

**T.C.
SAKARYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**

**THE RIVALRY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GREAT BRITAIN
IN EASTERN RUMELIA 1878-1885**

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Enstitü Anabilim Dalı : Tarih

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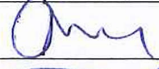

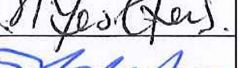
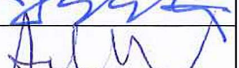

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Nadezhda Vasileva Vasileva

15 April, 2019

Abbreviations

arh. ed.: arhivna edinita/ archive unit

BOA.İ. HR: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri/ İrâde- Hâriciye

BOA.A.MTZ.04: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri/Sadaret Eyalet-I Mümtaze
Bulgaristan Evrakı

BOA. Y.A. HUS: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri/ Yıldız, Sadaret Hususi Maruzat
Evrakı

BOA. Y.PRK. BŞK: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri/ Yıldız Perakende Evrakı
Başkitabet Dairesi Maruzatı

CDA: Centralen Darzhaven Archive/ The Central State Archives

f.: fond/record

F.O.: Foreign Office Papers, United Kingdom, National Archives collections.

l.: list/page

op.: opis/list

Sakarya University
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Master Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ph.D.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Title of Thesis: THE RIVALRY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GREAT BRITAIN IN EASTERN RUMELIA 1878-1885			
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<p>The purpose of this study is to examine the rivalry between Russia and Britain over the autonomous Province of Eastern Rumelia. The study focuses on two historical events concerning the development of the Province - the process of establishment and administrative organization of Eastern Rumelia (1878-1879) and the event of unification between the Province and the Principality of Bulgaria.</p> <p>The presentation procedure of this work follows the topics pattern as well as the comparative method of presenting historical facts from several viewpoints and in chronological order. The first chapter presents different aspects from the policy of the Great Powers regarding the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire and the process of modernization and reformation of the Balkan territories, applied by the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. The next chapter continues tracing the British and Russian policy pursued towards the Balkan national movements and the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Also, it describes the origins of the British - Russian political rivalry in the Balkans. The third chapter examines the political activities of Britain regarding the organization of the governmental system established in Eastern Rumelia and the political attitude towards the act of union in 1885. The fourth chapter studies the political course of the Russian authorities and their attitude to oppose the British policy and preserve the Province within the Russian sphere of influence. The last chapter examines the political response of the Ottoman Empire to the events concerning the integrity of its Balkan territories.</p> <p>Our argument is that the British authorities created the Province of Eastern Rumelia and later they defended the act of unification with the purpose to thwart the Russian political advancement in the Balkans. The British political aim was successfully accomplished as Russia achieved to preserve its political domination in the Province only until 1885 when it opposed the act of unification.</p> <p>This research is based on archival documentary sources and secondary sources. The archive collections used for preparation of this work are the collections of the Foreign Office of the National Archive. The existing historiography on the issue of Eastern Rumelia is very limited as regards the variety of examined topics, though a considerable number of researches are dedicated to the act of unification and the political, cultural and economic development of the Province from 1879 to 1885.</p>			
Keywords: Eastern Rumelia, Russia, Britain			

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<p>Bu araştırma özerk statüde olan Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti üzerine Rusya ve İngiltere arasındaki rekabeti incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda bölgedeki tarihi gelişmelere bağlı olarak iki tarihsel süreç odaklanılmıştır. Bunlardan ilki Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti'nin kurulması ve teşkilatlanması diğeri ise Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti ile Bulgaristan Prenslığı'nin birleşmesi süreçleridir.</p> <p>Bu çalışmada konu ile ilgili farklı tarihi perspektiflerin kronolojik bir dizilim içerisinde karşılaştırmalı olarak tartışıldığı bir yöntem takip edilmiştir. Birinci bölümde dönemin büyük güçlerinin XIX. yüzyılda girilen modernleşme hamleleri içinde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Balkanlardaki topraklarına yönelik politikaları irdelenmiştir. Sonraki bölümde ise Balkanlardaki ayrılıkçı hareketler ve milliyetçi akımlara yönelik Rus ve İngiliz siyaseti incelenmektedir. Ele alınan bu süreç Balkanlardaki Rus-İngiliz rekabetinin ana hatlarını teşkil etmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde İngiltere'nin Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti'nin yönetim sistemine ve 1885 yılında gerçekleşen birleşmeye yönelik siyasi faaliyetlerine odaklanılmaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde Rusya'nın İngiliz siyasi emellerine karşı bölgeyi kendi etki alanında tutmayı amaçlayan politikası ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Dördüncü bölümde ise Osmanlı Devleti'nin Balkan topraklarına yönelik tehditler karşısında ülkenin entegrasyonunu koruma gayretleri incelenmiştir.</p> <p>Çalışma ile aydınlatılmaya çalışılan temel nokta İngiliz yönetiminin Rusya'nın Balkanlardaki ilerlemesine karşı önce Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti'nin oluşumuna daha sonra ise Bulgar Prenslığı ile birleşmesine yönelik politikalarıdır. Rusya bölgedeki etkisini 1885 yılındaki birleşmeye karşı tavır alıncaya kadar korurken İngiltere Bulgaristan ile ilgili siyasi hedeflerini hayata geçirmeyi büyük ölçüde başarmıştır.</p> <p>Bu çalışmada arşiv kaynakları ve ikinci el kaynaklar temel alınmıştır. Çalışmanın ortaya çıkmasında kullanılan arşiv belgeleri İngiliz Milli Arşivinde yer alan Dış İşleri Bakanlığı (Foreign Office) kataloğu içerisinde temin edilmiştir. Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti ile ilgili literatür oldukça sınırlı ise de birleşme süreci ve 1879'dan 1885 yılına kadarki ekonomik, siyasi, kültürel gelişmelere yönelik hatırı sayılır miktarda çalışma bulunmaktadır.</p>			
Anahtar Kelimeler: Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti, Rusya, İngiltere			

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Introduction

The Main Question

Eastern Rumelia appeared on the political scene of the Balkan Peninsula after signing the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. It was supposed to be settled as an autonomous Province under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. A special Commission of representatives of the Great Powers – Britain, Russia, Austro-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and the Ottoman Empire had to elaborate the Organic Statute of Eastern Rumelia. While the Commission was working on the Organic Statute, the Provisional Russian Administration remained to administrate the Province until the establishment of the administrative grounds for the autonomous Province.

The idea of Eastern Rumelia as an administrative autonomy appeared much earlier, before the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878) and the Congress of Berlin. The Istanbul Conference, which took place in 1877, attempted to solve the crisis that occurred on the Balkan Peninsula (1875-1877). It was the first time when such a project was proposed by the Great Powers, for the division of the lands inhabited by Bulgarian subjects into two administrative units. However, the Province of Eastern Rumelia emerged two years later, as a result of the division of big Bulgaria at the Congress of Berlin. Indeed, the Province was set up as a ‘compromise’ between Russia and Britain in their political struggle for influence over the Balkan Peninsula because the British Government strongly opposed the size of the new state formation, which according to British authorities threatened the balance of power in the region. All of the Great Powers supported Britain’s anxiety and unanimously agreed that the Treaty of San Stefano had to be revised. However, as the Treaty impacted mostly the interests of the British policy in the Balkans, before the Congress of Berlin was convened, Russia and Britain had to reach an agreement on the main controversial points regarding the future political order on the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore, the British authorities presented a project for creation of the Province of Eastern Rumelia and put pressure on the Russian authorities to accept it. Thus, the establishment of an autonomous Province was decided during bilateral negotiations between Britain and Russia, at the time of diplomatic preparations for the Congress, not exactly at the Congress.

The decreasing strength of the Ottoman authorities in the Balkans and the increasing interest of the Great Powers provoked a process of dissolution of the European provinces of the Empire into small nation states. This situation instigated a struggle for domination over these territories by two major actors on the diplomatic stage - Britain and Russia. The intensity of their struggle reached an alarming degree in 1878. This political situation required the establishment of a new political order which would secure the regional balance of power. Thereupon, the growing rivalry between the two Great Powers, regarding the Ottoman Empire's territories in the second half of the 19th century, required compromises and Eastern Rumelia was one of them.

Britain's major rival in the Balkans and in the Ottoman Empire was Russia. Nevertheless, Russia had become a 'liberator' of these territories and it had pursued an active policy to establish its influence over the Slav population. The Russian authorities were forced to accept the separation of the Province of Eastern Rumelia from the newly created Principality of Bulgaria, which indeed undermined its prestige among the Bulgarian population and diminished its political advancements in the Balkans. It was supposed that the Russian authorities would not easily give up their demands towards these territories. They considered that these territories rightfully belonged to their sphere of influence in the Balkans. The aim of the Russian Government was to prevent the separation of the natural connections between the two territories and the Bulgarian population, which would become part of one state in the future.

The Province existed only for seven years, when the Union of Eastern Rumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria was achieved in 1885. The historiography dealing with this question is not unanimous about formulating the act applied in September 1885 in Eastern Rumelia. The Bulgarian historiography recognizes the event as a 'union' between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of Eastern Rumelia, guided by the understanding for a division of the Bulgarian State, established by the Treaty of Berlin. The same attitude is expressed by the Russian Historiography, too. The Turkish historiography considers the act as 'ilhak' which means annexation, because the territory of Eastern Rumelia was legally a part of the Ottoman Empire, according to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The Western Historiography is divided. One part of it abides by the international law frameworks and designates the act as 'annexation', the rest of it adopts the term 'union', taking into consideration the historical circumstances of the era. The act infringes an international Treaty and, therefore, it could be

considered as annexation. However, as the historical conditions under which the act is executed still remain inexplicit, according to the provisions of international laws, none of the above-mentioned terms (union and annexation) renders the adequate historical formulation of the event. The main sources used for the preparation of this study are represented by British documents which named the event 'union' and 'unification'. In order to facilitate the readers' further understanding, the author of this research adopts the term 'union'.

The act of union was an infringement of the Treaty of Berlin, which respectively violated the order in the Balkans, established by the Great Powers in the year 1878 in Berlin, and it threatened the regional balance of power. Britain and Russia were forced to reconsider their political course towards the new political situation.

Eastern Rumelia was born out of the struggle for dominance between Russia and Britain in the Balkan Peninsula. Once it occurred on the political map of the Balkans, a question appeared: what role did they expect the province to occupy in the Balkan policy of these two Great Powers?

This thesis is preoccupied with the following questions: why, when and how the idea of Eastern Rumelia was born amongst the British political circles. Eastern Rumelia was created as an idea of the British authorities and on their insistence. So, another question arises: what was the purpose of the British Cabinet to establish it and how the province was expected to serve the British political interests in the Balkan Peninsula? Another main question is how the Russian authorities responded to the establishment of Eastern Rumelia by the division of "Great Bulgaria" and what political strategy was applied towards the establishment of the province.

The core of this research is the examination of the political struggle between Britain and Russia over the settlement of a political order in Eastern Rumelia, in the context of their rivalry in the Balkan Peninsula during the 19th century. Chronologically, the study is concentrated on two historical events. The first one - the process of the organisation and introduction of the new authority in Eastern Rumelia from 1878 to 1879, and the second one - the Bulgarian crisis outbreak resulted from the achievement of the union between the Principality and the Province, 1885-1886. The thesis focuses on the political activities of the two Great Powers during the work of the European Commission and on the political course pursued at the time when the act of union was executed. Each of the Great Powers had a particular idea about the role that the province would play in their

political programs in the region. Another aim of this work is to explain the political interests of Britain and Russia towards Eastern Rumelia, which correlated with the political rivalry for the dominant position over the Ottoman Empire's lands and the Middle East. For this purpose, the study examines the changes that occurred in the political attitude of Britain and Russia towards these two events.

The thesis is composed of five chapters. The first chapter presents the political, social and economic development of the Balkan Peninsula during the 19th century, development that brought the establishment of a new order in the Balkans at the Congress of Berlin. The second chapter presents the Russian and British policy during the 19th century towards the Balkans, since the first symptoms for the disintegrating of the Ottoman Empire appeared and provoked the nascence of national struggles among the Balkan population. The third chapter examines the aspects of the British policy towards the establishment of the Province of Eastern Rumelia from 1878 to 1879, and the political course of the British authorities pursued towards the unification of the Principality and the Province in 1885. The fourth chapter is focused on the activities of the Russian foreign policy as regards the organisation of the Province, Russia's political strategy pursued in Eastern Rumelia and its attitude towards the act of union in 1885. The fifth chapter deals with the response of the Ottoman authorities to the events, examining the policy of the Ottoman Empire applied towards its autonomous Province.

The Importance of the Researched Question

The history of the autonomous Province - Eastern Rumelia, which remained under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, occupies a great part of the Bulgarian historiography for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the division of the Bulgarian state left amongst the Bulgarian population feelings of great disappointment because of their national desires. Secondly, the act of union of Bulgaria's divided parts aimed to create a political program for the national unification of all the Bulgarians who lived within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, after the Congress of Berlin. Thirdly, Eastern Rumelia during its existence as an autonomous Province proved the ability of the Bulgarian population to govern itself in front the Great Powers and showed that it deserved its independence. However, most studies deal with only particular aspects from the history of the Province, such as the internal affairs and the movement for unification which deprive the Bulgarian Historiography from the establishment of a complete and accurate picture

of the political role obtained by the Province in the political struggles for dominance in the Near East of the two Great Powers – Russia and Britain.

The first historical interests in the Bulgarian historical science towards Eastern Rumelia dated since the times between the First and Second World Wars. The studies prepared at that time are products of the contemporary history, because certain participants in the events are still alive. This fact is a prerequisite for the limited number of topics which the authors explore. In this period, more than any other, the authors are not professional historians, but amateurs - former politicians, ministers, generals and diplomats, in most cases people familiar with the events and interested to narrate them.¹ Also, the concept of these works is influenced by the personal involvement of the authors in the events, their participation in the political life and party affiliation, which gives to the reader a subjective political understanding of the researches. The division between Russophiles and Russophobes was traditionally obvious for the Bulgarian political reality at that time and it impacts the author's estimation of the events, too. As Maria Veleva characterizes the period - "events are so close that they continue to exist in the minds of the authors who provoked them or were actively involved in them"².

In the Bulgarian Historiography, East Rumelia has been presented since the beginning of the 20th century. The first researches devoted to the subject are prepared by contemporary people and direct participants in the establishment of the administration and governance of the province

One of the earliest historical works dealing with the issue of Eastern Rumelia is the monograph of Mihail Madzharov: "Iztochna Rumelia" (Eastern Rumelia), published in 1925. The author was involved in the political life as a member of the political parties from the Province and as a member of the governmental authorities.³ His work ranges over a large variety of subjects. The author describes in details the political and administrative development of the Province, the elaboration of the Organic Statute, the internal party struggles, the governance of the first and second Governor General, the public attitude of Eastern Rumelia's society, the elections and the activities of the

¹ Maria Veleva, *Kak se pravi istoria. Istoriografski studii* (Sofia: Forum Bulgaria-Rusia 2013), p.326.

² *Ibid.*, p.328.

³ Mihail Madzharov was a one of the Leaders of the *Narodnata* Party in the Province. In Eastern Rumelia he was a deputy of the Provincial Assembly (1880-1884, 1884-1885) and he was a member of the Permanent Committee in 1880. He also held the posts of Vice-Chairman of the Supreme court in 1881, Chief financial Controller in the period between 1882 and 1884, and Director (Minister) of Finance 1884-1885. Tasho Tashev, *Ministrite na Bulgaria 1879-1999* (Sofia: Sv. Georgi Pobedonosets 1999), p. 271-272.

Provincial Assembly. In the chapter describing the work of the European Commission, the author underlines the contribution of the Russian Commissioners to the attainment of self-government rights by the Province. Thus, he reveals the struggle between Russia and the other Powers over the provisions of the Organic Law. Each of the administrative institutions of the Province is presented but the lack of critical analysis on how they apply their functions deprive the study from accuracy. Nevertheless, the monograph is a valuable source that presents the events through the eyes of a direct participant to the events, even if the subjectivity of the author is a serious disadvantage, as he was the member of a party. Some of the events are recreated through the prism of personal convictions and beliefs, fact that questions their authenticity. Furthermore, his Russophile political views also distort some of the events and the Russian policy in the province.

The work of Stefan S. Bobchev⁴: “Iztochna Rumelia - Istoricheski pregled, ustroistvo, zakonodatelstvo i pravosadie” (Eastern Rumelia – A Historical Review, Organisation, Legislation and Justice), published in 1924, examines the legislative activities and the governance of the central authorities of the Province. The author describes the administration of the Ottoman Empire before the Russo-Ottoman War and he makes a valuable comparison between the previous and present government systems, but not in the pattern of a destructive governmental system and its replacement with a completely new one, but as an improvement to the old Ottoman system throughout progressive alternations. As a lawyer, the author possesses considerable knowledge of the Ottoman legislation, which contributes to his considerations. Both Stefan S. Bobchev and Mihail Madzharov focus on the emergence of Eastern Rumelia, but Stefan S. Bobchev is much more critical towards the Provisional Russian authorities and the Russian Commissioners. He thoroughly clarifies the functions of the central and local institutions. The core of his study focuses on legislation, justice and judicial law in the Province. The study traces out the relations between the Governor General and the central authorities and it also describes the role of the Permanent Committee in the governance of Eastern Rumelia. Bobchev maintains the theory that the Province achieved significant advancement for a short period of time, upon the model of a republic with an independent Governor, due to the efficient work of the Provincial Assembly, executive authority and all the administrative authorities. The disadvantage

⁴ Member of the Provincial Assembly (1883-1884) and Director (1884-1885) of Justice in Eastern Rumelia. Tashev, *Ministrice na Bulgaria*, p.56-57.

of this research is the author's omission to present the mistakes of the governing authorities from the Province.

A different topic appeared in the study of Yanko Cholakov - "Iz istoriata na mitnicheskia rejim v Bulgaria" (The History of the Customs Regime in Bulgaria), published in 1926. The study describes the customs relations between the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia. The paper presents statistic information about the trade between the Province and the Principality. An attempt is made to solve the disputes that arose from the cost of customs tariffs. However, the author does not study the Ottoman point of view on the issue as well as the provisions of Ottoman customs legislation.

The Bulgarian Historiography from the first half of the 20th century exhausts the subject of Eastern Rumelia with the two monographs of Mihail Madzharov and Stefan S. Bobchev. The absence of extensive studies on the history of the Province is substituted with large amount of memoirs literature of the prominent figures engaged in the events from Eastern Rumelia.

One of the most valuable narratives belongs to Ivan Evstratiev Geshov⁵ – "Iztochna Rumelia i izborat na parvia postoyanen komitet"(Eastern Rumelia and the Elections of the First Permanent Committee), published in 1928, "Iztochno rumeliiskite finansi" (The Finances of Eastern Rumelia), also published in 1928, "Borbata za pobalgaryavane na Iztochna Rumelia i moyata parva diplomaticheska misia"(The Struggle for Establishment of the Bulgarian character of Eastern Rumelia and My First Diplomatic Mission), published in the year 1904, "Plovdivski spomeni" (Plovdiv's Memoirs) - a series of articles published in the newspaper Mir in 1931.

In his memoirs "Stroiteli na savremenna Bulgaria" (The Builders of Modern Bulgaria), Simeon Radev describes the political life of the Province, the establishment of two parties – *Narodnata* (Conservative) and *Liberalnata* (Liberal) and their political struggles. However, because he is contemporary with the epoch, the author does not properly state the reasons for their appearance and their main characteristics. The memoirs of Todor Ikonov, Ivan Vazov, Yoakim Gruev, Nikola Genadiev, Stefan Panaretov and Ivan Slabashev, also belong to this age. All these people contributed to the administrative governance and political development of the Province. Because they were born in the epoch of the nascence of the Bulgarian national struggle, they bear the

⁵ Tashev, *Ministrice na Bulgaria*, p.118-120.

spirit of the time, which requires careful reading of their works and filtering out the subjective points. They were educated in the spirit of the Bulgarian national idea for liberation and creation of an independent national state; many of them participated at the revolutionary movements in the second part of the 19th century: the struggle for the independent church, the April Uprising and the Russo-Ottoman War. They were part of the Bulgarian elite which emerged during the *Tanzimat* era; they were also propagators of the national ideals and the struggle for independence of the Bulgarian population.

The researches prepared after the Second World War present a larger variety and quantity of topics. Partly due to the new political regime in the Bulgarian state after 1944, partly because of the new opportunities received by the Bulgarian historians - the access to the archival documents of foreign countries such as Russia, Austria and Britain

The question about the education in Eastern Rumelia is examined in the work of Hristo Negentsov and Ivan Vanev - "Образованието в Източна Румелия 1878-1885" (The Education in Eastern Rumelia), published in 1959. The authors research in detail the legal basis on which the educational system is built and developed in the Province of Eastern Rumelia. They also examine the school system and school plans; information is submitted about the types of schools which are opened in the Province. The disadvantage of the study is the lack of information about the educational system of the Turkish, Greek, Jewish and Armenian schools. The development of the educational process through the years is not traced out, too.

The work of Simeon Simeonov - "Състав и функции на учрежденията в Източна Румелия" (Structure and Functions of the Institutions in East Rumelia) was published in 1979. The work aims to examine the structure of the central and local governmental authorities in the autonomous Province, the organisation and activities of the judiciary, militia and gendarmerie, the education system. This is the first study which deals with the administrative governance from Eastern Rumelia. The main sources used by the researcher are the documents from the Bulgarian state archive and the Organic Statute. However, the study fails to explain in detail the development of the institutions during the period and the results of their activities. The author expresses the thesis that the institutions work in the service of the "capitalist class" of Eastern Rumelia because they are governed by the ruling class and most of the employees descend from this group. This estimation is incorrect because it is necessary to take into account the limited

quantity of qualified people who can fulfil these obligations. In the Government of Eastern Rumelia, the majority of the positions are occupied by representatives of the intelligentsia, who receive their education in the Ottoman schools, Universities in Russia and Western Europe, but during the first years, the class differences from the Bulgarian society, that appeared during the Tanzimat, did not alter the pattern of the working class and the ruling class. Furthermore, the authorities concentrate their efforts on the development and prosperity of the Province in order to limit the interference of the Ottoman authorities in the internal affairs.

Maria Manolova's work is much more profound. "*Rusia i konstitucionnoto ustroistvo na Iztochna Rumelia*" (Russia and the Constitutional Organisation of Eastern Rumelia), published in 1976, describes the administrative and constitutional organisation of Eastern Rumelia. The study examines the role of the Russian provisional authorities during the process of elaboration of the Organic Law. The author concentrates her work on the labours of the European Commission, using as main source the protocols of the Commission. The study reveals different points of view of each of the Great Powers as regards the position that the Province has to obtain in their Balkan policy, but not very accurately. It presents the rivalry between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, supported by Britain, France and Austro-Hungary. The conflict is explained in the context of the policy of the Great Powers towards the Eastern Question. Russia's policy is presented as a policy of seeking solutions to the Eastern Question through the creation of independent Balkan Christian states, and the policy of Britain and Austro-Hungary intends to defend "feudal Turkey".⁶ The Russian policy towards Eastern Rumelia is examined under the influential tendency of the Bulgarian historiography from that period, which recognizes the Russian Empire as a 'liberator' for the Bulgarians. Therefore, the misfeasance of Russia is not correctly evaluated. Furthermore, Manolova's work entirely neglects the attempts of the Russian authorities to impose their influence over the Bulgarians and to deprive the Province and Principality of Bulgaria from the rights to develop independently from Russia. The study is constructed according to the framework that Britain, France and Austro-Hungary are trying to deprive the Bulgarian population from the right to organise their Province on liberal foundations and Russia, by opposing their activities, is struggling to enable the Bulgarians to have a liberal constitution on the model of the western countries.

⁶ Maria Manolova, *Rusia i konstitucionnoto ustroistvo na Iztochna Rumelia* (Sofia: BAN 1976), p.17.

Elena Statelova is a Bulgarian historian who dedicates much of her historical work to the problems of Eastern Rumelia's history. Her first researches, since the beginning of the 1980s, are devoted to the organisation of the civil administration and governmental apparatus of the Province. The author traces the establishment of the legislative and executive structures in the Province and their activities from 1879 to 1880. The main sources on which she constructs her studies are documents from the Bulgarian state archives, the reports of the Russian consuls in Plovdiv, the official records of the proceedings in the Provincial Assembly, the memoirs of the contemporaries of the events and the press - newspapers *Maritza* and *Naroden glas*. The new sources which contribute to the author's work are the reports of the French, Austro-Hungarian and British's Consulates in Plovdiv. They reveal new and important information for the activities of these Powers in Eastern Rumelia.

Afterwards, Elena Statelova intends to prepare a comprehensive research in her paper - "Izgrazhdane na Bulgarskoto upravlenie v Iztochna Rumelia" (The Establishment of the Bulgarian Governance in Eastern Rumelia), published in 1985, examining the internal and external conditions under which the Eastern Rumelian governance has been organised and the impact on the economic, political and cultural development of the Province. The events are reconstructed with the documents from the Russian archive and some memoirs of the Bulgarian and Russian functionaries. It is especially valuable due to the profound examination of the social origin of the members from the First Provincial Assembly, the Permanent Committee and the Directors of the governmental institutions, named *Directorates (Departments)*, which replace the Ministries. Besides, there is another work of Statelova: "Izbirane, sastav, deinost na Parvoto oblastno sabranie na Iztochna Rumelia" (Elections, Structure and Activities of the First Provincial Assembly of Eastern Rumelia). The analyse is based on categories which include educational status, foreign language skills, professions, participation in the national movements and the movement for an independent Bulgarian church in the 60s and 70s of the 19th century. The results reveal that a large part of the Bulgarian intelligentsia is concentrated in the Province, and this elitist group possesses a high level of education and social status. Therefore, they could occupy the posts in the governmental apparatus. Elena Statelova has two more valuable studies that contribute to the profound examination of the problems from the Province of Eastern Rumelia. One of the works draws attention to the emergence of political parties in Eastern

Rumelia - “Politicheski partii v Iztochna Rumelia, 1879-1885” (Political Parties in Eastern Rumelia). The author correctly emphasizes that the Bulgarian historiography until that time does not pay sufficient attention to this subject. The two parties formed in Eastern Rumelia are considered as part of the political parties from the Principality of Bulgaria, as they join their centres in the Principality in the year 1885. The author adopts the thesis of bourgeois historiography, according to which the emergence of both parties: *Narodnata* and *Liberalnata* (Conservative and Liberal) is explained by the personal rivalry of the prominent public figures in the Province, as well as their attitude towards Russia and the Governor General of the Province. The thesis of Marxist historiography is also expressed, which puts the embryo of the two political trends in the context of the socio-economic processes that take place after the establishment of the autonomous Province. The main sources are the memories of the members of the two parties, the press and the personal archives of Dimitar Yurukov, Alexander Ljudskanov, Geshovi’s family, Konstantin Hadzhikalchev, Mihail Grekov, Konstantin Velichkov. However, the reasons for the concentration of the Bulgarian intelligentsia in the Province remain obscure. Elena Statelova does not examine the relation between the *Tanzimat*, the prosperity and the progress observed in this region. The study of results from the Ottoman reformation program in the Bulgarian lands could give a more explicit explanation for the accumulation of capital amongst the Bulgarians, fact that impacted the education status of the population. Besides, this study entirely excludes the minorities as part of the Eastern Rumelian society - do the minorities take part in these two political formations, do they receive support, are there attempts to create a political party, how do they estimate the politics of *Narodnata* and *Liberalnata* parties? These issues remain beyond the scope of this study.

The first attempt of preparing a comprehensive study on the history of Eastern Rumelia is made by Elena Statelova. Her monograph – “Iztochna Rumelia 1879/1885. Ikonomika, politika i kultura” (Eastern Rumelia 1879/1885. Economy, Politics and Culture) is published in 1983. In this research, the author uses for the first time documents from the Austrian and French archives which reveal new facets of the events and particular moments of the historical development of the province. The detailed study of the organisation process of the autonomous Province has an important contribution. The author made a comprehensive research about the elaboration of the Organic Statute by the representatives of the Great Powers. Each chapter from the

Organic Statute is presented and it provides information about the authors of the chapter and the controversial points that caused debates in the European Commission. Elena Statelova tries to explain the struggle between Russia on one hand, and Britain and Austria-Hungary on the other hand, to impose their political views for the organisation of the Province and to establish their influence in the Province. As most of the studies from the Bulgarian historiography, Eastern Rumelia is considered an independent separate part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman point of view on each of the above issues is missing. The study is profound and detailed, but a serious disadvantage of the study is that the problems of Eastern Rumelia are considered in the context of a comprehension that the Province has an entirely Bulgarian character. This tendency can be noticed in all the researches published from the year 1944 to 1989.

Vasilka Tankova obtains inspiration from the press for her study “Svobodata na pechata v Kniazhestvo Bulgaria i Iztochna Rumelia from 1879 to 1885” (Freedom of the Press in the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia), published in 1994. All the published press structures from Eastern Rumelia, during its 7 years of existence, are found out and examined. The author presents 32 publications issued in Eastern Rumelia; this number includes the newspapers of the minorities – Greeks and Muslims. This narrative examines also the press law; a special attention is paid to the attempts of the authorities to elaborate a new law which has to revoke the Ottoman law and, at the same time, not to contradict the Organic Statute. The lack of methodology does not give a proper assessment of the relationship between the press, the political parties and the authorities.

Zhorzheta Nazarska elaborates a series of studies which concern the personality of Gavril Krastevich, assistant of the first Governor General Aleko Pasha and later, in 1884, when he is nominated for the post – “Gavril Krastevich–Glaven upravitel na Iztochna Rumelia (1884-1885)” (Gavril Krastevich - Governor General of Eastern Rumelia), “Gavril Krastevich zhivot mezhdu staroto i novoto” (Gavril Krastevich. Life between the Old and New), “Gavril Krastevich i direktsiata na vatreshnite dela v Iztochna Rumelia 1879-1884”, (Gavril Krastevich and the Department of Internal Affairs in Eastern Rumelia from 1879 to 1884). Her work presents the great role which Gavril Krastevich played in the organisation of the administration from the Province. Former officer in the Ottoman Empire and previous Governor of the Samos Island, he enjoyed the Sultan’s confidence. Due to his significant governing experience, obtained

during his service in the Ottoman Government and his knowledge of laws, he succeeded in the establishment of an executive authority in the Province, initially as director of the internal affairs in Eastern Rumelia, and later as Governor.

There are many studies which deal with the act of Union of Eastern Rumelia and Principality of Bulgaria in 1885, Union that caused the crisis in the Balkans – Ilcho Dimitrov “Predi 100 godini: Saedinenieto. Istoricheski ocherk” (Before 100 years: The Union. Historical Essay, 1985); Elena Statelova – “Saedinenieto na Kniazhestvo Bulgaria i Iztochna Rumelia 1885” (The Union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, 1985); Elena Statelova and Radoslav Popov “Spomeni za Saedinenieto ot 1885” (Memoirs of the Union in 1885), published in 1980; Yono Mitev -“Saedinenieto 1885”(The Union in 1885), published in 1985; Doyno Doynov Komitetite -“Edinstvo’ roliata i prinosat im kum Saedinenieto 1885” (The Committees Edinstvo, their Role and Contribution to the Union in 1885), published in 1985. The work of Elena Statelova and Andrei Pantev – “Saedinenieto na Kniazhestvo Bulgaria i Iztochna Rumelia 1885” (The Union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885), published in 1995, and Petar Kutsarov – “Rusia i Saedinenieto” (Russia and the Union), published in 2001, require special attention. The first one examines the origins of the revolutionary act, the preparation, execution and the achievement of its approval by the Great Powers, whereas the second one studies the attitude of the Russian authorities towards it. Both studies fail to present the aspects of the act of union in the context of political relations between the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire, the political situation in the Concert of Europe and the rivalry between Britain and Russia. The union is an infringement of the Treaty of Berlin and it endangers a piece of land in the Balkans. It also endangers the general political situation in Europe. Among the sources preserved on this topic, there are many memoirs of the participants at the events in the autumn of the year 1885: Ivan Andonov, Dimitar Petkov, Ivan Vazov, Dimitar Yurukov, Nikola Genadiev, Ivan Stoianovich, Grigor Nachovich, Kalcho Hadzhi Kalchev, Petar Dimitrov, Atanas Tilev, Ivan Slabashev, Dimitar Tonchev.

In the Turkish historiography, Eastern Rumelia is less studied; there are a couple of monographs and articles. The reason might be the short period of its existence as an Ottoman Province and the absence of profound studies devoted to the Foreign Policy of Sultan Abdulhamid II towards the Balkans.

The Turkish historiography that deals with this subject is represented by the researches of Mahir Aydın and Süleyman Uğoz, etc. The study of Süleyman Uğoz :“Osmanlı Vilâyet İdaresi ve Doğu Rumeli Vilâyeti 1878- 1885” (The Ottoman Province Administration and the Province of Eastern Rumelia from 1878 to 1885), published in 1986, focuses on the reasons that provoked the separation of the Province from the Ottoman Empire. The establishment of the executive authority in the Province is examined, too but the author does not trace the activities of the authority through the years of existence of the Province. Thus, a comprehensive and objective assessment of the administrative system from Eastern Rumelia is missing. The Union of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria Principality is also examined but the reasons that caused it are pointed out incorrectly. An accurate evaluation of the international political situation is not achieved, which actually became a precondition for the application of this act.

Mahir Aydın reviews in detail the Organic Statute of the Province and the activities of the *Directorates*, in the monograph “Şarki Rumeli Vilayeti” (The Province of Eastern Rumelia), published in 1992. He uses statistic information from the annual budgets of the Province, gives a short description of each of the directors of the *Directorates*. The work would be more comprehensive if this information were compared with the Bulgarian sources. One of the chapters of the study examines the status of the Muslim population that remained in Eastern Rumelia and some of the problems appeared after the establishment of the new administrative authority. The use of the Ottoman archival documents brings a great contribution to the history of the Province because it provides a lot of new information and it presents a new perusal of the events from different points of view. This is the most extensive research of the administrative structure from Eastern Rumelia. Mahir Aydın also elaborates an article that deals with the Conference of Tophane in 1885, which is organised to solve the political crisis occurred after the Union. The protocols of the conference are translated and supplemented with critical analysis which reveals the political attitude of the Great Powers towards the event. The act of union is evaluated in the context of the international political situation, but without explaining the role of the Bulgarian population on both sides of the mountain as regards the preparation and application of the act, as well as the role of Prince Battenberg and the ruling government from Bulgaria.

The voluminous work of Bilal Şimşir: “Rumelin’den Türk Göçleri” (Turkish Migrations from Rumelia), published in 1989, includes a large number of documents concerning

the Muslim emigration flow from the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It covers the period of the Russo-Ottoman War, from 1877 to 1878, and it reveals some aspects from the emigration process which appeared in Eastern Rumelia after its establishment.

In the recent years a few studies contribute to examination of the topic from the Turkish Historiography. The work of Aşkın Koyuncu: “1877-1878 Osmanlı-Rus Harbi Öncesinde Şarkî Rumeli Nüfusu” (The Population of the Eastern Rumelia Prior to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878) deals with the emigration of the Muslim population from Eastern Rumelia. The studies of Ömer Turan “The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria (1878-1908)” and Osman Köse “Bulgaristan Emareti ve Türkler (1878–1908)” (The Emergence Bulgarian State and The Turks 1878-1908) focus on the status of the Muslim population remained in the Principality and the Province. The paper of Emine Altunay Şam “Prens Alexandre Battenberg’in İttihat Beyannâmesi ve Doğu Rumeli’nin Bulgaristan’a İlhâkı” (Prince Alexander Battenberg’s Unity Declaration and the Annexation of Eastern Rumelia to Bulgaria) examines the Bulgarian crisis in 1885.

Until nowadays, besides the works that have been prepared on the topic in Bulgarian and Turkish historiography, a part of the published sources is available, too - the official records of the proceedings in the Provincial Assembly, *Sbornik “Oblasten sbornik ot zakoni v Iztochna Rumelia”* (The Regional Legal Code of Eastern Rumelia), published in 1880, “*Godishna statistika na Iztocha Rumelia za, 1883*”, (Annual statistics of Eastern Rumelia for 1883), “*Statisticheski svedenia na Direktsiata na finansite na Iztochna Rumelia za 1883*” (Statistic information from the Department of Finances of Eastern Rumelia for 1883), the Organic Statute of Eastern Rumelia, Documents concerning the Union – “*Arhiv na Vazrazhdaneto. Dokumenti po Saedinenieto*” (Archive of the Renaissance. Documents regarding the Union), from the year 1908, “*Saedinenieto 1885*”, “*Sbornik Dokumenti 1878-1885*” (The Union 1885. Documents 1878-1885), published in 1985, “*Izvestia na Darzhavnite Arhivi*”, “*120 godini ot Saedinenieto*” (Bulletin of the National Archives. 120 years from the Union), issued in 2005.

The autonomous status of the Province entitled three official languages - Bulgarian, Ottoman and Greek. Whereas the use of three languages in the administration would only complicate and impede the governing authorities, the Bulgarian language was imposed for usage in the administrative institutions. The Ottoman language was used in

the correspondence with the Ottoman authorities and the Sultan. So, the main source base has a bilingual character. Because of this reason, the researches that have been achieved until these days, have used only one type of archive material. Another significant obstacle against a comprehensive accurate restoration of the history from Eastern Rumelia is the lack of sufficient archival documents, which were destroyed during the years. This fact put obstacles the work of the researcher over this topic. The documents of the Regional Assembly of Eastern Rumelia, the Department of Finances, the Department of Internal Affairs, the Chief of the Police and Gendarmerie Staff of Eastern Rumelia, the Department of Justice, the Department of Telegraph and the Postal Services, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and the Municipal buildings in Eastern Rumelia are preserved in the Bulgarian archives.

Actually, these are archival documents that provide information about the internal governance of the province and, based on them, the political, economic and cultural development of the Province can be traced. The Ottoman archive documents regarding Eastern Rumelia provide information about the relationship between the Sublime Porte and the autonomous Province as suzerain and vassal. Information could be found there about the legislative activity in the Province and its development as an autonomous Ottoman Province which allows a perspective of the importance that the Province had in the economic, political and cultural life of the Ottoman Empire. As a Province of the Ottoman Empire, it has neither the right of independent foreign policy nor the right to contact officially foreign countries. However, from the correspondence between the foreign consuls in Plovdiv and the representatives of the governmental authorities, information could be obtained about the relationship between the ruling authorities and the foreign countries. These sources are preserved in the archives of the respective states. The division of the archival documents is a prerequisite in order to avoid the subjectivity of only one point of view on the issues, without making a comparison between the sources.

The Purpose of the Research

The topic of this research is selected with the assumption that Eastern Rumelia occupies an important part in the history that belongs to the Principality of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. During 7 years, the historical events which took part in the Province impacted the history of the states and the Balkans. However, some important aspects from the history of the Province of Eastern Rumelia remain outside the scope of existent

works. The role taken by the Province of Eastern Rumelia in the political struggle between Russia and Britain remains inexplicit in the historiography, which does not reveal the real political and strategic importance of the Province in the political programs for dominance of the two Great Powers in the Near East, which impacted the development of Eastern Rumelia. Besides, the policy of the Ottoman Empire, pursued during the establishment of Eastern Rumelia and the crisis in 1885, also remains obscure. These aspects from the history of the Province require new researches which should examine comparatively the source materials. The Province is part of the Bulgarian and Turkish history and it should be explored without disregard to the role obtained by the Ottoman and Bulgarian authorities in the events and processes that took place in the Province. Unfortunately, the existent researches neglect this issue. This study intends to bring its contribution in order to explain the British and Russian policy towards of the Province in context of their rivalry in the Balkans.

The Framework of Analysis and the Methodology

The primary sources used for the preparation of this thesis are the records of the Foreign Office from the collections of the United Kingdom, National Archive. The examination of these documentary sources is selected purposely, as there only few existent studies on this topic, which have used the British sources. The British authorities obtained a major role in events as regards the Province of Eastern Rumelia. This study introduces new source materials from the National Archives. This documentary base consists of the protocols of the European Commission, the correspondence between the Ottoman, Russian and British Governments, the correspondence of the British Ambassador in the Ottoman Capital and the British Consuls in Eastern Rumelia. The secondary sources are the Bulgarian, Turkish and European publications that deal with the issue of the Province of Eastern Rumelia and the Union. Also, documents from the Bulgarian (CDA) and Ottoman Archives (BOA) are used as supplementary sources.

The Russian perspective on the issue as regards to the creation of the Province of Eastern Rumelia and the union with the Principality of Bulgaria is presented by the studies existing in the Bulgarian Historiography. The works dealing with the question are based on the Russian sources materials and documents and thereby they reveal the policy pursued by Russian Empire in Eastern Rumelia. One of main topics over which the Bulgarian Historiography focused on is the Russian activities for establishment of the administration of the Province and the further activities for execution of unification

of the two divided parts of the Bulgarian state. The Bulgarian Historiography also contains large number of memoirs which retail the events and as Russian authorities were deeply involved these papers present valuable information displaying the Russian political engagements in Eastern Rumelia.

Since the main sources of information are the archival documents, the methodology of critical and comparative analysis is used at the preparation of this thesis. To achieve precise results, the information received from different types of sources is compared. Thus, the value and reliability of the information contained therein is revealed. The text is presented through a scientific critical way of reproduction. Although these two events have been examined before, they have rarely been treated fully as an integral part of a wider issue. For each event study two questions will be asked: what was the political attitude of the each of the actors? And what were the political activities to be achieved their political goal? Once these two questions have been dealt with the portrayal of the political attitude of the Britain and Russia it will be considered the political aims pursued by these two Powers in Eastern Rumelia. From this evidence base the thesis will explore the place obtained by the Province in the Anglo-Russian political rivalry in the Balkans. The Russian, British and Ottoman policy towards the two events will be presented separately and thus it has been made an attempt the policy followed by these countries to be considered and traced, which will reveal their perceptions for development of the Province of Eastern Rumelia.

To facilitate its understanding by the reader and to adhere to the accuracy of the archival documents, the calendar dates from this thesis are presented according to the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is also known as New Calendar and replaced the Julian calendar or the Old Calendar. The dates in accordance with the Gregorian calendar in the 19th century went twelve days forwards the Julian calendar.

Chapter 1: The Balkans during the 19th Century

During the 19th century, the Balkan peoples went through the most drastic changes and transformations in their contemporary history, which determined their development until nowadays. The Christian population on the Balkan Peninsula transformed from Ottoman *millet*s into nationalities and they were granted their own national states. Thus, by the establishment of the national states of the Romanians, Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians, the Ottoman political and military authority from the Balkan Peninsula was replaced by small state formations. The Great Powers – Russia, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France and Germany looked forward that these sovereign state formations would be able to substitute the political vacuum which appeared after the Ottoman Empire had lost its power over these lands.

For almost one century, the fate of the Balkan possessions that belonged to the Ottoman Empire and the population that inhabited these lands, became the most important factor in the international politics. The diplomatic issue was defined as “Eastern Question” which, in other words, occupied the diplomatic problems arisen from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the struggle for control over its territories by the Great Powers.

The Balkan Peninsula had a strategic geographic position, providing the passage from Europe to Asia through the Straits. Even after the development of the sea routes, the Balkan trade routes continued to provide a particular part of the trade between East and West. The Danube River was also an important water channel, connecting Europe with the Black Sea and establishing the connection with Asia and the Aegean Sea. According to these geographical specific features which had an important political significance, the Balkan Peninsula became a subject of constant aspirations of the Great Powers during the centuries.

The beginning of the rivalry between the Great Powers occurred in 1774, when the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The provisions of the Treaty ensured a privilege status to one of the Great Powers for the first time in relation to the Ottoman Empire. Besides the commercial advantages given to the Russian Empire and the access of the Russian ships to the Black Sea coast and the Straits, the most important benefit was the Russian Empire’s right to protect the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan. For the first time, a relationship was established between the Russian Empire and the Balkan population and this relationship allowed

the Russian authorities to increase their influence over the Balkans in the next century. These advantages obtained by the Russian Empire provoked the aspirations of the other Powers which did not want to allow the Russians to dominate alone over the Ottoman Empire's lands. This fact incited Britain, France, Austria-Hungary and Germany to obtain a coherent political course, trying to expand their influence in the Ottoman Empire, too. Some of the Great Powers had territorial aspirations, others had economic interests and other Powers were also interested in the Balkan population.

The rivalry among the Great Powers, for dominance over the Ottoman Empire, impacted the relationship of the Great Powers on and off the continent, because the crisis which appeared in the Ottoman Empire encouraged the aspirations of the Great Powers for partition of its territories. However, the Balkan Peninsula could not be physically divided and possessed by two or three Powers, as the rest of them would constantly remain unsatisfied, which would establish a permanent threat for the balance of power. At the same time, the Great Powers were preoccupied to preserve the balance of power because it was an important issue for the members from the Concert of Europe. This complex situation urged them to approach the crisis arisen in the Balkans with a political doctrine for preservation of the *status quo*, trying to prevent a European war since the year 1815, when the Congress of Vienna was organised.

Meanwhile, the different ethnical groups that lived in the Balkans, influenced by ideas of liberalism and nationalism which developed in Europe, started to recognise themselves as a distinct nation. Because the Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians had organised their own states before the arrival of the Ottomans, it was a natural consequence that they desired to restore their authority in the lands inhabited by them.

The Great Powers disregarded the ethnic map of the Balkans and the national feelings of the population and they were trying to find a solution to the question, which would be suitable only for their political interests in the region. Each of the Great Powers: Russia, Britain, France, Austro-Hungary and Germany had aspirations towards the Ottoman lands, which contradicted the aspirations of the other Powers. These controversial demands of the Great Powers brought to a standstill all attempts for solving the Eastern Question.

In order to comprehend the rivalry between Russia and Britain over the establishment and the organisation of the Province of Eastern Rumelia, it is necessary to examine

previously the political situation and circumstances which led to the emergence of the autonomous Province.

1.1 The Political Order in the Balkan until the Great Eastern Crisis

1.1.1 The Great Powers and the Balkans

According to R.W.Seton-Watson, the modern Balkan history could be divided into three periods: “The first in which Austria set herself the task of expelling the Turks; the second in which Austria and Russia combined in a policy of partition and worked on parallel lines; the third in which the jealousy and competition, which replaced their partnership, was still further complicated by the growing influence and interference of other Powers”⁷. The third period determined by Watson comprised the nineteenth century.

At that time, the Balkan history was characterized by three issues. The first issue was the struggle of the Ottoman subjects in the European province of the Empire. It began with the first Serbian insurrection in 1804. The second issue was the different degree of interest that the Great Powers showed in the Balkan affairs in the nineteenth century. Their interference in the initial affairs of the Empire, increased in proportion to their political and economic interests in the Near East. And the third issue was the strong national feeling aroused among the Slav population of the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Western revolutionary ideologies and the Pan-Slavic movement which were supported by Russia.⁸

The Balkan provinces became for almost one century the keystone in the struggle of the Great Powers for dominance over the Ottoman Empire’s territories that extended over three continents. The Balkan Peninsula’s strategic geographical position as a bridge between Asia and Europe and its access to the Mediterranean Sea secured the trade routes between East and West in the nineteenth century.

Russia had the greatest interest in the Balkan affairs and it played a significant role in all the diplomatic activities of the region. At the beginning, the Russian projects did not provide for territorial annexations in the Balkans, and were not even based on the idea of mutual Slavic origin of the Balkan population and Russians, but on the mutual affiliation to the Orthodox religion. Russian diplomacy did not plan to expand its

⁷ R.W. Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company 1918), p. 89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

borders in Southeast Europe, but was looking for the possibility of imposing its political influence. The article 7 of the Küçük Kaynarca Agreement, 1774, was the legal basis that the imperial government used until the Crimean War 1853-1856 to protect the Orthodox peoples in the Ottoman Empire. After the Crimean War, the Russian authorities built its Balkan policy on the ground of the unity of the Orthodoxy.⁹

Britain was less involved in the issues of the Balkan Peninsula. Its first direct diplomatic intervention regarding the Balkan affairs was during the Greek War for Independence 1820-1831 and the Crimean War 1853-1856.¹⁰ The British attitude, not to interfere in the Eastern Question at that time, could be explained by the British foreign policy applied so as to protect its possessions in the Near East. In the nineteenth century, Great Britain possessed the biggest share of Ottoman commerce, and three quarters of all British exportation to the Middle East passed through the territory of Anatolia.¹¹ The British predominance and interests in the Near East, particularly in India, its most important colony, were secured by the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain saw for the first time in 1799 its road and communication with India threatened when Napoleon Bonaparte led his army to Egypt.¹² These circumstances forced the Foreign Office to give a new meaning to its policy of the Eastern Question. In the early nineteenth century, the British Empire decided that the British government should implement an active policy for preserving the *status quo* in the region, so as not to allow the Ottoman Empire's collapse. Otherwise, the British Government had to face the possibility that any of the Great Powers could take control of the Straits. Its main rival was Russia. Britain preferred to keep as much as possible the integrity of the Ottoman Empire rather than to stand up against the Russian hegemony there. If Russia had taken control of the Straits, it would have been able to control the Mediterranean Sea and the Near East.¹³ The application of this policy required the national feelings and the struggle for emancipation of the Balkan population to be suppressed. The maintenance of the Ottoman Empire became Britain's traditional policy during the

⁹ Andrei Pantev, and Hristo Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia na Osvoboditelnata Voina 1877-1878* (Veliko Tarnovo 2008), p. 71-75.

¹⁰ James Peter Phillips, *The Eastern Crisis, 1875-1878, in British and Russian Press and Society* (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham 2012), p. 40.

¹¹ Donald Quataert, The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914, in *An Economic History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, ed H. Inalcik and D. Quataert, (New York: Cambridge 1994), 830-3.

¹² Phillips, *The Eastern Crisis*, p. 44.

¹³ M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Transformation of "Empire" through Wars and Reforms: Integration vs. Oppression," in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 2011), p.17-56.

nineteenth century. It opposed all initiations for partition of the Ottoman Empire, suggested by the other Powers.¹⁴

During the whole 19th century the Austro-Hungary Empire considered that for its political interest the existing of weak Ottoman Empire, as a neighbour was less menace than to have near its south boarder a powerful Slav state, which without doubts would be a Russian protégé. Whereas the specific design of the Austro-Hungary as a dual state, composed from the two nations, which struggle for control inside the country, the establishment of a national states in the Balkans was a significant threaten for internal order of the Empire. After 1867 when indeed was created the Austro-Hungary Empire by *Ausgleich* (Compromise)¹⁵ giving to the Hungary internal autonomy which maintained the existence of Empire as a Great Power, the two states remained united only in fields of finance, war and foreign policy. The Austro-Hungary was a multinational state which also was inhabited by large amount of Slav population, which incited by the experience of Balkan population could rise demands for similar rights like those of Hungarians. So Austro-Hungary authorities also opposed all plans for division of the Ottoman Empire. Austro-Hungary increased its expansion interest towards the Balkans after 1867. The reason for this decisive change of the policy of the Austro-Hungarian Government was the political view of the Magyars which insisted that the Austrian government should pay greater attention to its relations with the Slav population at the Balkans. This view was developed into the idea of the annexation of territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the larger plan of Macedonia too, which received support by the military circles in the Austro-Hungarian government.¹⁶ Austro-Hungary raised ambitions to establish in region of the West Balkans political and economic dominance. The decisive role for this policy played the defeat from Prussia in 1866, which cut off the opportunity for Austrian expansion on the North where the powerful state of Germany was created. Also the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Count Andrassy, who came to power in 1871 recognized greater threaten in one Slav state rather than in Germany. Thereupon he subordinated the foreign policy of the dual

¹⁴ Mihailo D. Stojanovich, *The Great Powers and the Balkans 1875-1878* (Cambridge:University Press 1938), p. 6.

¹⁵ "Ausgleich" in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1952), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Ausgleich>

¹⁶ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After. A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement 1878-1880* (London: Frank Cass and CO. LTD. 1938), p. 8.

monarchy to the idea of prevention of the creation of a large Slav state close to the borders of the Austro-Hungary.¹⁷

The Balkans entered in the sphere of the political interests of Prince Bismarck after the defeat of France in 1871 and the successive unification of the German state. From a policy of political compensation, the Balkan issue for Bismarck became a tool for exercising pressure on the Russia government. This meant the maintenance of constant degree of tension in the Eastern Question by artificial and purposeful instigating of the disorders in the Balkans.¹⁸ Since 1873 were recorded the first attempts of German diplomacy in accordance with this policy.¹⁹ According to Bismarck's political views, the clever diplomatical demarches in regard with the Eastern Question could guarantee to Germany the following important advantages: "1.The centre of gravity in the foreign policy of Russia and Austro-Hungary to shift from West to East. Only then it will be able to be maintained a constant rivalry between them in favour of Germany. 2. Russia will be deeply involved in the East, taking a defensive stance. Then it will always need German's support. There will be such relations between Russia and Austro-Hungary that they will not be able to join an alliance against Germany"²⁰.

Watson evaluated the Eastern Question as an "extraordinarily complex and delicate" issue that its outcome in the nineteenth century became unpredictable, that the Concert of Europe: Russia, Austria, Prussia, France, and Britain preferred to maintain the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire and to postpone its decay.²¹ Actually, the statesmen considered that the solution to the Eastern Question could be two. First one proposed a complete reconstruction which meant the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In consequence, it would have been replaced by small national states. The second one was a mere correction that could have secured the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in order to preserve its status for a few years longer. None of the Great Powers demanded a complete settlement of the issue because everyone wanted to postpone it as long as

¹⁷ Kenneth Allen Shafer, *The Congress of Berlin of 1878 : its origins and consequences* (Master thesis, Portland State University 1989), p. 20.

¹⁸ Konstantin Kosev, *Bismark, Iztochnia vapors and i Bulgarskoto osvobozhdenie 1856-1878*, (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov" 2003), p.105.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²¹ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 96.

possible. The truth was that the Ottoman Empire could not be partitioned in a satisfactory way for the Great Powers involved in the Eastern question.²²

The Ottomans on the other hand knew that they were in a delicate situation. The difficulties came on the scene with the increasing intervention of the Great Powers in the internal affairs of the Empire and their political and economic aspirations forced the Ottoman authorities to undertake series of reforms. The program for reformation and modernization of the Ottoman Empire had to restore the military power of the Ottoman Empire and to consolidate its authority.²³ Respectively these measures had to frustrate the further actions of the Great Powers.

As a result of this policy regarding the Eastern Question the Great Powers prepared and signed two international political acts in the nineteenth century. These acts decided the future of the Ottoman Empire and its Balkan Provinces in the next years. The first act was the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the second one was the Treaty of Paris signed in 1856 after the Crimean War. Both of them intended to preserve the *status quo* in the region and to avoid the dominance of any of the European Powers over the Ottoman territories.

The Congress of Vienna was dominated by a coalition between Russia, Prussia, England and Austria against France and its objectives. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the European Powers went along with the idea that it was “in their best interest to maintain the Empire's geographic integrity for as long as possible, rather than to risk the unpredictable consequences of attempting to partition it”. In pursuance of this political doctrine, the Treaty of Vienna established a new international order. This new order was constructed on the ground of “binding treaties and acknowledged rights”, in which a Balance of Power should exist. It stipulated that none of the Powers would enlarge its land without the others having an opportunity for equal territorial changes.²⁴

The Congress of Vienna also established some unregulated and inexorable practices in the history of international relations, which the Great Powers applied throughout the nineteenth century. They agreed that for the creation and recognition of a new state unit in the European political system, they required the consent of all the Great Powers.²⁵

²² Dave Harris, *A Diplomatic History of the Balkan Crisis of 1875-1878: the First Tear*, (Stanford University Press and Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 165, Russell to Derby, December 1, 1875.

²³ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğunu En Uzun Yüzyılı* (Istanbul:Timaş 2014), p. 33, 114.

²⁴ Tekla Sylvia Doris Price, *The Vice Sultan: A. Henry Layard, Ambassador to Constantinople, 1877-1880* (Master thesis, The University of Calgary 1997), p. 9-10.

²⁵ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 14-15.

This resolution meant only one thing: that the Balkan population's success in the struggle for independence depended on the Great Powers' acceptance. Preserving the European order and the so called balance of power was closely correlated with the destiny of the Ottoman Empire. The Great Powers' rivalry and their binding interests left the Balkan population "to brood over their brief flirtation with autonomy and independence" after 1815.²⁶

The Congress of Paris took place after the Crimean War and it was more successful as a congress that settled the particular question of the Near East affairs than a congress concerned Europe affairs. During the Crimean War, Russia endangered the established balance of power by declaring war to the Ottoman Empire. England, France and Austro-Hungary decided to defend the Ottoman Empire.

Russia lost the war and it was forced to sign the Treaty of Paris that was considered a humiliation by the Russian authorities. The treaty solved the controversial issues between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the other Powers' interests and it established three main stipulations. The first one referred to the Ottoman Government's engagement to introduce reforms regarding its Christian population. The second one regarded the Black Sea's neutrality which was thereby proclaimed and its waters were closed for military ships' navigation. Neither Russia, nor the Ottoman Empire could keep their military ships on Black Sea waters. The principalities from Danube region received administrative autonomy that rendered them independent from Russian dominance.

Closing the Black Sea waters ensured what the other Great Powers had long sought: a barrier for Russia's further interferences in the Ottoman Empire and the maintenance of the *status quo* as a guarantee for the balance of power in the Balkans.

The establishment of Danube principalities actually created a buffer-state and a barrier against the Russian invasion in the Balkans and the Austrian struggle for domination in the region.²⁷ The Balkan population's future was subordinated to the Crimean system for two more decades whereas the Ottoman Empire was subordinated to the interests of the Concert of Europe. The Ottoman Empire could exist as long as the Great Powers needed it but if they decided that the Ottoman Empire endangered their interests in the Near East, they were ready to partition it.

²⁶ Phillips, *The Eastern Crisis*, p. 40.

²⁷ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 99.

Russia resented the impact upon its foreign policy. Therefore, the abolition of the Black Sea stipulations became the most important objective of its diplomacy in the following decades after the Crimean War. A.J.P. Taylor declared that the acquisition of the Balkan Peninsula could give some “trivial prizes” to Russia’s imperial interest in comparison with those from the Near East and Central Asia. According to his statements, the eighteenth century and even the early nineteenth century had been decisive for Russia’s sphere of influence, as regards the Black Sea and the Near East. Those years also demonstrated that “Russia’s imperial future lay in Asia”. Russia regarded only defensively the Black Sea region. However, this is not an accurate evaluation of the value of the Balkan Peninsula for the Russian foreign policy. The Balkans provided the seizure of the Straits and the entrance to the Aegean Sea. Their possession would make it easy for Russia to dominate the Near East in a maritime way. Therefore, Russia considered Britain the principal opponent against its desire for the Black Sea.²⁸

The loss in the Crimean War increased the activity of the Pan-Slav movement that had already been widely spread among the Russian society and the government authorities. The Pan-Slavic movement was built up on ideas of Slav origin and Orthodox religion. It expressed the concept of a “Holy War” against the Ottoman Empire for the liberation of the Slavs and all people of Orthodox faith. Before the year 1860, many doctrines of the Pan-Slavic movement had a rather vague nature. Due to V.A. Cherkasskii’s work, the movement was able to achieve a clearer path of thoughts. For the Russian population, the Pan-Slavic struggle turned out to be the right solution to the Eastern Question.²⁹ As a result, the Russian foreign policy after the Crimean War aimed at the rejection of the clauses from the Treaty of Paris. It also aimed at strengthening the Slav nationalities in the Balkans³⁰. The Russian foreign policy succeeded in both ways. The clauses that guaranteed the neutrality of the Black Sea were revised in 1870 and the Bulgarian Exarchate was created in the same year.

After the Crimean War, the British government’s policy aimed to ensure a political balance on the continent which would give Britain the opportunity for expansion in the Near East. This strategy created an opportunity for expansion outside European regions. The English government considered that such balance would be reached if the rivalry between Russia and Austro-Hungary were overcome. The British government thought

²⁸ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press 1954), p. 83-98.

²⁹ Phillips, *The Eastern Crisis*, p. 31-37.

³⁰ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 102.

that it was better if Russia and Austro-Hungary divided the Balkans on sphere of influence, for example Russia to have influence over Eastern Balkans and Austro-Hungary over the western part.³¹ The policy would ensure the tranquillity in the region and it would suppress the desires for independence of the Balkan nations.

One of the main purposes of the European Powers was to force Russia to sign the Treaty of Paris after the Crimean War and to preserve the *status quo* on the Balkan Peninsula.³² However, in the period after the Crimean War the Balkans did not stay calm. Although Romania was under Ottoman suzerainty, it managed to reject it. Serbia was struggling to remove the last dependences on the Ottoman reign; Bulgaria and Bosnia prepared for rebellion.³³ The Crimean system was able to prevent the movement of the Balkan population for only two decades, because a new Eastern crisis emerged in 1875.

Meanwhile the developments of Balkan lands during this period were marked by the endeavors of the Ottoman Empire to improve its administration and government system, which had an aim to prevent the decay of the Empire. As the Great Powers' interests were focused on the Balkan Peninsula, where they were trying to extend their influence over the local population nurturing their national feelings the Ottoman Empire's authorities decided firstly to implement reforms in these provinces. The growing interest of the Russian Empire in these territories, in the context of the political doctrine that belonged to Catherine the Great, intensified its actions in the Balkans. But Russia was not the only Great Power that was interested in the Balkan region. Austro-Hungary was the rival of the Ottoman Empire for centuries. At the beginning of the 19th century, Austro-Hungary turned her eyes towards the western Balkans dreaming for the port of Salonika. In 1804, the first Serbian uprising broke out and set the beginning of a process which extended almost until the end of the century, during which the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, one by one, separated and emerged as national states. In 1817, the Serbian population which inhabited the area Pashalik of Belgrade, received autonomous status. The Russo-Ottoman war followed from 1806 to 1812, which resulted in the separation of Bessarabia province. In 1821, the Greek uprising broke out, it finished with the emergence of the first independent state of the Balkans in 1830. And in 1828-30, as a result of another Russo-Ottoman war, Wallachia and Moldavia

³¹ Andrei Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapros vav Velikobritania 1876-1878* (Sofia: Otechestve Front 1981), p. 19.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³³ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p.100.

were established as vassal kingdoms of the Ottoman Empire. So, once with the military defeats, the Ottoman Empire experienced the loss of territories that was the other sign for the necessity of reformation in order to preserve its possessions.

1.1.2 The Ottoman Empire and the Balkans

1.1.2.1 The Political and Economic Situation in the Balkans

The 19th century in the history of the Ottoman Empire was marked by the process of reformation. In the foreign and local historiography, the process of modernization of the Ottoman Empire remained under the name *Tanzimat*. The word *Tanzimat* means “Reorganization”³⁴. The historical boundaries of the period were established from 1839, when the first reformation decree was promulgated, to 1876 when the first Ottoman constitution was elaborated. The process continued for almost four decades and comprised the administration of the Empire from the lowest to the highest level, the social status of the Empire’s subjects, the education system and the army. The reformation acts were executed in all spheres of the state apparatus. Sultan Abdulmecid set the beginnings of this reformation process, followed by his successor Sultan Abdul-Aziz. The process was complex and multifaceted, but the main figures who inspired the *Tanzimat* were Mustafa Reshid Pasha³⁵ and his followers Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha³⁶, Mehmet Fuad Pasha³⁷ and Midhat Pasha³⁸. They were called men of the *Tanzimat*. These men represented the new political elite born in the first decades of the 19th century. They believed that they would be able to restore the strength of the Empire through reforms. As this new intelligentsia was influenced by the western ideas, it took the program of the western countries as a model of modernization. The era of reformation involved the energy and the efforts of several generations of Ottoman statesmen. In the process of reform and modernization, different points of view emerged in the reforms, but the direction and the idea remained the same - the recovery of the political and military power of the Empire.

