

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: **LARRONS EN FOIRE: PERCEPTIONS AND CHANGING STRATEGIES IN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN DURING THE BALKAN CRISES**

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With a contemporary diplomatic crisis between Russia and the West heating up due to the Russo-Ukrainian War, this thesis looks at an often undervalued Nineteenth Century crisis that offers lessons for the ongoing political situation. This thesis argues that, instead of merely being a starting point for many polities in Southern Europe, the Balkan Crisis of 1876-1878 and the subsequent Treaty of Berlin are not only important for Balkan and Ottoman history, but also provides a crucial window into how a crisis could lead to changes in governing and national ideologies. Crucially, this thesis argues that despite the Russian government's lack of representative bodies, and the British government's own incredibly limited electorate, the perception of popular support at home for the Balkan peoples abroad altered the way in which leaders of both empires made diplomatic decisions throughout the Balkan Crises. Furthermore, this public sentiment, in this case support for Balkan nationalism and pan-nationalism, became part of an enduring legacy in the political spheres of both St. Petersburg and London.

LARRONS EN FOIRE: PERCEPTIONS AND CHANGING STRATEGIES IN RUSSIA AND  
BRITAIN DURING THE BALKAN CRISES

by

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# Introduction

## **The Congress of Berlin's Role in Geopolitical Restructuring**

Despite being in the middle of a cold winter, Russian troops stood prepared, encroaching on her neighbor's territories. Their volunteers had long poured across the border, carrying weapons and supplies with them into a warzone. To support Russia's weakened neighbor against inevitable destruction, Western European countries had been supplying it with arms and humanitarian supplies. Despite all the diplomatic efforts to avoid war, and the increasing hostility between Western Europe and Russia, the crisis had only become more volatile. Thousands of Russians had already died fighting on the other side of the border and with Russia's prestige on the line the outcome appeared to be clear. By the time that the Russian government initiated open conflict with her neighbor, Western European states were convinced that Russian troops would overrun their fragile neighbors' forces and take the capital in mere weeks. Against all the odds, the West was proved wrong. The Russian army was unable to seize the seat of its rival government and instead was forced into long sieges and slow advances. As the war drew on, greater involvement of the Britain and Western Europe as a whole, would become a danger to the Russians and a rebirthed hope to their enemies.

While this description fits the parameters of the Russo-Ukrainian war of 2022-2023, it is also perfectly applicable to the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War that was brought to an end by the Congress of Berlin. Though there is a gap of 144 years between the two events, it is worth noting that in many aspects the situations are shockingly similar. Both the Imperial Russian Empire and the Russian Federation were led by strongmen with broad cults of personality and no global ideological goals; both countries felt betrayed by previous agreements they viewed as

manipulative actions taken with Western powers; Both governments were called to action by the supposed “targeting” of neighboring Slavs; Both countries were threatened by European coalitions that could plunge the world into a war. This is not to say that they are exactly the same situations; however, this historical connection might be a good guide to understand how a contemporary war and its subsequent peace might appear, as well as the relative success a peace settlement might have in creating lasting harmony.

Among historians of the Balkans, the treaty drawn up in the Congress of Berlin has often been used to explain individual national histories and to compare the ambitions of rival Balkan states in their adherence to the Treaty of Berlin, often compared to the preceding Treaty of San Stefano. While this is important it ignores the role the treaty played in the diplomatic sphere as well as the role that the Balkan crises had created in the minds of not merely Eastern European observers but also the wider world. Maria Todorova points out the importance of the creation of the Balkan region in the “imagination” of the West through these interactions and noted the development of a separate but similar orientalism for this portion of Europe due to the geographic position of the Balkans on Europe’s fringe.<sup>1</sup> Todorova’s work is crucial for understanding the developed imagination of the Balkans but she stops short of analyzing the Berlin Congress and the impacts that the newly minted role the Balkan region had in the imaginations of not merely the average educated Westerner but on politicians and political systems that held Europe together.

Most contemporary historians of continental Europe acknowledge the existence of the Congress of Berlin in 1878; however, the event is unlikely to receive more than a few sentences in a description of rising tensions in Europe or the role of the Concert of Europe. If anything, the

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<sup>1</sup> Todorova, Marija N, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 20.

event can be chalked up to the last time a European Congress directly interfered in the Balkans before the First World War, as Mark Mazower argues.<sup>2</sup> Though this establishes a basis for its importance in the regional politics of the Balkan polities in which the Great War erupted, it still lacks any form of definitive importance in the political history of the Great Powers, or as a reference to use for comparisons to modern crises.

Few historians have paid much if any attention to the long term ramifications of the 1878 Russo-Ottoman War, with Orlando Figes mentioning the war only briefly in his conclusion of *The Crimean War* in which he made a direct connection between the Crimean War and the Great War. In his explanation he characterized the war not as a critical catalyst or even a turning point but rather a continuation of post-Crimean developments.<sup>3</sup> Even fewer historians have tracked the impact of the war on internal processes and strategies in the Russian and British governments as battlefield developments on the ground changed political realities at home and in geopolitics.

Without analysis of the impact of this war on the leadership and populations of the empires engaged in the crisis diplomatically and politically, there is little comprehension of the wide reaching and somewhat counterintuitive changes in the European alliance system that emerged from the 1870s. After all, it was the British government that sought to stop Russia's meddling in the Balkans only to back Russian meddling in the outbreak of the Great War a few decades later. It is crucial to look at this radical change in the European alliance system not merely as a change in geopolitical terms but to further understand the impact that the Balkan Crisis had on the public and political operations of both empires in the concluding decades of the Nineteenth century.

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<sup>2</sup> Mazower, Mark *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2006), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York, NY: Picador, 2012), 591.

This is not to say that this event alone started these transformations. The Congress of Berlin was a definitive catalyst for changing diplomacy but does not stand as the only and absolute reason for these changes. Events that preceded the Balkan Crisis, namely the Crimean War in the 1850s, and the subsequent unification of Germany only a few years before the Balkan Crises, played crucial roles in the growing tensions of the old international order; however, the Berlin Conference lit the fuse that would destroy the geopolitical system that existed since the fall of Napoleon.

This thesis seeks to explain how a political crisis such as the Russo-Ottoman war could radically alter the national and international political landscapes, restructuring alliance systems and international goals. In this explanation, a thorough examination of the ideological character of Russian foreign policy is crucial to show the derailment of Russian internationalism after the Crimean War, and a redirection in the wake of the Congress of Berlin. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to disaggregate the mighty Russian and British Empires--and the official policies--by analyzing the alternatives and independent actors working within both governments who often sought to moderate their foreign ministries. Finally, this thesis examines the effects of the Balkan Crisis in the transition from ideological foreign policies toward pragmatic national self-interest allied to Pan-Slav nationalism in Russia and goals of international liberalism in Britain.

In each part of this analysis it is important to remember that the 19th century was an era of incredible new forms of communication and connection within empires, between imperial cores and distant imperial interests, and between countries, with constant correspondence connecting foreign delegations and the imperial capital. These changes did not happen in a vacuum, and the development of large literate classes of society provided a new range of influences on decision makers with the creation of daily newspapers and public venues that

allowed for meetings and displays. Altogether, this thesis will prove that perceptions of popularity, and the strength of ideologues along with their civil society organizations, inspired the traditionally diplomatically conservative and confrontational regimes of London and St. Petersburg to completely shift their foreign policy goals after the Congress of Berlin shattered the Conservative Order of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and replaced it with a new geopolitical alliance system.

## Historiography

Most contemporary historians have by and large ignored the details and importance of the Balkan Crisis of the 1870s and the long term impacts felt from the Congress of Berlin and the geopolitical fallout on the alliance systems of Europe. A crisis in 1878 is often seen as too distant from the First World War to be a direct cause of the conflagration, but also not important enough to be listed as a crucial point in 19<sup>th</sup> century history, as the actual violence of the crisis stayed localized to South-Eastern Europe. Without the most influential historians of the pre-war geopolitical situation commenting on the specifics of the Congress of Berlin, it is important to understand the general arguments about why the long 19<sup>th</sup> century ended with the Great War and the dissolution of the “Congress of Europe.”

One of the foremost contemporary scholars of the First World War, Christopher Clark wrote the popular geopolitical analysis titled *Sleepwalkers*. Clark argues that the book is not focused on blaming one power or another, but instead the obligations tied to the geopolitical landscape of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His argument centers on obligations between the great powers and more importantly the innate requirement for all powers to act in a geopolitical crisis to follow a flawed action plan based on unmanageable guarantees.<sup>4</sup> In one example he points to

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<sup>4</sup> Clark, Christopher M. *The Sleepwalkers* (New York, NY: Harper, 2013), 15-16.

Russia's struggle to manage good relations with Serbia despite the former's own political chaos and the latter's direct threat that Austrian ambitions played in the region. Clark made it clear that obligations did not innately mean warm relations or agreement, instead it merely meant that in a continental conflagration, that all empires would have to act to avoid the development of a hegemon which dominated the concerns of most imperial courts. This thesis utilized Clark's analysis of the geopolitical landscape and the multifaceted structure of the imperial order of the behemoth Great Powers as a foundation of much of the discourse on the changing alliance systems that Clark discusses but does not explain their origin.

On a different note, Alfred J. Rieber's expansive work, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*, focuses on a wider timeline but includes the same trajectory of his historical analysis concluding with the First World War. Instead of looking merely at imperial agency and geopolitical designs, Rieber focused his research on the multiethnic shatter zones that sat at the fringes of great Eurasian empires, as they fought over critical territories and resources such as the fertile plains of Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Though this analysis does include geopolitics, the chapters devoted to Balkan crises focus on the events that occurred after the 1880s with a particular focus on a growth of Russian politicians embracing nationalist goals and even Alexander III's limited acceptance of nationalism and nationalist goals, the geopolitics of alliances and strategic positioning are largely ignored. Rieber's geopolitical designs and analysis of crises provide great context to this thesis's main analysis of internal imperial reactions to major external diplomatic engagements especially in their disruptive shatterzones, notably in Eastern Europe and central Asia.

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<sup>5</sup> Rieber Alfred J., *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 615.

Where Rieber focused on nationalism in the fringes of the Russian Empire, Denis Vovchenko has focused his research on the development of Pan-Slavism and its relationship to other ideologies, notably independent nationalism and Pan-Orthodoxy. Using analysis of religion and cultural ties between the Russian and separate polities that lined the Balkan peninsula, with a notable interest in the relationship between Bulgarian nationalism and the goals of Eastern Orthodox unity. Though his research does not focus exclusively on the Balkan Crisis in the 1870s, he thoroughly evaluates the effects of the Russo-Ottoman War and the treaty of San Stefano on Russian feelings toward the Balkans, especially along religious ties.<sup>6</sup> His analysis provides this thesis with much of the core ideological context to Pan-Slavism and its uncomfortable relationship with Pan-Orthodoxy as well as individual nationalities and nationalism. Furthermore his analysis covers not merely international negotiations but also the internal divisions of Russian society and leadership relating to Pan Slavism provides a necessary and beneficial component to this thesis.

Few works relating to the Balkan Crises or Russian foreign policy in the 19th century fail to include the revolutionary work of the well-regarded academic couple, Charles and Barbara Jelavich. Both of the Jelaviches spent decades of their academic careers focused on the Balkans, and the development of the national and ethnic foundations of the Balkan states, specifically looking at the development of Habsburg and Russian foreign policy around Balkan crises. Decades later historians such as retired foremost specialist of Balkan Economic history at University of Maryland, Dr. John Lampe recommends reading Charles Jelavich to develop a solid foundation for Balkan history.<sup>7</sup> Though the Jelaviches have both passed and their most

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<sup>6</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians: 1856-1914* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 16-17.

<sup>7</sup> Contantin Iordachi and John R. Lampe, *Battling over the Balkans: Historiographical Questions and Controversies* (Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2020), 12.

recent important works were written in the 1990s few historians have been able to match their analysis of Balkan history and its relation to Russian Foreign policy, short of Mark Mazower whose work is more focused on the development of nations in the Balkans as he wrote in an era after the Yugoslavian breakup. Nonetheless both the work of the Jelaviches and the work of Mazower provide a helpful window into the history of the Balkans, though both insufficiently analyze the connections between serious concerns of imperial elites and geopolitical crises in the Balkans in the 1870s.

Given Britain's own lack of military action in the Russo-Ottoman War, contemporary historians of Britain have by and large ignored the Balkan Crisis of the 1870s, as one of the longest lasting legacies of the crisis in Britain is not a graveyard or monument to the fallen but the existence of the modern Liberal party that was in many ways reforged by this decisive moment. One historian who recently revamped scholarship on a subject of ideological reform of the Liberal party is James Andrew Perkins who wrote his doctoral dissertation on connections he found between the development of modern British Liberalism and the Balkans.<sup>8</sup> Perkins's dissertation forms a firm basis for both my analysis of Liberal party revival and my argument that British government officials believed that the British public supported the Balkan cause.

When looking at these major changes in British Politics it is impossible to describe the evolution of the Conservative and Liberal parties without their respective leaders of the time Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone as well as their combative monarch Queen Victoria. To strengthen the thesis's comprehension of the crisis's impact in British Society and the general interactions between major political players, this thesis cites the joint biography of

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<sup>8</sup> Perkins, James Andrew, "British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925", pp. 1-285, 10.

Disraeli and Gladstone written by Richard Aldous.<sup>9</sup> Though this text largely stays out of the policy position and ideologies of the political parties in the Nineteenth Century, it provides a crucial background to and impact of the British government's response to the Balkan Crisis. To further comprehend Queen Victoria's own long history of interactions with her "Imperial Cousins" this thesis references Coryne Hall's robust analysis of sixty years of fraught relations between the Romanovs and the stalwart monarch of Britain.

As one further note on the resources that have been the foundation of this thesis should be made for the actual method through which this research was conducted. The ideas of Ann Laura Stoler in *Along the Archival Grain* have largely influenced the foundation of my arguments in the succeeding chapters. This thesis does not seek to cut against the archival grain, using newly found resources to argue about the true events on the ground in Berlin or Constantinople. Factual numbers, new documents detailing the Bulgarian Atrocities, or modern detailed accounts of the events on the ground are, though incredibly valuable to the general historical study of the topic, are not the focus of this thesis. The goal is not to display the true facts on the ground of the war, argue in favor of one side or another or to engage in discourse of the actual events that precipitated the crisis. This thesis instead is focused on how actors perceive: the events, the facts, the opportunity, the morality, the responsibility and all other components that contributed to their decision making that impacted millions and brought about the disestablishment of domestic and international status quo.

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<sup>9</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs Disraeli* (London, UK: Vintage Digital, 2012), 1.

## Methods and Sources

The methods needed to achieve the research goals set out for this thesis have been limited by the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has complicated travel and altered accessibility to archival materials, as libraries and archives have changed hours, reduced capacity, or outright closed in response to the Pandemic. Fortunately, efforts have been made to counteract the reduced capability to conduct research over this period of time, perhaps most notably the opening of digital libraries to a wider audience. This thesis would not have been possible without the HathiTrust and Internet Archive digital library systems that allowed for usage of digitized material held by partnered libraries including the University of Maryland. Furthermore, other online resources, such as digitized Parliamentary notes, published works of Parliament, political speeches, and published pamphlets that have been added digitally to other platforms, have been instrumental in providing a comprehensive list of primary and secondary sources.

This thesis directly benefits from the earlier work of Charles and Barbara Jelavich, especially when it comes to procuring the private letters between high ranking personnel in the Russian Foreign Ministry. Notably, the Jelaviches were able to sort through the private archives of Nikolai Giers, who was Russian Foreign Minister from 1882-1895, and served in the Tsar's government for over twenty years prior to taking the position.<sup>10</sup> The Jelavich professors used this archive to produce their own research papers, also gathering hundreds of letters and notes between crucial advisors to Alexander II, Alexander G. Jomini, and the future Foreign Minister, Giers. These letters were written exclusively in French and have been translated by myself for this thesis, though some lines have been left in their original French to avoid the loss of linguistic

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<sup>10</sup> Jelavich, Charles, "Introduction", in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 3.

context. Though the text was used by the Jelaviches for years as foundations for many of their works, it is important to note that merely because this thesis is using these texts that there is no independence in this thesis from the Jelaviches, as the arguments of this thesis have a different focus from their earlier works. This correspondence has largely been ignored in modern analysis of late 19th century Russian foreign policy, and provides many crucial insights into the mentalities of Russian imperial leadership before, during, and after the Balkan Crisis.

Another source crucial to the development of this thesis is the published diaries of the former British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Edward Stanley, the 15th Earl of Derby. Though these insider diaries were written for personal use, they were collected and published by Professor John Vincent at Bristol University. The Diaries of Lord Derby provide a similarly intimate look at the events unfolding in the British Cabinet as the Jomini-Giers letters provide in the Russian equivalent. The two private accounts of the Balkan Crisis lay the very foundations of this thesis, as they provide valuable perspectives of the leadership and leading voices of the Russian and British foreign ministries, demonstrating their anxieties and perceptions of popular support in their respective empires.

Further sources including music, news articles, and popular speeches provide the foundation of the very perceptions of popular support that impacted decision making by Foreign Ministers in St. Petersburg and London. These sources are not obscure texts or minor publications, but were widely-consumed media that had long-standing effects on the general publics of both Imperial Russia and Victorian Britain. These outlets augmented not merely opinions of the day, but also the components of society, with musical works now deemed cultural artifacts, and terms still used today that were created by popular movements in the Balkan Crisis.

Understanding the methods and arguments present in this introduction is crucial to comprehending the arguments presented in this thesis. Namely the value of individual actors in the Russian and British empires, the role of ideology and national self interest as factors of negotiation, and the importance of perception on the decisions taken by the leading figures of the Balkan Crises. To understand how these components are interconnected, it is important to start at the beginning of the relationship dynamics of the Russian and British Empires in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

# Chapter 1

## **From Vienna to Paris: Russian Counter-Revolutionary Crusading**

At the turn of the 19th century, the Russian Empire was seen by many Europeans as a backward land on the fringes of Europe. In the view of the greatest and most rational thinkers of the enlightenment, led by Voltaire, Russia was an uncivilized and Asiatic country that needed a German Princess, Catherine the Great, at the helm of government to guide Russians toward modernity.<sup>11</sup> Even proud voices of democratization and freedom admired not merely Catherine the Great's reform based mindset but also her use of authoritarianism in the monarchy to enforce her will; all the while, these same voices were calling for an end to tyranny and weakening of monarchy in Western Europe where "civilization" was already achieved.<sup>12</sup> This opinion changed rapidly when the king of France was replaced by a revolutionary government with a Corsican artillery commander turned revolutionary Emperor of the French. After Prussia was beaten back and Vienna was threatened with siege, it was the Russian military that sealed the fate of Napoleon's empire.

In 1815, troops clad in imperial forest green marched from the quiet and cold expanses of the Russian Steppes to the loud and "cultured" Parisian crowds of Europe's core. At the head of the Russian army stood Catherine's grandson, Emperor Alexander I, leading the charge against the last vestiges of the French Revolution, and restoring monarchical order to Europe. Russian "Asiatic Despotism," once seen as barbaric and uncivilized, became the groundwork for the counter-revolution and monarchism in post-Napoleonic Europe. No longer would St. Petersburg

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<sup>11</sup> Wolff, Larry, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Pr., 2010), 126-133.

<sup>12</sup> Wolff, Larry, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 62-64.

need letters from Rousseau or Voltaire to be a Great European Capital, she had proven herself to be the protector of civilized Europe and the stalwart enemy of nationalism, populism, and revolution. Alongside Prussia and Austria, the Russian Emperor formed the Holy Alliance with each power dedicated to working together to avoid the revolutionary bloodshed that dominated the previous three decades.

For the first half of the 19th century the Russian government acted as the pinnacle of monarchism, and the protector of the status quo, earning a special hatred by revolutionaries across Europe, especially Karl Marx who saw Russia as a serious adversary and the bulwark of conservatism.<sup>13</sup> Only six years after the Congress of Vienna, Tsar Alexander backed the French destruction of constitutionalist Spain, and the restoration of an absolute monarchy. In the same year, fellow Slavs in Serbia sent a request for recognition and help from their Russian brothers in a fight against the Ottoman Empire. Alexander's government instead sided with the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>14</sup> Only a few years later, in 1826, the new Tsar Nicholas I joined Europe in supporting the Greek revolution only after the government committed to monarchism, while providing the Ottoman Sultan with a protective army of Russian troops to guard the route to Istanbul when Mohammad Ali's Egyptian army sought to weaken the Sultan's monarchical power.<sup>15</sup> This trend continued into the Revolutions of 1848, when the Russian Army marched to Vienna to help Emperor Franz Josef crush Austrian and Hungarian revolutionaries, restoring his absolute rule. Revolutions also toppled the French government where revolutionaries feared that Cossacks

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<sup>13</sup> Sperber, Jonathan, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014), 531.

