individual subject as the principle engine of historical change.

I additionally argue for critical synthesis of interdisciplinary and international bodies of scholarship. British, Bulgarian, and international historiographies of the crisis and its aftermath are individually inadequate for understanding its breadth and significance and they are, more ominously, noticeably characterized by self-reference and methodological nationalism. A transnational approach, besides “correcting” national biases and revealing the intrusions of state interests into historical narratives, also reveals new and important connections between seemingly disparate areas—such as the links between community-based political action and philanthropy in Britain and the regional histories of the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. Theoretical innovation in international relations and nationalism studies has also yet to be applied to certain historical contexts of critical importance to the modern world. Understanding the process by which nationalism became ensconced as the lodestar of modern political legitimacy—complete with its racist justifications and profoundly anti-democratic, xenophobic, destabilizing, and violent implications for international security—is a fundamentally important endeavour for scholars of international history in terms of the resolution of seemingly intractable geopolitical conflicts and social injustices. If nothing else, this study determined that a nationalistic perception of events created a self-fulfilling prophecy of nationalism that was first reified at the Congress of Berlin and the construction of the new—and unstable—Balkan geopolitical order with lasting, disastrous consequences for the modern world.

The shaping of the modern geopolitical order along principles of national self-determination was neither natural nor inevitable. Nationalism is not a permanent, quantifiable social structure that guides human behaviour in predictable ways, but a language of understanding that is ultimately contingent on individual interpretation and behaviour. Nationalism itself is a politicized vocabulary of cultural values conceived in abstract yet based upon material qualities and practiced in reality. Based on selective, sporadic, inaccurate, and imaginatively framed information as transmitted via the British newspaper media, ethnographies, scriptural prophesies, and travelogues, Britons (and many subsequent historians) misinterpreted the crushed revolt of Bulgarian revolutionaries as proof of the natural struggle of homogenous Bulgarians against Ottoman tyranny and anti-modernism. Appreciating the fluidity of nationalism, its constant state of flux, and its subservient position to the freewill of historical actors is therefore essential for understanding its role in the April Uprising and the formation of Bulgaria. As the 2007 Batak Massacre Controversy demonstrates, hybridization, multiculturalism, and scholarly skepticism pose serious challenges to underlying racial categories of understanding and so provoke vehement renunciations of racial degeneracy, social disintegration, or assaults on national heritage.

To the nineteenth century Great Powers, the Eastern Question was the most persistent and problematic issue within international relations. After decades of deliberation by Western statesmen, diplomats, politicians, journalists, and ordinary individuals, the eventual solution proffered by the Powers was that the “Christian races” of Turkey-in Europe must receive political autonomy. National self-government, according to the vocabulary of Romantic nationalism, would fully emancipate Christian nations

subsumed by the supposedly unnatural Ottoman rule, and it would secure international peace by satiating the natural desire for national liberation from foreign oppression and civilizational backwardness. This solution was based upon culturally perceived realities that hubristically misconstrued the character of subject populations, Ottoman governance, and the mechanisms of history. Racial and religious determinism overconfidently prescribed the inevitable decline of the Ottoman Empire in favour of the rise of nation-states in the name of civilizational progress and international stability. Fatefully, the solution itself—a compromise between Great Power strategic interests and the principles of national self-determination—precipitated the unstable future of the Balkans and thus contributed to the cataclysmic conflicts of the twentieth century.

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