³⁴ “Tanzimat” in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1952), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Tanzimat>

³⁵ Kemal Beydilli, s.v. “Mustafa Reşid Paşa”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mustafa-resid-pasa>

³⁶ Kemal, Beydilli, s.v. “Ali Paşa Mehmed Emin”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ali-pasa-mehmed-emin>

³⁷ Orhan F. Köprülü, s.v. “Fuad Paşa, Keçecizade”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fuad-pasa-kececizade>

³⁸ Gökhan Çetinsaya and Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, s.v. “Mithat Paşa”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mithat-pasa>

Kemal Karpat defines the process of social transformation as “an essentially internal social process which begins originally without government interference. State intervention occurs at an advanced stage of transformation and is basically an effort to give a direction.”³⁹ This explanation corresponds entirely to the situation in the Ottoman Empire before the *Tanzimat* era. At the beginning of the 19th century, the necessity of reformation and modernization arose among the Ottoman ruling class, but the Empire had already faced significant changes in its traditional government and social systems that were established in the first years according to the new possessed lands. The Ruling class realised that these transformations in tradition and government system weakened the military and political strength of the Empire. The main military classes, *Janissaries* and *Sipahis*, abandoned their military obligation and most of them transformed into tax-collectors, local notables, merchants and they settled down. These changes in the functions of the traditional social class undermined the classical Ottoman government system. Firstly, the army diminished its efficiency on the battle field and secondly, the military class which settled in the provinces transformed into local governing power that sometimes ruled the provinces completely independently from the capital. This changed the status of the peasants from the provinces as they became furthermore servants of the local governor than the Sultan’s subjects. The lack of control over the provincial governors enabled them to oppress the local population, economically, in most of the cases. On the one hand, the result was that this new born aristocracy transformed into a local social-economic power that rose as a “merchant class” and the desire to “liberate itself from the last economic vestiges of an imperial system and adapt itself to a market economy that functioned freely according to the law of supply and demand”.⁴⁰ Some of the local governors acquired such power as to challenge the Sultan’s authority. One of these examples was the rebellion of Osman Pasvandoğlu Pasha in the region of Vidin.⁴¹ His action presented a significant challenge to the Sultan’s power that showed how serious the problem with the local notables could be.⁴² On the other hand, this situation that endangered the life of the local population,

³⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, “The Land Regime, Social Structures, and Modernization of the Ottoman Empire”, in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History, Selected Articles and Essays Social, Economic and Political studies and Asia* (Brill, Leiden, Boston, Koln 2002), p. 327.

⁴⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, “Ottoman Relations with the Balkan Nations after 1683”, in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History, Selected Articles and Essays Social, Economic and Political studies and Asia* (Brill, Leiden, Boston, Koln 2002), p. 399.

⁴¹ For further information: Kemal Beydilli, s.v. “Pazvandoğlu Osman”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed February 1, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/pazvadoglu-osman>

⁴² Barbara Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge University Press 1991), p. 6.

escalated in the series of uprising in the provinces, initially directed against the local authorities but later they acquired the appearance of a struggle for independence. These revolts of the local population benefited from the support of one or another Great Power which was an important contribution to their success. The heightened interest of the Great Powers towards Ottoman lands, increasingly concentrated their efforts to weaken the Ottoman Empire in order to strengthen their influence over the territory. Another contribution was the change that occurred in the social status of the *reayas*. For example, the Greek subjects in the Empire controlled most of the naval transportation, obtained tax farm through state auctions or engaged in commerce as privileged merchants.⁴³ This allowed them to accumulate significant economic power that they later used in organizing the revolts and struggle for independence. In the beginning of 19th century the international status of the Ottoman Empire also undergo significant changes. European countries began to show interest in the Ottoman Empire lands not as a field of battle glory but as a field of trade and economic influence.⁴⁴

The Balkans represented the main territory on which the entire complex of conflicts concentrated. The uprising of Mehmed Ali made an exception to this territorial framework.⁴⁵ The reduction of power of the Ottoman Government over these territories and the dissatisfaction of the local population, made them vulnerable to external influence. As the main problem of the years, before the *Tanzimat* era occurred, the loss of strength of the Empire to govern the provinces in the Balkans and the national feelings that arose among the Sultan's subjects. In connection to these difficulties that the Empire faced, Halil Inalcık states that the *Tanzimat* was a solution whose main purpose and duty were the protection of the Empire's integrity and building a connection between the Ottoman Government and its Christian subjects under the principle of legal obligation. There is no doubt that this political movement, which was one of the most fundamental events, took place in the Ottoman internal politics in the last period of the Empire's history containing westernization and reformation movements, rebellions and external political intervention.⁴⁶

⁴³ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton University Press 2008), p. 25.

⁴⁴ Nikolai Genchev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdan*, (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad 2010), p. 78.

⁴⁵ For further information: Muhammed Hanife Kutluğu, s.v. "Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed February 1, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kavalali-mehmed-ali-pasa>

⁴⁶ Halil Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi* (Istanbul EREN Yayıncılık ve Kitapçılık Ltd. Şti. 1992), p. 3.

The reforms during the *Tanzimat* era established two main goals. The first one was “to transform the classical Ottoman ruling establishment into functional, service-oriented bureaucracy” and the second one “to give some representation in the government to various social and ethnic-religious groups living within the Ottoman state”. The first one aimed to improve the administration respectively it had to reinstate the Ottoman government power. To achieve this goal the Ottoman government was forced to implement reforms through which it had to take a series of responsibilities in the field of education, economy and welfare, most of them had been rejected before that moment by religious and different social classes. Together with these proceedings, a process of authority centralization started. The need for centralization was obvious after the local *ayans* concentrated significant power in their hands and made attempts for separation from the Empire. The dissatisfaction of the population against the local power was expressed by uprisings. By including the non-Muslim subjects in the administration guaranteeing their lives and properties, the Ottoman Government desired to make them obedient direct to the authority.⁴⁷ If the first goal had been accomplished by the time of the *Tanzimat* and the Ottoman Empire obtained efficient modern administration, unfortunately, the second goal was hard to achieve. The non-Muslim population and especially those living in the Balkans were already influenced by the western trends promoting the nationalism and the idea of a national state. This new tendency was neglected and it was not understood by the new governing elite. Actually, the *Tanzimat* reformers were not able to notice the struggle for national consciousness inside the ethnic groups in the Balkans. This was one of the main obstacles in front of the reform project, because “nationalism had made impossible the maintenance of a millet system which had worked for centuries, no matter how much autonomy was to be given to each millet under the new system”.⁴⁸

The Ottoman society was structured as follows: basically, it was divided into the ruling class and the *reaya*. The ruling class consisted of three groups: *ulema*, bureaucracy and army (*janissary and timariot cavalry*), the rest of the Empire’s subjects were designated as *reayas*.⁴⁹ The population of the Ottoman Empire which was recognized as *reayas*

⁴⁷ Karpal, “The Land Regime”, p. 357-358.

⁴⁸ Stanford J. Shaw, “The Ottoman View of the Balkans”, in *The Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, (University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963), p. 56.

⁴⁹ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, p. 23.

contained various religious groups. Each religious group was called millet and it was organised as a self-contained and internally autonomous community.

The so called millet system in the Ottoman Empire was the bridge built between the Sultan and its non-Muslim subjects. Its roots derived from the Islam. The non-Muslim population of the Empire were not divided according to ethnical principles but according to its religion beliefs. Each religious group was represented by a leader called “*Patriarch*”. He was appointed by the Sultan to take responsibility for education, religion confession and judicial issues concerning marriages and divorces of its laymen.⁵⁰ So, each religious group was organised as a community named millet which had internal autonomy limited by the framework of the religious affairs. The millet system allowed the non-Muslim population to keep “its own traditional law and internal administrative organization”.⁵¹ The millet system created a noteworthy relationship between the Sultan and his non-Muslim subjects. The Sultan was not a religious authority for the Christian population. He protected the Christian population not only from the state officials but also against the heads of the millets. The Sultan was the one who enforced the law and secured the wellbeing of the population.⁵² In the first years after the Ottoman Empire took possession of the Balkan lands, the Serbian and Bulgarian Patriarchate enabled the proceedings of their commitments in the religious communities. The existence of two religious institutions also designated their recognition as different millet by the Sultan. Later in 1766 and 1767, they were abolished and became part of the Greek Church jurisdiction. So, the Bulgarian and Serbian population started to be recognized by the Ottoman Government as *Rumi* millet and lost its religious authority. Together with the loss of the religious community, the population lost its identity, too.⁵³ By this act, the Greek orthodox community extended its impact over the non-Muslim population in the Balkans.⁵⁴ In the 19th century, some antagonism inside the millets appeared mostly because of the Greek propaganda and the

⁵⁰ Öztürk Fatih, “The Ottoman Millet System”, *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no 16 (2014): 71-86, <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/12937>. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, (Princeton, New Jersey Princeton 1963), p. 13.

⁵¹ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volum II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic. The rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975*, (Los Angeles: Cambridge University Press 2002), p. 61.

⁵² Karpat, “Ottoman Relations”, p. 393-4.

⁵³ Hucy Louis Kostanick, “The Geopolitics of the Balkans”, in *The Balkans in The Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Charesl and Barbara Jelavich (University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), p. 11.

⁵⁴ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers 1804-2012* (Canada: Anans 2012), p. 25.

Hellenization program. The Bulgarian population arose against the oppression of the Greek clergy and started a fight for an independent Bulgarian church.

Most of the researchers of the *Tanzimat* period focused on the “second goal” as the reforms carried in the traditional structure of the society broke down the frameworks of the traditional Ottoman society. The idea that all the Ottoman subjects had to be subordinated directly to the central Ottoman authority, established a new policy that had to remove the differences among the Ottoman subjects and made all subjects the same in the eyes of the government and in one another’s eyes as well. We can explain the reason it was necessary if we look into the Ottoman organisation system of the new conquered territories and its subjects. Firstly, the foundation of the Ottoman traditional ruling system was the presumption of the Muslim superiority over the non-Muslim population. Secondly, if we consider the structure of the traditional Ottoman state system the society was divided according to religious affiliation, ethnic roots and professional occupation of the groups. Therefore, the abolishment of these frameworks established for centuries was a very difficult task but the first step was the elimination of the intermediate groups like guilds, *Janissaries* and religious groups that were appointed by the Sultan to represent his power among his subjects.⁵⁵

The idea to allow equal rights for the Christian subjects and to employ them in the administrative institution actually aroused the “concept of common citizenship” known as Ottomanism. The *Tanzimat* statesmen tried to create the subjects of a new state which would regard and treat their religious faith and ethnic differences equally. As equal subjects of the Empire, they would be obedient to the Sultan.⁵⁶ The ideology of Ottomanism proceeded to be implemented during the whole period of the *Tanzimat* and later it was inherited by the Young Turks. As regards the non-Muslim population, it was unacceptable for them to give up the privileges of the millet system and religious dominance. The ideology contradicted the classical Islamic concept of the state where the status, rights and duties of the Sultan’s subjects descend from their membership in a religious community. The concept of Ottomanism was not just a separation from the past of the Ottoman Empire, it was an open road to a “purely secular concept of state and citizenship”.⁵⁷ The attempt was made and as a part of this program, the Lycée

⁵⁵ Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922*, (New York: Cambridge University Press 2005), p. 65.

⁵⁶ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p.8.

⁵⁷ Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century”, *The American Historical Review* 59, No. 4 (1954), p. 852.

Impérial Ottoman de Galata-Sérai or Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi⁵⁸ was opened in 1868. The reformers believed that non-Muslims had to receive their education together with the Muslims.⁵⁹ As the schools of the Christians became the place where national ideas spread, moving away the students were seen as a necessary step.

One of the reasons for the decline of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 19th century, as Barbara Jelavich noticed, was the “increasing impoverishment”. The outlay for the maintenance of the military forces of the Empire and the size of the administration structure increased. These circumstances forced the Ottoman government to increase the taxes and to obtain new operative methods of collection. The group of *Sipahi* was the core of the Ottoman army but, as they received their remuneration from the loot and the *Timar* system after the Empire’s expansion policy was brought to standstill, it was no longer able to pay the *Sipahi*. Therefore, because the government did not benefit any more from the military service of the *Sipahi*, their lands were put under the direct control of the Ottoman government or became private properties. Through these measures, the Ottoman administration was able to collect taxes directly for its treasury when necessary. These conditions affected the population from the Ottoman provinces as it was forced to pay higher taxes and the new tax collectors imposed harsher conditions which burdened the population’s life. The *Janissaries* became the new Ottoman military strength in the 17th and 18th century. They were paid directly by the government and their equipment cost large amounts of money that had to be given by the government. As the Ottoman Government had no longer the ability to expand its territory and no “new sources of booty were available” the maintenance of the *Janissaries* became an encumbrance for the Ottoman Government.⁶⁰ Besides, the economy of the Empire was stuck after the trade reduced its presence on Asian routes and also because new routes were found in the Atlantic Ocean.

Indeed the reasons for the complicated situation in the Empire were a combination of internal and external factors. The *Tanzimat* reformers desired radical changes in the Ottoman institutions and administration that had to strengthen and restore the power and prestige of the Ottoman Empire among its subjects and among the outside world. The

⁵⁸ Adnan Şişman, s.v. “Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/galatasaray-mekteb-i-sultanisi>

⁵⁹ Ümit Eser, *‘Philetism’ in the Balkans: The Formation of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1830-1878)* (Master thesis Sabancı University 2009), p. 34.

⁶⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), p. 46-47.

essence of the *Tanzimat* reforms was to promise life and property guarantees for the Ottoman subjects and the equality offered to Christian subjects.⁶¹

The first attempts for reformation were made by Sultan Mahmud II, so his ruling can be designated as actual preparation for the *Tanzimat* era. During his ruling, he encountered difficulties that made the need of reformation even more obvious: the Serbian and Greek uprising, the war with Russia, Mehmet Ali's rebellion and the rising interests of the Great Powers in the Ottoman lands. The ruling of Sultan Mahmud II was a keystone that supported the idea of reformation and modernization in order to set the roots among a specific group of statesmen in the Empire that prepared the ground for further and deeper reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Mahmud II managed to centralize the Ottoman Empire, reorganise and reform the institution in a way that the ruling power was in Sultan's hands. He laid the beginning for rising of the elite, the intelligentsia that was educated in the new schools of the Empire. Thus, the *Tanzimat* era followed as a natural outcome from his reforming endeavours.

The first and probably the most basic among the reformation acts of Sultan Mahmud II, was the abolishment of the *Janissary corps* in 1826. This was a difficult and dangerous task as the *Janissary* had already become a powerful segment of the Ottoman ruling class. During the years, this part of the Ottoman army was transformed into a "semi-autonomous traditional status group possessing their own special regulations with consolidated privileges".⁶² The transformation of their function from the most important part of the Sultan's army to traders reduced their military force and ability. At the beginning of the 19th century, it became obvious that they were no longer effective on the battle field. Besides, they resisted any modernization in their corps and improvements in the discipline. Also, they became an immense threat that had the power to destroy any sovereign and statesman who dared to menace their position in the Empire. This was the case with Sultan Selim III. He was the first one who tried to restrict the power of the *Janissary*. Selim III created a regular army under his direct command that had to be able to replace the *Janissary's corps* in the future. But this new military force was a potential threat not only to the dominant status the Janissaries already had in the Empire, but also to the local governors' military strength in the

⁶¹ For more details: Halil Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulagar Meselesi*.

⁶² Halil Inalcık, Comments on "Sultanism": Max Weber's Typification of the Ottoman Polity, *Princeton Papers in Eastern Studies 1* (1992), p. 49-72.

provinces.⁶³ Sultan Selim III made an attempt to abolish the *Janissaries* but they rebelled and disposed him from the throne. Therefore, Mahmud II witnessed what had happened to Sultan Selim III and he prepared very carefully the *Janissaries* disposal act. Firstly, he found supporters among the conservative ruling class. Secondly, he obtained the support of the Grand Vizier and thirdly, he appointed Hussein Aga Pasha⁶⁴ as Aga of *Janissaries* who was ready to carry out the entire project of the Sultan.⁶⁵

During the centuries, the *Janissaries* became a symbol of the preservation of the traditional conservative system. The disposition of the *Janissaries* enabled the Ottoman Empire to start a new course of modernization – reformation of the old institutions and replacing them with new ones imported from West.⁶⁶ The destruction of the *Janissary corps* was not just the abolishment of a certain military power; it was actually an act which reduced significantly the power of the conservative class in the Ottoman Empire. This event was extremely important, in other words “for the first time a reform had been undertaken by destroying an old institution, making it possible for the new institutions to function without being hindered by obsolete practices.”⁶⁷ The disposal of the *Janissaries*’ division also displaced the balance of power inside the Empire’s governor classes from *Ulema* to the military forces and bureaucracy. The *Janissaries* obtained the role of supporters of the traditional conservative forces in the Ottoman Empire, who needed military assistance to be able to preserve their dominance among the ruling class.⁶⁸ There was a tacit agreement between them for preserving the *status quo* in the Imperial Government.

After the groundwork was prepared, further reforms were drawn up to be implemented in administration and education.⁶⁹ Sultan Mahmud II concentrated his efforts on centralization of the administration and made it more efficient. He reformed the central governmental institutions, dividing them and establishing departments that were designated with particular functions. He separated the legislative and executive powers

⁶³ Halil Inalcik, “Political Modernization in Turkey”, in *From Empire to Republic, Essays On Ottoman and Turkish Social History* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press 1995), p. 129-130.

⁶⁴ Abdülkadir Özcan, , s.v. “Hüseyin Paşa, Ağa”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed February 1, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/huseyin-pasa-aga>

⁶⁵ Sir Edward S. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks* (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1878), 502-504.

⁶⁶ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 277

⁶⁹ Michael Palaret, *The Balkans Economies c.1800-1914, Evolution without development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 41

between the new ministries.⁷⁰ These changes created an opportunity for people to enter the administration, those people who had received education and were qualified for office work in Imperial administration.

Another military group, that was also able to acquire considerable strength exceptionally in the provinces of the Empire, was the *Sipahi*. This happened after they were designated by the government to have tax-collecting rights.⁷¹ After the Ottoman expansion was impeded, the Ottoman government no longer needed the military service of the *Sipahi*. In 1833, Sultan Mahmud II envisaged a reform to retire the *Sipahi*. Through this reform, the revenues were collected directly by government officials, particularly appointed for this task. Thus, the taxes came to the state treasury.⁷² The considerable reformation endeavours of the Sultan Mahmud II opened the way for the promulgation of the large-scaled reformation program.

1.1.2.2 The Execution of the *Tanzimat* Reforms in the Balkans

The beginning of the new era was set by the Imperial Edict of Reorganization (*Gülhane Hatt-i Şerif-i*), promulgated on November 3rd, 1839. The imperial edict was an official confirmation of Sultan Abdülmecit's desire to extend and deepen the reforms started by Mahmut II and to continue this lifework to reform and to strengthen the Empire. In the Reformation Decree, the following provisions were issued: "1. the guarantees which will ensure our subjects perfect security for their lives, their honour, and their property. 2. A regular method of establishing and collecting the taxes. 3. an equally regular method of recruiting, levying the army, and fixing duration of the service."⁷³

Through this document, the Sultan officially states that the rights of his subjects will be protected from now on not by the will of the Sultan, but by the law which had to be elaborated. The provisions of the decree imposed new attributes to the responsibilities of the Ottoman state towards its subjects - the protection of their life, honour and property. But what was really unique was the provision of equal justice for all subjects, irrespective of their religion.⁷⁴ On the one hand, this was one of the interpretations of the reformation edict. But on the other hand, the edict brought significant changes as

⁷⁰ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 36.

⁷¹ John R. Lampe, and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950, From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press 1982), p.136.

⁷² Palairret, *The Balkans Economies*, p. 41.

⁷³ Creasy, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 531.

⁷⁴ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p.61.

regards the power of the Sultan. He accepted “the limitation of his authority” which meant that the life of his subjects would be protected “by the laws rather than sultan’s will”.⁷⁵ A new relation was established between the Ottoman subjects who were recognized as citizens of the Empire and the Sultan who embodied the state. Both sides received rights and obligations. This new connection was the ground for the aims of the reformation decree. Reshid Pasha’s intention was the creation of a new Ottoman society which, as regards religion, would be able to use all the rights brought by the reformation decree.⁷⁶

The execution of the edict regulations was a difficult task. The fundamental principles, upon which the Ottoman Empire had been built for centuries, were completely destroyed by the provisions of the decree. The *status quo* in the Ottoman society that had been preserved for centuries was now endangered. One of the first entities which opposed the reformation edict was the religious class *Ulema*. The status alignment of non-Muslims and Muslims, the idea of education secularization was not ready to be accepted by the conservative classes of the Ottoman Empire. Besides, such provisions threatened their dominant role and interests in the Empire. Neither the tax collectors nor the provincial governors were satisfied. They were apprehensive about their income if closer supervision would be introduced as it was promised. Even the Christian population had doubts. The Greek clergy opposed the edict for fear that their traditional position, as first among the other millets of the Empire, would be threatened by a proclaimed equality between all the subjects of the Sultan. Also, all the other ethnic groups would desire to be recognized as separate millet. Therefore, it was obvious that the separation from the traditional old system and building the new Ottoman state required significant efforts from the people of the *Tanzimat*. Despite these obstacles, significant endeavours were achieved between 1839 and the outbreak of Crimean War. In 1840 a penal code was prepared that reaffirmed the equality of all Ottoman subjects. Some Christian subjects were allowed to enter the military medical school.⁷⁷

They attempted to obtain a new tax farming system but unfortunately it did not bring successful results. The provisions of the reformation decree abolished the traditional taxes inherited from the religious law *Şeria*, except for the tax paid for the sheep and the

⁷⁵ Eser, ‘*Philetism*’ in the Balkans, p. 22.

⁷⁶ Şerif Mardin, *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin Doğuşu, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınlar 1996), p. 21.

⁷⁷ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 40-44.

tax *Cizye*⁷⁸ paid by the Non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. The tithe continued to be imposed over the agriculture production from cultivated lands. The Ottoman Government tried to establish a new collecting system which had to be more effective and to protect the peasants from the tax collectors' abuse. The government appointed officials with salary to collect the taxes in the provinces, but the bureaucrats did not wish to work under these conditions. Under the regulations of the old system, the tax farming was a profitable work that gave an opportunity to the tax collector for enrichment. The new arrangements deprive the tax farmers from this source of wealth. The tithe income from the provinces decreased significantly and the Ottoman Government was forced to restore the old system in 1840. In 1847, a new reform was prepared for the tax farming system. The Government decided that the tax farmer's appointment to be extended over 5 years with the presumption that the extension of the period would bring long-term interests in the lands under their jurisdiction. The Government wanted to avoid over taxation. Also, when abusive taxation would come to an end, the peasants would be encouraged to keep the cultivated lands which would produce steady income for the treasury.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, this reform also failed.

The over taxation and abusive behaviour of the tax collectors and provincial governors constituted the main reason which resulted in complaints among the population in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The insurrections in the Balkans at the beginning of the 19th century were seen as expression of this dissatisfaction and the Reformation Decree as a solution. The *ayans* were among the first of the Ottoman Empire's problems which had to be solved. They owned extended territories mostly in the *vilayets* of Rumeli and Anadola that gave them an opportunity to acquire economic strength and to disregard the Ottoman Government in most of the cases.⁸⁰ The Ottoman Government had to restrict their power to protect its subjects against their oppression. However, the implementation of such broader reforms required the efforts of a large number of qualified cadres and it required time. They had to be sent in the provinces to replace the former officials who were the product of the old system. The reformation process was interrupted by the Crimean War. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire had neither sufficient qualified cadres nor time and some of the reforms had unexpected

⁷⁸ Halil Inalcık, s.v. "CİZYE", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed April 18, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ciziyeh2-osmanlilarda-cizye>

⁷⁹ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 95-97.

⁸⁰ Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve BulgarMeselesi*, p. 11.

results. Partly because of the above-mentioned inconvenience, partly because Reshid Pasha who inspired the reformation program, was not able to see and predict a new process that would open the Reformation Decree as regards the intensification of the trade with the Western countries and the activation of the missionary missions and increased interests of the Great Powers towards the Christian population.⁸¹

The proclaimed equality between the Muslim subjects and non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan actually provoked fear among the ruling conservative class because of the structural transformation brought in the traditional Ottoman social system. This fear triggered a situation in which the traditional elites tried to preserve their power, refusing to accept the reformation on the one hand and on the other hand the population, which expected to be able to use its new rights, raised its voice even louder. Regional revolts occurred against the local power. This situation also gave an opportunity to the Great Powers pretending to prevent the population from interference in the internal affairs of the Empire.⁸²

Even if the reformers tried to make the modernization of the Empire smoothly for the conservative classes, the half-execution of the reforms got even tougher. According to Davison, Hatt-i Serif acquired a dual personality because “new and westernized institutions were created to meet the challenges of the times, while traditional institutions of faith and state were preserved and also, to a degree reformed”⁸³. But for every traditional society is hard to break with its own past. Nevertheless the regulations of Hatt-i Serif laid ground for the second edict to be proclaimed, which re-establish and extend the guaranteed the equality between all the subjects of the Sultan.

The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 interrupted the reformation process but it did not end it. After the war finished, the Great Powers Britain and France that were allies of the Empire, forced the Ottoman Government to initiate a new reformation program. The second Reformation Imperial Edict, named Hatt-ı Humayun, was promulgated on the 18th of February 1856 by Sultan Abdulmecid I. The second Reformation Decree reaffirmed the provisions of the first one extending the rights of the Christian population. The principal equality between the Muslim and Christian subjects was more clearly defined by the promises for tangible reforms. The reforms had to guarantee the Non-Muslim subjects equal testimony rights in the courts; liberty for changing the

⁸¹ Mardin, *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin*, p. 22.

⁸² Eser, ‘*Philetism*’ in the Balkans, p. 22.

⁸³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 39.

religion; equal taxes collected directly by the central authorities and the abolishment of the *iltizam* system.⁸⁴

The juxtaposition of the two Reformation Decrees, shows that in Hatt-ı Humayun the policy for reformation of the Ottoman Empire was “confirmed in a more extensive way”, promising “equal treatment for adherents of all creeds in such specific matters as educational opportunity, appointment to government posts, and the administration of justice, as well as taxation and military service”.⁸⁵ By these provisions, the line between Muslim and Non-Muslim millets was completely abolished because the government’s spheres, that had been previously reserved only for the Muslim population, were now opened to Christians, too. The domination of the Muslim millet had already been undermined by the provisions of the first Imperial edict and challenged *Ulema*’s rights over the justice and education but the second Reformation Decree deepened this process. The dominance of the Religious Institution was swiftly over the new established Institutions and the religious class lost their wealthy income obtained from their religious background. This situation turned the religious class into one of the firmest opponents of the reforms. The provisions of the second edict mostly regarded the status of the Non-Muslim population and they expressed the Ottoman Government’s concerns about the growing national desires incited by the Crimean War, desires which they actually intended to stifle. The first reformation period did not provide satisfying results so it only increased the discontent of the Balkan population. Besides, the Ottoman statesmen could not fulfil the promised reforms.⁸⁶

During the years between the first and the second edict, the population from the European provinces became deeply influenced by ideas of revolution. National movements received support from the Great Powers that saw in them a tool to weaken the Ottoman Empire’s power over its Christian subjects in the Balkan provinces. This created a situation in which the Ottoman Government was coerced by the Great Powers into securing the rights of the Christian population. On the other hand, the Christian population itself put pressure on the proper initiation of the reforms. Some of the Great Powers criticized the Ottoman Government for using the equality principle as a diplomatic weapon during internal conflicts rather than as a real solution for the domestic problems. The first Reformation Decree was issued when Mehmet Ali’s crisis

⁸⁴ Eser, ‘*Philetism*’ in the Balkans, p. 29.

⁸⁵ H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning”, p. 847.

⁸⁶ For more details: Halil Inalcık, *Tamzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*.

occurred and the second one was issued after the Crimean War. In reality, it was more than that. If the internal conflict, which in most cases arose into an international crisis, dictated the time and the manner to proclaim the Reformation decrees, the content of the reforms and views of the *Tanzimat* Statesmen was a product of the strong desires for modernization of the Ottoman statesmen in the 19th century.⁸⁷

When R. Davison studied the *Tanzimat* era, he focused on the four men of the *Tanzimat*. Using as source the memorandum prepared by Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha⁸⁸ for the Sublime Porte at the time Ali Pasha was sent to deal with the Crete uprising in 1867, he claims that Ali believed that the Christians needed to feel protected by the Sultan and they had to receive the opportunity for education and tenure of public office. This was the only way to put an end to the revolutionary activities of the Christian population. Reshid Pasha expressed the same view and in addition he believed that equal rights given to the Christian subjects would secure their devotion to the Ottoman Empire and to the Sultan. Mehmed Fuad Pasha, in the same way as Ali Pasha, defended the belief that the liberties given to the non-Muslim population would diminish their nationalist and separatist activities. Midhat Pasha believed in the equal treatment of Muslims and Non-Muslims but at the same time he was ready to suppress the revolutionary movements among the Christian population.⁸⁹ He was the only man out of the four men who had real experience to introduce the reforms as governor of the Danube province and he had an opportunity to observe the Christian population and notice their desires. So, the idea of equality between the Ottoman subjects was not simply an external and foreign ideology borrowed from the Western states or proclaimed under the pressure of the Great Powers. It constituted a solution for the internal issues of the Ottoman Empire and it resulted from the realities of the era which were understood by the *Tanzimat* statesmen. It was adopted after a profound evaluation of the internal situation of the Ottoman Empire.

One of the first measures taken after the proclamation of the edict was the reorganisation of the Ottoman provinces and the modernization of provincial administration as the reformers themselves believed that a proper governance of the lands in the provinces would bring the desired tranquillity. For the Christian population, the institutions connecting the people with the millet and village communities were of

⁸⁷ Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning", p. 847.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 851-852.

significant importance as they kept in touch directly with the people. If the Ottoman Government wanted to undertake the control over its Christian subjects, it had to establish a new type of institution that could secure similar direct connections with the subjects. The Government needed an “efficient administration managed by honest bureaucrats dedicated to the service of the state” that would make the Christian subjects trust the Government.⁹⁰ Therefore, between 1856 and 1876, significant efforts were accomplished for improving and reorganisation of the administration in the Balkan provinces. In 1860, the Ottoman government decided to send officials to supervise the provincial authorities there. The work of the commission continued for months and the following conclusions were reached: “1. There was no systematic oppression of the Christians by Muslims, officially or unofficially, but if Christians could justly complain, their testimony was often refused in court; 2 The Greek hierarchy was frequently tyrannical and unjust; 3 Malfeasance was found in administration among a number of Turkish officers; 4. The commission was dissatisfied with the tax-farming system. 5. Local roads needed improvement. 6. The policy system had to be strengthened.”⁹¹ In the next years, the Ottoman Government continued to inspect the provinces and prepared a program for particular reforms in the administrative system of the provinces. The result was a new *Vilayet* law issued in 1864. The model for the new *Vilayet* law was taken from the French law for the provinces. The *Vilayet* reform aimed to centralize the provincial government and to strengthen the connection between the centre and the periphery in the Empire. A new division of the Ottoman lands was achieved and the number of the provinces was reduced.⁹² According to the provisions of the law, in each province which was ruled by a governor, some administrative councils had to be established. The members of these councils had to be representatives of all ethnic groups which inhabited the province. Also, a new internal division of the provinces was introduced.⁹³ The Administrative council had to include six representatives - three Muslims and three Christians. The same administrative councils were applied and in the lesser subdivisions (*sanjaks*, *kaza* and *nahiye*).⁹⁴ In the administrative council of the *sanjaks* and *kaza*, the local religious heads of the non-Muslims had reserved seats. But at the same time, in the administrative councils of the three subdivisions *vilayet*, *sanjak*

⁹⁰ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 282.

⁹¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 106-107.

⁹² Lampe, and Jackson, *Balkan Economic History*, p. 148.

⁹³ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 101.

⁹⁴ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 285.

and *kaza*, there were places for elective members: two Muslims and two non-Muslims for the *vilayet's* and *sanjak's* councils and three members disregarding the religious status for the *kaza's* council.⁹⁵ The new provincial administrative system increased the governor's authority and it gave the power to control all provincial affairs. The difference from the old *vilayet* provincial administration was that according to the new law, the high-ranking provincial officials had to be nominated and appointed by Ottoman Government's ministers rather than by the governor. But the positions in the lower and the middle level of the provincial bureaucracy left occupied by the officials which were products of the previous administrative system, so significant improvements could not be expected.⁹⁶ This hindered the process of establishment of the new *Vilayet* system, diminishing the results and arousing conflicts.

The provincial law was introduced in the Danube Province for the first time. Midhat Pasha was appointed as governor of the province. He was one of the prominent reformers of the *Tanzimat*. He was able to reorganise the province in a short period of time. By making attempts to introduce the equality between the Muslims and non-Muslims in the administrative councils, the Christian subjects were drawn in. He focused his reformation endeavours on the improvement of the economic conditions in the region. He developed the infrastructure by building roads and bridges. Also, he paid special attention to the education. He supported the opening of new schools.⁹⁷ His governing also improved the tax collection system and the tax income from the province increased by one third. In comparison with the revenues from other provinces, his achievements were considerable.⁹⁸ The work of Midhat Pasha was a proof for the success of the reforms if they were implemented adequately. At the end of his governance in 1867, the modernized administration of the Danube Province became a model for the rest of the provinces. The work of Midhat Pasha and its impact over the Bulgaria population it will be detail presented in the further chapters.

The proper collection of the taxes in the provinces was one of the main problems of the Ottoman Government that remained unsolved during the first reformation period. During the second era of the *Tanzimat*, the Ottoman Government continued to look for a suitable solution. The new reform stated the term for collecting the taxes in one region

⁹⁵ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 136-172.

⁹⁶ Mehmet Çelik, *Tanzimat in the Balkans: Midhat Pasha's Governorship in the Danube Province (Tuna Vilayeti), 1864-1868*, (Master thesis, Bilken University 2007), p. 37-38.

⁹⁷ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 340.

⁹⁸ Lampe, and Jackson, *Balkan Economic History*, p. 149.

to be reduced to one or two years. After the period finished, the tax farmers had to apply for a new appointment. The Ottoman Government believed that by establishing short period nominations, it would prevent the transformation of the tax farmers into a local power that would be able to evade the law. However, these short term appointments were not able to preserve the long-term prosperity of the cultivated lands because the tax collectors tried to collect as much as they could before their appointment expired, by oppressing the peasants even more than before. In 1860, in the province of Rumeli, a system was introduced which forced the local notables to collect the cultivation tax (tithe) as they had to transfer to the treasury the amount based on the calculation of the average annual tithe for the last five years for their lands. They could keep the rest. But this system also failed because the notables kept as much as they could for themselves.⁹⁹ The tax farming turned into means of accumulating financial resources in the provinces and most of the administrative officials used it in their favor. Consequently, they were not expected to give up easily and to accept the new regulations. The Ottoman administration's lack of sources and the system of supervision encouraged the provincial officials to ignore the new provisions that menaced their interests.

In 1869, the reform of the millet system was introduced. The reform was the result of the attempts made by the Ottoman statesmen in order to improve the conditions of the non-Muslim population inside their religious community and, respectively, in the Empire. The process began earlier in 1862 when a new Organic Law (*Nizamname*) was introduced for the Greek millet, one year later for the Armenian millet and in 1865 for the Jewish religious community. The provisions of the Organic Law aimed to involve more actively the individuals in the religious affairs of their communities and to decrease the power of the clergy. R. Davison also binds the millet reform with the idea of Ottomanism and the attempt to separate the religious structures from the state. Those were the ideals for the modern Ottoman state.¹⁰⁰ The new law entitled every national group to participate in the affairs of their churches, following the endeavours of the Ottoman Government to accomplish the reform that would guarantee the Ottoman subjects the promised equality. The new reform gave these ethnical groups as Bulgarians and Serbians lost their status as millet an opportunity to be recognized again by the Sultan as a millet and to be represented by their own religious head and to organise their own religious communities and churches. The reform encountered the

⁹⁹ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 114.

firm resistance of the conservative Muslim groups in the Empire. Besides, it was rejected by the religious heads of the millets. The reform that opened the way for other ethnical groups to obtain the status of millet would interrupt the process of Hellenization of the Bulgarians and the Vlachs and, most importantly, it would deprive the Greek clergy of the income obtained from the dioceses of these ethnical groups.¹⁰¹ The reform of the millet system actually paved the way for Christian communities to be transformed in national groups. As the Christian subjects belonged to different ethnical groups they started to implement the new reforms provisions as understandings for “individual nations” and thus began the process of renaissance amongst them that has an aim to reestablish their language, literature and history.¹⁰² The struggles for improvement of the administrative and governing institutions and the conditions of life of the Ottoman subjects deepened the process of reformation of the Empire. The actions of the Ottoman authorities during second *Tanzimat* period intensified the transition from the old to the new system and brought visible results.

1.1.2.3 Results from the *Tanzimat* and the Balkans

The period between 1839 and 1876 was characterized by significant efforts for the modernization of the Ottoman Empire. Some of these endeavours were successful and gave results, some of them were half-introduced under the pressure of the Great Powers, some of them gave unexpected results; for others the ground was not prepared and the population rejected them. The reformation of the Ottoman Institutions was accomplished following the example of the European states. In this case, the model introduced was external and foreign to the traditional social structure of the Ottoman Empire and its traditional government.¹⁰³ Along with the process of establishing the Osmanism ideology, the progress of the reformation was achieved, and mostly, the major changes in the status of the non-Muslim population, intensified the national feelings. The result was partly because of the interference of the Great Powers and on the other hand because of the opportunities resulted from the reforms. The Christian population could improve its financial status and education. The situation encumbered the process of modernization. Four decades were absolutely insufficient for such large-scale reforms.

¹⁰¹ Karpát, “Ottoman Relations”, p. 400-2.

¹⁰² Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey, The quest for Identity*, (Oxford: Oneworld, UK 2003), p.36.

¹⁰³ Karpát, “Ottoman Relations”, p. 363.

One of the most important results of the reforms which were undertaken by the *Tanzimat*, was the change of the economic status of the non-Muslim population in the Balkans. In the 17th and 18th centuries, in the territories of the Balkans provinces, a new form of exploitation of the cultivated lands called *chiflik* (*çiflik*) appeared. These *chifliks* were agricultural farms settled down over large surfaces of lands. The production from these farms was thoroughly orientated towards distant markets. Initially, this type of farm was established in the region of the western Black Sea coast so as to meet the need of food supplies of the population which lived in the Capital. During the 18th century, following the model of *chiflik*, large farms emerged also in Macedonia and Thessaly, but with differences in their function. They specialized in production for external markets and exported agriculture products as cereals, tobacco and cotton for the European markets.¹⁰⁴ Between 1838 and 1840 a series of commercial agreements were signed by France and England to increase imports and exports of goods. In the next years a significant number of European merchants started to visit the Ottoman lands, some of them settled down and developed a profitable business. This new reality challenged the traditional Ottoman merchant's class and forced it to accept the new circumstances.¹⁰⁵ The increased commercial interests of the European countries extended the establishment of large-scale enterprises in the region of Danube, Dobrudja and Thrace. The emergence of the *chifliks* created an opportunity for the local non-Muslim population to accumulate capital that was later invested in other initiatives. Thus, the modernization of manufacture began and the main role was played by the Christian population. As a consequence the Christian population was able to improve its financial status and education. A new merchant class appeared among Bulgarians, Serbians and Greeks that was able to take preponderance over the foreign trade. The non-Muslim population was also able to occupy some government offices. These improvements of the social life of the Christian subjects were reflected in their education as more families started to send their children to study in foreign schools, in Istanbul and abroad. Thus, during the *Tanzimat*, by virtue of all above mentioned conditions, the new intelligentsia was born among Christians. Later, this new educated youth became the moving power for the idea of national movements which spread national ideas.¹⁰⁶ The program of equality that brought those opportunities above

¹⁰⁴ Eser, '*Philetism*' in the Balkans, p.16.

¹⁰⁵ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁶ Karpát, "Ottoman Relations", p. 363.

“remained largely unrealized” not only because a large number of Ottoman statesmen opposed it but also because the upper-class Christians had doubts, too. Neither the Muslim nor the non-Muslim ruling classes wanted to be deprived of the privileges that the existing status secured them.¹⁰⁷ For example, most of the non-Muslim population refused to join the army. So, in the last decades of the *Tanzimat*, the Balkan population did not desire equality anymore. Crete wanted autonomy or union with Greece, the Serbians dreamed of political union of their land and independence, Rumania also desired unification. And Bulgarians struggled for religious independent.

Barbara Jelavich states that until 1870, it was obvious that the main purpose of the reforms, to prevent the disintegration of the Empire, as regards the Balkan provinces could not be accomplished.¹⁰⁸ In 1876, the reformation era came to an end when the Constitution was elaborated. The last years of the *Tanzimat* era, between 1871 and 1876, were difficult for the Ottoman Government. In 1869, Fuad Pasha died and Ali Pasha died 2 years later in 1871. With the lost of the prominent statesmen of the *Tanzimat*, it was hard for their successors to keep the control over the Empire’s governor in their hands. It became ostensibly that the men of the *Tanzimat* accomplished the aim for centralization of the official power in the capital but they did not manage to leave behind personalities in government apparatus through which this power could be exerted. The Sultan was not able to take control over the Empire because he was isolated from government affairs from the moment of Ali Pasha’s death. The Sultan did not have enough experience, either. As a result, during the rest of his 4 years and 9 months ruling, 9 Grand Viziers were changed. The Ottoman Statesmen who fought for dominance of the ruling power were divided into groups. One group was organised around Mahmud Nedim Pasha¹⁰⁹ who wanted to restore the power of the Sultan and the other group around Midhat Pasha who continued the lifework of the *Tanzimat* statesmen and kept the power in the Porte isolated from the Palace.¹¹⁰ The impossibility of the central power to keep the government under control resulted in the crises which arose in the Balkans in 1875. The new crisis in the Balkan provinces of the

¹⁰⁷ Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning”, p. 853-854.

¹⁰⁸ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁹ Ali Akyıldız, s.v. "Mahmud Nedim Paşa," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 19, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mahmud-nedim-pasa>.

¹¹⁰ Engin Deniz Arakli, *The problem of External Pressures, Power Struggles and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909): Origins and Solutions* (PhD Thesis, Princeton University 1976), p. 94-98.

Ottoman Empire opened the Eastern Question again and rivalry between the Great Powers over the Ottoman territories.

1.2. Breaking of the Order in the Balkans

1.2.1 The Eastern Crisis 1875-1877

The time between the Paris Congress and the Eastern crisis in 1875, according to some researchers, can be described as a period of “classical diplomacy”. In comparison with the earlier period, the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Russo-Ottoman wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the revolutionary acts in 1830 and 1848, were settled down by negotiations and mutual compromises between the Great Powers, in a manner similar to most European conflicts and issues concerning the Eastern Question. They did not allow any local military conflicts to grow into a European War.¹¹¹

In July 1875, the population from Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted against the Ottoman reign. Because of this outbreak, the Eastern crisis was arisen again. Actually, everyone had been expecting it since the end of the Crimean War and the building of the Crimean system. In 1875 the interests of the Powers were still in conflict. The Treaty of Paris was not a solution to the Eastern Question. Although the Powers had signed it, they were aware of this issue.

The Russian Empire still felt offended by the stipulations concerning the closure of the Straits. Without a fleet in the Black Sea, their position would become unfavourable, if the Straits opened. Austrian-Hungary continued to depend on free navigation of the River Danube because the water channel was its main economic connection. The Britain still demanded the integrity of Ottoman Empire as a measure to secure the Eastern Mediterranean region and the Near East region. In fact, the British required it even more than ever due to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The French state remained still the largest financiers of the Ottoman Empire, followed by the Great Britain. Therefore none of the Great Powers wanted to re-open the Eastern Question. Nevertheless, another factor occurred in 1875 as regards the Eastern Question. It concerned the Balkan nations and their struggle for independence. This fight endangered the strategy established by the Powers after the Treaty of Paris. The Crimean system was not able to prevent the growth of the national feelings that later turned into the struggle for an independent national state. Once again the Balkan population was astir and the Russians did not want

¹¹¹ Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapors*, p. 13.

to miss this opportunity. They did not want to see the Balkan population fail. On the contrary, Austria-Hungary wanted to see its succession.¹¹²

The interest of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans concerned two main issues. The government of the dual monarchy made projects for railways construction in the Balkans and these investments required that the peninsula should be under a single authority. Its partition was not desirable. Also, the Austrian military authorities had set their minds on Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1867. However, Andrassy intended to preserve the geographical entirety of the Ottoman Empire. He also wanted to prevent the creation of a 'great Slav state'. He declared in a conference in 1875: "Turkey is almost providential utility for Austria; her existence is essential to our well-understood interest. She keeps the *status quo* of the small states and hinders their aspirations to our advantage. Were there no Turkey, then all these heavy duties will fall on us"¹¹³. But should it fail, he would like to take possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina in an attempt to prevent the existence of Slav states, namely Serbia and Montenegro.

The war between France and Germany, that took place in 1870, changed the balance of power not only in Europe, but also in the Balkan region. During the war, Russia decided not to interfere and it adopted a policy of 'benevolent neutrality' that favoured Germany. Later, when Germany defeated France and the balance of power changed in Europe, it was the right moment for the Russian diplomacy to obtain compensation for its benevolent neutrality. The Russian government denounced the Black Sea terms stipulated in the Treaty of Paris and in 1871 the signatory Powers met in London and they made amendments to the Black Sea terms. This was a victory for the Russian foreign policy and it allowed Russia to restore its position in the Balkan region.¹¹⁴ It would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole political history of Europe after 1871 was concentrated on the Balkan Peninsula. In 1873, a new powerful alliance emerged, namely the League of the three Emperors. The alliance was concluded between Germany, Russia and Austro-Hungary.

All these changes were a sign that the *status quo* established by the Crimean system could not be preserved for a long time. A new phase of the Eastern Question occurred in 1875 and it endangered the European peace to a great extent. The English Prime Minister made a speech in favour of the Ottoman government. It was in contrast with

¹¹² Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p. 228-229.

¹¹³ Stojanovich, *The Great Powers*, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 352.

the speech of Alexander II addressed to the nobles of Moscow on the following day, when the Russian Emperor declared that “If he failed to obtain with the aid of Europe the guarantee which he was entitled to demand from Turkey, he would be obligated to act alone”¹¹⁵. Thus, the following developments in the Balkan would pass under the growing rivalry of the two Great Powers Russia and Britain.

1.2.2 The Attempts for Peaceful Solution

The Great Powers made an attempt to find a peaceful solution through diplomatic actions. The first step was made by Austro-Hungary. On the 30th of December 1875 Andrassy proposed a note that detailed a program of reforms which the Great Powers should recommend to the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁶ His initiative failed because the insurgents refused it. Gorchakov elaborated a scheme for a mutual intervention of the Great Powers in Istanbul so as to impose a reform program. Besides, in his inner thoughts, he expected autonomous states to be the consequence. Disraeli proposed a conference “based upon the territorial status quo” convened.¹¹⁷ The Great Powers had different positions based on various interests. Although they tried to persuade each other and to reach agreements as regards the Eastern Question, the Great Powers were not able to find a mutually convenient solution to the crisis.

Besides, there was another factor that had an impact upon the crisis in the year 1875. The situation was different in comparison with what had happened twenty years ago. The strong national feeling among the Balkan population was vivid in their own schemes for partition of the Balkan Peninsula. The Greeks had their Megali Idea, aiming at the recreation of the Byzantine Empire. They foresaw the acquisition of lands, at its furthest extent, south of a line running through the Balkan Mountains up to the Albanian coast. The Serbians wanted to annex Bosnia, Herzegovina and Kosovo regions and to create Great Serbia. These were the territories possessed by the Old Serbian Kingdom. They could only create an alliance with Montenegro because Montenegro had already been recognized as an autonomous province. The two Romanian Principalities dreamed of a unification of Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia with the two autonomous provinces. After the establishment of the Independent Church, the Bulgarians believed that they would soon gain their Independence within the borders of

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 105-106.

¹¹⁶ The text of the note in Edward Herstlet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty, Vol IV* (London: Harrison and Sons 1891), p. 2418-2429, No 456.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p. 236.

the Bulgarian Exarchate. Not only were these programs contradictory, but they obviously concerned the interests of the Great Powers. Such programs contradicted especially Britain's support for preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. If a comparison had been made between the desires of the Great Powers and those of the Balkan population, people would have seen the impossibility to satisfy both of them.¹¹⁸

On May 13, 1876 the joint efforts of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Russia elaborate another proposal named Berlin Memorandum, which before its presentation to the Ottoman Government had to receive the approval and the support of the rest of the Great Powers – France, Britain and Italy. But the British authorities refused to give their support for the Memorandum.¹¹⁹ However, the crisis deepened when the Sultan abdicated on the 29th of May 1876, the Bulgarian population revolted and both Serbia and Montenegro declared war against the Ottoman Empire in June 1876.

Later on, Austro-Hungary and Russia reached an agreement, namely the Reichstadt agreement, based on the possible results of one war: "If Turkey won, she would not be allowed to benefit from her victory, if she were defeated, Russia would recover the part of Bessarabia which had been taken from her in 1856 and Austro-Hungary could acquire some or all of Bosnia. Finally, if the Ottoman Empire collapsed, Constantinople was to become a free city, and Bulgaria, Rumelia and perhaps Albania, would become autonomous or independent."¹²⁰ The two statesmen, Count Gorchakov and Count Andrassy, met in July 1876 at Reichstadt. The meeting was organised according to the policy established by the Three Emperors' Alliance for harmonization of their attitude towards the Eastern Crisis. The crucial agreement was that 'no large Slav state would be formed'. However, the agreement had a lack of clarity as to which state it was about. The two foreign ministers pointed out to a 'large Slav state'. What did they mean? Bulgaria or Serbia? This pact was reaffirmed and its stipulations were defined in January and March 1877 at the Budapest Convention. At that time Russia prepared for a possible war with the Ottoman Empire. The military convention signed between Russia and Austro-Hungary obliged Russia not to conduct military actions in the Western Balkans. Thus, the Balkans was divided into eastern and western political and military

¹¹⁸ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 329-335.

¹¹⁹ Yono Mitev, "Diplomaticheskata Konferentsia v Tsarigrad 1876 g. Bulgarskiat vapors", in *Osvobozhdenieto na Bulgaria, materiali ot yubileina mezhdunarodna nauchna sesiya*, (Sofia: BAN 1982), p. 46-56.

¹²⁰ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p. 237-238.

spheres of influence.¹²¹ Therefore, it could be concluded that the signatories of the words “large Slav state” referred to Bulgaria.

While Austro-Hungary and Russia were making secret agreement for division of the Balkans, the British authorities took the initiatives and made a proposal for convening a conference, where the Great Powers to find a solution for coming to head crisis.

1.2.3 The Last Attempt - Istanbul Conference

The Great Powers met in Istanbul from the 23rd of December 1876 until the 20th of January 1877. Before this conference, two unsuccessful diplomatic initiatives had existed: Andrassy’s Note and Berlin Memorandum. Besides, there was a war threat between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. However, the European powers accepted the idea to organise a Conference, as suggested by the British Government. The purpose of the Conference was to find a solution to the crisis arisen in the Balkans between 1875 and 1878. It was decided that the Great Powers’ Ambassadors in the Ottoman Empire would attend as representatives and one more statesman sent by each Power. The British cabinet decided to send Lord Salisbury¹²², together with Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador in Istanbul.

Before leaving for Istanbul, Lord Salisbury received instructions from the British cabinet as regards Britain’s position at the Conference and the strategy that had to be followed for the territorial changes in the Balkans. Such changes would make it possible to secure the British interests in the region and to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, avoiding the military intervention in the Ottoman Empire. According to the strategy of the British Cabinet, the *status quo* had to be maintained in Serbia and Montenegro, while ensuring administrative autonomy to the Province of Bosnia. As regards Bulgaria, some guarantees had to be given against maladministration. They wanted to exclude the opportunity of a tributary state to emerge.¹²³ Lord Salisbury was empowered “to demand administrative autonomy for the insurgent provinces, with efficient guarantees for its being a reality, but excluded acquiescence in the military occupation”.¹²⁴ This

¹²¹ Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan Entanglements*, p. 171.

¹²² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-77*’, from Lord Derby to Marquis of Salisbury, November 20, 1876, Turkey. No2 (1877), p.1.

¹²³ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question. A study of Diplomacy and Party Policy*, (Psychology Press 1962), p. 108.

¹²⁴ Cecil, Lady Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis Salisbury* (London:Hodder and Stoughton London 1923), p. 93.

meant that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire had to be preserved. As a guarantee for preserving the integrity, the Christian minorities' life conditions had to improve, in order to suppress their desires to separate from the Empire.

Lord Salisbury left London and during his travelling, the Foreign Office decided that it would be useful for him to visit the capitals of the European Powers so as he could explore the position that they would probably take at the Conference. After the meetings in France, Germany, Austria and Italy, Lord Salisbury concluded that none of the Great Powers expected a successful result at the Conference. The Austrian Foreign Minister Andrassy appeared to be strongly averse to the formation of any tributary states, as he believed that such an arrangement would not secure either the political stability or the good government of the population. He also strongly opposed to the idea of a Russian occupation, and expressed the hope that Britain would not sanction it.¹²⁵ This was suitable for the British desires and the two Powers could collaborate on these issues. But the reality of the situation, after the insurrection in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, required the Great Powers to insist on the implementation of particular reforms. Every new step in the introduction of reforms would reduce the power of the Empire in this region and it would lead to the Great Powers' influence increase in the Balkans. Because of this reason, the Austrian Foreign Minister objected to any policy for the settlement of the provinces which would give Russia a good opportunity of interfering further in the Balkans. He did not want the territories settled with Bulgarians to be organised in a province that would occupy a large area of land and would create a Pan-Slavism influence on the population, because according to the Austrian Foreign Minister, the moment of emergence of a new Slav state on the Peninsula could have happened very soon.

After the meeting with Bismarck, Lord Salisbury realised that Bismarck did not believe in a solution either. He focused only on establishing what should be done when the Ottoman Empire could not continue any longer its ruling over the European Provinces. At that moment, Germany did not have certain interests in the East. Bismarck thought that the Great Powers would agree upon the division of the Ottoman territories: "Bosnia and Herzegovina for Austria; Egypt for England; Bulgaria possibly for Russia; the Turks in Istanbul with some surrounding country like the Eastern Empire; the rest for

¹²⁵ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-77*', from Marquise of Salisbury to Lord Derby, Rome, November 29, 1876, Turkey. No2 (1877), p. 18-19.

Greece”. The French Foreign Minister Decazes considered similar decision of the Eastern Question as recognition of the possibility that the Great Powers would occupy together the Balkan Provinces of the Ottoman Empire, suggesting “Bosnia for Austria, Bulgaria for Russia, and Macedonia for England – but admitting that there would be serious difficulty to come to any such arrangement.”¹²⁶ At that moment, each of the Great Powers had its own interests in the Ottoman Empire and the preservation of *status quo* secured them. None of the Great Powers was ready for the separation of the Ottoman Empire because they were not ready for the consequences that would follow. After those meetings, Lord Salisbury also had doubts about the possibility to reach an agreement at the Conference.

At that time, there was a rivalry between Russia and Britain as regards the future of the Ottoman Empire, as each Power had its interests in the East. Russia’s particular interest in the Balkans endangered the *status quo* established after the Crimean War. The so called Crimean system had an aim to keep Russia far from the opportunity to have access to the Aegean Sea. The threat of a possible war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire could lead to a war between Britain and Russia and that could lead to a European war. None of the Great Powers was prepared for a war. After the meeting with Andrassy and Bismarck, Lord Salisbury wrote: “Both argued that we should not make the passage of the Danube a cause of war. Both urged that we should occupy Constantinople. Both were thinking very little as what was to be done if had broken up.” Therefore, Lord Salisbury reached the conclusion that they were partners and they desired Russia to waste its strength in a war with Ottoman Empire, not with Britain, because in that case they would be forced to take sides and they were not ready for such things.¹²⁷

1.2.4 The Division of the Bulgarian Lands at the Istanbul Conference

Lord Salisbury had to meet his opponent, Count Ignatyev, in Istanbul. He was a diplomat with significant experience in the Eastern Affairs. He worked as Russian Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire between 1864 and 1877. He was also a member of the Pan-Slavism society and he was seriously influenced by its ideas. He supported the Bulgarians in their fight for an independent church and it was also his idea to be created “Great Bulgaria”. According to his ideas, the first Russian proposal, presented by Count

¹²⁶ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 95-100.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Ignatyev in the private meeting with Lord Salisbury, had the following frame: “Bulgaria to form one province; covers all coloured tallow in Kiepert’s Map except Varna, Adrianople, Wodena.”¹²⁸ This project for governing Bulgaria was prepared by Mr. Schuyler and Prince Tzeretelev. It was written in the project that “BULGARIA will form an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, composed of Danube and Sofia vilayets, the Sanjaks of Philippopolis and Slivno, and the Bulgarian districts of Macedonia. The unit for administrative purpose will be the canton (mudirlik), with an average number of inhabitants from 5,000 to 10,000. A General Governor will be assigned to rule over Bulgaria. This Governor should speak the language of the country, and should be nominated for five years by an agreement between the Porte and the Guaranteeing Powers. The official language of the province will be Bulgarian”.¹²⁹ That was the main sketch for a further organisation of the Bulgarian territories. This project became the maximum program of the Russian proposal. The British representatives were also informed about this project and Sir Henry Elliot received a copy of the project that was sent to Lord Derby on the 4th of December 1876.¹³⁰

The expression of the British representative, after the first meetings between Lord Salisbury and Count Ignatyev in Istanbul, was that: “the Russian plenipotentiary was ready to abandon without serious resistance his plan for a single “big Bulgaria”; he consented to its division into two provinces and he consented to its frontier being thrown well back from the Aegean seaboard”.¹³¹ During the preparation for the Conference, Count Ignatyev received instructions from Count Gorchakov as regards the Russian Empire’s program that had to be presented at the meetings. Count Gorchakov’s instructions approved Lord Salisbury’s impression for Russia’s readiness to divide the Bulgarian territory:

Present first the maximum. That will show that we were not aiming at dictation (terms), as we are accused of doing. It is not impossible that the minimum project may be the majority in view of its moderation – perhaps even Salisbury, who has gathered at Paris, and will gather in Berlin, a favourable impression to us. According to you, who are the best judge, the minimum already assures to

¹²⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-77*’, from Marquise of Salisbury to Lord Derby, Constantinople, December 8, 1876, Turkey. No2 (1877), p. 21.

¹²⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-77*’, from Mr. Baring to Sir H. Elliot, Philippopolis, December 1, 1876, Turkey. No2 (1877), p. 30-31.

¹³⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-77*’, from Marquise of Salisbury to Lord Derby, Constantinople, December 4, 1876, 11:50 p.m, Turkey. No2 (1877), p. 28

¹³¹ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 107-108.

Bulgaria a satisfactory and attained autonomy, being based on the elements which the country offers. If your two projects are ruled out, you will enter your opinion in the minutes and will reiterate it at the Conference, from which, in my view, you must not hold aloof. If in the preliminary discussions the project of Salisbury or other serious guarantees, you will not reject it forthwith and will take it ad referendumEven if our minimum prevails, it would be a great result which would spare us the military campaign, which would be risky both politically and materially and would above all bear heavily on our financial position. If we can avoid it, while maintaining intact the honour and dignity of the Empire, I should applaud loudly and our country would gain.¹³²

The Russian project contained two programs: a minimum program and a maximum program. On a scale of achievement, the maximum program signifies the maximal level of acceptance that was single, autonomous Bulgarian province situated on large area of land between Black Sea and Aegean sea, while the minimum program signifies the minimum level of acceptance the reduce of dimensions of the province, its division and organisation into two “vilayets”, granted with administrative autonomy. If both proposals had been rejected and if any of Powers had presented another proposal with guarantees, Count Gorchakov insisted Count Ignatyev to accept it.

Although there were some loud voices in the Russian society and especially in the Pan-Slavism society, which were in favour of war, the Russian Government tried to prevent the military collision. The Russian Empire was not prepared for a military campaign, but at the end of the 19th century, a tendency occurred which showed that the voice of the society had the power to force the authorities to take decisions even if they risked the financial and political ground of the country. This was the case of the Russian Empire.

Therefore, a project for the organisation of the territories inhabited by Bulgarian population, was presented for the first time during the Conference. The proposal was approved unanimously by all the representatives and it stipulated that the territory had to be divided and organised into two provinces, temporarily named East and West. The East province included Ruse, Tarnovo, Tulcha, Varna, Sliven, Plovdiv and Kaza Kirk Klise, Mustafa Pasha and Kizil Agach, with Tarnovo as main town. The West province included Sofia, Vidin, Nis, Skopie, Bitola, Strumitsa, Tikvesh, Veles and Kastoria, with Sofia as main town.¹³³ On the 21st of December 1876, the representatives of the Great Powers unanimously agreed and signed a program that had to be proposed to the

¹³² Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 125-126.

¹³³ Todor Ikonov, *Protokoli na Tsarigradskata konferentsia i Londonskii protokol. Prevod ot frenski* (Varna 1885), p. 19-25.

Ottoman Empire authorities. It included the terms of peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Serbians, the autonomy of Bosnia and Bulgaria and the establishment of an international commission which to be entrusted with the function to carry out this program.¹³⁴ Lord Salisbury explained the reasons for the division of the territory, pointing out the religious and ethnic principles.¹³⁵ If it is compared the territories recognized by the Ottoman *Firman* established the Independent Bulgarian Church in 1870, which was accepted as the ethnic boundaries of the Bulgarian population in the Ottoman Empire, with those accepted in the project presented by the Istanbul Conference, their similarity is obvious, with little exceptions (Map 2 and Map 3). But this division could also be estimated as a division of the sphere of influence in the Balkan region. The East part containing the entire Black Sea shore was left to Russia and the west part was left to Austro-Hungary and England. Lord Salisbury's proposal for the division of East and West intended to prevent the appearance of a strong and independent province with too much power over the strategic positions in the Balkans. He did not want a large and autonomous province to be created, in which the Bulgarians would represent a predominant majority. He insisted on a division so as the provinces would reduce the Bulgarian element as a national factor in territorial combinations in the Balkans.¹³⁶ The East Province contained three regions with Bulgarian population majority: Tarnovo, Plovdiv and Sliven were conjoint with three regions inhabited by Muslim population: Varna, Ruse and Tulcha. This proportion of the population in the East province would prevent the Russian penetration. The creation of the West province was accomplished on a different principle. There, the majority of the population was Bulgarian, in the regions Vidin, Nish and the South part that contained Macedonia together with the Bulgarian population, there was a large number of Greek population. The province was far from Russia, geographically speaking, and it was contiguous to the sphere of interest of Austro-Hungary and Britain. This distribution of the spheres of influence could have secured the British interest in the Aegean Sea and the Austro-Hungarian interest in the Balkans.

Nine formal meetings took place before the Conference broke up on the 20th of January 1877, without reaching any result. After the Porte proclaimed the Constitution, the Ottoman Government refused to accept the program for settlement of the crisis

¹³⁴ Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 122.

¹³⁵ Ikonomov, *Protokoli na Tsarigradskata*, p. 39.

¹³⁶ Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapors*, p. 91.

elaborated by the delegates of the great Powers. Its rejection was conveyed by an imperial decree issued by the Council of Notables, convoked in Istanbul on the 18th of January.¹³⁷

After the failure of the Constantinople Conference, Lord Salisbury shared his view, in a letter to Lord Derby, on the crisis that could develop in the future, which turned out to be very accurate:

Your future policy will require the gravest consideration. You will have to choose between (1) Helping to coerce; which would give you a voice in the ultimate disposal - but that you will not do. (2) Allowing Russia to her worst, and if she attacks and wins, coming in to regular demands when peace is talked of. This would be the easiest way, if practicable. But it is very possible that she may refuse to let you have your word at the end, and that you may have to content yourself with writing a pathetic dispatch on the model of Aberdeen's after peace of Adrianople. (3) You may come to terms with Andrassy and Count Gorchakov for a regulate occupation of Bulgaria and Bosnia; providing for evacuation after a certain date, and securing an indemnity to the occupying Powers out of the revenues of the provinces, of which Bulgaria at least is very rich. This could only end in the creation of two tributary states, but I believe it to be the safest course. Even if Russia does not invade, it will crumble of itself: and the Russian Embassy has in its hands the threads of a vast network of intrigue, by which it can, it will aggravate enormously any natural causes of anarchy.¹³⁸

It is only necessary to compare this with the ultimate settlement of the Berlin Treaty after the revision of the San Stefano Treaty, and one will see the implementation of the above mentioned policy. Lord Salisbury was able to correctly predict the development of events, but eventually he managed to successfully turn the situation to Britain's advantage, preparing the necessary diplomatic moves.¹³⁹

1.3. The New order in the Balkans

1.3.1. The Treaty of San Stefano

The Treaty of San Stefano was signed on the 3rd of March, 1878. The Preliminary Treaty arranged the peace between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Its main stipulations regarded the creation of the new political structure in the Balkan Peninsula. The articles VI, VII, VIII, IX, X and XI settled the terms under which the Principality of Bulgaria had to be organised. The new state unit was created as an "autonomous tributary Principality, with a Christian Government and a national militia". The boundaries of the new state were designated. It was bordered by the river Danube to the

¹³⁷ Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 134

¹³⁸ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 124

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 271

north and it reached the Black Sea shore. The boundary followed the Black Sea shore to the east, reaching Hakim-Tabiassi to the south. Then, the southern border traced the line towards the towns Loule – Bourgaz, Tchorlu, Thimermen. After these towns, it passed the Rhodope Mountain and it followed from Buru-Guel on the Aegean Sea coast to the mouth of the rivers Struma and Mesta. Then, through the middle of Lake Bechik-Guel, the border continued to the mouth of the river Vardar, passing by Yanitza and it reached Lake Kastoria. The western border included *kaza* of Ohrid, following its limits and it continued to run along the western limit of *kaza* of Kotchani, Kumanovo and Vrania as far as the river Danube reached to the north.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the new Principalities obtained a territory of 170 000 square meters. They included the regions of the towns Vidin, Vratsa, Tarnovo, Sofia, Ruse, Silistra, Varna, Pirot, Vrania, almost the whole territory of Macedonia and a part of East Thrace. This part of East Thrace extended towards the coast of the Aegean Sea and the south of Dobrudja. Covering this large amount of land in the Balkan Peninsula, the Principalities became the largest state among the Balkan states.