<sup>14</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements: 1806-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18-23.

<sup>15</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians: 1856-1914* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 58.

would once again cross Europe to restore the July Monarchy.<sup>16</sup> In the same year an uprising of Wallachian Romanians was crushed by a joint Russo-Ottoman invasion, with the Russian government not merely denouncing nationalist revolutionaries in the Balkans but sending troops to oppress them.<sup>17</sup> Instead of supporting Russia's efforts to avoid a repeat of nationalism and revolution turned into a continental war, Britain and the British government looked at Russia with concert and hostility for the very acts they committed in the name of European peace.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the Imperial government's best efforts to prove their willingness to cooperate as a serious European partner, the state found itself alone in the Crimean War. What started as a dispute between Russia and France regarding protective rights over Ottoman Christians, turned into a European coalition war set on defeating the Russian Empire. French Emperor Napoleon III entered the war in hopes of usurping the prestige of the Tsar as the protector of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Piedmont-Sardinia, as a near protectorate of Napoleon's empire joined the war, with hopes by Prime Minister Di Cavour might be shown favor towards his Italian Aspirations by helping the Ottomans transfer the prestige of the Tsar's position in the Ottoman Empire to the French Emperor. The British Public also saw themselves so gravely encouraged and so eager to fight their long-standing political rival that the British government joined with France to protect the Ottoman state from the Tsar.<sup>19</sup> Russia's own Germanic allies provided no assistance and declared neutrality, even though the Tsar's troops had spilled their own blood for the Austrian Kaiser a mere five short years earlier.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York, NY: Picador, 2012), 123-124.

<sup>17</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, Coryne, *Queen Victoria and the Romanovs: Sixty Years of Mutual Distrust* (Stroud, UK: Amberley Publishing, 2022), 33.

<sup>19</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (London, UK: Vintage Digital, 2012), 89.

<sup>20</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War*, 96-100.

The superior British navy sailed through the Ottoman controlled straits, crushed Russia's own Black Sea fleet and ferried French, British, and Sardinian forces to the Crimean Peninsula. The Russian army fought fiercely to lift the subsequent siege of Sevastopol, while simultaneously fighting Ottoman Regiments in the Caucasus and Balkans. After months of skirmishes on the peninsula, in which both sides took heavy casualties, Sevastopol had fallen to French troops, to the dismay of disappointed Russian generals and jealous British officers. With a loss in the Crimea, indecisive campaigns in the Caucasus, and stalled efforts in the Balkans, Russia was left in an uncomfortable position. On Christmas day 1855 Nicholas I's son and, in the wake of his father's untimely death, the not-yet-crowned Tsar was handed an ultimatum by his own ally, the Austrian government. The ultimatum stated that Russia must make peace with the coalition or risk Prussian, Swedish, and Austrian troops joining the coalition against Russia. Despite the young Alexander II's vehement efforts to keep the war going and restore Russian honor, his own government acted as the voice of moderation and convinced him to agree to peace. The decisive argument they made was based on their concern that further defeat could spark a revolution within Russia herself.<sup>21</sup>

The terms of the subsequent Treaty of Paris were devastating, albeit not as devastating as British Prime Minister Palmerston had hoped. Russia would return southern Bessarabia to Ottoman Moldavia. For the latter principality and the other Romanian dominated principality of Wallachia, the Ottomans would concede autonomy. These Romanian principalities would still acknowledge Ottoman supremacy, pay Ottoman taxes and promise not to unite into a united Romania. Furthermore, the Black Sea was to be demilitarized without Russian or Ottoman fleets or forts along the coasts. Unlike the Ottomans who maintained ports in the connected

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<sup>21</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War* 521-524.

Mediterranean Sea, the Treaty of Paris de facto banned Russia from maintaining a Southern Navy.<sup>22</sup> This stipulation left the Russian South permanently exposed to the mighty British fleet that was free to enter the Black Sea whenever conflict could arise.

### **Lessons from Crimea and the Pivot of Russian Foreign Policy**

The Treaty of Paris of 1856 was not merely a factor but instead the point on which all of Russian Foreign policy pivoted for the rest of the century. It is impossible to look through the Jelavich transcribed diplomatic papers of late Nineteenth century Russia without seeing direct and indirect references to the Crimean war, and its subsequent Treaty of Paris. The calamity of war made many issues abundantly clear to the Russian government, and lessons had to be learned to avoid a repeat of the critical diplomatic and military failures that led to the outbreak of war and the decisive defeat.

First and foremost, the new goal of the imperial foreign ministers was to avoid being diplomatically isolated and forced into a war against another European coalition. From 1856 onward, the Russian government operated as a quiet and introspective state, and its operatives, both political and diplomatic, sought to reform the government and ensure a passive foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> No longer was the Russian military being sent out on grand forays into neighboring states to protect the thrones of their rivals. When Russia's two largest Germanic allies fought each other in 1866, Russia stood back. When Austria was forced to accept a constitution and realignment into a dual monarchy due to Hungarian militancy, Russia resisted urges to reassert the power of Franz Josef. When Bismarck united the German states in a war with France, Russia gave benign neutrality instead of an active role in balancing European powers.

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<sup>22</sup> Fies Orlando, *The Crimean War* 530.

<sup>23</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 9, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 40-45.

Second, the Russian government learned not to trust their Germanic allies too extensively or to over-exert their military and foreign policy for idealistic goals. Hopes that Franz Josef would return the favor provided by Nicholas in his critical hour were dashed when Austria was not only avoiding entering the Crimean War on the behalf of Nicholas, but even plotted to counter the Russians and force a devastating peace that would guarantee Russian withdrawal from the Balkans. The Prussians could not be trusted much further, as their loyalty to Austria after the post 1866 reconciliation was decisively more influential than any loyalty to the Russian Tsar.<sup>24</sup> The diplomatic language of Russia would be filled with “betrayal” and “ungrateful” throughout this period when discussing their Balkan allies as well as their long standing Germanic ones.<sup>25</sup> Diplomats would generally try their hardest to rebuild relations with Prussia whom they did not blame for the defeat, but remained cold and distant from the Austrians whom they felt deeply betrayed by.

The third lesson the Tsar’s ministers learned was the importance of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits for Russian defense, power projection, and economics. The straits operated as a gatehouse that allowed the Ottoman state to decide who could enter the Black Sea and who could leave. Never before had Russia faced such a direct threat to their Southern coast by Western Europeans, and the brutality of the relatively small expeditionary forces proved to be shockingly effective. The mighty British fleet never before sailed up to Russia’s most powerful ports and shelled their defenses. Furthermore, up to a quarter of Russian exports moved through the straits and the Ottoman government was free to close Russian traders off at its leisure, thus destroying the robust Russian economy with a few forts and a mediocre navy, as had been done

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<sup>24</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, Undated letter, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 272.

in the Crimean War.<sup>26</sup> With these devastating experiences etched into the minds of military strategists, it was now essential to ensure that the straits were not owned solely by Russia's eternal enemies in the South.

A more general and crucial lesson from the war was for Russian leaders to keep an eye on public opinion both at home and abroad, specifically in Britain where distrust of the Russians opened the door for military intervention. Despite the Crimean War's origin lying in a fight over religious protection rights of a Catholic Power and an Orthodox Power, it was the Protestant British Power that launched its superior fleet in defense of their Ottoman Allies. That was not merely a byproduct of geopolitical concern for France's success, nor was it merely an action called upon to keep the Russians out of Constantinople. British media was obsessed with the enduring rivalry of Russia and Britain in Asia and the Middle East, and politicians such as Lord Palmerston who made their political legacy of British nationalism were able to spur anger at Russia into a militant cause for war.<sup>27</sup> The "Great Game" captured the imagination of media outlets and politicians alike, and Russia's efforts to counter French influence had been seen as an effort to force the destruction of the Ottoman state, a de facto vassal of Britain. The Russians had the most to gain from a collapsed Ottoman empire, based both on historical ties and geographic positioning on the Ottoman northern border. If Russia was going to avoid another catastrophe they had to keep an eye on the feelings of the British electorate who would give their consent or their opposition to another British adventure into the Russian core.

At home the war proved that Russia had to pay greater attention to the Tsar's subjects. As the war continued to drag on it became apparent that accountability of military leaders had to be enforced, as individual heroism caused devastating and costly losses. With Patriotism surging

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<sup>26</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 205.

<sup>27</sup> Figs Orlando, *The Crimean War*, 132.

and criticism of Russian leadership, it became clear that there was a need for greater openness and freedom for the Russian elite so the lessons of war could be learned.<sup>28</sup> Thus papers that had their starts in war reporting would continue on to serve as foundations for the semi-independent Populist and Nationalist press as reforms would lessen censorship and allow the intelligentsia to criticize Russian policy in limited ways.

At 37, Alexander II inherited his father's throne, and with it his father's empty treasury, depleted military, and diplomatic isolation. No politician or adviser learned the lessons of Crimea more directly than Alexander, who was the first Russian Tsar to decisively lose a significant war since Emperor Alexander I lost to Napoleon in the War of the Third Coalition half a century prior. The Tsar knew that Russia needed time and peace for his empire to heal and grow. Furthermore, he knew that nearly every facet of the Russian government needed to reform and ensured that similarly minded advisors were promoted to leading positions in all branches of government.<sup>29</sup> To lead his reform-based moderate government he chose Prince Alexander Gorchakov who understood all too well the costs of hawkishness and ignoring ultimatums from Europe, as he was part of the Russian delegation in Paris in 1856. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexander would appoint Assistant Foreign Minister Nikolay Karlovich Giers and senior counselor Alexander Genrikhovich Jomini, as moderates who would guide Russian foreign policy for decades after the Crimean War.

At the same time, a growing faction of a new nationalistic Russian elite were making their way into government. For some it was part of a new patriotism that emerged around the Crimean War and the democratizing power of national heroes, while others were influenced by

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<sup>28</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 331-334.

<sup>29</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire*, 315-320.

Russia's expanding connections to co-ethnic Balkan Slavs.<sup>30</sup> It was not uncommon for Tsar and Tsarinas of Russia to declare themselves as the patron of Orthodoxy and religious unity, indeed Peter I refused to appoint a new Patriarch in Moscow and a unified church and state under the position of the Emperor; furthermore, Catherine the Great called for an uprising of Orthodox Christians in her own wars against the Ottomans.<sup>31</sup> This new idea that the Russian Tsar was more than a protector of Orthodoxy but also the ethnic and national unity of Slavs was revolutionary. Which is partially why the Tsar and the Russian government quietly opposing this ideology that risked upsetting European order, and inspiring revolutions or irredentist violence in the name of Pan Slavism.

Though Pan Slavists were a diverse group, in general they advocated for the self-government of Balkan Slavs and the protection of Slavs by the Russian Empire. Theoretically their emphasis on race should have encouraged them to argue in favor of not only Orthodox Serbs and Bulgarian, but also Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians, as well as the rights of "Little Russians" and "White Russians" modern day Ukrainian and Belarusian; however, this was not common and the ideology tended to focus on Serbs and Bulgarians with hopes that they might lead a South Slav Orthodox federation.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore these advocates were focused heavily on the protection of Slavs from non-Slavs, not merely Muslims or Catholics. This meant that Orthodox Greeks and Romanians were often just as unfavorable options as rulers of Slavs as their Catholic Hungarian, or Muslim Turk overlords.

This highly aggressive position not only opposed the stance of the Russian government as an ally of Austria, who themselves included the Kingdom of Bohemia as a self-governing Slavic

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<sup>30</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War* 613-625.

<sup>31</sup> Taki, Viktor, *Tsar and Sultan: Russian Encounters with the Ottoman Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2016 100-109.

<sup>32</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 330.

land within the Austrian half of the empire, but also threatened a war with the Ottomans.<sup>33</sup> Nationalism had the Great European Powers on edge throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a more idealistic pre-Crimean Russian Empire actively spent years countering radical nationalism to both spare monarchies and prevent a lapse in the balance of power. The idea that Europe's largest and most numerous empires could create a Slavic vassal state of radical nationalists with irredentist claims on Austria-Hungary, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire would all but guarantee a continental conflagration.

The Russian government had to toe a fine line between antagonizing these Pan Slav nationalists and ensuring that the newspapers of Russia avoided stirring violent sentiments at home, or worse yet, projecting militant fears abroad. Despite Imperial Russia's own propensity to maintain the monarchy, and control the media, this task was filled with danger as many high ranking generals, diplomatic staff, and members of the imperial family were subscribed to Pan Slav newspapers, even if not all were actively a part of the movement itself.<sup>34</sup> Rogue generals and diplomats were not uncommon, and after seeing the violence of nationalist revolution threatening well founded monarchies such as in the 1848 revolutions in the Papal States, Austria, and Poland, it was not infeasible that monarchist Russia could be threatened by its own population or governing elite. Count Nikolay Ignatiev, Russia's ambassador to the Sublime Porte, was so greatly opposed to government policy and Gorchakov's moderation that the British foreign office suspected that his contradictory nationalist rhetoric and moderate orders from St. Petersburg was a Russian plot to confuse the British government.<sup>35</sup> This struggle to manage this growing group of hyper nationalistic elites that came to dominate many of St. Petersburg's

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<sup>33</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 220-226.

<sup>34</sup> Rieber Alfred J., *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*, 132.

<sup>35</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 30, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 274.

newest and most popular newspapers became increasingly tenuous, especially as the Ottomans and Austrians started cracking down on their Slavic minorities giving Pan Slavists something to write about.

## **A Long Russian Peace: Caution and Fear in Russian Foreign Policy**

The Russian government sat mute internationally as it conducted agriculture, military and societal reforms in hopes of building back its strength and prestige as a great power. This era of introversion was simultaneously an era of expanded nationalism within Russia's extensive borders and outside in the lands of her rivals. Nationalist surges that were once quashed by the mighty forces of the Tsar, faced fewer challenges as the Russian army no longer ventured to decimate revolutionary movements and were even reigned-in within their homeland.

After the Crimean war, Piedmont-Sardinia gained permission to ride the coattails of Italian nationalism to form a cohesive Italian kingdom in 1861, as a reward for supporting the coalition against Russia.<sup>36</sup> Romanian nationalists also benefited from a withdrawn Russian military, as their new autonomy granted by the treaty of Paris allowed Wallachia and Moldavia to hold elections for their ruling princes, which allowed for nationalists to elect Alexandu Ioan Cuza to be prince of both and accomplish Romanian dreams of de facto unification, previously dashed by Russia in 1848.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, nationalists in Germany who often wrestled with the conservative and powerful forces of Prussia were wrangled into a weapon for unity by the clever Prussian Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, who used their passions as a foundation to form the North German Confederation in 1866, and later the German Empire in 1871 against the

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<sup>36</sup> Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War*, 558-560.

<sup>37</sup> Michelson Paul E., *Romanian Politics: 1859-1871 ; from Prince Cuza to Prince Carol* (Iași, Romania: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 54-63.

judgements of the conservative King Wilhelm of Prussia.<sup>38</sup> Austria suffered from much less helpful forms of nationalist surges as, unlike the unifying passions of Italians and Germans, Austria's multinational foundations forced the ruling Austrians to ally with the Hungarians in order to avoid the collapse of the empire. In the Austrian case this created an even more restrictive government with greater opposition to smaller national movements, especially Slavic ones that were often crushed decisively by the Hungarian government's efforts to build Hungarian nationhood.<sup>39</sup>

Simultaneously Imperial Russia's own multinational empire experienced a surge of nationalism with reports that a Polish uprising was being planned, and the administration decided to institute conscription to separate the young revolutionaries and disrupt communications. This decision violated the constitutional order of Poland and sparked a rebellion that spread quickly throughout the countryside. Though this was not the first Polish rebellion, nor the most difficult to crush, it took a surprising amount of time to end. This was due in no small part to the caution of Emperor Alexander and his eagerness to appear merciful and restrained on both an imperial and global scale.

Noting the apparent change in Russian tactics toward the Polish rebellion of 1863, the British emissaries in Russia informed the British government of their interpretations and perceptions of a more cautious policy towards the policing of Polish territory. Col. Edward Stanton reported from Warsaw as Britain's Consul General in the region while, Lord Napier was Britain's direct connection to Emperor Alexander II and the imperial court in St. Petersburg. Both British emissaries sent documents and reports back to London with a relatively positive

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<sup>38</sup> Rieber Alfred J. *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 428-431.

<sup>39</sup> Rieber Alfred J. *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*, 545.

impressions on the conduct of the Russian Emperor and his general interest in being seen positively by the British public and government.

The Emperor called on the loyalty of not only his military, but also his people, in his speech to his old loyal bodyguards and subordinates of the Ismailovski regiment.<sup>40</sup> Soon afterwards councils of Nobles in St. Petersburg and Moscow published letters of full support for the Tsar, eager to show their support for the crown to observers at home and abroad. The Imperial army was not merely deployed to Poland with orders to loot Polish assets or burn Polish towns, but instead they were sent to hold crucial positions and move slowly across the Polish Kingdom in a methodical occupation of the countryside.<sup>41</sup> This response was not the full deployment and undiplomatic approach used by Alexander's father when he sent imperial forces into Wallachia or Hungary to crush nationalists. While this played into his role as father of the nation, it was also evidently a response to pressure from more liberal states such as Britain.

The British public and Foreign Office were fascinated by the rebellion in Poland, as Britain hosted a number of Polish refugees and notable dissidents who laid the foundation of British-Polish sympathy within British media.<sup>42</sup> Within his letters to the British Foreign Office, Col. Stanton detailed the outbreak of the rebellion, the appearance of some level of planning on the part of the Poles, and the response of the Russian military. He stressed that this rebellion was not exclusively the fault of the government, and would have likely happened anyway.<sup>43</sup> In his letter of February 19, 1863 he confidentially reported that he spoke with Chancellor Gorchakov

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<sup>40</sup> Francis Napier to Elliot, January 26 1863, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 14.

<sup>41</sup> Col. Stanton to Elliot, February 6 1863, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Figes Orlando *The Crimean War*, 106.

<sup>43</sup> Col. Stanton to Elliot, February 9 1863, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 21.

about the situation who expressed some sympathy with the Polish cause but valued limited repression as a way to ensure the empire didn't fracture.<sup>44</sup>

These efforts to show the Russian government as humanitarian and diplomatic make much more sense when you look at conversations between the Tsar and the British Consul to St. Petersburg, Lord Francis Napier. As a trusted member of Alexander's court, Lord Napier had many conversations with the Tsar about crises of the day. Lord Napier's report on March 18, 1863 detailed a long conversation he had with the Emperor in which Alexander noted British media hostility to his government and to himself personally. After listing efforts that Alexander's administration made to show his goodwill, the Tsar asked why the British media was so firmly opposed to his government. In response Lord Napier stated that he admired the efforts of the Tsar to work as a humanitarian, and gave advice that he believed would give Alexander a greater chance of being seen favorably in Britain. At the end of his suggestions, Lord Napier stated that he wasn't sure why there was such animosity between the British public and Russia, especially as British opposition to French influence and French Catholic ties to the Poles. He concluded that given France's long held animosity toward Britain, it would make more sense for Britain to see Russia a more sensible ally than Francophile Poland.<sup>45</sup>

### **Upended Balkan Peace: Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Britain**

Unlike the Prussians and Sardinians who rode the geopolitical waves of successful wars to their nationalist dreams, or the Austrians who were forced to accept a constitution after the failed 1866 Austro-Prussian war, the Ottomans remained stagnant and unrevolutionary. The

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<sup>44</sup> Col. Stanton to Elliot, February 19 1863, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Francis Napier to Elliot, March 18, 1863, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 26-30.