The Peace Treaty was prepared by Count Ignatyev, the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul. Elaborating the draft for the articles concerning the future organisation of the Balkans, Count Ignatyev guided the decisions of the Ambassadors at the Conference of Istanbul, in December 1876. The consent given to the reforms which were reached and signed at the above-mentioned Conference, constituted the only possible authoritative legal basis for the terms of the forthcoming peace treaty because they assumed the agreement in principle of the other interested Great Powers. The correction made by Count Ignatyev in the draft, provided access to the Aegean Sea for the new state, in return Pirot and Nis were attributed to Serbia and North Dobrodja was assigned to Rumania as a compensation for Bessarabia which was taken by Russia. Thus, what Count Ignatyev had failed to achieve at the Conference of Istanbul a year before, he accomplished then, by taking advantage of the Ottoman defeat.

The Prince of the Principality had to be elected by the Bulgarian population. His election had to be confirmed by the Ottoman Government and approved unanimously by the Great Powers. The Prince could not to be chosen from the ruling dynasties of the European countries. A two-year provisional Russian administration was established that

¹⁴⁰ Parliamentary Papers, '*Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey, San Stefano, March 1878*', from Count Schouvaloff to Lord Derby, Londre le 11/23 Mars, Turkey No. 22 (1878), p.11.

had to organise the future administration of the Principality.¹⁴¹ Bulgaria would be under Russian occupation as long as the period of country organisation continued. The Russian troops would remain in the country after the evacuation of the Ottoman army. The Ottoman Government would have no more the right to garrison on the territory of Bulgaria.¹⁴² A special Ottoman-Bulgarian commission had to be established under the superintendence of the Imperial Russian Commissioner, whose duty was to settle the question that referred to the properties of the Sublime Porte on the territory of the new Principality.¹⁴³ As a tributary state, the Principality had to pay an annual tribute to the Ottoman Empire. The tribute was calculated on the average revenue of the Principality.¹⁴⁴

Actually, the formation of Bulgaria was accomplished according to a formula established in the nineteenth century by the Great Powers. After the second Serbian uprising in 1815, the first independent state was created on the Balkan Peninsula, namely the Principality of Serbia. After the Greek Independence War in 1830, the Principality of Greece was acknowledged. At the beginning, both Principalities had the status of suzerains of the Ottoman Empire and they paid annual tribute to the Sublime Porte.

When the Great Powers realised the impossibility to suppress the national movements of the Balkan population, they tried to find a new formula to maintain their interests undamaged in the region. They found it in the establishment of small national states under the suzerainty of the Sublime Porte. Thus, the Concert of Europe considered that the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire was preserved and the *status quo* was secured.

So, Bulgaria was not an exception. Its emergence was a natural succession of such strategies. But when the Russian authorities made the Treaty of San Stefano available to the public, the Concert of Europe turned against its execution and insisted on the revision of the Treaty. Bulgaria's size was the main issue objected by the other Great Powers. The boundaries of the Bulgarian state, created by the Treaty of San Stefano,

¹⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, '*Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey, San Stefano, March 1878*', from Count Schouvaloff to Lord Derby, Londres le 11/23 Mars, Turkey No. 22(1878), p.12.

¹⁴² Parliamentary Papers, '*Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey, San Stefano, March 1878*', from Count Schouvaloff to Lord Derby, Londres le 11/23 Mars, Turkey No. 22(1878), p.12.

¹⁴³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey, San Stefano, March 1878*', from Count Schouvaloff to Lord Derby, Londres le 11/23 Mars, Turkey No. 22(1878), p.13.

¹⁴⁴ Parliamentary Papers, '*Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey, San Stefano, March 1878*', from Count Schouvaloff to Lord Derby, Londres le 11/23 Mars, Turkey No. 22(1878), p.12.

overlapped the territories of the two *vilayets*, East and West. The two *vilayets* were inhabited by Bulgarians. They were granted administrative autonomy by the project for implementation of reforms prepared by the Great Powers at the Istanbul Conference in 1876-1877. Therefore, the territories of the Principality of Bulgaria were practically recognized by mutual agreement of the Powers as they expressed it at the Istanbul Conference in 1876-1877. However, the political situation changed in 1878. The defeat of Ottoman Empire strengthened Russia's position in the region. In 1877, when Conference of Istanbul took place, Britain and Austro-Hungary had agreed upon the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian province. Nevertheless, they were ready to oppose the creation of a tributary Bulgarian state in 1878.

On the 25th of March 1878, Lord Derby gave a speech in the House of Lords concerning the Treaty of San Stefano and the possible outcomes for the British interests in the region. He said that if Bulgaria became a large state, the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire would remain without borders, without fortresses. Its dismemberment would make it impossible to defend. Thus, the Ottoman Empire would no longer exist.¹⁴⁵ Actually, the British authorities were more concerned about the establishment of a state which would depend on Russia, as Bulgaria was supposed to become, because it would allow Russia to interfere intensively in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁶

For Austria-Hungary, the Treaty of San Stefano was the worst that could happen. In the nineteenth century, the objectives of the Dual Monarchy were directed towards West Balkans. Count Andrassy's program contained the acquisition of Macedonia that would secure the access to the Aegean Sea. One powerful Slav state could also inspire national feelings and desires for separation of the Slav population that lived in the Monarchy and it endangered the domestic *status quo*. As the other Great Powers, Austro-Hungary was worried that Bulgaria could become a Russian satellite, unable to free itself from Russia's influence.¹⁴⁷

The harassment of France was engendered by the possibility of the *status quo* to be broken in the Mediterranean basin, if big Bulgaria were allowed to extend to its coast. The south coast of the new state was unacceptable to the French interest in the region. At that moment, France endeavoured to secure its possessions and investments in

¹⁴⁵ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁶ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p.176.

¹⁴⁷ Teodora Toleva, *Vanshnata Politika na Dyula Andrashi i vaznikvaneto na Makedonskia vapros* (Sofia: Ciela 2013), p. 114-115.

Egypt, Tunis and Algeria. The French foreign minister made plans for restoration of its political and military prestige, by enforcing France as a dominant power in the Mediterranean Sea. He desired to alienate Britain from the region through acquiring territories in Asia Minor.¹⁴⁸

Thus, when the Great Powers became aware of the terms of the San Stefano Treaty, all of them insisted to revise its stipulations. They justified their reason based on the agreements they had reached and signed in the Treaties of Paris and Vienna. Since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, according to well-established international practices, all the territorial changes in Europe's borders, affecting smaller countries, were mandatorily subjected to the agreement of the Great Powers. Such changes obtained an international legal validity only after their joint approval. Later on, the signatory Powers signed the Treaty of Paris in 1856. The Powers agreed upon the fact that the issues concerning the Eastern Question could not be solved separately, but they had to be debated by the Concert of Europe. This stipulation was confirmed in 1872 and, in addition, the Concert of Europe signed a solemn declaration binding the European Powers to the principle “that no Power can liberate itself from terms of a Treaty without the consent of the other contracting Power”.¹⁴⁹ The stipulations of the San Stefano Treaty itself constituted a breach of the Treaty of Paris and Vienna.

A.J.P. Taylor argues that “the Russians demanded a “Big Bulgaria”, meaning Bulgaria as it had been agreed at the Conference of Constantinople twelve months earlier. According to him the concept had no Machiavellian sense because “a Bulgarian national state seemed the only alternative to the Turkish rule”.¹⁵⁰ That was the desire of the Russian diplomacy. The Treaty of San Stefano left the Ottoman Empire “with frontiers which defy every law of geography, politics or common sense”. The connection to its territories from west Balkans was cut off. The creation of large Bulgaria state neglected the non-Slav races of the Peninsula and raised their discontent.¹⁵¹ As the last state formation of the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria could not be bigger and more powerful than its neighbours which had already settled particular relationships with the Great Powers.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 114-115.

¹⁴⁹ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 227.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p. 246.

¹⁵¹ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 107.

¹⁵² Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 55.

For all these reasons mentioned above, the Treaty of San Stefano had a short life. Then, why did the Russian authorities make it? There are a few hypotheses about the Russian Government's reason to prepare the Treaty of San Stefano. It was true that the victory in war was expected by none of the Great Powers. Russia did not expect it either. Nevertheless, Russia knew that no peace treaty would get legal recognition unless it took into account the interests of the remaining Great Powers.

On the eve of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877-1878, secret pacts were made with Austria-Hungary and Great Britain. Under the obligation of the Reichstadt agreement, Russia agreed not to create new political formations such as a "big Slav State". Besides, the Russian authorities assured Britain that they had no intention of acquiring Istanbul and that the occupation of Bulgarian territories would be provisional.¹⁵³

The creation of a large powerful Slav state by obtaining territories between the river Danube and the Aegean Sea was "the heart of the Russian program".¹⁵⁴ However, it was uncertain to whom this program actually belonged. Did it belong to the Russian governing authorities or to the Pan-Slavic circle? The stipulations of the Treaty implemented the Pan-Slavic ideas for the union of the Slav population and the creation of one powerful Slav state in the Balkans. From this point of view, the San-Stefano Treaty was a Pan-Slavic settlement. A conclusion can be drawn that the Treaty of San Stefano was a victory of the Pan Slavic circles existent in the Russian ruling class. However, it is unlikely that such a victory would have succeeded without the approval of the official Russian authorities.

Russia waged twelve wars against the Ottoman Empire. The wars were subjected to the same expansive strategy to control the Black Sea straits and the hinterland - the Balkan Peninsula. The thirteenth war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire is an unusual war. It differs significantly from the previous wars and it is not motivated by the previous aggressive political strategy. In this case, Russia was not ready and it did not want war. Therefore, it made great efforts to avoid the confrontation, seeking a peaceful solution to the Balkan conflict. However, some powerful political factors pushed the Tsarist Government to war.

Konstantin Kosev argues that, for several centuries, the Russian rulers had purposefully built Russia's reputation as a protector and ally of the Balkan Slavs and Christians from the Ottoman Empire. As the faith in the liberating mission of Russia was growing, its

¹⁵³ Medicott, *The Congress of Berlin*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 175.

position in the Balkans was strengthened to an equal extent. After the failure of the peaceful solution suggested in the Istanbul Conference, Russia faced the danger of prestige impairment. In case of a possible resignation or passive indifference to the fate of the Balkan nations at such a critical moment, Russia risked the impairment of its position in the Balkans, won at the cost of so many wars. The correlative relation between Russia's reputation as a protector and ally of the Balkan Christians and Slavs, on the one hand, and the protection of its position in the region, on the other hand, is beyond doubt. In 1878, Russia recovered its prestige that had suffered some damage after the Crimean War, when it triumphed in a war against the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Government did not have an alternative to the Treaty of San Stefano. After obtaining gains from the war, it became unacceptable to conceive a treaty less favourable in acquisitions than the San Stefano Treaty. Bulgaria's creation was envisaged. The Tsar and the ruling circles would have faced a strong resistance from the Russian society if its aim had not been achievable. During the Eastern crisis that occurred from the year 1875 to 1878, the struggle of the Slav population for independence received a strong support from the Russians. The Tsar himself declared that he had waged the war in the name of the Slav population that suffered under the Ottoman reign. When Count Ignatyev coordinated the draft of the peace treaty with the Tsar, the former traced out the borders of the Balkans. The Tsar approved the draft, but also expressed his doubts whether the contract would be carried out. In this regard, the Tsar said to Ignatyev that Russia was bound by secret preliminary commitments to Austria-Hungary and Britain as regards the Balkans' future, so he expected objections from their side. However, the Tsar approved the draft of the peace treaty without reservations or hesitations. Shortly afterwards, just before signing the San Stefano Treaty, Count Gorchakov ordered to Count Ignatyev, in a secret encoded telegram, that the contract should have the character of a "mere preliminary protocol".¹⁵⁵

Therefore, taking into account all the factors that referred to the internal affairs of Russia and the complicated political situation in the region, the Treaty of San Stefano made sense only as a tactical move of the Russian diplomacy. W.N. Medlicott argues that Count Ignatyev had prepared "the best bargaining weapon for Russia, which imposed its maximum terms on the Turks in the most bidding manner that was

¹⁵⁵ Konstantin Kosev, "San-Stefanskia miren dogovor: zad kulisite na diplomatsiyata", *Istorichesko badeshte*, No 2(1997), p. 21-28.

possible”.¹⁵⁶ Later on, the Tsarist Government took the road of compromises quite deliberately, in order to revise the Treaty of San Stefano. From March to June 1878, the authorities of the Great Powers raised the question of how the Treaty could be revised.

1.3.2. The Congress of Berlin

The Congress of Berlin was held from the 13th of June to the 13th of July 1878 and its aim was to revise the Treaty of San Stefano signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The decision to organise the Congress of Berlin came after the negotiations accomplished between the Great Powers, which agreed that all the main issues had to be settled before the congress. Otherwise it would be hard to reach a mutual agreement upon the controversial issues, which arose after the signing of the San Stefano Treaty. Among the Great Powers, Britain and Austro-Hungary were directly concerned about the Treaty of San Stefano. As Russia had already satisfied Austro-Hungary desires agreeing for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by it, the British desires remained to be satisfied.¹⁵⁷ The San Stefano Treaty threatened the British interests in the East. According to this, the principle agreement between the two Empires for revision of the San Stefano Treaty became the main condition for the arrangement of the Congress.

The stipulations of the San Stefano Treaty, which sanctioned the extension of Russia’s influence over the Balkans and Asia, on account of the Ottoman Empire concerned the British policy in the region. On the 17th of April 1878 Lord Salisbury shared his position on the issue, in a letter to Lord Russell: “I still think that the division of Bulgaria in Europe and the provision of compensation for England in Asia are the two keys of this difficult lock”¹⁵⁸.

At the beginning of May 1878 the Russian Government decided to begin the negotiations with the British Government. For this purpose, Count Shuvalov was sent to London with specific instructions. He took a step for direct negotiations with the British Government. The aim was to clarify the British proposal regarding the revision of the San Stefano Treaty. Lord Salisbury established the following terms for the agreement: the British Government did not object to Russia’s acquisition of the Bessarabia Province and of the towns Kars and Batumi; Britain did not object to Serbia and

¹⁵⁶ Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Alfred Fransiz Priban, *The Secret Treaties of Austro-Hungary 1879-1914* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press 1920), p. 188-190.

¹⁵⁸ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 243-245.

Montenegro's territory acquisition, it did not make claims for Bosnia, Herzegovina and Novipazar region; the British cabinet objected to the territory of Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury insisted that the territory of the new state should to be divided into two parts – the northern part to be organised as Principality with Bulgarian government, the southern part that would obtain the territory situated in the south of the Balkan mountain, had to be organised as a self-governing province, under the ruling of the Ottoman Empire, like the British colonies. In the following negotiations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs also insisted that the southern boundaries of the province should not include the coast of the Aegean Sea.¹⁵⁹

According to another source during the war Prince Gorchakov prepared a Memorandum which was communicated to Lord Derby by Russian Ambassador on the 17th of December, 1877 where he himself intimated for: “Bulgaria up to the Balkans to be made an autonomous vassal province under the guarantee of Europe.” The rest of the Balkan territories including the south part of Bulgaria had to be guaranteed with a “regular administration”.¹⁶⁰ This document, however, should be considered in the context of the development of the military operations and the difficulties of the Russian army which met in Pleven. Nevertheless, the sources revealed that the Russian authorities were not a stranger to an idea of the division of the Bulgarian lands on this scheme. The Bulgarian Historian Andrei Pantev also talks about the Prince Gorchakov's plan for a “little” war with the Ottoman Empire, which to limited to the line of the Balkan Mountain. This idea included a plan for Ottoman's rapid defeat, and then the future organisation of the Balkan provinces to be submitted to the Concert of Europe. However Gorchakov's program had provoked great dissent among the Slavophil circles in Moscow and Petersburg. He argues that Gorchakov considered that “once a small independent territorial area is provided for a future Bulgarian state, it will be able to continue on its own, despite the resistance of other forces”¹⁶¹.

At that time when the negotiations began, the Russian government and the Tsar himself had already agreed upon a division of the Bulgarian state, created by the San Stefano Treaty. At the meeting between Count Shuvalov and Alexander II, before Count Shuvalov's departure for London, Alexander II stated “To me it doesn't matter if there will be two or even three Bulgarias, if only they are secured by institutions which

¹⁵⁹ Kosev, *Bismark, Iztochnia vapors*, p. 446-450.

¹⁶⁰ Herstlet, *The Map of Europe*, Vol IV, p. 2634-2639, No 503.

¹⁶¹ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 44.

guarantee from the horrors which we saw”. Alexander II suggested that Count Shuvalov should negotiate for a division of Bulgaria on a north-south line, as it was agreed at the Istanbul Conference, rather than at the Balkan Mountains. If this division was adopted, both provinces could remain under the authority of the Sultan governed by General Governors. If not, then in the north of the Balkans inhabited by Bulgarians had to be established political autonomy, similar to that of the Rumania.¹⁶²

At the time of the negotiations between Count Shuvalov and Lord Salisbury, the Russian representative communicated that “the Czar would not hear of Turkish troops being retained in any of the emancipated provinces”¹⁶³. However, the British Government insisted on the preservation of the Sultan’s rights in the South Province by organising garrisons which would protect the frontiers. The question remained open for further discussion and in the memorandum was made reference that the Russian Emperor emphasized the importance of withdrawing the Ottoman military forces from the South part of Bulgaria, because he was concerned about the security of the Bulgarian population, if Ottoman troops had been left there. Theoretically, Lord Salisbury agreed with the withdrawal of the Ottoman army, but he desired that Russia would not object to congress decisions as regards the army’s permission to enter the Province, in case of insurrection or other threats.¹⁶⁴ Also, the congress considered other issues that remained open for further discussion, such as the Black sea coast frontiers and the West frontiers of Bulgaria, issues that had to be settled in a way to exclude the provinces which did not have Bulgarian population.

After several difficult days of negotiations, Count Shuvalov reached an agreement with Lord Salisbury. The Tsar approved the principal stipulations which comprised the Salisbury-Shuvalov agreement, and it was signed on the 30th and 31st of May 1878.¹⁶⁵

The signed memorandum Between Russian and Britain made possible the Congress of Berlin and it became a foundation for the treaty signed between the Great Powers later at the Congress of Berlin. Due to the stipulations of the Shuvalov-Salisbury agreement, the emergence of the new autonomous province in the Balkans was actually approved, and later it was named Eastern Rumelia.

¹⁶² Richard G. Weeks, Jr., “Peter Shuvalov and the Congress of Berlin: A Reinterpretation”, *The Journal of Modern History* 51, No. 1, (1979), p. D1056.

¹⁶³ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquise*, p. 258.

¹⁶⁴ Ivan V. Kozimenko, *Sbornik dogovor Rossii s drugu gosudarstvami 1856-1917*, (Moskva: Gospolitizdat 1952), p. 176-179.

¹⁶⁵ Weeks, Jr., “Peter Shuvalov”, p. D1057.

The Congress of Berlin began its works on the 13th of June 1878. Lord Salisbury, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Odo Russel were appointed as Plenipotentiaries at the Congress.¹⁶⁶ As he was preparing for the Congress, Lord Salisbury sketched out the general principles applicable to the agreement, which had to be settled in order to preserve Britain's interest. The constitution of the Province of Bulgaria "especially merits the attention of the English Plenipotentiaries". The British Plenipotentiaries had to defend their position as regards the territory situated in the south of the Balkan range. In their opinion, the territory had to be protected by institutions in a way which was similar to the British colonies, as suggested at the Istanbul Congress. At the same time, while necessary safeguard was provided for the good government of the population, the political and military authority of the Sultan's Government had to be sufficiently secured against the risks so as the Province would not become a field of intrigues and influences of other Powers that might enter with their invading army. The British Government also desired that the Ottoman forces would continue to occupy the passages through the Balkans if they were not allowed to enter the Province. The British Government would approve the presence of local militia in the Province only if the officers were nominated by the Sultan. The Greek population that was left in the new province, had to be preserved from absorption by the Slav population. The towns Thessaloniki and Cavalla had to be kept out of the jurisdiction of the province that could fall under the influence of Russia. It was preferable that the Aegean Coast would remain under the ruling of the Porte. Also, the British representatives objected to the period of occupation and the amount of forces and they required the decrease of such forces. The financial issues required the utmost attention, as a matter of principle, it had to be provided that the securities to which the British Government was entitled, as creditor of the Porte, should be left entirely unaffected by the Treaty. As regards the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, the British interests required the maintenance of the regulations which had already existed.¹⁶⁷

These instructions showed the intention of the British Government to exert pressure on Russia with the assistance of Austro-Hungary, which was also afraid of the extension of

¹⁶⁶ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress*', from Mr. Secretary Cross to the Earl of Beaconsfield/Marquise of Salisbury, Foreign Office, June 6, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p.1.

¹⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Odu Russell, Foreign Office, June 8, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 2-4.

Russia's influence over the Balkan Peninsula. The British Government desired the new Province to be entirely under the authority of the Ottoman Government. The fact was emphasized in the statement: "in the arrangements made for the government and defence of the territory south of the Balkans, the position of the Sultan should be made strategically so secure as to enable him to discharge independently the political duties which he has to perform"¹⁶⁸. By preserving the rights of the Greece population, the impact upon the Bulgarian population would be reduced. The British political and economic interests in the region would be maintained. The outstanding issues that were left open for debate during the Congress became a reason for the confrontation between Russian and British Plenipotentiaries at the first meetings of the congress.

The main issue of the Congress became the delimitation and the organisation of Bulgaria. As regards this matter, Bismarck suggested that the debate should open with the examination of the stipulations from the San Stefano Treaty, referring particularly to the future organisation of Bulgaria. Count Andrassy and Lord Beaconsfield accepted Bismarck's suggestion that the Bulgarian issue should have priority.¹⁶⁹

To avoid a direct confrontation between Russia and Britain during the sessions of Congress, Bismarck brought out the outstanding issues to be solved in direct meetings and then the decisions to be submitted for a vote within the Congress.¹⁷⁰ This greatly facilitated the works and overcame the threat of Congress dissolution because of the inability to reach consensus on certain issues. A private Committee of Austrian, Russian and British Plenipotentiaries, with Count Corti (Italian Plenipotentiary) as neutral member of the Congress, agreed to settle in principle the issue that referred to Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

The first draft proposal after the first private meeting settled the following agreements on the controversial points. The military occupation of Eastern Rumelia's frontiers by Ottoman Empire was accepted in a satisfactory manner; it was agreed that the Ottoman troops should occupy the frontiers with their regular military forces. The Ottoman military forces should not remain in the interior, unless formally summoned by the Governor and billeting should be forbidden. The Russian Commissary in Eastern

¹⁶⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress'*, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Odu Russell, Foreign Office, June 8, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 2-4.

¹⁶⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress'*, Protocol No. 1 – Sitting of June 13, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 11-15.

¹⁷⁰ Weeks, Jr., *"Peter Shuvalov"*, p. D1063.

Rumelia had to be superseded by an International Commission. Both the resolution for religious liberty and the maintenance of the Commercial Treaties were accepted.¹⁷¹

Lord Beaconsfield began to debate on the point that the Ottoman troops should have full rights to garrison in Eastern Rumelia. The Russian government was sensitive to the issue of returning the troops in the Province. Count Shuvalov had specific instructions which allowed him to negotiate locations for Ottoman troops' concentrations and the circumstances under which they could enter the province.¹⁷²

The next issue regarded the internal governance of the Province and the authority of the Sultan. At the meeting held on the 22nd of June, the British Representatives presented their proposal for the organisation of Bulgaria's southern part after making some amendments. They proposed that the province situated in the south of Balkans should take the name Eastern Rumelia. The Province should be placed under the direct military and political authority of the Sultan. His power was expressed in terms of the right "to provide for the defence of the sea and land frontiers of the province, the faculty of maintaining troops there, and of fortifying them there". The internal order had to be maintained by the militia, and the militia officers had to be appointed by the Sultan, who should take into consideration the religion of the population. The General Governor would have the right to summon the Ottoman troops, in case the security was threatened. With reference to the borders of Eastern Rumelia, Britain suggested that *Sandjak* of Sophia should be incorporated into the Principality of Bulgaria, in consideration of the retention of Varna by Turks, or of the exclusion of the basins of Mesta Karasou and Strouma Karasu from Eastern Rumelia.¹⁷³

It was the first time when the Province was named in this proposal. Until that time it was denominated in the official documents as "province south of the Balkans", "South Bulgaria", "the territory south of the Balkan", "unsatisfied Bulgaria".¹⁷⁴ At the meeting held on the 22nd of June, Russia opposed to the name Eastern Rumelia. Count Shuvalov explained that if they excluded the word "Bulgaria", they would deprive the population of a name that belonged to the people. The reason for the retention of the word

¹⁷¹ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress'*, from Marquise of Salisbury to her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State Berlin, June 26, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 40.

¹⁷² Weeks, Jr., *'Peter Shuvalov'*, p. D1062.

¹⁷³ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress'*, Protocol No. 4 – Sitting of June 22, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p.46-47.

¹⁷⁴ Weeks, Jr., *'Peter Shuvalov'*, p. D1056.

“Bulgaria” was that it would have been considered as “watchword or rallying point” for the dangerous aspirations of the population.¹⁷⁵

The Russian Plenipotentiary also objected to the two amendments of the British proposal from the 22nd of June, 1878 and insisted on the necessity that the Congress should determine the occasion and the entry manner of the Ottoman troops into Eastern Rumelia in case the General Governor would exercise this right. Russia’s Plenipotentiaries thought of that principle too, and they agreed that the interior of Eastern Rumelia should be occupied only by native militia, and that principle must be guaranteed. This could only be done, in their opinion, by a European Commission, whose responsibility was to determine the locations which the Ottoman Government might be allowed to occupy at its frontiers, and the approximate strength of these occupation forces.¹⁷⁶

At the meeting held on the 26th of June, it was agreed that, at once the treaty was signed a European Commission would be established for the administrative organisation of the Province and its financial administration until the accomplishment of the Organisation.¹⁷⁷

During the Congress sessions, the Russian representatives proposed to the Great Powers to prepare a Treaty that would guarantee the application of the resolutions.¹⁷⁸ The draft proposal presented by the Russian Plenipotentiaries raised the question about the way to secure the guarantees. For Britain and Austro-Hungary, the following stipulation stated in the second part of the proposal: “They (signatory Powers) reserve themselves the right to come to an understanding, in case of necessity, for the requisite means to ensure a result which neither the general interests of Europe, nor the dignity of the Great Powers permit them to leave invalid” if had the meaning of the necessity of employing a foreign force, they did not agree. In case the Treaty was not carried into effect, the further interference of the Powers had to be expressed through an active superintendence by diplomatic action.¹⁷⁹ The direct interference of the Great Powers

¹⁷⁵ Parliamentary Papers, *‘Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress’*, Protocol No. 4 – Sitting of June 22, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 48.

¹⁷⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *‘Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress’*, Protocol No. 24 – Sitting of June 22, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 48.

¹⁷⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *‘Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress’*, Protocol No.7 – Sitting of June 26, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 94.

¹⁷⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *‘Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress’*, Protocol No. 16 – Sitting of July 9, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 240.

¹⁷⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *‘Correspondence relating to the Treaty of Berlin, with the Protocols of the Congress’*, Protocol No. 17 – Sitting of July 10, 1878, Turkey No. 39(1878), p. 253.

would allow Russia to extend its influence over the Slav population in the Balkans, but Britain and Austro-Hungary wanted to restrict such a thing. Count Shuvalov and Gorchakov were greeted in Berlin by the British–Austrian coalition. The two Great Powers reached an agreement on the 6th of June, upon the mutual support measures, most of them regarding Bulgaria. This was one of Russia’s fears at the time of preparations for the Congress.¹⁸⁰

The Berlin Treaty aimed at bringing peace in Europe after the crisis in the Balkans between 1875 and 1878. The new order established and endorsed by the Great Powers had to preserve the *status quo* settled by the Treaty of Paris. Ensuring the peace in Europe was connected to the security in the Balkans. The Treaty drew the borders of the Balkan states and the European Province of the Ottoman Empire, it arranged their external and internal organisation. The establishment of the new autonomous province Eastern Rumelia actually followed the tradition that the Great Powers established for the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

The Congress of Berlin, its purposes and results were widely examined. For some of the authors, the Congress had the purpose to divide the new state in order to reduce as far as possible Russia’s sphere of influence, and to establish an international control over Bulgaria, which was dismembered in order to prevent the Russian influence from becoming exclusive even in that limited sphere. The big Bulgaria was divided into three segments: Principality of Bulgaria, Province of Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia was returned to the Ottoman Empire. Eastern Rumelia became a privileged province under the authority of Christian Governor, it had an assembly of notable people and its own organic law, drafted and put into practice under the control of the Great Powers; however, the Province remained an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸¹

The Congress of Berlin in comparison with the previous two Congresses those in Vienna (1815) and in Paris (1856) was convened not to deal with relations of the Great Powers but to establish new political order in the Balkans. The Congress of Berlin achieved to restore the balance of power broken by Russia’s unilateral attempt to set up a new political order by the creation of large Slav state reaching the Aegean coast. If the Treaty of San Stefano was imposed it would secure the absolute dominance of the Russian Empire in the Balkans. This possibility threatened the political and commercial

¹⁸⁰ Weeks, Jr., “*Peter Shuvalov*”, p. D1060.

¹⁸¹ *Studies on the Eastern Question, translated from French by Mr. Charles G. Fenwick, of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, The American Journal of Law* 5, No 1(1911), p. 144-177.

interest of the Russian political rival in the region - Britain. Therefore the British authorities took energetic actions to counteract to execution of the Treaty of San Stefano. The result from the skilful British diplomatic activities was the signing of the Treaty of Berlin. As it will be presented in this research the further developments in the Balkans in regard with the execution of provision of the Treaty of Berlin passed under the rivalry of Russia and Great Britain.

Chapter 2: British and Russian Interests in the Balkans during the 19th Century

The Congress of Berlin managed to establish a new political order, revising the Treaty of San Stefano. The British political interests in the Near East during the 19th century were challenged by the national movements of the Balkan population and also by Russia's advancement policy towards the Straits, supporting the national desires of the Balkan people. This political situation forced the British statesmen to reconsider the political course towards the Balkans. As a result, from a non-interested state at the beginning of the century, Britain became one of the major actors on the Balkan Peninsula at the end of the century. As a result from 1815 to 1878, Britain became Russia's rival for dominance over the Balkans. The British policy during the entire 19th century intended to suppress the further Russian advancement in the Balkan region, which threatened the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Only after taking possession of Crete in 1878 and Egypt in 1883, Britain provided the security of routes to India and the rivalry between the two Great Powers shifted over Asia.

At the same time, the Russian policy in the Balkans during the entire 19th century was subordinated to the strategic aim assigned by the Russian diplomacy to obtain access to the Mediterranean Sea through the possession of the Straits. For the achievement of this objective, the Russian authorities had to exercise control over the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore, the Russian traditional interests towards the Balkan population originated from the opportunity brought by the geopolitical position of the Balkans, which was favourable to the Russian expansion towards the Straits. In comparison with Britain, the Russian society and the Balkan population were united by their ethnic origin and confessed religion. Thus, two major aspects were comprised in the Russian policy towards the Balkans: firstly, the Orthodoxy and secondly, the Slavism. Even if they originated from different backgrounds, both of them gave the Russian authorities a reason to establish close relations with the Balkan Christians, fact that facilitated the Russian approach and penetration amongst them. Therefore, the Russian political program was influenced by these common aspects, representing the Russian Empire as protector of the Christendom and Slavdom members.

2.1. The British Policy in the Balkans

2.1.1 The British Policy until the Crimean War

During the 19th century, the Balkan Peninsula became the keystone of the Eastern Question. The events in this region developed in such ways that concerned the balance of power on the whole continent. The growing dissatisfaction of the local population influenced by the national ideology, together with the decreasing Ottoman authority, created a situation that required a new political approach to take control over the events. Among the Great Powers, Russia and France were two countries which had traditional interests in the Ottoman Empire, in comparison with Britain which had pursued a policy of non-intervention in the continental affairs. Only after the year 1820, the British statesmen displayed symptoms of a changing attitude. The dynamics of the events in the 19th century forced the British foreign policy, as regards the Balkan region, to pass through several transformations.

The Balkan region by itself was not a question of interest for the British Empire. If it is examined the British policy towards the Balkans territories, it will be seen that it should be considered in the context of the dominant aspects of British foreign policy at that time – British trade and colonial interests in the Mediterranean Sea and the Near East, the role of the Ottoman Empire as a guarantee for those interests and the Russian Empire which had become a menace for the same interests. Taking into account these facets of the British policy towards the Balkans, three different attitudes could be provisionally recognized. These attitudes intended to secure its interests. From the beginning of the century until 1830, the policy towards the Balkans had to be considered as part of the British trade interests in the Mediterranean Sea. After the year 1833 and until the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire's need to preserve its possession over the Balkans, became a guarantee for its existence. Respectively, its further maintenance became a guarantee for Britain in the Near East. Thus, when the Ottoman Empire was in a situation to endure losses because of lost territories in its European provinces, which opened a way of decay, the British policy towards the Balkans should be examined in the context of the endeavours to prevent the Ottoman Empire's collapse. After the Crimean War, until the Great Eastern Crisis, the British policy in Balkans was influenced by the growing Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Near East. At that time, the Balkans were reckoned as a key for the Ottoman Capital and the Straits were the key for

controlling the Near East. Although at the beginning of the century Britain acted like a non-interested country, at the end of the century, it became a major player in the Balkans. The British initial ideology for non-intervention slowly evolved during the century.

During the first half of the century, the British foreign policy was guided by powerful and energetic personalities such as Lord Robert Castlereagh, Lord George Canning and Lord Palmerston. Their attendance in the office coincided with 'a power vacuum' in Europe in the years between 1815 and 1864. The lack of a dominant power on the continent was deemed an opportunity for the British authorities to take control over Europe and other parts of the world, which at that time meant the Near East and the Far East. First of all, in order to succeed, Britain had to dominate over the Mediterranean Sea and later it had to master the routes to the Near East. To understand the British role in the global political context, G.D Clayton summarized the work of these three statesmen in the following way: "Canning had seen Britain primarily as a colonial and maritime power outside Europe, interesting herself in Europe only when forced to by the needs of self-defence. Castlereagh on the other hand, had wished Britain to play a full part within Europe, combining her diplomatic weight with that of other powers to maintain an orderly Europe - thereby of course, maintaining a balance and preserving Britain from continental aggression. It was Palmerston who first understood that after 1805 (or perhaps after 1815), Britain could play both roles, dominating both the continent and the oceans of the world."¹⁸²

Lord Palmerston served three times as foreign secretary in the years 1830-1834, 1835-1841 and 1846-1851. As regards the following two decades, he obtained the position of Prime Minister in two cabinets in 1855-1858 and 1859-1865. He professed the ideas of nationalism and conservatism. His foreign policy was conducted by the idea that the British Empire had to follow its imperial interest. Even if he supported the conservative view in his domestic policy, he did not hesitate to support and use the liberal and national movements arisen in Europe so as to secure the interest of his country.

Making a parallel between the aspects of the British foreign policy towards European affairs and its attitude towards the Balkan issues, it could be easier to comprehend the policy that Britain pursued in the Balkan region. Canning's refusal of an active presence of Britain in the European affairs, explained the British non-intervention at the time of

¹⁸² Gerald David Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli*, (London:University of London Press), p. 69-70.

the Serbian insurrection. After Castlereagh became Prime Minister, during the Greek War of Independence, the British policy altered and for the first time it pursued an active policy towards the Balkan affairs. This tendency was confirmed and developed by Palmerston, whose policy supported the modernization of the Ottoman Empire as a way of preserving its existence in the region. This policy completely counteracted the desires of the Balkan population whose national movements were an undesirable hindrance.

As we mentioned above, Britain's first direct intervention in the Balkan region was at the time of the Greek War of Independence 1821-1830. The insurrection of the Greek population and its struggle for independence, endangered the *status quo* in the Mediterranean region where France occupied a dominant position in trade followed by Britain. The establishment of a new state formation in this region influenced by France or Russia could be a menace for the British interests. Nevertheless, the British Government was worried about the destabilization of the Ottoman Empire that could imperil the trade with the Near East. It had been a profitable branch needed by the British economy. Thus, by 1821, the Britain foreign office increasingly began to act in the sense of the idea that the Ottoman Empire's existence brought more advantages for the British interest than damages, securing its commerce interest in the Mediterranean region and in the Near East.¹⁸³ So, the British Government's first reaction was to oppose the Greek revolt. Castlereagh as British Prime Minister reckoned that if Russia advanced in the Balkans, the balance of power would be endangered. However, Castlereagh refused any action of direct intervention in the conflict. He preferred the way of diplomacy. To prevent the active Russian intervention in the conflict, the British Prime Minister tried to convince the Russian Tsar that the Greek action was a revolutionary movement against the sovereign power of the Sultan, which was no less dangerous than the revolutionary movement widespread in Europe, challenging the autocratic ruling.¹⁸⁴

After Castlereagh died in 1822, the Prime Minister position was occupied by George Canning who also refused any actions that would involve Britain in the conflict. Both of them saw the Ottoman Empire as a barrier which had to prevent the Russian expansion towards the Mediterranean Sea through the Balkans. Britain wanted to avoid

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁴ R. J. Vincent, *Non Intervention and International Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1974), p. 73-83.

any action that would weaken the Ottoman Empire. After the crisis deepened, the British authorities became aware that they had to change their policy towards the Greek movement. In March 1823, it became obvious that the Greeks obtained a particular degree of advancement in the conflict and the Ottoman Empire did not have the necessary power to suppress the revolt. Those things forced the British Government to take the side of the Greek population in the conflict. In addition, the British authorities were aware of Greece's naval power which was important to their interest in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁸⁵

Starting from the year 1824, the new course of the British policy towards the Greek War of Independence established the following goals: “(1) to further British interests in the region; (2) not to allow Russia to take undue advantage of the Greek case; (3) to limit French influence and not to permit a Franco-Russian alliance; (4) not to permit the collapse of the Ottoman Empire; and (5) to bring about an autonomous or independent Greece leaning towards Britain”.¹⁸⁶ In this early stage of development of the Eastern Crisis, Britain still preferred to apply a moderate policy and to stand up strongly for the provisions of the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

Unfortunately, the British endeavours failed to prevent a Russian unilateral intervention in the Greek crisis. In 1828, Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman forces were defeated. By the provisions of the Adrianople Treaty, the Russian Empire gained significant prestige among the Balkan population which strengthened its position in the Balkans and secured its further influence over the region. One of the results seen after the Greek War of Independence was that, by 1830, it had become obvious that the continental balance of power established at the Congress of Paris would be in the future “as much affected by events in the Turkish Empire as it was by events in Spain, Portugal, Italy and South Africa.” From now on, the British foreign policy would be dominated by the idea that Russia could have the Black Sea only without the Straits and the Balkans.¹⁸⁷ The further actions of the British authorities were in line with this watchword.

Three years later, in July 1833, the Ottoman Empire signed the *Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi*. According to its provisions, Russia engaged to support the Ottoman Empire

¹⁸⁵ Matthew Smith Anderson, *Doğu Sorusu 1774-1923, Uluslararası İlişkiler Üzerinde Bir inceleme*, trans., İdil Eser, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları 2001), p. 78.

¹⁸⁶ Alexis Heracides, and Ada Dialla, *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century, Setting the Precedent* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2015), p. 111.

¹⁸⁷ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 58.

against the army of the rebelled governor of Egypt, Mehmet Ali Pasha, whose predominance on the battle field challenged the Sultan's sovereignty. In return, the Ottoman Government undertook to close the Straits against the entry of foreign war ships which belonged to any other Great Power in times of war.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, in case of war between Britain and Russia, the Russian navy could remain on the Black Sea coast, to be safe from unexpected British attacks. This privilege entitled Russia to have considerable advantages in its advancement in the Middle East. Consequently, the balance of power was broken. As a result, the following years was marked by the struggle between Russia and Britain. The reason of the first one was to keep its supremacy and Britain sought to restore the balance of power according to its understanding.¹⁸⁹

The obligation taken by the Ottoman authorities in the agreement raised serious encumbrances for Britain's future development in the region and forced the British Government to implement a more energetic policy towards the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans. Russia increased its influence over the Balkan region after the Russo-Ottoman War and the Adrianople Treaty endorsed broad autonomous rights for the Serbian and Danube principalities. Therefore, Britain took a course of policy to secure the Ottoman Empire's integrity. Firstly, the British Government endeavoured to improve its discredited relations with the Ottoman Government and to gain its trust. The presumption was that, in case of a second crisis similar to Mehmet Ali Pasha's rebellion, the Ottoman authorities would not seek the help of the Tsar. Secondly, the British authorities submitted their support for the Ottoman reformation program as a solution to the Christian discontent which caused insurrections against the Ottoman authorities. Also, the British statesmen desired to secure the Ottoman markets for their goods and to provide the import of raw materials from the Ottoman lands.¹⁹⁰

A new large scale program for reformation and modernization of the Ottoman Empire was promulgated in 1839. The Ottoman Empire received Britain's support as the intention of the Ottoman authorities was to centralize the Empire and to improve the governing apparatus. The British ambassador in Istanbul played an important role advising the Ottoman authorities during this process. The intention of the British

¹⁸⁸ Creasy, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 523.

¹⁸⁹ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 67; Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 95.

¹⁹⁰ Jelavich, *Russian Balka's Entanglements*, p. 95.

Government was to restore the control of the Ottoman authorities over its European provinces so as the Balkan population could be free from the Russian influence.

At that time, when Lord Palmerston was leading the Foreign Office, the interests of the British Empire in the Near East and Middle East increased. The main reasons were the intensified trade in Levant and the appearance of steamships that facilitated Britain's access to its important colony in India. These advances initiated a search for new shorter routes to the Middle East. The alternatives to the old route that went round Africa were only through Suez and the Red Sea or across the Syrian Desert towards the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf. The Ottoman geopolitical position in that region was of great importance for providing free and safe access to both alternative routes. According to the new realities which concerned Britain, Palmerston pursued a policy by which the Ottoman Empire had to strengthen its military power, to improve its administration system and thus, to establish a reformed Ottoman Empire as equal power and partner of the British Empire.¹⁹¹

In 1838, Britain signed a trade convention with the Ottoman Empire which extended the commercial rights of the British Empire in the Ottoman lands, providing open access of the merchants to the Empire's markets.¹⁹² For a very short period of time, the Ottoman Empire achieved the third position in Britain's export. Britain's manufactured goods dominated the Ottoman markets. After 1846, when the Corn Laws were issued, the Ottoman Empire and especially Egypt, the Danube Principalities and the Black Sea coast became the main suppliers of grain for Britain. The Ottoman Empire's existence became vitally important, securing cheap grain supplies for Britain's economy and trouble-free transportation of the British goods through the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East and also through the Balkan routes and the Danube region. As G. D. Clayton states: "The breakup of the empire could destroy a very profitable pattern of trade." During this time, the Russian Empire conducted a policy of increasing the rates which established a barrier for the British goods that were almost excluded from the Russian and Central Asia markets¹⁹³. In these circumstances, the Balkan region developed rapidly. The European province of the Ottoman Empire exported per person 2.7 more than Asia's provinces to Britain. The production of the Bulgarian lands took a

¹⁹¹ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914, A Survey of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge at the University Press 1945), p.192-198.

¹⁹² Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 282.

¹⁹³ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 89-92.

significant role as the export of corn from these territories increased from 296,000 hl. in 1840 to 1.6 million hl. in 1848.¹⁹⁴ The British Empire would not have liked to lose these markets in case of the Ottoman Empire's decay.

Three years later, the Straits Convention was signed in 1841. The Dardanelles were put under international supervision. The terms of the agreement stipulated the closure of the Straits for the war ships of all Great Powers outside times of war. As a matter of principle, the convention secured the interests of Britain and Russia at a moment when the rivalry increased between them in the Near East and respectively in the Ottoman Empire. The convention prevented the threat of British invasion on the southern shores of the Black Sea situated under Russian possession, and at the same time, Britain was protected from Russia's aggression in the Mediterranean Sea where British ships travelled. As regards the Ottoman Empire, it was reassured that Istanbul would not be endangered by hostile fleet.¹⁹⁵ However, the Straits Convention secured fundamentally the British interests, depriving the Russian Empire from the privilege obtained in 1833. Besides, it put Russia in a position of aggressor if it ever undertook actions to take possession over Istanbul or to cross the Straits without the consent of the other Great Powers.¹⁹⁶ The Straits Convention was a great success for the British diplomacy. Together with the implementation of reforms in the Ottoman Empire, the British statesmen were able to counteract the Russian penetration in the Balkans and to frustrate its privileged position in the Ottoman Empire.

The British economy's strong commitment in the Near East and the strategic importance of the Ottoman territories in this region, determined the British policy of preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire's territories, fact which was reflected in the development of the Balkans. Another decisive aspect of the British policy towards the Balkans was the strong conviction that the Russian policy in the Near East threatened its connections with India. This fear was felt during the entire governance of Palmerston. Lord Palmerston's foreign policy was a combination of ideas in favour of the balance of power in Europe as the only true political strategy that assured the British interest on the continent and in favour of nationality as a tool against its rivalries. Therefore, its actions exerted influence over the national and liberal movements which had arisen on the continent. Nevertheless, if Lord Palmerston accepted this policy for

¹⁹⁴ Palairret, *The Balkans Economies*, p. 43.

¹⁹⁵ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 281.

¹⁹⁶ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 84.

the European territories, he strongly opposed a similar policy of the Ottoman Empire for its European provinces. The British statesmen distrusted Russia mainly because they viewed it as a defender of autocratic regimes and because of Britain's sensitiveness about India. Also, there was a traditional belief that the British route up to it had to be defended at Istanbul and not at Suez.¹⁹⁷ All these considerations put together determined Britain to get involved in the Crimean War.

2.1.2 The British Policy after the Crimean War

In 1853, Britain became the most serious advocate of the Ottoman Empire among the Great Powers. The quarrel that first occurred between Russia and France, as regards the protection of the holy places that existed in the Ottoman Empire, later developed into a Russian-British conflict concerning the Orthodox population of the Empire and its protection which had been Russia's privilege in the past decades.¹⁹⁸ Since 1833, when Russia obtained this function, it gradually increased its influence over the Christian population in the Balkans. Together with quickly penetrating national idea and examples of Greece independence, Serbian and Danube Principalities autonomy the situation endangered significantly the Ottoman authority in the Balkans and respectively the British desire for controlling the region. According to the work of Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw: "The Crimean War was basically a conflict between Russia, on one side and Britain and France on the other to see who would dominate the Middle East politically and economically as the Ottoman Empire declined. It was stimulated by Britain's gradual shift away from its eighteenth-century support for Russia's ambitions in the area due to its realization that any Russian takeover would upset the European balance of power and also damage Britain's economic interests in the Middle East."¹⁹⁹

After Russia was defeated in the Crimean War by the military coalition of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain as victorious powers convoked the Congress of Paris where the peace treaty was elaborated. The provisions of the agreement took away the leading role of the Russian Empire in the Ottoman lands and its Balkan domains. The Black Sea was closed for warships and Russia was forbidden to fortify the coasts and maintain naval forces in the region. During the congress, the actions of Britain's foreign policy converted the bilateral regional Russian-Ottoman conflict into a European conflict. With

¹⁹⁷ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 458-463.

¹⁹⁸ Jelavich, *Russian Balkan's Entanglements*, p. 119.

¹⁹⁹ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 134.

the Treaty of Paris, all European Powers became guarantors for the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and most importantly every single problem arisen between one of the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire had to be considered and solved in concordance with the rest of them. The stipulations of the Treaty interrupted the Russian advancement towards the Balkans and the Straits for approximately 25 years. Lord Palmerston inspired this policy proceeding to implement his plan for reformation of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰⁰

As a result, from the British program for reformation of the Ottoman Empire, Article XI of the Treaty stipulated the obligation of the Ottoman Government to implement reforms which had to secure equal rights for the Christian and Muslim population of the Empire. Paradoxically, the Ottoman Empire was accepted as a full member of the European concert and the other Great Powers had to respect its territorial integrity and political independence. Article IX of the Treaty entitled those Powers to protect the Christian population and through this right they actually received a legal tool for interference in the internal affairs of the Empire.²⁰¹ The equal treatment and improvement of the conditions for the Christian population had to appease the agitated Balkan provinces and to obtain a barrier for external influence over the region especially at a time when the Balkan population was left without Russian protection. Lord Palmerston's plan for reformation of the Ottoman Empire became an '*idée fixe*' that was the main cause of the Crimean War, which in a broader context, induced the Eastern Crisis in the Balkans in the years 1874-1878. Lord Salisbury's notorious quote about the results of the Crimean War was that: "We had put up our money on the wrong horse", and Watson stated that they were "not fully atoned until the great war."²⁰² The Treaty of Paris delayed the national movements in the Balkans for two decades but the process could not be completely stopped as it already reached a high level of development. Four areas with different degrees of independence and self-government had already existed in the Balkans by 1860. Among them, only Greece was a fully independent country. The Serbian and Danube Principalities were designated with autonomous status that found expression in paying tribute and some obligations regarding internal affairs.²⁰³ In accordance with the decisions taken at the Congress of

²⁰⁰ Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914*, p. 351-356.

²⁰¹ Jelavich, *Russian Balkan Entanglements*, p. 138-139.

²⁰² Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 198.

²⁰³ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 298.

Paris, influenced by the British foreign policy, the Balkans enjoyed a significant degree of peace and improvement in administration and economy for the next two decades. However, Europe and the Near East became an arena for considerable changes that challenged the British foreign policy which followed Palmerston's era. In 1869, the Suez Canal was opened and since then the access to the Middle East and India became easier. From that moment, the stability and preservation of the Ottoman Empire attained even greater consequence. The European balance of power was interrupted by the union of Germany and its approach to Russia. The Ottoman Empire's impossibility to achieve the desired stability through modernization and reformation made the preservation of its integrity a task that required extra efforts. Therefore, Britain began to doubt if they were worth it. In 1870, after France was defeated by Germany, the Russian Empire unilaterally denounced the provisions of the Treaty of Paris as regards the neutrality of the Black Sea. Andrei Pantev evaluated the role of Britain during that time of major fluctuations in continental affairs, more as a neutral observer of those changes than an active side.²⁰⁴ At that time, Britain still continued the policy of neutrality imposed by a system established since 1815. After the Congress of Paris, none of the Great Powers had the right to act on its own at times of crisis on the continent. Britain's foreign policy had to decide if its interests required to reach an agreement with one of the European Powers, and thus, to interfere in continental affairs more actively, or to remain outside the European complexity. But soon the British senior politicians realised that the continental policy was strongly connected to the development in the rest of the world.²⁰⁵ The outburst of the Eastern Crisis was a proof of this facet.

2.1.3 Britain and the Eastern Crisis

Outside the continent, the affairs in the Near East were dominated by the growing single combat between Britain and Russia. The advance of Russia towards Afghanistan seriously inconvenienced the British authorities but they were divided by their opinion about the real intentions of the Russian Empire in the region and the probability of its attack against India. Lord Salisbury was the only British statesman who followed a moderate way considering the possibility of a Russian invasion in India. He considered

²⁰⁴ Andrei Pantev, and Rumén Doinov, *Uiliam Gladston i bulgarite. Politika na spravedlivost* (Sofia: TanNakPa 1999), p. 57.

²⁰⁵ W.J. Harte, "Fifty Years of British Foreign policy", *History, New Series* 1, No 2 (July 1916), p. 97-107.

it an exaggeration but, according to him, Russia's occasion to provoke Afghan actions should not be underestimated.²⁰⁶

In this complicated international situation, the Balkans gained again a strategic importance for the British foreign policy. The Balkans, with their contiguity to the Straits and the Ottoman Capital, were regarded by the Great Powers as "a key for the gate" to the Near East. Therefore, the Great Powers' interest in the Balkans increased. It was not a coincidence that the new Eastern Crisis ignited exactly in the European province of the Ottoman Empire in 1875.

At the beginning of the crisis, the Foreign Office was still under the powerful influence of Lord Palmerston's ideology as regards the role of the British Empire in the foreign affairs. The majority of the political issues were inherited by his successors in the Cabinet. Disraeli's second cabinet coincided with the new Eastern Crisis. The British Prime Minister faced the isolation of Britain from the events on the continent where, at that time, the League of the Three Emperors dominated. In order to exit from this isolation, Disraeli decided to pursue an active policy in the spirit of Palmerston's policy.²⁰⁷ To achieve his plan, in November 1875, he bought the controlling stake of the company that exploited the Suez Canal and thus he declared the return of Britain on the political scene.²⁰⁸

Disraeli's foreign policy towards the Eastern Question was directed according to some objectives. If these objectives had been accomplished, the British prestige would have been obtained again. Firstly, he strongly believed that if the British Foreign Office was able to pursue a more energetic policy in Europe, it would focus its endeavours to arise disaccord among the allies of the Three Emperors. The actions of Britain during the Eastern Crisis, in the years 1875-1877, were exactly in the spirit of that idea. In most cases, Britain opposed the measures suggested by the other Powers and it tried to reach an agreement with Austro-Hungary to the detriment of Russia. Thus, it contributed to the failure of a peaceful solution to the Crisis.²⁰⁹ Konstantin Kosev, in his prominent work on Bismarck's policy and the Treaty of Berlin, saw the final results of the Berlin Congress as the fulfilment of this policy.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 507.

²⁰⁷ Martin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London: Macmillan 1985), p. 31.

²⁰⁸ Pantev and Doinov, *Uiliam Gladston i bulgarite*, p. 63-64.

²⁰⁹ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 506.

²¹⁰ For more details: Kosev, *Bismarck, Iztochnia Vapros*.

The second aspect of Disraeli's policy towards the crisis in the Balkans, was the comprehension that the British authorities had to protect India not by possessing Egypt if the Ottoman Empire declined but by securing its maintenance.²¹¹ Regarding this issue, the Foreign Office entirely rejected whatever alternation of the *status quo* in the Balkans. Therefore, during the Eastern Crisis, the British Government refused to endorse most of the collective initiatives of the Great Powers that contained solutions which extended the rights of the Balkan population and endangered the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. As refers to those collective notes, the British authorities used their influence over the Ottoman authorities to encourage them to reject the proposals. This behaviour of the British statesmen indicated that the policy towards the Balkans was still considered in the light of a Russian threat in the Near East. During the Eastern Crisis, the interests of the Great Powers in the Balkan Peninsula increased rapidly, making their secret plans for partition of the Ottoman lands. They were all divided by their opinion for finding a solution to the situation. As a matter of fact, there were two possible solutions: preservation of the Ottoman Empire and suppression of insurrections aroused by the Balkan population or acceptance of the establishment for a new state formation. The British authorities were strongly determined to allow neither the formation of any sovereignty achieved by local and national struggles nor a Russian military intervention that would turn them into Russian clients.²¹²

In the summer of 1876, the Bulgarian uprising complicated even more the Eastern Crisis. The European press and particularly the British print gave broad publicity to the event. The unexpected support received by the Bulgarian struggle from the European nations, took the control of the situation away from the hands of European governments and put the crisis in an impasse. The polemic arisen in the British press continued in the British Parliament and polarized the British political circles. Actually, the issue became a tool in the hands of the Liberal Party and it was used against the Conservative Cabinet of Disraeli and his foreign policy. Gladstone carried out a wide pamphlet campaign in the British press in the defence of the Bulgarian population. As a result, the campaign induced the creation of a public opinion towards the British foreign policy and it became obvious that the British Government could not disregard the public opinion in its future political actions. Andrei Pantev argues that if the Bulgarian uprising could

²¹¹ W.N. Medlicott, "Bismark and Beaconsfield", in *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in the Honour of G.P.Gooch*, (London: Longmans Green and Co Ltd 1961), p.232-233.

²¹² Toleva, *Vanshnata politika na Dyula*, p. 13.

transform the Eastern Crisis from a regional issue into a European problem, then it would be reasonable to state that the Bulgarian issue in 1876 suddenly became a turning point in the political views concerning the British foreign policy. There had been discussions and mutual accusations before but after the Bulgarian revolt, they induced a bitter party struggle.²¹³ When it is considered Gladstone's attitude towards the April Uprising and the struggle which emerged between the Liberals and the Conservatives, some circumstances have to be taken into account. In 1876, the Liberal Party constituted the opposition and it was looking for ways to come back to the political scene. The information about the insurrection of the Bulgarian population in May and the suppression of the revolt by the Ottoman Empire, were an advantage in the hands of Gladstone. He loudly raised the question of the foreign policy which belonged to Disraeli's Cabinet in the Eastern Question that continued to support the Ottoman authorities which oppressed the Christian population. The Liberal Party opposed the traditional foreign policy of the Conservatives using the reverberation received by the Bulgarian uprising. The British public society felt compassion towards the „wronged” Christian population from the Empire. In the British Parliament, Gladstone insisted to change the *status quo*, giving autonomy rights to the Christian population as the only solution to the Eastern Question.²¹⁴ Some researchers like Swartz explained Gladstone's exploiting the Bulgarian crisis as an attempt to reconstruct the Liberal Party and to secure his own return to the leadership of the Party and Government in 1880.²¹⁵ Even though Gladstone recognized the Christian population of the Balkans as a “dynamic element” that could serve Britain's interest in the region, he also realised the risk of creating a big Slav country. But Gladstone, unlike Disraeli, did not come from a narrow understanding of the strategic and imperial interests of Britain, but from the concern about European peace and moral impulses. Although he regretted his participation in the government of the Crimean War, his view originated from the understanding of the Treaty of Paris in the year 1856, as the embodiment of the European conscience expressed by the collective guarantees and joint actions of the European Powers, contrary to the Russian right, earlier obtained, for the intervention in the Ottoman initial affairs in favour of the Christian population.²¹⁶

²¹³ Pantev and Doinov, *Uiliam Glaston i bulgarite*, p. 81.

²¹⁴ Yahya Bağçeli, “İngiltere Parlamento Tutanaklarında 1876 Bulgar İsyanı”, *International Journal of Social Science* 24 (2014), p. 211-235.

²¹⁵ Martin Swartz, *Politics of British Foreign*, p.43.

²¹⁶ Pantev and Doinov, *Uiliam Glaston i bulgarite*, p. 69.

Thus, since the year 1877 the British authorities realised the need to implement a new foreign policy as regards the Eastern Crisis, partly because of the pressure inside the country, partly because of the situation of the Eastern Question which remained still unsolved and menaced to develop into a war for division of the Ottoman Empire. Lord Salisbury became the voice of this new foreign policy. On the 9th of March 1877, in a letter to Lord Lytton, he described his view of the Cabinet's policy: "I feel convinced that the old policy – wise enough at its time – of defending the English interests by sustaining the Ottoman dynasty has become impracticable, and I think that times have come for defending the English interests in a more direct way by some territorial re-arrangement."²¹⁷

Indeed, at the beginning of the Eastern Crisis in 1875, most of the prominent members of the British political circles reckoned that the restoration of the political *status quo* in the British foreign policy between the years 1853-1856 was completely impossible. The new development of Balkan national movements forced Britain not to think any longer how to preserve the Ottoman Empire but, as Lord Salisbury said to William Waite, to prepare the Christian population in the Balkans not to become a toy in the hands of Russia.²¹⁸

Lords Salisbury represented Britain at the conference which took place in Istanbul at the end of the year 1877, as a last chance of peacefully dealing with the Eastern Question before a military intervention. Following his convictions about the policy that Britain had to pursue, Lord Salisbury together with Count Ignatyev elaborated a project that had to implement autonomy in the rebellious regions inhabited by the Bulgarians, divided into two provinces under suzerainty of the Sultan.²¹⁹ However, the conference failed, not without the support of the British authorities. Actually, Britain had two voices at the conference: one that spoke about the official diplomacy of Lord Salisbury and the other one spoke about behind-the-scene actions of the British Ambassador Henry Elliot who encouraged the Porte to reject the project.²²⁰

The realistic tendency in the British foreign policy was to deny Palmerston's persistence of supporting the Ottoman Empire's integrity in the attempt to prevent the Russian influence in the Balkans. Instead, if the British had supported the revolutionary movements of the Balkans population, the successful results would have been useful to

²¹⁷ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 130.

²¹⁸ Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapros*, p. 26.

²¹⁹ Anderson, *Doğu Sorusu*, p. 206.

²²⁰ Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 135.

Britain's interests in the Balkans.²²¹ But only a small group of politicians realised the advantages that this policy could have brought.

Before the Congress of Berlin, Lord Salisbury had shared the following thoughts with Mr. Layard: "The great problem which the Turk will have to solve, as soon as he has got rid of the Russian army on his soil, is - how to keep his Asiatic Empire together. Sooner or later the greater part of his European Empire must go. Bosnia and Bulgaria are as good as gone. We may with great efforts give another lease of Trace, and he may keep for a considerable time a hold upon Macedonia and Albania, and possibly upon Thessaly and Epirus."²²²

Indeed, Disraeli was also aware that his foreign policy required compromises under the pressure of domestic affairs. His policy for maintenance of the Ottoman Empire could encounter significant difficulties. After the ardent agitation of Gladstone over the events which occurred in Bulgaria in the year 1876, a strong feeling against the Ottoman Empire arose inside the British society. Even if, among the members of his party, some of them expressed support towards the Ottomans, the public opinion was a consideration that his cabinet could not neglect. The British Prime Minister realised that, in case Russia had declared war against the Ottoman Empire for the sake of the Balkan Christians to defend their rights and life, for Britain it would have been very hard or even impossible to sustain the Ottoman Empire in this war. But in case the Ottoman Empire lost this war, Britain had to take what was needed to secure its interests in the region. Disraeli's actions resulted from his view that the Russian advancement in the Balkans and the Near East had to be brought to a standstill. Britain supported the Ottoman Empire on the background of Russia's energetic and advancing initiative, aiming to find a peaceful solution to the Eastern Crisis, had the purpose to hinder Russia from extending its prestige and influence over the region.²²³

The final stage of the Eastern Crisis - the Russo-Ottoman War and the Congress of Berlin registered no significant opinion changes of the Prime Minister Disraeli. All the actions of the British authorities showed that the idea of preserving the Ottoman Empire and its control over the Balkan region was alive. This feeling even strengthened after the Ottoman Empire was defeated and Russia was seen as a liberator of the Slav population. On the 25th of March 1878, Lord Derby spoke in the House of Lords

²²¹ Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapros*, p. 38.

²²² Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, p. 267.

²²³ Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign*, p. 52.

explaining the menace resulted from the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano and the new state formation.²²⁴ Actually, in the establishment of Bulgaria in the boundaries designated by the Treaty of San Stefano, the British authorities recognized the dangerous Russian domination over the Ottoman Government. Large in its size, expanding its border to the Aegean coast, closely connected to the Russian Empire, Bulgaria could become a powerful tool of the Russian policy in order to put pressure over the Ottoman Empire.²²⁵

Therefore, the British Government opposed the Treaty of San Stefano, especially the provisions concerning Bulgaria. London insisted on reducing the size of the new state in the Balkans. The idea of the British authorities was to remove as much as possible the border of the state formation from the Straits. The Bulgarian lands were seen as the natural strategic hinterland of the Straits seen from the north, which in a short term historical perspective could become the key to India. The favourable relation that would exist between Russia and Bulgaria could immediately turn into a strategic factor for the balance of power in Eastern Europe.²²⁶

In a conversation between Lord Derby and the Russian Ambassador Shuvalov, after signing the London Protocol in May 1878, Derby expressed the British remonstrance against the Treaty of San Stefano only as regards the size of Bulgaria and the Russian influence over this new state formation which had to be replaced with British ones.²²⁷

The British Government was the main opponent to all the Russian projects for a peaceful solution to the Eastern Crisis. Later, the British authorities objected to the proposals for establishment of the Bulgarian Principality in all points regarding its size, outlet to the Aegean Sea, state system and sovereign rights. All these issues aimed to restrict the Russian influence over the Balkan nations.

Medlicott summarized the tasks of the British foreign policy at the time of the Congress in three points. Firstly, the Bulgarians had to be granted autonomy rights in case the Ottoman Empire would be allowed to own the Balkan Mountains which were a natural military barrier that could secure the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, the protection of the communication with India required the further maintenance of the Ottoman Empire's authority, its military power over the territories north of the Suez Canal and projected railway connections between Istanbul and the Persian Gulf. The preservation of the

²²⁴ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 94.

²²⁵ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 176.

²²⁶ Pantev, *Bulgarskiat vapros*, p. 146.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Ottoman Empire's integrity required assistance for improving the military experience and administration. Britain could offer its support but only under certain conditions because of the anti-Ottoman feelings in the country.²²⁸

The division of big Bulgaria into three parts was regarded as a prominent success for the British foreign policy. Disraeli believed that the provisions established in the Treaty of Berlin protected the Ottoman Empire from the Russian menace. However, the further developments in the Balkans were not favourable to the Ottoman Empire.²²⁹ The divided Bulgaria was soon united and the Ottoman Empire lost another European possession. The friendship between Russia and Bulgaria did not develop as much as the British authorities had expected. The Macedonian question threatened to provoke another Eastern crisis. The Ottoman Empire almost lost its possessions in the Balkans and proceeded to go into pieces. The origins of all of these developments were relevant to the British consideration for establishment a regional balance of power at the Balkans by means of the project of the settlement of the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia from the south part of the Bulgarian lands under the Sultan's authority.

2.2 The Russia Policy in the Balkans

2.2.1. The Russian Policy in the First Two Decades of 19th Century

In his last work dedicated to the Eastern Question and the Balkans, the Bulgarian historian Ivan Parvev describes the Eastern Question as a phenomenon of the European-Ottoman relations, developed in the time interval from 1688 to 1923, which describes the correlation between the political de-Ottomanization of the Balkans and the balance of power in Europe. He also makes a new relative division of the Eastern Question based on the 'leading factor' in solving the problems. In other words, which of the Great Powers was dominated in the European-Ottoman armed conflicts and which one, by having strengthened its influence in the region at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, could disturb the balance of power. Thus, he divided the Eastern Question into three periods²³⁰:

1. Austrian period (1688-1774)

²²⁸ Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin*, p. 18.

²²⁹ Egerton Hugh Edward, *British Foreign Policy in Europe to the end of the 19th century* (London: Macmillan 1917), p. 325.

²³⁰ Ivan Parvev, *Balkanite i Iztochnia Vapros* (Sofia: Universitetsko Izdatelstvo 'Sv. Kliment Ohridski' 2017), p. 16-19.

2. Russian period (1774-1856)
3. European period (1856-1923)

The Russian Empire, because of its geographical position as a neighbour of the Ottoman Empire, had its natural aspirations towards the Ottoman territories situated south of its borders and keeping the outlet towards the Mediterranean Basin where the world's trade routes were concentrated at that age. The opportunity for expansion in Europe was effete, because on the continent, powerful monarchic states had already been established, so the Russian expansion policy was directed towards its weak neighbour - the Ottoman Empire - and later, in the nineteenth century, towards Asia. The emergence of Russia's expansion policy towards the Ottoman territories and in particular as regards the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, also resulted from several factors distinguished in the last decades of the 18th century.

Firstly, Russia increased the trade exports of grain from Ukraine's territory and due to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, its merchandise ships were allowed to pass freely through the Straits. If this permission could have been obtained as a permanent measure, it would have had a significant contribution to the Russian trade. The second reason was the construction of a navy on the Black Sea that would be able to use the Straits also and would allow Russia to participate equally in the international politics and diplomacy of that time when France and Britain had been established as dominant sea powers. Thirdly, there was a need to keep the warships of the foreign powers outside the Black Sea in order to protect its land territories situated at its south border in the Black Sea region.²³¹ All these reasons required the Russian control over the Ottoman capital. Realizing the importance of the Straits as a defender of its Black Sea possessions and also as an outlet for a profitable trade in the next century, the Russian Empire pursued a policy of "measured out expansion" towards the Ottoman Empire's territories in the Balkans.

The advantages of the Russian foreign policy in the Balkans emerged from the provisions of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca which was signed in 1774. The agreement stipulated that the Russian merchants should receive the same commercial benefits as those of the British and French merchants. Also, the Russian authorities obtained the right to appoint consuls in different towns of the Ottoman Empire. The most important article of this agreement was the one regarding the Orthodox Christian population that

²³¹ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 26-28.

inhabited the Ottoman lands. According to its stipulations, from that moment the Russian authorities designated themselves as protector of the religious rights and churches of the Christian Orthodox population within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. The historiography on the Eastern Question unanimously agrees that this document is the most important one which aroused the Russian ambitions in the Balkans and predestined the Russo-Balkan relations in the next century.²³²

But this Russian policy evoked the dissatisfaction of the other Great Powers and threatened the balance of power in the region which forced the other Great Powers to activate their policy in this regard. This situation required another formula to be found, one that would gratify the interests of the Powers. Therefore, in 1782, Catherine the Great - the Empress of Russia proposed to the Austrian Emperor - Joseph II, who also had a particular interest in the Ottoman territories, a program for partition of the Ottoman Empire's Balkan possessions and establishing statehood formations that had to function as satellites for the two Empires. Along this proposal, there was also the idea for unification of the Orthodox Christendom under the supremacy of the Russian church.²³³

These principles established in Empress Catherine's program received continuity in the Russian foreign policy regarding the Balkans in the next century and settled particular goals. During the first decades of the 19th century, Russia engaged in a few wars with the Ottoman Empire and it was able to sign a series of treaties which extended and confirmed the existent rights over the Balkan population. In this way, its influence increased in the region. The result constituted in an increase of Russia's image as a future "liberator" of the Balkan population. All this advancement of the Russian Empire raised the suspicions of its rivals.

The first challenge as regards Russia's role of protector of the Balkan population occurred with the first Serbian Uprising which outburst in 1804. It was the beginning of a new stage in the Eastern Question. The Serbian revolt, which started as an answer to the Ottoman authorities and claimed arbitrariness of the local governors, later transformed into national struggles.

During the rebellion, Russia and Austria-Hungary, which at that time were directly involved in the Eastern Question, faced a new phenomenon for the first time - the

²³² Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 3-4.; L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, (New York: Rinehart&Company, Inc. 1958), p. 187-192.

²³³ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya. XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşından Kadar Türk-Rus İleşkileri(1789-1919)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi 2011), p. 32.

national movements of the Balkan population. These movements struggled for definite rights or autonomous privileges which, if received, could turn these lands and people into a separate factor of the Eastern Question or into an intricately predictable and manageable quantity in the Balkans.²³⁴ This issue could somehow explain the negative attitude of both Empires at the beginning of the movements. However, they could not ignore the Serbian issue for a long time, which automatically made it appear on the international political scene.

At the beginning of the uprising, a Serbian delegation was sent to the Russian court, asking the Tsar to support their struggle, but the Russian government declined the request. At that time, the Russian Empire was engaged in a European war against Napoleon who threatened the future of the European continent. So, the Serbian representatives were advised to turn directly to the Porte and the Russian authorities would mediate in the negotiations.²³⁵ During the Serbian uprising, Russia had no interest to put on its agenda the issue of the integrity of the Ottoman possessions in Europe. Such an issue would have meant a serious deterioration of the relationship between the Sublime Porte and Alexander I, which at that time benefited from serious advantages, based on the agreements signed in the previous century, as regards the great geopolitical space of the Black Sea, the Straits and the Mediterranean Sea. Those were considered useful not only against Napoleon but also against Britain that appeared as a new powerful rival.

Actually, the Serbian uprising became a powerful weapon used in the game between Napoleon and Alexander I. As a consequence, the Russian attitude towards the uprising changed according to the political situation on the continent. In 1805, the Russian authorities managed to sign another convention with the Ottoman Empire which restored their alliance from 1799. According to this convention, both countries guaranteed each other's integrity and the mutual defence of the Straits.²³⁶

Nevertheless, this agreement did not last long and in 1805, the Russian-Ottoman relations deteriorated. The French involvement in the Balkan affairs, in the time interval from 1805 to 1806, aimed to undermine Russia's influence over the Christian population from the Balkans and it prejudiced the Russian-Ottoman relations because

²³⁴ Ivan Parvev, *Balkanite i Iztochnia Vapros*, p. 131.

²³⁵ Goergi P. Genov, *Iztochniya vapors. Politicheska i diplomaticheska istoria*, Vol. I (Sofia: Hudozhnika 1926), p. 159.

²³⁶ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 49-50.

France tried to convince the Sultan that the Russian authorities were involved in the Serbian uprising. The French apprehension arose from the possibility that, if the Serbian had received autonomous rights, it would have encouraged other populations in the Balkans to seek similar privileges that would lead to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. These activities of Napoleon induced fluctuations in the Russian attitude towards the Serbian struggles and in 1806 the second Serbian diplomatic mission had a more successful result. Czartoryski was the Russian Foreign Minister who promoted the idea of a policy strategy towards the Serbian uprising that would prevent the opportunity for Serbians to seek help from France. Furthermore, his idea consisted in the creation of a South Slavic Balkan state that would benefit from a wide internal autonomy under the external influence of the Russian authorities. The Russian Foreign Minister's beliefs originated from the hypothesis that in a contingent war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the latter would decay and a partition of its territories would follow. The Slavic Balkan state had to obtain the role of a buffer zone between the rest of Ottoman possessions in European regions and the French territories in Dalmatia. Therefore, Russia's Foreign Minister thought of supporting the Serbian rebellions with money and advised them to negotiate directly with the Ottoman authorities for a settlement in which Russia could support them. Alexander I did not share the views of his Foreign Minister and he preferred to maintain a policy of friendship with the Ottoman Empire. Besides, Alexander I refused to take any engagements in the Serbian issue.²³⁷

However, the political situation changed in 1806 when the Ottoman Empire decided to change the rulers of the Danubian Principalities without the approval of the Russian Tsar. According to the treaties signed between the two states, the head of the Principalities had to be appointed by the mutual approval of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The Russian authorities gave order for occupation of the Principalities and the war was a natural consequence of tensioned relations between the two Empires. It is doubtful that Russia really intended to wage war against the Ottoman Empire. A more possible explanation for its actions could be the aim to prevent the creation of a possible alliance between the Ottoman Empire and France. During the Serbians struggles against the Ottoman army, the rebellions did not receive an evident support from Russia. The

²³⁷ Lawrence P. Meriage, "The First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Eastern Question", *Slavic Review* 37, No 3, (1978), p. 425-426.; Lawrence P. Meriage, *Russia and First Serbian Revolution*, PhD Thesis, Indiana University 1975: 119-127.

conflict with the Sultan himself was a direct function of the other major potential collisions that went hand in hand with the events in the Balkans - the opposition between Russia and France. As a result of the French threat in 1812, when the peace between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was concluded, the issue of the Serbian lands and their establishment into a separate principality was excluded from the agenda of the Russian-Ottoman relations.²³⁸

When the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire could not be avoided, the Serbian uprising received a new perspective. During the conflict, the Serbian military power was evaluated by the Russian authorities as an advantage that could be used against the Ottoman Empire. In exchange for the collaboration with the Russian army against the Ottomans, Russia offered its support for the Serbian desires of independence. Nevertheless, the Russian authorities continued to regard the Serbian aspirations as incompatible with Russia's general interests. Therefore, during the conflict, the Russian agents in the Serbian territories tried to wield some degree of influence over the Serbian authorities and to influence their domestic and foreign policy. The type of relationship patron-client was satisfying for Russia at that time, when its foreign policy required much more to return to its dominant position in the Danubian principalities.²³⁹ The geostrategic position of the Principalities near the Russian border was far more important than the distant Serbian territories.

The agreement between Russia and the Serbians was signed on the 10th of July, 1807. The Serbian soldiers pledged to attend the Russian army against the Ottoman and French armies, and in return Russia promised to support them with military supplies and money. It also took the engagement to protect the Serbian people and to send officials to support the organisation of administrative system in region.²⁴⁰

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian foreign policy obeyed Tsar Alexander I whose words were decisive in the foreign affairs. He was more concerned about the European affairs in the context of international politics and the issues in the Middle East and Balkans occupied the second place in the order of importance. It was an opportunity for the Foreign Minister Czartoryski to act freely in the latter two spheres of Russian interests. As the Russian foreign office had some traditional interests which aimed to control the Straits, to achieve an outlet in the Mediterranean Sea and to weaken the

²³⁸ Parvev, *Balkanite i Iztochnia Vapros*, p. 130-146.

²³⁹ Meriage, "The First Serbian Uprising", p. 428.

²⁴⁰ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 205.

Ottoman Empire, the movements which occurred in the Balkans could not be easily ignored. Despite the support given to the Serbians, the Tsar was reluctant to the idea of creating an independent state formation in the Balkan Peninsula. The model established in the two Danube Principalities and Morea which, under Ottoman governance, benefited from Russian protection, was more acceptable at that time for the Russian foreign interests.²⁴¹

When the Serbian revolt appeared as an episode of the Eastern Question, the idea of an independent state created on national principles had not reached its maturity as a possible solution to the Eastern Question in the Imperial European courts. Even if there were some indications for the concept of creating some states in case of downfall of the Ottoman Empire, the idea presented the establishment of a large, powerful statehood or two states that would divide the peninsula into spheres of influence between Austria and Russia. However, the national principles were not present in the foundation of these states. The memory of the French Revolution was too fresh for the monarchic courts to be able to bend their traditional principles.

On the 14th of June 1807, the Franco–Russian agreement was signed regarding the European affairs. Tsar Alexander and Napoleon also agreed on the division of the Ottoman Empire, but the division did not include specific details. It had a general character. The two Emperors acknowledged the “*liberation*” of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the capital. The Tsar desired more tangible arrangements on the issue, especially about the future of the Ottoman Capital and the Straits, but Napoleon refused to take any further obligations. Consequently, the question regarding Istanbul and the Straits was left for future discussions because neither of the parties could synchronize their claims. Very soon afterwards, Napoleon relinquished this policy strategy, realising the menace represented by the Russian Empire for the European balance of power, if the Tsar took possession of the Straits. The next meeting was organised in Erfurt in 1808 and Napoleon renewed the Tilsit agreement which entitled the Russian Empire over the two Danubian Principalities. The Serbian issue was not mentioned at all at the meetings.²⁴² It was confirmed that the Serbian issue occupied a subordinate place in the Russian foreign affairs at that time. On 24th of August 1807, when Russia reached an armistice with the Ottoman Empire, it could not manage again

²⁴¹ Tadeusz Swierochowski, “Czartoryski and Russia’s Turkish Policy, 1804-1806”, *The Polish Review* 12, No 4 (1967), p. 30-36.

²⁴² Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 13; Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 208-209.

to arrange the Serbian question and the Serbs were left alone to fight against the Empire.²⁴³

Although the Serbian issue was not only impacted by the relations between Napoleon and Russia, furthermore the Russian authorities did not hesitate to use it as a pawn in the negotiations with the Ottoman Empire in 1811. They wanted to force the Ottoman Empire to cede the Danubian Principalities to Russia and in return Alexander I declared his readiness to abandon its support for the Serbian desires to become an independent state. All along the negotiations, the Russian authorities raised the claim that the Serbians from the territory of Belgrade Pashalik should receive a certain degree of autonomy. Indeed, this was a diplomatic strategy. Extending the demands on the size of territories which the Ottoman Empire could renounce and threatening the Empire's possessions in the Balkans, the Tsarist diplomacy aimed to force the Porte to preserve its dominions giving up the Principalities in the exchange of the Belgrade Pashalik. At that moment, Russia would have ceded undoubtedly its claims about Serbia if it had received what was desired but, when the international climates changed and a new French hostility was felt, the Tsarist Empire was forced again to give a new meaning to the Serbian issue. As a result, at the final stage of the peace negotiations with the Ottoman Empire, Russia renounced all its Balkan territorial claims in return for the Serbians' autonomy. This alternation of the Russian policy could explain the idea of the Slav population's autonomy to be used in case of an eventual attack of the French army in Dalmatia.²⁴⁴

The following Franco-Russian War ended with the defeat of Napoleon and strengthened Russia's position as a dominant power on the continent. It was obvious that the balance of power was disturbed. Russia's further advancement in the Balkans actually proved this. By the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, Russia had already gained Bessarabia and continued slowly but firmly to extend its territories towards the Straits, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire's downfall.

At the Congress of Vienna that followed the collapse of Napoleon's Empires, the so called Holy Alliance was created (Russia, Austria and Prussia), whose vocation was to re-establish the legitimate power of the monarchs and to guard vigilantly the existing conservative order from all revolutionary assaults.²⁴⁵ Preserving this new system in

²⁴³ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 247-248.

²⁴⁴ Meriage, "The First Serbian Uprising", p. 436-237.

²⁴⁵ *Oto Fon Bismark. Spomeni*, Tom 1, trans. Georgiev, Georgi, (Sofia: Hristo Botev 1994), p. 5.

Europe became one of the main political strategies of the Russian Emperor in the following decades.

2.2.2 The Russian Policy during the Greek War for Independence

In comparison with the British foreign policy, which in the 19th century was mainly impacted and guided by commercial interests and imperial goals, the Russian policy was concerned about the national interests of the Russian Empire. The geopolitical importance of the Balkans for the Russian authorities came from Russia's vulnerability in the Black Sea basin in front of foreign navies (especially British and French ones). Therefore, the Russian statesmen displayed certain concerns about the status of the Romanian and Bulgarian lands and the Straits. The main task of the Russian foreign policy during the 19th century was to keep away its rival navies from the Black Sea and also to keep the Straits closed for foreign warships. This could be achieved either through an agreement with the Ottoman Empire or a joint settlement with the other Great Powers. The other important issue for the Russian authorities was the conceivable downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the further problems that would arise in this case. The Russian department for foreign affairs elaborated three possible political strategies that could be followed. The first one presumed the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as long as Russia obtained a dominant position at the Porte. The second strategy presented the probable collaboration with the other Great Powers for division of the Ottoman territories. And the third possible solution was the establishment of several autonomous or independent states, significantly influenced by Russia as regards the territories situated within its sphere of interest such as the Balkans. In order to pursue any of these political lines, Russia had to consider the interests and aspirations of the other Great Powers, especially those of Austria that had become involved in Western Balkans and Britain that had become Russia's main opponent in the Near East in the 19th century. Also, the Russian Empire had ideological interests originated from the conservative principles of the aristocracy and the religious functions in the Orthodox Christendom. A premise of the aristocratic regimes was the belief that monarchs received their ruling power from God, to serve the wellbeing of their people. At the same time, monarchs were defenders of the faith. These two principles harmonised for the creation of a special relationship between the Russian Tsar and the Balkan

population.²⁴⁶ This relation developed and strengthened in the future decades and it became one of the main attributes of Russia's foreign policy regarding the Slav and Orthodox population from the Ottoman Empire.

Nationalism and liberalism were the two revolutionary principles upon which the Balkan population built its movements. Fundamentally, they were controversial to the Russian conservative monarchist system of governing. At that time, the Great Powers were multinational entities and, at the Vienna Congress, they agreed upon the maintenance of a conservative monarchist order in Europe. Thus, the Russian Empire acted as a guarantor of the Vienna system. Therefore, the attitude of Alexander I and his successor on the throne, concerning the national struggles of the Balkan population, was ultimately negative. Only after the Vienna system failed, Russia's approach to these movements changed.

When the Greek revolt outburst in 1821 in the Principalities, the first Russian response was to condemn the rebellions. The Russian Tsar - Alexander I, who was expected to support the demands of the Sultan's Orthodox subjects, during the outbreak of the Greek uprising, in 1822 at the Verona Congress, still hesitated between preserving the conservative order in Europe after 1815 and the tradition of being protector of the Balkan Christians.²⁴⁷ The Russian Tsar chose the first approach, because he believed that his duty was to preserve the conservative and monarchical principle of the ruling system in Europe, which he defended himself at the Congress of Vienna. As a consequence, he opposed the Greek actions and dismissed the leader of the Greek uprising in the Principalities from his rank in the Russian army.²⁴⁸

The Russian foreign policy attitude towards the Greek crisis could be divided, as a matter of principle, into two stages. The first one, in the period between 1821 and 1825, when Alexander I was on the throne, and the second one, from 1825 to 1829, when Nicholas I took the reign of the Tsarist Empire. Even though both of them had similar attitudes towards the Eastern Question, ready to sacrifice their desires in the name of the European balance of power and peace for which they felt responsible, Nicholas I was more willing to neglect this principle and to act in favour of Russia's interests in the Balkans. Alexander I had decided to pursue a policy in harmony with the other Great Powers and he refused to help the Greek rebellions. As a result, the Russian foreign

²⁴⁶ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 24-42.

²⁴⁷ Parvev, *Balkanite i Iztochnia*, p. 10.

²⁴⁸ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 283.

policy endeavoured to obtain diplomatic measures for solving the crisis and it received replies from the European courts.

In 1824, the Russian authorities managed to organise a conference, so as to seek a solution to the crisis, with the mutual agreement of the Great Powers, but unfortunately the diplomatic initiative failed because of the Ottoman authorities and the Greek rebellions. The Russian program consisted in the creation of autonomous Greek state formations according to the model of Danubian Principalities. They were three and had to live under the sovereignty of the Sultan. Even though the Congress did not produce positive results, the Tsar continued to insist on joint actions of the Great Powers. However, this attitude had its drawbacks and the Russian authorities altered their policy. Russia's statesmen contemplated that a separate agreement with Britain could bring a solution and an opportunity for further actions. In this way, the Ottoman Empire would be forced to accept the proposal. In the meantime, the Greek lands were threatened by the attack of Mehmet Ali Pasha. Also, Alexander I died and the throne was inherited by Nicholas I who continued the policy of his predecessor and on the 4th of April 1826, a protocol was signed between London and St. Petersburg for the creation of an autonomous Greek state under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. This agreement opened the way for signing the Russian-Ottoman Convention of Akkerman in October 1826. The agreement was a significant success of the Russian policy in the Balkans as it ensured its privileges in the Danubian Principalities and it designated the Serbians with internal autonomous rights. Russia received the right to keep its territorial possession in the region of Caucasus and its ships could freely navigate in the Ottoman waterways. However, this was a short success for the Russian diplomacy because of the Sultan's reluctance to execute the provisions of the convention. Therefore, the Tsarist authorities decided to compel the Ottomans to fulfil their obligations according to the Convention. In April 1828, Russia declared war. Matthew Smith Anderson claims that even in the last stage of the Greek crisis, the Russian Tsar did not desire the establishment of an independent Greece and his policy aimed to increase the Russian influence over the Greek population and to secure the application of the Akkerman Convention.²⁴⁹ The Russian Tsar had to consider during that crisis also his duty as protector of the Orthodox Church. So, even if he opposed the Greek revolution, Alexander I stated that he was

²⁴⁹ Matthew Anderson, "Russian and the Eastern Question, 1821-41", in: *Europe's Balance of Power 1815-1848*, ed. Alan Sked, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education 1979), p. 85.

ready to protect the suffering population, emphasizing his religious commitment to the Orthodox faith.²⁵⁰

Another aspect of the Greek crisis was the relationship between the Russian Empire and Serbia. The complicated situation that Russia had encountered, required no further complexities in the Balkans, so the Russian authorities warned the Serbians not to rebel and tried to put pressure on the Ottoman authorities for further concessions. Actually, Russia was afraid of uprisings all over the Balkan territories, which might have arisen other Great Powers' suspicions about the real intentions of the Russian foreign policy. If the Russian desires as regards the Balkans during the Greek crisis could be stipulated, the status of the Principalities and the re-establishment of Russia's protection over them represented a major importance and priority. After these problems, the Greek issue followed and lastly the Serbian status. Russia's foreign policy desired to protect the privileges it had obtained through the agreements with the Ottoman Empire during the last decades and it had no further aspirations.²⁵¹

At the end of the war, Tsar Nicholas I established a special committee which consisted of the most skilful Russian statesmen, to make an assessment of the Russian-Ottoman relationship and to elaborate the future Russian policy for the Eastern Question. The committee unanimously expressed that preserving the Ottoman Empire was a more suitable political strategy to secure Russia's interest in the Near East. The members of the committee argued that, in case of the Ottoman Empire's decay, the partition of its territories could cause significant difficulties between Russia and the other Great Powers, which also desired to seize lands from different parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Thus, the Russian rivalries would be settled closer to the Russian boundaries than it was required. The further territorial gains at the expense of the Ottoman Empire were strongly undesirable for the Russian Empire. Meanwhile, if the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Russian authorities had to endeavour to arrange the division of the Ottomans' heritage through diplomatic strategies which had to be approved by the other Great Powers.²⁵² These conclusions reached by the committee were included in the Russian foreign policy in the future decades when its authorities were deprived from territorial concessions and attempted to develop a powerful Russian influence over the Ottomans. On the other hand, this policy restrained the national movements of the

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁵¹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 76-80.

²⁵² Nikolai Ryazyanovski, *Istoria na Rusia*, (Sofia: Kama 2008), p. 297.; Anderson, "Russian and the Eastern", p. 87.; Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 290.

Balkan population as they were deprived from the support of the Russian Empire. Russia maintained the role of protector of the Christian-Orthodox population left in the Ottoman regions, trying to influence the extent of its national feelings. As regards the independence of Greece and Serbia's autonomy, the Tsarist Empire tried to expand its authority over their governance.

The Russo-Ottoman War determined the clinch of the Greek crisis, through the agreement concluded in September 14th, 1829. The Treaty of Adrianople significantly undermined the Ottoman authority in the Balkans in favour of the Tsarist Empire. According to the provisions of the treaty, Greece was recognized as the first independent state in the Balkans. It was created as a tributary state. Serbia's autonomy was recognized together with Moldavia and Walachia's autonomy under the Russian protectorate. Also, Russia acquired territorial possessions at the mouth of the Danube River and Caucasus coasts of the Black Sea. The Straits were opened for the Tsarist ships, too. The possession of the Danube River represented an important opportunity for Russia to control the trade routes of Central Europe that crossed the river and concerned Austria's commercial interests.²⁵³

2.2.3. The Russian Policy after the Establishment of the Greece until the Outbreak of the Crimean War

After the Treaty of Adrianople in 1830, The Tsarist Empire pursued a policy towards the Ottoman Empire which refrained from further expansion of Ottoman territories in the Balkans. The Russian foreign policy preferred to preserve the Ottoman Empire's integrity extending its influence over the Ottoman authorities. Preserving the *status quo* in the Balkans would mean preserving the balance of power within the framework of the Vienna system. However, the Tsarist governance's main concerns were the status of the Straits. Therefore, in the following years, Russian statesmen endeavoured to secure the Black Sea coasts by closure of the Straits for the French and Britain navy. Tsar Nicholas I realised the menace he could face in case he applied a conquering policy towards the Ottoman Empire. If Russia had made an attempt to seize Istanbul, Austria would have been the first to oppose this issue, and later the Tsar would have faced the frustrations of France and Britain. These two countries together could have transformed into a powerful coalition against Russia. So, the Tsarist Empire wanted to turn the Ottomans

²⁵³ Creasy, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 519.

into a weak state so as to establish a protectorate. Thus, the Ottoman state could have the function of a buffer between Russia and its western rivalries. During the years from the Treaty of Adrianople in 1830 and the Straits convention in 1841, the Russian foreign policy had a defensible character. The Russian governance in the first decade of the 19th century considered that Russia had achieved a satisfactory territory extent which required the defence of its boundaries. The formula of a weak neighbour fulfilled this requirement.²⁵⁴

How could Russia reach these goals? The Tsarist Empire's policy-makers used the collision arisen between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt that had grown into a war, and on the 8th of July 1833, forced the Ottoman authorities to sign an alliance treaty.²⁵⁵ The proposal of alliance came from the Sultan, but actually, it resulted from skilful Tsarist diplomacy. The Treaty of Hünkâr Iskelesi had a defensive character proclaiming the peace and good relations between the two Empires. But these were only the official stipulations of the agreement, the secret article engaged the Sultan into an obligation to close the Straits for the foreign warships.²⁵⁶ The Russian-Ottoman alliance treaty managed to achieve a desired defence on the Black Sea coast and to ensure its predominant position in the Ottoman Empire.²⁵⁷ Watson argues that the idea of the Tsarist diplomacy was "to make Russia inaccessible to the Western Powers from the south, while leaving to her the possibility of reaching the Mediterranean Sea in case of war". He also declares that the Treaty gave an interpretation to the denial of Russia's policy in case of collapse and partition of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian statesmen appreciated the value of the possibility in their hands to have a weak and dependent Ottoman Empire, and after a series of diplomatic victories, the Tsarist governance secured its strong position in the East. This Russian policy was strengthened by the agreement of Münchengratz reached between Russia and Austria in September 1834. The two states agreed to maintain the Ottoman integrity, but in case their efforts failed, Austria and Russia had to reach a settlement in accordance with the European balance of power.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Matthew Rendall, "Restraint or Self-Restraint of Russia: Nicholas I, The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Vienna System, 1832-1841", *The International History Review*, 24, No 1, (2002), p. 37-63.

²⁵⁵ Creasy, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 523.

²⁵⁶ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 307.

²⁵⁷ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 279.

²⁵⁸ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 177-178

This policy strategy applied by Russia after 1830 included its denial to maintain the struggle of the Balkan population for autonomous rights. Also, the Tsarist authorities worried about the nature of the Balkan national movements which were seen as revolutionary movements. The Russian statesmen strongly advocated for respecting the treaties signed with the Ottoman Empire which secured the Russians' dominant position in the Near East. The status of the Principalities was important for the Tsarist Empire in comparison with the other Balkans state formations. These territories became a buffer land between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. It was a powerful tool in the hands of the Tsarist diplomacy because it could threaten the European territories of the Empire and, at same time, in case of war against the Empire, there was a strategic position for concentration of the Russian troops and a supplier of food reserves.²⁵⁹

In the period between the Adrianople Treaty and the end of the Crimean War, the Bulgarian population from the Ottoman Empire did not take part in the sphere of interests of the Russian diplomacy regarding the Balkan Christian subjects of the Sultan. The Greek independent state had already been created in the Balkans with Russian mediation, Serbia and two Danube Principalities were granted significant degree of autonomy as the latter were tightly bound to the Russian authorities. Another factor was also the delay of the Bulgarian national revival movements to reconcile with the Russian political interests in the region.²⁶⁰ The further extension of their autonomy rights and territories or the appearance of a new semi-autonomous formation could only undermine the central authority and weaken the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty.

However, the Tsarist foreign policy underwent some changes after the second Egyptian crisis in which the other Great Powers, especially Britain, took an active role. G. Clayton argues that the acceptance of the international supervision of the Straits, according to the convention signed in 1841, demonstrates the fact that Russia's diplomacy gave up its policy strategies pursued in first decades of the 19th century. According to him, the Russian authorities realised that they gained nothing from the cooperation with Ottoman Empire and preserving the integrity of the Empire. The new political attitude towards its neighbour was to seek a settlement with the other European Powers for division of the Empire. But this policy faced Britain's opposition to this

²⁵⁹ Jelavich, *Russian's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 98.

²⁶⁰ Doyno Doinov, and Ivan Stoyanov, *Vazobnoviavane na bulgarskta darzhavnost 1762-1878 idei i proekti*, (Varna: VSU Chernorizets Hrabar 2002), p. 117.

issue.²⁶¹ Watson presents the Convention of the Straits as Nicholas I sacrificed his Near Eastern policy in order to achieve a split between France and Britain, whose symptoms of rapprochement were detected by the Russian diplomacy during Mehmet Ali's crisis. Thus, during the further decay of the Ottoman Empire in which the Tsarist authorities strongly believed, the Russian diplomacy would be able to act freely and to benefit from what its interests required.²⁶²

The previous Treaty expired in 1841 and the Russian diplomacy was uncertain about the Ottomans' attitude towards renewing the agreement after the significant discontent that it had brought among the other Powers. Therefore, a better solution had to be found. The international settlement as regards the Straits, as Matthew Rendall states, secured „*Russia's back door shut as long as Russia remained at peace with the Porte.*” At the same time, the Tsarist Empire prevented the creation of a powerful western coalition against itself. However, the author also argues that the convention did not mean the relinquishment of its policy for the predominant position in the Ottoman Empire.²⁶³ The real intentions of the Tsar and Russian statesmen, when they signed the convention, resulted rather from the realistic tendencies of the Near Eastern policy of the other Great Powers. The further weakness of the Ottoman Empire would lead firstly to an intensification of national movements in the Balkans and then it would increase the desires for partition of the Ottoman European territories by other Great Powers. Also, after 1839, the Tsarist Empire understands that the other powers will not allow it to dictate on its own the fate of the Ottoman Empire. The British authorities strongly opposed any scheme of division of the Ottoman Empire and obtained the role of protector for the Ottomans' integrity. Therefore, the Russian authorities were concerned about a reasonable cooperation with the other Great Powers as regards the Eastern Question.

Thus, if the Tsarist policy towards the Balkans were summarized, in the context of Russian-Ottoman relations during the first half of the 19th century, it could be concluded that Russia acquired significant advantages. A series of treaties (Bucharest in 1812, Ackerman in 1826, Adrianople in 1829, Hünkar Iskelesi in 1833) reaffirmed and extended the Tsarist Empire's specific rights to protect the Orthodox-Christian population that inhabited the Turkish territories. These rights were guaranteed by the

²⁶¹ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 85.

²⁶² Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 220.

²⁶³ Rendall, “*Restraint or Self-Restraint*”, p. 54.

provisions of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. At the beginning, the Russian authorities applied those rights over the Principalities and Serbia which were considered to protect the lands, but later they were inclined to apply such rights over the other Ottoman possessions in every suitable case for interference in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶⁴ A few years later, the Russian authorities obtained full domination over the Principalities. The convention of Balta Liman was signed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire on 1st of May, 1849. According to this convention, the Porte and the Tsar had to appoint together the princes for seven years ahead.²⁶⁵ This agreement fulfilled one of the Tsarist foreign policy tasks established by the Russian diplomacy at the beginning of the century.

The Russian policy towards the Ottomans, applied before the Crimean War, was able to raise the Tsarist Empire as a dominant factor in the Balkans. All the Balkan nations such as the Greeks, the Serbians and later the Bulgarians relied on Russia's support for their national aspirations. All the advantages acquired by the Russian diplomacy as territorial possessions and influence over the European lands of the Ottoman Empire, violated the balance of power in the Near East. The Tsarist foreign policy towards the Balkans derived from Russia's desire to control the Straits. Nevertheless, the Russian Empire was able to preserve its dominant position in the region only until the Crimean War.

The symptoms for the relinquishment of the policy for maintenance of the Ottoman Empire and its return to the previous policy strategy pursued before the Vienna Congress, occurred on the eve of the Crimean War. During the diplomatic preparation for the war, Tsar Nicholas tried to obtain Austria's neutrality. He informed Franz Joseph about his intention to occupy the Principalities and he also proposed further agreements to be reached in case the Ottoman authority over the Balkans collapsed as a result of the international war. The Russian Tsar suggested that Austria should occupy the territories of Serbia and Herzegovina. As for the future organisation of the Balkan lands, Nicholas I introduced a plan according to which independent state formations had to be established in the regions of Moldavia, Serbia and Bulgaria. These sovereignties had to be placed under mutual Russian-Austrian protection. The Ottoman capital had to be settled as a free town and the fortification of the Straits had to be destroyed.²⁶⁶ An

²⁶⁴ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 303.

²⁶⁵ Jelavich, *Russian's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 110.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

earlier attempt was made with Britain, to reach an agreement for division of the Ottoman lands, during the preparation of the Convention of the Straits in 1841. When Tsar Nicholas I visited London in June 1841, he carried out a conversation with the foreign secretary Lord Aberdeen, about possible agreements between the two states for partition of the Ottoman Empire. The diplomatic initiative of the Tsar failed even if he strongly believed that the British government would favour his idea. Later, Lord Palmerston's government definitely denied any commitments in connection to that conversation.²⁶⁷ Even if the Russian foreign policy at the beginning of the century preferred to follow the political strategy for preserving rather than destroying the Ottoman Empire, it never completely relinquished the bequest of Catherine the Great. The Tsarist Empire used every suitable political situation as an attempt to reach an agreement for partition of the Ottoman Empire.

2.2.4 The Russian Policy after the Crimean War

The reasons for the outburst of the Crimean War and the course of the war will not be an object of this research.²⁶⁸ The study will consider the results of the war and its impact on the Russian policy in the Balkans. The Crimean War was the first considerable military conflict since the time of Napoleon's military campaigns. During the Crimean War which occurred between the years 1853-1856, the Russian authorities faced the united coalition of France and Britain that entered the war to protect the Ottoman Empire. It was a nightmare for Russia to endure a joint western coalition against it. Austria did not attend the military actions. The refusal was explained by its previous agreement for neutrality in case of military hostilities between the Tsarist and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the end of the war was almost predictable. The consequences of the war impeded Russia's further advancement towards the Balkans for almost forty years.

The Treaty of Paris that Russia was forced to sign by the winning Powers, deprived the Russians from the right to maintain a military fleet on the Black Sea and they were

²⁶⁷ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 304-307.

²⁶⁸ The war can be followed from these studies: Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill 2010).; Orlando Figes, *Crimea the Last Crusade*, (London:Penguin Groups 2010).; Jack Faire, *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom. The Crisis over the Eastern Church and the Era of the Crimean War* (New York:Palgrave Macmillan 2015).; Trevor Royle, *Crimea. The Great Crimean War*, (New York:Palgrave Macmillan 2000).; *Osmanlı belgelerinde Kırım savaşı (1853-1856)*, (Ankara : Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2006).; Alan WarwickPalmer, *1853-1856 Kırım Savaşı Ve Modern Avrupa'nın Doğuşu* (Istanbul : Sabah Kitapçılık, 1999).

compelled not to pontificate the coast. A part of Bessarabia had to be given to Moldavia, so the Russians did not control any longer the mouth of the Danube River. The Tsarist governance's dominance over territories in the Principalities and in Serbia was eliminated by replacing its protectorate with the joint guarantees of all the Great Powers.²⁶⁹

The abolition of the Tsar's previous privileges regarding the Balkan Christians and the imposition of collective guarantees upon the integrity of the Ottoman Empires by all participants at the Treaty of Paris in 1856, was a significant inconvenience for the prestige of the Russian Empire among the Slav population. Furthermore, the same treaty actually obliged Russia not to take military actions against its strategic rival - the Ottoman Empire. This was a serious hindrance to the strategic corridor Russia-Straits and it virtually meant the relinquishment of its recognized rights in the strategic region of Eastern Balkans near this corridor.²⁷⁰

Kostantin Kosev claims that the post-Crimean policy of the Russian authorities towards the Balkan national movements which had intensified, followed the principle "to deal with the national liberation and revolutionary actions of the peoples from the Balkan provinces of the Empire in such a way as to prevent a direct Russian military involvement in the conflict". Thus, the Russian foreign policy, through tools of diplomacy, endeavoured to control and guide the national movements and put them within a particular framework so they could serve the Tsarist interests. Russia tried to preserve its role as protector of the Balkan Christians and, at the same time, to seek the restraint of the dangerous rebellions which would require military interference. The Russian authorities restricted their activities in the sphere of supporting the Balkan people to reduce the weight of the Ottoman ruling through reform measures and autonomous rights inside the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire.²⁷¹

After the Crimean War, the new Russian foreign policy harmonised with the intentions of the new Emperor - Alexander II²⁷² and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs - Prince Gorchakov. Gorchakov concentrated his efforts on the domestic affairs and maintained the view that Russia could not achieve an active role in the European diplomatic theatre during its large scaled internal reforms that were initiated by the government. The Tsar

²⁶⁹ Jelavich, *Russian's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 138.

²⁷⁰ Pantev and Glushkov, *Evropeiskite izmerenia*, p. 27-28.

²⁷¹ Kosev, *Bismark, Iztochnia Vapros*, p. 85.

²⁷² For further information for the ruling of Alexander II see: W.E. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, (New York: Collier Books 1962).

also endeavoured to prevent the intervention of the Empire in military conflicts.²⁷³ Both the Tsar and the foreign minister desired to maintain peace and good relations with Britain and Austria. For this purpose, both Central Asia and the Balkans had to preserve their tranquillity. Consequently, the Russian authorities warned the leaders of the national movements in the Balkans several times that the Tsar did not desire any uncoordinated actions which were not approved by the Russian authorities.²⁷⁴ Another inconvenient reality for the Tsarist foreign policy was that the provisions of the Treaty of Paris deprived it from the opportunity to act alone in the future Balkan affairs. After the Crimean defeat, the future of the Balkan population was entirely subjected to the will of the Concert of Europe and the interest of all other Great Powers. A few crises occurred in the Balkans after the Crimean War: the unification of the two Principalities and the formation of the Romanian state, the military coup in Greece, the conversion of the monarchic dynasty and the Crete uprising. As regards the settlement of these issues, Russia had to collaborate with France, Britain and Austria. From the reaction of the Russian authorities, it became evident that they tried to avoid further complications in the Balkans. They also preferred a peaceful outcome.

The defeat in the Crimean War impacted the Russian society significantly and it strengthened the national feelings which supported the development of the Pan-Slavic ideology. In the middle of the 19th century, Pan-Slavism was not an organised movement with clarified concepts. The centres of the movement were situated in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Pan-Slavic followers collaborated with the Russian church against Catholicism and Islam in the Empire. The ideology was also embraced by some of the Russian intellectual circles which opposed the influence of the Germanized ruling circles in the Russian Empire.²⁷⁵ These vague characters that supported the Pan-Slavic concepts, hindered the consolidation of the movement and its actual expression as an ideology.

The Pan-Slavic movement was able to define its principles and thoughts and to trace its line of development only after 1860. The beginning of the Pan-Slavic ideology was presented in the Russian society by the work of Konstantin Aksakov and Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov in 1850. However, the movement was able to extend only a decade later. The work of Vladimir Alexandrovich Cherkassky supported this process,

²⁷³ Jelavich, *Russian's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 145-146.

²⁷⁴ Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernization*, p. 119-120.

²⁷⁵ Eser, *'Philetsim' in the Balkans*, p. 79.

establishing Pan-Slavism as a solution to the Eastern Question.²⁷⁶ Pan-Slavism was based on religious and ethnical aspects which represented the roots of the Russian society – the confessed Orthodox Christian religion and the Slav origin of the Russian population. These two aspects represented a foundation for the Balkan nations. Therefore, Pan-Slavism established a unique relation with the Balkan populations in the further decades, and at the same time, it became a powerful tool in the hands of the Tsarist foreign policy.

Another aspect of the Russian foreign policy regarding the Balkans was its correlation with the Tsarist advancement in Asia. At the beginning, the connection between this new policy strategy, orientated to extend the Russian domination and the Russian policy which was applied in the Balkans, was hardly visible.

Barbara Jelavich noticed this relation between the Russian advancement in Asia and its Balkan policy. In her opinion, because the Tsarist authorities could not pursue an active policy in the Balkans after the Crimean War, they concentrated their endeavours for expansion in Central Asia. The process began after the Crimean War and it was concluded with the war between Russia and Afghanistan in 1885. The result was the acquisition of large territories by the Russian Empire in Central Asia. That is why the British authorities signalled significant anxiety which increased Russia's concerns about the status of the Straits and its future possessions and influence in the Eastern Balkans as the Tsarist authorities were afraid of another attack on the Black Sea coast in case of a future war.²⁷⁷ To be able to protect its territories on the east coast of the Black Sea and the access to its new Asian acquisitions, Russia had to secure its west coast of the Black Sea.

Before the Great Eastern Crisis, 1874-1877, the official Tsarist authorities avoided to pursue an active policy among the Balkan population that could enhance their national demands. During that period, the Russian diplomacy prepared only one project concerning the status of the Balkan peoples within the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the reason for this enterprise had to be sought in relation to the French project for reforms in the Ottoman Empire after the Crete uprising in 1866.²⁷⁸ Prince Gorchakov was the Russian chancellor who submitted a program which insisted on conferring autonomy to the Balkan nations. This project could not be comprehended as an actual

²⁷⁶ Phillips, *The Eastern Crisis*, p. 31-37.

²⁷⁷ Jelavich, *Russian's Balkan Entanglements*, p.157.

²⁷⁸ Simeon Damyanov, *Frantsia i bulgarskata natsionalna revolutsia*, (Sofia: BAN 1968), p. 97.

political tendency among the Russian ruling circles, but as a countermeasure to the French influence over the Ottoman Empire.²⁷⁹ The French program presumed the establishment of a common nationality including all the subjects of the Sultan. This initiative had to be achieved by means of equal treatment and education of the population irrespective of religion or ethnic origin, and by decreasing the role of religious institutions in governance procedures.²⁸⁰ Both programs were completely opposite in their essence. If the French plan could somehow attract sympathies among the Ottoman government, the Russian plan did not have any chance.

During the 19th century, in a way similar to Britain's situation, the Russian diplomacy also passed through several phases in its policy towards the Balkans. Before the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Russian statesmen recognized the policy of expansion towards the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire as the right way for application of their intention to seize the Straits. Later, when the Russian authorities faced the increasing interest of the Great Powers in the Ottoman Empire's lands, the Tsarist statesmen reasonably decided to cease the expansion and to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which was also a guarantee for the benefits that Russia had obtained through agreements during the first half of the century. However, the Russian Empire was deprived from its rights over the Orthodox Christian population in the second half of the century. Officially, the authorities obtained a course for non-intervention in the national struggles of the Balkan population, but unofficially, they started to encourage the Pan-Slavic organisation. Even if the Russian foreign policy fluctuated in its orientation, one idea always remained intact – the concept of division of the Balkan lands into several statehood formations with autonomous status. Actually, this was the final solution to the Eastern Question for the Tsarist diplomacy. Therefore, it strived to achieve this objective during the entire century.

²⁷⁹ Georgi P. Genov, *Iztochnia vapors. Politicheska i diplomaticheska istoria. Chast Vtora, Ot Parizhkiya Kongres (1856g.) do Nyoiskiya dogovor (1919g.)*, (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov" 2008), p. 204.; Maria Shahotina, "Ruskite proekti za reformi v Evropeiska Turtsia ot 1867", in *V chest na Akademik Hristo A. Hristov*, (Sofia: BAN 1976), p.130.

²⁸⁰ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman*, p.235.

Chapter 3: British Demands in Eastern Rumelia

In 1878, the British officials chose to follow the traditional British policy, to preserve as much as possible the Ottoman Empire's possessions in the Balkans. So, Britain insisted on the division of the big Bulgaria established by the Treaty of San Stefano, whose large size and access to the Aegean Sea menaced the balance of power and facilitated the Russian Empire to acquire a port at the Mediterranean Sea. The British authorities perceived that the future Bulgarian state would become a Russian satellite, entirely disregarding the opportunity for Bulgaria to free itself from the Russian influence and to pursue an independent policy. Thus, without taking into account the national desires and the ethnic map of the Balkans, the Bulgarian lands were artificially divided.

As a result, the Province of Eastern Rumelia emerged. The autonomous province, which was left under the authority of the Sultan, was established by Britain with some particular tasks. The most important task was to protect the Ottoman Capital and the approach to the Straits. Another task was to diminish the Russian influence in the region. However, to apply these tasks in Eastern Rumelia, a governing system had to be established, which would secure a strong Ottoman authority and would suppress the desires of the local population for union with the Principality of Bulgaria.

Indeed, the British struggle against the Russian influence did not conclude with the imposition of the division of the Bulgaria. It continued with the work for the organisation of the Province and the elaboration of the Organic Law. While the labours continued, the traditional British policy underwent changes which could be obviously seen in the year 1885, when the Province of Eastern Rumelia united with the Principality of Bulgaria. Examining the British policy towards Eastern Rumelia, a few aspects had to be considered: the rivalry between Russia and Britain in the 19th century, not only on the continent but in Asia, too; the relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the alliance between the Three Emperors.

3.1 British policy and the Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

3.1.1 British Policy and the Administrative Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

The provisions of the Treaty of Berlin allowed Britain to succeed in preserving as much as possible the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, avoiding the dissolution of its European possessions and interrupted the penetration of the Russian Empire south of

the Balkan territories. Nevertheless, Lord Salisbury conveyed little optimism for the future maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as a powerful barrier against the Great Powers' various interests in the Near East and particularly Russia's advancement in the Balkans and in Asia. In December 1878, when the work of organising Eastern Rumelia had already begun, he expressed the following view "We shall set up a rickety sort of Turkish rule again south of the Balkans. But it is a mere respite. There is vitality left in them."²⁸¹ Anyway, the British Foreign Diplomacy made significant efforts to establish the province in such a way which had to secure the interests of Britain in the Balkans.

According to the Treaty, a Commission constituted from the representatives of the Great Powers had to be organised to elaborate an Organic Law, to define the rights of the Governor General and the administrative, judicial and financial government of the Province, as well as the regulations and functions of the militia.²⁸² The organisation of Eastern Rumelia's administration was a key factor for the future development of the Province which had two possible paths ahead – to remain an Ottoman possession or to unite with the Principality of Bulgaria. The first strategy would satisfy the British policy and the second one would accomplish Russia's mission in the Balkans. In this way, the beginning of a struggle for Eastern Rumelia continued for almost a year.

The British foreign policy strategy intended to prevent the Russian advancement in the region and it required the Province to be organised in such a way which had to secure the complete power of the Sultan over the governance of the Province. For this purpose, the basis of the Organic Law had to be represented by *Laws of the Vilayets* implemented in the Ottoman provinces. Also, the proposal for administrative autonomy was raised at the Conference of Istanbul as both strategies secured the Sultan's dominance in the region. In the instructions sent to the British Commissioner, Lord Salisbury states that the British Government had two main objectives as regards the future organisation of the province Eastern Rumelia:

1. the Sultan's political and military authority over the territory included in the new province should be maintained intact, while the population was protected from exactions or annoyance caused by the Ottoman soldiers; His Majesty should maintain, for all practical purposes, an unrestricted power of defending his frontiers by land and sea.
2. by means of reformed financial administration, public and impartial courts of justice, an improved system of policy and local representative institutions; the

²⁸¹ Quoted in Benedict Humphrey Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880* (Oxford:Oxford Press 1937), p. 565.; Taylor, *The Struggle of Mastery*, p. 253.

²⁸² Elena Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia (1879-1885): Ikonomika, politika*, Sofia: Kultura, 1983, p. 13.

subjects of the Sultan throughout the province of whatever race or creed should be placed on a position of perfect equality in front of the law; they should be free from oppression and they should enjoy safety for their lives and properties.²⁸³

The British authorities' position expressed on the issue aimed to create a province in the spirit of the 19th century British policy regarding the Ottoman Empire, preserving the Ottoman power over the territory in exchange for the implementation of particular reforms in the territory. Nevertheless, Eastern Rumelia had an important strategic position for securing the Ottoman Capital. Therefore, the establishment of a strong Ottoman power in the Province was greatly important for Britain as it aimed to consolidate the Ottomans' strength within their European territories. Besides, Britain sought to undermine the future Tsarist influence over the Balkan territories. These were the desires of the British diplomacy at the beginning of the European Commission's work.

These first instructions of the British Government established the principal opinion of the Bulgarian Historiography that Britain desired Eastern Rumelia to be organised and to exist as a *Vilayet* of the Ottoman Empire not as a autonomous province. These actions were also appraised as an objective to restrict the further development of the Bulgarian population in the political, economic and cultural sense.²⁸⁴ However, in order to present the foreign policy pursued by the Great Powers such as Russia and Britain, a one-sided assessment of their actions is not the adequate method of study. This chapter aims to examine the British policy regarding the establishment of Eastern Rumelia and also to present the viewpoint changes that Britain was forced to endure so as to achieve its goals.

During the diplomatic preparation that preceded the establishment of the European Commission, the British Government tried to gain allies. It orientated towards Austro-Hungary, whose interests regarding the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire were favourable to "the firm establishment of the political and military authority of the Sultan by free constitutional rights for the people."²⁸⁵ Additional assistance Britain was able to acquire from the French authorities. After their arrival in the Ottoman capital, the

²⁸³ *F.O.* 901/8, from Lord Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, August 20, 1878, No 5 PRO.

²⁸⁴ Maria Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto ustroistvo na Iztochna Rumelia* (Sofia: BAN 1976), p. 35-39.

²⁸⁵ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquise of Salisbury, Vienna, August 27, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p.10.

Commissioners of these three countries – Le Baron de Ring (French Delegate), M. Kallay (Austro-Hungarian Delegate) and Hendry Drummond Wolff (British Delegate) - held a meeting at which they agreed to act together on certain fixed points.²⁸⁶

Officially, the Commission started its work in Istanbul, on the 18th of September 1878, when the first meeting took place. Afterwards, the Commission continued its work in Plovdiv. The first meeting of the European Commission in the capital of the province took place on 21st of October 1878.²⁸⁷ The work of the commission was planned to last 3 months but the difficulties which arose during the work required the prolongation of the Commission's work. The Organic Law was finally accomplished and signed on the 26th of April 1879. Sir H. Drummond Wolff was appointed British Commissioner²⁸⁸ and the Earl of Donoughmore was appointed Assistant Commissioner.²⁸⁹

At the beginning, the British authorities were ready to suppose that the Russians had been able to establish a particular degree of influence over the Bulgarian population, but actually they were not aware of its extent. So, together with the strong Ottoman authority which had to be secured in the province, they pointed out the need to establish a government and administration in Eastern Rumelia that would bring tranquillity and prosperity. Thus, the inhabitants of the province would give up the idea of a union with Bulgaria.²⁹⁰ This view of the British authorities was dictated by their awareness of the difficulties that had arisen from the division of Bulgarian lands and by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin which were opposed by the Bulgarian population. In one of his communications, Wolff expressed the opinion that: "If the Bulgarians of Eastern Roumelia are rendered satisfied and prosperous under the Government of the Sultan, they will remain quiet under his rule. If they are governed as before, they will intrigue Russia, and Europe will still be kept in a state of ferment and anxiety"²⁹¹. The British

²⁸⁶ F.O. 78/3036, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 6, 1879, No 98, p. 89-97, PRO.

²⁸⁷ Manio Stoyanov, "Izrobotvane na Organicheskia Ustav na Iztochna Rumelia", *Istoricheski Pregled* 2 (1955), p. 66.

²⁸⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Marquise of Salisbury to Sir A. H. Layard, Foreign Office, August 7, 1878, Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 1.

²⁸⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Marquise of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, August 10, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 2

²⁹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, August 24, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 8-9.

²⁹¹ F.O. 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise of Salisbury, Philippopolis 9, 1879, No 16, p. 131-134, PRO.

authorities accepted this main objective as basis for the organisation program of the Province.

The first step of the British plan for organisation of Eastern Rumelia was the proposal raised by the British Commissioner. He requested that the meetings of the Commission should be moved from Istanbul to Plovdiv.²⁹² The British authorities proceeded in front of the governments of Austro-Hungary, France and the Ottoman Empire in this regard. Their reasons were that the relocation would contribute to a faster pacification of the province and the attainment of the duty to manage the financial issues assigned to the Commission by the Treaty of Berlin.²⁹³ Actually, the continuation of the Commission's work in the capital of the province aimed to obtain the control not only over the financial resources but also over the management of the province during the work of the European Commission. Therefore, the Ottoman authority could be re-established easily in the region even before the elaboration of the Organic Law.

To achieve this purpose, the question concerning the administrative authority of the province during the transitional period was raised by the European Commission. Until that moment, as the province had been occupied by the Russian army, it was governed by the Tsarist Empire. However, the Treaty of Berlin did not mention specific provisions on that issue, except for the financial status in the province. So, the British government used this absence of clarity and insisted on the right of the Ottoman Government to administrate the province during the work of the European Commission.²⁹⁴ The British Commissioner stated that, according to the Treaty of Berlin, Eastern Rumelia was an Ottoman Province and only the Sultan's authority could govern it. Consequently, the Porte had to apply immediately its right before the Organic Law was elaborated. Actually, behind this position, there was Britain's clear understanding that the existence of Russian authorities in Eastern Rumelia could only complicate and hinder the work of the British authorities on the re-establishment of the Sultan's rights in the Province.²⁹⁵

This proposal failed but Britain tried to achieve control over the administration of Eastern Rumelia through other scheme. On the 9th of October 1878 the British

²⁹² In the British record is written the old name of the town Philippopolis.

²⁹³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from the Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Adams, Foreign Office, September 10, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 10.

²⁹⁴ F.O. 901/8, to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, September 23, 1878, No 23, PRO

²⁹⁵ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 57.

ambassador was instructed to communicate the following proposal to the French Government: “Her Majesty’s Government are of opinion that the duties of the administration during this period may, in conformity with the Treaty, be entrusted either to the Porte or to the Commission; but that the right of occupation, conferred by the Treaty to Russia, does not carry with it a right to administer.”²⁹⁶

In his personal report, Henry Layard pointed out a very important fact that the Powers signed the Treaty of Berlin accepting the prolongation of the occupation of the Province by the Russian army as a measure to avoid the anarchy. However, the Powers did not intend that the civil administration should continue in Russian hands after the conclusion of the Treaty and they wanted to transfer it to the Ottoman civil authorities.²⁹⁷ If the administration of the Province could not be returned to the Sultan, at least it could be transferred into the hands of the European Commission and Britain could exercise some degree of control over it. This was the hidden idea behind the proposal. But, according to article XIX of the Treaty of Berlin, the Commission was only designated with the right to administrate the finances of the Province in accordance with the Porte. The struggle for the administration of Eastern Rumelia was actually a struggle to exclude the Russian authorities from the Province.²⁹⁸ Russia was very well aware of Britain’s intentions and used the same absence of clear formulation of the article XIX to reject the British proposal. Thus, the British authorities failed to obtain the administration of Eastern Rumelia.

Guided by opposite interest, Russia and Britain debated in contradiction on how much power the Sultan should have in Eastern Rumelia. This argument preceded the main points for which they clashed during the establishment of the administrative authority of the Province.

The first point was the pattern of the Organic Law that had to be elaborated and implemented in the province. The first proposal came from the Porte based on the *Law of the Vilayets* and it stipulated the preservation of the old administrative system, the appointment of the governance apparatus by the Ottoman authorities and the subordination of the militia and gendarmerie to the Ottoman Empire. The project was

²⁹⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia’, from the Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Lyons, Foreign Office, October 9, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 27.

²⁹⁷ F.O. 881/3910, from Sir Henry Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, January 6, 1879, No 283, p. 267-270, PRO.

²⁹⁸ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 65.

rejected by the European Commission because it restricted the autonomous rights given to the Eastern Rumelia by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin.²⁹⁹ The directors of the seven departments, who had to rule together with the Governor General and also to support him, had to be appointed by the Sultan, at the proposal of Ottoman ministers and in agreement with the Governor General. Thus, these appointments were entirely subjected to the Ottoman Government.³⁰⁰ The project preserved the same administrative division of the region which was designated by the law for the administration of the *vilayets* which had been applied since 1870.³⁰¹

Eastern Rumelia was returned under the authority of the Ottoman Empire with the Treaty of Berlin, but the extent of its subordination depended upon the model of the administrative institutions and organisation that would be established in the Province. Thereby, after the Congress of Berlin, the work of the European Commission was very substantial for the further development of the Province. The result of this work, viz the Organic Law, would determine the future of the province.³⁰² Therefore, the character of the authority which had to be established depended on the character of the Organic Law which had to be prepared.

Before the Commission relocated to Plovdiv, the Assistant Commissioner - Donoughmore was sent to the province with the mission to observe the financial status of the Province, the collection of the revenues by the Russian military administration and the way the revenues were spent. Also, he acknowledged the number of Russian troops left in Eastern Rumelia. Furthermore, he had to determine the social and educational level of the people who could attend the administrative institutions of the province in the future. The British authorities were also interested in religious and race features of the population and they distinguished between Muslim population of 'Bulgarian blood' and 'of Turkish origin'. The present situation of the administration instituted and applied by the Russian authorities and the influence of this rule over the Bulgarian population created information of great importance for the British

²⁹⁹ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 24.; Maria Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 76-78.

³⁰⁰ Mihail Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumelia*, (Sofia: Pechatnitsa "S.M. Stajkova" 1925), p. 50.; Stoyanov, "Izrabotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 67.

³⁰¹ Maria Manolova, *Izgrazhdane na bulgarskata burzhoazna darzhavna organizatsia v perioda na Vremennoto rusko upravlenie*, PhD Theisi, Sofia University 1969, p. 43

³⁰² Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 14.

authorities.³⁰³ This information contributed to the preparation of further programs by the British authorities.

The situation in the province occurred differently from what the British authorities expected. The representatives of the European Commission faced the powerful Russian authority that had been established and a strong opposition of the Bulgarian population against the provisions of the Berlin Treaty and the restoration of the Ottoman authority in the region. When the European Commission relocated to Plovdiv, it encountered repeated demonstrations and petitions expressing the readiness to defend its freedom and publications in the press against the intention of the Commission to restore the Sultan's authority in the province. All these actions were sustained by military demonstrations.³⁰⁴ The Russian authorities succeeded to establish a significant militia in Eastern Rumelia. Besides, the population was also armed and trained, supported with money by the Russian authorities and a possible rebellion would have been a suitable pretext for further Russian intervention.³⁰⁵

These realities probably forced the British diplomacy to change some of its views regarding the organisation of Eastern Rumelia. The alternation in the views of the British authorities as regards the organisation of Eastern Rumelia could be traced observing the work of the Commission and the concessions that the British Government agreed to make. At the beginning, it was very important to Britain that Eastern Rumelia should be absolutely subordinated to the Sultan. However, later in the process of elaborating its administration and careful observation of the conditions in the province, Britain became mainly concerned about the suppression of the Russian influence, allowing the population of Eastern Rumelia to have significant self-government rights. The firmness of the Bulgarian population also contributed to this alternation because the Bulgarians aimed to strengthen the rights given to them by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, namely the right to freedom and self-governing. The Bulgarian population insisted that the existing organisation and administration had to be left untouched.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Lord Donoughmore, Therapia, September 3, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 13-14.

³⁰⁴ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 68-75.

³⁰⁵ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquise of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 99-100.

³⁰⁶ A. Shopov, "Мемоар. Отправен на Представителит на Великите Сили в Цариград от Българския народ", *Maritza*, Plovdiv, October 13, 1878, p. 4-5.; A. Shopov, "Мемоар. Отправен на

These circumstances threatened the policy of the British authority to restore the Sultan's rule and the balance of power in the Balkans, established by the Treaty of Berlin. If the existent system of governing set up by the Russian Provisional Administration in Eastern Rumelia had remained, the province would have been under undisputable Russian influence and it could have threatened the Ottoman Empire's possessions in the Balkans. Thus, Britain was somehow forced to change its political strategy for the organisation of Eastern Rumelia.

The alternations of the British views became apparent when Britain accepted the elaboration of the Organic Law which had to preserve the autonomous character of the Province according to the Treaty of Berlin. The Commissioners reached consent upon a basis for elaboration of the Organic Law, using the proposals made at the eighth meeting of the Conference of Istanbul. They also used the *Law of the Vilayets* but they had to take into consideration the local conditions in the Province. It was also important to clarify that modern institutions had to be implemented in the province, by following the example of western countries. In order to prepare an Organic Law in this regard, a scheme was determined for the work of the Commission on the Organic Law and the main parts of the Law which individual delegates had to elaborate. The chapters of the Organic Statute were the following³⁰⁷:

1. Public Law of the Province – Sir H. Drummond Wolff
2. Rights of the citizens – Le Baron de Ring
3. Governor General – M. de Kallay
4. Central Government of the Province – Le Baron de Ring
5. Provincial Assembly - Sir H. Drummond Wolff
6. Division of the Province and Governing of the Provincial Districts - Le Baron de Ring
7. Finances of the Province – Le Chevalier Veroni
8. Agriculture, Commerce and Public Buildings – Le Chevalier Veroni
9. Judicial Authorities - M. de Kallay
10. Religions – M. de Kallay
11. Education – M. de Braunschweig
12. Militia- Le Baron de Ring and Le Colonel Schepeleff

Представителит на Великите Сили в Цариград от Българския народ”, *Maritza*, Plovdiv, October 17, 1878, p. 2-6.

³⁰⁷ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 24.

13. Gendarmerie- Le Baron de Ring and Le Colonel Schepeleff

The project was presented at the beginning of November by the Austro-Hungarian delegate - Kallay.³⁰⁸ According to this project, if the European Commission successfully realised this program in the province of Eastern Rumelia, the rights and freedom of the population would be secured, a modern financial administration would be implemented, a modern educational system would be created, a strong executive authority and a civil administration would be established which had to work for prosperity of the province.³⁰⁹ According to Lord Salisbury: “The scheme appears to afford a very clear and comprehensive sketch of the framework of such constitution as the Commission is desired to prepare, and of the principles by which they should be guided in the task.”³¹⁰ The acceptance of this kind of program was an indication for the new course obtained by the British authorities regarding the elaboration of the Organic Law with larger measures of autonomy. Even though the liberal character of the program was recognized by Maria Manolova, she stated that the intention for preserving entirely the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, restricted the democratic framework of the Organic Law. This statement was not actually correct. Britain was removed from the original program according to which, as Count Andrassy said “the Porte should continue to exercise within it as much authority as it is compatible with security for a good administration”³¹¹ and the Austrian Government expressed its dissatisfaction because this new course was estimated as unfavourable. The purpose for the elaboration of an Organic Law was vivid. In this way, it would enable the population of the province to obtain significant self-government authority and it had to influence the people so as they could enjoy the progressive regime developed in Eastern Rumelia, instead of demanding to unite themselves with Bulgaria.³¹² The British diplomacy requested the reduction of the Russian dominance in Eastern Rumelia and if that objective could not be achieved by subordination of the province under the Ottoman rule, it could be

³⁰⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 3, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 111.