Hatt-ı Hümayun reforms of Abdulmejid I, in the aftermath of the Crimean War in the 1850s, had been incredibly successful at managing a multiethnic state and rebuilding the empire after a pyrrhic victory over Russia in Crimea. Decades passed without a serious revolution or challenge to the Sultan. Reforms were not cheap however, and after Abdulmejid passed away, his brother Sultan Mejid was forced to raise taxes in 1875, upsetting Christians and Muslims alike.<sup>46</sup>

A failed Hergezovinian harvest in 1874 and increased taxes on the peasantry caused an outbreak of violence between the province's peasant and landowner classes. Though most peasants in the region were Orthodox Serbian Slavs and most land owners were Muslim Bosniaks, another Slav population, this was not innately a religious or ethnic conflict. In hopes of ending the violence the Ottoman government sent the regular military to re-establish order in the province. However, peace was not forthcoming. The rebel bands that roamed the countryside were being discreetly armed by the Sultan's nominal Balkan vassals, Prince Milan I of Serbia and Prince Nikola I of Montenegro.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of 1875 it was evident that the crisis was not being resolved quickly enough and growing concerns about how the Ottoman state would manage the crisis inspired the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister to propose the Andrassy Note to Britain on December 30, 1875. This note included wide ranging reforms centered on protecting Balkan Christians as a central role in reducing tension, and had the support of the German, Habsburg, and Russian courts. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was outraged that Britain was not welcome to the formation of the listed reforms and sought to deny it outright, as Britain "Ought to lead not

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<sup>46</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions: The Road to the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War, Diplomacy and Great Power Ideology" (dissertation, History Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012), 135.

<sup>47</sup> Ayten Kihc., "Paved with Good Intentions", 143.

follow.”<sup>48</sup> The British Foreign Minister, Lord Derby, however insisted on Britain acquiescing to the Andrassy Note, as he believed that the Ottoman empire would likely agree to these reforms out of hand, putting Britain in “the foolish position of being more Turkish than the Turks.”<sup>49</sup> According to his diary his concern largely centered not on good government or a firm belief in the success of these reforms, if anything he believed the opposite, but he insisted on agreeing to the Andrassy Note out of fear of public opinion and the positive articles the London Times and other Newspapers had towards the proposal.<sup>50</sup> In the end he won out and the British cabinet agreed to the Andrassy Note on January 18, 1876.

Lord Derby would be proven correct as the Andrassy plan failed shortly afterwards due to its lack of mechanisms to enforce Ottoman reforms and thus simply allowed the government to ignore the agreement. While some within Russia called for military intervention after a failed diplomatic engagement, the moderate Russian government pushed forward with a diplomatic solution. In early 1876 Gorchakov accepted an invitation by Chancellor Bismarck to hold a meeting between Austria-Hungary, Russia, France, and Germany relating to the crisis and the Andrassy Note. At the conference German government officials expressed concerns about Pan Slavism among the upper echelons of the Russian military to Gorchakov and Jomini.<sup>51</sup> This concern was centered on not only the risk of defections to the Balkans by Pan Slav generals, but also the threat Pan Slavism posed to their Austro-Hungarian allies who were threatened by Slav nationalism. Jomini was comforted by the warmth still provided by the German Emperor and

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<sup>48</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 15, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 269.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 7, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 266.

<sup>50</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 17, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 270.

<sup>51</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 16 May 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 7.

his government that seemed sympathetic and even supportive of moderate Russian leadership who had been moving carefully out of fear of diplomatic isolation.

As ministers from the representative countries formed what would become the Berlin Memorandum, pressure was building for an end to the heating crisis. The French, who were seen as a possible holdout to the proposed enforcement of reforms on the Ottoman Empire, were horrified when tensions between Christians and Muslims in Thessaloniki resulted in the murder and post-mortem mutilation of the French and German consuls on May 6. With French support for the memorandum, believing it might end the violence between Christians and Muslims in the Balkans, the Italians followed suit. This put Britain in an uncomfortable position of having to agree or risk being diplomatically isolated.<sup>52</sup> Once again Disraeli was blindly furious that the powers of Europe were leaving Britain out of the loop again, declaring that "We are being treated like Serbia and Montenegro," causing him to oppose the proposal out of hand.<sup>53</sup> His cabinet was similarly opposed to the bill but less due to British pride and more due to Derby's argument that the terms were too harsh on the Ottomans and would encourage the rebels to keep fighting in hopes they will get a greater bargaining hand. Thus her majesty's government refused the Berlin Memorandum as a gamble to go it alone.

With the eyes of the great powers focused squarely on the Balkans, Bulgarian nationalists were simultaneously planning a revolutionary revolt that was supposed to spark a unified rebellion across the entire province and catch the Ottoman government off guard. The plotters smuggled arms and supporters through autonomous Romania and into position for the April uprising. In theory this plan seemed brilliant to the orchestrators; in practice it was horribly

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<sup>52</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, undated, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 10.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, May 15, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 296.

botched from the beginning. First of all, the plan's goal of secrecy was not maintained well, and the Ottoman government was informed of the possible threat of rebellion from both informants and caught firebrands who were captured in preparations. Secondly and more crucially, the plan of simultaneous rebellions in many towns meant that the entire revolution had to happen at the same time, and miscommunication ruined this allowing for the Ottomans to crush the rebellions as they emerged, undercutting the point of using Ottoman confusion to secure the province. The third problem was that the revolutionaries were under-prepared and not armed for a prolonged fight with the Ottomans whom they had incorrectly assumed would be unable to respond to the event.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless violence broke out in April 1876, as the few Bulgarian rebellions that were successful went about looting and burning Muslim villages and estates throughout the region, while calling for independence.

With the best regular regiments suppressing the tax rebellion in Bosnia, the Ottoman government was left with few options to restore order in Bulgaria and opted to use irregular units made up largely of exiled Muslim Circassian refugees from the upper Caucasus of the Russian Empire.<sup>55</sup> These Bashibazooks were notorious for their brutality, and as refugees of a Slavic empire that looted and burned their own villages in the 1860s it is not an absolute surprise that when they were ordered to act as the hands of Ottoman law and order, they would show a similar treatment as their own personal experience in the Russian Caucasus. The Bashibazooks crushed the Bulgarian rebellion quickly through excessive violence and repression. Towns were destroyed, innocents were murdered, churches were burned, and resources were looted.

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<sup>54</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 173-175.

<sup>55</sup> Jelavich, Barbara *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 160-164.

## **The Bulgarian Horrors: Reactions to the Balkans Crisis in Britain and Russia**

The news did not arrive all at once however, and Lord Derby's late April and early May diary entries depict his personal tragedy, the loss of his mother on April 26th and her subsequent funeral on May 2nd. Further personal tragedies hit the cabinet with another minister losing his wife and a third losing his mother in May. Affairs of state focused on the brewing of the crisis in the Suez and fear of electoral reprisals from the raising of the income tax. The first mention of Bulgaria did not show up until he wrote about a "partial rising in Bulgaria" on May 10th as he blamed the crisis on Russian instigation and Austrian naivety. This minor inconvenience did not sway his feelings toward the Berlin Memo as he was unaware of the repercussions of such a crisis, despite how the media was already getting parts of a violent story in Bulgaria.

The American-operated Roberts College in Constantinople was the first major Western organization to hear about the Bulgarian repression, as Bulgarian students gave gruesome accounts to the school's professors and administrators who then passed the information to the British consul to send back to Britain. Shocked by the reports coming in about the atrocities and bloodshed in Bulgaria, the British media was stirred into a frenzy of fury and horror. Calls for action were being made by major newspaper outlets and there were concerns raised on the floor of Parliament about what was to be done to respond to the violence. A select group of already strictly reporters, who preemptively stated expected findings and expressed opposition to the Ottoman Empire, visited the Balkans and exaggerated events and numbers, while an American diplomat validated their inquiries without authorization, expertise, or neutral impressions.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 189.

Entering June, the British government was proud of their decision to oppose the Berlin Memorandum and felt empowered by their French allies following British lead and withdrawing support for the Berlin reform proposal. Derby excitedly noted the success in diplomatic and electoral spheres "Our rejection of the Berlin note, our naval display of force, and the general attitude assumed by England has been a success. We are more respected & consulted than has been common of late years: and by a singular chance, our policy is as popular in France and Germany as at home."<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile the British consulates in the Ottoman and Russian empires were aware that some violence had occurred on all sides, but could not verify the reports that came pouring in from the newspapers. Disraeli was not whipped into fury as many of his compatriots had been. Indeed, he believed that the whole affair was an effort to "create a cry against the government" and referred to the whole affair as "Little more than coffee house babble."<sup>58</sup> Beyond his own distrust of the media coverage, his government relied heavily on the Ottoman Empire as a client state that would protect British Imperial interests in India and Egypt. Disraeli dismissed the claims, acting on insufficient reports from the Foreign Office, his own trust in the Ottoman government, and his distrust of Russia. Instead the Foreign Office and other ministries were instructed to stall and oppose any proposals from the Russians or Austrians.

Outraged by the shockingly low level of interest shown by Disraeli's Tory government, former Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone demanded a response from the Government. Gladstone had previously sat as Prime Minister and had already virtually retired from Parliament after a disastrous election knocked his liberal coalition out of power years earlier. Despite selling his London house and missing most parliament sessions due to self-imposed exile, the aging

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<sup>57</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, June 1, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 301.

<sup>58</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 270.

politician was revitalized by the present political situation.<sup>59</sup> With such apathy towards the massacre of Christians the devout and morally righteous Gladstone wrote a seething assault on the British government in a pamphlet titled *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Questions of the East*. Within this robust and widely distributed pamphlet, radical claims that significantly over-exaggerated the total casualties, depicted the Bulgarians as helpless idealists, and portrayed the Ottomans as both cruel overlords and simultaneously complaining that the Ottoman state is so weak that “even these miserable insurrections, she has not the ability to put down.”<sup>60</sup> Though Gladstone himself was neither a journalist nor had any unique sources for his claims, he chose not to use the moderated numbers of the Baring report conducted by the British mission in the Constantinople, but instead more graphic depictions from other media sources including Richard Millman’s report that included estimates about a town he had not fully examined in which he claimed there had been 900 houses with 10 people living in each house before the massacre, which are now considered to be incredibly inaccurate by modern estimates.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, the pamphlet achieved the desired effect and the public became even more outraged by government apathy. The aging politician’s rhetoric mirrored his youthful impassioned moral speeches that put him in cabinet four decades prior. While he was writing he found new energy and a cause in which he truly felt for his slayed brethren in the Balkans.<sup>62</sup> He laid out a thorough criticism not merely of the irregular troops who committed the massacre and the Ottoman Sultan, but also of

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<sup>59</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 254.

<sup>60</sup> Gladstone, William Ewart, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (New York, NY: Lovell, Adam, Wesson, and Co's , 1876), 12.

<sup>61</sup> Ayten Kihc, “Paved with Good Intentions”, 173-185.

<sup>62</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 273.

Disraeli. He denounced the Tory government's coordination with the "barbaric" Ottomans, with a particular focus on Bulgaria who had been so poorly treated by the Ottoman state.<sup>63</sup>

In Russia the outcry was similarly violent, as newspapers ran the same stories of the tragedies occurring in the Balkan provinces. Bulgaria was becoming a war cry among Pan-Slavist newspapers who demanded action and retribution. Proof of the connections between the Liberal outcry in Britain and the Pan Slav outcry in Russia can be seen in the mass printing of Gladstone's own "Bulgarian Horrors" by and for the Russian elite.<sup>64</sup> For the moment it seemed that the British and Russian publics were on the same side in regards to their fury with Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

With widespread opposition to Ottoman repression in Europe, the Sultan's Serbian and Montenegrin subjects formally declared war on June 30 1876 and launched assaults on the stretched Ottoman forces fighting rebels throughout the Balkans. Pan-Slavist papers in St. Petersburg, such as *Novoe Vremia* pushed for the Russian Empire to protect their Slavic brethren in a war that seemed destined for victory, which risked rattling the cages of Europe's elites.<sup>65</sup> Despite the apparent strain of the Ottoman state, Russia did not acquiesce. Similar to the British response, instead of deploying troops, they sent forward diplomats and calming words of peace. A group of Russian elites split with government policy and set up fundraisers to back the Serbs, with a small group even rallying thousands of volunteers to march with them into Serbia to join the war effort.

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<sup>63</sup> Gladstone, William Ewart, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (New York, NY: Lovell, Adam, Wesson, and Co's , 1876), 18.

<sup>64</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 9 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 26.

<sup>65</sup> Hall, Coryne, *Queen Victoria and the Romanovs*, 263.

Russian diplomats were instructed by the Tsar to ensure that no connection would be made between the Pan-Slav volunteers and the Russian government. Furthermore, Russian officials ordered the government financed newspaper, *Journal de St. Petersbourg*, to pull back from its often nationalistic rhetoric as diplomats feared the journal would present Russia as an aggressor in the situation.<sup>66</sup> This distanced approach to the violence in the Balkans became even more tenuous when Serbia declared that Russian war hero and retired Major General Mikhail Chernyaev would lead their forces against the Ottomans. Jomini was among many government officials who were furious with the decision and with the volunteers that went off to fight, as he declared in a letter to Giers:

If by misfortune the Serbs are defeated and the Russian volunteers are manhandled by the Turks, I will not answer for anything.<sup>67</sup>

Serbia would force Jomini to eat his words, as under the command of a Russian general who was notorious for his recklessness, the army found itself on the losing side of most of its battles and forced into a full retreat. The Russian government was able to make a successful diplomatic overture to force an armistice between Serbia, Montenegro and the Ottoman state, sparing the remains of the Serbian army and protecting Russian volunteers in the Balkans.

Leading voices of the Russian public were becoming more vocal for their support for the Serbian cause with members of the Russian elite and intelligentsia making their opinions more public through the symbolism of their work. Count Lev Tolstoy, a writer notorious for displaying his political and philosophical beliefs through his writings, was finishing up *Anna Karenina* in

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<sup>66</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 23 May 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 8.

<sup>67</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 23 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 28.

1877 and included a nod to his own feelings of the ongoing political crisis. By no means was Lev Tolstoy a raging Pan-Slavist, indeed his harsh attitude towards Pan-Slavism was one reason that some publishers refused to publish his work; however, his nationalistic rhetoric and belief in Russian spirit shows through the book's relationship with the Balkans.<sup>68</sup> Of all the nods made in the book, Vronsky's character arc is directly affected by Tolstoy's support for the Balkans. This adulterous character who has been morally problematic throughout his book is given a single chance at redemption for his many sins by serving selflessly in the Russian volunteer regiment for Serbia.<sup>69</sup>

In the musical arts, Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write a musical piece for the International Red Cross in September 1876 to honor their work during the Serbo-Turkish war. In a nine-minute symphony, known now by its French name as *Marche Slave*, he encoded rich symbolism into the piece. It starts off with a single melody that starts to compete with a new score. As both melodies get louder and louder, the refrain of "God Save the Tsar," is played bringing the rival musical tones to an end. The music then gets quieter and quieter until almost no instrument can be heard, and just when it is at its quietest the melody picks back up and a full verse of "God Save the Tsar" blares into a victorious grand finale. The symphony tracks the outbreak of hostility, the arrival of the Russian volunteers, and the weakening and loss of the Serbian cause. The crucial finale of the piece symbolizes the need for Russian intervention as the Russian National Anthem is all that stops the musical piece, and thus Serbia, from being snuffed

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<sup>68</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire*, 299-305.

<sup>69</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, "How Tolstoevskii Pleas'd Readers and Rewrote a Russian Myth." *Slavic Review* 64, no. 3 (2005): 543-45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3650141>.

out in silence. The response to the symphony was incredibly passionate and Tchaikovsky was proud of the nationalist spirit and energy it created for the Serbian cause.<sup>70</sup>

With building pressure at home, and disinterest in Russian diplomatic overtures by British and Austrian diplomats, the possibility of war had to be considered. Even moderates acknowledged the growing tension within Russia over inaction. In September as the Serbian Army was being pushed back by the Ottomans and calls for intervention were getting louder and louder, Jomini confided to Giers that he feared that if the Russian government would not be sent to fight the Ottomans the anger at home would mean “our soldiers will have to repress the Slavs of Russia !!”<sup>71</sup> With the slow acknowledgement that the Russian bear would have to leave a diplomatic hibernation that stagnated foreign policy since 1856, the foreign ministry was ordered to start forming a possible coalition of empires of participants, or benign neutral states, should diplomacy keep stalling and war break out.

### **Avenues for Peace Closing: Russia’s New “Militant foreign Policy”**

The last time Russia marched to war against the Ottomans they marched alone, and soon found themselves isolated internationally and forced to fight a coalition of some of the strongest states of Europe without diplomatic or military assistance. As war seemed to be approaching, the Russian government put incredible pressure on its diplomats to ensure that this would not happen again. Crucially the Russian ambassador to Austria, Nelidov was tasked with bringing Franz Josef and Count Andrassy into a mutual understanding. There was little to no hope that Austria

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<sup>70</sup> Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilych. Letter to Aleksandra Davydova. *Tchaikovsky-Research.net*, December 2, 2019. [http://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Letter\\_513](http://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Letter_513).

<sup>71</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 5 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 25.

would actually send in Habsburg forces against the Ottomans in favor of their Slavic southern neighbors, but crucially the Russian government needed to gauge what could be done to keep them neutral and what possible peace proposals could ensure the continuation of the secret Three Emperors Alliance, or Dreikaiserbund.<sup>72</sup>

Nelidov was able to negotiate a meeting between Franz Josef and Alexander II in Bohemia in Riechstadt (modern day Zákupy, in Czechia), to discuss the possibility of war with the Ottoman Empire. Count Andrassy and Prince Gorchakov would be the main players in the negotiation as they tried to hammer out a proposal that would appease Austria without limiting Russia's own ability to make peace in a war that hadn't even started yet. Andrassy's proposal, that Austria-Hungary should be allowed to occupy Bosnia in the event that Russia should win the war, was accepted by Gorchakov with the assumption that Austria would back Russia's own territorial acquisitions, most notably the previously lost southern region of Bessarabia from the Crimean War. More importantly to the Austrian foreign Minister, was the assurance from the Russian government that there would not be an "État Grand Slave" in the Balkans.<sup>73</sup> Gorchakov's own moderate stance on Pan Slavism allowed him to freely agree to such a rejection of Slavic federation, despite the cries from Russian society and even among members of the Russian foreign office such as Count Ignatiev.<sup>74</sup> In exchange for guaranteeing a Russian opposition to a super Slav state in the South Balkans, Gorchakov extracted support for the creation of a Russian fort on the Straits, giving the Russian government the same ability as the Ottomans to open and close the straits at their leisure.

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<sup>72</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 29 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 29.

<sup>73</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 11 October 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 33.

<sup>74</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 9 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 26.

It was absolutely crucial for this treaty to be kept secret and for only the highest-ranking members of the Russian and Habsburg governments to know about it. For the Habsburgs there needed to be plausible deniability in the event that the Russian war went poorly and they needed to evade the punishments Europe might dish out to the Russian government, as it had in 1856. For the Russians the risk was less a concern of international retribution for secret treaties, though her claims on Russian rights to a fort on the straits would certainly spark outrage, far more dangerously would be the announcement of her open opposition to the Pan Slav cause. With defectors and volunteers fighting and dying for this ideology in Serbia, and the financing of Serbian arms and uniforms by Russian citizens, the Russian government's own opposition would risk open rebellion from her most loyal citizens, and most passionate patriots.<sup>75</sup>

With Austria secured in a position of benign neutrality, and incentivized to remain that way by their ripe claims on Bosnia, most of Russia's top diplomats were feeling confident with the approaching war. Indeed, Jomini and Giers were both eager to see the war happen sooner rather than later, as they both feared a campaign through the snowy north Balkans in the winter months.<sup>76</sup> That said, they were still willing to continue efforts to work within the ever closing options of European Diplomacy.

As 1876 was drawing to a close and Russian military preparation was on its way, the British Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Henry Elliot, called for a conference in Constantinople to discuss a possible reform program to avoid war. On December 23, 1876 the conference began without much optimism that war could truly be avoided.<sup>77</sup> However, the diplomats at the Constantinople Conference were able to form an agreement on some basic

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<sup>75</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 218-224.

<sup>76</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 3 October 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 30.

<sup>77</sup> Jelavich, Barbra *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 170-172.

points that could cool tensions and relieve the stress of Ottoman rule over the Balkans. The agreement provided for an expanded and autonomous Bulgaria to match the ethnic makeup of the region, and the granting of significant autonomy to Bosnia where the whole conflict started. To the dismay of the negotiators, any hopes created by a unanimous agreement were dashed when the proposal was refused by the Ottoman Sultan on January 20, 1878. Sultan Abdul Mejid II opposed the idea that Europe would get involved in the direct governance of the Ottoman state and as a result refused the whole proposal.<sup>78</sup>

With the failure of the Constantinople Conference, the road to war was clear, and many of Russia's leading government officials looked forward to a decisive war to end the indecisive actions of European diplomats. Of all the things that could have further spurred public support in Russia against the Ottomans, a coalition of British stalling and Austrian meddling in the situation only inflamed already strong support for Serbia. Even moderates like Jomini started to sympathize more with the Serbian rebels who were causing him such great pain in the foreign ministry. In a letter to Giers he blamed the British ego and Ottoman mismanagement for stopping what he saw as a Russian led mission for European humanitarianism.<sup>79</sup>

Not all diplomats however were so eager to get to work on crushing the Ottomans, as Russia's ambassador to Britain, Count Shuvalov wrote passionately from London for the Emperor and Chancellor to continue moving cautiously towards a diplomatic resolution instead of a military one.<sup>80</sup> Without a doubt hostility to the Ottoman Empire remained high in Britain with many newspapers actively critiquing Disraeli's opposition to efforts to solve the crisis

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<sup>78</sup> Jelavich, Charles, "March to War", in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 34-36.

<sup>79</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 19 June 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 16.

<sup>80</sup> Ayten, Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 131.

diplomatically, and the Prime Minister's foreign policy being questioned in Parliament. However, Disraeli, now titled Lord Beaconsfield, had a greater weapon to counter the countless papers and political speeches railing against his leadership, the British public's distrust of Russia.

### **Popular Opinion and Populism in Constitutional Britain**

As Serbians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Ottomans, and Russian volunteers all clashed in the Balkans, the violent waves of upheaval crashed ever harder on the sturdy nerves of the Disraeli administration. Conservatives and Liberals alike were repulsed by the news of the increasing bloodshed in Southern Europe. Ministerial inquiries, parliamentary debates, foreign policy briefings, engulfed the business of the Empire, yet Disraeli never faltered. Indeed even when Queen Victoria expressed concern that her favorite Prime Minister was too soft on the Ottomans, he and his Cabinet could evade her advice. His administration was staffed by the most hawkish Conservative politicians: men driven by national and imperial pride.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore these foundational leaders of the Conservative party were exceptionally talented and experienced with foreign policy. Not only was the Prime Minister an experienced politician who controlled the reins of Her Majesty's Government before in diplomatic crises, his foreign minister had decades of experience with the 'Eastern Question' and his Home Minister was former Prime Minister Lord Palmerston.

That said, the British Foreign Office was less certain of its ability to weather the storms conjured at home in the wake of foreign aggression. The British government anxiously kept an

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<sup>81</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 92.

eye on the prominent Pan-Slavist papers of the day, such as *Novoe Vremia* and *Agence Russe*, who called for Russian intervention and the creation of Russian fortresses on the straits.<sup>82</sup> War seemed to be on the horizon. Meanwhile Lord Derby himself noted that the crisis in the Balkans “destroyed entirely any sympathy felt in England for Turkey.” Furthermore he noted that among the British public “the hope is expressed that we will have nothing more to do with the Turks, except to help in turning them out of Europe.”<sup>83</sup> Indeed Sir Elliot insisted that even if the government wanted to act in the defense of the Ottoman Empire the British public would stop them in their tracks. After all, he pointed out, it was the Ottomans who sank the Constantinople Convention, allowed the Bulgarian horrors to occur, and defaulted on their loans to thousands of British bond holders leaving them robbed of their investments in the East. This was a warning he would share with both his Ottoman counterparts and his superiors in the British cabinet, as he doubted British willingness to endure another Crimean war.<sup>84</sup>

Riding this current of unpopularity, of both the Ottoman Sultan and the Tory imperialist Cabinet, some outraged members of Liberal party attacked the Disraeli administration for its handling of the crisis. The party leader at the time, Spencer Cavendish, was quiet and calculating, believing that the Liberal party remained fragile and wracked with factionalism and thus couldn't engage in an ideological battle over foreign policy without revealing its own weaknesses and differing opinions. The retired party leader later turned “Grand Old Man,” Gladstone, did not share this concern and was the most vocal and hardest fighter.<sup>85</sup> His *Bulgarian Horrors* relaunched a stagnant political career and his virtual retirement as he called

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<sup>82</sup> “Transmitting *Novoe Vremia*” January 18, 1877 in British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2, 277-278.

<sup>83</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, August 29, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 321.

<sup>84</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, May 24, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 299

<sup>85</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 277.

for a new type of ideological diplomacy in the British Empire. Gladstone described a foreign policy focused on civilizing and providing a route for self-determination and independence of the peoples of Europe.<sup>86</sup> He was already a supporter of Irish Home Rule, and he brought those same principles to his foreign policy in relation to the Balkans who he believed should be self-governing. With his attempts to champion home rule for Balkan Slavs he was attacked from the right as at-best naive and at-worst an enabler of Russian aggression. He fired back that Britain's goal in the Balkans:

“ought to be the development of those populations on their own soil, as its proper masters, and as the persons with a view to whose welfare its destination ought to be determined.”

With Balkan peoples given their own land, he argued that they would be the greatest guarantee to spurn Russian advances into the region.<sup>87</sup>

This disagreement over foreign policy was not kept quietly within the halls of Parliament but instead made into a public spectacle by Gladstone. His effort would later culminate in his famous Midlothian Campaign in 1879 in which his crowds brought hundreds of thousands of people and he toured the British countryside even in Disraeli's own district railing against the Conservative government's foreign policy and self-interested goals.<sup>88</sup> Creating pamphlets and flyers, the former Prime Minister made headlines not merely in Britain but around the world as newspapers in France, Austria, and Russia published his speeches and pamphlets. The Russian government soon found itself influenced by his words, even while his own conservative government stubbornly refused to withdraw support for the Ottoman Sultan. Indeed, Jomini discussed with Giers the idea that Russia adopt the entire program proposed by Gladstone, as a

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<sup>86</sup> Perkins, James Andrew, “British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925” (dissertation, Online Repository of Birkbeck Institutional Theses, 2014), 37-43.

<sup>87</sup> William Ewart Gladstone, “England's Mission,” *The Nineteenth Century* 4 (1878), 560-584.

<sup>88</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 298.

solution that would both solve the current crisis in the Balkans and avoid a war. More importantly he argued that such a proposed program could get universal acceptance as “it is impossible to suppose that anyone dares to oppose an idea put forward by a former English [Prime] Minister and approved by public opinion.”<sup>89</sup>

Despite the efforts to avoid war made by moderates such as Gladstone and Gorchakov, and the efforts of diplomats like Derby and Shuvalov, passions were running too high within the Russian Empire to avert bloodshed. Leaders of the Russian foreign ministry tried their hardest to avoid a winter war, but anxiously watched public opinion lean more and more on the Russian government in the Winter months.<sup>90</sup> Fortunately the mobilization effort, which increased speed after the failure of the Constantinople Conference in January 1878, kept the Russian public at bay until April 24, 1878. As Jomini had hoped, Russia was going to war in the springtime.

### **Conclusion: Leaving the Era of Counter-Revolution**

At the start of the Balkan Crisis, the British and Russian governments had surprisingly similar feelings. The crisis was not a competition for influence over the Sultan, as was often the case, nor was this crisis a result of flexing over religious rights and imperial prestige as had been seen in the outbreak of the Crimean war. Instead this crisis was unifying. Many papers and politicians in Britain and France among others, rallied behind an imagined brotherhood with Christians against an imagined antagonism with Muslims. As the crisis became worse with the outbreak of the Bulgarian revolt and subsequent repression, the two governments were not so far apart in their response.

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<sup>89</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 9 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 26.

<sup>90</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, 23 September 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 28.

Simultaneously both governments faced a media frenzy and popular passions that threatened the stability of their empires. Both populations were disgusted with the actions of the Ottoman forces, and as a result neither government could risk giving too much flexibility in dealing with the Sultan. Both administrations were themselves divided on how to move forward with more radical leaders like Disraeli and Ignatiev bumping heads with moderates like Derby and Shuvalov. The difference truly lies in how the two governments dealt with this surge of anger and nationalism.

In Constitutional Britain, where the government was elected by a limited but ever-growing electorate, the decision of the government was to ignore the calls for action against the Sultan in favor of rebuffing Russian efforts to re-exert influence over Ottoman affairs. Despite being appointed by the democratic process, Lord Beaconsfield did not fear his electoral chances despite widely held public opposition and populist efforts to unseat his government. Instead his administration would hold fast to Realist international ideologies and imperial self-serving policies to accomplish the empire's goals, with only a minor glimpse at electoral chances and popular feelings toward foreign policy.

In Autocratic Russia where the government was not elected and had only changed leadership through the passive or violent death of the tsar or through military and political coups, the administration was unable to contend with the volatility of Russian sentiments over the Balkan Crisis. Trying to present itself with the strength and independence that Pan-Slavist newspapers like *Novoe Vremia* forced on the regime, the moderate administration had been put in a difficult corner. Now the Russian government was forced to enter a war against the Ottoman Empire without allies, underprepared, and once again at threat of foreign intervention.

1876 was a crucial year for the development of the imagined Balkans in both the courts of Western Europe and the Tsar's court itself. As Maria Todorova explained, it was in crises like this that outside forces would adopt assumptions about the Balkans.<sup>91</sup> While Todorova focused on later negative imagined traits of the Balkans based on the association with violence and chaos, for now Europe was looking at the Balkans sympathetically, especially devoutly religious Christians who did not see nationalists in the Balkans but instead oppressed Christians. With a Balkan image forming in the heads of the public and statesmen abroad, it would sow the seeds of future sympathy for the region in both London and St. Petersburg.

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<sup>91</sup> Todorova, Marija N. *Imagining the Balkans*, 21.

## Chapter 2

### **Nationalists vs Pragmatists in the waning days of peace**

The Constantinople Convention of 1878 was the last great effort to make peace and allow for diplomacy to replace any possible military solution. Called by the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte and his Russian counterpart, the Great Powers of Europe sent deputy foreign ministers and high ranking ambassadors to discuss a reform plan that would satisfy all powers.<sup>92</sup> Within all camps there was an awkward feeling toward the conference, as many saw war as inevitable and indeed a number of high ranking officials even saw war as desirable.

Within Britain, Prime Minister Disraeli saw a repeat of the Crimean War as a feasible way to protect the straits and keep Russia relegated to the Black Sea. After all, Russia was allowed to withdraw from the limitations of their Black Sea fleet only six years prior thanks to the collapse of the French Empire, and the blatant *Quid Pro Quo* in the Benign neutrality Russia had shown towards the Germans in 1871. The limitations that Lord Palmerston proudly signed into the treaty of Paris in 1856 were now being undone and the Russians could become uncaged. Calming these concerns was foreign Minister Derby who explained that he was not afraid of Russian aggression as the state was far too financially troubled to conduct a long or extensive conflict. As a firm advocate for peace, Derby recommended that instead of sending a member of cabinet or an ambassador with clear hatred for the Russians, that the British government should send his protege Deputy foreign Minister Salisbury.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 247.

<sup>93</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 1, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 361

The Russian government also had its divisions which, unlike the British government, were well known across Europe. While most diplomatic circles believed that the Tsar was a strong defender of peace, Alexander's ministers were deeply and bitterly divided. The most vocal diplomat in favor of strong action to be taken was Russia's ambassador to Istanbul, Count Ignatiev, who not only was a noted supporter of Balkan Slavs, but had incredible influence over the Sultan and his ministers. Even with his impressive connections, Ignatiev's power and influence would dramatically weaken after a number of palace coups in Constantinople.<sup>94</sup> Beyond this his disdain for the Russian policy of snailish moderate diplomacy over hawkish intervention was very well known, both at home and abroad. Despite both Chancellor Gorchakov and his advisor Jomini's own feelings towards Ignatiev's disobedience, they agreed to have him represent the Russian government at Constantinople, as he had a firm grasp of the situation in the Balkans and the needed reforms.

The Conference met on December 23, 1876 and would run for a month. While all diplomats came into the conference with limits and guidelines from their governments, there was plenty of room for negotiation as war seemed to benefit few if any Great Powers. For Ignatiev, Ottoman reforms were crucial for the security of Balkan Slavs. Salisbury on the other hand sought to protect the Sultan and the Ottoman Empire from threats to territorial integrity and legitimacy.<sup>95</sup> Despite the constant animosity shared between Russia and Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century diplomatic sphere, the two ambassadors worked hard to form a coherent solution. Indeed, they worked so well together that Derby questioned how much Salisbury was being

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<sup>94</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 4, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 39.

<sup>95</sup> Ayten Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 231.

influenced or manipulated by the Russian Ambassador.<sup>96</sup> All together the reform proposal focused on civil and religious reforms throughout the empire, and a specially designed Bulgarian autonomous principality based on ethnicity. Ignatiev held a high importance to the size of Bulgaria reaching the Aegean Sea and included some Macedonian lands. The foundation of this Bulgarian principality would be similar to Finland in the Russian empire, as a separate entity with extensive self-rule but still maintaining the Sultan as head of the state and civil government.

With the Ottomans signaling that they would not be willing to accept Ignatiev's proposal, the Russian government authorized him to shrink the proposed size of Bulgaria and some of the more radical parts of the reform plan. This decision gave the Ottoman representatives the overly optimistic belief that they would be able to avoid war and minimize their concessions, assuming the pacifism of the Russian Tsar was based on Russian vulnerability.<sup>97</sup> When the lessened concessions and reforms were handed to the Ottoman government they refused the entire proposal, making the entire Constantinople Conference a failure.

After the Constantinople Convention failed it was clear to almost everyone that war was inevitable. In Russia, nationalists had been saber-rattling for over a year and countless Russians had already lost their lives in the Balkans in a hot blooded pursuit of pan-nationalist goals. Russian ministers were preparing a circular to be sent to the courts of Europe, cementing their reasoning for intervention and the need for Ottoman governance to change by force. At the same time the Russian Ambassador to the Court of St. James, continued fighting to keep diplomacy

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<sup>96</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 26, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 372.

<sup>97</sup> Heraclides, Alexis, and Ada Dialla, "The Balkan Crisis of 1875–78 and Russia: Between Humanitarianism and Pragmatism," In *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent*, 175.

alive.<sup>98</sup> His close friendship with the British foreign minister allowed him to try maneuvering the British government into a position of pressuring the Ottomans into accepting reforms and backing down. Count Shuvalov continued holding out hope for peace or at least encouraging the British to avoid antagonizing the Russian people and government well into the new year.

Without satisfactory guarantees of benign neutrality from many of Europe's courts, including Britain, Gorchakov authorized Count Ignatiev to make diplomatic visits to Paris, Berlin, and London to garnish support for treaties of neutrality. The British press was already well acquainted with Ignatiev who had been seen as a threat to British interests in Constantinople for years. It came as no surprise that his visit was greeted with hostility by the British newspapers and political circles, whom Shuvalov had long worked to build good relations with.<sup>99</sup> Lord Derby's own personal disgust towards Ignatiev made the situation no better, as his deputy was unable to thaw Derby's coldness towards the Russian diplomat. He noted that when asked directly if a promise of neutrality and renewed diplomatic efforts would be coupled with a freeze on Russian mobilization, Ignatiev was at a loss for words.<sup>100</sup> The Interaction proved to Derby the deceptions of Ignatiev that played poorly when compared to the moderate and accommodating approach favored by the Anglophilic and less ideologically compromised Shuvalov.

The Constantinople Convention, the mobilization of Russian troops, and the Ignatiev diplomatic blunder was leading public opinion away from its hardline opposition to the Ottomans and focus switched back to enduring animosity towards Russia. Liberal newspapers toed the line between hostility to Ottoman government and support for a Russian invasion, while

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<sup>98</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, February 5, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),375.

<sup>99</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, March 9, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),381.

<sup>100</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, March 20, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),384.

conservative papers were free to assail the whole of Russia's diplomatic efforts as trickery and deception. The Queen herself moved from a stance that Britain should trust the sincerity of the Tsar, toward a more militant and combative belief that Britain must defend Ottoman integrity as a matter of honor.<sup>101</sup> Derby noted that he was just as unenthusiastic about her new stance as it provided the government more risk.<sup>102</sup> Public opinion at the start of the war was still far from interventionist on either side of the conflict, with Ottoman Bankruptcy and the Bulgarian Horrors still firmly in recent memory.

Meanwhile the failure of diplomats at Constantinople was music to the ears of Russian militarists. Already content with the many other failures of diplomacy that turned the Tsar's stumble towards war into a sprint, military planners were unfazed by the costs of war and the depleted economics of Russia. Among the many eager for war were high ranking members of the Russian Imperial family who looked forward to a glorious victory in which many could prove their mettle and provide honor and glory to themselves. The Tsar's brothers had long glorified wars and unlike the seizure of Khiva and the other missions into Central Asia, the Ottoman Empire was a serious opponent whose coalition bested Russia in 1856.<sup>103</sup> For centuries nearly every Tsar had proven Russian power by successfully conducting a war in Europe, and after 23 years of relative peace it was Alexander's time to do the same.

Following this tradition, the Russian emperor would not sit in St. Petersburg thousands of miles away from the warfront, leaving his generals to decide the entire war without him. Instead, as the old Preobrazhensky March declared, "we are led by the Tsar Himself!" Alexander would leave to follow the Russian army in the Balkans and govern his empire from whatever command

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<sup>101</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 283.

<sup>102</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, July 9, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 416.

<sup>103</sup> Heraclides, Alexis, and Ada Dialla, "The Balkan Crisis of 1875–78 and Russia: Between Humanitarianism and Pragmatism," 177.

posts could be thrown together. His Chancellor-Foreign Minister-Confidante Gorchakov insisted on following him despite his own age and rapidly declining health.<sup>104</sup> Other imperial ministers were called upon to join the Tsar on campaign such as A. G. Jomini, and members of the imperial cabinet.

In long exchanges with Deputy foreign Minister Giers, Jomini emphasized his opposition to the decision to march with the army. Without an independent foreign Minister, Gorchakov was officially in charge of foreign policy, but would now be difficult to reach and away from the St. Petersburg diplomatic missions. Furthermore, decision making in the foreign office was often confusing with Deputy foreign Minister Giers deciding many important things without Gorchakov who became more of a rubber stamp in older age. With Giers in St. Petersburg managing Russia's diplomats abroad and the missions assigned to the Russian capital, the situation was destined to create even more confusion.

For Jomini, this situation was unbearable, made even worse by yet a greater concern: the safety and mentality of the Tsar.<sup>105</sup> On one hand, Jomini was deeply concerned that the Tsar could be in danger, even if he wasn't exactly on the front lines, lest one forget that another European emperor lost his throne by being captured in war in 1870. Indeed, Napoleon III's fate was not as wild as one could imagine for Alexander, especially when the Ottomans nearly captured the Tsar and his court in July but stopped short of chasing the Tsar's retreat.<sup>106</sup>

On the other hand, Jomini held concerns about the mentality and influence some advisors had over the Tsar. While in St. Petersburg, the Tsar would meet regularly with diplomats and

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<sup>104</sup> Jelavich, Charles, "March to War", in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 36.

<sup>105</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, May 28, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 37.

<sup>106</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, July 26, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 53.

ministers to discuss the many aspects of his empire, but on campaign his schedule was streamlined and focused on war. Furthermore, the company he kept at camp centered on his militarily focused generals and brothers, such as Commander-in-Chief Nicholas Nikolayevich and Grand Duke Alexis. Jomini was concerned that this aggressive and self-serving militarism by Alexander's war ministers, brothers, and generals exercised extensively direct influence over him.

### **The Imperial Court on Campaign**

On April 24, 1877 Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire and marched into Romania, as a surprise to almost no one in any court in Europe. The knowledge of mobilization and the likelihood of war did not make the official declaration any more tolerable for moderate Russians or foreign governments who looked anxiously at the carefully negotiated lines of Eastern European maps, now destined to be redrawn one way or another. Lord Derby in particular noted that his dear friend Lord "Shou" was particularly distressed by the outbreak of war, expressing his interest in trying to mediate and end the war at the earliest convenience.<sup>107</sup>

At the same time that Derby was noting Shuvalov's sadness he was also dealing with the Prime Minister's rage. The day after Russia announced its declaration of war, an emergency Cabinet meeting was called by Disraeli. In the meeting the Prime Minister took his usual aggressive stance against Russia and excitedly decried the Russian invasion. Disraeli was ready for war and suggested to the cabinet that the British military should be immediately deployed to Gallipoli with or without the support of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>108</sup> By his own estimates, from an

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<sup>107</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, April 9, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),388.

<sup>108</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, April 21, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),391.

earlier session of the Cabinet, Russia was expected to be at Gallipoli or Istanbul by August, thus he argued, the British would need to send troops now as it would take at least two months to get a proper force together to hold the straits.