³⁰⁹ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 83.

³¹⁰ F.O. 901/9, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Foreign Office, November 21, 1878, No 114 PRO.

³¹¹ F.O. 901/9, from Sir Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, October 18, 1878, No 1 PRO.

³¹² F.O. 901/11, from H. Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, February 4, 1879, No 67, PRO.

realised by giving extensive rights of self-government to the Bulgarians and at the same time a chance for the population to free itself from the Russian tutelage.

Even if the new course had been adopted by the British authorities, the work of the Commission would have been hard. In December, the British Commissioner complained that for almost two months since the Commission had started its work in Plovdiv, nothing had been done by the end of December and the fault was Russia's unwillingness to cooperate.³¹³

During the discussions upon the first chapter, the Russian and British views clashed on some issues which were substantial for the future of the Province. The project was worked out by the British Commissioner. Firstly, the project stipulated that except for the Governor General and the Governor General's Secretary, the high clerks, officers and judges had to be appointed by the Sultan.³¹⁴ The Russians regarded these provisions as a restriction of the administrative autonomy in the province. The compromise was achieved with the following correction – the directors of departments, the judges of the High Court and the local governments had to be appointed by the Governor General with the approval of the Sultan. The Governor General received also the right to appoint officers up to the rank of captain.³¹⁵ The designated right of the Sultan to approve the laws accepted by the Provincial Assembly, also raised discussions because it subordinated all legislative power to the Porte. Therefore, the Sultan received the right to approve the laws on condition that if in two months the Sultan did not reject a particular law, it will be considered as accepted.³¹⁶ As the proposal came from the British Commissioner, he stated:

It will be seen that by our proposals the Sultan's sanction is necessary for the confirmation of every law and that in this respect the Governor General has no power of sanction apart from the Sultan. I fear it will be unavoidable in the first instance that the Porte will look unfavourably on the legislation of the Province, and it is therefore very desirable that as little opening as possible should be left for any (unreadable word) proceedings, either on one side or the other, caused either by ill or dilatoriness. It is also desirable that any modifications to a law, desired by the Sultan, should be communicated if possible during the session of the Assembly, which is not likely to last more than two months.³¹⁷

³¹³ F.O. 881/3910, Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philipopolis, December 25, 1878, p.105-106, No 15, PRO.

³¹⁴ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 87.

³¹⁵ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 26.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26-27, Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 92-108.

³¹⁷ F.O. 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 2, 1879, p.25-27, No 3, PRO.

The measure proposed by the British Commissioner and approved by the British authorities shows that they realised the trouble that could have occurred from the side of the Porte – rejecting the laws or postponing the approval for a long period which could have hindered the work of the Governor General and the development of the province. So, they decided to leave an escape for Eastern Rumelia's Government. The British anxiety regarding the Sultan's administration was proved. For the period from 7 years from 12 Provincial Laws submitted for approval to the Sultan only 3 were sanctioned and from 5 annual budgets not even one was accepted by the Sultan.³¹⁸

Most difficulties occurred during the discussions about chapter V. "Provincial Assembly", prepared again by the British Commissioner. The project had a tendency to give comprehensive rights to the Governor General, at the expense of limiting the population's right to participate in the governance of the province. Various restrictions were subjected to suffrage, such as property and educational qualifications. The members were appointed by right and selected by the Governor General. If it had been set up on that model, the Assembly would have been completely depended on the Governor General and its duties as a controlling organ would have been canceled. Also, the attendance of the Bulgarian population was limited.³¹⁹ The Russian Commissioners opposed the project.

The sharp dispute between Britain and Russia on this issue threatened the work of the Commission as both sides refused to draw back. At the end, a compromise decision was adopted. The Russian Commissioners agreed that the Governor General would have the right to appoint members in the Provincial assembly but only a number of ten.³²⁰ The opportunity of the population to play a more active role in the governance of the province rendered quite a liberal character to the regime and an opportunity for self-development. The dimension of the Governor General's power actually ensured the opportunity for the Porte's limited influence in the Province.

The alternation of the British policy resulted in the creation of an Organic Law which became significantly alienated from the *Law of Vilayets* and it practically allowed the province to have a semi-independent character. At the beginning Britain desired to strengthen the Ottoman Empire and to prevent a semi-independent character, according to the Treaty of Berlin. Nevertheless, the British policy changed its attitude later when

³¹⁸ Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 229.

³¹⁹ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitucionnoto*, p. 171-174, Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, 1983, p. 30-31.

³²⁰ Stoyanov, "Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 78-79.

some of the rights that were given to Eastern Rumelia undermined the Sultan's authority. An article was adopted in the Organic Law which defined and recognised the 'indigenous' quality as nationality of Eastern Rumelia and it gave the right to citizenship in the Province. The decision was to use the Bulgarian language as official language and to exclude the Turkish and Greek languages which could be used officially in the regions where one-third of the entire population spoke one of those languages. These stipulations were considered as a step for complete independence of Eastern Rumelia by some of the British statesmen (Sir Henry Layard).³²¹

The commission did not manage to finish its work in the established period of three months and the British Commissioner proposed to his Government to obtain steps for prolongation of the European Commission.³²² All the Great Powers agreed that the Commission should continue its work until the elaboration of the Organic Law, as the European Commission had not been relieved from its duty of completing the organisation of Eastern Rumelia.³²³

On the 25th of January 1879, the British Commissioner sent a detailed report about the progress of the Commission's work and the existent situation. According to his report, after four months of assembling, only four chapters of the Organic Law were accomplished and ten chapters were waiting to be elaborated. The financial administration was not submitted yet to the European Commission. The Ottoman authorities were not doing anything to secure their authority in the province although only three months were left before the finish of the occupation period and the Russian troops had to leave. The great difficulties came from Russia's policy in Eastern Rumelia, as the British Commissioner pointed:

I am convinced that they do not want war. But as a matter of pride, they have flourished before the Bulgarians - flag of defiance to the Berlin Treaty. They have produced an agitation which has assumed dimensions beyond their control and which they now find themselves obliged to follow, at the risk of incurring the hostility of the Panslavist organisation both in Russia and abroad.

Their army is fatigued and anxious to return home, and the generals are worried by the complication of their duties. But knowing the feelings they have fostered if

³²¹ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A.H. Layard to the Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, January 6, 1879, p.267-270, No 283, PRO.

³²² Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 30, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p.164.

³²³ *F.O.* 195/1214, from the Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Loftus, Foreign Office, January 13, 1879, No 7, PRO.

not created, they are determined to be able to say to the Bulgarians”: ‘Europe has prevented us from doing all we wished in your favour; but at all events we have secured you a fairly good Government, and safety from Turkish misrule – You may therefore bide your time’.³²⁴

The Russian authorities represented by the Russian Commissioner, Prince Tzeretelev, stated that if the other controversial issues regarding the establishment of Eastern Rumelia (the European Governor and the officer of the gendarmerie were appointed not from people of Muslim origin and the Balkan garrisons could be settled) the elaboration of the Organic Law could run through very rapidly. As regards the position of the affairs in the Province, the British Commissioner discussed the situation with his colleagues: the Russian, French and German Commissioner and he also reached a similar conclusion and said: “I can only add the expression of my belief without entering into the discussion of causes that the pacification of this country cannot take place without bloodshed unless some measures be taken to prevent violence, and further that without the adoption of some such measures, Russia will throw obstacles in the way of any satisfactory report by the Commission”³²⁵.

The Russian authorities troubled the Commission’s endeavours to secure a political order in Eastern Rumelia. The British Commissioner thought that the promise for a conciliatory demeanour on behalf of the Russians, could represent a solution to this complicated circumstances and he advised his government in this regard. On the 6th of February, Lord Salisbury brought the political move of the British Government to the British Commissioner’s knowledge, in order to put pressure on the Russian authorities to restrict some “extraordinary proceedings which have taken place under the sanction of and encouraged by Russian officials” in Eastern Rumelia. Some information was allowed to be revealed concerning the promise of Britain to give material assistance to the Sultan and to insist on the evacuation of Russian troops from the Ottoman Empire’s territories until May. At the same time, a rebuke was made against arming the Bulgarian population. Lord Salisbury especially pointed out that: “Any further intimation to be conveyed to the Russian Government, though it should be very firm in tone, must reach them in the same informal manner. Any kind of public menace would raise their feelings against it, and make it impossible for them to yield.” In the dispatch, Lord

³²⁴ *F.O.* 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 25, 1879, p. 351-353, No 47, PRO.

³²⁵ *F.O.* 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury Philippopolis, January 30, 1879, p. 380-384, No 55, PRO.

Salisbury also expressed his fear that the Panslavist movements might force Britain into war.³²⁶ These actions of the British diplomacy aimed to compel Russia to reject its propaganda among the Bulgarian population against the application of the provisions from the Treaty of Berlin, the elaboration of the Organic Law and the measures undertaken in this regard – distribution of arms, military training of the population and obstructive behaviour of the Russian Commissioner. It also declared the firmness of Britain to vindicate its conditions in Eastern Rumelia.

The Provisional Russian Administration in Bulgaria was a significant hindrance for the application of the British policy in Eastern Rumelia. Even after the Treaty of Berlin, the Provisional Government for Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was not separated. The general administration of the province was not subordinated to an independent Governor and the administrative acts and order continued to be issued by the Governor General of Bulgaria. These circumstances raised the Bulgarian population's hope for future union with the principality of Bulgaria. In January, the British Government strongly insisted in front of the Russian authorities that the temporary government of Eastern Rumelia should be separated from the Principality of Bulgaria and that the local militia should be established independently, according to the conditions of the Treaty.³²⁷ As long as the Russian authorities occupied the administrative government and military power in Eastern Rumelia, Britain had little chances to impose the Ottoman rule and to restore the province within the Ottoman Empire.

During of work of the Commission, the British authorities had to struggle with the Russian opposition on almost all points and with the sustained Ottoman lapse of active attendance. As Sir Henry Layard claimed in front of Caratheodory Pasha³²⁸ (Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Ottoman Empire): “in consequence of proper instructions not having been given to the Turkish Commissioners, who, unwilling to take upon themselves the responsibility of decision on any question of importance, accept the decisions of their colleagues almost in every case with a ‘reserve’ ”³²⁹.

³²⁶ *F.O.* 901/11, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, February 6, 1879, No 62, PRO.

³²⁷ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Loftus, Foreign Office, January 26, 1879, PRO.

³²⁸ For more details: Peri Efe, “Bir Osmanlı Bürokrati: Aleksandır Karatodori Paşa/Milleti-Rum’dan Bir Münnever Aleksandros Karatheodoris”, *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi*, no 193 (2010), p. 83-93.; Mahmut Akpınar, *Bir Tanzimat Bürokrati ve Diplomati Olarak Aleksandır Karatodori Pasa* (PhD thesis, Selcuk Universitesi, 2010).; Syed Tanvir Wasti, “Three Ottoman Pashas at the Congress of Berlin 1878”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52 no 6 (2016), p. 938-951.

³²⁹ *F.O.* 195/1220, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 28, 1878, No 1591, PRO.

One of the first steps necessary for the Ottoman Government was to organise the gendarmerie and the militia as a measure against Russia's probable pretext not to withdraw its troops from the Province inasmuch as there was no other legitimate power to replace them and maintain the order.³³⁰ In the future months, Britain put pressure on the Sultan over and over again to begin the preparation of the military forces 'gendarmerie' which would be sent in Eastern Rumelia and the British threatened him that, in case of European intervention, the consequence would be their fault.³³¹

At the beginning of March, the elaboration of the Organic Law seemed unlikely to be accomplished before the departure of the Russian troops. On the 4th of March, 1879 the British Commissioner sent a communication that Chapter VI was successfully accepted and he supposed that the Organic Statute might be completed by the first week of April. Except Chapter VII "Finances of the Province" and Chapter VIII "Agriculture, Commerce and Public Buildings", the rest of chapters should not raise difficulties.³³² On March 18, 1879 Chapter XII "Militia" and Chapter XIII "Gendarmerie" were accepted without any significant discussions.³³³ The last chapter was accomplished on the 26th of March leaving four points of primary importance open for further negotiations: "the languages, the revenue of the province, the Berats for Bishops and the Vacouf"³³⁴. Three of them were settled on the 9th of April at a meeting in Istanbul. As regards the official language, it was accepted that together with the language of the larger population, the language of the minorities must also be used simultaneously if the number of the minorities represents half of the entire population. As for the *Berats*³³⁵, the population could apply both to the Porte and to the Governor General.³³⁶ The tribute that Eastern Rumelia had to pay to the Porte was determined at the amount of 240 000 Turkish lira. At the end of April, the Organic law was completed and in this way, the main task of the European Commission was accomplished.

³³⁰ F.O. 901/9, from Lord Lyons to Marquis of Salisbury, Paris, October 24, 1878, No 6, PRO.

³³¹ F.O. 195/1215, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir A. H. Layard, Foreign Office, February 1, 1879, No 81, PRO.

³³² F.O. 78/3041, Philippopolis, March 4, 1879, p.181, No 82, PRO.

³³³ F.O. 78/3041, Philippopolis, March 19, 1879, p.237-238, No 110, PRO.

³³⁴ F.O. 78/3041, Phillipopolis, March 26, 1879, p.267, No 125, PRO.

³³⁵ Mübahat Kütükoğlu, s.v. "Berat", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed February 1, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/berat--belge>; Since the Independent Bulgarian Church was established in 1870 the appointment of the bishops in the Bulgarian dioceses was executed by the berats issued by the Sultan.

³³⁶ F.O. 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p. 301, No 141, PRO.

About the proceedings of the European Commission and its results, the French Commissioner Coutouly made the following observation: “we were fatally giving up this country to Russia and Austria”.³³⁷ The result of the European Commission’s work was estimated by Count Andrassy as following: “the European Commission proceeded in a contrary direction, and the Organic Statute now about to be put in force leaves scarcely a vestige of direct authority to the Sultan, who, except as regards one or two superior officers of militia, can neither appoint nor dismiss a civil or military functionary in the province, and the whole executive authority is permanently delegated to an irremovable Governor-General, who necessarily has to be selected less for any supposed aptitude for the post than with a view to secure the requisite unanimous sanction of the Powers”³³⁸. Actually, those alternations made by the British authorities contributed to the primary British policy to restrict Russia’s influence in the Balkans and to give an opportunity to the Bulgarian population to take its own way of development.

The European Commission endorsed the Organic Law for the Province, law which was widely detailed and it strictly designated the governing authorities. The governing authority was placed in the hands of the Governor General, the Secretary General, the Director of Internal Affairs, the Director of Finances, the Director of Justice, the Director of Public Works, the Director of Education and the Commander in Chief of Militia and Gendarmerie.

The Organic Law implemented most of the liberal principles recognised in the European countries and it tried to adapt them to local conditions, even though the British authorities confessed four years later how hard it was for them to deal with a population just emerging from war and to gain knowledge of the conditions and national laws under which the population had lived. The opinion of the British Consul – General later appointed Henry M. Jones was that: “Matters which in other countries are not fixed by the law but by Government regulation, have made in Eastern Rumelia the object of rigid stipulations in an international act which cannot be changed but by the approval of the Great Powers.”³³⁹. Actually, this feature of the Organic Law made the Bulgarians

³³⁷ *F.O.* 78/3036, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 6, 1879, No 98, p.89-97, PRO.

³³⁸ *F.O.* 195/1220, from Sir H. Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, June 18, 1879, No 6, PRO.

³³⁹ KMF 04, inf. No 215/1, l. 21-41, Philippopolis, April 7, 1884, *F.O.* 195/1496, from Consule General Jones to the Earl of Dufferin, Phillipopolis, 10 April, 1886, No 401, PRO.

strictly obey the Law until the last day of the Province as an autonomous province. Eastern Rumelia decided to take its own path unlike the trend that Russia had settled.

3.1.2 The British Policy and Struggle over the Ethnic Groups

The struggle for domination over the province of Eastern Rumelia between the two Great Powers concerned not only the administrative organisation but also regarded the ethnic groups that inhabited the province. The preponderance of one ethnic group over the other had to secure the opportunity of Britain and Russia to guide the internal affairs in the province in such a way as to ensure their persuasive policy in the region. The Russians was supporting the Bulgarian population within the framework of the Pan-Slavism ideology. Britain traditionally was sustaining the Greeks as a counter action to the dominant Slav population in the Balkans. In a wider context, when Maria Manolova examined the issue, she stated that the western Great Powers created Eastern Rumelia as a defender of the territories south of the Balkans against the Slav invasion.³⁴⁰

During the elaboration of the Organic Law, some issues arose regarding the rights and status of different nationalities in the province. One of the questions was: which authority should appoint the bishops in the Province? The Russian delegates insisted that they had to be nominated by the local government. In the instruction sent by the British Foreign Office to the British Commissioner Wolff, this proposal encountered a strong opposition because of the following reason: “The policy of England is to sustain the Greeks against the Slavs: and we could not support any proposal in an opposite sense.”³⁴¹ The British apprehension resulted from the idea that if the clergy staff were appointed independently in the province, without the control of the Ottoman authorities, in case of schism between the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Bulgarian population could speedily predominate over the Greek population and thus the province could obtain the character of a purely Bulgarian district where the Russian impact would have advantages. As a result, the future development of the province under the Ottoman rule could be endangered.

The Commissioners tried to obtain settlement by compromise. The French Commissioner Ring suggested a clause to be introduced in the Organic Law. This clause would stipulate that the appointment of the Bishops in the Province should be

³⁴⁰ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 27.

³⁴¹ *F.O.* 901/11, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, February 25, 1879, No 106, PRO.; *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, February 25, 1879, p.164-169, No 106, PRO.

subjected to the Sultan by the Governor General. The British authorities agreed in principle to this proposal and sent instructions that could be adopted only in case the other Commissioner insisted on the issue. Otherwise, Britain preferred the question not be touched by the Commission.³⁴² The British authorities were anxious about this matter because they knew Russia's strong determination to protect the Slav population and the impossibility to rely upon the support of the other Commissioners. The issue was left unsettled until the last meetings of the European Commission.

Similar debates emerged from the question regarding the official language and also from preserving and extending the Greeks' rights in Eastern Rumelia. As the Bulgarian population prevailed, Russia desired the official language to be the Bulgarian language. This became a reason for Henry Layard and Lord Salisbury to express their dissatisfaction with the limited rights established for the Greek population in Eastern Rumelia.³⁴³ The sympathy of the British authorities towards the Greeks could not be concealed. These feelings were dictated by Britain's policy pursued in Eastern Rumelia. The British authorities worked for the establishment of a multiethnic province which had to be a barrier against further Russian penetration. Taking into account the Ottoman weakness regarding the application of authority over its European possessions, a multiethnic model of Eastern Rumelia could keep the province under the Ottoman power. Otherwise, the predominance of the Bulgarian population and the migration of Muslim population would have traced the settlement of a district with complete Bulgarian character in immediate proximity to Istanbul. If the circumstances in the province had developed in that direction, two great threats would have occurred – the union between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia and the possession of the Balkans by Russia. Although the British authorities accepted the introduction of the liberal state system, this system had to serve for the political and cultural imposition of the Muslim and Greek population.³⁴⁴

The desire of the British authorities to organise Eastern Rumelia as a multiethnic province was frankly expressed in a conversation between the Russian Emperor and the British Ambassador: “not even His Majesty himself could be more determined than we were to secure the Rumelian people in the enjoyment of those Constitutional Rights and

³⁴² *F.O.* 901/11, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, March 10, 1879, No 133, PRO.

³⁴³ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 12, 1879, p.149-152, No 69, PRO.

³⁴⁴ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 39-40.

administrative privileges which were proposed to assure them under the Treaty; and that thanks to the labours of the Commission it was probable that the mixed population of Bulgarians, Mahomedans and Greeks within the Province would find themselves placed at all events under as satisfactory a regime as that which had been successfully provided for the inhabitants of Lebanon".³⁴⁵

The way of transforming Eastern Rumelia into a multiethnic province was through providing a liberal organisation, including representatives of all nationalities in the administrative and judicial council and admitting three official languages: Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek. These measures pursued the aim to restrict the dominance of the Slav (Bulgarian) population and to open the way for making the Province a real barrier against Slavism as the purpose of the Congress of Berlin was.³⁴⁶

Even though Britain's foreign policy conveyed firmness, it was also liable to some alternations. The traditional support of the Greek nationality was a followed course in the British foreign policy since the establishment of the Greek state and even before that moment. The Greeks embodied the idea of guardians of the Christianity in the Ottoman Empire and they were a powerful economic factor in the Mediterranean trade. Furthermore, they were a barrier against the Pan-Slavism's movement which had gained strength. However, Wolff considered that it had to look for a different approach towards the Bulgarians, their churches in Eastern Rumelia and the territories inhabited by Bulgarians under the Ottoman power. The desire of the Greek Patriarch was that the Bulgarian Exarch to be forced to live in Bulgaria and to eliminate the Bulgarian churches from Macedonia, Thrace and other provinces from the Ottoman Empire or European territories which, at the same time, to be brought under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch. Such an act would have signified the cancellation of the religious liberties already enjoyed by the Bulgarian churches and the determination of the Bulgarians to look for support from Russia. Besides, he considered more advantageous for the Sultan the following scheme proposed by the Bulgarian Exarch than the strategy of the Patriarch: "the Bulgarians from Turkey should look at Constantinople for their ecclesiastical authority, and the Exarch should govern his churches under a supervision which can only be exercised by the Capital. It is impossible to do away with his authority by artificial means, or permanently to subject the Bulgarian majority to the

³⁴⁵ *F.O.* 901/11, from Lord Differin to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, March 12, 1879, PRO.

³⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquis of Salisbury, Philippolis, Desember 2, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 241-2.

Greek minority by some quibble of ecclesiastical law which pretends to do away with the existing schism. Excommunication has terrors only so long as it is not pronounced”.³⁴⁷

If this proposal had been accepted, it would have achieved two goals: firstly, to preserve some kind of authority of the Sultan over the Bulgarians and secondly, not to give an occasion for further propaganda of the Pan-Slavism as regards the Bulgarian issues. The way to deal with the Pan-Slavism’s movement amongst the Bulgarian population was not by repressive measures but through endeavours to separate it into different centres. After having assessed these conditions in Eastern Rumelia, the British officials preferred this course of policy towards the Bulgarian population.

2.1.3 British Policy and the Military Defence of Eastern Rumelia

One of the most significant anxieties of the European Powers regarding Eastern Rumelia was to preserve the order in the province after the evacuation of the Russian troops. The European Powers feared that disorders could occur in the province that would force the Russian authorities to desire to prolong the occupation period.³⁴⁸ Britain tried to find some measures so as to be able to control the situation in the Province. One of the possible measures was the idea of a mixed occupation. The idea appeared also as an act against the powerful influence of Russia in the province and the strong opposition of the Bulgarian population against the restoration of Ottoman troops in the province. The French Foreign Minister, William Waddington, described the issue for maintaining the order in the Ottoman province as “extremely critical, and full of difficulty”³⁴⁹.

The scheme had been earlier discussed by the British authorities. On the 24th of December 1878, Lord Salisbury wanted to maintain the public order in Eastern Rumelia and therefore he agreed with the British Commissioner to conduct consultations with the other representatives from the Commission about a mixed occupation. He desired the proposal not to appear as the official position of Britain but to be regarded as his own idea and also to be careful not to say anything which would seem to engage the opinion of the British Government. Similar discussions took place with some of the Great Powers and Lord Salisbury intended to avoid the confusion which could have

³⁴⁷ *F.O.* 78/3039, Constantinople, May 19, 1879, p.57-62, No 221, PRO.

³⁴⁸ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Sir Henry Elliot to the Marquise of Salisbury, Vienna, January 3, 1879, No 2, PRO.

³⁴⁹ *F.O.* 195/1214, from Lord Lyons to Marquis of Salisbury, Paris, December 29, 1878, No1082, PRO.

occurred in the Province because of the current negotiations sustained by the British Commissioner.³⁵⁰ The suggestion was rapidly dropped by the British Government and on the 31st of December an instruction was sent: “Do not say anything more about mixed occupation for the present. It appears to irritate and frighten the Turks seriously and the existent Government might throw itself into the arms of Russia, if driven hard.” It is also said that the British Government was considerably pressing the Ottoman authorities to prepare themselves for maintaining the order.³⁵¹ Anyway, further consultations were maintained outside the European Commission and without the knowledge of the Ottoman Government, but little progress was achieved. At the beginning of February, the result was as follows: “Italy opposed it warmly; Russia also opposed it; and the Germans threw cold water on it.”³⁵² The mixed occupation was a second plan for the British authorities. However, it was more important for Britain that the Sultan would be able to establish his power independently. Thus, the province could remain entirely under his rule.

Therefore, the issue about the mixed occupation was almost closed for the British authorities at that moment, but many times Lord Salisbury would harp on the issue to use it as a threat against Russia. Surprisingly, at the end of March, the proposal of a mixed occupation came this time from the side of the Russian authorities. The British Government was principally concerned about the conditions in case that “all Signatory Powers consent to it and that they shall all be at liberty to take part in it.”³⁵³ Actually, by this provision, Britain made it impossible to organise such a mixed occupation because Russia would never agree on the attendance of the Ottoman troops.

The report of the British General Military Attaché showed in details the real situation in the Eastern Rumelia:

the Bulgarians in every part of the province are in possession of weapons (about 65 000 rifles) and ammunitions supplied by the Russians, and every man capable of bearing weapons is occupied in drilling and larger practices under the system of “Ecoles gymnastiques” and instructed by Russian commissioned officers. In conclusion, I may affirm that, from a military point of view, the state of Eastern Roumelia is far from satisfactory and I fear that it will be a work of very great

³⁵⁰ *F.O.* 195/1214, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, December 24, 1878, No 4, PRO.

³⁵¹ *F.O.* 901/9, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, December 31, 1878, No 190, PRO.

³⁵² *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, February 1, 1879, p.69, No 55, PRO.

³⁵³ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, March 25, 1879, p.253-254, No 158, PRO.

difficulty to effect a general disarming of the Bulgarians throughout the province and I do not believe the Turkish forces alone could do so without encountering great resistance, when much bloodshed would ensue in consequence. I consider the Russian authorities are responsible for this state of affairs.³⁵⁴

In the context of this situation, the question about the establishment of Ottoman garrisons, which had to secure the military defence of the province, became the second cornerstone of primary importance to Britain. The right for garrisoning the Ottoman troops in Eastern Rumelia was provided by the Treaty of Berlin. However, even from the beginning, it was completely ignored by the Tsarist authorities. The military presence of the Ottoman Empire in the province was a guarantee for the enforcement of the Ottoman authority in Eastern Rumelia. Also, it prevented the separation from the Empire and the conversion into a province with dominant Bulgarian governing authorities that could favourably use the opportunity to unite with the Principality of Bulgaria. During the work of the European Commission, the question was brought forward several times. So, Britain firmly proclaimed its opposition against any modification of the Treaty regarding this provision. It immediately obtained actions to avoid “this abuse without paralyzing Sultan’s power of maintaining order and expelling attack”³⁵⁵. The maintenance of the Sultan’s authority in Eastern Rumelia was one of the main tasks of the British diplomacy as regards its Balkan policy. Therefore, the British authorities tried to remove all obstacles that prevented the Ottoman Government from ruling the province.

Indeed, after the British Government became acquainted with the conditions in the province, it comprehended the threat that could result from the distribution of garrisons which could feel free from the direct control of the Governor of Eastern Rumelia and could ill-treat the neighbouring Bulgarian population, particularly at the beginning when the administration was transferred to the Sultan. This consideration had not been neglected. Actually, it had been noticed by Lord Salisbury and some measures had to be taken to prevent it.³⁵⁶ Britain desired the implementation of a strong Ottoman authority in the province but also an authority which could govern and maintain the peace. If such an authority brought dissatisfaction and disorder to the population, it would endanger the situation, as the Great Eastern Crisis had happened. Another presumption was that,

³⁵⁴ *F.O.* 78/3037, from Colonel Dickson to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p. 230-234, PRO.

³⁵⁵ *F.O.* 901/9, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, December 16, 1878, No 164, PRO.

³⁵⁶ *F.O.* 901/9, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, December 14, 1878, No 161, PRO.

if any disorder appeared, it would be a suitable opportunity for Russia to interfere in the Province.

These considerations had a significant impact on the firm opinion of the British diplomacy expressed at the time of the first European Commission meeting. In the instruction sent by the Foreign Office to the British Commissioner, it was written that in case the Russian authorities “persist in a manner which is incompatible with the Treaty of Berlin, you should enter a protest against their proceedings”³⁵⁷. The strict application of the Treaty of Berlin was the base which provided the restoration of the Sultan’s power in the province. In opposition to Russia, Britain continued to support the Sultan’s right to place garrisons in the Balkans during the accomplishment of the European Commission’s work.³⁵⁸

However, the strong Russian objection endorsed by the Bulgarian antagonism made the British authorities seek an alternative plan. During a meeting between the British Commissioner and the Exarch, the latter strongly urged that the Bulgarians expected the garrisons to be forbidden from entry into the Balkans.³⁵⁹ In the telegram of Wolff addressed to the Foreign Office as regards the right of the Porte to place garrisons and to fortify the Balkans, he presumed the following “while maintaining its right to garrison and fortify the whole frontiers, it should limit the exercise in the Province up to the sea frontier at Bourgas; that it should keep a considerable force at Adrianople and about 5000 men at Djuma, Mustapha Pasha and in the Rhodope; and that the garrisons bordering the frontier should in the first place be accompanied by British officers and those of other signatory Powers that thought fit to send them”³⁶⁰. This way of disposition of the military forces was evaluated as one of the great strategic strengths which allowed the Porte to have absolute control over the sea entrance to the province and to concentrate its military force in a single place from which it could immediately attack and seize the Balkan lands. Besides, the Ottoman Government could negotiate for a strategic railway route along the Balkan range.

³⁵⁷ *F.O.* 901/8, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, October 12, 1878, No 53, PRO.

³⁵⁸ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquise of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, , Foreign Office, January 31, p.64, No 53, PRO.; *F.O.* 195/1215, from Marquise of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, January 31, 1879, 2:30 p.m., No 10, PRO.

³⁵⁹ *F.O.*195/1215, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 29, 1879, No 2, PRO.

³⁶⁰ *F.O.* 78/3036, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 9, 1879, p.140-3, No 106, PRO.

At that moment, Britain did not give up completely the idea that the military forces of the Ottoman Empire to be sent to the province. The view of the British Commissioner was supported by the expert opinion of General Sir Collingwood Dickson whose evaluation described a military point of view “Adrianople and Bourgas are both points of great importance as barring the approach of an enemy towards Constantinople; and an army holding the country between them will have the advantage of a strong fortress on either flank, if compelled to retire will fall back upon the lines of Buyuk-Tchekmedje”³⁶¹. The Foreign Office reckoned that this proposal would be considered very carefully by the British Government.³⁶² Actually, the above mentioned scheme provided more advantages to the Ottoman Empire than garrisoning in the Balkan Mountains.

So, the scheme was adopted by the Foreign Office and later it was used as a counter act against Russia’s proposal for a mixed occupation which was brought to the agenda by the Tsarist authorities. On the 2nd of April, Lord Salisbury urged the Ottoman Government to be ready with sufficient forces to occupy Bourgas and Ichtiman. It was obvious that for Britain the presence of military forces in Eastern Rumelia was of vital importance.³⁶³ Later the Ottoman Government rejected the Proposal for mixed occupation.³⁶⁴

The British Government also made endeavours to make similar arrangements directly with the Russian Empire. To accept the scheme about Ottoman garrisons, Britain was ready to make significant concessions on other points regarding the organisation of the Province. The British Ambassador in the Russian Empire was instructed to obtain the following arrangements from the Russian Government: “the European Commission to be prolonged for another year, during that time the Governor-General would not have the right to summon the Turkish troops inside the province without the consent of the majority of the Commission; the Turkish forces to occupy Bourgas and Ichtiman, but to abstain for a year from taking positions along the Balkan frontier.”³⁶⁵ By this form of

³⁶¹ *F.O.* 78/3036, from General Collingwood Dickson to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philippopolis, March 9, 1879, p.146-148, No 107, PRO.

³⁶² *F.O.* 78/3033, from from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, March 10, 1879, p. 207-208 No 131, PRO.

³⁶³ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, April 2, 1879, No 458, PRO.

³⁶⁴ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, April 4, 1879, No 489, PRO

³⁶⁵ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, Foreign Office, April 2, 1879, No 26 PRO.

proposal, Britain made a concession to Russia but it did not completely abandon the right of the Sultan to occupy the Balkan frontier since the Governor General was designated with the right to summon troops at his own discretion. At the same time, two of the most strategic military points had to be in the hands of the Ottoman Empire and respectively to keep Russia away from Istanbul and the Straits, fact that was very important to the British foreign policy in the region.

The negotiations did not lead to a satisfactory solution to the issue and in April, a month before the expiry term of the Russian occupation, the question of Ottoman garrisons entering Eastern Rumelia was in an impasse. The Russian authorities strenuously opposed to the placement of Ottoman military force in the province. At the beginning of April, the British Commissioner reported the following: “the chief aim which the Russians have had in view when exiting and arming the Bulgarians and recently proposing the mixed occupation, has been to postpone and ultimately prevent altogether the execution of that clause of the Berlin Treaty which provides that the Balkans shall be garrisoned by Ottoman troops without the necessity of undertaking a new war for the purpose”. A further observation of Wolff, obtained in the conversation with a Russian diplomat, stated that the Russian authorities were aware that Britain would not go to war for ensuring the application of this clause provided by the Treaty of Berlin, at a time when it had difficulties in Afghanistan, South Africa, Burma and Egypt. Britain perceived the Tsarist firmness on that issue as an attempt to remove one of the chief obstacles against a future invasion in the Ottoman Empire through the Balkans by Russians.³⁶⁶ Thus, Russia achieved its aim which was also supported by the Bulgarian population and the issue of the Ottoman troops’ entry into the province was forsaken by Britain and the other Great Powers.

Therefore, the Ottoman Empire could never again re-establish its military power in Eastern Rumelia, fact that wrecked the British project for establishment of Eastern Rumelia as a military defence of Istanbul. But, the right given to the Governor General to summon Ottoman troops in case of threat became a powerful tool in the hands of the British authorities to control the government of Eastern Rumelia, because in case of rebellions in the province, they could use the threat of sending Ottoman garrisons to the province. This fact was imposed upon the Bulgarians from the first moment when the local population took over the governance of the province. The British Consul stated in

³⁶⁶ *F.O. 78/3037*, Memorandum from Sir H. Drummond Wolff, April 11, 1879, p.284-285, No 163, PRO.

front of the delegates of the Bulgarian notables: “although the Turks might not be in occupation of the Balkans, yet their troops could certainly be brought into the Province at the slightest symptom of disorder or rebellion. I impressed them with the necessity of respecting the law”³⁶⁷.

2.1.4 British Policy and the Election of the Governor General

The question as regards the Governor General was greatly important for the future of the province. The person who will be appointed Governor of the Province would determine the prevailing influence of Britain or Russia. The British authorities would exercise its influence over the province indirectly through the strong Ottoman authorities which had to be secured in Eastern Rumelia. For this purpose, they preferred the appointment of an Ottoman subject for the government of the province. The first proposed candidate was Rustem Pasha, the Governor General of Lebanon.³⁶⁸ The proposal was made by the Porte before the Commission had accomplished the elaboration of the Organic Law. Russia differed from the nomination of Rustem Pasha and it supported its reservation with arguments that he was “*a persona grata*” and he had failed in the governance of the Province of Lebanon. Russian Chancellor also made an observation that it was premature to appoint the Governor General before the European Commission drew up the chapter which determines the power which he would acquire.³⁶⁹ Thus, the assignment of a Governor General accompanied the labours of the Commission and became one of the great difficulties that troubled the final establishment of the Province.

The Russian authorities prepared a counter proposal suggesting the nominated candidate not to be an Ottoman subject but a foreign citizen.³⁷⁰ In the conversation between British Ambassador in St. Petersburg Lord Loftus and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolay Giers, except the above mentioned principle of the Russian opposition to the nomination of Rustem Pasha, the Russian statesman also added that Rustem Pasha was a Catholic and this circumstance could neither make him popular nor ensure

³⁶⁷ KMF 04, inv. No 106/1, l. 43-54

³⁶⁸ For further details see: William Harris Wilson, *Lebanon. A History 600-2011* (New York:Oxford University Press 2012), p.164, Philip K. Hitti, *A short History of Lebanon* (New York:Macmillan 1965), p. 202, PRO.

³⁶⁹ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Lord Loftus to the Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, January 14, 1879, No 2 PRO.

³⁷⁰ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 22, 1878, No 39, PRO.

the influence required for a Governor General over the Orthodox population that dominated the province. This remark made the British ambassador think that “a member of the Greek faith would be preferred by Russia to a Catholic probably with the necessary addition of his being a Bulgarian”³⁷¹.

The idea to appoint a Governor General who could not be completely obedient to the Sultan and could become a weapon in the hands of the European Powers, was disadvantageous to the British authorities. As the Foreign Secretary shared in a letter to the British Commissioner, the main reason to insist on appointment an Ottoman subject rather than a European one was “the fact that in such an appointment lays the only security against a repetition of the manoeuvres which resulted in the union of the two Danubian Principalities under Prince Couza”³⁷². From the beginning of the meetings held by the European Commission in the capital of the province, the British Foreign Office realised how serious was the threat of a possible union between North and South Bulgaria, which division the British government imposed on Russia at the Congress of Berlin. For this purpose, it tried by any possible means to diminish the opportunity of a union. The hostility of the Bulgarian population against the restoration of the Ottoman rule had an effect over the Great Powers. The general feelings among the Bulgarian population indicated that they were ready to accept the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin if a certain guarantee was given against the re-establishment of the Ottoman authority which could endanger their lives. The figure of the Governor General was the key to that situation. A suitable candidate had to bring the desired guarantees for the population.

During the meetings between the Bulgarian Exarch and the British Commissioner, the head of the Bulgarian church stated that if the concessions regarding the appointment of the European Governor were accepted, the escalation in the province would be prevented.³⁷³ The French Commissioner made similar observations about the attitude of the population: “they want to see a hat not a fez on the head of their governor”³⁷⁴.

³⁷¹ *F.O.* 195/1214, from Lord Loftus to the Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, January 4, 1879, No 36, PRO.

³⁷² *F.O.* 901/11, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, February 17, 1879, No 82, PRO.

³⁷³ *F.O.* 78/3037, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 27, 1879, p.74-76, No 142, PRO.

³⁷⁴ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 13, 1879, p.158-165 PRO.

The British authorities decisively opposed the idea of a foreign Governor General. A satisfactory compromise came with the nomination of Aleko Pasha by the Russian authorities.³⁷⁵ The figure of Aleko Pasha was of Bulgarian origin and he had served the Ottoman Government for a long time. All the Great Powers approved this nomination without objection. At the beginning of April, the Ottoman Government also accepted to appoint Aleko Pasha as Governor General of Eastern Rumelia, instead of Rustem Pasha.³⁷⁶

At the beginning of June, the situation in the Province was settled. The Bulgarian Exarch expressed his satisfaction which resulted from the course of events and the tranquillity in the Province. According to his observation, the population of Eastern Rumelia was satisfied by the Organic Law and they focused on their ordinary pursuits. The appointed Government consisted in experienced men who were ready to exercise the provisions of the Organic Statute.³⁷⁷ However, the struggle between Russia and Britain did not cease after the selection of the Governor General. The struggle continued this time for exercising influence upon the Governor General to apply the policy of the two Powers.

When the time came for the Governor General to occupy his post, the British authorities insisted that he had to take ruling “at once with the assistance and advice of the Commission”. Also, Britain desired the Commission to accompany Aleko Pasha at his arrival in the Province.³⁷⁸ However, the Russian authorities opposed the latter proposal because in their opinion the Governor had to arrive alone in the province, under Russian auspices.³⁷⁹

Despite this issue, Disraeli prepared a dispatch a few days later with instructions to Wolff in which he expressed the desire of the British Government for the European Commission to return in Plovdiv and to observe the introduction of the new institutions which had to replace the provisional administration of Eastern Rumelia. Besides, the British Commissioner had to obtain a resolution for the Commission to accompany or

³⁷⁵ *F.O.* 901/12, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury St Petersburg, March 19, 1879, No 31, PRO.

³⁷⁶ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, April 4, 1879, No 489, PRO.

³⁷⁷ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to from Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, June 8, 1879, p. 264-269, PRO.

³⁷⁸ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, May 1, 1879, No 129, p.345, PRO.

³⁷⁹ *F.O.* 78/ 3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, May 4, 1879, p.353, No 222, PRO.

precede the Governor General and the Commission to be charged with the duty of “advising the Governor General in the event of his considering it necessary to summon Turkish troops into the province for the purpose of maintaining order by asserting the Sultan authority”. So, to ensure the right of the Commission to exercise these functions, the decision had to be taken by the vote of majority and unanimity was not required.³⁸⁰

All these instructions were guided towards Russia and its activity in the Province. The fear that Aleko Pasha could become a tool for the Russian policy in Eastern Rumelia forced Britain to take precaution measures and to establish an organ for control over Russians in the Province. Those indications that Aleko Pasha “is inclined to pay course for the Russians” were conveyed by Wolff before his arriving in the province.³⁸¹ The main condition for the European Commission to succeed was the impossibility of Russian Commissioners to impose veto, fact that would hinder further works of the Commission and respectively to pursue the British policy in Eastern Rumelia. Unfortunately, the Commissioners did not support the same opinion. As the Bulgarian population was ready to accept the new governor’s authority without significant opposition, they thought that it was better to leave Aleko Pasha by himself and considered the prolonged stay of the Commission if not useless, then probably mischievous.³⁸²

Britain managed to apprehend the attitude of Aleko Pasha. A symbolic supremacy of Russia against Britain was the fact that Aleko Pasha entered the province not with the traditional Ottoman “fez”, but with the Bulgarian “calpac”. The Sultan’s order was firm: Aleko to represent himself in front of the population with the traditional Ottoman “fez”. Nevertheless, the order was not respected.³⁸³ Aleko Pasha’s entry occurred at the suggestion of the Russian delegates who accompanied the new Governor General without the attendance of the Commission, as Britain desired.³⁸⁴

On the 30th of May 1879, Aleko Pasha was greeted in Eastern Rumelia. After his arrival in the Province, a ceremony was prepared at which the Sultan’s *Firman* had to be read

³⁸⁰ *F.O.* 78/3033, from The Queen, Lord Beaconsfield to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, May 8, 1879, p.358-360, No 227, PRO.

³⁸¹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 12, 1879, p.373, No 176, PRO.

³⁸² *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 10, 1879, p.369, No 174, PRO.

³⁸³ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury Philippopolis, May 27, 1879, p.161-163, No 286, PRO.; *F.O.* 78/3040, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, May 27, 1879, p. 411-412, No 195, PRO.

³⁸⁴ “Пристигането в Пловдив на Княз Александър Богориди”, *Maritza*, Plovdiv, May 18, 1879, p. 2-3

to the population. Before the ceremony, the friction between the Governor General and the Russian authorities escalated regarding the insistence of Aleko Pasha that the Ottoman flag should be raised. As a result, great dissatisfaction appeared amongst the Bulgarians that could incite disorders. After that incident, the Ottoman flag was taken down by General Stolypin. Also, a delegation was immediately composed from three Bulgarians: Stoyan Tchomakov, Georgi Vulkovich and Gavril Krastevich³⁸⁵, the secretary of the Governor General, who visited the British Commissioner on the behalf of the Governor to ask for advice what to be done. At the same time, Gavril Krastevich expressed his own belief and Aleko Pasha's strong determination to resign in case rebellions arose in the Province because it signalled that the country did not require their service. This act seriously sobered up the British Commissioner because it was evaluated as a real danger for the future of the Province and the British interests. The European Commission was convoked and it took a joint decision to find a solution which would allow the Governor General a 'loophole of escape' from the emerged situation. These circumstances made Wolff share his own opinion about Aleko Pasha: "He wishes, I believe, to preserve the rights of the Sultan; but he is left without strength or material force to deal with a population excited against the Sultan and in the presence of forces which have done so much to upset his rule and Empire."

However, at the same time, he also shared that: "Aleko Pasha does not think his appointment a very great prize, while his knowledge of the inconveniences to which Europe would be placed by his resignation may induce him if not to resign at all events to make the threat whenever he wishes to force the Commission to cover his indecision. I am therefore more than ever of opinion that things will go on more satisfactorily when he is left face to face with his responsibilities and to bear his own burden alone."³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Gavril Krastevich was born in Kotel. He received firstly his education in Karlovo (1831-1835), after that he was received in the home of Stefan Bogoridi and took private education there (1835-1837), later studied in the Greek school in Kuruçesme 1837, between 1838-1844 he graduated Law in the University in Paris. After his return in the Ottoman Capital for the period of five years he served as a Governor General of Samos Island (1845-1850). Since 1850, he began a career in the Ottoman judiciary: he was a judge, a member of the Supreme Court and a lecturer in the law school in the capital. He is the author of the Ottoman Empire's trade law. In 1868 he was appointed to the Supreme Judicial Council (Divan-i-akymy-and-adventure) of the Empire. In 1884 he inherited on the post of Governor General of Eastern Rumelia Aleko Bogoridi. Before this he was appointed as secretary of Governor General of the Province (1879-1884). Vera Boneva, *Vazrozhdnetsa Gavril Krastevich* (Shumen: Helikon 2000; Marko Balabanov, *Gavril Krastevich. Narodn deets, knizhovnik, sadia i upravitel*, ed. Sv. Sinod na Bulgarskata Tsarkva (Sofia: Pechatnitsa "Dena" 1914).; Toncho Zhechev, "Gavril Krastevish", in: *Bulgarskiat Velikden ili strastite bulgarski* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad 1976).

³⁸⁶ *F.O.* 78/3039 from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, May 30, 1879, p.184-189, No 244, PRO.

Mitchell, the British Consul in Easter Rumelia, observed in his report the above mentioned events and he shared a negative attitude towards Aleko Pasha, pointing out that: “he is capable of being led and frightened into course opposed to the general and European interests in the Province”.³⁸⁷ Thus, the British authorities were divided over Aleko Pasha. Notwithstanding, this divergence in the behaviour of the Governor General would be well used by the British authorities in the future.

Before the ceremony, Wolff found out that the Governor General intended to announce “that nothing will ever induce him to summon Turkish troops into the Province”. This action annoyed Britain and provoked its government to intimidate Aleko Pasha with a subsequent act that “any such declaration on his part will render speedily the establishment of garrisons on the frontier by the Porte as an absolute necessity”³⁸⁸. Britain’s strong position was expressed in a threatening tone and it demonstrated the anxiety of the British authorities as regards the future policy of Aleko Pasha, who, under Russian pressure, instead of ensuring the interests of the Ottoman and British governments, would continue the Russian policy for an independent development of Eastern Rumelia and a future union with the Principality of Bulgaria. Therefore, the British commissioner was instructed to give Aleko a serious lecture upon his recklessness as a matter of serving the political interests of Russia or Bulgaria rather than the Ottomans’ benefits: “Eminent Christians in the service of the Porte are rare and there is likely to be great demand for them while the Russians and Bulgarians are sure to prefer a foreign Prince.”³⁸⁹ From the observation of the documents it became very clear that Aleko Pasha was put in a very difficult situation but he inclined to listen to the counsel of Britain. This became obvious in his statement: “His Excellency told me that his heart bled for the Turks and that he held the Russians in detestation but begged me not to mention this as it damage him with the Russians with whom he is bent on keeping on good terms”. Besides, he complained about the Tsarist policy which he regarded as a menace with possible dangers in the Province.³⁹⁰ To wade through the difficulties, the Governor General begged Wolff to communicate to the Porte the need for the Ottoman Government to support him as he was “devoted to the Sultan and wished to carry out his

³⁸⁷ KMF 04, inv. No 106/1 l.107-111, Philippopolis, May 27, 1879.

³⁸⁸ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, May 31, 1879, p.413, No 254, PRO.

³⁸⁹ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, June 9, 1879, p.439-442, No 264, PRO.

³⁹⁰ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise Salisbury, Philipopolis, May 30, 1879, p.196-198, No 246, PRO.

Policy”. His first step was to conciliate the existing ruling authorities and create a majority, which could ensure his power. For this purpose, the Sultan should have confidence in him and assist him instead of hindering his work by suspending the appointments with him and other similar acts which brought him into collision with the Bulgarians. Aleko Pasha was waiting for the departure of the Russians so as to be able to act much more independently.³⁹¹

This attitude of Aleko Pasha was confirmed by his denial to make the announcement that he had intended to make about the entry of Ottoman troops in the Province. The ceremony unfolded quietly and without any disorders.³⁹²

During the establishment of Eastern Rumelia, even if some significant changes were made by the British authorities, their main policy aims which had been pursued during the Eastern Crisis, regarding the Balkans and Russia, did not alter. One of them was that Russia must be kept far away from the Mediterranean.³⁹³ During the entire period of elaboration of the Organic Law and the establishment of the governing system for the Province, Britain’s policy was lead by the fear that the Tsarist authorities were preparing the ground for proclaiming an annexation immediately after the departure of its forces and Britain would have to face ‘*a fait accompli*’.³⁹⁴

At the beginning of the work, during the collisions between the Russian and British delegates, Wolff said the following: “We could not expect the Russian authorities and functionaries to obey us, nor could we entirely supersede them before having formed a system to take their place.”³⁹⁵ This was the aim that Britain followed during the organisation of the province in Eastern Rumelia, to implement such an Organic Law and administrative system which could replace the Russian administrative system. The British Foreign Policy’s objective was accomplished after seven years when Eastern Rumelia united with the Principality of Bulgaria.

³⁹¹ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise Salisbury, Constantinople, June 12, 1879, p.272-3, No 262, PRO.

³⁹² *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Salisbury Philippopolis, May 30, 1879, p. 421, No 200, PRO.

³⁹³ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise Salisbury, Phillippopolis, February 14, 1879, p. 107-109, PRO.

³⁹⁴ *F.O.* 78/ 3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise Salisbury, Constantinople, April 4, 1879, p.283-284, No 132 PRO.

³⁹⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquise of Salisbury, Therapia, October 8, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 43-44.

3.2 Britain and the Union of Eastern Rumelia

3.2.1 Britain and the Balkans in 1885

The British political strategy and conduct, regarding its foreign policy on the main political issues, was largely dependent on its colonial interest on the two continents, Africa and Asia. On a large scale, the British foreign policy was guided by the struggle for imposing its colonial power. With reference to this issue, the British policy in Europe was determined by the relationship of the rest of the Great Powers outside the continent. Britain's rivals, for its colonial interest in the last quarter, were still France in Africa and the spread of Russia's power in Asia, on the line Afghanistan-China. In most cases, Russia's growing power in Asia was estimated by the British authorities as a greater menace than the French actions in Africa, especially after France lost the continent in favour of Germany.³⁹⁶ Between November 1884 and February 1885, the struggle for colonial interests in Africa reached a dangerous proportion. Therefore, due to Chancellor Bismarck's initiatives, a Conference was established between the European countries, in order to reduce tensions.³⁹⁷

Furthermore, in the winter of 1884-1885, the conflict between Britain and Russia in Central Asia, known as "The Great Game", reached an alarming degree, too. The Russian Empire continued to advance in the region of Afghanistan and it took possession of the lands claimed by the Afghans. An attempt was made between the three sides to reach an agreement on the 17th of March, 1885, but a few days later, on the 30th of March, 1885, the Russian forces attacked Penjdeh and the British Cabinet called the reserve army and applied for a war credit.³⁹⁸ During the whole spring of 1885, the military collisions between the Russian troops and the army of the Afghan Emir, supported by the British Government on the border oasis of Penjdeh, provoked a deep deterioration of the Anglo-Russian relations. The great repercussion, which the events received in the European press, gave signals for a possible military conflict between Britain and Russia.³⁹⁹ Thus, in the summer of 1885, it passed under the growing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia, which threatened to extend to a war as Britain had suffered great defeat in the region.

³⁹⁶ Sir Henry Slessor, *A History of the Liberal Party* (London: Hutchinson 1936), p.111

³⁹⁷ Pantev and Doinov, *Uiliam Gladston i bulgarite*, p. 153.

³⁹⁸ Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis*, Vol. III, p. 130.

³⁹⁹ Pantev and Doinov, *Uiliam Gladston i bulgarite*, p. 153.

In the context of this tense atmosphere, the British authorities sent to Istanbul a special representative, the diplomat Wolff. Because his mission was kept⁴⁰⁰ secret, this only called forth the suspicions of the Russian and French authorities as to what Britain was trying to obtain from the Sultan. Russia apprehended that Britain was trying to acquire the right of entry for the British navy in the Black Sea, France that Britain would expand its rights in Egypt.⁴⁰¹ Under the joint pressure, the Sultan was forced to declare that, in case of war between Russia and Britain, the Porte would preserve its right to be released from any particular commitments in this regard.⁴⁰² However, the situation only aroused the fire in the relationship between Russia and Britain.

The traditional Russian demands, for controlling the Straits and the access to the Mediterranean Sea, were always considered as a threat to the British strategic and naval interests. For such purposes, all British Governments had pursued an anti-Russian course during the political crisis from the 19th century. Also, as the relationships outside the borders of Europe reflected Britain's political decision regarding the political crisis arisen in Europe, the case of the Bulgarian crisis in the year 1885, in the Balkans, was not expected to bring a different political course of the British Government. Besides, the British officials already experienced a difficult situation in Afghanistan, which again was comprehended as a menace to their important dominion, India.

The Balkan policy of Britain, and particularly its political interests regarding Bulgaria, was guided by the comprehension that Bulgaria was a strategic point, through which successful political manoeuvres could be performed against two Great Powers, Russia and Austro-Hungary, whose foreign policy pursued certain political tasks in the Balkans. The eternal rivalry between Vienna and St. Petersburg was a desired situation which served the British foreign policy, which had already tried different paths to instigate a conflict in Europe, to secure easier actions on the direction of its colonial policy.⁴⁰³

The disability of the liberal Government to cope with the situation in Central Asia and to take adequate political actions, which could hinder the Russian invasion in

⁴⁰⁰ This mission had aim to achieve agreements on the Egyptian issue, Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondance Respevting Sir H. Drummond Sir H. Drummond Wolff's Special Mission to Constantinople', Egypt No1 (1886).

⁴⁰¹ Hristo Glushkov, "Frantsia, Osmanskta Imperia i Saedinenieto na Bulgaria (1885-1886)", *Istorieski pregled* 41, no 5 (1985), p. 68.

⁴⁰² *Istoria na diplotsiata, Vol. II: Diplomatsiia v novo vreme 1871-1914* (Sofia:BKP 1965), p. 218

⁴⁰³ Andrei Pantev, "Politikata na Anglia kam Saedinenieto na Kniazhestvo Bulgaria s Iztochna Rumelia", *Izvestia na Istituta za Istoria* 19 (1967), p. 77.

Afghanistan, was one of the reasons to overturn the Liberal Cabinet of Gladstone. The new Conservative Government, which came to power, was managed by Lord Salisbury. The new British Prime Minister made the observation that the previous Government had lost the benefits of the British conservative authorities in the Ottoman Empire's territories.⁴⁰⁴ The leaders of Conservative Cabinet the Prime Minister Disraeli and the Foreign Minister Lord Salisbury were the creators of the political map of the Balkans in the year 1878, at the Conference of Berlin. Lord Salisbury firmly insisted on the division of Bulgaria and the creation of the province as an attempt to diminish the Russian influence in the Balkans.

Indeed, the Bulgarian crisis arose in 1885 by the execution of the Union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was an expected and desired action by Russia, Britain and Austro-Hungary, as it could provoke a situation which could be used to apply their political aims in the region. Russia was seeking to create a powerful alliance in the Balkans, which could have a decisive role for maintaining a favourable balance of powers. Also, Austro-Hungary was waiting for a precedent to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it was unofficially entitled to such act by the Congress of Berlin. As regards Britain, it would have been a suitable opportunity to thwart the Alliance of the Three Emperors.⁴⁰⁵ These requests of the three Great Powers came to prove actually how unsatisfying the decision of the Congress of Berlin was, because it could not solve the controversial questions between them. Furthermore, the provisions of the treaty only aroused their political ambitions as refers to their political tasks before the Congress.

3.2.2 Britain and the Act of Union

The first attempts for unification of the Principality and the Province were made earlier, before the year 1885. The international political situation in 1880 predisposed Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia's authorities to expect that the Great Powers would be favourable to such an act. The provisions of the Berlin Treaty, regarding the Ottoman-Greek and Ottoman-Montenegrin border, had not been applied, and the endeavours of the Great Powers, to settle the conflicts, were left without result.⁴⁰⁶ In Britain, the Conservative

⁴⁰⁴ Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 522.

⁴⁰⁵ Pantev, "Politikata na Anglia", p. 78.

⁴⁰⁶ For further information about the difficulties for the application of Treaty of Berlin and the results from it: Fahri Maden, "Büyük Güçlerin Berlin Antlaşması'nın Uygulanmasına Yönelik Baskıları", *History Studies* 5, no 1 (2013), p. 267-286.

Cabinet was changed with a new government, Gladstone's Government, which was welcomed by the Bulgarian political circles which had recognized the Liberal Party as a defender of the Bulgarian population, whose national feelings about the events had remained since the spring of 1876. As the Bulgarian authorities considered that they have the support of the Russian Empire, they decided to obtain the support of Britain, too. A special correspondent, Professor Panaretov,⁴⁰⁷ was sent to London in the summer of 1880 where he met the British Foreign Secretary, Granville, where he had to make inquiries about Britain's opinion as regards a possible union. The answer which the Bulgarian delegate received was that Britain could not take any actions which could be against the Treaty of Berlin at the moment when it was struggling to impose the Treaty.⁴⁰⁸ In 1880 the Government of Gladstone and Granville strongly rejected any request made for violation of the Treaty of Berlin.⁴⁰⁹

Indeed, the British political circles assessed that the union could restore the "Great Bulgaria" which at that time, when it was still under Russia's strong influence and in close relations with Austro-Hungary, could become a significant obstacle against the British interests in the Balkans. Moreover, a favourable attitude towards the Bulgarian union, could have harmful consequences over the Ottoman-British relations. However, in the future years, the British officials will observe the unionist movement, obtaining information about the character, the activities and the attitude of the Bulgarian population towards the Russian authorities. Two special missions of the British diplomats in Eastern Rumelia confirmed the conclusion reached by the British Consul in Plovdiv, that the "union was inevitable". The reports of the British agents indicated that, as the Bulgarian element prevailed in the government of the province and the influence of the Ottoman authorities was not a decisive factor in the province, the union was a matter of time. Nevertheless, the year 1880 was not yet a favourable moment for

⁴⁰⁷ A Bulgarian diplomat, he was born in Sliven on October 4, 1853. He graduated Robert College (1867-1871) and later worked as a teacher of Bulgarian language at the College (1871-1914). After the April Uprising in 1876 he was sent by the Bulgarian Exarch and George Washburn (director of the College) to visit the European states with a mission to acquaint the European society with the situation in the Bulgarian lands. Later he attended the Bulgarian movement against the decisions of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. In 1914 he was appointed as the first Bulgarian Plenipotentiary in America and remained on this post until 1925. Marin Punev, "Stefan Panaretov and Bulgarian-American Relations", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 17, No 3, (1989): 18-41.

⁴⁰⁸ Ivan Panayotov, "Opit za saedinenie na Knyazhestvo Bulgaria s Iztochna Rumelia prez 1880", *Izvestia na bulgarskoto istoricheskoto druzhestvo* 22-24 (1948): 12-29.; Stefan Panaretov, "Една мисия в Лондон" (One mission in London), *Mir*, November 17, 1930; November 18, 1930.

⁴⁰⁹ Yono Mitev, "Otnoshenie na velikite sili kam Saedinenieto na Bulgaria prez 1885", *Istoricheski pregled* 10, no4 (1954), p. 59.

the British Diplomacy. Britain had the difficult task to frustrate the union until a desired situation would appear when the union could be used against Russia's interests in the region. Furthermore, the British officials requested to receive real guaranties that the event would not harm their interests in the Balkan Peninsula. As the British authorities could not officially express their favourable attitude towards the union, Gladstone thought he would be able to act upon the Sultan and to convince him about the advantages of such an act, applied under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, from 1880 to 1884, the British Government strictly followed the course of events in the province and in the Principality, as regards the development of the unionist movement.⁴¹⁰

The British authorities were guided also by other considerations, besides their traditional political interests. The British Consuls in Plovdiv reported that the division of Bulgaria influenced the trade, decreasing it because the majority of merchants avoided the payment of the custom duties, in accordance with the Ottoman tax imposed in Eastern Rumelia. They preferred to go to the Principality of Bulgaria. The unification of the two parts could remove this hindrance which would be favourable to the British commercial interests.⁴¹¹

Some sources revealed the increased interests of the British officials towards the Unionist movement which intensified its activities and propaganda in Eastern Rumelia in the summer of 1885. The correspondence between Konstantin Stoilov⁴¹² and the director of Robert College, George Washburn, disclosed that the latter was informed in detail about the preparations for the union. He advised the Bulgarian authorities as regards the planed action, firstly to convince the world that the Russian influence did not play any part in the event.⁴¹³ The previous contacts and visits of Washburn in the province of Eastern Rumelia confirmed this opinion. In 1880, the Director of the College arrived in the province to meet with some of his ex-students.⁴¹⁴ However, his

⁴¹⁰ Pantev, *Politikata na Anglia*, p. 81-86.

⁴¹¹ Andrei Pantev, *Anglia sreshtu Rusia na Balkanite 1879-1894* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo 1972), p. 79.

⁴¹² Konstantin Stoilov graduated Robert College in 1871, until Mrch1872 he worked at the College as a teacher and secretary. He was member of the *Konservativnata (Conservative)* Party, later foundation member of the *Narodnata* Party. In 1885 he serves as a chief secraty of the chancellery of the Prince Alexander Bettenberg. *Dr. Konstantin Stoilov: zhivot i obshtevenata deynost* (Sofia 1923).; Tashev, *Ministrite na Bulgaria*, p. 435-437.

⁴¹³ CDA, F. 600, op.1, arh. ed. 584, l.16-17.

⁴¹⁴ George Washburn, *Filthy years in Constantinople and Recollections of the Robert College*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, The University Press Cambridge 1909), p. 152.; Elena

last visit took place one month before the act of unification, in August 1885, when he also met some of the political figures involved in the Unionist movement.⁴¹⁵ After his visit in Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria, which ended two weeks before the proclamation of the union, he pointed out: “It was made plain to me that, sooner or later, an attempt would be made to unite Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria.”⁴¹⁶ In the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the emerging of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia significant number of Bulgarian students graduated Robert College, later these people were appointed in the administration of the two state formations and attained the governance obtaining leading position. Their number prevailed in the province of Eastern Rumelia.⁴¹⁷ Thereby the British authorities were able to establish close relations with the Bulgarian ruling classes and were able to obtain accurate intelligence for the internal affairs and attitude of the Bulgarian authorities in the Province and Principality. Andrei Pantev recognized in these proceedings (the visit of the direct of Robert College in Eastern Rumelia) a last attempt made by the British authorities to inquire about the political character of the movement. Even if the information about the absence of approval of the act by the Russian Government was widely spread, the British authorities were well aware of the sympathies of the Russian society towards such an act which could enable it to exercise pressure over the Russian officials, to support the event, in spite of the opposition existent in some Russian political circles. Another factor, which could not be ignored, was the strong Bulgarian feeling towards the Russian Emperor, amongst the Bulgarian political circles. Pantev also stated that the British Embassy in Istanbul acquired some particular information about the expected events in Eastern Rumelia. He also paid attention to the concentration of the British diplomatic staff in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia at that moment, especially the two vice-consuls in Plovdiv, Jones and Wilmore.⁴¹⁸

In June 1885, the Prince of Bulgaria, Alexander Battenberg, visited London, which gave him an occasion to approach the question about the attitude of the British Cabinet towards a possible union between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of

Statelova and Radoslav Popov, *Spomeni za Saedinenieto ot 1885* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Otichestveniia front 1980), p. 13.

⁴¹⁵ Washburn, *Filthy years in Constantinople*, p. 180.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Orlin Sabev, *Robert Kolezh i Bulgarite* (Sofia: Iztok Zapad, 2015), p. 283-289.; Ivan Ilchev, “Robert Kolezh i formiraniето na Bulgarskata inteligentsia (1863-1878)”, *Istoricheski pregled* 1 (1981), p. 50-62.

⁴¹⁸ Pantev, *Politikata na Anglia*, p. 89-90.

Eastern Rumelia. The British politicians hinted that, if the union did not serve the Russian interests, they would not oppose the act.⁴¹⁹

Some of the researchers of the event considered the British interest towards the issue, in the context of the Anglo-Russian intense rivalry for Asia, at that time. For example, P. Topalov expresses the idea that the British Government decided through “striking a lightning-like blow” in the territories regarded as the sphere of Russian influence, to compel the Russian Emperor to cease Russia’s advancement towards Afghanistan.⁴²⁰ It could be presumed that one of the British authorities’ assumptions for the favourable attitude towards the act of union in 1885, could be originated by similar political considerations, because during the vast advancement of Russia in the Central Asia, the Union of Bulgaria received definite British support.