As usual Derby opposed any action that would draw Britain into war on both personal and popular grounds. He argued with Disraeli that what the Prime Minister proposed risked not merely a war with the Russians but possibly even the Ottomans who would not take kindly to a British occupation. In Derby's diary he clearly outlined his thoughts regarding the meeting:

I think the Premier now sees the risk and difficulty. But his state of mind makes me uneasy: he evidently thinks that for England to look on at a war, without interfering even for a limited time, is a humiliating position: and of the injury to finance and industry which would be caused by taking an active part, he either does not care to think, or considers that such sacrifices are a less evil than the playing of a secondary part. In this view of things he has the Court with him, the army and navy of course, and a section of the public: but that section, though noisy, is small, and I am satisfied that the country would not allow us to go to war if we wished it.<sup>109</sup>

Russian troops continued to pour into Romania in the days and weeks after the declaration of war in April, as the Russian army planned its next move. Romania was technically still a vassal of the Ottoman Empire when the war broke out, but as the Prince of Romania made it clear to the Russians that he would allow them to move through his Principality unharmed the Ottoman military shelled Romanian towns for their disloyalty. On May 10, 1877 the Romanian Prince declared independence and joined the war with his small fleet clearing the Danube of Ottoman ships, mining the river, and giving Russia an opening for the army to move into the Balkans.

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<sup>109</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, April 25, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 395.

The Emperor and Gorchakov were based in Romania at this time, allowing for constant correspondence with Giers who was managing the many diplomatic missions devoted to keeping the powers out of the war. Shuvalov arrived in Russia to receive whatever assurances he could gather before returning to the ever more enraged British government. He returned from Russia in early June with assurances he believed could calm the British cabinet and show the Tsar's good intentions. The written instructions he had shown Lord Derby centered on promising that the annexation of Constantinople was not a war goal, but instead the war goals would include reclaiming lost land, a renegotiation of the straits, the independence of the current autonomous principalities, and the creation of an autonomous Bulgaria.<sup>110</sup> This excited the British Foreign Minister who believed that those goals were moderate enough to keep the Cabinet war hawks at bay.<sup>111</sup>

Shuvalov's orders seemed to fit well with the goals of the Russian Foreign Ministry; however, Giers and Gorchakov were not the highest authorities in Russia. The Tsar was consulted on these orders originally, but now that Alexander was under the influence of his brothers and the highest-ranking generals of the Russian General Staff he had different ideas. Despite a firm argument between the Imperial Chancellor and Russian High Command, Gorchakov was forced to telegram a change of orders to Shuvalov. Sadly, Shuvalov had already given his assurances to Derby, and thus he had to explain that his original orders should now be seen as an "exchange of ideas" according to Gorchakov.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> "Memorandum of a Confidential Conversation of Count Schouvalof with Lord Derby" June 8, 1877 in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2, 273*.

<sup>111</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, June 8, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 407.

<sup>112</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, May 31, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 38.

When it was made clear that Shuvalov was not allowed to set any promises on the size of a possible autonomous Bulgaria or discuss how it would be governed, he confided that he had great frustrations with his orders. Derby expressed his disappointment that the Emperor should have gone to the warfront and become so gravely influenced by the military. Shuvalov agreed and assured him that "There are thousands of Russians who think as you do in that respect."<sup>113</sup> Indeed many in the Russian foreign Ministry found themselves regretting the whole situation.

While Shuvalov regretted the situation from London, and Giers regretted the situation from St. Petersburg, Jomini regretted the unfortunate state of foreign affairs in the company of the emperor in Romania. In one letter to Giers he argued that weak and old Gorchakov needed to stand up for the foreign Ministry that had so clearly been sidelined by Grand Dukes Nicholas and Alexis, unbalancing the court.<sup>114</sup> In another letter he declared "we are responsible for nothing, everything reports to the general staff" and explained that he had no orders for Giers from Gorchakov because there was nothing for anyone to do.<sup>115</sup> Though he was evidently jealous of his own diminished role, his true concerns in his letters to Giers center on the growing animosity felt by Europe towards Russian militarism, and the growing possibility of diplomatic isolation on the grounds of unpopularity abroad.

### **A Campaign in Crisis: Reactions to Plevna**

The Russian military had long maintained the largest standing army in Europe, and had hundreds of thousands of troops ready to be mobilized for any given conflict. With this fact in

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<sup>113</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, June 14, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 390.

<sup>114</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 6, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 39.

<sup>115</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 24, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 47.

mind, the outbreak of war with the Ottoman Empire alone was a great concern for the empires of Europe. Often in the past, when the Ottoman Empire was stronger and more unified, the Russian army was bogged down in multiple wars or faced many Ottoman allies within the same war. Not only was Russia entering this war against a lone Ottoman enemy, the empire had 23 years of relative peace and reform meaning that Alexander's Russian empire was radically different from his late father, Nicholas's Russian empire.

The Emancipation of the Serfs, which was a process started in 1861 by Alexander himself, meant that mandatory military service was being replaced by a more professional military force. The Russian empire invested in better weapons and training for their troops in the aftermath of the devastating Crimean War. Industry was coming to Russia in force as factories and railroads expanded throughout the Russian Empire.<sup>116</sup> By all metrics it appeared that Russia was at its strongest in almost all departments except one, financing.

Modernization and reforms cost the state huge sums of money and required large loans to be taken out by the Russian government in Western European banks. This would prove to be a decisive factor for the Russian war effort. Despite updated weapons and greater military professionalism, the Tsar's army was only able to mobilize a fraction of its total force for the war.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, despite the Russians outnumbering the Ottoman army almost 3 to 1, the Russian government could only deploy enough troops to roughly equal the size of the Ottoman Balkan forces.

When the Russian army crossed the Danube on June 28th 1877, they surprised the Ottoman military who had not expected a slow march through the Balkans over a coastal war along the Black Sea. With immediate success in the first clashes in the Balkans, a great amount

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<sup>116</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire*, 195.

<sup>117</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire*, 340.

of excitement was brewing in the Russian government, with even moderates like Jomini expressing excitement about the war's prospects. Indeed, this surge of patriotism that so greatly gripped Jomini inspired him to write one of his longest letters to Giers, in which he argued that Russia had the moral high ground and needed to take a more militant approach to foreign policy.<sup>118</sup> If the war could be won quickly enough then there would be less concern that another power could intervene in time before Russia could secure peace, which was both a hope of policy makers in Russia and fear of those in Britain.

Lord Derby sat in on cabinet meeting after cabinet meeting in which the Conservative government was bitterly divided on what action, if any, to take as Russian victories made it into the newspapers. These cabinet minutes would be filled with arguments about increasing taxes, recruiting a new regiment, and immediately deploying the Mediterranean fleet to the straits or even to Constantinople herself. Often the battle lines were drawn between the Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield as the main voice for militarism, and the Secretary of State of the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon as the voice of pacifism and criticism of the Ottomans. Derby, as foreign Minister, was surprised to find himself voting less and less with his longtime friend and ally Disraeli, instead siding on most cabinet votes with Carnarvon and the peace faction. This peace faction was decidedly small however, and could only stall action that Derby feared could lead to war. Fortunately for him Russian victories would be stopped suddenly in July.

Eager to push the Russian Army towards Constantinople, the Imperial high command ordered an assault on the city of Plevna. The first assault failed decisively and the second was no more successful with the two assaults inflicting staggering casualties on the Russian army. With an already economized military in the field, Russian losses meant that a third assault could not be

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<sup>118</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 9, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 40-45.

successfully mounted. Furthermore, the Russian army itself was unable to properly lay siege to the city to cut off Ottoman reinforcements and supplies. In a desperate effort to keep the offensive going, the Russian government requested assistance from the mobilized Romanian army under the command of Prince Carol. Carol agreed and instead of joining in another disastrous assault on the city, he had the city completely surrounded and became the supreme commander of the joint Russian-Romanian army at Plevna. The Russians were effectively stalled until the city and its Ottoman garrison would yield.<sup>119</sup>

Within the Russian government Plevna was a great failure of Russian military strategy. Soldiers would have to endure a long siege as the fall was rolling over the Balkans. Officers would be robbed of great personal glory as grand battles would be less likely to occur and the war would be confined to small battlefields instead of wide swaths of occupied Ottoman territory. Russian forces would have to watch as Serbian and Montenegrin forces would expand their territories and bring home glorious victories without Russian assistance. Such a traumatic experience shocked the emperor into restoring influence to the Russian foreign Ministry.<sup>120</sup> Jomini noted that returning the Military failures forced the foreign ministry to fix the mistakes of the military and were now tasked with both crafting statements that would project power after such a humiliating defeat, but also avoid turning public opinion against the government's poor handling of the war.<sup>121</sup>

As the siege continued with no end in sight, Jomini's early optimism of a quick success was replaced by dread. He angrily wrote to Giers that "After 20 years of mediation and reform

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<sup>119</sup> Catherine Evtuhov and Richard Stites, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces since 1800* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2004), 137.

<sup>120</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 176.

<sup>121</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, August 5, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 53.

we show ourselves to be inferior to the Turks in armament, in strategy, and also in tactics.” He further wrote that the longer that the war would drag on the more likely that the war could lead to catastrophe.<sup>122</sup> Not merely was he worried that a coalition could be formed as nearby empires could taste Russian blood in the water, but he feared the Russian people themselves.

In October, as the Plevna garrison showed no signs of cracking, British military adjutant Col. Wellesley informed the British Government that he had a surprising conversation with Jomini about the risks associated with a loss at Plevna and the war in general. Jomini emphasized that the emperor could not return defeated to his subjects without the risk of a popular uprising. Not merely fearing a mob of mindless fanatics, Jomini went so far as to say that there was enough sentiment in Russia that he could see the emperor forced to accept some form of constitution.<sup>123</sup> This conversation could be seen as a dramatic diplomatic flourish if you ignore Jomini’s own internal letters to Giers in which he emphasized the very same issues.

Plevna was the key to either total victory or total defeat in the eyes of many including Jomini and Giers. With winter moving in and the Ottomans holding out for five months, the talks about a greatly reduced peace deal became a serious probability. Jomini already had limited faith in Russia’s military after seeing his early optimism proved invalid. Furthermore, it seemed that the longer the war would rage on the higher the chances that something catastrophic could happen. Already tensions were growing with the Austrian government who imprisoned a proudly vocal Pan Slav historian, in a bid that was seen as purposeful antagonism of the Russian cause.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, August 20, 1877 in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 56.

<sup>123</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, October 4, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 441.

<sup>124</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, November 9, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 66.

Thus, peace before a possible loss or greatly delayed victory at Plevna was seen by Jomini as a viable alternative to an uprising or a coalition. Jomini went so far as to discuss the idea of a moderate peace negotiation directly with Col. Wellesley outlining basic peace terms, should an early peace be called or in the case of a pyrrhic victory at Plevna.<sup>125</sup> Giers and Ignatiev on the other hand believed that peace was impossible without the end of Plevna in favor of one power or the other. As a result, they were tasked with creating secret proposals for a possible victory in the war.

A stalled Russian advance, the Russian foreign Ministry being restored to a privileged position, statesmen fearing a revolution at home, altogether should sound like a good thing for British statesmen. Indeed, when the news hit Britain that Russia had stalled, Derby excitedly argued that the cabinet no longer had any cause for action as the Russian military was firmly stalled in the Balkans and thus would be far from Constantinople. A few days later he confided in his diary that “The Russians are now in the position of the American federals after Bull's Run: unexpectedly beaten, & furious accordingly. In the one case as in the other, it is only a question of time: the superior force must win in the long run.”<sup>126</sup> This comparison innately shows that as Derby discouraged his colleagues from being overly concerned about Russia having an opportunity to reach Constantinople soon, he understood that like the United States and Native Americans, the Russians and their superior forces would eventually hold out and the Ottomans were merely holding them back for a time.

Derby's hope, that a stalled fight would leave room for mediation and discard calls for war, would not pan out. As the Russians made limited movement in the Caucasus and even less

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<sup>125</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, November 13, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 453.

<sup>126</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, August 1, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 426

in the Balkans, the British media actively rallied against them. Newspapers continued to feed a cycle of Russian antagonism, with Conservative and nationalist newspapers calling on the Government to do more to help the Ottomans.<sup>127</sup> Liberal newspapers focused more on criticizing Ottoman atrocities and calling on Britain to support reforms but not the dismemberment of the empire. Feeding these papers Disraeli and Gladstone engaged in open debate outside of Parliament with speeches being given targeting their opposing party. Famously Disraeli's most popular response to Gladstone's crusade against the Tory government was made in his "Guildhall Speech" in which he charged that he was protecting British interests and that Britain had the men, the money, and the ships to keep the Russians out of Constantinople, implying that those who disagreed with his policy were not "true Britons."<sup>128</sup> Disagreements about the war was not merely a topic of British tabloids, but instead found its way into many facets of daily life from Liberal M.P. Gladstone's public speeches across Britain's countryside, to artists depicting the atrocities of the Ottomans and Russians, even making its way into popular music. Given music's purposeful and empowering nature, major events can sometimes be best displayed through songs or chants, as could be seen during this crisis.

Music in Britain in the 19th century had two general origins, with expensive refined theaters and orchestras creating music to be enjoyed by the upper classes, and music halls providing music to the working and lower middle classes. Despite the general disgust of music halls among the higher echelons of society their music would often disseminate between classes as music halls produced catchy music. One such case of catchy music hall music making its way

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<sup>127</sup> Leonard, Dick, "William Ewart Gladstone — from 'Stern Unbending Tory' to 'the People's William,'" *Nineteenth-Century British Premiers*, 2008, 286-309, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230227255\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230227255_19).

<sup>128</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 276.

through society was “MacDermott's War Song” written by G.W. Hunt and performed famously by G.H. MacDermott in 1877.<sup>129</sup>

The song was definitely inspired by Disraeli’s “Guildhall Speech ” from which it gets not merely the premise of the song but also many phrases.<sup>130</sup> The lyrics portrays the Russian bear as a scheming villain that has forced the British lion to give the Russians a “thrashing” after trying to find the bear an excuse to go back to its den. In the second stanza, Russia is described as a trickster seeking to cut Britain off from India as it challenges any state who dares “to think of coming near our road unto the East.” The third stanza compares the “misdeeds of the Turks” with Russian violence against Siberians, Circassia’s, and Poles. The song then builds to the final stanza in which it claims “Should we have to draw our sword our way to victory we'll forge With the battle cry of Britons, ‘Old England and Saint George!’” This pointed song makes the intention all the clearer in between each stanza as the refrain reiterates:

We don't wanna 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!<sup>131</sup>

Passions in Britain became even more heated as Kars fell to the Russian army in the Caucasus in late November, and signs that the Ottomans were trying to break out of the siege of Plevna meant to many that the siege was coming to an end.<sup>132</sup> The Queen, who already replaced many of her closest pacifist courtiers, had been pushing harder and harder for war. Victoria’s usual complex relationship of fondness for some and distrust of all Romanovs was replaced with

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<sup>129</sup> Golicz, Roman, “The Russians Shall Not Have Constantinople”

<sup>130</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 278.

<sup>131</sup> Golicz, Roman, “The Russians Shall Not Have Constantinople”

<sup>132</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 175.

blanket eagerness to confront her former suitor's empire,<sup>133</sup> Alexander II. In Lord Derby's diary he notes increasing concerns that the Queen was using her unusually close relationship with her Prime Minister as a tool to force a war into existence.<sup>134</sup> The Prime Minister kept the Russian threat and the continuing competition in Asia on the minds of Parliamentarians as even building on his earlier claims that the Queen's new Imperial title as Empress of India was combatting Russian influence in the region. Everything seemed to revolve around the war for Disraeli. Lord Derby was deeply concerned that her majesty's endless pursuit of war was giving Disraeli a false sense of unity behind the idea of a conflagration with Russia. Derby noted in his diary that "it is evident that he [Disraeli] is looking forward to war as not only a probable event, but one in a party point of view rather desirable than the reverse." This was a sentiment that Derby could not agree with in any capacity as he believed that despite all the artistic flourishes and impassioned music the British people would not welcome a new war, let alone one defending the Ottomans.<sup>135</sup>

### **Pushing to Constantinople: Anxieties and Hopes in a Russian Peace**

On December 9, 1877, the Ottoman forces defending Plevna attempted to attack the Russian lines at night, hoping to break the siege in one last battle. Fighting was fierce but the Ottomans were decisively defeated and pushed back to Plevna. The next day, the Ottoman garrison surrendered to Prince Carol. With Plevna and Kars both falling to Russian forces, the Balkan and Caucasian fronts both began to move again. With the fall of Plevna, the road to Bulgaria, Constantinople, and the straits were now opened to the Russian army. Along with the

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<sup>133</sup> Hall, Coryne, *Queen Victoria and the Romanovs: Sixty Years of Mutual Distrust* (Stroud, UK: Amberley Publishing, 2022), 138.

<sup>134</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, July 9, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 416.

<sup>135</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, December 6, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 460.

new options for expansion, Plevna provided a great military victory that was desperately needed to rally the army forward.

In the aftermath of the occupation of Plevna, Emperor Alexander expressed his confidence that the war was coming to an agreeable end. The emperor's confidence inspired him to tell Col. Wellesley that he believed that peace could be negotiated bilaterally between the Ottoman and Russian empires, which shocked the Colonel as this directly counteracts what the emperor told him in July.<sup>136</sup> Wellesley assumed that this change of heart was based on the influence of the military that surrounded the Emperor at all times. While Alexander saw the war as virtually over and allowed the military to plan its final moves before forcing a favorable treaty on the Ottomans, some in the British public saw the war as just beginning.<sup>137</sup>

While most British politicians were unfazed by the Ottoman loss of Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia, the loss of Constantinople was a far greater concern. Despite the opposition to the Ottoman government and abuse of the Balkan peoples, even moderate politicians had trouble supporting a neutral stance relating to Russia marching towards the capital of the Ottoman state. In fact Derby noted earlier in the war that cabinet members who opposed action early on stated that they were opposed to Russian occupation of, and even more opposed to Russian annexation of, Constantinople.<sup>138</sup>

This was not news to the Russian government who had been warned by Disraeli on July 16, that there would be repercussions to taking Constantinople, and Derby had reiterated this stance many times in the months since. Nor were these warnings surprising as many states took a

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<sup>136</sup> Derby noted in his diary on July 26, 1877 that Wellesley was given assurances that peace would be decided with all of Europe, but in Wellesley's Confidential letter of July 26, 1877 he outlines the Tsars intention to make a bilateral peace.

<sup>137</sup> Aldous Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 282.

<sup>138</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, October 21, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),433.

hard-line stance that Russia should not be allowed to hold the straits or Constantinople as it would threaten the balance of power in Europe. Almost no one in the Russian Foreign Ministry, short of a few slavophiles like Ignatiev, considered the annexation of Constantinople to be a serious foreign policy goal at that time as there was an understanding that such a move would unsettle the balance of power and guarantee war with the West.<sup>139</sup> That didn't affect the Russian Military General Staff who were acting with a "childlike eagerness" that infuriated moderates like Shuvalov.<sup>140</sup>

With the Russian army heading South towards both the straits and Constantinople without any serious opposition in their way it seemed that the worst-case scenario for the British was occurring. If the Russians were able to occupy Britain's de facto protectorate's capital it would be a horrible disgrace for the British government, and tarnish the honor of the empire; but at the same time, bankrupting the country to protect a state whose bankruptcy lost many Britons significant money and was known to have committed atrocities against Christians might also tarnish British honor. All the hypothetical discussions from the previous six months were coming to a head as popular support for war was peaking. Now the Cabinet would have to face the full fury of the hawkish Disraeli and Queen Victoria who had been threatening to abdicate if the Russians took Constantinople without British reprisals.<sup>141</sup>

When Lord Carnarvon made a public speech in which he condemned calls for a repetition of the Crimean War and made clear that he had no intention of supporting the Disraeli's anti-Russian sentiment, he was brutally censured by Disraeli in cabinet. Despite his threat to resign if he was not treated better, Carnarvon was invited to Windsor Castle to be dressed down by the

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<sup>139</sup> Jelavich Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 193.

<sup>140</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, February 23, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 490.

<sup>141</sup> Hall Coryne, *Queen Victoria and the Romanovs*, 151.