On the 18th of September 1885, in the capital of Eastern Rumelia, the act of union was proclaimed, between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of Eastern Rumelia. The Government of the Province and the Governor General, Gavril Krastevich, were overthrown and a Provisional Government was established. The authorities asked for recognition and support of the act by the Bulgarian Government and a special manifest was issued with the request towards Prince Alexander to put himself at the head of the movement and to defend the event.⁴²¹ The revolutionary act was accomplished without any bloodshed and all measures were taken for preserving the tranquillity in the Province. On the same day, the Prince of Bulgaria accepted the appeal and travelled from Varna to Plovdiv.⁴²²

Watson argues that, after the Union of the “two Bulgaria” was publicly proclaimed, the Cabinet of Lord Salisbury “realizing that the Bulgarians were developing a will of their own and were not disposed to remain mere instruments of Russia, gave Britain’s support to the idea of the union”⁴²³. Nevertheless, Salisbury’s Cabinet did not want to outdistance itself from that particular position before having got acquainted with the views of the rest of the Great Powers, and especially with Russia’s attitude. So, the first reaction of the Foreign Office was to send a note to the courts of Austro-Hungary,

⁴¹⁹ Goran Todorov, “Kam diplomaticheskata istoria na Saedinenieto na Bulgaria prez 1885 g.”, *Istoricheski pregled* 21, No 6, (1965), p. 25.; Pantev, *Anglia sreshtu Rusia*, p. 83.

⁴²⁰ Petar Topalov, “Borba na bulgarskia narod za demokratichno ustroistvo na bulgarskata darzhava”, *Istoricheski pregled* 11, No 4-5, (1971), p. 460.

⁴²¹ CDA, Fond 176, op. 1, a.e.181,l. 3.

⁴²² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Graves to the Marquis of Salisbury, Sophia, September 18, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 1.

⁴²³ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 119.

Germany and Italy, stating that the policy of the British Cabinet was to act in concert with the other Great Powers in upholding the Treaty of Berlin.⁴²⁴ In the instructions sent to the British Ambassador in the Ottoman Capital, Lord Salisbury underlined that “the British interests in Eastern Rumelia are not sufficient to justify this country to act alone”.⁴²⁵ These actions were skilful diplomatic manoeuvres of the British Government, which firstly needed to gain time so as the British diplomacy could examine the real reasons of the unionist movement - whether the event was insinuated by the Russian authorities or it was entirely prepared and carried out by the Bulgarian authorities without preliminary arrangements with Russian authorities. The other purpose of the note issued from London, was to warn the Russian authorities that, if they had took the union under their custody and used it to strengthen their position in the Balkans, they would have faced the opposition of Britain and all the anti-Russian powers on the peninsula.

The British authorities expressed a suspicion that the Russia authorities could have organised the act of union with a double purpose. On the one hand, if Prince Battenberg assumed to head the movement, he would counteract the Treaty of Berlin, by infringement of its provisions. On the other, if he refused, he would betray the Bulgarian population’s trust. In both cases, the Prince of Bulgaria would find himself in a difficult situation: in the first instance, he would face the will of the Great Powers; in the second case, he would face the national demands of his subjects. He could be forced to pay the cost with his throne.⁴²⁶

The relations between the Bulgarian Prince and Russian authorities during the last seven years undergo significant changes, which would be later presented in the next chapter. In the 1885 the Russian Emperor’s conduct towards Prince Alexander revealed an irresistible conflict.

From the very beginning of the Bulgarian crisis, the position of the Prince of Bulgaria was greatly important to the British authorities. The British Ambassador, immediately after having heard the news about the events, he urged the British Prime Minister that the position of Prince Battenberg was a most difficult one, and could become even

⁴²⁴ Simeon Radev, *Stroiteli na savremenna Bulgaria, Vol 1*, (Sofia: Bulgarski Pisatel 1990), p. 545.

⁴²⁵ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 22, 1885, No 328, PRO.

⁴²⁶ Yono Mitev, “*Otnoshenie na velikite sili*”, p. 62.

dangerous in the future.⁴²⁷ The apprehension of Sir William White, about the future preservation of Prince Battenberg on the Bulgarian throne, revealed the assumption that the British officials had already been informed that the act had been achieved without the support or approval from Russia. In another dispatch, White shared the following: “It is since that the Emperor of Russia is still as much opposed personally to the Prince of Bulgaria and now that His Highness has shown that he is able to emancipate himself from Russian dictation, the question will be to what extent the Great Powers, who are interested in Bulgaria, will be able to preserve his Highness as a ruler”.⁴²⁸ The figure of Prince Alexander played a major role in the current crisis.

The first information obtained by the Foreign Office, as regards a possible Russian involvement in the movement, was unanimous. The British Ambassador in Vienna reported that, according to the opinion of the Prime Minister Count Kalnoky, the revolutionary act in Eastern Rumelia was organised in Bulgaria and executed by the Bulgarians, without the knowledge of the Russian Emperor or the Russian Government. He also stated that the authorities in St. Petersburg were as much surprised as any other of the Great Powers.⁴²⁹ On the 23rd of September, 1885, the report from the British Ambassador in the Russian Empire was received, too. The report asserted that there appeared to be no grounds for suspicions that the event in Eastern Rumelia had been brought about at the instigation of the Russian Government.⁴³⁰ One day earlier, on the 22nd of September, the Russian Emperor issued a notification, forbidding the Russian Officers employed in the Bulgarian army, to take part in the present movement in Bulgaria. According to the Russian officials, this was evidence that the act of union had not been incited by the Russian Empire.⁴³¹

On the 22nd of September, the Prince had a conversation with the British representatives who were in Plovdiv, accentuating that the act did not benefit from Russia’s support and the Bulgarian population acted independently.⁴³² Additional confirmations on the same

⁴²⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir. W.White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 18, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 2.

⁴²⁸ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 25, 1885, No 392, PRO.

⁴²⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, September 20, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 3.

⁴³⁰ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, September 23, 1885, p.80-82, No 323, PRO.

⁴³¹ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr.Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, September 22, 1885, p.67-68, No 319, PRO,

⁴³² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Willmore to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, September 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.12.

issues were also explained by the Provisional Government in the province, which also expressed its expectations for a British assistance in favour of the recognition of the union, which, as it was underlined, was accomplished “entirely without advice of Russia or even their knowledge”. It was said that, later on, the Russian authorities even increased their animosity against the Principality of Bulgaria. The members of the Provisional Government requested the British authorities to use their influence so as to prevent any military actions of the Ottoman Empire.⁴³³ Furthermore, the Provisional Government explained that, if Russia refused to recognize the union, they would no longer regard the Russian Emperor as their friend, and it believed that Russia’s policy towards them was disinterested.⁴³⁴ The Bulgarian officials from the province frankly disclosed their demand that, with the act of the union, they desired to outgrow the influence of Russia, which was a threat for the independent development of the Bulgarian population. The president of the Provisional Government said that the movement was more anti-Russian than anti-Turkish.⁴³⁵

Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Prince issued a proclamation to all of the Great Powers, after his arrival in Plovdiv, with the promise to preserve the tranquillity in the two countries and the safety of all inhabitants, without distinction of their race and religion. After the announcement of his acceptance to lead the act of the union, the Prince declared his recognition of the Sultan’s suzerainty rights over the two countries. He requested the act of union to be approved by the European courts, and thus, to avoid any bloodshed because the “people are determined to defend with their life what has been done”.⁴³⁶ The judicious policy of Prince Battenberg and the Bulgarian Government, that were trying to convince the Great Powers that the action was effected without hostile intentions, that it was a movement entirely born and developed amongst the Bulgarian population living north and south of the Balkans, which did not aim to overthrow the Sultan’s authority or to extend outside the borders of the Province and the Principality,

⁴³³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Willmore to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, September 23, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.13.

⁴³⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Willmore to Sir W. White, Philippopolis, September 26, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 36-38.

⁴³⁵ Mihail Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumelia (Istoricheski pregled)*, (Plovdiv: Balkan Cultural Forum, 2015), p. 372-373.

⁴³⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, Telegram from Prince of Bulgaria, Philippopolis, September 21, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 4.; *Vanshnata Politika na Bulgaria. Dokumenti i materialni 1878-1886*, Vol. 1 (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo 1978), p. 567, No 281.

facilitated the British diplomacy and, at the same time, unarmed the Russian and Ottoman ones.

Since the first days of the Bulgarian crisis, among of the Great Powers arose the embarrassment that the revolution movement could spread into the province of Macedonia. If the revolutionary movement had taken such a course, it would have threatened the reopening of the Eastern Question, regarding the Sultan's possessions in the lands of Macedonia. So, as an initial measure, the Austro-Hungarian authorities proposed to the British Cabinet that the agents of the Great Powers in Plovdiv should give a warning to the Prince and Bulgarian Government that one revolutionary act in Macedonia would not be tolerated by them.⁴³⁷

Meanwhile, the Great Powers were assessing the British Cabinet's proposal for a joint remonstrance against Prince Battenberg, in support of the Treaty of Berlin. On the 24th of September, 1885, Lord Salisbury communicated to White that he should find an opportunity and inform the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Great Britain strongly disapproved the infringement of the Treaty of Berlin by the Bulgarian authorities.⁴³⁸ This application was made independently from the other Great Powers, with the purpose to temper the Porte and the Sultan. Actually, before being absolutely certain of the intentions of the Russian Government as regards the act of union, the British Cabinet did not want to decrease their influence over the Ottoman Empire, by openly supporting the union. However, on the same day, the information that reached the Foreign Office was about Russia's proposal, that the representatives of the Great Powers should meet in the Ottoman Capital, not for a formal Conference, but in order to harmonise together the act of the revolutionary movement in the province of Eastern Rumelia, with a view to agreeing upon future proceedings.⁴³⁹ The motion of the Russian authorities displayed that they had taken a position to oppose the union.

The confirmation, that the act of union was executed without the assistance of St. Petersburg and it might even have been censured by the Russian Government, determined the British authorities to have a firm attitude in favour of the union. On the 25th of September, the Foreign Office answered to the inquiry of the British Consuls in

⁴³⁷ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Sir A. Paget to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, September 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 5-6.

⁴³⁸ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 24, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.14.

⁴³⁹ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Malet to the Marquis of Salisbury, Berlin, September 24, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.15.

Eastern Rumelia, in relation to the attitude which they had to assume towards the Provisional Government of the Province. In the instructions, it was written “that they should recognize *de facto* the government for practical purpose, taking care at the same time not to make any admission which could imply that it was a government *de jure*”.⁴⁴⁰ The communication of the Foreign Office, which was also dispatched to the British Ambassador in Istanbul, had to be considered as an unofficial acknowledgement of the union. Later on, the engagements obtained by the British authorities, so as to defend the union, proved this policy line of the British Cabinet.

In the following days, the British Cabinet took measures to prepare the ground for the diplomatic negotiations in the Ottoman Capital. The British Government instructed the British Consuls in Sophia and Plovdiv, to put serious pressure on Prince Alexander to avoid armed accidents with the Porte, and it was absolutely necessary that no act of violence, towards the Muslims inhabitants from the province, to be allowed to appear.⁴⁴¹ The Bulgarian Government had already taken the necessary measures to preserve the tranquillity in Eastern Rumelia, and to prevent the occurrence of disturbance in Macedonia. The Muslim population was tempered and even a religious service was performed in the mosque in Plovdiv, in the honour of the Sultan.⁴⁴² All Macedonian military brigades were recalled from the south-western frontier, to avert any insurrection movement.⁴⁴³ All these measures had to demonstrate to the Sultan that the Muslim subjects in the Province were safe. Therefore, the Sultan would not have any reasons to send armed troops in the Province. Additionally, the preservation of peace in Macedonia would have to convince the Great Powers that the Bulgarians did not intend the expansion of the revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, Lord Salisbury was visited by the Ottoman Ambassador in London. During the meeting, even the British Prime Minister openly condemned the infringement of one of the most important decisions of the Berlin Congress, and he reaffirmed the strong desire of the British Government for Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia to remain separate states. Also, the British Prime Minister expressed the opinion that the restoration of the

⁴⁴⁰ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 25, 1885, No 330, PRO.

⁴⁴¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to the British acting Consul-General at Sophia and Philippopoli, Foreign Office, September 27, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 30.

⁴⁴² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Graves to the Marquis of Salisbury, Sophia, September 28, 1885, 9 p.m., Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 33.

⁴⁴³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Graves to Marquis of Salisbury, Sophia, September 28, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 35.

status quo was a very difficult task and it would be better to perceive the situation as *a fait accompli*. In this situation, even Salisbury did not oppose the application of the Sultan's right to occupy the Province, but the British politician considered that such an act would encounter great difficulty and would impede the process of finding a solution to the issue. Lord Salisbury reckoned that the Great Powers could reach a compromise, through measures of particular alternations to the provisions of the Berlin Treaty, as regards the Sultan's rights in Eastern Rumelia.⁴⁴⁴

All things considered, the British authorities adopted the proposal for an informal Conference which had to achieve the agreement upon the advice to be offered, in the present state of affairs, to Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. The British Cabinet decided to anticipate the development of procedures. On the 27th of September 1885, Lord Salisbury instructed the British Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, firstly to advise the Sultan to abstain from any military intervention in Eastern Rumelia, taking into consideration the fact that no violence was used against the Muslim population in the province. Secondly, to make suggestions that particular amendments could be effected to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, in order to find a solution for the present state of affairs. For instance, Prince Alexander had to be appointed also as lifelong Governor General of Eastern Rumelia.⁴⁴⁵ Thus, only one week after the first announcement of the British Government, upholding the Treaty of Berlin and disfavoured the act of revolutionary movement in Eastern Rumelia, the British Government 'remodelled' its political course and appeared to defend the united Bulgaria, which 7 years before, Lord Salisbury himself had divided at the Congress of Berlin. Furthermore, the British authorities were prepared to present even a formula for arrangement of the current crisis. In the same instruction, Lord Salisbury stated that any proposal for the deposition of the Bulgarian Prince, had to be rejected. The figure of Prince Battenberg, and his preservation on the throne of the Principality, became a keystone for the success or failure of the Union between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of Eastern Rumelia. Hence, it was acknowledged that the struggle between Russia and Britain targeted more the figure of the Bulgarian Prince than the recognition of the act of union. The British interests in the Balkan Peninsula and, respectively, in the Continent and in the Middle East, required to pursue a policy for avoiding the restoration of *status quo* in

⁴⁴⁴ BOA. Y.A.HUS 183-66, September 29, 1885.

⁴⁴⁵ F.O. 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 27, 1885, No 331, PRO.

Eastern Rumelia. At the same time, the infringement of the Treaty of Berlin should be reduced to the smallest point, so as to preserve the present Constitution in Bulgaria, without making any changes, and to achieve a merely personal union. This political course pursued a few tasks: Prince Alexander's throne to be preserved and strengthened, his position in Bulgaria to be accepted as well as the union, which had to tear Bulgaria away from Russia's influence. Meanwhile, the disharmony among the alliance of the three Emperors would be deepened, as they already had different attitudes towards the future status of the Bulgarian Prince.

The crisis in the Balkan Peninsula, evoked by the unification of the Bulgarian states North and South of the Balkan range, enabled the Government of Lord Salisbury to assume the role of defender of the national feeling and desires of the population in the Balkans, an entirely opposite role to that adopted in 1878, as suppressor of the national demands of the same Balkan nations. The antagonism of the Bulgarian population and Prince Battenberg towards Russia, determined the British Cabinet to abandon their principal obstruction against the Union. The political situation in the Principality obtained the confidence of Lord Salisbury, that a powerful united Bulgaria would become a more effective way to prevent the Russian advancement towards the Straits, especially after the Ottomans' failure to impose their authority in Eastern Rumelia, and to garrison the Balkan line. Thus, in the eyes of the British authorities, Bulgaria had to become the preserver of the Straits against the Russians.⁴⁴⁶

3.2.3 Britain and Recognition of the Union

On the 30th of September 1885, the British Ambassador in the Ottoman Capital received a resolution, which allowed him to join the meeting of the Ambassadors.⁴⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the British Consul in Sophia was instructed to follow Prince Alexander wherever the Prince was, and to remain with him.⁴⁴⁸

Before the first meeting of the Ambassadors, it seemed that the proposal of the British Cabinet for the personal union under Prince Alexander was favourable to Austro-Hungary. Additionally, the Government in Vienna agreed to oppose any projects for

⁴⁴⁶ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 180.

⁴⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 30, 1885, 7:55, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 54.

⁴⁴⁸ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Lascelles, Foreign Office, September 30, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 54.

deposition of the Bulgarian Prince, and it stated that the Austrian Ambassador in the Ottoman capital was instructed to act accordingly.⁴⁴⁹ The German and French Government also displayed no inclination to advocate Prince Battenberg's deposition. Besides, the French authorities stated their favourable attitude that the union between Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria should be limited to a personal union and the existing constitutions of the two provinces should be maintained unaltered.⁴⁵⁰

Nevertheless, it was surprising for the British authorities the fact that, when the Ambassadors met, the British Ambassador White faced an entirely different attitude of the Austro-Hungarian representative. He made the first proposal at the meeting for the preparation of a Resolution, condemning the breach of the Treaty of Berlin committed in Eastern Rumelia by the Bulgarian authorities. As it could be supposed, the British Ambassador did not meet warmly this suggestion, reasoning his position that he saw no practical effect in repeating any censure, which had already been expressed by all the Great Powers. He also considered the resolution superfluous, as nothing would be obtained but it could only serve to exclude Prince Alexander, and he encouraged the Ottoman Empire's belief that they would receive the support of the Powers, if they attempted to re-establish the entire and full *status quo* by one military campaign.⁴⁵¹ The course taken by Austro-Hungary contradicted the British political line, and in reply, on the second meeting day, Lord Salisbury instructed the British Ambassador "that should Baron Calice bring forward any motion which implied a condemnation of Prince Alexander's proceedings", he was "authorized to move an amendment condemning the breach of the settlement arrived at under the Treaty of Berlin, but excluding any mention of Prince Alexander himself".⁴⁵²

On the same day, the British Government was informed by the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Kalnoky, that Russia opposed the idea of personal union.⁴⁵³ The situation evinced the rivalry from 1878 to 1879 between Russia and Great Britain, over the establishment of their influence in the autonomous province, rivalry that was still in progress, but in

⁴⁴⁹ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October 2, 1885, No 349, PRO.

⁴⁵⁰ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, September 28, 1885, No 333, PRO.

⁴⁵¹ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 3, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 72.

⁴⁵² Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign office, October 4, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 73.

⁴⁵³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Sir A. Paget to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, October 4, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.73.

the year 1885, the roles were exchanged. At the time of the Congress of Berlin, the British authorities adopted a certain opinion that the south part of the Bulgaria lands had to be left under the authority of the Sultan. Russia was the creator of the “Great Bulgaria” and struggled by all means to preserve the Bulgarian character of Eastern Rumelia, guided by the conviction that the division was only a temporary measure and in the future, the union could not be avoided. In 1885, Russia opposed the Union and Britain obtained the role of defender of the act.

The political attitude of the Russian Government, as concerns the act of union, foresaw difficult conversations at the meetings of the Ambassadors in Istanbul. The situation was impeded by the hostile attitude taken by the Greek and Serbian Governments, which strongly remonstrated in front of the Great Powers against the infringement of the Treaty of Berlin, and they insisted to restore the *status quo*, otherwise, they stated their readiness to fight for territorial compensations. As the territorial compensations could be achieved only from the Ottoman Empire, and respectively in Macedonia, the crisis threatened to unleash a war for the settlement of the Eastern Question and the partition of the Balkan domains of the Sultan. As before, from 1875 to 1877, at the time of the Eastern Crisis, none of the Great Powers was ready to re-open the Eastern Question. Only the continuing peaceful policy of the Bulgarian Prince, who avowed repeating his readiness to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Sultan and his endeavours to prevent the movement from reaching Macedonia, counteracted the actions of Greece and Serbia, which were only waiting for a favourable moment to justify one military action in Macedonia.⁴⁵⁴

Facing the opposition of the Russian Emperor to accept the act of union under Prince Alexander, the British officials decided to use their influence over the Porte and they advised the Ottoman authorities that “His Majesty should retain Prince Alexander (whose circumstances and disposition tended to make him more favourable to Turkey than any other occupant of the position the Porte would be likely to obtain), and should address himself to reducing the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, so far as possible, to a merely personal union under the Prince”⁴⁵⁵. The British authorities were trying to embolden the Ottoman Empire to begin bilateral talks with the Bulgarian

⁴⁵⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Lascelles to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 4, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 77-78.

⁴⁵⁵ *F.O.* 195/1495, to Sir W. White, October 5, 1885, No 343, PRO.

Government which had to counteract Russia's actions against Prince Alexander and the Union.

On the 6th of October 1885 the Bulgarian agent in Istanbul informed Prince Battenberg about the recommendation of the British authorities for a personal union and the appointment of the Prince as Governor General of Eastern Rumelia. Immediately after receiving the information, Prince Battenberg turned towards the British Consul for consultation, before a definite decision to be taken. Prince Battenberg expressed his readiness to accept this formula.⁴⁵⁶ As the question about a personal union was never discussed at the official meeting of the Ambassadors, it could be presume that the proposal reached the Bulgarian agents through unofficial channels. Thus the British authorities prepared the ground for further negotiations between the Prince and the Sultan.

After the official meeting of the Ambassadors began, the Ottoman Ambassador in London had a conversation with Lord Salisbury, approaching the attitude of the British authorities, which he was supposed to obtain in the future discussions. Salisbury again said that the British Government fundamentally decried the revolutionary act in Eastern Rumelia, and he assured the Ottoman politician that Britain, together with the other Great Powers, would work together to prevent the extension of the crisis and to preserve the Treaty of Berlin. However, he also explained that, during the Congress of Berlin, the main task was to forestall the establishment of "Great Bulgaria", and through summoning the Ottoman troops, to counteract the threat of union between the two provinces. Nevertheless, because the Ottoman forces never garrisoned the Balkan range, the present situation required re-examination. Salisbury stated that the Principality of Bulgaria demanded to maintain the peace, and if the peace had been unsettled, no one would have predicted the outcome.⁴⁵⁷

The wording of the Resolution, which had to be prepared by the Ambassadors, raised various objections. Thus, the discussions of the Ambassadors shifted from the main point of the meetings, which was the subject of union, and the delegates became involved in academic deliberations that brought no results. The delay of instructions, from some European courts to their representatives, only frustrated the process of finding a practical solution. The Foreign Office was aware of the endeavours of the

⁴⁵⁶ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*', from Mr. Lascelles to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 6, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 89.

⁴⁵⁷ *BOA.Y.A.HUS.* 183-140 October 8, 1885.

Emperors of Germany, Russia and Austro-Hungary to achieve an agreement as regards the crisis in Eastern Rumelia, and to act together against Britain. Nevertheless, the British Cabinet had some reasons to believe that Prince Bismarck was not entirely satisfied with the policy adopted by Austro-Hungary on the issue.⁴⁵⁸ These disagreements, inside the League of the Three Emperors, gave advantages and encouraged Britain to continue its course for achieving recognition of the Union. So, the British politicians proceeded to encourage Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire to reach an agreement, without further involvement of the Great Powers. They supported the initiatives of Prince Alexander, to send two Bulgarian delegates to the Ottoman capital, in order to deliver two letters from him to the Sultan and to the Grand Vizier. White was instructed by Lord Salisbury to advocate in front of the Ottoman authorities to accept the Bulgarian deputation.⁴⁵⁹ When the Ottoman authorities refused to accept the proposal of the Bulgarian Prince, British Ambassador suggested that the question could be brought forward at the meeting of the Ambassadors and thus showing its support of the Bulgarian Prince “in that form to prove the strong desire of Her Majesty’s Government to bring about a prompt solution of the present crisis”⁴⁶⁰. British authorities skillfully endeavored to embrace from any suitable situation to impose its program for resolving the crisis.

The British Cabinet was very accurate in reckoning the situation. Taking into account the meetings of the Ambassadors which continued without results, and the further military preparations of the Ottoman Government, which had to provide a position to enter Eastern Rumelia, if there were circumstances for such an act, the British authorities considered that the Russian Government was supposed to make a proposal for Prince Battenberg to depart with his troops from the province, and thus “sacrifice himself with a view to save the Province which had invited him”⁴⁶¹.

The Great Powers were able to reach an agreement on the text of the resolution, two weeks after the first meeting on the 14th of October 1885, after several amendments. However, on the next day, it became clear that this measure was not sufficient to deal with the existent situation from Eastern Rumelia. For this purpose, the Russian

⁴⁵⁸ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October, 11, 1885, No 357, PRO.

⁴⁵⁹ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October, 9, 1885, No 355, PRO.

⁴⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 11, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 109.

⁴⁶¹ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, October 11, Therapia, No 434, PRO.

authorities considered that a formal Conference of the six Signatory Powers of the Treaty of Berlin should be assembled, to deliberate on the final solution. The first duty of the Powers at the Conference should be to summon the Bulgarian Prince to withdraw, together with the Bulgarian troops, from Eastern Rumelia. Nevertheless, the next day, Lord Salisbury informed the British Ambassador at Vienna that he “doubted whether Her Majesty’s Government would be able to consent to a course which might eventually place them in the position of giving their sanction to a Turkish execution in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia”.⁴⁶²

A communication of similar nature would jeopardize the British political course, which was to defend the Union and to preserve Prince Alexander on the Bulgarian throne. Even though the British Foreign policy faced the joint opposition of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany, Britain refused to change its policy regarding the act of union. If Prince Alexander had declined to comply with the demands of the Powers, it would have been extremely risky, because it would have involved an Ottoman military interference, conducted in Eastern Rumelia, with the approval of Europe.⁴⁶³ It was obvious that the proposal was directed against Prince Alexander, without dealing with the question what had to be done with Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia afterwards, and how their union was to be achieved.

Lord Salisbury explained the refusal of the British officials to support such proposal, in front of the Austrian Ambassador, in a way that the request to summon the Prince to the legal conditions of the Treaty of Berlin, would force the British Government to deviate from its traditional policy of non-interference, or approval for interference, to compel the inhabitants of any foreign state to submit to political arrangements against which they had risen an insurrection. The second argument was that, in case the Bulgarians resisted to the proposal, an Ottoman military intervention could not be prevented, and the British Cabinet did not want to become responsible for it.⁴⁶⁴

The British authorities hurried to warn the Ottoman Ambassador in London that, if the Ottoman Empire pressed for an absolute restoration of the *status quo ante*, sending its troops to Eastern Rumelia, this would raise great dissatisfaction among the British

⁴⁶² Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir A. Paget, Foreign Office, October 16, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 128.

⁴⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, October 16, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 129.

⁴⁶⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, from Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, November 2, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 199-200.

authorities. Furthermore, Lord Salisbury pointed that such an action would put the Sultan into the hands of Russia, making him a tool of that Power.⁴⁶⁵ He also stated in front of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador that: “if a return to the status quo ante were put forward as one of the bases on which the Conference should deliberate, Her Majesty’s Government would have great difficulty in taking part in it, unless the proposal was modified by some agreement as to the ulterior action to be taken”⁴⁶⁶.

Nevertheless, Lord Salisbury accepted the idea of a formal conference. The official Conference began on the 24th of November 1885, in the Ottoman capital. For delegates were appointed Russian Ambassador Nelidov, British Ambassador White, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Calice, Italian Ambassador Corti, German Ambassador Radowitz, Ottoman Foreign Minister (Hariciye Nazırı) Mehmed Said Pasha and the Minister of Justice (Adliye Nazırı) Server Pasha.⁴⁶⁷ As a matter of fact, the discussions of the Great Powers at the meetings had little chance to elaborate a solution to the crisis, because even before the beginning, the Russian and British authorities had already clarified their points of view. Russia strongly advocated for preserving the Treaty of Berlin in its entirety, which would signify to put Prince Battenberg in an impossible position. The British politicians desired Eastern Rumelia to be officially subordinated to the Government of Prince Alexander, with minor alternation of the provisions from the Treaty of Berlin.⁴⁶⁸ Lord Salisbury followed the same political procedure as during the time of the Congress of Berlin, for the assembly of an official conference. He insisted that the Great Powers should agree upon a preliminary basis for discussions, and to elaborate the whole program before the meetings of the conference.⁴⁶⁹ The British authorities’ apprehension, about a Conference without preliminary agreements, originated from the information that had reached the Foreign Office, that Russia was in favour of re-establishing the absolute *status quo ante* in Eastern Rumelia, while other information inferred that the Russian Emperor was ready to content with less.⁴⁷⁰ However, this “less” was exactly what the British authorities should have settled before

⁴⁶⁵ F.O. 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October 16, 1885, No 370, PRO.

⁴⁶⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, to A. Sir A. Paget, Foreign Office, October 19, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 148.

⁴⁶⁷ Mahir Aydın, “Tophane Konferansı ‘Doğu Rumeli’ye Veda””, *Tarih Dergisi* 1 (2011), p. 123.

⁴⁶⁸ Ivan Panayotov, *Bulgarskata kriza v Evropa 1885-1889. Prinos kam predistoriata na Obshtoevropeskata vojna* (Sofia, 1924), p. 58.

⁴⁶⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, October 20, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 154.

⁴⁷⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October 20, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 154.

the official Conference, because if it referred to the throne of Prince Battenberg, they were not ready to accept the compromise.

Thus, the British authorities tried to neutralize the Russian intentions to oppose the alternation to the Treaty of Berlin, which, in order to approve the act of union, proposed the following course for the proceedings of the Conference: “1. To determine the extent to which the Powers are prepared to meet the wishes of the Roumelian people; and 2. To examine the most appropriate methods for persuading the populations and Governments of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia to give their acceptance to the arrangements proposed.”⁴⁷¹

During the Conference, the British Government pursued a few tasks. Firstly, the British authorities had to prevent any agreement which would return the state of things that existed at the beginning of the previous month of September. Secondly, they desired to avoid any proposal for summoning Prince Alexander to withdraw from Eastern Rumelia. Thirdly, the Porte had to be urged to begin to communicate with the population in Eastern Rumelia, for the purpose of ascertaining how far it was possible to find a basis for agreements. The British authorities considered that, at the beginning, the Conference had to take into account the wishes of the people from Eastern Rumelia. Such a political course was also wise for the interests of the Ottoman Empire, according to the British Cabinet, because the province occupied such an important position in the Sultan’s dominions. Also, the contentment and friendly feelings had to be preserved.⁴⁷²

The moral principles and the mindfulness about the population’s feelings and opinion, expressed by Lord Salisbury, were very disputable and did not take place in imperialistic politics. But in the politics the aim justifies the means, and the British Prime Minister did not hesitate to pursue a policy in this sense.

It is very interesting and important to notice the alternation of Lord Salisbury’s attitude towards the Union and the Treaty of Berlin, which he himself created in 1878 and in 1879 rejecting to accept the Bulgarian deputation came from Eastern Rumelia stated that there is nothing to be discussed in regard to the issue for union.⁴⁷³ On the eve of the Conference that had to find a solution to the Bulgarian crisis, Lord Salisbury expressed

⁴⁷¹ *F.O.* 195/1495, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October 25, 1885, No 391, PRO.

⁴⁷² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 2, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 197-199.

⁴⁷³ Pantev, *Anglia sreshtu Rusia*, p. 69-70.

his lack of understanding of the Great Powers' insistence to recommend acceptance for the exact letter of that Treaty.⁴⁷⁴ Most of the researchers appraised this act of the Lord Salisbury as a considerable change of the British Foreign Policy towards Bulgaria. Indeed, Britain's policy towards the Bulgarians could be assessed in this manner, but towards the Balkans it followed the course established during the 19th century, to prevent the extension of the Russian influence near the Ottoman Empire's borders. In 1879, Salisbury already stepped back from application of the provision of the Treaty, regarding the settlement of the Ottoman troops in Eastern Rumelia, realising that such a measure could entirely subject the Bulgarian population to Russia's will.

Britain obtained a strong opposition against the measures that aimed to force Prince Battenberg and the Bulgarian troops leave the Province. Lord Salisbury recognised in one united Bulgaria, gravitating towards European courts and a possible ally for the Ottoman Empire, a substantial guarantee against the Russian domination in the Straits.⁴⁷⁵ The British objective remained the same as 7 years before, to interrupt the advancement of Russia towards Istanbul. So, Britain was ready to permit alternations in the letter of the Treaty of Berlin, but not in its spirit.

The British attitude towards the claims of Greece and Serbia also deserves attention: "The only principle, therefore, which Greece and Serbia will have established by their victory in this diplomatic conflict is that, whenever anything is taken from the rights or possessions of the Sultan, it shall always be taken in three parts, and divided equally. It is much to be feared that certain portions of the Balkan populations will not be slow to learn this lesson, and that the Porte, by insisting upon the restoration of the exact provisions of the Treaty of Berlin under these conditions, will be pursuing a suicidal policy." This issue, according to Lord Salisbury, would not bring any real strength to the Treaty. If the desires of Greece and Serbia were considered as not proper, the wish of the population from Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia for union, according to him, had been "declared in very clear language and is not likely to be abandoned". The act of union was the result of the endeavours during the last 7 years.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 2, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.197-199.

⁴⁷⁵ Yono Mitev, *Otnoshenie na velikite sili*, p. 76-77.

⁴⁷⁶ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 2, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 197-199.

On the eve of the Conference, the French and German Ambassadors gave notice to the British Ambassador that, if he was determined to carry out his intention of objecting to the resolution in favour of the *status quo ante*, serious difficulties would occur between Britain and rest of Great Powers, which could lead to unexpected consequences for the affairs in the Balkans⁴⁷⁷. Thus, the British Cabinet would face the joint opposition of the four Powers.

The first meeting of the Conference took place on the 4th of November 1885. Meanwhile, some news came from St. Petersburg that Prince Alexander had been dismissed from the Russian army on the 3rd of November 1885.⁴⁷⁸ The British authorities had already hinted that the unsettled situation from the province had to be regarded from the point of view of the population, before any further measures were taken. Therefore, Lord Salisbury decided to develop this political course so as to counteract Russia's persistence to return to the *status quo ante*. Thus, Britain tried to impose that the consideration of the population's wishes should precede the discussions for restoration of the *status quo ante*. For this purpose, the British Ambassador in Istanbul induced the Ottoman Government to propose the appointment of a Sub-Commission for the Conference, so as to consult with delegates from Eastern Rumelia. When Lord Salisbury instructed Sir W. White, he stated that the Ottoman Empire had to be convinced by the desire of Great Britain "to protect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire by securing the contentment of the Bulgarian population", pointing out "the distinction between the present demand made spontaneously by that population, and the claim advanced on their behalf, eight years ago as the result of Russian military action". The British Government had a difficult task "to combine the satisfaction of the Roumelians with the maintenance and security of the Turkish Empire". Any proposal that tends to maintain the *status quo ante*, had to be taken *ad referendum* by the British Ambassador. This political course of the British Government foreboded the abortive labours of the Conference.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 8, 1885, 8 p.m. No 188, PRO.; Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 1, 1885, No 171, PRO.

⁴⁷⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria', from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, November 6., 1885, 1:25 p.m., Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 203.

⁴⁷⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria', from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 6, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 203-204.

At the fourth meeting of the Conference, which was supposed to discuss the Ottoman program for the settlement of the crisis in Eastern Rumelia, the British delegate made the following motion that the “state of that province should be submitted to a serious inquiry, which may permit the Conference to consult the wishes of the population in a well-defined manner, and to learn more exactly the means calculated to prevent the return of similar difficulties.” The proposal was based on an explicit statement, expressed on the 28th of June 1878 at the Congress of Berlin, that the European courts desired to create a steady state of things, and to secure the well-being of the population.⁴⁸⁰ The British proposal in this regard put the Conference in a political impasse.

The further proceedings of the Conference were drawn in ink as the British authorities rejected to accept the proposal of the Ottoman government which was issued to meet the British objections. It charged one mixed Commission to examine the requirements of the population of the province but it was mentioned that it had to be taken into consideration their “legitimate wishes within the limits of the Treaty of Berlin”. The British authorities opposed this measure because they considered it as a return to the absolute *status quo ante*, because the desires of the population were limited within the framework of the Treaty.⁴⁸¹

The Conference was interrupted by the declaration of war which Serbia forwarded to Bulgaria on 14th of November 1885.⁴⁸² The British Ambassador suddenly stated, in front of the other delegates, that the announcement of the Serbo-Bulgarian War changed the situation. Besides, the time was not appropriate for taking a final decision regarding the act of union.⁴⁸³ It became clear that the issue of Eastern Rumelia’s status would be decided not at the Conference and not by the Great Powers, but by the Bulgarians themselves on the battlefield.

Medlicott explains in his article examines the unification of Bulgaria, that even before the Conservative Cabinet of Disraeli was disposed from service, British authorities

⁴⁸⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 12, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 219.

⁴⁸¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 21, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 280.

⁴⁸² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, November 14, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 223.

⁴⁸³ Simeon Damyanov, “Frenskata diplomatsia i Saedinenieto prez 1885g.”, *Istoricheski pregled* 21, No 6 (1965), p. 78.

realised that they had made a wrong choice in 1878, staking on the Ottoman Government that it would be able to restore its authority in Eastern Rumelia and to garrison in the Balkans after the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the province. Hence, the division of Bulgaria became worthless as it could neither accomplish nor serve to the British interests.⁴⁸⁴ Georgi Todorov considered that British authorities persuaded two aims with its support of Prince Battenberg and union. The first object was to established particular degree of influence over Bulgaria and, at the same time, to stroke its rival in the Balkans - Russia although the latter was not its major rival in the Continent at the moment. In fact, Britain's opponent at that moment was Germany. The second purpose was to create confusion, by giving its support to Austro-Hungary's policy, in order to spoil the protocols between Russia and Austro-Hungary as regards the Balkans and to stimulate the spirit of rivalry between Russia and Austro-Hungary, and thus, to disrupt the alliance between the three emperors. The second task was considered as the main one.⁴⁸⁵ The desire of the Britian to strike the League of the Three Emperors was a political course followed since the time of the Congress of Berlin. Thus by this political game Britain desired to neutralize its traditional rival Russia and the new occurred Germany. It was obvious that during the Bulgarian Crisis in 1885 Britain was led by its interest regarding the political situation in Europe and Asia. The Bulgarian union was a political aftermath from the British policy followed in the Balkans since the Eastern Crisis 1875-1878.

The course which Lord Salisbury decide to follow in the autumn of 1885 in regard with the Bulgarian Crisis could be explained by the hypothesis that Lord Salisbury's policy for controlling the Ottoman territories failure in 1881, which undermine the British Government authority at the Continent so in 1885 he decided to stand out from system of alliance of the German Chancellor, which dominated the European politics at this age and preferred to lead British policy for preserving its position in the Middle East and Levant by the principle of *ad hoc* agreements.⁴⁸⁶

The final solution was reached on the 5th of April 1886 when the Tophane agreement was signed and Prince Battenberg was appointed for Governor General of Eastern

⁴⁸⁴ W.H. Medlicott, "The Powers and the Unification of two Bulgarians", *The English Historical Review* 54, No 213 (1939), p. 69.

⁴⁸⁵ Todorov, "*Kam diplomaticheskata istoria*", p. 33.; Elena Statelova, and Andrei Pantev, *Saedinienieto na Knyazhestvo Bulgaria i Iztochna Rumelia 1885* (Sofia: Narodna Prosveta 1985), p. 103-104.

⁴⁸⁶ Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, 165.

Rumelia. Thus the Union between the Principality and the province was recognized by the formula of the British authorities for a personal union.

Chapter 4: The Russian Demands in Eastern Rumelia

In 1878, the Russian authorities almost achieved their goal to dominate the Balkans by signing the Treaty of San Stefano and the creation of the “Great Bulgaria”. Their victory lasted only a few months and, at the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers managed to diminish the Russian benefits by dividing the Bulgarian state that had been created. Thus, the Russian authorities were forced to reconsider their policy towards the new political order imposed by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin.

If the Russian influence was secured in the Principality of Bulgaria, the situation with the Province of Eastern Rumelia was not the same. Because it had been decided that the Province would be returned to the Sultan, the Russian dominance over these territories was threatened as the British authorities applied their determinacy to increase their influence in the Balkans. So, after the Congress of Berlin, when the Organic Law had to be prepared and the administration of the Province had to be organised, Russia made considerable endeavours to preserve the Province in its sphere of influence.

The Russian ruling circles had never accepted willingly the division of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. After 1879, Russia pursued a political course for unification of the two parts of Bulgaria, which had to provide the restoration of the Russian power in the Balkans. The Russian authorities considered that the Bulgarians would remain subservient to the Russian Emperor recognizing him as their ‘liberator’, disregarding their desire for an independent development. Nevertheless, their assessment of the political situation appeared to be wrong and in the year 1885, when the Bulgarians accomplished their unification, the Russian authorities applied a political course of opposition to the unification.

4.1 Russian Policy and the Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

4.1.1 The Provisional Russian Administration in Eastern Rumelia

The question regarding the governing of the territories taken in possession by Russian army during the Russo-Ottoman War planned at the time of the Eastern Crisis was discussed long before the beginning of the military actions. According to the preliminary plan prepared in 1876 by Russian military authorities the special character of the war required immediate introduction of administrative government in these lands. The project was prepared by Prince Vladimir Cherkassky, a Russian statesman close to

the Slavophil circles. To accomplish this task a civil administration office run by the Prince had to be included in the general structure of the Russian army. Its main function was to gradually introduce a new civil government which had to secure the rear of the Russian army and the peaceful life of the Bulgarian population. It was expected local subjects to be involved in the administration. They would support the Russian authorities during their work. The civil administration office had to collect taxes, to establish and preserve the educational system and institutions, to create new governing system. Its main aim was to remove the Ottoman state system and to replace it with a new administrative one. Actually, having launched this project, the Russian authorities showed that they had accepted a political course to organise a new state formation and to build administrative and governing institutions, ready to secure the future development of the new state. The project demanded the Russian authorities to leave the new country only after stable peace and order were provided. The civil administrative government unlike the ordinary military occupation aimed to establish the foundations of government of one independent state.⁴⁸⁷ Because of the project for a civil administration office, it could be concluded that Russian political circle at that time had already adopted the idea that the territories south of the Danube River had to be included in a state formation under strong Russian influence.

Therefore, Provisional Russian Administration with civil functions was established in the territories occupied by the Russian army during the war 1877-1878. The civil authority was in direct contact with the local population and was able to establish strong relations between the local subjects and Russian functionaries. They could be clearly observed, particularly in the province of Eastern Rumelia. People there gave significant advantages to the Russian authorities during the period of the labours of the European Commission.⁴⁸⁸

As the establishing of the new administrative system was going on, the Russian authorities took a decision the existing administrative division of the territories to be preserved but special attention was paid on the local government institutions to be activated and stimulated to take part in the necessary proceedings for organizing the state. Local inhabitants had to be involved in the administrative institutions as much as possible. They had to possess particular governing experience, be respected by the

⁴⁸⁷ Maria Manolova, *Normotvorcheskata deinost na Vremennoto Rusko Upravlenie v Bulgaria (1877-1879)*, (Sofia: Ciela 2003), p. 31-39.

⁴⁸⁸ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 59-60.

community and popular with the local population. The Russian functionaries intelligibly preferred Bulgarian subjects to be appointed so they contacted the Slavonic Society in St. Petersburg, which had to seek out well-educated and experienced local people. Even though Russian authorities had some doubts about it, they surprisingly found out that local population was well-acquainted with the governing principles and had gained significant experience in the local administrative governing institutions. Thus exclusively Bulgarians had been appointed for the vice-governors of the 8 *Sanjaks* (Svishtov, Tarnovo, Ruse, Tulcha, Vidin, Sofia, Sliven and Plovdiv). In the local administration except for the post of Governor, District Chiefs and Chiefs of the Police the rest of administrative posts were occupied by Bulgarians.⁴⁸⁹ This experience was gained during the Tanzimat era. The Ottoman reformation endeavor in the 19th century obviously had positive results.

In accordance with the duties of the Provisional Russian Administration the first act of the Russian authorities was to abolish the collection of the *bedel* tax⁴⁹⁰ collected by the Ottoman Government. The tax was replaced by general military service /conscription/. Russian authorities also decided to abolish the tithe and tax over the pigs, but to preserve the taxes over the ships, real-property and all types of net incomes.⁴⁹¹

After the Treaty of San-Stefano had been signed Prince Dondukov Korsakov took up the post of Imperial Commissioner, which at the beginning had been occupied by Prince Cherkassky. The new Administrative Governor of Bulgaria continued the endeavors of the former one in establishing the government authorities but now according to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The principle model of the future government was the division of executive, legislative and judicial authorities, decentralization and local government with significant representation of the local subjects.⁴⁹²

The period of the Russian occupation was diminished from 2 years (the Treaty of San-Stefano) to 9 months (the Treaty of Berlin) for the province of Eastern Rumelia.⁴⁹³ Due to the new situation, a new instruction was prepared by the Russian Government and sent to the Imperial Commissioner on 24th of July, 1878. The formation of the military forces and the militia in the occupied lands was urgently needed. These military forces

⁴⁸⁹ Manolova, *Normotvorcheskata deinost*, p. 45-59.

⁴⁹⁰ Specific Ottoman tax collected from the Christian population of the Empire against their exemption from military service in the Ottoman army. Feridun M. Emecen, s.v. "Bedel", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed February 1, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/bedel--osmanli-vergi>

⁴⁹¹ Manolova, *Normotvorcheskata deinost*, p. 67-82.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁹³ Todor Ikonov, *Protokolite na Berlinskii kongres* (Sofia 1885), p. 54-55.

had to be organised without any intervention of the other Powers and thus had to be avoided these institutions to obtain a character controversial to the Russian political views. With other words the Russian required these two military bodies to be subordinated to the Russian authorities and even in the future a Governor General obedient to the Sultan to be appointed he could not be able to control the Militia and Gendarmerie.⁴⁹⁴ It was pointed out that they were of main importance and they had to be organised immediately. The decision concerning the size of the military forces was left to be taken by Prince Dondukov.⁴⁹⁵ He also received an order about the organisation of the administration in Eastern Rumelia. He had to organise such kind of administrative government which as much as possible had to be similar to that of the Principality of Bulgaria. This required the imposition of principles of self-governing and limiting the prerogatives of the executive authority through the introduction of principle of eligibility instead of the principle of appointment of officers. Later those principles were defended by the Russian Commissioners in the European Commission.⁴⁹⁶

If in the Principality of Bulgaria the participation of Bulgarians in the Government would secure the Russian influence, in Eastern Rumelia the occupation of the administration by the Bulgarian subjects had to secure the strength of the Bulgarian character of the province as an opposition to the Greek and Muslim population who had already had significant experience in governing and would receive the support from the Ottoman authorities. The Russian Minister of War Dmitry Milyutin in the letter sent to the Imperial Commissar expressed his opinion that the fate of the Bulgarian population in both parts depended on the success of the Russian authorities to create strong and well prepared, militia, gendarmerie and military forces in the province of Eastern Rumelia.⁴⁹⁷

These efforts of the Provisional Russian Administration were the main reason why Bulgarian Historiography appraises their endeavors as a mission of Russian government to 'liberate' the Slav population from the Ottoman authority as not only didn't they

⁴⁹⁴ Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumelia (Istoricheski pregled)*, p. 34-35.

⁴⁹⁵ Muratov, *Dokumenti za deinostta na rusite po uredba na grazhdanskoto upravljenie v Bulgaria ot 1877-78-79*, (Sofia: Ministerstvo na Narodnoto prosveshthenie, Darxhavna Pechatnitsa 1905), p. 78.

⁴⁹⁶ Petko Stainov, "Prinos kum istoriata na administrativnoto pravosadie v parvite godini sled Osvobozhdniето", *Godishnik na Sofiiskia Universitet, Yuridicheski Fakultet* 30, No 8 (1934-5), p. 4-5.

⁴⁹⁷ Madzharov, *Iztochna Rumelia (Istoricheski pregled)*, p. 36.

annex the territory, but also helped organise an independent state on it.⁴⁹⁸ Such a statement considerably excludes Russian interests on the Balkan Peninsula as a Great Power.

Due to the proceedings of the Russian Provisional Authority at the time when the session of the European Commission had to be convened to elaborate the Organic Law and organise the administration of Eastern Rumelia, there was achieved already difference in the British and Russian level of influence in this province: Russia had already had significant influence there. Actually, during the upcoming months Russia had to struggle in order to preserve it.

4.1.2 Russian Policy and the Administrative Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

The province of Eastern Rumelia had to be organised as an autonomous body under the sovereignty of the Sultan. The organisation of the province had to be carried out in accordance with the Organic Law. The Great Powers, which had signed the Treaty of Berlin, were designated with this task. The commission consisted of two representatives of each country of the Great Powers, who gathered to elaborate the Law. They formed their position about the character of the Organic Law depending on the interests and demands of each of the Great Powers in the Balkans. Russia demanded the provisions of the Organic Law to preserve the existing order and administrative system, established by the Provisional Russian authorities because they confined the Sultan's authority. That is the reason why Russian authorities preferred the liberal principles of governance to be implemented in the province. They were based on the extensive representation of the population in the governing authorities.

Colonel Schepeleff⁴⁹⁹ and Colonel Tzeretelev were appointed by the Russian government for members of the European Commission, responsible for the elaboration of the Organic Law. They both were military officers. The first one was a former military governor of Plovdiv after the occupation of the territories south of the Balkan mountain by the Russian army. The second one was a former secretary of the Russian Embassy in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁰ Tzeretelev also attained the Commission examined

⁴⁹⁸ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*.; Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*.

⁴⁹⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Mr. Plunkett to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, August 7, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 3.

⁵⁰⁰ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 52.

the situation in the Bulgarian lands after the insurrection in April 1876.⁵⁰¹ The presumption of the Russian authority to nominate them was based on the experience which they had gained with the local population and the fact that they were familiar with the affairs in the region.⁵⁰² Later their work proved that they had been the right choice for that mission and managed to secure the Russian interests in Eastern Rumelia. The attempts of the Russian Commissioners to prevent the restoration of Ottoman Empire's authority in this province and establish an autonomous government in accordance with the instructions, sent from St. Petersburg, began even before the European Commission officially started its work. Before the first session at unofficial meetings the principles of work and regulations of the Commission were discussed. In a conversation with the British Commissioner, Russian delegate and Russian Ambassador in Istanbul tried to oppose the right of the Ottoman Empire to appoint a Commissioner for the Commission. Actually, both Russian statesmen were not unanimous on that issue. Russian Ambassador Prince Lobanov was less firm in defending this application in comparison with the Russian Commissioner Prince Tzeretelev.⁵⁰³ From that moment on a separation in the Russian political circles could be observed, concerning the foreign policy of the Russian Empire towards the execution of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. Constant controversy accompanied the work of the European Commission and the organisation of Eastern Rumelia. The two tendencies -one for moderate policy in sense of strictly following the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin and the other- for strong opposition against the provisions of the Treaty, were supported respectively by the political circle around Russian Chancellor Prince Gorchakov and by the Panslavist circles in the Russian government.

The proposal the Ottoman Empire not to have a Commissioner was rejected by the British authorities, which were unanimously supported by the representatives of the other Great Powers. This did not discourage the Russian delegates and at the first official meeting on the 30th of September 1878 held in the house of the Grand Vizier, Russians opposed the proposal the Ottoman delegate to be designated with the right to be the President of the European Commission. As a counter measure they suggested that the presidency should be taken alternately by the delegates of the Commission in

⁵⁰¹ Dnevnik D.A. Milutina, ed. P.A. Zaionchkovskogo (Moskva 1948), Vol. 2, 75, 289; Vol. 3, p. 46.

⁵⁰² Stoyanov, "Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 61.

⁵⁰³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 19, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p.18.

alphabetic order. Their proposal prevailed and was accepted with following correction, stating that the Ottoman Commission had to be changed on the Presidency when the Commission moved to Eastern Rumelia but as long as it was in Istanbul, the Presidency had to be kept for the Ottoman delegate.⁵⁰⁴

During the first meetings in the Ottoman capital when the principles on which the Commission had to proceed its work were being elaborated, the Russian delegates tried to obtain some advantages, facilitating their future work. One of the provisions they insisted on was the right for veto.⁵⁰⁵ It said that the decisions in the Commission should be taken with unanimity. Thus they achieved control over the work of the Commission. This important regulation later significantly helped the struggle of Russian authorities to impose their policy regarding the establishment of the province as all unfavorably provisions could be objected and discussed again and again, which slowed down the work of the Commission. From the beginning the Russian delegates obtained an attitude aiming to reduce the participation of the Ottoman authorities in the process of the province organisation. They ignored all the rights given to the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Berlin. Ottoman Empire was supported by Britain. The re-establishment of Ottoman authority in Eastern Rumelia would mean increase in British influence there at expense of the Russian interests in the Balkans.

The decision the residence of the European Commission to be moved to the capital of Eastern Rumelia was of great importance for the further work of the Commission both for Russia and Britain. Indeed, this idea came from the British authorities but it was also warmly accepted by the Russian ones. There were different motives for this support. Russian authorities thought that if the European Commission was in Plovdiv, it would be easily forced to take into account the already established conditions by the Provisional Russian Administration, regarding the organisation of the province. At the same time the Russian delegates would receive the support of the Bulgarian population in the struggle against Britain concerning the administration of Eastern Rumelia. The further development proved that they had estimated the situation accurately.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 1, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 29.

⁵⁰⁵ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 53.

⁵⁰⁶ Goran Todorov, *Vremenna Rusko Upravlenie v Bulgaria 1877-1879*, (Sofia: BKP 1958), p. 93-124.; Stoyanov, "Izrabotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 65.

Propaganda was a powerful tool used by the Russian authorities after the arrival of the European Commission in Eastern Rumelia. They used the feeling of disappointment of the Bulgarian population with the Treaty of Berlin and as a result a significant number of demonstrations and deputations welcomed the delegates of the Commission. Series of violent articles were also published in the local newspaper Maritza. All of them accused the Great Powers of having left “the province to the mercy of the Porte” and expressed the refusal of the Bulgarian population to be submitted again to the direct authority of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰⁷ This violent attitude of the Bulgarian population was skillfully used by the Russian authorities to convince British Commissioners that Ottoman authority could not be re-established in its previous form and particular guarantees had to be given to the population in the sense of self-government rights. This required the Organic Law to be based on the liberal principle of governing widely spread in European countries at that time as Russian authorities preferred.

The attitude of the official Russian authorities in the province also underwent some significant changes with the arrival of the European Commission in Plovdiv. On one hand, due to the control exercised by the European Commissioners, on the other hand in accordance with the orders sent by the Russian Government, Russian delegates expressed their willingness to cooperate with the other Commissioners. This was obvious especially after accepting Kallay’s program for elaborating the Organic Law. Tzeretelev stated his readiness to assist the European Commission if it had the intention to establish a real autonomy. He claimed that the discussions about the details of the Organic Law would be difficult and would take a lot of time. The Russian Commissioner freely expressed the opinion that the union between the province and Principality of Bulgaria would happen in time. But Russia did not want to speed up this act and violate the Treaty of Berlin.⁵⁰⁸ Russian Commissioners stated their willingness to cooperate but it did not mean that they were ready to make concessions to their policy regarding Eastern Rumelia.

General Totleben arrived in Plovdiv on the 18th of November 1878 as a result of this new attitude of the Russian authorities. In the conversation between him and the

⁵⁰⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 11, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 273.

⁵⁰⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 207.

Bulgarian notables, who applied for a union with the Principality of Bulgaria, he made a statement in the strongest manner that Russia had already signed the Treaty of Berlin so the provisions of the Treaty had to be executed.⁵⁰⁹ This measure aimed to conquer the anxiety of the Bulgarian population at time when the European Commission started its work. Russian authorities were aware that a union between the two Bulgarian states was not possible because further complication on that issue was not required. They concentrated their efforts on elaborating such kind of Organic Law which had to secure the opportunity of the Bulgarian population to take the governing of the province.

But at the same time they did not refuse entirely to use the feelings of the Bulgarian population as a tool for putting a pressure on the European Commission. For example, Russian authorities tried to limit the contact between the local population and European Commissioners. They put a restriction on the direct contact with the population.⁵¹⁰ The Russian Commissioners prevented every occasion when the Commission desired to make publications as an answer to the Bulgarian deputations and petitions.⁵¹¹ They interfered in another way, too. When British Donoghmore and French Commissioner Coutouly suggested some measures be taken to relieve the agricultural distress of the province through a loan, the Russian authorities opposed. A new form of agitation was being carried out, which was urging the Bulgarian population to refuse any assistance from the European Commission.⁵¹² These actions only frustrated the work of the European Commission and undermined the Treaty of Berlin, which put the delegates of Great Powers in a very difficult position. In the eyes of the Bulgarian population they were presented as enemies who had come to take away their freedom.

As it was mentioned above when Austro-Hungarian Commissioner Kallay proposed a program for elaborating the Organic Law, it was adopted without serious opposition

⁵⁰⁹ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 19, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 163.

⁵¹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 11, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 275-276.

⁵¹¹ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 5, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p.245-246.

⁵¹² Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 22, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p.347-348.

from the Russian authorities.⁵¹³ The only amendment was made in the part of program where was stipulated that it was forbidden to the Commission to make any changes in provisions of the Treaty. The Russian delegates insisted that it had to be taken into consideration that the European Commission could be forced to make some alternations as some of the provision would not be executed. Therefore it was accepted and written in the program that it was forbidden to the European Commission to ‘provoke’ any changes in the Treaty of Berlin.⁵¹⁴ Actually, the proposal corresponded to the ideas of the Russian authorities for introduction of government authority in the sense of modern and liberal institution which gave the population the right of broad participation in the governing process of the Province. But this was just the beginning of a long struggle led by the Russian Commissioners for each article of the Organic Law. The Russian Commissioners refused to take part in preparation of the projects of chapters of the Organic Law which had to be prepared by the Commissioners.⁵¹⁵ The Russians prepared only the chapters concerning the provisions for the Militia and Gendermerie (as it was mentioned above the Russian authorities put special attention on these two military intitutions). This strategy of the Russian authorities gave them the advantage to examine every chapter carefully and to object the provisions they considered controversial. The Russian Commissioners criticized and opposed the projects and very energetically vetoed most of the time. They did not hesitate to veto even against the united decision of the representatives of all six Powers. This attitude of the Russian delegates left the impression that they tried to impede the activities of the European Commission.⁵¹⁶ Actually, this was part of the Russian authority’s policy which had to preserve already established model of the organisation in Eastern Rumelia. Particular self-government rights had to be acquired in order Bulgarian population to be able to dominate in the province. Respectively this policy had to secure the Russian dominant role in the province.

The first chapter Public Law of the Province became a reason for great discussions between British and Russian delegates. The Russian authorities arose against the right

⁵¹³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 5, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 109.

⁵¹⁴ Stoyanov, “Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia”, p. 67.

⁵¹⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 7, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 118-119.

⁵¹⁶ F.O. 78/3035, Philippopolis, November 5, 1879, p. 109, PRO.

of the Sultan to sanction the laws voted by the Provincial Assembly written under the article 10 in the project of the British Commissioner. Defending this provision Wolff expressed his anxiety in case the Provincial Assembly decided to vote a law against the previously taken engagements by the Ottoman Government regarding the Capitulation regime.⁵¹⁷ For the British authorities securing the authority of the Sultan meant securing their own political and economic interest in the region. So the Russian authorities tried to frustrate this. They based their objection on the hypothesis that in case the Porte did not execute their obligations properly and on time, the result will be that the development of the province would be impeded.⁵¹⁸ The compromising solution giving the Sultan the period of two months to approve the laws won for the Bulgarian population the right to govern the province themselves after this period had expired. Then the laws automatically came into effect. Bearing in mind the Ottoman bureaucracy this was a significant advantage for the regional government. Even though the proposal for a limited period came from the British Commissioner, it was very convenient for the Russian authorities because it helped restrict the Sultan's power.

The second chapter Rights of the citizens was accepted with less difficulty. The Russian delegates strongly objected the provision regarding the appointment of the officers because it was written that they had to be taken as much as possible not only from among the inhabitants of the province. In this provision the Russian authorities saw the menace that a Governor General could prefer to appoint foreign officers instead of locals as the number of Bulgarians prepared to take different administrative posts was insufficient. The compromise was found by mentioning that this provision could be applied only to some particular posts.⁵¹⁹ Actually, a provision in such sense challenged the Russian policy, which had the aim to establish a government system entirely represented by the Bulgarian population.

Chapter V referred to the Provincial Assembly probably caused the most significant difficulties between British and Russian delegates. The discussions were prolonged for more than a month (39 days). It even threatened to interrupt the efforts of the Commission as both British and Russian Commissioners showed relentlessness. The

⁵¹⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 5, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 404.

⁵¹⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 5, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 404-405

⁵¹⁹ Stoyanov, "Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 74.

strong opposition of the Russian authorities was constantly applied to any suitable situation. When the British Government expressed their dissatisfaction with the course of things regarding the elaboration of the Organic Law, the British Commissioner stated the following: “Lordship will see how difficult it is to arrive at any solution at all, while the opposition of a single Power serves as an absolute veto and while the power that usually exercises this right is the one interested in maintaining a state of confusion.”⁵²⁰ The situation in the European Commission was so strained, because of the attitude of the Russian Commissioners, that the British Commissioner even proposed the right of veto to be removed.

According to the project prepared by the British Commissioner the Provincial Assembly was supposed to consist of three different types of members: 1. Members by right; 2. Elected members; 3. Members appointed by the Governor General.⁵²¹ For members by right was stipulated that it had to be appointed the religious heads, chief justices and the financial inspector of the province. The appointed members were assigned property qualification and they had to be elected from one hundred of the most wealthy factor-owners and farmers. For the elected members was determined that had to be owners of real property.⁵²² Russian delegates did not agree with the number of the members who had to be nominated by the Governor General as they were half of the numbers of the members elected by the population. What raised this problem was that the number of the members by right ten and nominated members eighteen altogether twenty eight went beyond half of the number of the elected members thirty six.⁵²³ Russian delegates thought that the construction of the Provincial Assembly on this scheme threatened to deprive the population from the prerogatives to govern their country and to put the province in complete dependency on the Governor General’s and respectively Sultan’s will. So the Russian authorities strongly objected the project and long negotiations began. Russian delegation argued, pointing out article 9 from the Kallay’s program about the organisation of Eastern Rumelia, which said: “Fair participation of all classes of the population in life as well as a popular representation adapted to the needs of the

⁵²⁰ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 12, 1879, p.149-151, No 69, PRO.

⁵²¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 9, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 595.

⁵²² Stoyanov, “*Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia*”, p. 75.

⁵²³ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitutsionnoto*, p. 111-112.

country”.⁵²⁴ At a private meeting the Russian authorities withstood their opposing opinion against the British proposal and Russian Commissioner Prince Tzeretelev said that he was ready to drop off the idea of the Assembly only in case the other delegates agreed to organise District Councils of the Province such as the ones organised in Russia.⁵²⁵ Thus they tried to secure the right of the population to take part in the governing process at least at the lowest levels of administration.

The Russians were so relentless that they refused to make any compromises on most of the issues. The British Commissioner described their behavior like this: “If one accepts at once small concessions from the Russians, they consider all that has been said as a flash in the pan and begin and begin again immediately.”⁵²⁶

In the middle of February British delegates were trying to find a compromise solution as the Commission was facing the threat to stop working. Both the principle of nomination and the number of the members were established. The first proposal was eighteen members to be nominated but later they were reduced to twelve. With the support of the rest of the Commissioners an agreement was reached 12 members to be nominated. However, the Russians insisted on 8. Realizing how firm the Russian opposition was, Wolff supposed that probably ten would be the right compromise. As a result of adopting this application British Commissioner observed the following: “The elected members would thus have a majority of fourteen or indeed of 16, as the Bulgarian Bishop would of course vote with the majority. It would give, however, to the government a respectable party which might in time perhaps be reinforced by some of the elected members”.⁵²⁷ The observation of the British delegate showed how important the alignment of the forces among the different nationalities in the Provincial Assembly could be for the establishment of such a government, which had to maintain the interests of a particular power, Russia on one hand or the Ottoman Empire supported by Britain on the other.

⁵²⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 18, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p.145.

⁵²⁵ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 2, 1879, No 4, PRO.

⁵²⁶ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 5, 1879, p.79-80, No 34, PRO.

⁵²⁷ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 9, 1879, p.145-147, No 68, PRO.

Finally, it was decided the number of nominated members in the Assembly to be reduced to 10.⁵²⁸ Thus the Commission overcame one of the main hindrances. Chapter V was of great importance for the future of the Province as the legislative authority was concentrated in the hands of Provincial Assembly. If the majority of the members of the Assembly came from the Bulgarian population despite the legislature, the executive authority could also be provided for them. The dominance of the Bulgarians in the government institution would be impediment for the restoration of the Ottoman authority in Eastern Rumelia and respectively would help to increase Russian influence there.