Queen for his opposition to war. In Derby's recollection of the arguments at Windsor, the Queen argued that "we must fight, we should be disgraced if we did not, and more to the same effect. C. [Carnarvon] objected that we have no allies: the Q. [Queen] answered, in heat, that was a cowardly argument."<sup>142</sup>

By no means was Carnarvon the only member of cabinet to oppose military action, he was merely the most vocal. Indeed Derby actually agreed with him and was sympathetic to him despite not being particularly fond of Carnarvon, and had been working to keep the peace in cabinet<sup>143</sup> Derby quietly tried to sway the cabinet and his dear friend Disraeli away from militant action rather than taking them head on, but a vocal minority of the public continued to be a thorn in his side as he expressed similar frustrations to his Russian counterpart, Jomini, who also opposed violent nationalists at home. The Foreign Minister summed the situation up quite well in his diary entry of January 1 as he often made a yearly review. On January 1, 1878 he noted that:

The state of things is therefore unpleasant and dangerous: for we have a divided cabinet, no continental ally, and a public which expects it does not know what, and wishes to have the results of victory without the sacrifices of war.<sup>144</sup>

In Russia, Britain's calls for a ceasefire and the silent but constant threat of the Mediterranean fleet caused greater concern among patriotic and Pan Slav Papers. The vocal Pan Slav paper *Agence Russe* was chosen by Britain's diplomatic mission to Russia to represent Pan Slav concerns. On January 12, the paper declared that Britain "failed to prevent war through negotiations, now it will fail to end the war," further arguing that the peace Britain is trying to

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<sup>142</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 4, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),479.

<sup>143</sup> Aldous Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 283.

<sup>144</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 1, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),475.

force was not on behalf of humanitarian principles but saving the Ottomans.<sup>145</sup> The paper made clear that it hoped the Russian government would not back down, and would keep the offensive moving. They would likely be disappointed to hear that the Russian government would agree to a British proposed armistice only a week later.

This armistice remained vague but called for an end of fighting between the Ottomans and Russians. Given that the Ottomans retained no fortified garrisons between the Russian army and Constantinople, the Russian military took the initiative to avoid combat, but continued marching closer and closer to the Ottoman capital. This maneuvering was seen as proof of Russian deceit among the British public and caused some concern even for Shuvalov who feared that the move could inspire a combative response from Britain.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, the British Cabinet was up in arms about Russian movement towards the capital, as many feared that the Russians were trying to pull a Coup de Grace of occupying the straits and Constantinople, forcing acceptance by Europe. This threat changed the minds of many undecided votes in cabinet who previously voted with Carnavron's peace faction, but were now willing to be more aggressive. With the Russian military less than a month's march to Constantinople, a direct military occupation of the Dardanelles or Constantinople by Britain was no longer a feasible option. Instead the Tory government discussed the two serious options for determent, Austrian intervention and the British fleet.

Austrian intervention was seen as both the preferred and less likely option, as they were technically still allies of the Russian government. Beyond this, Austria by itself risked far too much being the only feasible coalition partner with Britain should the Russians refuse to make

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<sup>145</sup> "Agence Russe: An Impasse", January 23, 1878, in *British Documents of Foreign Affairs, Part I, Series B, Vol 2*, 275.

<sup>146</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 29, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 495.

peace. foreign Minister Derby agreed with Disraeli's efforts to convince the Austrians to join British deterrence but was limited by the concessions he was willing to negotiate with the Austrians. Disraeli on the other hand was desperate to stop the Russians and cared little for his foreign minister's caution, and thus negotiated directly with the Austrian government, offering huge loans, supplies, and British guarantees if Austria gave Russia an ultimatum to end the war.<sup>147</sup> When Derby was informed of Austrian refusal he understood why he had been left out of negotiations, given that the deal Disraeli was offering would be wildly unpopular in the House and would virtually draw Britain into war.

This left the British fleet as the only serious threat of deterrence to Russian troops occupying either the Ottoman capital or the straits. Disraeli called for a similar vote before and was unable to gather a majority of the cabinet to approve of his proposal and the media picked the story up creating a diplomatic scandal. The vote on January 23rd was different. Kept under absolute secrecy, the Prime Minister was able to secure every member of cabinet except Lord Carnarvon and Lord Derby, allowing for secret instructions to be given for the fleet to move into the straits and threaten the Russian advance.<sup>148</sup>

Such a flagrant provocation had not been seen in British foreign policy during the war. At the Cabinet both Derby and Carnarvon objected but maintained the secrecy of the mission. Lord Derby that night drew up his resignation papers and sent them to Disraeli, intending to be done with the Cabinet after being overruled in his own ministry. Disraeli was able to convince him to rescind his resignation the next day, with Derby worried that without his vote in cabinet warhawks would govern and likely lead to the collapse of the Tory government. Lord Carnarvon

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<sup>147</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 21, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),488.

<sup>148</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 23, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),490.

was not so concerned about the survival of the Disraeli administration. When the Tory Cabinet had to answer questions in the House of Lords for the movement of the fleet, Carnarvon publicly resigned from cabinet.<sup>149</sup> The rifts between the warhawks and moderates of the British Tory party were now open for all to see.

### **A Russian Peace: San Stefano**

The British fleet was now in a difficult position in which it could not defend both the straits and Constantinople without risking being choked by a Russian occupation of Gallipoli; a fear that Lord Derby long argued in his opposition to the fleet's movement.<sup>150</sup> Indeed this danger was made even more problematic as the Russian army was camped in San Stefano, a suburban town just outside of Constantinople. Fortunately for the British, the Russian Emperor was unwilling to threaten a war with Britain, and instead called for treaty negotiations to begin.

The Tsar had spent the past year in the company of some of the most vehement patriots of his empire, fighting in a nationalist war with a number of Balkan and Slav allies. Unlike some of his ministers who followed him to war and became vocally disappointed with the Pan Slav and Balkan causes, the emperor still seemed to believe in the goals set out at the beginning of the war. As a result, he appointed the former ambassador to the Sublime Porte and a noted defender of Pan Slavism, Count Ignatiev, to head the negotiations with the Ottoman Mission, under the supervision of the ill and aged Gorchakov.<sup>151</sup>

It is clear from the final treaty that Ignatiev's former proposal for a greater autonomous Bulgaria at the Constantinople Convention was central in his vision of victory. Bulgaria now

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<sup>149</sup> Aldous Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 283.

<sup>150</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, April 25, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 395.

<sup>151</sup> Jelavich Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglement*, 162.

reached past the Balkan mountain range, stretching to the Aegean Sea, and pushing further into Roumelia where Constantinople lay vulnerable.<sup>152</sup> This large Bulgaria would be autonomous, with its own militia and government, but would still pay taxes, allow troops safe passage, and stay loyal to the Ottoman Sultan. The Bulgarian government would be advised by Russian ministers, with a thinly veiled assumption that Russia would have extensive authority in the province. With this autonomy guaranteed, the Russian Army would stay in Bulgaria to help the principality transition to an autonomous state and protect it from possible Ottoman betrayal with a vague and open timeline for the army's withdrawal.

The Romanians, Serbians, and Montenegrins would all be freed as independent principalities, in place of their former autonomy, and would be given land to compensate them for their participation in the war and to limit their animosity towards the greatly enlarged Bulgaria. Romania alone would lose land in the treaty of San Stefano with North Dobruja being returned to Russia as compensation from the Crimean War. In exchange, the Ottomans would hand land to the Romanians on Russia's behalf, in hopes of staving off possible Romanian opposition. The treaty further stated that Russia would force the Ottomans to pay war reparations, and hand over the Eastern cities of Kars and Batoum to Russia.<sup>153</sup>

In the light of the final terms for the Treaty of San Stefano, Igantiev's earlier reform proposals at the Constantinople Convention seem far more palatable to both the Ottomans and her European allies. Beyond the new geographic girth of this sizable Bulgaria being a point of possible contention for the Sultan, cutting off the Ottomans from any remaining imperial territory in Europe posed a unique set of challenges. Furthermore, the Russians would be able to

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<sup>152</sup> Heraclides Alexis, and Ada Dialla, "The Balkan Crisis of 1875–78 and Russia: Between Humanitarianism and Pragmatism," 178.

<sup>153</sup> Hertslet Edward, "Treaty of San Stefano," in *The Map of Europe by Treaty: Showing the Various Political Changes since 1814*. Vol. IV. IV vols, 2692.

manipulate the Bulgarians into de-facto vassalization to Russia only miles from Constantinople further threatening Ottoman security.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore the newly liberated principalities of the Balkans found Bulgaria as a direct threat to their existence which was made more problematic by Bulgaria being handed much of the disputed land in Macedonia.

Despite many possible reasons for opposition to the proposal, the Ottoman diplomats agreed to the proposed treaty, with the continued threat of Russian troops merely miles from Constantinople. Every word in the treaty seemed to favor the people of the Balkans and the Russian government, with no considerations for the absolute devastation that the treaty would have on the Ottoman Government; every word of course, except the opening language of the treaty in which it is described as the “Preliminaries of Peace.”<sup>155</sup> This treaty was devastating, but as Alexander promised the British representatives, a final peace in the war would be decided by Europe as a whole.

### **Conclusion: A Temporary Victory for Nationalists**

In Mark Mazower’s short work on the Balkans he discussed what many in Europe saw as the recipe needed for a national unification. The recipe was modeled on the successful unifications of Italy and Germany. The first component was an irredentist core with the military capacity to expand and eventually become the foundation of a unified nation-state, often referred to as a “Piedmont.” The second ingredient was a patron Great Power that would support the

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<sup>154</sup> Heraclides Alexis, and Ada Dialla, “The Balkan Crisis of 1875–78 and Russia: Between Humanitarianism and Pragmatism,” 178.

<sup>155</sup> Hertslet Edward. “Treaty of San Stefano,”

nation's unification passively or actively. The third and final ingredient was a clever statesman from within the region to bring the empire together, like Cavour and Bismarck.<sup>156</sup>

When looking at the treaty of San Stefano, it is evident that Pan Slavs had achieved the foundations of their great goal. Bulgaria was decisively designed to be the Piedmont or Prussia of the Slav federation that many dreamed of. Furthermore, the new principality was supported by Russia as an equivalent to France for Italian unification. Thus, in one treaty two crucial factors were secured for a South Slav federation. One notable difference between those two unifications and the Balkan Slav unification efforts lay outside the scope of the treaty. Without an equivalent to Italy's Garibaldi or Germany's Bismarck, Bulgaria lacked a coherent leader who could steer the ship through the political turmoil of unification. Also, unlike Piedmont or Prussia, Bulgaria lacked strength and unity that was largely seen in the two founding states of Italy and Germany. The other notable difference between these unifications, centered on the armed opposition of the nationalist movement across Europe.

The Russian government remained divided on supporting the nationalist dreams of their vocal minority of Pan Slavs. While some diplomats and government officials were inclined to support the South Slav cause, many others were cautious to risk allied relations or upset Russian geopolitical goals. Indeed, Count Shuvalov openly expressed concerns over the treaty to the British foreign Minister, with the main concerns centering on Austria. In particular he was worried that Bulgaria was becoming the "Grand Etat Slave" that Franz Josef so vehemently opposed, thus he worried that Russia lost any good will it might have had with the Austrians.<sup>157</sup> At the same time, many diplomats on the campaign actually had a conversion from some level of

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<sup>156</sup> Mazower Mark, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2006), 102-103.

<sup>157</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, February 5, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 500.

support for the Balkan cause, to a sense of betrayal or lack of gratitude among the Balkan natives. Foreign Advisor A. G. Jomini himself complained about the situation, suggesting that the Tsar's rosy view of the South Slavs would be different if he disguised himself and spent any time with the local Slavs.<sup>158</sup>

While war opened up the rifts in Russian feelings about foreign policy and the influence of nationalism, the crisis caused a mirrored feeling across the continent. Loud calls for the defense of South Slavs were being out-shouted by British nationalists bent on protecting their empire from possible Russian threat. Indeed, British foreign Policy was receiving so much attention that foreign Minister Derby wrote in his diary that "since I have known parliament, attention has never been so fixed on foreign policy."<sup>159</sup>

Sometimes referred to in popular culture as "By Jingo," the MacDermott War Song became so popular that the Conservative Party was becoming directly associated not merely with warmongering but the word Jingo. This was particularly bizarre as the word was merely a filler word, to use in place of God or Jesus to avoid using the lord's name in vain as profanity. In December 1878, when discussing proposed military expansion in Afghanistan by the ruling Tory government, Liberal members of the House of Commons described the Tories as "the great Jingo party."<sup>160</sup> With its growing usage to describe politicians and advocates alike, Jingo would be the foundation of the modern term "Jingoism," or a mood of inflated patriotism in the form of aggressive or warlike foreign policy.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, September 1, 1877, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 59.

<sup>159</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, April 18, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 391.

<sup>160</sup> Diane Greco Josefowicz, ed., "MacDermott's War Song (1877)," MacDermott's war song (1877), VictorianWeb, October 9, 2020, <https://victorianweb.org/mt/music/hall/macdermott1.html>.

<sup>161</sup> "Jingoism Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jingoism>.

In both London and Moscow, a vocal nationalist minority called for war, with famous members of society calling for blood. Their respective foreign ministries made efforts to ensure imperial ambitions and a balance of power in Europe were central in decision making and were overruled. In Russia, the Tsar decided to support nationalists over the objections of his foreign policy advisors, until the siege of Plevna risked catastrophe. In semi-democratic Britain, Disraeli never had the support needed for war, as the cabinet remained divided on what policy should be followed, and the Opposition led anti-Ottoman campaigns. It was only when the Russian government came dangerously close to achieving the nationalist goal of seizing Constantinople, that Disraeli felt comfortable enough to aggressively move the British fleet into the straits, but stopped short of direct confrontation.

Nationalists in Britain excitedly greeted Disraeli's decision to hold the line against the Tsar's empire, while Pan Slavs in Russia eagerly looked forward to the virtual destruction of the Ottoman Empire's presence in Europe. Both camps sat as victors in the war; however, a victorious war and an unsteady preliminary peace would not hold up well when peace would have to be negotiated. The Russian and British governments had appeased their nationalist factions for the time, but knowing all too well that a European Congress was on the horizon both governments prepared to send their best statesmen to the negotiations instead of nationalist sycophants. These statesmen would be some of the most pragmatic and politically moderate men in their respective governments. Popular nationalist victories appeared to be fleeting.

## Chapter 3

### A Congress or a Coalition

Peace certainly tasted sweet to the hundreds of thousands of troops who were on the Russo-Ottoman Fronts. No longer would Ottoman soldiers starve in entrenched cities, nor would Russian troops keep an ever-vigilant gaze on these same cities for months on end. Furthermore, the long march to the outskirts of Constantinople was done, and the Russian army could camp for the time without racing to another objective. The Ottomans had avoided the risk of having to fight to protect their capital and would not have to watch thousands more troops be marched away to their deaths in the horrible conditions of Russian Prisoner of War Camps. Indeed, after a year of tough and vigorous fighting, few things could be sweeter than peace on the front for a tired and overworked soldier, but not for a diplomat.

The peace made at San Stefano was bitter in the mouths of diplomats and statesmen across Europe. Count Andrassy's distaste with the treaty centered on its flagrant abandonment of the Russian promise to avoid creating a large Slav state on the fringes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>162</sup> For Prince Bismarck, San Stefano awakened a bitter friction in the secret alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, the Dreikaiserbund, that was his personal achievement and main mechanism for keeping peace in Eastern Europe. For the Earl of Beaconsfield, it went far beyond distaste, as he saw the treaty as a direct threat to British interests in the Ottoman Empire, and more importantly the Dardanelles. The bilateral negotiations of the Russian and Ottoman empires were undoubtedly going to be changed dramatically by a shocked Europe, either diplomatically or by force.

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<sup>162</sup> Aytan Kihc, "Paved with Good Intentions", 198.

Prince Otto von Bismarck's offer to host a conference in Berlin was the first post-peace proposal to call upon the Congress of Europe. A Congress, Bismarck hoped, would provide a forum to discuss changing San Stefano diplomatically before other nations rallied for war. As a state with close ties to both the Ottoman and Russian governments, as well as good relations with London and Vienna, Germany appeared to be a reasonable arbiter of a new peace deal. All the Great Powers of Europe agreed, including the Tsar's government who hoped that Bismarck would moderate between his Dreikaiserbund allies to avoid stacking European votes against the Russian government. It was decided that the conference would occur in June, only three months after the original treaty was published. June was close enough to avoid the implementation of any parts of San Stefano, but also long enough for the usual pre-conference maneuvering to occur.

The Tsar was back in St. Petersburg by now, and returned to the usual company of his foreign policy advisors who feared a repeat of the Congress of Paris in 1856.<sup>163</sup> Though this time there was an evident Russian victory that was decisively different from the Crimean War, what was the same was the level of diplomatic isolation. Britain was gearing up for war and most of the continent was either prepared to join them or benevolently neutral towards British military preparations. It seemed that a new war was brewing in which Russia would be alone against a new coalition if there was not a satisfactory conclusion at Berlin for the Great Powers.

From the beginning it was obvious that the British delegation would lead the fight against Alexander's government in Berlin, and Shuvalov was tasked with figuring out the exact stance of the British government. Fortunately, Shuvalov retained very close ties to Lord Derby, unfortunately however, Derby was not long for the Cabinet. With secret negotiations continuing

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<sup>163</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 15, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 79.

between Disraeli, Austria, and the Ottomans, Derby was being left out of the most important diplomatic decisions of the administration.<sup>164</sup> This tied to his own opposition to aggressive actions of the British government, Derby felt compelled to once again submit his resignation following Disraeli's decision to call up British reserves in a gesture to pressure the Russian government. Unlike earlier in the year, Disraeli did not ask for Derby to withdraw his resignation, and deputy foreign minister Lord Salisbury became foreign minister in his place.

Unlike Derby, Salisbury had cooled on his once close ties to the Russian government. Where he once invited Ignatiev to Britain to plead the Russian case for Russian proposed reforms of the Ottoman empire, he was now voting regularly with the war faction of the Cabinet.<sup>165</sup> That said, he was still far from the fury and hawkishness of Disraeli; however, he was a firm believer of British Imperialism and based his decisions more on the protection of Britain's lesser Ottoman partner rather than merely seeing the Russians lose. He had no attachments to protecting Ottoman territorial integrity, just its role in the British imperial system, a fact clearly seen in his own pre-Congress maneuvering.

The Ottomans were looking forward to a European conference that might allow them to be spared from some of the harshest components of San Stefano by British diplomats; however, British assistance was not free, and Salisbury was in charge of negotiating a price for the services of her Majesty's Government. In secret negotiations that ran through May 1878, Salisbury negotiated the purchase of Cyprus to the British empire.<sup>166</sup> This sale provided Britain a base in the Eastern Mediterranean to protect both the Ottoman core from Russia and, more importantly

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<sup>164</sup> Vincent, J. R., "Introduction", *Derby Diaries*, (UK: University of Bristol), 25.

<sup>165</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, January 23, 1878, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 490.

<sup>166</sup> Heraclides, Alexis, and Ada Dialla. "The Bulgarian Atrocities: A Bird's Eye View of Intervention with Emphasis on Britain, 1875–78." In *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 172.

for imperial goals, the Suez Canal from a number of threats. The sale would not be announced until the Berlin Congress to avoid possible objections from other powers.

Britain, like Russia, needed to test the diplomatic waters before meeting at Berlin, and Disraeli was ready to make strong guarantees and actions to bring allies to the table. For Austria, Disraeli agreed to allow an Austrian occupation of Bosnia, as long as the Austrians backed British proposals to block Russian efforts to change the status quo agreements regarding the straits. Furthermore, Disraeli's decision to call up British troops, gave a show of force that would back the Austrians in the event that the Congress failed.

### **Thieves at the Fair: The Congress of Berlin**

Unlike the Constantinople Conference which was quickly thrown together by ambassadors to the Sublime Porte, the Congress of Berlin was a much more comprehensive meeting and as such required Europe's greatest statesmen. Germany's mission was headed by Chancellor Bismarck who hosted the event to ensure his Eastern European allies avoided dragging his new fragile Germany into a war. For Britain, Prime Minister Disraeli theoretically headed the diplomatic mission, but his new foreign Minister Salisbury played a larger role in negotiations. Austrian foreign Minister Andrassy headed the Austrian delegation with the goal of limiting Slav states and ensuring that Bosnia would be occupied by his empire. The Tsar's delegation was headed by Chancellor Gorchakov, who like his British counterpart played a lesser role in negotiations while his junior, Count Shuvalov, conducted most of the negotiations to preserve even the undesirable portions of San Stefano.

With a collection of some of the most pragmatic statesmen in Europe, it seemed unlikely that this Congress would be a grand show of ideology, like that of Vienna in 1815 or Verona

1822. Nor was this Congress going to be an effort to reset the Russian empire after a failed war as had happened in Paris in 1856. Instead, this was going to be a Congress focused on maintaining the status quo as much as possible, with all parties focused more on personal imperial gain than merely on punishing an aggressor. The official protocols of the conference depict the organized and civil discussions between the towering statesmen who had dominated European diplomacy for decades. In the less official records of private letters, it is evident that the conference was far from civil, as the off the record negotiations between the many statesmen were filled with threats and more diplomatic maneuvering. Early in the conference Jomini, who played a supporting role for the Russian Plenipotentiaries in Berlin, described the European powers as "Larrons en foire," due to the apparent theft of Russia's victory by his British counterparts.<sup>167</sup>

One of the first skirmishes between the Russian and British delegations centered on the entry of further representatives to the Congress. Gorchakov attended the conference under the assumption that he would be dealing with the European great powers; however, Disraeli was advocating for the inclusion of Romanian and Greek representatives.<sup>168</sup> The Russian government was deeply opposed to this proposal, especially after San Stefano allowed Russia to seize Romanian lands and handed Greek sought territory to Bulgaria, poisoning relations. Thus the Russian delegation hid behind the formal invite to the conference rather than state openly their geopolitical concerns. These arguments didn't work on French foreign Minister Waddington and

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<sup>167</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, Undated Letter, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 72.

<sup>168</sup> British Foreign Office, *Correspondence Relating to the Congress of Berlin: with the Protocols of the Congress*, 153.

Italian foreign Minister Count Corti, as both countries had firm records of backing nationalist voices in the Balkans.<sup>169</sup>

These efforts, to block Greek, Romanian, and also Albanian representatives, were not limited to opposition of non-Slav Balkan kingdoms. Gorchakov and Shuvalov fought equally hard to avoid allowing the entry of Serbian and Montenegrin representatives to plead their case at the Congress. As a strong supporter of Slavs, one might expect that the Tsar's representatives would welcome more Slav voices to the congress; however, the Treaty of San Stefano's Pan Slav components directly threatened the national goals of these separate Balkan peoples.<sup>170</sup> Despite their own gains from the treaty of San Stefano these representatives were opposed to the size of Bulgaria that would acquire lands they sought for themselves and the general threat that an autonomous Bulgaria could bring to the Balkans.

As a diplomatic win for Disraeli, the Russian delegation was forced to allow even more voices to rake them over the coals for their radical bilateral peace deal. By no means was the intention of the British delegation to give these smaller states a vote or to change their fates, in fact they had been given specific orders to allow Russia to take back Bessarabian North Dobruja from the Romanians.<sup>171</sup> Instead these representatives were tools used to show that the Russian treaty was not achieving some form of peace and necessary service to the Balkan peoples, but instead was vehemently opposed by the Balkan peoples the Russians swore they were protecting.

Andrassy showed little sympathy to the Russian plenipotentiaries as well, as there was still a sense of betrayal by the Russian military nearly seizing Constantinople, then creating a

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<sup>169</sup> British Foreign Office, *Correspondence Relating to the Congress of Berlin: with the Protocols of the Congress*, 153.

<sup>170</sup> Jelavich Charles, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism* 162.

<sup>171</sup> British Foreign Office, *Correspondence Relating to the Congress of Berlin: with the Protocols of the Congress*, 15.

great Bulgarian principality that would act as a Slav satellite of Russia. Shuvalov worked hard at dispelling the distrust of his Austrian counterparts and guaranteed their occupation of Bosnia. The problem with Shuvalov's efforts centered on his inability to guarantee the Austrians the right to annex the province without the support of Chancellor Gorchakov or the Tsar, with both being too cautious to antagonize the Slavs.<sup>172</sup>

Bismarck was equally uninterested in seeing a Slav state that could threaten both the Dreikaiserbund, and national unity within her closest ally Austria, Bulgaria would not have any other allies in Berlin. Unlike the Serbs and Montenegrins that already had autonomous princes who could clearly appoint representatives to speak on their behalf, Bulgaria had no such existing institutions. Instead the powers decided their fate without a voice, and the Russian government was forced to fold and give in to shrinking Bulgaria. The autonomous principality would be shrunk, then cut in half with "East Roumelia" becoming a neighboring semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire.

Despite so many issues being hammered out regarding the map of the Balkans some of the most contentious decisions were discussed later in the congress resulting in more concern about a failure in Berlin. Limited control of the Russian government over picking the Bulgarian Prince, building administrative institutions, and training the Bulgarian army were all sticking points of the negotiation. With Shuvalov and Gorchakov trying to push back against a complete withdrawal from the newly created Bulgarian Principality, Disraeli threatened to move the British fleet into the Black Sea and directly threaten Russia if they didn't concede.<sup>173</sup> Further disagreements over Batoum caused the Ottoman delegation to threaten withdrawal from the

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<sup>172</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 27, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 82.

<sup>173</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 20, 1872, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 79.

congress altogether if they were to keep losing territory. Meanwhile Russian Plenipotentiaries demanded that they must still be compensated for the expensive war, leading to a spar between Count Shuvalov and Lord Beaconsfield in which they found some agreement in payment from the Ottomans but not through land.<sup>174</sup>

These contentious diplomatic negotiations continuously risked a collapse of the congress and the creation of war. Disraeli had already been trying to push his country into the war for over a year, and would eagerly see a Russian defeat to garnish national pride and imperial ambitions. The Ottomans on the other hand threatened to force a return to war by withdrawing from the congress without supporting San Stefano. Fortunately for the pacifists of Europe a series of pragmatic decisions spared the continent from another coalition-based war. Jomini spent most of the negotiation complaining to Giers about Shuvalov who was handing over Russia's victory, but by the end of the conference he admitted that Shuvalov did the best he could in sparing Russian strategic goals.<sup>175</sup>

In the end, Russia would leave a bitterly halved Bulgaria in significantly less time, and with significantly less influence over the principality. Serbia and Montenegro would become independent states and gain some land from Bulgaria, but would have to pay off debts to the Ottomans, unlike in San Stefano. Russia would be allowed to take North Dobruja from the Romanians who would also get land from Bulgaria, Austria would be allowed to occupy but not annex Bosnia, and Britain would be given Cyprus. Macedonia would remain Ottoman but have new European based reforms. The Russians were unable to build fortifications or puppet an autonomous principality on the straits, but were still able to exact a sizable payment of

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<sup>174</sup> British Foreign Office, *Correspondence Relating to the Congress of Berlin: with the Protocols of the Congress*, 128.

<sup>175</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 20, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 79.

indemnities from the Ottomans. Outside the Balkans, Russia was given Kars without issue, but had to argue that they had given up too much to go home without Batoum, convincing the British delegation to relax a sticking point that had been clearly outlined in their pre-congress limitations.<sup>176</sup>

### **A Loss in Berlin: Pan Slavism Adapts**

The Tsar gave his ascent to the treaty that still returned the lost lands from the Crimean war to him, expanded his Caucasian territory, gave him limited influence over Bulgaria, and ensured that the treasury would receive a heavy indemnity from their Ottoman rivals. That said, the Congress of Berlin was not a celebrated event for the Russian government. For the plenipotentiaries, it was a necessary evil to avoid a coalition war and bring home something worthwhile for all of Russia's sacrifices but by no means was there a victory for Russia in Berlin. At the end of the conference, Gorchakov wrote to Giers that:

The peace treaty will be signed tomorrow. I believe Shouwalow will prevail on Sunday. I do not envy him for being the bearer of this sad [news] and I only regret having to affix my signature to such a transaction. I have some doubt that [the treaty] has more vitality than the falling leaves. For the rest, everything depends on the policy that the Emperor will adopt for the future, and if, as in 1856, we return to the system of contemplation. For my part, I admit that I did not expect this page at my physical or political end which cannot be very far away. All I could do was to devote all my efforts to safeguarding as much as possible the dignity of the Emperor and of Russia.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> British Foreign Office, Correspondence Relating to the Congress of Berlin: with the Protocols of the Congress, 153.

<sup>177</sup> Alexander Gorchakov to Nickolai Giers, June 30, 1876, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 86.

Even before the end of the conference, newspapers wrote scathing assaults on the Congress of Berlin. These papers stayed within the lines of censorship and avoided direct critique of the Tsar's government for their own role in it, but still bothered Jomini who believed that the censors should have been harsher.<sup>178</sup> When the plenipotentiaries returned home they hoped that the country would be at least partially satisfied with the gains for Balkan Slavs and the Russian government. Instead the congress virtually sealed Shuvalov's fate, not as a possible successor to Gorchakov, but as a tainted politician. Among the many published criticisms of the Russian government and its foreign policy failures among the Intelligentsia, Nikolay Danilevsi's "Woe to the Victors!" became popular in Pan Slav circles.

A Pan Slavist and Slavophile pundit with an informal background in history and philosophy, Nikolay Danilevski developed his own system of organizing history by competing civilizations of peoples.<sup>179</sup> As a Slavophile he believed that Russia needed to find its own way forward instead of relying on systems taken from the West. Part of his criticism of the Russian government was its eagerness to be considered part of Europe. The Slav race and civilization needed to develop independently from Europe, he argued, otherwise their development would be stifled. Danilevski believed that Europe was not merely the provider of institutions and cultures he opposed, but also that the contemporary empires of Europe were united in hostility to Russia. Well before the Congress of Berlin he criticized Russian foreign policy in the 19th century, as he believed that the Russian government's efforts to act as a moderating force and a protector of

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<sup>178</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, June 26, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 82.

<sup>179</sup> Catherine Evtuhov and Richard Stites, *A History of Russia*, 135

European civilization was deeply misguided.<sup>180</sup> When Russia prostrated itself in front of all of Europe, he was enraged enough to write his searing criticism:

“All the obstacles were destroyed by the bayonets of Russian soldiers and raised once again, some even strengthened or created once again by the pens of Russian diplomats. The negative results achieved by Russian politics, far exceeded the positive ones achieved by Russian military art and Russian military prowess!”<sup>181</sup>

*Woe to the Victors* would continue on to detail the failure of Russian foreign policy from the past century, as a result of being too focused on keeping European allies on-side such as Austria and Germany who are “false friends” at best. When he looks at the specific flaws in the tactics of the Russian government, he pointed not merely to the faults of Berlin Congress but also the faults of the original treaty. San Stefano, he argued, tried to mask the goals of Pan Slavs in diplomatic language rather than being direct, forceful and more radical. He further criticized the Russian government’s decision to focus on territorial gains in Romania instead of securing Bulgaria or seizing the straits. In his criticism, he attacked Russian foreign policy dating back to Russia protecting “Conservatism and legalism” from Napoleon on England and Austria’s behalf. Danilevski pointed out that in Russia’s pursuit of protecting the monarchs of Europe from France and her revolutionary governments, made Russia a tool of Metternich.<sup>182</sup> He argued that what Russia needed was to understand that:

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<sup>180</sup> Danilevskii Nickolay *Woe to the Victors!: The Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, and the Future of Slavdom* ed. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015), 120

<sup>181</sup> Danilevskii Nickolay *Woe to the Victors!: The Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, and the Future of Slavdom* ed. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015), 119.

<sup>182</sup> Catherine Evtuhov and Richard Stites, *A History of Russia*, 135

“Its greatness, its world-power status does not require foreign conquests or the oppression of nationalities nor the annexation of lands rightly belonging to others, but the liberation of the oppressed, the restoration of the downtrodden, the destruction of violence and injustice”<sup>183</sup>

Indeed, it was not merely Danilevskii who believed that Russia ought to be compelled to act in the defense of Slavs, as the Pan Slav movement survived despite their disappointment with the Congress of Berlin. Instead of dying off when their hopes and plans were horribly dashed, the Pan Slav movement grew and continued to support the Slavs and the idea of a future Pan Slav state. Starting in the late 1870s, the Moscow Slavic Benevolent Committee was founded to support Slavs and even their Orthodox cohabitants of the Balkans.<sup>184</sup> Further support came in the form of new Pan-Slav papers who tried to rally support in Russia for Slavs in the Balkans. *Vostok*, a notable Pan Slav Paper, rallied Russians in favor of a “Multi-colored” slavdom, encouraging a federation of all Orthodox people and warping part of the Pan Slav movement into a Pan Orthodox Movement.<sup>185</sup>

This increased attention was not lost on Balkan political actors who knew about the popularity of Pan Slavism in Russia. The Bulgarian church found a path to manipulate their way into recognition from Russian institutions by either feigning offense by the Ottomans, or feigning interest in working with the Catholic Church.<sup>186</sup> The Russian government remained opposed to the Pan Slav movement at face value. Many Russian ministers found the Balkans to be ungrateful and problematic to Russian geopolitical goals, but Russian ministers were no longer the only voices in imperial foreign policy. Despite the Russian government’s own opposition to

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<sup>183</sup> Danilevskii Nickolay *Woe to the Victors!: The Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, and the Future of Slavdom* ed. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015), 177.

<sup>184</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 218.

<sup>185</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 242.

<sup>186</sup> Vovchenko, Denis, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, 208-210.

being drawn further into the Balkans, they were left without much of a choice when it came to the militancy of Pan Slavs within Russia itself.

### **A Betrayal of British Honor: Midlothian Liberalism is Formed**

In Britain, Disraeli came home to a much more supportive country, as he expanded the empire, protected the Ottomans, and spurned the Russians. The announcement of the actions of the plenipotentiaries of Berlin in Parliament was met with roaring applause in the Houses of Commons and Lords.<sup>187</sup> The Queen herself was quite happy as well, as British honor had been protected and her alliances seemed stronger than ever.

Not all Britons were enthralled with the agreements made in Berlin. The liberal party's loudest member of Parliament, William Ewart Gladstone continued his war on the Disraeli administration. Though still not the leader of his party, the Grand Old Man of the Liberals spent the past year giving speeches in which he tied the Conservative opposition Irish Home Rule to their fierce defense of the Ottoman Sultan and other non-democratic regimes. In a popular article he wrote and distributed in the *British Public* titled "England's Mission," he outlined grave concerns about the Conservative government's victory in Berlin. In the start of this essay he referenced British history in saying:

“We , who have helped Belgium, Spain, and Portugal to be free, who led the way in the establishment of free Greece, and gave no mean support to the liberation and union of Italy, have at Berlin wrought actively to limit everywhere the area of self-government, and to save from the wreck as much as possible of a

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<sup>187</sup> Leonard, Dick, “William Ewart Gladstone — from ‘Stern Unbending Tory’ to ‘the People’s William,’” *Nineteenth-Century British Premiers*, 2008, 286-309, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230227255\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230227255_19).

domination which has contributed more than any other that ever existed to the misery, debasement, and extermination of mankind.”<sup>188</sup>

He outlined both in this article and in his speeches his opposition to defend purely imperial purposes in foreign policy. Instead of an imperial approach of control and political realism, foreign policy should have a humanitarian component to it. The goal ought to be for Britain to enlighten, civilize, and protect the populations of the world. By supporting Austria over the native inhabitants of the Balkans, Disraeli’s government made clear that the main objective was to maintain and expand the empire even if it meant working with tyrants and authoritarian regimes. In Gladstone’s outlined argument that “England’s Mission” ought to be more philosophical he ended it with a firm condemnation of 10 Downing Street:

"Of all the Empires whose rise and fall have been recorded in history, there is not one that had owed its ruin or decay to checking the lust of unmeasured territorial acquisition"<sup>189</sup>

Just as usual, Disraeli ignored the hot headedness and bluster of his long-standing Liberal opponent. The Prime Minister was confident that the firm conservative majority would hold out against the chaotic and unorganized leftist opposition.<sup>190</sup> Just as Derby often noted Gladstone’s efforts to sway the countryside and style himself as a man of the people as mere “Popularity Hunting,” so too was the government in 1878. Gladstone was just getting started however.

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<sup>188</sup> Gladstone, William Ewart, “England’s Mission”, (London, England: John Hodeges, 1878): 562. <http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk>.

<sup>189</sup> Gladstone, William Ewart, “England’s Mission”, 568.

<sup>190</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, October 21, 1877, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol),446.

Taking his case to the crowds and masses of Britain, Gladstone announced that he so deeply believed in his cause, that he would run for a Conservative Scottish Midlothian seat to flip it from the sitting Tory parliamentarian.<sup>191</sup> Gladstone believed that his Scottish family name might further help his cause in the seat against his English Tory competitor, but by no means relied on that for victory. He made pamphlets and went on tours. Despite his old age and background of already being Prime Minister once before, he achieved a new level of fame in the countryside and around the world. Indeed, as he campaigned to challenge his government's cruelty, Danilevski applauded the internal effort to make Britain a fair player on the international stage, though held little hope that much would change in Europe or Britain.<sup>192</sup>

When the general elections of 1880 occurred, the public of Britain voted overwhelmingly with Gladstone's Liberals to disband the conservative government and give the reins of power to the opposition. Indeed, the Liberal coalition maintained a safe majority that was two seats larger than the majority so often touted by Disraeli. After an almost two-year campaign, Gladstone took the Scottish Midlothian seat and successfully won what has come to be regarded as the first modern political campaign in British history. When the Queen called on the Liberal Party head Spencer Cavendish to form a government in her name, he refused, explaining that he needed Gladstone for a government to form and that Gladstone would take nothing less than Prime Minister. Queen Victoria deeply distrusting Gladstone asked Cavendish to reconsider before begrudgingly inviting Gladstone to form a liberal government. While her majesty disagreed with

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<sup>191</sup> Blair, Kristi, "The People's William and the People's Poets: William Gladstone and the Midlothian Campaign," Academic Essay for 'The People's Voice' Project, February 15, 2018, 2.

<sup>192</sup> Danilevskii Nickolay *Woe to the Victors!: The Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, and the Future of Slavdom* ed. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015),236.

Gladstone's behavior and ideology the process sealed the future of Gladstone's second administration of Britain.<sup>193</sup>

The Liberal party would continue to be shaped by the decisions of Gladstone's campaign, as they remained steadfastly supportive of self-government and liberal reform both inside Britain and abroad. This new cause crafted by Gladstone had a great effect on more than just the left leaning population of Britain, his focus on British honor and enlightened humanitarianism inspired moderate Conservatives who opposed the Ottomans to join the Liberal cause. Lord Derby, who left Disraeli's government frustrated over being ignored and overruled for his high value on peace, came to switch parties and even joined Gladstone's cabinet in 1882.<sup>194</sup>

It is worth noting that the Liberal party would not simply abandon the empire, or limit its own scope of imperialism when it was in power. In fact, Gladstone would rule over one of the greatest expansions of the British empire in the 19th century, as his government occupied Egypt indefinitely, invaded Afghanistan, and took part in the 1885 Berlin Conference in which Britain gained control of much of Africa. Gladstone and the Liberal party were by no means de-colonizers, and their support for Balkan peoples was not a cry for revolution, but instead the commitment to a mission of civilizing.<sup>195</sup> In their eyes the Ottoman empire was uncivilized and backwards and Britain was bringing with it Western ideas and values that would allow for these populations to civilize and someday be worthy of self-government, and to do this in the Balkans, Liberals formed together in the Balkan Committee.<sup>196</sup> This committee of writers, politicians, and

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<sup>193</sup> Aldous, Richard, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 310.

<sup>194</sup> Leonard, Dick, "William Ewart Gladstone — from 'Stern Unbending Tory' to 'the People's William,'" 309.

<sup>195</sup> Perkins, James Andrew, "British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925" (dissertation, 2014), 164-165.

<sup>196</sup> Perkins, James Andrew, "British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925" (dissertation, 2014), 105-109.

popular personas of the British public actively advocated for Balkan independence from foreign rule..

### **Waning Days of Monarchist Comradery: The Dreikaiserbund**

The Congress of Berlin undoubtedly had a negative effect on the Dreikaiserbund, as Russian government officials felt that Austria secretly worked with Britain to undo their goals and that Bismarck did not do enough to help their Eastern ally. After the Russian government already felt betrayal from Austria over its role in threatening Russia into peace in 1856, this conference was an even more stark break. Furthermore, Bismarck's inaction to aid the Russians created a further gap between the Tsar's government who had only six years earlier shown benign neutrality towards Germany and accepted the creation of the German Empire.