The other struggle regarding the Chapter V was over the Permanent Committee, which had to be organised. According to the project of the British Commissioner the Committee should consist of 12 members – 9 titular and 3 deputies. Russia and Britain both supported the idea of the Permanent Committee, whose main aim was to support the work of the Governor General.⁵²⁹ Its prototype was discussed during the Conference of Istanbul. One of the functions of the Permanent Committee was to issue administrative regulations together with the Governor General in the period between the sessions of the Provincial Assembly which had statute of laws. They had to be in power during the time between the sessions of Provincial Assembly. Thus the Permanent Committee was given significant legislative power and control functions. But on the other hand, the Permanent Committee was a menace for the establishing of a powerful executive authority and for the abdication of the Governor General from his responsibilities.⁵³⁰ The real reason for the disagreements arose regarding the Permanent Committee originated in its prerogatives to issue regulations which had the status of law and did not required the sanction of the Sultan as they were valid only until the next session of the Assembly.⁵³¹ But in the future this provision could prepare the ground the province to be ruled only through these administrative regulations suspending the right of the Sultan to approve the laws of the Province.⁵³² The question, which led to the

⁵²⁸ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 124.

⁵²⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Foreign Office, Philippopolis, January 11, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1979), p. 448.

⁵³⁰ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 136.

⁵³¹ Simeon Simeonov, *Sastav i funktsii na uchrezhdeniata v Iztochna Rumelia* (Plovdiv: ODA 1979), p. 40-49.

⁵³² Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 11, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 450.

arguments between Russia and Britain, was again the appointment of the nominated members by the Governor. Britain proposed Permanent Committee to be set according to the following model: “the minority of vote simply five and four and without specific categories provided the election is made by the whole assembly including the nominated members”. According to this scheme only five members had to be from the majority, the rest four from the minority of the population in the province. This scheme threatened the interests of the Bulgarian population and was established by the British authority to secure the interests of the Greek and Muslim minorities and respectively to strengthen the Sultan power in the province. So the Russian Commissioners opposed this provision insisting on the number of the members of the Permanent Committee to be ten, respectively six of the majority and four of minority.⁵³³ In the end this scheme was accepted as Russian delegates managed to impose their will over the other delegates. Later during the elections of the first Permanent Committee the Russian scheme proved its favorable character for the Bulgarian interests. During the first election a mathematic formula was applied and as a result in both electoral lists for the majority and minorities only Bulgarian members entered.⁵³⁴ With this action the representation of the Bulgarians was secured at this level of the government apparatus, which was very important for the Russian authorities. They could control the actions of the Governor General.

The Russian Commissioners also refused to accept the project for the Chapter VI - Division of the Province and Governing of the Provisional Districts. The project was elaborated by the French Commissioner. It was based on the French administrative system dividing the province into 6 county and 21 districts. As for the county council it was stipulated that its members had to be appointed on the principle of members by right, nominated and elected ones. The district chiefs, towns and villages mayors had to be appointed by the Governor General. Russian authorities refused to accept the project in this form. These provisions were considered as restriction of the Bulgarian population’s participation the governance and provided the attendance of the minorities in exchange, so Russian delegates insisted on decentralization of the administrative

⁵³³ *F.O.* 78/ 3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 9, 1879, p.145-147, No 68, PRO.

⁵³⁴ A. Strashimirov, “Malko aritmetika”, *Prosveta* 3, No 6 (1904), p. 264-270.; Ivan Salabashev, *Spomeni* (Sofia: Pechatnitsa Knipegrafa 1943), p. 17.

system. Most of the Russian proposals for alternations were rejected and only some minor changes were made.⁵³⁵

British authorities demanded such an administrative system and government authority to be introduced in Eastern Rumelia which had to be entirely subordinated to the Ottoman Government. As a counter policy Russian authorities insisted the organisation of the province to be established with broad participation of the local subjects in the government. Thus the Ottoman authority would have opposition from the Bulgarians as a guarantee of the self-government development of Eastern Rumelia.

During the work of the European Commission the Russian delegates obtained a position of confrontation. The attitude of the Russian Commissioners became the reason for the delay of the proceedings of the European Commission. Russian authorities in Eastern Rumelia were not acting up loyally and did not have enlightened policy although the Russian Government had declared their intention to pursue it. They pursued a course aiming to impede and imperil the tranquil execution of the Treaty of Berlin, which was exactly what they desired. As long as the work of the Commission was hindered, they would have the freedom to maintain their work on establishing the Eastern Rumelian administration in such a model their foreign policy interest in the Balkans required.

In the territories of Eastern Rumelia Russian authorities established an administrative system which did not differ much from the previous ones, introduced by the Ottoman authority during the reformation period of *Tanzimat*. They tried to follow closely the line of the existing administration regarding the territorial division and the elections of the District Councils, which were carried out in the same manner as previously. As a base of the administration of the province the Russian authorities took the *Law for the Vilayets*. The difference was that all the District Councils consisted almost exclusively of Bulgarians and the governors of the districts were entirely Bulgarian. The other two ethnical groups were almost excluded from the administrative apparatus – Greeks partly attended the Councils, but the Muslims were entirely unrepresented.⁵³⁶ Russian authorities aimed to use the existing administrative organisation, which the local population was familiar with, without burdening them with completely new institutions

⁵³⁵ Stoyanov, "Izrobotvane na Orhanicheskia", p. 80-81., Todorov, *Vremenno Rusko upravlenie*, p. 282-286.

⁵³⁶ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Lord Donoughmore to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philippopolis, September 22, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 24.

and causing chaos with the new division of the territory. The difference was that the Bulgarian population took control over the administration.

The Russian authorities were challenged to defend the right to administrate the province during the period of the work of the European Commission because of the strong pressure executed over them by the British representatives supported by other powers.⁵³⁷ After the Treaty of San Stefano Prince Dondukov was appointed as Imperial Commissioner of Bulgaria and General Stolypin - as a Governor General of Eastern Rumelia as well as of the district of Adrianople. When the European Commission began its work General Stolypin was still under the orders of Prince Dondukov. The governing of Eastern Rumelia was not separated from that of the Principality of Bulgaria.⁵³⁸ This situation gave significant advantages to the Russian authorities in comparison with the European Commission which was deprived from authority in the province. Prince Dondukov continued operating with the incomes of the province without giving any reports to the Commission.

In the middle of December, Provisional Russian Authorities executed new elections for the District Councils, for both criminal and civil Courts and Municipal Council. The decision for the election was taken without any agreement with the members of the European Commission. The Russian authorities implemented a new regulation which had the purpose to deprive the minorities from the possibility of securing the election of their candidates according to which the householders of each neighborhood “meet and elect a certain number of representatives; but a separate vote is taken for each candidate, and consequently the minority are always out-voted”. During the last election in April 1878 no such regulation was issued. The present elections were executed in accordance with the laws introduced in the Principality of Bulgaria and which had to remain in force in Eastern Rumelia at the time of the occupation period.⁵³⁹ On one hand, these activities of the Russian authorities had the purpose not to allow the minorities to enter the administrative institutions. On the other hand, Russians tried to establish one working administration which could not be abolished after the new Government in

⁵³⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Foreign Office, Therapia, October 5, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 39-40.

⁵³⁸ F.O. 881/3910, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 19, 1879, p. 20-21, No 32, PRO.

⁵³⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 15, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 281-282.

Eastern Rumelia was to be introduced in May 1879 the following year. In it all Bulgarians, prepared to govern the province, had to be appointed. Thus further development of the Eastern Rumelia as a Bulgarian province could be secured.

The success of the Russian authorities to prevent the transfer of the administration to the European Commission was of vital importance for the Russian policy in the province. Russian functionaries had to accomplish the administrative organisation of the province in order to strengthen their influence in the region and secure Russian interests. Maintaining the general administration of Eastern Rumelia subordinated to Governor General of Bulgaria pursued a few goals. Firstly, governing the population of Eastern Rumelia from the capital of the Principality of Bulgaria up to the last hour of the Russian occupation gave hope that the idea of uniting the two parts of Bulgaria would come true.⁵⁴⁰ Secondly, the Russian authorities were striving to keep the administrative institutions to the south and north of the Balkan range similar due to the same reason. But in May Eastern Rumelia had to inaugurate a new administrative system. The European Commission could come across to resist of the Bulgarian population when the Organic Law was elaborated and the time came for the introduction of new authority in Eastern Rumelia. Not until the end of February was the administration of the province entirely separated from that of Bulgaria.⁵⁴¹

In this context Provisional Russian Administration ruled by Prince Dondukov and assisted by General Totleben and General Stolypin also obtained a policy line defending the statement that it was impossible the Treaty of Berlin to be put into execution with regard to Eastern Rumelia. Prince Dondukov openly stated “that the Bulgarians would resist all attempts to reinstate the authority of the Sultan, and that Europe would be compelled to allow them to constitute themselves as they thought proper. They would never accept a Constitution framed for them by a European Commission, however good and liberal it might be. They would insist upon making their own laws, as their brethren in Bulgaria would do.”⁵⁴² In all possible ways the Russian authorities in the province tried to convince the representatives of the Great Powers that the restoration of the Ottoman authority in Eastern Rumelia would be very difficult, almost impossible.

⁵⁴⁰ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Loftus, Foreign Office, January 26, 1879, (No 62), PRO.

⁵⁴¹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 25, 1879, p.141-142, No 62, PRO.

⁵⁴² *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Pera, January 7, 1879, p. 271, No 286, PRO.

When in January British Ambassador in Russia remonstrated against the Russian authority's action in the province, Prince Gorchakov belittled the question of Eastern Rumelia explaining that these kinds of accusation only creates "ill-will and were productive of no good result."⁵⁴³ Actually, the tendency which was observed during the time of the Eastern Crisis (the Russian ruling circles were divided in their opinion regarding the Russian foreign policy towards the Balkans) continued and could easily be traced during the time of organising the Eastern Rumelia province. The Panslavist circles dominated in the Provisional Russian Administration and their actions clashed with the policy line obtained from St. Petersburg. The British Ambassador shared the following attitude regarding this issue: "I confess that after experience of some months, I find it daily more difficult to follow the intricacies of Russian administration. I cannot discover whether there really exist in it two genuine parties, a moderate party and an advanced one, the former really deploring the excesses of the latter, or whether we are no spectators of a gigantic stage play in which each actor assumes the part best suited to his features and peculiarities but there all contribute equally to the development of the plot."⁵⁴⁴

Few months later after the work of the European Commission had already been done the British Commissioner was definitely able to recognize the two different parties among the Russian functionaries in Eastern Rumelia. He described them as moderate and advanced. Figures as Prince Lobanov who belonged to the Russian Foreign Office according to him was functionaries of the moderate party. He was supported a course of moderate policy, which had to carry out the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The members of advanced party were General Stolypin and General Skobelev. The latter was also a supporter of the Moscow Committee. Their actions in Eastern Rumelia followed the policy line of the opposition to the provisions of the Treaty. They excited the Bulgarian population and propagandized for a union between the Province and Principality of Bulgaria. Similar divisions of the attitudes existed among the Bulgarian population, too. The Bulgarian Exarch and the circle around him, who once attended the Ottoman administration so called the group of 'elders' at the time of the Tanzimat, were content to carry out the provisions of the Treaty. The lower class of the Province and the members of 'youngster' who had taken part in the Bulgarian national movement and

⁵⁴³ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Lord Loftus to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, January 15, 1879, No 3, PRO.

⁵⁴⁴ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 22, 1879, p. 245, No 83, PRO.

were under the influence of the Panslavist ideology, firmly rejected the new regime in Eastern Rumelia and were ready to insurrect at any time.⁵⁴⁵

At the beginning of January another attempt was made Russian Provisional Administration to be deprived from the governing of the civil administration of the province. This happened at the time when the duration of the European Commission had to be prolonged to be able to fulfill its duties. During the discussion Britain and Austria-Hungary stated their condition. In case the time of the mandate of the Commission was extended, Russia had to give up the administration of the province. Russians agreed with the prolongation of the European Commission except for exactly this provision and stated that they would accept the work of the Commission to continue only under the condition “the civil administration of the province remains in the hands of Russia until the promulgation of the new organizational Statute”.⁵⁴⁶ In this situation the Russian authorities very skillfully used the fear of the British authorities that Russia could refuse to give its consent and Commission would not have valid mandate, which would make the work of the Commission groundless. This doctrine, obtained more firmly by the Austrian government, actually only achieved to “place this weapon of obstruction in the hands of Russia”.⁵⁴⁷ Finally, British authorities made another move to secure the prolongation of the mandate of the Commission, upholding the opinion that actually “no such assent was absolutely required by the Treaty of Berlin”. However, Russia achieved to preserve the civil administration under its authority.⁵⁴⁸

The Provisional Russian Administration also made an attempt to preserve the financial administration of Eastern Rumelia. The British delegates posed the problem as early as they had this opportunity at the first meetings of the European Commission, but Russian authorities postponed the execution of this application in accordance with the provisions of Treaty of Berlin as much as possible. On the 21st of September 1878 Prince Dondukov made the following statement regarding the financial issue of the province. He expressed his determination not to give up the control of the finances of Eastern Rumelia to the European Commission. Furthermore, he expressed his puzzlement how

⁵⁴⁵ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 27, 1879, p.61-65, No 182, PRO.

⁵⁴⁶ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, January 14, 1879, p.193, No 347, PRO.

⁵⁴⁷ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Elliot, Foreign Office, January 22, 1879, p. 311-312, No 360, PRO.

⁵⁴⁸ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Elliot, Foreign Office, January 21, 1879, p. 297, No 336, PRO.

the administration could be carried on by the Commission without obtaining possession of the finances. The Prince argued that the finances were required in order the expenses of the occupying army to be paid so he refused to leave the accounts but agreed to hang over a small surplus to the Commission.⁵⁴⁹

Prince Dondukov also refused to accept the proposal the Imperial Ottoman Bank to be delegated with the right to organise the finances of Eastern Rumelia by establishing its own branch in Plovdiv. He went further expressing an opinion that it should be done by creating a branch of a new “*Bank of Bulgaria*”.⁵⁵⁰ The actions of the Russian authorities were absolutely contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. In the struggle for preserving the finance, Bulgarian population was drawn in, too. On the 11th of November 1878 the Governor-General issued an order the chest with accounts of the province to be delivered to the Finance Committee, constituted by the members of the European Commission. When the information that the finances were to be handed over to the Ottoman authority as one of the members of the Finance Committee was the Ottoman Commissioner, spread among the population, they organised a boycott closing all the Bulgarian shops at the market.⁵⁵¹ In December General Totleben made a promise to the British Commissioner that the transfer would be carried out, but one month later in January the situation did not change.⁵⁵²

Another accident occurred on the 14th of December 1878 when the British Commissioner Donoughmore and Mr. Schmidt, designated Director of the Finance, were trying to take over the Treasury chest and public accounts at the town of Stara Zagora. At the arrival in the town they were met with demonstrations and the local Bulgarian Governor could not prevent the disorders. He also refused to call Russian military authorities. They were accused of not having assisted the two officers as well as not fulfilling their duties properly, being in favor of the violation of the Treaty by the

⁵⁴⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 15, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 301-303.

⁵⁵⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 4, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 35-36.

⁵⁵¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 12, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 132-133.

⁵⁵² *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 8, 1879, p.57-74, No 60, PRO.

Bulgarian population.⁵⁵³ Similar trouble occurred when Mr. Schmidt assisted by the French Commissioner Coutouly visited the town of Sliven in March 1879 to accept the delivery of the chest. Once again they were met by a crowd of Bulgarians who were ready to protect the accounts of the town using military force. The Russian authorities acted as spectators, declining to intervene in the conflict. Talking in defence of his action General Stolypin said that "he could not stop these manifestations without shedding blood, and this he would not do without an order from the Emperor. If these orders were given, he would resign his place and his commission."⁵⁵⁴ After this the General advised the two gentlemen to put an end to their journey and return to Plovdiv because they were able to continue their journey only in case they were accompanied by a great military expedition for which the general did not want to take responsibility. Indeed, these accidents demonstrated the power of the Russian authority in Eastern Rumelia, which they managed to establish over the population. Under the occupation of Russian military forces, the population of the province proved its wholehearted sympathies and support for the Russians. The other troops didn't have the right to be located in Eastern Rumelia so practically it was controlled by Russia. The delegates of the other Great Powers were not able to protect themselves without the defence of the Russian army.

What the Provisional Russian Administration was able to do with respect to the organisation of the province of Eastern Rumelia during the time until the conveying of the European Commission and later during its sessions, secured the strong position of the Russian government in the Province. The tangible supremacy of the Russians made such an impression on the representatives of the other Great Powers and at the same time created confusion with the further development of the Province after the retreat of the Russian army. French delegates expressed the opinion that "a great many conditions were necessary to prevent the anarchy now being prepared by the Russians. It would be inevitable on their departure unless measures were taken to satisfy the Bulgarians".⁵⁵⁵ Keeping the administration and the finances gave time and enabled the Russian authorities to accomplish their work in the province.

⁵⁵³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Loftus, Philippopolis, December 14, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 239.

⁵⁵⁴ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 19, 1879, p.237-238, No 110, PRO.

⁵⁵⁵ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 14, 1879, p. 107-109, PRO.

4.1.3 The Russian Policy and the Military Defence of Eastern Rumelia

One of the first undertaken steps by the Provisional Russian Authorities after the provisions of Treaty of Berlin had been announced, was to prepare the local population to defend themselves against the Ottoman troops which as was stipulated in the Treaty were supposed to return in the province. Russian military officers, instructed by the Russian government, armed and trained the Bulgarian population. These people later became part of the specially created military bodies called “Gymnastic Societies”. The generator of this idea was General Skobelev. They had the task to organise and carry out military training all over the province.⁵⁵⁶

On the 18th of January 1879 Russian authorities issued a notification announcing that everyone in Plovdiv who wanted to acquire military skills had to be present daily. At these classes the instructions were given by Russian Officers. The number of the volunteers enrolled in the training program was estimated by some sources to 80 000 men. At the same time the distribution of arms to the Bulgarian population was carried out by the Russian authorities.⁵⁵⁷ A few days later all the male Bulgarian population, suitable for military service, between 18 and 40 years of age were also ordered to attend the training, organised in Haskovo district.⁵⁵⁸ The aim of this training was not only the military preparation of the Bulgarian population to be organised and the defense of the province against the re-establishment of Ottoman authority to be prepared, but also pressure to be put on the European Commission by the Russian authorities.

At the beginning of February General Stolypin officially announced the formation of Gymnastic Societies. At the same time the number of the distributed arms achieved 90 000, a process which could not be interrupted even if countless remonstrations were issued by the European Commissioners.⁵⁵⁹

Gymnastic societies were defined as “an organized system of rifles clubs and musketry instructions” in the official instruction distributed by the governor of Plovdiv concerning their formation. Similar directive was also issued regulating the formation of “armed communal guard” in the villages with the purpose the population to be able to

⁵⁵⁶ Elenata Statelova, “Izgrazhdane na vaorazhenite sili na Iztochna Rumelia”, *Voenna Istoricheski sbornik* No 6 (1983), p. 14-29.

⁵⁵⁷ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 23, 1879, p.27-28, No 13, PRO.

⁵⁵⁸ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 24, 1879, p.33, No 16, PRO.

⁵⁵⁹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 2, 1879, p.61-63, PRO.

defend themselves against the attacks of brigands and Bashi-Bozuks. As stated in the orders each guard was also authorized to be constantly armed.⁵⁶⁰ At the end of February more measures were taken to extend the process of drilling and arming the population in Eastern Rumelia. At the same time the Russian authorities deposited considerable quantities of arms as a part of their intention not to distribute rifles to individuals anymore but to create warehouses in different centers, from where they could be taken when it was needed.⁵⁶¹ If this process was maintained by the time of the Russian retreat, it would have the result that almost every fit and suitable for the army male adult would be armed and would receive education and a certain extent of discipline irrespective of his post in militia. For the Russian authorities the following outcome would mean concentration of large amount of military force in Eastern Rumelia, enabling it to make a stand against the entering Ottoman troops. Russian authorities were fighting for this cause from the first moment of the signing of the Treaty of Berlin.⁵⁶² In case the Sultan insisted on summoning the military garrison in the province, great disorders could be provoked and it would discredit his authority. Indeed, the Russians managed to establish a powerful barrier against the restoration of the Ottoman authority in the province. Russian authorities constructed an analogy to a reserve army completely independent from the militia and gendarmerie. Even if a comparison in the aspects of preparation, arming and discipline with a regular army could not be made, still it was strong military foundation which in any time could be used to fulfill the Russian interests. Furthermore, if this issue is considered in the context of the Russian Balkan policy, in the immediate vicinity of Istanbul Russia had created fairly well-trained military body which could be easily provoked and used at any time against the Ottoman Empire.

In the actions of the Russian authorities most of the Great Powers recognized a plan for preparing an insurrection in the province after the departure of the Russian troops. This could be an obstacle for the introduction of the Ottoman civil and military authority and at the same time an occasion Russian army to be brought back to Eastern Rumelia. Actually, this was not what the official Russian Government in St. Petersburg desired. The formation of the Gymnastics societies was used as a tool against British and

⁵⁶⁰ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 13, 1879, p. 193-194, No 76, PRO.

⁵⁶¹ *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 22, 1879, p. 268-269, No 86, PRO.

⁵⁶² *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 18, 1879, p. 239, No 81, PRO.

Ottoman authorities to make them drop the idea of installing the Ottoman garrisons in Eastern Rumelia. Currently, Russian authorities were ready to accept the Treaty of Berlin with minor corrections of the provision for the Balkan garrisons. Their intention became obvious in the Russian Emperor's allegation targeting the chief leaders of Bulgarians. He addressed a memorandum to them, in which he expressed his decision to carry out the Treaty of Berlin, and that "if they were to get up an insurrection after the return of the Turks, Russia would not come back to their assistance."⁵⁶³

Firstly, the establishment of Gymnastic societies concentrated considerable power in Russian hands. Thus Russian authorities were able to control and direct the actions of the Bulgarian population in a course, favorable for them. Secondly, being in charge of the military power of the province Russian Government could easily control governing authorities, too. The number of the created Gymnastic Societies in Eastern Rumelia reached 16. The Bulgarian population with readiness attended the training lessons and for a very short time received the necessary preparation.⁵⁶⁴

At the beginning of April the result of the Russian endeavors was that: "the Bulgarians in every part of the province are in possession of arms (about 65 000 rifles) and ammunitions supplied by the Russians, and every man capable of military service is occupied in drilling and large practice under the system of 'Ecoles gymnastiques'(Gymnastic Societies) and instructed by Russian non-Commissioned officers." According to the opinion of the British Military Attaché from a military point of view the state of Eastern Rumelia was far from satisfactory. The possession of such a large number of arms would make a general disarming of the Bulgarian population in the Province impossible. The Ottoman authority would encounter great resistance in execution of this task and the result would be bloodshed.⁵⁶⁵ Except for the Gymnastic Societies Russian authorities made significant efforts to establish the two official military bodies, which had to be organised in the province – Militia and Gendarmerie. The Russian Provisional Administration was led by the thought that the province could not be able to maintain powerful military forces at the beginning so they focused their

⁵⁶³ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 4, 1879, No 7, PRO.

⁵⁶⁴ Tsonko Genov, "Gimnasticheski strelkovi druzhestva v Yuzhna Bulgaria 1878-1879 godina", *Voenna istoricheski sbornik*, No3 (1956), p. 81-110.

⁵⁶⁵ *F.O.* 78/3037, from Colonel Dickson to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p.230-234, PRO.

endeavor on preparing military forces which would be able to train as many people as possible for a short period and thus to form reserve troops.

At the time when the Commission started its work in Istanbul at the end of September the British Commissioner Lord Donoughmore reported that a military body exclusively compounded by Bulgarians was composed by the Russian Provisional authority. About 39 000 people were conscripted and registered for both Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. The title of the formation was National Army.⁵⁶⁶ Russian authorities also organised the formation of police, mainly composed of Bulgarians as an additional administrative measure. The purpose for this measure was to keep the peace in the towns and surrounding districts.⁵⁶⁷ The existence of united militia, composed as a Bulgarian army by the Russian Provisional authorities kept Bulgarian population united. But according to the Treaty of Berlin the officers of the local militia had to be entirely local inhabitants elected and appointed by the Sultan. The case of combined militia under Russian command was contrary to the provision of the Treaty so the British authorities many times remonstrated in front of the Russian Government and insisted that “two militias should cease at the earliest possible moment, and that the militia of Eastern Rumelia should without delay be placed under the precise conditions prescribed by the Treaty.”⁵⁶⁸

Later this National Army was divided and the body of the Eastern Rumelia’s Militia was established. Before the Russian occupation period be ended up Russian Provisional authorities made significant endeavor to build up the militia. According to the Russians the security of the autonomy of the province significantly depended on it. But the main problem was the lack of the experienced military staff among the Bulgarian subjects so it was decided cadres from the Russian and Bulgarian army to be enlisted in Rumelia’s Militia.⁵⁶⁹ In November Lord Loftus reported that large number of Russian non-commissioned officers and soldiers were being enrolled in the Bulgarian and Rumelian militia.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Lord Donoughmore to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Adrianople, September 20, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 20.

⁵⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Lord Donoughmore to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Adrianople, September 16, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 16.

⁵⁶⁸ F.O. 195/1215, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Loftus, Foreign Office, January 26, 1876, (No 62), PRO.

⁵⁶⁹ Statelova, “*Izgrazhdane na vaorazhenite*”, p. 14-29

⁵⁷⁰ F.O. 195/1215, from Sir H. Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, January 9, 1879, No 10, PRO.

The Gendarmerie was created to preserve the internal order of the Eastern Rumelian province. British and Russian authorities were at variance on the question regarding the organisation of the Gendarmerie. Britain desired and insisted that Ottoman authority to establish the Gendarmerie and introduce it in the province.⁵⁷¹ Russian government by no means would accept such a scheme for the organisation of the Gendarmerie. Prince Tzeretelev shared the view of his government about the staff of the Gendarmerie with French and British Commissioners. He pointed out that it was urgent to form the gendarmerie “from a nucleus of Bulgarians, as had been suggested at Constantinople.”⁵⁷² At the same time the British authorities continued putting pressure on the Sultan. In February the Russian authorities were informed that their British colleagues were forcing the Porte to form a gendarmerie which had to be introduced in Eastern Rumelia as a countermeasure to their own acts- hiring Russian officers and soldiers in the Militia and Gendarmerie.⁵⁷³ The establishment of military forces mainly consisting of Bulgarians and commanded by Russian officers was one of the important aims of Russian authorities in accordance with their policy in Eastern Rumelia. Russian authorities were determined to prevent the formation of any other kind of Gendarmerie. They aimed to deprive the Governor General of a supporting him force. They didn’t want any other organisations keeping the peace in the Province to exist, except for the militia they were preparing at that time.⁵⁷⁴ Russian authorities were very unwavering in their position about the conditions for organizing the militia and gendarmerie. Especially General Stolypin insisted on constituting these forces in his own way against the authority of the Ottoman Empire in the Province. If he succeeded in this, the position of Governor General would become untenable.⁵⁷⁵

At the end of March after some alternations and modification not affecting the general principles of the projects concerning the Militia and Gendarmerie were made, the two chapters had been approved and adopted by the European Commission. However, at the beginning of April after the chief Russian authorities made strong objection against the

⁵⁷¹ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, January 2, 1879, p.263, No 297, PRO.

⁵⁷² *F.O.* 78/3035, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 8, 1879, p. 57-73, No 60, PRO.

⁵⁷³ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, February 20, 1879, No 248, PRO.

⁵⁷⁴ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 25, 1879, p.141, No 62, PRO.

⁵⁷⁵ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 5, 1879, p.185, No 84, PRO.

stipulated organisation of the two military bodies. Firstly, Russian Commissioner Colonel Schepeleff and General Stolypin opposed “the formation of an armed and disciplined force of Gendarmerie; they considered that a simple unarmed policy would be sufficient to maintain order and security, and laid very great stress upon the constant maintenance of a militia force, some 5 or 6000 men for the defense of the frontier towards the Rhodope and Adrianople, and they urged that the Turks would be constantly crossing over to village and harass the Christian population, if an adequate force existed to oppose them”. Secondly, they insisted on the establishment of a large force of Militia as it was at the present moment. But the British authorities considered that such an organisation was not desired as it would ruin the finances of the province. The British Commissioner stated: “The frontiers could be sufficiently protected against any lawless incursions by the small detachments of Gendarmerie stationed at various points, and the Militia of the country could be called out in any particular district, should its services be temporally required, without the expenses of keeping up a permanent force.” The present armed forces of the Militia and Gendarmerie established by the Russians consisted of 70 000-80 000 men well drilled and organised, distributed in nine battalions. Under the new system of organisation these battalions had to be disbanded and remodeled. Thus the population would be left without the ability to defend itself in case of the entering of the Ottoman troops. Furthermore, at the time of the retreat of the Russian army Russian officers had to leave the province, too and the battalions would be left without commanders. General Stolypin did not agree foreign officers, who were part of the Militia and Gendarmerie, to be obliged to swear allegiance to the Sultan, either.⁵⁷⁶ It was obvious that the Russian authorities would like their officers to remain part of the two military institutions so that Russia could keep strong influence on them. Regardless of the firm opposition of the Russian authorities no further concessions were made by the European Commission on this issue.

When the new administration was going to be introduced General Stolypin made one last attempt to influence the organisation of the Militia proposing that number of the Militia not to be reduced at once to the number fixed by the Organic Law but gradually. He also objected the proposal of Britain and the rest Great Powers Colonel Vitalis to be at the helm of Gendarmerie and Militia. General Stolypin didn't nominate him for the both institutions taking into consideration his lack of qualification, organizational skills

⁵⁷⁶ *F.O.* 78/3037, from Colonel Dickson to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p. 230-234, PRO.

and ignorance of the language. He suggested that Colonel Vitalis could be only in command of Gendarmerie. Colonel Vitalis was not a desired nomination by the Russian authorities and from the first moment General Stolypin opposed his nomination. Furthermore, the Russian authorities actively agitated against his appointment and the appointment of other foreign officers (excluding their own ones) in the Militia. They also organised the Bulgarian population to act against these nominations. According to General Stolypin Colonel Kisiakov could be nominated as the Comannder of Militia.⁵⁷⁷ The Governor General could be appointed as a commander in chief of the two millitary bodies.⁵⁷⁸ Actually, the Russian authorities made efforts to preserve their power over the Militia nominating Colonel Kisiakov, who would be able to influence the Governor General and thus to be restricted the Ottoman authority.

One of the issues from primary importance for the Russian interests in Eastern Rumelia was the article of the Treaty of Berlin which stipulated the right of the Sultan to summon troops in the province and to garrison them on the border with the Principality of Bulgaria. All actions of the Russian authorities in Eastern Rumelia from the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, during the work of European Commission, until the time of the retreat of the Russian troops were led by the perception the execution of this provision to be avoided. For the Russian authority once the Ottoman troops entered the province it would mean loss of their predominance in the struggle for the Straits. So Russian authorities were intransigent and rejected all proposals made by the British authorities the article to be executed with some alternations.

Early in December when the European Commission was working on the Organic Law the question about the Ottoman garrisons was also discussed because it concerned the British interest as much as the Russian one. Russian Commissioner Tzeretelev told Wolff that the system of the garrison in the Balkan “would be worse than under the past regime.” He made comparison with the Ottoman garrisons in Serbia. Small organisations of fifty or sixty men accommodated in blocked-houses, badly paid and provisioned, scattered in different neighborhoods would only threaten the population among whom they were quartered. What the British Commissioner really saw was that there was “a genuine fear of the return of the Turks, partly no doubt instigated by the Russians, and partly caused by recollections of the past and the fear of retribution for

⁵⁷⁷ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Constantinople, May 13, 1879, p. 4-6, PRO.

⁵⁷⁸ *F.O.* 78/3039, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 22, 1879, p. 116-118, No 228, PRO.

the present”.⁵⁷⁹ This was a considerable argument in the hands of the Russian authority used against Britain. The fear of repetition of the situation from the summer of 1876 made British Government more appeasable on that issue.

As a compromise British authorities decided to propose the Ottoman troops to be replaced with a mixed occupation by European forces. In November 1878 Salisbury discussed this idea with Shuvalov. According to him this would guarantee both - the population in the province and the Sultan. The Russian government rejected the proposal from the beginning but Salisbury kept constantly coming back to this issue. According to Shuvalov:”He held it over his head like the Sword of Damocles”.⁵⁸⁰ The failure of the attempts of the British diplomacy to convince St. Petersburg to accept the introduction of a mixed occupation forces made Britain insist strongly once again on the installation of Ottoman garrisons in the province. In January 1879, British diplomacy openly began sharp attacks against the Russian Provisional Administration for arming and drilling the Bulgarian population in the Gymnastic Societies as a violation of the Treaty of Berlin.⁵⁸¹ This measure had to put a pressure on the Russian authorities and make them more conciliatory on the question regarding the Balkan garrisons.

In February correspondence was exchanged between British and Russian Governments with reference to the profound disturbance among the population in Eastern Rumelia. The two Great Powers were unanimous on the point that some measures had to be taken possible rebellion or disorders to be avoided which could happen after the withdrawal of the Russian army. Prince Gorchakov firmly stated that “the entry of Turkish troops into the province was to be avoided at any price”. Furthermore, the Russian Chancellor went so far as to say that he was prepared to urge Russian Government to accept and even to propose the idea of the mixed occupation although it was unacceptable for Russia. The Russian Ambassador in Britain also stated that if preconscious actions were not taken this would mean that “Not only Eastern Rumelia but also the treaty of Berlin will be led to debacle”. But Russian authorities refused to accept any participation of Ottoman troops in the mixed occupation forces or Ottoman forces with foreign officers as an

⁵⁷⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 237.

⁵⁸⁰ *Osvobozhdenie Bolgarii ot turestkogo iga, Dokumenti v treh tomah, Boraba Rossii i bolgarskogo naroda za sozdanie Bolgarskogo gosudarstvo. 1878-1879*, ed. S. Nikitina and edc. (Moskva 1967) Vol. III, No 219, p. 350, Shuvalov ot London, 11/23 dek. 1878 do A. Gorchakov.

⁵⁸¹ Statelova, *Iztochna Rumelia*, p. 44.

alternative.⁵⁸² This made the proposal of the mixed occupation army unacceptable for London.

On the 11th of March 1878, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg had an audience with the Russian Emperor. The attitude of Alexander II gave a signal for possible understanding between Britain and Russia regarding the controversial points of the organisation of Eastern Rumelia. The Emperor expressed his readiness to fulfill the provision of the Treaty of Berlin concerning the issue of the withdrawal of the Russian troops and the stipulations related to the Eastern Rumelia. But he did not step back from the intention in case of “onslaught” by the Ottoman authority over the Christian population to remain indifferent “spectators”. These actions according to him could only compromise the stability and the peace in the region. The Russian authorities also refused to make compromises with the points regarding the Balkan garrisons and the Governor General. Russian Emperor insisted on the diminishment of the number of the Ottoman troops and their location on certain specified places.⁵⁸³

Russian authorities refused to make compromises on the points which could give an opportunity for the re-establishment of one powerful authority of the Sultan. Furthermore, they had already managed to achieve significant advantages in Eastern Rumelia which were determined to preserve. The division of the “Great Bulgaria” on the Congress of Berlin was a great loss for the Russian policy in the Balkans and an offense to its prestige among the Bulgarian population. Somehow Russia had to maintain its influence on the two parts of Bulgaria. Not allowing military occupation of the Eastern Rumelia by the Sultan’s army was the measure which had to secure Russian influence and prestige in the region. So the Russian Emperor only ostensibly adopted the British proposal Ottoman troops to occupy Burgas and Ihtiman instead of the Balkan range and Russian authorities only used this proposal raising objections to it frequently to protract the settlement on the issue.⁵⁸⁴

At the same time the Russian authorities as a countermeasure, aggrandized the training and arming the Gymnastic Societies. The militia also improved. Demonstrations were organised against the entering of the Ottoman garrisons. A celebration for the Russian

⁵⁸² *F.O.* 901/11, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, Foreign Office, February 27, 1879, (No 12) PRO.

⁵⁸³ *F.O.* 901/12, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, March 15, 1879, PRO.

⁵⁸⁴ *F.O.* 65/1042, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, March 28, 1879, No 62, PRO.; *F.O.* 65/1042, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury St. Petersburg, March 31, 1879, No 68, PRO.

Emperor's Birthday in on the 29th of April 1879 was organised and around 12 000 people in uniforms and arms attended the event. This left the impression that everything in the Province was in Russian hands.⁵⁸⁵ General Stolypin stated that the conditions for the further development of the province, which previously satisfied the Bulgarian population, would no longer be sufficient for them as they did not want to accept less than annexation.⁵⁸⁶

In April, the question regarding the entering of the Ottoman garrison in Eastern Rumelia went into the last phase as the Organic Law was almost accomplished and the Russian authorities tried to put pressure on the Great Powers. The following document shows how contrary the positions of Britain and Russia were when it came to the issue of the Ottoman troops.⁵⁸⁷

The British Government proposed:

1. The Ottoman troops only to enter the Province with the sanction of a majority of the European Commission.
2. The immediate occupation of Ihtiman and Burgas
3. The non-occupation of the Balkans for a year

Prince Gorchakov accepted this scheme with the following modifications:

1. The non-occupation of Ihtiman
2. The non-occupation of Burgas until the retreat of the Russian army from the Province.
3. The non-entry of the Ottoman troops into the Province, under any circumstances, until after the Russian retreatment.
4. The non-occupation of the Balkans until after conclusion of the delimitation.

The Russian policy concerning the establishment of the province in many points remained unchanged. Russian authorities were determined to defend their position - not to allow any Ottoman troops under any circumstances to enter the province. British authorities were forced to yield on this question becoming aware the real risk of the situation in the Province. In the end the issue was settled by bilateral agreement between

⁵⁸⁵ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Mr. Walpole to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philipopolis, April 29, 1879, p.182-185, PRO.

⁵⁸⁶ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 4, 1879, p.283-284, No 132, PRO.

⁵⁸⁷ *F.O.* 65/1044, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis Salisbury, British Embassy, 14/29, April 1879, No 165, PRO.

the Russian and the Ottoman governments. On the 2nd of May 1879, General Obruchev came to Istanbul and had an audience with the Sultan during which he handed a letter over to him by the Russian Emperor. Russian authorities proposed the suspension of the Balkan garrisons for one year instead of this the Ottoman authorities had to have the right to garrison one point on the Black Sea coast. During this period the time of the European Commission had to be prolonged.⁵⁸⁸ None of this measure was executed in the future. None Ottoman troops in any form were allowed to enter again the Province of Eastern Rumelia.

4.1.4 The Russian Policy and Struggle over the Ethnic Groups

The establishment of the Province of Eastern Rumelia disclosed two important aspects concerning the geopolitical rivalries from the second part of the 19th century. In one hand, the political balance among the Great Powers became correlated with the balance among particular ethno-religious groups that considered Great Powers their protectors, especially Bulgarian and Greek Christians, Turkish Muslims. On the other hand, the geopolitical interests were put in the framework of well-known understanding for “civilizing backward peoples” and it was spreaded among these groups with the aim to present the “rational and just governance”.⁵⁸⁹ Russia as well as Britain had particular policy towards the ethnic groups inhabiting Eastern Rumelia. Dominance over the population led to the increase in their influence in the province. The Russian policy concerning the local population of the Eastern Rumelia was constituted on the understanding that the province had to acquire an entirely Bulgarian character. The advantage had to be given to the Bulgarian population in governing the province. Thus, alongside with the struggle for the administration of the Eastern Rumelia which had to secure the broad participation of the Bulgarians in the governing institutions, Russian authorities took measures to provide supremacy of the Bulgarian population over the other nations inhabiting Eastern Rumelia.

British Commissioner Donoughmore wrote a report about the conditions under which different ethnic groups in Eastern Rumelia lived at the time when the European Commission conveyed in Istanbul in September 1878. According to his observation the Muslim population was in a very poor state due to emigration flow during and after the

⁵⁸⁸ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 2, 1879, p.355, No 167, PRO.

⁵⁸⁹ Anna M. Mirkova, “Population Politics at the End of Empire: Migration and Sovereignty in Ottoman Eastern Rumelia, 1877–1886”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, No 4 (2013), p. 958.

war and because of the difficulties which occurred as the same population tried to return. The position of Greeks was estimated as more preferable to that of the Muslims. The Greek population was almost totally unrepresented in the administration but at least they were admitted to attend the Government even in very limited share. Only the Bulgarian population was “*in full enjoyment*”, as they were designated with certain privileges.⁵⁹⁰

Indeed, the Russian authorities pursued a policy aiming to diminish the number of Muslim population in Eastern Rumelia. Provisional Russian Administration took measures to send away the Muslims inhabited the region. As the winter was to come the question for the Muslim refugees was put up in front of the Russian authorities by the European Commission. In October 1878 General Stolypin, the Governor of Eastern Rumelia proposed a motion instead of the refugees to return to their homes in the province “exchange of properties between Mussulman refugees from Eastern Rumelia and Christian refugees from Turkish provinces”⁵⁹¹ to be carried out. The execution of such an act would mean that Eastern Rumelia province would be depopulated from the local Muslim population. It would be replaced with Christian one. This would increase the Bulgarian population and secure its required dominance. The Russians kept to this policy till the last moment of their departure from the province.

At once with the deportation of the Muslim population the Russian authorities also pursued a policy of internment of the Bulgarian one. At the end of February 1879 a movement was organised by the Russian authorities stimulating the Bulgarian population to migrate from the province of Adrianople to Eastern Rumelia alongside with the withdrawal of the Russian army.⁵⁹² As a result on the 13th of March 1879 it was reported that a great number of Christians about 30 000 people emigrated from the districts around Adrianople. General Stolypin declared his intention this population to be settled in the properties abandoned by the Muslim population during the war in case they had not returned by that time. Actually, this was a counter action as the repatriation of the Muslim population was prevented by the measures taken by the European

⁵⁹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Lord Donoughmore to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philippopolis, September 27, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 33-35.

⁵⁹¹ F.O. 901/1, to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 29, 1878, No 81, PRO.; Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 29, 1879 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 96.

⁵⁹² F.O. 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 26, 1879, p.153, No 68, PRO.

Commission.⁵⁹³ The settlement of such a great number of population would be able to influence deeply and even alter the ethnic composition of the province. Furthermore, according to the information obtained by the British Commissioner Russian authorities in Eastern Rumelia were in contact with some of the Bashi-Bozuk leaders in the Rhodope region and were inciting them to alarm the Christian inhabitants of the district to evacuate.⁵⁹⁴

Another aspect of the struggle between Russia and Britain regarding the gaining advantage of one of the three nations inhabiting Eastern Rumelia was the activities of the Panslavist Society. Their actions aimed to support the Bulgarian population in their struggle against the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin and the restoration of the Ottoman authority in the province.

In November 1878 a committee called 'Eagle' was established in Plovdiv. The Committee was founded with the support of the Moscow Committee which also promised to cover all the expenses in case an uprising in the Bulgarian lands was organised.⁵⁹⁵ The Panslavist committee in Moscow sent money and informed the members that there was an arrangement with Russian War Office. The Office ordered General Stolypin to supply them with arms and ammunitions. The following instructions for the further work of the Eagle Committee were given: "Begin as soon as possible to work with energy, in order Europe to perceive that the Bulgarians are not such as they are depicted. Let this error be admitted in particular by our enemy England."⁵⁹⁶ From the correspondence between the two organisations it was obvious that Panslavist circles in Russia pursued a course of preparing an insurrection in Eastern Rumelia. Later in January the Eagle Committee already established its head-quarters in Plovdiv and other branches under the name Bulgarian Committees as its ramifications

⁵⁹³ *F.O.* 78/3036, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 13, p. 167-171, No 110, PRO.

⁵⁹⁴ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 13, p.209, No 96, PRO.

⁵⁹⁵ *F.O.* 78/3038, Moscow, November 20, 1878 p.72-73, No 184, PRO.; "Орел Народно Гимнастическо Дружество" *Maritza*, Plovdiv, November 28, 1878, p. 5; The Committee of Eagle probably is a branch of the Gymnastic Societies settled in Plovdiv. In the Bulgarian historiography has lack of unanimous opinion on the issue. But after the comparison of the information from the British documents which tell about the establishment of the Committee of Eagle on November 20, 1878 and the publication of the regulations of the "National Gymnastic Society Eagle" in the newspaper *Maritza* on November 28, 1878 which match by date, it could be concluded that the Committee of Eagle is a new established Gymnastic Society in Plovdiv. The British sources reveal unknown aspects from history of the Gymnastic Societies in Eastern Rumelia regarding the relations between them and the Panslavist Committees.

⁵⁹⁶ *F.O.* 78/3038, Moscow Slavic Committee to the Philippopolis Committee of the Eagle, November 20, 1878 p.74-75, No 184, PRO.

in all towns in the province.⁵⁹⁷ Obviously the Committee succeeded in spreading influence all over the Province. At about the same time the committees started to transform into Gymnastic Societies in accordance with the order of Russian authorities in Eastern Rumelia.

At the end of March British Vice-Consul in the Principality of Bulgaria was informed by the intelligence that Bulgarians supported by Moscow Committee were organising a revolt on the 13th of April in Plovdiv. The Panslavist Committee covered the financial expenses of the preparation. At the same time in the Maritza newspaper an announcement by the Eagle Society was published. It said that on the 3rd day of Easter “a great rifle meeting of Bulgarian sharpshooters at Philippopolis” would be convoked.⁵⁹⁸ No such revolt arose in Eastern Rumelia on the mentioned date. Only the meeting was carried out. But the activities of the Moscow Committee supported the strong opposition of the Bulgarian population against the division of the Bulgarian lands at the Congress of Berlin and at the same time deepened the relation between the Bulgarian and Russian authorities which resulted in extending the Russian influence in the region. Furthermore, the support of the Panslavist circles on one hand and the Russian government on the other, gave a significant advantage to the Bulgarians in the province.

The Russian Commissioner Tzeretelev, Nekludov and M. Grezenco were recognized as functionaries of the Panlavist’s movement in Eastern Rumelia. They carried out agitation and distributed money among the population.⁵⁹⁹ General Stolypin was also one of the supporters and members of the Slavonic Society.⁶⁰⁰ Colonel Tzeretelev stated his personal opinion about the policy that had to be pursued by Russian Government in the Balkans:”the annexation of Rumelia to Bulgaria, to let Constantinople be a free city, Russia taking the Bosphorus and England the Dardanelles, like Gibraltar.”⁶⁰¹ Indeed, this policy line was desired by a significant part of the Russian statesmen who were influenced by the Panslavist ideology. The idea of the “Great Bulgaria” created by

⁵⁹⁷ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 23, 1879, p.27-28, No 13, PRO.

⁵⁹⁸ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, March 25, 1879, p.261-262, No 122, PRO.

⁵⁹⁹ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 4, 1879, No 2, PRO.

⁶⁰⁰ *F.O.* 78/3039, Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 22, 1879, p.116-118, No 228, PRO.

⁶⁰¹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 17, 1879, p.115-116, No 50, PRO.

Ignatyev was still alive among these political circles connected with the Moscow Committee.

But obviously the actions of the Panslavist Russian functionaries, part of the Provisional Russian Administration, were contrary to the official Russian policy regarding Eastern Rumelia.⁶⁰² After the Organic Law had been accomplished and signed by the European Commission, the Russian Government which was aware of the rebellious situation in the province decided to send General Obreshkov, a member of the Panslavist Committee with the mission to convince the Bulgarians that they had to accept the new administration.⁶⁰³ Due to the activities of the Panslavist circles in Eastern Rumelia and the support given to the Society of Eagle and its subordinated committees the network of these organisations became a powerful weapon in the hands of the Russian authority and great menace in the eyes the British one. Panslavist ideology supported Bulgarian national feeling and was able to put the population of the province under the entire subordination of the desires and needs of the Russian foreign policy's aims in the region.

But when situation required the official Russian government was able to subject the activities of Panslavist circles to their policy as it had already been done during the Eastern Crisis. At the end of March Moscow Committee sent about 40 000 Imperial Pols (Russian money at that time) promising the rest of the necessary by the Committee sum to be sent shortly afterwards. However, the desired insurrection for which those preparations were made had to be postponed for a few months because "it does not suit the policy of Russian government that a rising should take place while the administration is in its hands and its troops remain in your country, as it would then be responsible to Europe and particularly to England, which is searching for a cause (a quarrel) with 'a lighted candle'". The Moscow Committee reasoned this desire with the depriving of the Great Power from the Balkan garrisons and mixed occupation, which guaranteed the autonomy of Eastern Rumelia. During this time the population would have ample time for more precise training and completing the preparation. The Moscow Committee also advised the functionaries, to keep up the moral of that population and the firm belief among those people that "Thrace and Macedonia are as good as united

⁶⁰² *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 4, 1879, p.73, No 31, PRO.

⁶⁰³ *F.O.* 78/3033, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, April 28, 1879, p.338, No 214, PRO.

Bulgaria, and that no one can preserve that union.”⁶⁰⁴ Obviously Pan Slavist political circles desired to maintain the political doctrine for the union of Thrace, Macedonia and Bulgaria and restoration of the “Great Bulgaria” which had to accomplish the Russian political goals in the Balkans. Indeed, at the end of March almost all of the obstacles which had been threatening Eastern Rumelia to be proclaimed as an Ottoman province were overcome. Russian government achieved its task to secure autonomous status of the province which acquired Bulgarian character as the Bulgarian population had predominance in the governing apparatus.

Thus the Eagle Society continued its work based on the received instructions. On the 28th of April 1879 a meeting was organised with the purpose a course of action after the departure of Russian troops and the introduction of the new authority in May to be chosen. The meeting did not achieve any particular agreements on the issues so the new one was appointed two days later on the 30th of April. It lasted for three days. The prevailing tendency among the members was that the Eagle Society would abide by the pacific policy advised by the Moscow Committee and by the attitude of the Bulgarian population ready to accept the provisions of Treaty of Berlin at that moment.⁶⁰⁵

British authority was aware that the Committee was “a dangerous weapon” because large sum of money and considerable quantities of arms were concentrated in its hands. The arms were spread all over the country. This could only increase the difficulties of the Governor General of the province as the existence of a revolutionary committee alongside with newly introduced administration under the Organic Law was contrary to its nature.⁶⁰⁶ The Russian authorities kept their sufferance regarding these proceedings.

4.1.5 The Russian Policy and the Election of the Governor General

The election of Governor General was the last hindrance which had to be overcome before the new authority be introduced in Eastern Rumelia. When the Porte proposed Rustem Pasha to be appointed as a Governor of the Province, the Russian authorities opposed his nomination. Propaganda was also carried out among the Bulgarian population against the nomination of Rustem Pasha through different stories about his

⁶⁰⁴ *F.O.* 78/3038, Slavic Committee of Moscow to the Philippopolis Society of the ‘Eagle’, Moscow, March 28, 1879, p.188-189, No 17, PRO.; *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 2, 1879, p.351-353, No 165, PRO.

⁶⁰⁵ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Mr. Walpole to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philipopolis, April 29, 1879, p.182-185, PRO.

⁶⁰⁶ KMF 04, Inf. No 106/1, 1.25-28.

abilities as a governor and his personal character. Even the Russian authorities coined a watchword that “Ottoman Christian is worse than a pure Turk.”⁶⁰⁷

Besides the activities conducted by the Russian authorities to oppose the Ottoman nomination they also took the initiative and proposed a foreigner to be appointed as a Governor General who would gain Bulgarian population’s confidence. The appointment of an Ottoman commissioner would recall negative memories from the previous authority under which they lived.⁶⁰⁸ But a nomination of a foreigner was a complicated issue as no one of Great Powers would accept a candidate originating from its rivals’ nationality. The Russian authorities understanding the problem took a course to nominate a neutral candidate. In the conversation between British and Russian Commissioners Tzeretelev, stating the firm position of his government which would not consent the nomination of the Rustem Pasha, shared the view that Russia would prefer a Swiss or Belgian candidate.⁶⁰⁹

The Emperor also expressed his rejection to the nomination of Rustem Pasha but conveyed the idea that “His Majesty would himself would have prepared a member of the Orthodox church though he did not insist upon qualification adding that perhaps a Swiss protestant might be suitable for the appointment.”⁶¹⁰ This cross-reference to the figure of the Governor General with Orthodox origin open the way for the nomination of the Aleko Pasha. Aleko Pasha was the only qualified figure who could be a satisfactory nomination for all of the Great powers.

Early in 1878 Russian authorities sent instructions to their ambassador in the French capital Orlov to approach Aleko Pasha, who was in Paris at that time. He had to do it in a very secret manner and to ask him if he would accept the position of a Governor General in Eastern Rumelia. Based on the first conversation the Russian Ambassador got the impression that Aleko was ready to accept the Russian proposal and asked for 48 hours to think it over. He accepted the position but the fact that Aleko Pasha immediately contacted British government through the Ottoman Ambassador in London Musurus Pasha and searched for their opinion raised some questions. Thus the

⁶⁰⁷ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Philippopolis, December 22, 1878, p. 39, PRO.

⁶⁰⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1979), p.236-237.

⁶⁰⁹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 5, 1879, p. 79-80, No 34, PRO.

⁶¹⁰ *F.O.* 901/11, from Lord Dufferin to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, March 12, 1879, No 13, PRO.

appointment of Aleko Pasha was negotiated in the end of March between Gorchakov and Dufferin in the context of the discussed measures for securing the order in Eastern Rumelia after the departure of the Russian army. He was appointed on the 14th of April 1878 by the Sultan.⁶¹¹

The issue about the Governor General was bounded with the other controversial questions regarding the organisation of the province—Balkan Garrisons and mixed occupation. They were settled together in the context of the struggle between Russia and Britain for predominance which depended on the concessions made by the opponent.

Anyway, the nomination of the Governor General did not put an end to the difficulties regarding the establishment of the Eastern Rumelia. Just the other way round: it put in new difficulties - the question about the prolongation of the European Commission as a supporting organ of the new Government in Eastern Rumelia.

Russian authorities stated the following conditions under which the Commission had to continue its work: 1. To advise Governor General on all questions related to the execution of the Organic Law; 2. To advise Governor General on the calling out the troops; 3. To abstain from interfering in the nomination of the vacant places in administration.⁶¹²

The anxiety which occurred in the British authority was a result of the fact that Commission could deprive the Governor General of the responsibility of his acts and of taking independent decisions. The French Commissioner supported the Russian proposal and stated that: “The European Commission has as a mission to superintend (sunveiller) the introduction of the Organic Statute. On all questions related to it the Governor General has to ask its preliminary advice. This decision taken by the absolute majority of votes is obligatory for the Governor General. As to the choice of the administrative staff, it must be made on the personal responsibility of the Governor General”.⁶¹³ If this proposal was adopted, the whole government of Eastern Rumelia would be in the hands of the majority of the Commission, which at that moment was not in favor of the British authorities. Thus the question about the Commission was a very complicated one. It looked as if it threatened the affairs of the province. It didn't ease

⁶¹¹ Hristo Glushkov, “Frenskata diplomatsia i izborat na gubernator na Iztochna Rumelia (1878-1879)”, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 1, No 2 (2006), p.172-174.

⁶¹² *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, May 28, 1879, p. 413, No 196, PRO.

⁶¹³ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, May 31, 1879, p. 423-424, No 201, PRO.

them at all. Furthermore, if the Commission was established under these provisions and the right of a single veto, it could only be a hindrance for the execution of the British policy in the province. Even though Russian authorities ostensibly agreed with the idea and worked for any arrangements on the question, actually besides the official diplomacy they worked against the idea.⁶¹⁴

When the time came for the Governor General to take his post in the Province, Russian authorities stipulated that Aleko Pasha had to go to Eastern Rumelia accompanied by the European Commission but without any Ottoman troops. In exchange the Russians could guarantee that the Bulgarian population would not oppose the Treaty of Berlin and would not make an attempt to annex Eastern Rumelia to the Principality of Bulgaria.⁶¹⁵ On the 2nd of May 1879, British Commissioner Wolff and Russian Ambassador Prince Lobanov had a conversation concerning the measures which had to be taken the new regime in Eastern Rumelia to be introduced. The Russian Ambassador insisted on instituting the new administration under the auspices of Russian authorities. He thought that the Organic Law had not been properly introduced to the Bulgarian population so they did not understand how solid the guarantees were against the restoration of the old Ottoman administration system. Reasonably, Russian functionaries as General Obruchev were sent to reassure the population. The British Commissioner expressed his doubt because he did not trust the present military government of the province as they excited the population and allowed Moscow Committee to distribute arms and money.⁶¹⁶ The present situation made this proposal very dangerous and made British authorities oppose it.

Indeed, the Russian authorities faced such opposing behavior which they themselves kept during last year. General Stolypin had to persuade the Bulgarians to accept the provisions of the Organic Statute and the Treaty of Berlin and to allow the new government system to be introduced in Eastern Rumelia. In defense of this political course Russian authorities gave arguments that if the Statute was “compared with the constitution of Bulgaria, the Statute was cheaper and better, and that, as an older man, Aleko Pasha was more qualified to inaugurate the new government system than Prince

⁶¹⁴ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 14, 1879, p. 379, No 179, PRO.

⁶¹⁵ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p. 315, No 148, PRO.

⁶¹⁶ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 2, 1879, p.171-174, No 199, PRO.

Battenberg, who was young and inexperienced.” Moreover, they did not hesitate even to threaten the Bulgarian population that forasmuch as the Ottoman troops were not allowed to return in Eastern Rumelia and Bulgarians rise in revolt, Russia and the Emperor would not assist them.⁶¹⁷

Russian authorities tried to obtain a severe control over the action of the Governor General.⁶¹⁸ The Russian authorities tried to make an impression in front of the Bulgarian population that Aleko Pasha was not under the orders of the Sultan but of Europe. It had to show that the province was emancipated from the Porte.⁶¹⁹

Whether the nomination of Aleko Pasha was the right choice for the Russian diplomacy is questionable because after starting governing the province, he tried to be independent from Russian policy. This is the main reason why Russian authorities did not support his nomination for the second time. The further developments in the Balkan Peninsula revealed the aftermaths of the Russian policy pursued towards the establishment of the province of Eastern Rumelia.

4.2 Russia and the Bulgarian Crisis

4.2.1 Russia’s Political Activities as Regards the Union

The Russian advancement on the Balkan Peninsula was ceased with the unanimous endeavors of the Great Powers in 1878 in Berlin. The traditional Russian policy towards the Christian population of Ottoman Empire, pursued during the 19th century, suffered a failure. Its main characteristics was ‘liberating’ the Christian subjects of the Sultan and later establishing pro-Russian state formations. In 1879 Tsarist Diplomacy was very close to the achievement of its half century-long political aim - creating a large and powerful Slav state on the Balkans under Russian control, which respectively had to secure their influence in the Ottoman Capital and over the Straits. Instead of this, Tsarist authorities were forced to accept the division of this “Great Bulgaria” state. The decisions of the Congress of Berlin brought significant discontent among the Russian population, who considered that what had been gained on the battlefield had been lost at the diplomatic table.

⁶¹⁷ *F.O.* 78/3039, Constantinople, May 13, 1879, p. 4-6, PRO.

⁶¹⁸ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 22, p. 399, No 189, PRO.

⁶¹⁹ *F.O.* 78/3041, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, May 31, 1879, p. 425-426, No 202, PRO.

The base for the union between the Province of Eastern Rumelia and Principality of Bulgaria was prepared during the establishment of the administration and government system of the Province as the Russian authorities never really accepted the division of the Bulgarian lands and perceived it as a temporary measure. Therefore, the unification of the two separated parts of Bulgarian lands -Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia -became a zealous political aim for the Russian diplomacy in the years after the Treaty of Berlin, determining its political course on the Balkans and having impact on its relations with the other Powers on the Continent. Russian authorities considered that if they succeeded in establishing an autonomous state formation of Eastern Rumelia restringing the Sultan's authority, they would also impose their strong influence on this province. But the later events in the Province did not prove this.

Russian authorities believed that the unification of the two parts of Bulgaria should be organised and executed by the Russian government in accordance with their political interests. They intended to decide when and how to do this. In 1879 a movement against the execution of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, concerning the separation of Bulgarian territories started among the Bulgarian population (not without the support from the Pan-Slavist society). Then the official Russian authorities opposed and suppressed it. "Edinstvo"⁶²⁰ Committee was established in Bulgarian territories immediately after the Congress of Berlin. It took on the leadership of the spontaneously arisen opposition of the Bulgarian population from Thrace and Macedonia, who were left under the Ottoman rule, against the decisions of the Treaty of Berlin. Russian government obstructed the activities of these Committees as they threatened its policy. The Provisional Russian Administration in Eastern Rumelia was instructed to take all necessary measures to restrict their further actions. But this movement opened a new stage in the national movement of Bulgarians – the Unionist Movement. It ended in the autumn of 1885 accomplishing its task – the Unification of Eastern Rumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria.⁶²¹ The diplomatic defeat at the Berlin Congress put Russia in the diplomatic isolation. On one hand Russia's Balkan policy confound the relations

⁶²⁰ For further information Petko Krusev, "Nachaloto na Mekodonskia vapors v Bulgaria. Blagotvoritelni komiteti 'Edinstvo'", *Makedonski Pregled*, No 3 (1948), p. 83-105.; Doino Doinov, "Komitetite 'Edinstvo' i Kresnensko-Razlozhkoto vastanie (1878-1879)", *Istoricheski pregled*, No 5 (1978), p. 24-40.; Todorov, *Vremenno Rusko Upravlenie*, p. 321-328, 335-338, 378-385, 411-418.; Doino Doinov, *Kresnensko-Razlozhkoto vastanie 1878-1879* (Sofia: BAN 1979), p. 29-31, 127-151.; Doino Doinov, *Komitetite Edinstvo. Vtoro Komitetsko desetiletie 1878-1885* (Sofia Universitetsko uzdatelstvo Sv. "Kliment Ohridski" 2006).

⁶²¹ Doino Doinov, "Saedinistkata aktsia na komitetite "Edinstvo" v navecherieto i po vreme na Uchreditelnoto Sabranie prez 1879", *Voenna Istoricheski sbornik*, No 4 (1985), p. 66-69

between Russia and Austro-Hungary and strengthened the British opposition. On the other hand the tense political relations between Russia and Germany as a result of the duplicitous game of Bismarck and the fragile support for the Russian interest by Germany during the Congress. Thus Russia was forced to adopt a political course for the preservation of the *status quo* and to deprive from its advancing policy in the Balkans. Any further complications in the region could induce the formation of anti-Russian coalition. Therefore to be able to preserve its gains Russia had to seek to participate in diplomatic alliances in the continent.⁶²² Part of the Bulgarian political circles realised at a very early stage that Russian Empire was ready to sacrifice Bulgarian national feeling if its imperial goals required this and its political interests were threatened. These circles claimed that Bulgarians had to follow their own political development independent from the Russian policy.

The menace to the Russian Balkan policy caused by the Unionist movement came from the fact that the division of the Bulgarian territories was one of the main issues of the Congress of Berlin and laid the basis of Treaty of Berlin. If it was violated by the Bulgarians, it would cause an avalanche effect and open other controversial issues in regard to the provisions of the Treaty.⁶²³ Opening the question without previous diplomatic negotiations and approval of the other Great Powers brought a significant risk for the Tsarist Government.

Therefore, in the following years the Russian diplomacy continued working on the preparation of the diplomatic grounds for the execution of the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria with the Province of Eastern Rumelia. In 1881 when the alliance among the Three Emperors was renewed, Russia insisted a condition to be included - a stipulation bounding the governments of Germany and Austro-Hungary not to resist the unification of the Principality and Eastern Rumelia. In exchange the Russian authorities engaged not to oppose the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary. The Three Emperors agreed that the two events had to take place at the right political moment for both Austro-Hungary and Russia.⁶²⁴ Furthermore, they agreed that the occupation of Eastern Rumelia by Ottoman military forces would not be allowed, considering that this might provoke very dangerous consequences for the

⁶²² Elena Stelova, Radoslav Popov and Vasilka Tankova, "*Istoria na bulgarskata diplomatsia 1878-1913*", (Sofia: Otvoreno Obshtesvo1993), p. 5.

⁶²³ Pantev, "Politikata na Anglia", p. 77.

⁶²⁴ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since*, p. 426.

general peace.⁶²⁵ Thus, later in 1885 the three cabinets in Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg acted together as the Bulgarian crisis outburst. After having provided the support of Austro-Hungary and Germany, Russian authorities only had to choose the most convenient moment for them.

On the eve of the Bulgarian crisis of 1885-1886 the political atmosphere on the Balkan Peninsula did not show any good chances concerning the unification of Bulgaria. The Balkan states were forced to continue their development under the conditions of the Treaty of Berlin, but none of them were satisfied with the execution of the provisions. This brought more complications than it had been expected and increased the tension among the Balkan states.