As a result of these tensions, there was a serious possibility that the Dreikaiserbund could implode entirely. This was problematic for Germany who depended on Russian alliance as a means to avoid being encircled between her mortal enemy France and the mighty Russian Empire. For Austria it increased the risk of open conflict with Russia without a guarantee that Germany would back them over measly Balkan claims. Furthermore, there was no guarantee that German foreign policy would remain pro-Austrian, as Bismarck had guided the German government into bending to Austrian interests in hopes of building strong bonds in the aftermath of the diplomatic breakdown of 1866.<sup>197</sup>

With concerns that the Dreikaiserbund was nearing collapse, A. G. Jomini wrote to Giers trying to sway him towards restoring friendship with the German states. Unlike in the past where Jomini exercised extensive power over foreign policy and could whisper into the ear of the

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<sup>197</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglement*, 155

Chancellor himself, power had shifted dramatically in the Russian government following the Congress of Berlin. In a defeated mood, Gorchakov virtually withdrew from his duties but retained his title as head of foreign policy leaving Giers and other lower ranking officials to govern the Tsar's foreign affairs.<sup>198</sup>

Though the days of whispering in the ears of the Tsar's trusted advisers were largely behind him, Jomini hoped that he could sway Giers into giving the Germans a second chance. In a series of letters, the two figures discuss the purposes of the Dreikaiserbund and the future of Russian alliances after the Congress of Berlin. Jomini outlined three major reasons to hold the secret alliance system together.

The first major point that can be gleaned from Jomini's letters, was his enduring concern about Western Europe. Jomini noted that immediately after the Berlin Conference, France and Britain were actively influencing Egypt together and seemed to be in lock step. If these two states continued working together they would continue threatening Russian interests and there would always be the possible repeat of the Crimean War, thus Russia needed to keep their longstanding German friends onside.<sup>199</sup> This point would obviously become dubious when the British would soon attack Egypt and seize the French financed Suez from them.

In subsequent letters, Jomini defended the Dreikaiserbund as more than a mere geopolitical tool, but also an ideological one. He argued that Austrians were truly good friends to the Tsar's government and that Franz Josef was actually sympathetic to the Russian plight but it was Hungarians and liberal constitutionalism that opposed Russia in Berlin.<sup>200</sup> Indeed Andrassy

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<sup>198</sup> Nickolai Giers to A. G. Jomini, June 28, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 83.

<sup>199</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, July 2, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 84.

<sup>200</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, September 10, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 86.

as the former Prime Minister of Hungary had inherently turned Austria against Russia as the Austro-Hungarian foreign Minister. Going further into this reasoning he argued that Russia could help the Austrian Emperor throw off Hungarian rule, end dualism, and destroy the constitution. In this light, Jomini described Nicholas I's intervention in the Hungarian Revolution as both a decision to spare Franz Ferdinand's power and to fight off the Hungarians:

Emperor Nicholas saw things perfectly clearly in 1849. His intervention to counter the Hungarians was by no means a sentimental affair but a calculated foresight. Hungarian Freedom- that was the open road for anyone who wanted to harm Russia.<sup>201</sup>

Jomini's third major reason for defending the Dreikaiserbund was its ability to deal with the Pan Slav issue. As a government minister deeply opposed to Pan Slavism, this was an issue that had already been vexing Jomini for years. He already feared the sway of Pan Slavs, and made a point to try using their passion for imperial goals while criticizing their actions that pulled Russia into war. Jomini was already opposed to helping them achieve their goal to create an "Étas-Unis Slaves Republicains" and could not suggest that Russia call on Pan Slavs to stir up trouble without honestly seeking to help them. As the current situation was too tumultuous to manage, he argued that an accommodation with Austria might be the best decision going forward.

to maintain the present state of trouble and tension would be to condemn oneself to living with war constantly in prospect. Let us limit ourselves to excite the Slavs without practically assisting them in order

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<sup>201</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, September 14, 1978, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 85.

to weaken Austria by these internal dissensions. would be a shrewd policy, but this Machiavellianism is repugnant to our loyalty. In these conjunctions, perhaps an association with Austria on Slavic territory would be the least bad of combinations.<sup>202</sup>

The debate continued to rage through the years following the 1878 Balkan Crisis, and dominated the next three years of Alexander II's foreign policy. When the Tsar was suddenly blown up by a revolutionary group in 1881, his son would come to power and assert the dominance of autocracy and an end to his father's liberal reforms.<sup>203</sup> Harkening back to the monarchist foreign policy of the past, the new Alexander III agreed to return to the Dreikaiserbund with changes made to the expectations of the three-member states. After the three-year period had elapsed all three states renewed the treaty for another three-year period in 1884, with the treaty going back up for renewal in 1887; however, this would be the only time the treaty would be renewed. The reason the alliance was not renewed further, is the same reason that the Russian government debated rebuilding the alliance in the first place, the Balkans.

## **Alliances in Peril**

Only seven years after the Treaty of Berlin was crafted and signed, the Autonomous principality of Bulgaria was already looking to break a core foundation of the agreement. In 1885 Bulgaria sought to unite with Eastern Roumelia, despite opposition from the Ottoman Empire along with most of Europe. In a move mirroring their previous efforts to defend European law, the Russian government publicly opposed this move, even though it would partially restore San

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<sup>202</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nickolai Giers, September 10, 1878, in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 86.

<sup>203</sup> Valerie A. Kivelson and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Russia's Empires* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 218.

Stefano Bulgaria to the Balkans. Despite Prince Alexander von Battenberg's familial ties to Russia and the continued support Russia had given the young Bulgarian principality, Prince Alexander ignored his uncle's ministers and pushed ahead with unification. Already chilled relations between the Tsar and prince over the restoration of the Bulgarian Constitution and diminishing Russian influence made this decision more fatal.<sup>204</sup> The Russian emperor recalled his ministers and military staff in the Principality and called for a conference in Constantinople, which was seen favorably by European courts.

Serbia, who was firmly opposed to San Stefano Bulgarian irredentism, demanded land from Bulgaria while the principality was also butting heads with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>205</sup> When Prince Alexander's government rebuffed them they went to war with Bulgaria. The war quickly turned against Serbia and Bulgarian troops marched through the Serbian state and were at the outskirts of Belgrade when Austria intervened to prevent Bulgaria's total victory and prospect of annexing some or all of Serbia. Alexander accepted a status quo in the Serb-Bulgarian war, and would soon make peace with the Ottomans, agreeing to Ottoman Suzerainty, but acquiring Eastern Rumelia and maintaining extensive Autonomy. The Tsar refused to accept this agreement and further refused to recognize his nephew as the ruler of the principality for the rest of his rule, and would conspire to overthrow him for his role in ignoring Russian advisors.<sup>206</sup>

The British on the other hand were skeptical about Bulgarian maneuvers, but were far more skeptical about Russia's role in the crisis. Writing from their Balkan posts, the British diplomats in the region believed that the Russian government had control over many of the events occurring in Bulgaria. With Gladstone's government pushed out of power after wavering

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<sup>204</sup> Jelavich Charles, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 267.

<sup>205</sup> Jelavich Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Balkans* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 57.

<sup>206</sup> Jelavich Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 193.

on sending troops to support the African occupation, Salisbury was back in power for less than a year while this crisis unfolded. As the crisis unfolded the queen and Salisbury were unsure if they should support the union, as they suspected Tsarist manipulation.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore liberals who still held a significant plurality overwhelmingly supported the aspirations of the Bulgarians, especially as some even participated in Gladstone's meddling in the Balkans in his second administration. When the Russian government made clear it was withdrawing from Bulgaria, Salisbury was willing to enter the fray and support the unionist cause.

Russian popular opinion appeared relatively divided as the crisis played out, as even the Pan Slav camp was unsure which Slav state to support. On the one hand there was a disloyal German prince who led the Bulgarians in opposition to Russian policies and programs in the principality.<sup>208</sup> On the other hand Serbia was smaller and weaker than Bulgaria, but retained admiration for Russia even while they nestled themselves into Austrian arms. Like in other crises, Russian diplomats found themselves disorganized and lacking a coherent vision as different diplomats and military representatives with different goals based on different ideologies.<sup>209</sup> This would continue to plague the Russian public, as crises without Great Power intervention left the media without a clear enemy, and the administration to be pulled in many directions at once.

Despite the mutual opposition to Bulgarian irredentism by both Austria-Hungary and Russia, Austrian meddling in the affair was problematic for the Russian public and many members of the Russian Foreign Ministry.<sup>210</sup> While Russia did not formally withdraw from the alliance in 1885, there was not enough support in the government to renew the treaty again.

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<sup>207</sup> Hall, Coryne, *Queen Victoria and the Romanovs*, 186-189.

<sup>208</sup> Jelavich, Charles, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism*, 228

<sup>209</sup> Jelavich, Charles, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan nationalism*, 281

<sup>210</sup> Jelavich, Barbara, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*:180.

Bismarck secured the Reinsurance Treaty between Russia and Germany in 1887, but that was merely a band aid to close the gaping wounds left from Russian and Austrian diplomatic brawls. It was then clear that the Russian government could no longer rely on the other autocratic regimes of Europe, and even more clear that the Russian people would not continue to stand by Germany. Fortunately, a partner began reaching out to the Russian foreign ministry with greater overtures.

## Conclusion

### Popular Support and the Budding Entente

With the Tsar's Southern and Eastern neighbors sharing counterintuitive claims with Russia in the Balkans, and the German government's unwillingness to rein in their Austrian allies to preserve a Russian alliance, Alexander III had to look elsewhere for allies. Britain had a long history of opposition to Russia, and was isolated from the continent by the English Channel, but started having issues with the German government in Africa and the new German Kaiser had a notoriously negative relationship with his grandmother's empire. Though Piedmont-Sardinia fought Russia in Crimea and was in opposition to San Stefano, Italy shared common rivals in both the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires; however, it was still a weak fledgling state with no real relationship with Russia, and had already started growing closer to Germany in the wake of French opposition to the seizure of Rome from the pope. The only serious option seemed to be France.

A country who had deep seeded distrust and opposition to the British and had proven a willingness to challenge them on every continent was a great ally for an empire that felt boxed in by Victoria's government. Furthermore, Russia developed closer relations with France after German unification, as part of Gorchakov's strategy clearly outlined by Barbara Jelavich: "France and Germany... would always be at a sword's point; Russia would be the arbiter of Europe."<sup>211</sup> To some degree this was successful as Bismarck's warm relations with Russia centered not on any direct benefit from trade or Russian help putting down rebellions, but instead on countering France. At the same time the Russian government made efforts to keep Paris on

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<sup>211</sup> A. G. Jomini to Nicholai Giers referenced by Charles Jelavich , "Introduction", in *Russia in the East 1878-1880*, ed. Charles and Barbra Jelavich (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 5.

their side, and shared many similar interests in the protection of Balkan nationalists and Christians in the Ottoman Empire. What made France a problematic partner for Monarchist Russia was French ideology.

In 1870, Emperor of the French, Napoleon III was overthrown by a Parisian revolution, while he was in German custody, following the devastating loss of Sedan in the Franco-Prussian war. This revolution was the third successful revolution that ousted the sitting French monarch within the past century. Furthermore, this revolution saw the creation of the radically leftist Paris Commune that existed for only two months of the conservative French Third Republic before it would be put down the uprising; nonetheless, the revolutionary and leftist tilt of the commune had long standing impacts on French politics. By the time that conservative Alexander III sought to forge new alliances, France was firmly positioned in the Third French Republic with monarchism largely weakened and conservatives regularly losing elections.<sup>212</sup> Alexander's own conservative grandfather Nicholas I opposed French constitutionalism, and even his own liberal great grandfather Alexander I marched into Paris to defeat the Revolutionary Napoleonic army. Now a Tsar known for his staunch conservatism, counter-reform, and imperial strength was looking to completely abandon the Monarchist foreign policy of his forebears to defend his evolving empire.

This policy change worked for both moderates who found little benefit in the Dreikaiserbund, and for Pan Slavs who saw Austrian influence in the Balkans to be a growing problem. Danilevski argued in "Woe to the Victors" that Russian efforts to crush France, were counterproductive and actually shackled the state into a system in which they would be limited

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<sup>212</sup> Bataković Dušan T. "Le Modèle Français En Serbie Avant 1914." In *La Serbie Et La France : Une Alliance Atypique*. Belgrade: Academie Serbe des Sciences et des Arts, Institut des Etudes Balkaniques, 2010, 43-45.

and controlled by the other Great Powers of Europe that Russia was protecting. In fact, he argued “Hostility to Russia that directly benefited others, always harmed France no less than Russia.”<sup>213</sup> He was unfazed by the revolutionary, nationalistic, and republican ideologies that France espoused, as his philosophy focused on European ideologies being unusable for Slavs who were part of a different civilization and would develop independently. Furthermore, Napoleon III’s support for nationhood and revolutionary spirit created *Les Modèles Politiques* for the Balkans, especially Serbia.<sup>214</sup>

Britain also experienced a change in policy after the Congress of Berlin. Though the plenipotentiaries sent to Berlin came back victorious and were not resigned to obscurity, they would lose the next general elections by a wide margin. Disraeli planned on retiring before the election anyway as he had served in government for decades already and was physically deteriorating and often gravely sick like his Russian counterpart.<sup>215</sup> Instead of Gladstone beating his permanent rival and sending lord Beaconsfield into opposition, former deputy, then official, foreign minister Salisbury was forced to lead the retreat of Tories from government.

After largely winning the election on foreign policy speeches, Gladstone created a new ideology in the British Foreign Office. The liberal government valued humanitarianism and enlightened nationalism as core aspects of the new ministry. This meant that it was England’s mission to oppose “uncivilized” and “backward” regimes that held populations back from achieving a more enlightened state of existence. In practice this gave the Liberal Government a *Casus Belli* against any regime they viewed as counterproductive to civilization including

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<sup>213</sup> Danilevskii Nickolay *Woe to the Victors!: The Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, and the Future of Slavdom* ed. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015), 159.

<sup>214</sup> Bataković Dušan T. “Le Modèle Français En Serbie Avant 1914.” 27.

<sup>215</sup> Stanley Edward Henry, *Derby Diaries*, March 6, 1876, ed. John Vincent (UK: University of Bristol), 282.

authoritarian regimes such as the “Oriental” Ottoman , Persian, and Chinese Empires, as well as European autocracies like Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia.<sup>216</sup>

With this ideology functioning similarly to the geopolitical balancing act and imperial expansion under the Tories that Gladstone so vocally opposed, one has to wonder if the ideology was truly an independent philosophical view or a political ploy executed by the Liberals to confuse voters. According to the research of James Perkins, this Liberal ideology was not merely a political ruse, but instead a lens from which politicians, journalists, and historians alike saw the world. According to Perkins many famous historians of the late Victorian era into the Edwardian era focused on the development of civilization, both in Britain’s colonies and in the independent kingdoms of the Balkans.<sup>217</sup>

Liberals advocated for home rule in Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as well as some level of self-government in India and South Africa. While there was an undoubtedly racial tone to the levels of civilization, according to the Liberal ideology it was possible for any population to civilize and move towards self-government so long as they adopted British institutions and customs. In this ideology the British Empire was merely a temporary body providing self-government so that the peoples under their domain could join a commonwealth of civilized nations.<sup>218</sup> With common interests in the protection of the Balkans among liberals and the creation of the Balkan Committee, active efforts were being made to advocate for self-government in the Balkans, without directly calling for the dismemberment of the Ottoman state. By no means, am I arguing the validity of such claims, nor would I speculate to the level of honest intention of Liberal policy makers and historians to provide this ability to join the

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<sup>216</sup> James Andrew Perkins, “British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925” (dissertation, 2014), 147-150.

<sup>217</sup> James Andrew Perkins, “British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925” (dissertation, 2014), 204.

<sup>218</sup> James Andrew Perkins, “British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925” (dissertation, 2014), 61-63.

commonwealth for all the empire's nations; however, it is clear that the ideology was more than political smoke and mirrors and that it provided a tangible change to British foreign policy.

In Russia the Pan Slavs, and other groups who valued Russia's intimate relationship with Balkan Slavs, continued to grow and retain extensive emotional ties with the successes and failures of the newly independent Balkan Kingdoms. In Britain, opposition to autocracy became the very cornerstone of one of the two largest parties in government, as Liberals advocated against the expansion of rival authoritarian governments. With Liberalism and Pan Slavism both glorifying the independence and prosperity of Balkan peoples against their Germanic and Ottoman neighbors, it's clear that there was growing capability for Britain and Russia to find common ground on an issue that plagued relations for decades. Despite continued tension between the Russian and British, both publics became continuously in favor of similar policies towards the Germanic autocracies of central Europe and the declining Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, both empires had civil society organizations devoted to the wellbeing and protection of Balkan peoples, with Slavic Benevolent societies in Russia and the Balkan Committee in Britain. Thus, despite long standing animosity, the publics of Britain and Russia, as well as France, could increasingly find themselves in the same camps of European diplomacy opening the door for a change in alliances.

# Epilogue

## **From Plevna to Bahmut**

While the Russian empire entered the 19th century as an proudly European entity devoted to Metternich-styled defense of traditional autocracy, betrayal during crises and perceptions of popular opinions forced Russian officials to withdraw from their long-standing relations with Berlin and Vienna while addressing geopolitical and popular concerns regarding the Balkans and German hegemony. On the other hand, Britain entered the 19th century as a power devoted to realist political goals of expansion and imperialism challenging Russian and French power around the world, only to develop a Balkan-inspired idealistic party focused on the job of the British government to enlighten populations until they were able to be self-governing parts of a British Commonwealth.

In the 21st century nationalism and populism undoubtedly still exists, and national movements still force nations into actions their own leaders might disagree with. Sitting Prime Minister David Cameron actively opposed the idea of Brexit, and campaigned against members of his own party to avoid the geopolitical decision that he believed would hinder his government more than help it. Despite the American military successes in inflicting casualties on the Taliban in Afghanistan and the political success of coalition forces to create an adolescent democracy in Kabul, American voters showed time and time again that they wanted to withdraw from the region in calls for an “America First” foreign policy. France currently holds the European Presidency, which is fitting as it was Gaullist foreign policy that suggested that French influence over a European project would be the future of the nation, even while the second most successful candidate two elections in a row has been a radical right of center opponent of European

integration. Regimes often experience a disconnect between the feelings and ideologies of the grassroots efforts of the citizenry and the geopolitical goals of elected politicians who are tasked with creating policy. Every time a politician opposes a seemingly popular stance, they risk the collapse of their support and the loss of power in constantly shifting administrations, exemplified by David Cameron's loss of power and the unstable position of Macron's political future.

This thesis was not merely looking at how fully democratic regimes respond to public pressure, but also at the diplomatic decisions made by semi-democratic or autocratic regimes. In these regimes the perception of the likelihood of losing power is not a matter of universal elections or national polls, but instead the likelihood of revolution or growing opposition to the current administration. Apartheid was not ended because the White South African government took a poll of the Black population, but instead because there were serious fears that increasingly difficult sanctions and rising opposition might unseat the Apartheid government. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the governments of Morocco and Saudi Arabia have married new reforms and government crackdowns to avoid possible revolution. Then there is the modern Russian government under Putin.

The modern Russian Empire experiences many of the same anxieties present in the 19th century: fears of foreign threats, complete diplomatic isolation, instability at home, military weakness, apparent vulnerability, and economic collapse. Despite the confidence the Putin administration so masterfully projects in the international sphere, there is legitimate concern on all of these fronts, even if the government downplays or ignores them. Russia's decision to invade Ukraine to push back against NATO expansion evidently displays the coalition-based concern that Jomini or Alexander II had, in relation to Europe. In the staging of nationalistic rallies, while stifling adversarial media sources that might inform the general public about the

costs of war, Russian leaders are attempting to combat concerns that their government might falter.

As Kyiv or Bakhmut threaten to become the Plevna of 2023, and the Russian government is constantly risking the intervention of NATO forces, they will have many difficult decisions in the coming weeks and months. While Jomini broke down in fear a mere month into the siege at Plevna and began to question the whole war as a lost cause, the calmer heads of the Russian Imperial government prevailed and the war simply dragged on with steadily increased tensions between the Tsar's government and the rest of Europe. Even if the Russian government can hold together and press forward into the West's feared long sluggish march into Kyiv and perhaps even Lviv, the question still prevails as to how successful the outcome might be. Would the Russian government be able to manage integrating openly hostile cities into the direct control of the Russian Federation? Otherwise how long might a Russian puppet last in a new Ukraine? Would the modern congress system, the United Nations, have enough of a bark to give a Russian military success a diplomatic failure?

It is clear that the final outcome will not come down merely to facts on the ground but to perception. Vladimir Putin will continue supporting the war as long as he perceives that the threat from coalitions surpasses the threat of revolution. Furthermore, if he perceives that simply ending the war without gains of any capacity would cause his loud nationalistic minority to threaten his power, he will not stop the war. If he, or Russian powerbrokers, develop new perspectives or perceptions about a change in anxieties, then the war might head into a different direction, for the better in a path towards peace, or for worse in a path towards a greater conflagration. Only time will tell if the current Russian regime like its predecessor would accept a 21st century Berlin Congress or if a war with the West is more preferable.

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