The Principality of Bulgaria, as a new born state on the political map of the Balkans, inherited border conflicts with all of its neighbors due to its geographical position and the fact that the Congress of Berlin was convoked to alter its borders. As a result of the changes made by the Great Powers dissatisfaction amongst the Balkan states was provoked. In 1884 Serbia made an attempt to take possession of border territories near Bregovo by force. The Serbian authorities did not hide their aspiration towards the region called 'Western outlying districts' including the regions of Vidin, Belogradchik, Breznik and parts of Sofia and Kyustendil, given to the Principality as part of the Sofia *Sanjack*. As a consequence the diplomatic relations between Serbia and Bulgaria in 1885 had broken off. The relations with Romania also suffered a setback because in August 1885 Romanian troops occupied the height Arab Tabia in the region of Silistra. This issue was unsolved by the border commissions, established to determine the borders in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The relationship with Greece was obscured by the struggle of Greek Patriarchate to hinder the activities of the Bulgarian Exarchate in the European domains of the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarian Exarchate was the only Bulgarian institution taking care of the religion and education of Bulgarian population in Macedonia and Thrace. Greek Patriarchate put some obstacles to its work. The Greek and Serbian diplomats protested against the *Berats* given to the Bulgarian Exarch in Macedonia and Thrace. In 1885 encouraged by the position of Greece and Serbia, the Porte rejected the issue of the *Berats* for the Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia. After hearing the news about the act of unification in Plovdiv, Greece and Serbia protested against it to the Great Powers and started military preparations. They

⁶²⁵ Simeon Damyanov, *Bulgaria vav Frenskata politika 1878-1918* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo 1985), p. 107.

insisted on territorial compensation or restoration of *status quo* as the only possible measures for keeping the balance of power on the Peninsula violated by the extension of the territories of the Principality of Bulgaria. Only Romania took a neutral position fearing that Russia was probably involved in the events in Eastern Rumelia which could provoke Russo-Ottoman War. If that happened, Russian troops would go through Romanian territory again. The acts of the two Balkan states made the situation more complicated and difficult. They provoked serious arguments among the Great Powers. The struggle of the Great Powers for gaining new positions on the Balkans was intertwined with the efforts already established influence in the respective states to be preserved. Every new complication concealed unforeseen consequences. This was the reason why all of the Great Powers approached the crisis in the same way. They agreed upon the limitation of the conflict within the Ottoman-Bulgarian relations.⁶²⁶

At the meeting of the League of the Three Emperors in August 1885 the arrangements from 1881 were reaffirmed. But Alexander III and Franz Josef reckoned that the moment was not suitable for any changes of the political map on the Balkans.⁶²⁷

Russian Empire was anxious about further complications on the Balkans as some unsolved issues concerning the executions of the Treaty of Berlin had been left open. They could turn into conflicts, which could outburst at any moment.

The political situation in Europe, respectively the Balkans was not the only issue which defined the political course of the Russian authorities towards the Bulgarian unification, proclaimed in the autumn of 1885. Since 1878 when Russia suffered a reverse in regard with its Balkan Policy the Tsarist Government was engaged to enlarge and strengthened its position in Asia, where its and the British interest also clashed the same way as they did on the Balkans. During the summer of 1885 Russia managed to gain considerable advancement against Britain in Afghanistan. But to be able to take advantage of that, Russian authorities needed no further difficulties on the Continent and the Balkans.

Besides the international political situation, the Russian authorities were also led by other motives which had been impacted by the bilateral relationships between the Russian Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria during the last seven years (1878-1885). After the establishment of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria, Russian diplomacy was satisfied because their candidates were elected. Aleko Bogoridi was their choice for

⁶²⁶ Elena Statelova, "Balkanskite darzhavi i Bulgarskoto Saedinenie", *Voennohistoricheski sbornik*, No 4 (1985), p.104-107.

⁶²⁷ Goran Todorov, "Kam diplomaticheskta istoria na Saedinenieto na Bulgaria", *Istoricheski pregled* 21, No 6 (1965), p. 27.

Governor General of Eastern Rumelia and Alexander Battenberg was their choice for Prince of Bulgaria. Reasonably they considered that their influence in these two states was secured after the withdrawal of their troops. But very soon after the Principality of Bulgaria decided to take its own path and develop independently some disagreements occurred regarding the activities of the Russian functionaries in Bulgaria threatened the relations between the 'liberator' and its Slav brothers. In 1885 the conflict between Prince Alexander and Russian Emperor seemed inevitable. This brought significant change in the Russian policy. In 1878 Russia established Bulgaria as an instrument for its policy against the Ottoman Empire but in 1885 Bulgaria acted as a weapon against its own creator.⁶²⁸

During the period between 1884 and 1885, the attitude of Russian authorities towards Prince Battenberg underwent important alternations so Russia considered deposing and replacing him on the throne as a Prince of Bulgaria. Actually, during the whole reign of Alexander III there were endless conflicts with the Principality of Bulgaria, Bulgarian administrative institutions and national aspirations of Bulgarian population. In 1886 Battenberg was dethroned (not without the help of the Russian agents) and the diplomatic relations between Russia and Bulgaria were broken off as a result of the acts of the Russian Tsar. Firstly, Alexander III supported the violation of Bulgarian Constitution by the Prince. Secondly, he condemned the Liberal party. During the Constitution restoration in 1884 the Russian Emperor repealed the ruling party because of its appeal for equality in the relations and respect of sovereignty of the Bulgarian state. He gave credit to the most radical Russophile party, which did not enjoy much support among the population.⁶²⁹ The personal attitude of Alexander III to Alexander Battenberg was of significant importance. The Russian Emperor had an ambition to put the Bulgarian state under implicit obedience and establish absolute control there. This disaffiliated Battenberg from Russia and forced him to struggle for more independent ruling. That is why Prince Battenberg was not considered loyal to Russia by the Russian Emperor.⁶³⁰

The attitude of Alexander III towards the struggle for independent political development of Bulgaria could be explain with the perception of the Emperor concerning the Russian interest on the Balkans, reported in 1885: "We ought to have one principal aim: the

⁶²⁸ Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 541-542.

⁶²⁹ Ilco Dimitrov, *Predi 100 godini: Saedinenieto. Istoricheski ocherk* (Sofia: Septemvri 1985), p. 178.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.91.

occupation of Constantinople so that we may once for all maintain ourselves at the Straits and know that they will remain in our hands..... everything else that takes place in the Balkan Peninsula is secondary to us.....The (Balkan) Slavs must now serve Russia and not we them”⁶³¹

Prince Battenberg’s ambition to conduct an independent policy frustrated these plans of the Tsarist authorities. Alexander III intended to convert the Principality of Bulgaria into Russian protectorate, serving the interests of its ‘liberator’. Thus, in 1885 Russian government pointed out the main hindrance for the Bulgarian unification - the figure of the Bulgarian Prince and the strained relations between him and the Russian Emperor. In the summer of 1885, Battenberg was not only warned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Giers not to undertake any actions to proclaim the unification but even to restrain the unionist movement.⁶³² The Russian authorities did not want the consolidation of Prince’s positions in the Principality.

They did not tolerate the liberal policy of the Prince in sense ‘Bulgaria for Bulgarians’. Indeed Prince Battenberg lost the support of the Bulgarian population after he suspended the Bulgaria Constitution in 1881 and a period of absolute ruling with the support of Russian Generals began. Realizing that this act undermined his popularity amongst the Bulgarian population in 1885 he decided to stand at the head of the movement. Actually, Prince Battenberg didn’t have a chance to choose. In case he rejected, he would be expelled either by the Bulgarians or by the Russians. The movement was organised by Bulgarians themselves and kept in a complete secret from the Prince. When *coup d'etat* had been successfully carried out, an invitation was sent to the Prince. Thus, the Prince had to solve a dilemma in the autumn of 1885. If he gave his support for the union, he would confront Russians. But if he refused to accept the leadership of the union, he would estrange Bulgarian population.⁶³³ Both ways were leading to his abdication or as Stefan Stambolov told the Prince that there were two possible outcomes of this situation - one would lead the Prince to the capital of Eastern Rumelia, the other would send him to Svishtov and then Darmstadt.⁶³⁴

⁶³¹ Quoted in Arthur J. May, *The Hapsburg Monarchy 1867-1914* (New York: Norton & Company, Inc. 1968), p. 275.

⁶³² Mitev, “Otnoshenie na velikite sili”, p. 61.

⁶³³ Stavrianos, *The Balkans since*, p. 432.

⁶³⁴ *Saedinenieto 1885.Spomeni*, eds. Elena Statelova, and Radoslav Popov, Sofia: Bulgarski pisatel (1985), p. 361.

4.2.2 Russia and the Act of Union

The Russian political circles considered the issue of the Bulgarian unification as a Russian-European question. Furthermore, Russian authorities connected the unification of Bulgaria with the Russian policy in the Balkan Peninsula. The act of unification of Northern and Southern part of Bulgaria had to secure the accomplishment of a particular task of the Russian Foreign Policy in the region - to increase its political influence in the Peninsula and to bring Russia near its cherished aim - to control the Straits.⁶³⁵

On the 18th September 1885 the unification was carried out by the Bulgarian authorities in the Province and the Principality without coordinating it with the Russian government. Instead of securing their political interest, the act of union threatened it. The Tsarist authorities were expected to express their reprehension and disapproval especially having in mind the fact that half a month earlier the Bulgarian Prince had been warned by them not to do so. Russian position at the Balkan Peninsula at that moment was strongly undermined by the advancement gained by the British authorities in the Ottoman Empire and Greece and Austro-Hungary in Serbia and Romania.⁶³⁶

However, on the 18th September 1885 immediately after Prince Battenberg had agreed to take the helm of the act of unification and accepted to defend the desire of the population for unification, he sent a telegram to Alexander III. He expressed his hope that the Tsar would approve of his actions as they were the wish of his “beloved Bulgarian nation”. The Russian Emperor kept silence for three days and the reply came on the 21st September to whither the Prince’s hopes: “It is because I love the Bulgarian nation that I disapprove what you have done.”⁶³⁷

The first reaction of the Russian Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire on the 19th September 1885, when the news about the revolutionary act in the capital of Eastern Rumelia reached the Ottoman capital, was similar. He said that measures had to be taken to put an end to that movement.⁶³⁸ Obviously, Russia expected that all of the Great Powers would suspect it of being an initiator of the act of the unification. On one hand, Russian Government avowed their disapproval of the act in Bulgaria. They took

⁶³⁵ Maria Kuncheva, “Rusia i Saedinenieto na Bulgaria” in *Saedinenieto na Bulgaria ot 1885 i natsionalnoosvoboditelnata programa na bulgarite* (Plovdiv 1995), p.133-142.

⁶³⁶ Statelova and Tankova, *Istoria na Bulgarskta diplomatsia*, p. 50.

⁶³⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Malet to Marqui of Salisbury, Berlin, September 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 6.

⁶³⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 19, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 2.

some preventive measures to make it clear to the other governments that Russian authorities had not been involved at all in the events, having taken place in Eastern Rumelia.

On the other hand, Tsarist authorities desired to censure Prince Battenberg and Bulgarian Government for their disobedience. Therefore, on the 22nd September the Russian officers on service in the Bulgarian army were prohibited to take part in the movement in Eastern Rumelia. The next step was an order issued by the Russian Emperor. General Kankuzin, the current Bulgarian Minister of War, had to resign from the office.⁶³⁹

All of these actions revealed the negative attitude which the Russian authorities had on the first days after the act of unification. Furthermore, it was openly demonstrated that the Russian Emperor had entirely withdrawn his support of Prince Battenberg and Bulgarian Government.

However, the Bulgarian authorities decided to send an address to Alexander III in which they asked him to reconsider his decision and not to abandon them. On the 24th of September, the reply of Alexander III arrived restating his prohibition concerning the Russian officers. It was also reminded “that the sacrifices already incurred by Russia on behalf of Bulgaria entitled her to be consulted beforehand in affairs of such vital importance”.⁶⁴⁰ The position of the Russian Emperor was unwavering.

Meanwhile, the Russian authorities warned the Porte and the Sultan that although they had not been informed about the opinion of the rest of the Great Powers concerning the revolutionary act in Bulgaria, they considered that they would ally immediately to take the necessary measures to protect the principles of the European diplomacy – to preserve the *status quo*. Precautions had to be taken in advance so that disorders in the Province to be prevented. Otherwise, the situation would lead to bloodshed. The Russian Emperor insisted his decision to be reported to the Bulgarian Government, Ottoman civil officers in the province and the Russian soldiers in the Bulgarian army.⁶⁴¹ Thus, the Russian authorities tactfully urged the Porte that an Ottoman military intervention in the Province was not desired.

⁶³⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 9.

⁶⁴⁰ F.O. 78/3770, to Marquis of Salisbury, Sofia, September 24, 1885, p.47-54, No 67, PRO.

⁶⁴¹ BOA. YA.HUS 183-19, September 21, 1885.

The Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Vlnagely had a conversation with the British Ambassador Grosvenor on the 21st September. He expressed his surprise of the event in Eastern Rumelia and shared his opinion that Prince Alexander could not be able to plan or carry out the unification as “he was not a man of sufficient ability for an undertaking on so large a scale”. Obviously, the attitude towards Battenberg among the Russian government circles was negative due to the undisguised disfavor of the Russian Emperor towards the Prince of Bulgaria. Vlangaly shared his opinion about the organisation of the revolutionary movement stating that “threads of the plot must have been in the hands of some person who enjoyed the confidence of the Prince” and the Prince was privy to the existence and preparations of the secret act. The Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his hope that the crisis would be solved as soon as possible by diplomatic means, excluding any bloodshed.⁶⁴² From this first conversation and the shared opinion by Vlangely it was clear that Russia was against Prince Battenberg but at the same time Russian authorities were ready to look for a solution to the crisis in a diplomatic way. Meanwhile they would not allow any Ottoman intervention in the province.

In fact, the Russian authorities considered this event as an opportunity Prince Battenberg to be deposed from the throne together with Petko Karavelov’s liberal government⁶⁴³. They also wanted some changes to be made to the Bulgarian Constitution resulting in strong Russian protectorate to be imposed on the Principality.⁶⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Russian Consul in Plovdiv was instructed not to sympathize with the movement. Russian officers received an order to leave the militia of Eastern Rumelia.⁶⁴⁵ All Russian officers at service in the military institutions of the Principality of Bulgaria and Province were ordered to come back to the Russian army. The Russian authorities also were embarrassed by the fact that the Minister of War in the Province was Russian. So in case a conflict between Bulgaria and Serbia or Ottoman Empire broke out Russia could be involved in it. Ilcho Dimitrov’s opinion is that the presence of Russian officers

⁶⁴² *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, September 21, 1885, p. 53-56, No 314, PRO.

⁶⁴³ At the time of proclamation of the union Petko Karavelov was a Prime Minister of the Liberal Government in the Principality of Bulgaria and took a leading role in the diplomatic negotiations for the recognition of the union. Tashev, *Ministrite na Bulgaria*, p. 216-218.

⁶⁴⁴ Todorov, “Kam diplomaticheskta istoria”, p. 31.

⁶⁴⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Mr. Willmore to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, September 26, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 27.

in the Bulgarian army contradicts to the official Russian policy. If their soldiers continued being part of Bulgarian army and military conflict broke out, that would mean that Russia supported the actions of the Bulgarian authorities whilst at the same time it claimed that it didn't approve of them. Furthermore, if the Russian authorities could prove that the act of unification had not been planned by them, the rest of the Great Powers wouldn't be suspicious about Russian influence.⁶⁴⁶ Ilcho Dimitrov's statement could be partly accepted because at that time the Russian authorities were cognizant of the British proposal concerning the crisis – personal union between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia under Prince Alexander's rule and were against it because they didn't approve of Battenberg. The British authorities were in favor of the Union but they didn't officially state this. Russian intelligence got some information that from the first day of the crisis the government of Bulgaria was supported by the British authorities in regard to the act of unification. These factors provoked further hardening of the Russian position.

On the 22nd September, 1885 Russian Ambassador in London informed Lord Salisbury that Russian authorities considered “necessity of energetic and immediate action in order to keep the Bulgaria question within the domain of European diplomatic action. Any bloodshed would be the signal for a conflagration which it would be difficult to stop”.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, the Russian authorities stated in a very certain way that any military interventions in Eastern Rumelia would not be favoured by them and at the same time declared their readiness to work for finding a solution to the crisis together with other Powers.

Soon, the Russian authorities took the initiative and Russian Ambassador in Istanbul Nelidov on the 25th September, 1885 presented a program which had to prevent further complications in regard to the crisis. Firstly, all kinds of measures had to be taken the movement to be localized within the province. Spreading it outside the borders of Eastern Rumelia should be avoided. Secondly, Rumelian border should not be crossed either by the Ottoman troops or by the Bulgarian ones. This way the bloodshed would be prevented. Thirdly, after the previous two were provided, this issue had to be brought on the stage of diplomacy.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Dimitrov, *Predi 100 godini*, p. 185.

⁶⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Grosvenor, Foreign Office, September 24, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 15.

⁶⁴⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 25, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 18.

On the same day a telegram was sent by Vlangaly to the Russian Ambassador in London with instructions the Russian proposal to be presented to the ambassadors of the Great Power immediately “to meet in order to concert together as to the identic language to be held to the two parties in the name of Europe, with a view to putting a stop to the conflict and bloodshed and thus to give time for consideration”⁶⁴⁹. Not wanting military intervention Russia showed clearly that it was not against the act of union, as it firmly stated, but against this form of union mainly under the name of Prince Alexander, proposed by the British authorities. The aim of Russia was to counteract further British actions in this sense.

This attitude for opposing the unification was entirely contrary to the Russian policy having in mind that the Treaty of Three Emperors in 1881 was signed with the purpose to provide the approval of Germany and especially Austro-Hungary for the future unification of the Bulgarians. But the policy line was in accordance with the political course followed by the Russian authorities towards Bulgaria after 1883. In 1884 when the unionist movement stirred up in the Province again because of the election of new Government General, Giers stated that it was not the right moment for this, Prince Battenberg did not deserve it and that Russian Government tried hard *status quo* on the Balkans to be preserved.⁶⁵⁰ Another reason for the Russian disapproval was provoked by the fact that one unified and strong Bulgaria could be for the British authorities such a mainstay against Russia, similar to what Afghanistan was against the Russian advancement towards India. This opinion was widely spread among the Russian political circles at that time.⁶⁵¹ This view was expressed by some organs of the Russian press close to the Russian Government. Simeon Radev told about the attitude of Russian journalist Mihail Katkov⁶⁵² towards the Bulgarian Union. The editor of the *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* expressed an opinion that British authorities were seeking to establish a “stronghold” against Russia advancement in the Balkans as those what was Afghanistan against Russia advancement in the Central Asia. Ivan Aksakov supposed

⁶⁴⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from M. Vlangaly to M. de Stall, September 13(25), 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 21.

⁶⁵⁰ *Bulgaria v politikata na trimata imperatori 1879. Germanski diplomaticheski dokumenti, No30, Tom I*, (Sofia: Universitetsko Izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”), p. 625-626, No 458.

⁶⁵¹ Dimitrov, *Predi 100 godini*, p. 184.

⁶⁵² Mihail Nikolaevich Katkov was a Russian journalist. He published the newspaper *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* (Московские ведомости). He supported conservative political views and largely influenced Russian Political circles. He was closed to Alexander II and Alexander III. He also led a struggle for preservation of the autocratic principle of governance in the Russian Empire. For further details about Mihail Katkov and his conservative ideas: Svetoslav Manoilov, “Liderite na Konservativnia lager – Konstantin Pobedonostsev and Mihail Katkov”, <http://www.viaevrasia.com>.

that British authorities desired to divert the Russian attention from the political events on Asian theater.⁶⁵³

Although the Bulgarian authorities were aware that the Russian Emperor condemned the act of union, they decided to send a special delegation led by the most Russophile figures of the Bulgarian political circles such as Vasil Drumev⁶⁵⁴. On October 3rd the delegation arrived in Copenhagen, where at that time the Emperor Alexander III and the Russian chancellor Giers were. The Bulgarian representatives were met firstly by Giers and then by Alexander III. The Emperor stated that there was no doubt about his feelings towards Bulgarian people but he did not approve what had been done. The Russian authorities were not told in advance and Russian government was put in a very difficult situation, probably even to a deadlock. He also stated that the separation of Bulgaria was out of question, but how and in what form the unification should have been done, that was the matter to be discussed and decided.⁶⁵⁵ The Bulgarian deputation made a conclusion that the Russian official authorities were not against the union as a matter of principle but were against the current Bulgarian government and especially against the Prince so they would not allowed their position to be strengthened by a success of the union.⁶⁵⁶ The Russian Ambassador in Sofia also mentioned this in a conversation with Stefan Stambolov⁶⁵⁷ saying that as far as Prince Battenberg continued ruling Bulgaria, Bulgarians could not expect any support from the Russian Emperor.⁶⁵⁸ This position of the Russian authorities moved the focus from the act of union. The diplomatic struggles between Russia and Britain that continued during the following six months were over the preservation or dethronement of the Bulgarian Prince from his position as Prince of the Principality, which respectively had to secure either Russian or British interests in the united Bulgaria.

The Russian authorities expressed their strong objection after receiving information that the British Consul Lascelles was sent from Sofia to Plovdiv. They pointed out that this situation could give wrong impression to the Bulgarian population seeing the approval

⁶⁵³ Radev, *Stroiteli na Savremenna*, p. 533-535.

⁶⁵⁴ Vasil Drumev was a metropolitan bishop and member of the Bulgarian Conservative Party. He graduated the Kiev Seminary in 1869. He was a follower of the Bulgarian Russophile circles and had close relation with Russian political circles. Tashev, *Ministrite na Bulgaria*, p. 172-173.

⁶⁵⁵ *Vanshna politika na Bulgaria Tom I*, No 299, p. 587.; Radev, *Stroiteli na Savremenna*, p. 538-540.

⁶⁵⁶ Mitev, "Otnoshenie na velikite sili", p. 64.

⁶⁵⁷ Stefan Stambolov was one of the members of Revolutionary Committee prepared and executed the act of union. Previously he took a leading role in movement against the decisions of Congress of Berlin and was one of the foundation members of the committees 'Edinstvo' 1879, member also of the Liberal Party and deputy of national Assembly in 1885. Tashev, *Ministrite na Bulgaria*, p. 422-424.

⁶⁵⁸ Ardern George Hulme-Beaman, *M. Stambuloff* (New York: Frederick Warne & Co 1895), p. 75.

by the British Government.⁶⁵⁹ Taking into account that the British Consul was instructed to follow Prince Battenberg constantly and this order came on the eve of the meeting of the Ambassadors in the Ottoman capital, it could be supposed that Russian authorities were annoyed by the British support to the Prince which was vividly manifested. According to Russia “people in Bulgaria and Roumelia are so full of political speculations that they will at once conclude from the presence of a special British Agent in Philippopolis, that Her Majesty Government are in favour of the national political aspirations”.⁶⁶⁰ In contrast, seven years ago the Russian agents were those who supported the national feelings of the Bulgarian population against the actions of British authorities in the province.

On the 7th October, 1885 Russian Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs communicated to British Ambassador the opinion of his government about settling the crisis arisen by the revolutionary act. Vlangaly stated that the wisest thing to do was the Great Powers to be informed to what degree the Sultan was prepared to recognize the events in Eastern Rumelia. Then the Great Powers should discuss what formula to apply to fulfill the Sultan’s wishes. But he also expressed his opinion that Ottoman Empire probably would insist and “he should wonder if she did not’ upon some ‘mark of blame bestowed upon Prince Alexander, such as his dismissal from the Throne, for instance”⁶⁶¹. The remark that Vlangaly made regarding the possible deposition of Prince Battenberg revealed the course of the Russian Government who would accept the union only without the figure of Prince Alexander. This course of policy was shared with the Bulgarian authorities, too. A support for the movement of unification was proposed to some Bulgarian deputies under the condition that Prince Battenberg be replaced on the throne⁶⁶² - evidently by someone, who could be easily controlled by the Russian authorities and act more in accordance with the Russian interests.

Some of the diplomats noticed that Russia, actually, had double-natured position on the event. On one hand, Russian Empire officially expressed their disapproval of Bulgarian Prince. On the other hand, the satisfaction declared all over the Russian society about

⁶⁵⁹ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, October 13, 1885, p. 132-133, No 347, PRO.

⁶⁶⁰ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, October 13, 1885, p.141-143, No 353, PRO.

⁶⁶¹ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, October 7, 1885, p.121-123, No 341, PRO.

⁶⁶² Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 29, 1885, Turkey No 1 1886, p. 65-66.

the union had significant contribution to forestalling the Porte use arms and restoring its right in the Province.⁶⁶³ This, indeed, proved the suspicions that Russia would not accept the restoration of the *status quo ante* in Eastern Rumelia as the Russian authorities kept firmly and constantly declaring during the crisis, but this was only a political maneuver for providing the replacement of Prince Battenberg.

At the beginning when the news about the event reached the Russian society, the independent part of the society and Slavophil groups expressed their support for the act called on the pages of their organs 'bloodless revolution'. The act was perceived as a logical consequence which was inevitable since the signing of the Treaty of Berlin. There were doubts that Russian Government had arranged everything in advance and Ottoman Empire would not take any military interventions against the Bulgarian population. Unlike independent press, official Government press sharply criticized the act of union which was defined as a "plot" against the Russian authorities. The public organs accused the government of "passivity" during the last events undertaken by Slav nations in the East. The official press advised the Government authorities to take favorable attitude towards the act which indeed was "celebration of the Slavic idea". However, after the official disapproval and censure of the event by the Russian Emperor, part of the public organs altered their opinion. They mainly reproached the Bulgarian prince (in the spirit of Russian official policy) and made accusations towards individual Bulgarian personalities and parties involved in the Unionist movement. However, the majority of the Russians retained favourable to the act of unification. Only the Russian Slavophile circles led by Aksakov were intransigent opponent of the official policy line of St. Petersburg. They insisted on Russian protection of the Bulgarian population and urged the other Great Powers not to be allowed to do this. The Russian government managed to influence the public opinion and the press, reorienting the press in regard to the event in Eastern Rumelia. As a result the press openly began to state that Russia was dissatisfied with the Union, because it had been carried out without the approval of the Russian authorities and the Emperor. Meanwhile, the whole Russian society obtained an attitude against Prince Battenberg. With a few exceptions the Russian society and periodical press responded with approval to the event, but once the official Russian position was clear, the organs became cautious. They did not withdraw their support for

⁶⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Mr. Phipps to Sir A. Paget, Pesth, October 2, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 75.

the Bulgarian people and the act of union, distinguishing the Bulgarian nation from the prince and the rulers.⁶⁶⁴

4.2.3 Russia and the Recognition of the Union

In the beginning of October during a meeting Giers, Lobanov and Bismarck discussed their position concerning the unification of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria. Contrary to the warm acceptance of the idea for personal union proposed by British authorities by the governments in Vienna and Berlin, Russian diplomacy firmly stated that a personal union under Prince Alexander was unacceptable for the Russian Emperor. After the meeting Russia obtained a political course for not recognizing the accomplished event and insisted on conveying a conference which aimed to restore the *status quo* in Eastern Rumelia.⁶⁶⁵ The resistance of Russian authorities against the recognition of the union was increasing in direct proportion to the British assistance of the event. But the personal union was the logical and painless solution to the crisis and some of the Russian Statesmen realised this as Baron Jomini. His personal opinion was that a meeting of the signatories Powers of the Treaty had to be organised and then a possible solution to the question about a personal union between the Principality and Eastern Rumelia under the Prince's rule could be found. This would be a satisfying solution.⁶⁶⁶

After the preliminary conversations between the Great Powers had been carried out in connection with the proposal made by the Russian authorities, the official meeting of the Great Power's Ambassadors in the Ottoman Empire started on the 4th October, 1885. During the meeting Russia was supported by the Representatives of Germany and Austro-Hungary according to the agreements made in The League of the Three Emperors. Thus, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador's proposal a Resolution to be prepared, expressing the disapproval of the Great Powers of the violation of Treaty of Berlin by Prince Alexander was supported by the Russian Ambassador. Indeed, Russians were ready to accept any measures which could discredit the actions of Prince Battenberg and menace his position as a Bulgarian Prince. During the meeting British Ambassador mentioned that Nelidov's "animosity" against Prince Alexander was

⁶⁶⁴ Ivan Stoyanov, "Saedinenieto prez 1885 g. i ruskiyat pechat", *Voennistoricheski sbornik* 52, No 6 (1983), p. 61-74.

⁶⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria', from Sir A. Paget to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, October 4, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 73; Statelova and Pantev, *Saedinenieto na Knyazhestvo Bulgaria*, p. 113-114.

⁶⁶⁶ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Peterburgh, September 23, 1885, p. 76-79, No 322, PRO.

“probably undiminished”.⁶⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Russian authorities made some attempts again to solve the crisis in the Principality by finding a possible formula for a union without Battenberg. The Russian Consul Igelstrom told two prominent members of the revolutionary movement – Rizov and Stoyanov - that Russia was willing to assist Bulgaria but could not do it as long as Prince Alexander remained in the country.⁶⁶⁸

The reason for the preparation of the Resolution was gaining time for both Britain and Russia. It did not have a particular result. Russian Government considered that if the text of the resolution contained “no personal allusion” (which was required by the British authorities) to Prince Battenberg, the pursued aim would not be achieved so it was not acceptable for them.⁶⁶⁹ The Tsarist authorities had to look for other means to settle the problem in order to achieve their political interest. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Gier’s personal opinion shared with Bismarck included the governments in Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg to agree upon the convocation of an official Conference. There the Ottoman Government was expected to propose the union to be recognized with particular modifications which had to unite economic and administrative systems of the Principality and Eastern Rumelia but under the condition that these changes would not get out of the frame of the *status quo ante* or adopt the personal union.⁶⁷⁰

Later this idea was implemented as an official political course. On the 15th October, 1885 a proposal was issued by the ‘three cabinets’ for a formal Conference whose “first duty would be to summon the Bulgarian Government to withdraw their troops from Eastern Rumelia, intimating at the same time that, in the event of non-compliance, the Powers would not shield the province from exercise by the Sultan of his sovereign rights”. In case that Prince Battenberg and the Bulgarian authorities agreed to obey the summon, the Great Powers would “deliberate with the Porte respecting the means by which effect can be given to the wishes of the two provinces in the sense of an assimilation of their administration, institutions, &c., but it is not proposed that the word “union” should be used”⁶⁷¹. The basis of the proposal was entirely the same as the one Giers shared with Bismarck. If such summons was prepared and sent to the Bulgarian

⁶⁶⁷ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis Salisbury, Therapia, October 5, 1885, No 416, PRO.

⁶⁶⁸ *F.O.* 78/3770, from Mr. Lascelles to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 10, 1885, p. 286-287, PRO.

⁶⁶⁹ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 11, No 434, PRO.

⁶⁷⁰ Medlicott, “The Powers and the Unification”, p. 82.

⁶⁷¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, October 16, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 129.

Prince, there was a certain risk the Prince to reject it. The refusal could sanction an Ottoman military intervention. On the other hand, if the Prince accepted it, he would kneel to Russian Emperor. By coming up with such a proposal, the government in St. Petersburg expected that the Prince, forced by the circumstances, would obey the “unanimous voice of Europe” and leave the Province.

This Russian policy line was defended in a conversation between Giers and the British ambassador in St. Petersburg during which the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs ‘deprecated’ the unionist movement and used it as a reason to explain the danger the Ottoman Government was exposed to - arm menace inside its dominions. Although Giers did not approve of the actions of Serbia and Greece, he said that “they only defended their action on the ground of the necessity incumbent on these two countries of maintaining ‘the balance of power’ in the Balkan Peninsula, which would be disturbed if Bulgaria and Roumelia were united under one rule”. He continued presenting his idea that Conference should take the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin as a basis and work in order to reach an agreement “as much in harmony with the spirit of that Treaty as possible”. The Russian Ambassador Nelidov received instructions in the same sense.⁶⁷² It appeared that Russia was determined to maintain the formula “union without Battenberg or Battenberg without Union” and for the execution of this political course the Russian authorities was using the Treaty of Berlin.

Before the start of the Conference on the 3rd November the news that the Russian Emperor dismissed Prince Alexander from the Russian army reached all the European courts. With this act Russia showed to the rest of the Great Powers that the staying of the Prince Battenberg on the Bulgarian throne was inconceivable for it.⁶⁷³ The act of the Russian authorities predestined the work of the Conference. Russia desired a union without Battenberg and Britain desired the opposite - a union with Battenberg. There was no opportunity a compromise solution to be found. Moreover, the Russian Ambassador made an endeavor to connect the question of the ensuing discussion about the restoration of the order in the Principality and Eastern Rumelia with the execution of alternations to the Bulgarian Constitution. He proposed during the future Conference the question about carrying out a modification of the Constitution of Principality of Bulgaria also to be included. It occurred that parts of the Constitution seemed to be

⁶⁷² *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, October 17, 1885, p. 143-146, No 354, PRO.

⁶⁷³ Radev, *Stroitelni na Savremenna*, p. 572.; *F.O.* 65/1220, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, November 6, 1885, 11:30 a.m., p.189, No 60, PRO.

“very defective” for Russia.⁶⁷⁴ It was the same Constitution, which seven years ago, Russian authorities had elaborated and imposed on Bulgarians.

On the second meeting of the Conference on the 7th of November 1885, Nelidov made a declaration for reestablishment of the *status quo*.⁶⁷⁵ It was accompanied with historical retrospective that in 1878 the Treaty of Berlin was extremely unpopular in Russia because of the separation of Bulgaria. However, its provisions were accepted in the name of the interest of Great Powers on the Balkans and the peace in Europe. Due to the same reasons Russia insisted on preserving the Treaty and restoring the *status quo* now.⁶⁷⁶

While the Ambassadors of the Great Powers in Ottoman capital were struggling to elaborate a solution to the crisis, Bismarck in the course of his policy for deepened the Anglo-Russian rivalry, a political course followed since the time of the Eastern Crisis, on November 12th he proposed to the Russian Ambassador Shuvalov to convince Austro-Hungary to accept Russian military intervention in Bulgaria to be undertaken in case the Prince rejected the decisions of the Conference. The proposal received as an answer a sharp resolution by Alexander III stating that he would never accept an occupation of Bulgarian lands by Russian troops⁶⁷⁷.

This revealed the fact that Russian authority, no matter how firm they were in their position for restoration of the *status quo*, were not ready to overdo things and sacrifice their political line interwoven with the winning idea of being a “liberator” of the Slav brothers. Since the Eastern crisis in 1875-1877 Bismarck maintained a political course which followed the idea that the Balkans had to become "a bone of contention" between Russia and Britain. Hence, the German Chancellor pursued a policy line which officially supported the Russian program on the Balkans especially until 1885.⁶⁷⁸

The Russian government hardened its political course announcing that the Conference of Ambassadors summoned by the Sultan had to agree to return to the *status quo ante* as regards the current affairs in Eastern Rumelia. Opposed by the British Ambassador that it seemed that the Bulgarian population would hardly acquiesce calmly the destruction of what had been achieved by their own efforts, Giers gave the following answer: “I

⁶⁷⁴ F.O. 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 23, 1885, No 458, PRO.

⁶⁷⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 7, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 207.

⁶⁷⁶ *Protokolite na Tsarigradskata Konferentsia po rabotite na Iztochna Rumelia* (Sofia 1886), p. 13-16.

⁶⁷⁷ Statelova and Pantev, *Saedinenieto na Knyazhestvo Bulgaria*, p. 124.

⁶⁷⁸ Andrei Pantev, “Saedinenieto kato urok po istoria”, in *Saedinenieto na Bulgaria ot 1885 i natsionalnoosvoboditelnata programa na bulgarite* (Plovdiv 1995), p. 12-30.

know Prince Alexander, what had made such a hero of him is the absence of any real danger”. Giers continued saying that the Russian Emperor “has shown great disinterestedness in the cause of what he believed to be right, by withdrawing all Russian officers from the Bulgarian army, and, naturally, he said, Russia would be most vigorously opposed to any scheme having for its object the creation of a big Bulgaria which he estranged from any Russian influence whatever.” He also added that the Ottoman Empire’s position had to be taken into account as the preservation of the Sultan’s authority in the Empire was an essential condition for securing the peace in Europe. According to him the Christian population in Eastern Rumelia was only nominally subjects to the Ottoman Government, they were governed by themselves and were under a Christian Governor which as he stated: “In a word their lot is not to be pitied.”⁶⁷⁹ In comparison with the attitude obtained by the Russian authorities in 1878 and their struggle for providing a self-government authority in Eastern Rumelia, it could be seen that for a very short period Russian foreign policy regarding Bulgaria and Bulgarian population underwent such considerable changes.

Even though the Russian authorities avoided being in contact with Prince Battenberg, thus showing their disapproval of his actions on October 30th, 1885 the Russian Consul in Sophia met the Prince in regard with the Declaration signed by the Bulgarians, asking for Russian protection. The Russian Consul urged Battenberg not to oppose the desires and devotion of the Bulgarian nation to Russia, otherwise it would be impossible for Russian authorities not to regard the Prince an enemy of Russia.⁶⁸⁰ During the meetings of the Conference in Istanbul considerable activity of the Russian Consul was reported. He was trying to convince the Bulgarian population that Russia would give its assistance if the Prince was no longer in Plovdiv. The Prince himself had received information from the intelligence that a fresh attack upon him was being prepared by the Russian Government. He supposed that it would take form of breaking off the diplomatic relations.⁶⁸¹

After the third meeting of the Conference on November 9th when the delegates did not manage to achieve a result, Giers expressed “deepest anxiety, should tomorrow

⁶⁷⁹ *F.O.* 65/1218, from Mr. Grosvenor to Marquis of Salisbury, St. Petersburg, October 28, 1885, p. 172-176, No 369, PRO.

⁶⁸⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*, Mr. Lascelles to the Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, October 30, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 184

⁶⁸¹ *F.O.* 78/3770, from Mr. Lascelles to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 9, 1885, p.282, No 129, PRO.

Conference not bring about the prospect of preliminary agreement, lest the conflict should at once break out". He underlined that immediate recognition of the *status quo ante* was the only chance for avoiding a military conflict on the Balkans. One question arose - whether in the *status quo ante* the continuance of Prince Alexander as a regent of Bulgaria remained included even after his expulsion from the Russian army.⁶⁸² Meanwhile, a military conflict on the Balkan Peninsula, which all of the Great Power desired to avoid, broke out- Serbia declared war on Bulgaria. The meeting held on November 17th was met by Giers with hope as he regarded the decision Ottoman Commissioners to be sent to Eastern Rumelia to restore the order as a positive result. If on the next meeting a particular result was not obtained, he foresaw that Conference might come to an end. Giers stated that Russia pursued two aims - the maintenance of European peace and minimizing the dangers to the Balkan population which the "infringement of the Treaty of Berlin by the Roumelian revolution had exposed them to". In regard with this Russian political course the British Consul made the following observation⁶⁸³:

Last Wednesday the Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that if Thursday's Conference yielded no result war would break out. It broke out on Friday. Today His Excellency declares that if tomorrow's Conference yields no result all hope of order being established. A week ago it was Bulgaria that was called upon to make sacrifices for the maintenance of peace. Today the reintegration of the Treaty of Berlin affords the only means of saving her. But the evacuation of Roumelia by the Bulgarians is the necessary condition of the evacuation of Bulgaria by Servians. How can one be insisted on without the other?

Only after Bulgaria went out of the war with Serbia as a winner, were the Russian authorities forced to recognize the act of union. On December 23rd, 1885 the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg sent a telegram in which was announced that the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs for the first time admitted that a return to the *status quo ante* was from then on impossible and that the union which existed *de facto* would have to be maintained. Also it was accepted that Prince Alexander was the only possible Regent.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸² *F.O.* 65/1220, from Mr. Morie to Marquis of Slaisbury, St. Petersburg, November 11, 8 p.m., 1885, p.152, PRO.

⁶⁸³ *F.O.* 65/1220, from Mr. Morie to Marquis of Slaisbury, St. Petersburg, November 18, 10:45 a.m., 1885, p.195-197, No 67, PRO.

⁶⁸⁴ *F.O.* 65/1220, from Mr. Morie to Marquis of Slaisbury, St. Petersburg, December 23, 1885, p.207, No 77, PRO.

Chapter 5: Ottoman Reaction of the British and Russian Rivalry in Eastern Rumelia

The Ottoman Empire's policy regarding the Balkan Province during the 19th century was established upon the perception that further territorial losses in these lands had to be avoided. The political course followed by the Ottoman politicians resulted in the replacement of the Sultan's strong authority with a nominal one, in order to strengthen the governance function of the local governors. Anyway, that measure made the situation even worse and increased the discontent of the local population.

After 1830, the Balkan lands became a field of nascent rivalry for influence between the Great Powers and it developed into a struggle for dominance between Russia and Britain over the European territories of the Ottoman Empire. The rivalry between the two Powers was induced by the internal political situation of the Ottoman Empire, which had been fighting to reform and strengthen its authority in the Balkans since 1839. Also, the rivalry was provoked by Russia's strong demands to replace the vacuum of power and to control these strategic lands. In the future years, the growing Russian menace instigated the rapprochement between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, alliance which transformed into a considerable dependence of the Ottoman Empire on Britain after the Crimean War, and it continued until the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877-1878.

A group of reformers who emerged inside the Ottoman political circles comprehended the significance of the Ottoman Empire for the relationship between the Great Powers. One of them, Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha, noticed the political situation in the following way: "The integrity of the Ottoman Empire is a necessity for a European balance of power...Thus, a struggle emerged between conflicting interests. This conflict determined our conduct. We had to profit from the defensive powers of some against the aggressive powers of others."⁶⁸⁵ This was recognized as the only political course which could retrieve the Ottoman Empire from the aspirations of the Great Powers. As regards the Balkan territories, Ali Pasha developed his idea and inferred that the Ottoman Empire would act wisely if it relinquished the territories which had brought only predicaments, such as some of the Balkan possessions. These measures had to

⁶⁸⁵ Quoted in Engin Akarli, *The Problems of External Pressure, Powers Struggles and Budgetary Deficits in the Ottoman Politics under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909): Origins and Solutions*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Princeton 1976, p. 15.

secure the Ottoman frontiers and to cease the aspirations of the Great Powers. In this way, the opportunities for interference would diminish significantly.

The Ottoman policy towards the establishment of the Province of Eastern Rumelia and its Union with the Principality of Bulgaria originated if not exactly from the same viewpoint but from similar considerations.

5.1 The Bulgarian Lands and the *Tanzimat* Era

5.1.1 The Bulgarian Lands until the *Tanzimat*

During the *Tanzimat* Era, the Ottoman Government paid special attention to the modernization and reformation of the lands situated north and south of the Balkan Mountains. As a part of the large-scale reformation actions, particular efforts were made for improving, economically and socially, the conditions of the peasants' lives in the Bulgarian lands. These endeavours acknowledged the importance of the Bulgarian lands for the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the Balkan Mountains acted as natural defence which protected the Ottoman capital. These territories had become a scene for separatist movements decades before the reformation of the Ottoman Empire began. The neighbouring Serbian territories were overwhelmed by revolutionary feelings that escalated in several Serbian uprisings. The struggle of the Serbian population resulted in the achievement of the autonomous status in 1830.⁶⁸⁶ Beside the internal conflicts which occurred at that moment, Austria started to increase its interest in the Western Balkans, influenced by Russia's active role played during the last international conflicts concerning the Balkan lands of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the Bulgarian lands acted as a barrier against further penetration of the foreign ideologies and the expansion of these two Great Powers. In order to support this idea, K. Karpat states that the Bulgarian lands "formed the core of the Ottoman domains in Europe". On the other hand, he argues that this issue also resulted from the different status occupied by the Bulgarians in comparison with the status of other Balkan populations in the Empire. They acquired this position by an economic commitment that existed between the Bulgarian lands and the closely situated Ottoman capital. During these centuries, the Bulgarian population produced coarse wool cloth for the Ottoman army and bred flocks to supply the capital with meat. These actions created an opportunity for the appearance of an upper class

⁶⁸⁶ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 101.

that had significant resources at its disposal. It made this class of merchants much more deeply rooted in the Ottoman economic and social system. At the same time they recognized themselves more as members of the Greek millet alienated from their Bulgarian roots, using the Greek language and being educated in Greek schools.⁶⁸⁷ The geographical position of the lands inhabited by Bulgarians predestined the political and economic development of the Bulgarian population. The proximity to the Ottoman capital and the fact that it was surrounded by other territories possessed by the Empire, without direct connection with the Great Powers, contributed to their late revival.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the Ottoman Government noticed some significant changes in the Bulgarian lands, it realised the need to implement certain reforms that would strengthen the authority and support the future development of these lands. The improvement of the economic conditions occurred after the Ottoman Empire lost its traditional supplier because of the loss of Egypt and Black Sea lands. The Bulgarian population produced food and raw materials that the Ottoman government needed and they became a new source for the Ottoman Government. The Bulgarian population also started to provide wool for uniforms to the Ottoman army in 1826.⁶⁸⁸ By the Treaty of Adrianople signed in 1829, when the Danube Principalities were granted autonomy under the Russian protection, the Ottoman capital had to look for new sources of food provisions. This new reality was an opportunity for the Bulgarian population to establish a new economic class of merchants and manufacturers who, in the second part of nineteenth century, managed to create powerful and influential colonies in the Ottoman capital and the Principalities.⁶⁸⁹ In 1834, before the *Tanzimat* era began, the first textile manufacture appeared in the Bulgarian lands, created by Dobri Zheliazkov in Sliven. The production of the fabric had to meet the needs of the Ottoman army.⁶⁹⁰ Two years later, Sultan Mahmud II issued a *Firman* which stipulated that the factory became state property and received financial support from the Ottoman Government. The Greek revolt in 1821 and the emergence of the Greek state in 1830 induced the creation of a new class of Bulgarian merchants who replaced the Greek merchants after they lost their dominant position in the trade with the Ottoman Empire. For several decades, the Bulgarians were able to create a network of shops in the

⁶⁸⁷ Karpat, "The Land Regime", p. 424.

⁶⁸⁸ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları 2012), p. 94.

⁶⁸⁹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 159-160.

⁶⁹⁰ Lampe and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p. 145.; Georgi Kozarlov, *Dobri Zheliazkov Fabrikadzhinata: Rodonachalnik na Bulgarskata tekstilna industrija* (Slieven: Zhazhda 2000).

Ottoman lands and to export the production from the Bulgarian lands.⁶⁹¹ The textile production from the towns situated south of the Balkan Mountains such as Klisura was distributed in the Anatolian coasts and Aegean Islands⁶⁹²; Kotel supplied the rest of the Bulgarian lands especially the northern towns and Dobrudja region with clothe production.⁶⁹³ Thus, during the *Tanzimat*, the Bulgarian lands increased their role of supplier and obtained the status of a border land that had to protect the Ottoman possessions in the Balkans.

Although there was a development in the economic status of the Bulgarian population, the Bulgarian lands faced with the damages, caused by the failure of the Ottoman governance of these territories. The actions of the Kirdjali bands ruined the Bulgarian lands north of the Balkan Mountains. Osman Pazvandoglu, governor of Vidin province, acted destructively. Also, the Russo-Ottoman War 1828-1829 had a destructive result over the Bulgarian lands on which the Russian army had passed. They caused an emigration flow. The Bulgarian population left together with the Russian army and settled in Bessarabia and Danube Principalities. Nevertheless, by the first reformation attempts of Sultan Mahmud II, this process was discontinued and most of the emigrants returned to their home lands.⁶⁹⁴

5.1.2 The First Reformation Decree and the Bulgarian Lands

The first Reformation decree, which had to end the arbitrariness of the provincial governors and to improve the life conditions of the population through provincial administration reforms, faced significant difficulties in its execution. Because of this situation, the first reactions of the Bulgarian population against the reformations resulted in uprising against the local authorities. After the edict proclamation, the expectations of the local population from north-west Bulgarian lands for equality between them and the local ruling Muslim class, clashed with the struggle of the Muslim elite to preserve their privileges, ignoring the new orders.⁶⁹⁵ In an attempt to express its dissatisfaction, the population which inhabited the Nish region rebelled in 1841. Halil Inalcık, through his prominent work on the *Tanzimat* era and the Bulgarian

⁶⁹¹ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 338.

⁶⁹² Hristo Popov, *Grad Klisura v Aprilskoto vazstanie*, (Sofia 1926), p. 8.

⁶⁹³ Mihail Arnaudov, *Iz Minaloto na Kotel*, (Sofia: Pechatnitsa Grafika 1931), p. 56.

⁶⁹⁴ Lampe, and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p.140.

⁶⁹⁵ Mark Pinson, "Ottoman Bulgarian in the First Tanzimat Era The Revolts in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850)", *Middle Eastern Studies* 11, No 2 (1975), p. 104-105.

population, argues that the dissatisfaction in the first year of reformation was chiefly caused by the tax farmers' oppression and the way of tax collection. Not only did they leave the population in an impasse, but also the statute labour and the inequality in testimony rights of the Muslim and non-Muslims subjects, troubled the population.⁶⁹⁶ The reaction of the Ottoman Government towards the rebellion indicated the comprehension of the Ottoman authorities that the revolt was not simply the action of a group of peasants against the Empire. The roots had deepened as regards the economic oppression and the absence of functional local authorities. A special commissioner was sent to visit the revolted villages, to help them recover. This action of the Ottoman Government indicated its determination for further reformation actions and the abandonment of the idea that suppression was the only solution.⁶⁹⁷

A reform in the tax collection system was achieved in 1840 and it entitled the non-Muslims, in the face of local Christian notables, to collect the taxes. This measure was established with an aim to be avoided the abuse of the tax collectors. The Bulgarian notables were designated with the duty to appoint the Christian tax collectors – kocabash.⁶⁹⁸ The local notables had already experienced the collecting of revenues. In 1830, when the Ottoman Government decided not to use the *Sipahi* as tax farmers, it chose representatives of the Christian communities to obtain this responsibility. The Christian notables had the status of community elders as they were the wealthiest and obtained administrative functions in the Millets administration. They received special privileges from the Ottoman Government.⁶⁹⁹ Occupying these various functions, the Christian notables were able to obtain a certain power, but in most cases they used it to secure their personal interest. Also, they disregarded the interests of their communities and oppressed the peasants. Thus, they became a threat as dangerous as the *ayans* for the peasants. The Ottoman Government became aware of this in a later stage of its reform execution.⁷⁰⁰ Thus, the attempt for tax reform could not bring any results. The population proceeded to be economically abused and did not receive the desired protection from the Sultan. Even if some improvements could be remarked in the economic status of the Bulgarian population, the everyday life of most peasants did not improve significantly. The Ottoman authorities found themselves unable to reform the

⁶⁹⁶ Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, p. 36-37.

⁶⁹⁷ Pinson, "Ottoman Bulgaria", p. 109-110.

⁶⁹⁸ Mehmet Çelik, "Tanzimat in the Balkans", p. 56.

⁶⁹⁹ Lampe, and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p.146-147.

⁷⁰⁰ Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar*, p.78

provincial administration that had to establish regulations for cultivated lands and supervise the collection of revenues and taxes. Also, the local authorities could not apply adequate measures to restrict banditry that disturbed the population and ruined their lands. This situation increased the discontent among the Bulgarian population and escalated in the Vidin uprising in 1850. The internal factors were not the only reason that incited this action. The relationship established between the Bulgarian population and Russia during the last war and through trade, the formation of Serbia and Greece and the spreading of the Pan-Slav ideology, were all factors that influenced the attitude of the Bulgarian population towards the Ottoman authority. However, we must clarify that the Bulgarian population was far from the idea of independence at that time. The first rebellions in the Bulgarian lands were mostly a search for better life conditions within the boundaries of the Empire.⁷⁰¹ The two rebellions from the north part of the Bulgarians lands were actually an indicator that the process had began inside the Bulgarian population as a result of *Tanzimat* reformation attempts. On the one hand, they received better opportunities for economic development, but on the other hand, the slow modernization of the administration and the lack of sufficient cadres with strong will and abilities to force the reforms, became a hindrance for further progress. Thus, the population arose in search of rights and opportunities to continue its development. Most of the Bulgarian population engaged in agriculture. Hence, the exploitation of the land was greatly important for the process of livelihood. In the traditional Ottoman state, the land belonged to the Sultan and he rented it to his subjects for cultivation. The idea of private land possession could not be understood by an Islamic state and it did not exist at all. Over the years, this regulation also created ways and means for the ruling class to control the peasants. At the time of reformation, the issue of land ownership arose more as a conflict between the government authorities and local bureaucracy because of the desire of latter to maintain the interests and traditional ruling in the countryside.⁷⁰² After some changes had occurred in the Ottoman Empire as a result of expansion closure during the 17th-18th century, a new class of landowners emerged in the north part of the Bulgarian lands. The Empire's Government granted them particular privileges that did not exist in other regions of the Empire. Due to this advantage, after the decline of the *timar* system, they started to acquire large amounts of land. Besides, the new class of landowners obtained further power during the

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42, 100-101.

⁷⁰² Kemal Karpat, "The Land Regime", p. 337.

decentralization of the Empire in the 18th century. The landholders or *ayans* managed to transform the accumulated land possessions into a powerful tool against the Ottoman government. The peasants who lived on their belongings suffered from this situation. The pressure of taxation was double because the peasants paid state taxes and also sent paid rents to the landholders. This double burden made life difficult for the population. Furthermore, the *ayans* applied forced labour. Although the Ottoman Government was aware of the situation, it preferred to preserve this system as a preventive measure. After the year 1830, these lands became boundary territories. In addition, they were mainly inhabited by a Christian population exposed to external influences. Nevertheless, as part of the Ottoman strive for centralization, the *ayan* system had to be abolished and the control over the land to be restored. In 1851, the landlords allowed selling lands to the village residents. Later on, in the year 1857, the annual taxation replaced the multiple taxation in an attempt to protect the peasants from over taxation. This measure was obtained against the village notables and it aimed to restrict their power. Forced labour was also prohibited.⁷⁰³ In 1858, the Ottoman Government issued a new Land Code which set the first step for transformation of the lands into private ownership. Also, children were allowed to inherit properties.⁷⁰⁴ By the new Land Law, the Ottoman state made a direct connection with the peasants who cultivated the arable lands and it ensured more freedom in the cultivation process.⁷⁰⁵ Accordingly, a transfer of land rights from the Muslim subjects to the Non-Muslim subjects was noticed during the next years. The land reform and the distribution of land after the abolishment of the *Sipahi*, transformed the Bulgarian and Muslim landholders into competitors in a struggle for lands. The process intensified after the opportunity to claim the state land.⁷⁰⁶ This process was encouraged by the Ottoman authorities. For example, during Midhat Pasha's governing in the Danube Provenience, his administration reforms assisted the process to "resettle peasants on state lands" and were applied under the control of the provincial administration. Even more, the peasants started to buy small portions of the *chiflik* lands and the small landholder emerged in that way.⁷⁰⁷ The land reforms induced the increase of agriculture production, securing the peasants' rights

⁷⁰³ Yonca Köksel, "Land Reform in Northwestern Bulgaria during the Tanzimat Era," eds. Ekrem Causevic, Nenad Moacanin and Vjeran Kursar, (Berlin: LIT Verlag Publishing House, 2010).

⁷⁰⁴ Çelik, "Tanzimat in the Balkans", p. 57.

⁷⁰⁵ Reşat Aktan, "Problems of Land Reform in Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, 20, No. 3 (Summer, 1966), p. 318.

⁷⁰⁶ Pinson, "Ottoman Bulgaria", p. 117.

⁷⁰⁷ Palairret, *The Balkans Economies*, p. 46.

over the land. Along these lines the reforms encouraged the birth of the agrarian middle class among the non-Muslim population.⁷⁰⁸ Thus, by 1869, together with the improvements of the tax collection system and the expansion of the land reforms, more authority and lands started to circulate in the hands of the local Bulgarian population.⁷⁰⁹ One of the results was the emergence of small Bulgarian landholders who expanded their possessions during the next decades.

5.1.3 The Second Reformation Decree and the Bulgarian Lands

The real florescence of the Bulgarian lands was accomplished during the second *Tanzimat* era. The Crimean War extended the trade and commerce connections between the Bulgarian lands, the other Ottoman provinces and the trade centres outside the Empire. The provisions of the new Reformation decree promulgated in 1856 extended the rights of the Christian population and deepened the process of modernization as regards economic, social and cultural relations in the Ottoman society. The focus of the new large-scale reformation program was to improve the administration in the Ottoman provinces. The centralization of the state and the re-establishment of a strong administrative structure, that would be able to control the provincial authorities, were the main aims of the new reformation program. The reorganisation of the provinces and the new law for the *Vilayets* contributed to the success of the program. Immediately after the Imperial edict was issued in 1858, Midhat Pasha was sent to investigate the Bulgarian lands north of the Balkans, in the Nish Province. In the course of his observation, he ascertained violations of the laws and the malfeasance of some local governors. However, none of them was withdrawn from their position by the Sultan. Three years later, in 1861, Midhat Pasha was nominated Governor of Nish Vilayet. During his service, Midhat Pasha concentrated his efforts on investigating the difficulties that hindered the improvement of the provincial administration.⁷¹⁰ Firstly, he applied measures to bring tranquillity in the province by abolishing the brigandage and establishing public order. Midhat Pasha maintained close relations with the Christian notables. This action resulted from the comprehension that the Ottoman authorities had to be aware of the complaints and needs of its subjects, so as to be able to improve the

⁷⁰⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, "The Ottoman Rule in Europe from the Perspective of 1994", in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History, Selected Articles and Essays Social, Economic and Political studies and Asia*, (Brill, Leiden, Boston Köln 2002), p. 498.

⁷⁰⁹ Lampe, and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p. 133.

⁷¹⁰ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 67.

life conditions. Establishing close relations with the Christian notables, he was also able to keep under control their national feelings that were a significant threat for the Ottoman authority in the Balkan Provinces. He was well aware of the growing national feeling that received support from particular centres outside the Empire.⁷¹¹ One important event, that marked the new stage in the emancipation process of the Bulgarian population, happened in the eve of Midhat Pasha's governance. On the 3rd of April 1860, the Bulgarian population set the beginning of its struggle for the establishment of an Independent Bulgarian Church. The event remained in historiography under the name 'Bulgarian Eastern'. On that day, the Bulgarian population rejected the supremacy of the Greek Patriarchate. This created an elated atmosphere among the Bulgarian population. After Midhat Pasha was appointed in 1861, the first step he undertook was to appease the situation. For this purpose, he gathered the local notables and heard their demands. Later, based on his experience, he prepared a program for reformation of the Nish Province, taking in consideration the needs of the local population. His endeavours concentrated on the following⁷¹²:

1. Introduction of regular and proper collection of the revenues in the province. Remission of the uncollected taxes for the past periods.
2. Accommodation of the troops outside the villages and the burden for their maintenance to be removed from the local population.
3. The infrastructure of the province to be improved through building of roads.
4. Schools to be opened for the orphans.
5. The agriculture to be supported by credits with low interest

There were visible results soon after Midhat Pasha applied his reformation program. As one of the most serious problems was the improper levy of taxes, Midhat Pasha managed to restrict the illegal collection of the revenues. He deposed from offices the officers who abused the regulations or changed their position. Their salaries were also increased to prevent further violations. The low salaries and irregular payments forced the officials in the provinces to misuse and overtax the peasants. The garrisoning troops were ordered to leave the villages and to go back to their barracks. These measures restored the security of the population and brought tranquillity in the region. Midhat Pasha started a project for constructing transportation networks that had to facilitate the

⁷¹¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman*, p. 151-157.

⁷¹² Maria Votoshavska. Mithat Pasha i bulgarite. Mitove i realnost, (Sofia: Tangra TaNakRa 2012), p. 40-42.

access of the peasants' production to the markets. The roads Nish-Sofia-Pazardzhik, Nish-Kumanovo were built and the existent road Sofia-Dobnice-Salonica was repaired. A few bridges were also constructed. The most important work of Midhat was the creation of the "Menafi-i Umumiye Sandıkları"- Agricultural Credit Cooperative in 1863 in the town of Pirot. This establishment gave credits with low interest to the peasants. Therefore, the cultivation of the lands was stimulated and the peasants were protected from getting into debts. Funding these cooperatives was ensured as the peasants cultivated half of the acre of some state arable lands for the cooperative fund. A mixed provincial council was established and it had the most significant contribution to the reformation of the province. This council settled a direct connection between the Ottoman authorities and the subjects, opened the opportunity for dialog between the centre and the periphery through provincial governor's mediation. Craftsmanship schools were opened in the province for orphans and poor children. Irrespective of religion, these children received education under state control.⁷¹³

Midhat Pasha served as governor of the *Nish Vilayet* until 1864. During his governance, he gained experience that was used to develop the new Provincial Law promulgated in 1864. As a result, the Ottoman Government decided to introduce the Provincial Law in the European Provinces. His knowledge of the exact problems in the provincial administration and the needs of the local population, brought the success of the reform. The lands north and south of the Balkan Mountains including the towns: Ruse, Vidin, Sofia, Tarnovo, Varna, Nish and Tulcha, constituted the new province named Danube which was chosen to be organised according to the provisions of the new law. The lands dominated by Bulgarians, according to population census, attested a number of approximately 611,000 Christian subjects. The number of the Muslim population was approximately 410, 000. The Muslim population was concentrated in the coast towns Ruse, Varna Tulcha, whereas the non-Muslim population dominated inside the province in the towns Sofia, Tarnovo, Vidin.⁷¹⁴ Midhat Pasha was appointed governor because he already had experience in these lands. The main problems of the province were the same as those he had faced during his previous governance in Nish. He developed and implemented on a larger scale the program of reforms that he had prepared for the *Vilayet of Nish*. The infrastructure of the region was repaired by construction of paved

⁷¹³ Çelik, "Tanzimat in the Balkans", p. 20-26.

⁷¹⁴ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 63.

roads, bridges, public buildings and urban lighting. The ability to transport the merchandise was a main factor in stimulating agriculture production and trade in the province. The production had to reach also the markets outside the Empire borders. For this purpose, Midhat Pasha established regular transport line on the Danube River, by buying a few steamer ships. The first provincial newspaper – ‘*Tuna*’ was published in the Bulgarian and Ottoman languages. Besides, ‘agricultural credit cooperatives’ were introduced and they had significant success.⁷¹⁵ During his work, Midhat Pasha faced the growing national feelings of the Bulgarian population in the province. In order to prevent the future influence of the national and Pan-Slav ideology, he tried to involve more actively the Bulgarian population in the administration of the province, including them in administrative and judicial councils.⁷¹⁶

The governance of Midhat Pasha in the Bulgarian lands coincided with the struggle of the Bulgarian population to free itself from the Greek dominance over church and education. Before the *Tanzimat* era, the most common form of education among the Bulgarian people, was the monastery school. The number of these schools in the Bulgarian lands was 235 in 1835.⁷¹⁷ These schools offered conservative religious education. The Bulgarians had contact with the modern secular education only through the Greek schools that had already applied at that time the new education systems from abroad. The Bulgarians preferred to send their children to modern Greeks schools. Besides, other types of schools were also opened and such schools applied the method of elder students to educate the younger ones. At the beginning of the *Tanzimat* era, the number of these schools was 50. Thus, the first Bulgarian intelligentsia was born in the Greeks schools and it was largely influenced by the Hellenic ideas. Most of the young people started to recognize themselves as Greeks. Only after 1860, when the Bulgarians rejected the supremacy of the Greek Patriarchate, a real enlightening movement occurred among the Bulgarian population. The influence of the relationship established with the Russian authorities after the Crimean War, also contributed to this process.⁷¹⁸

Midhat Pasha supported the opening of schools in the province, where the Bulgarians could get education and they did not need to send their children to Greek schools or

⁷¹⁵ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman*, p.151-155.; For further information about the development of the agricultural credit cooperatives in the Dabube Vilayeti see: Hristiyan Atanasov, *Razvitie na zemedelskoto kreditirane v Dunavskia Vilaet: 'Obshtopoleznite kasi' prez 60-te i 70-te godini na XIX vek: Na bazata na neublikuvani informatsionni iztochnitsi* (Sofia: Faber 2017).

⁷¹⁶ Çelik, “Tanzimat in the Balkans”, p. 52.

⁷¹⁷ Genchev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdane*, p. 117.

⁷¹⁸ Plamen Mitev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdane. Lektsionen kurs* (Sofia: Polis 1999), p. 55-65.

abroad, as part of his program to suppress the Pan-Slavism movements in the province. All these endeavours aimed to create a local Muslim and Bulgarian intelligentsia that had to grow with the consciousness of the Ottoman subjects. For this purpose, Bulgarian students were sent to the Mekteb-i Osmânî⁷¹⁹ Ottoman School in Paris opened in 1857.⁷²⁰ After receiving their education, these people had to work in the service of the Ottoman authorities and to support the future development of the Empire.

In 1863, the first Bulgarian school for girls was opened in Eski Zara. The opening was supported by the local Bulgarian community council so as to oppose the influence of the American protestant missionary schools which opened 6 months earlier. The school was successful and in the school year 1868-1869, it was the first female school where the students completed a five-year course of study.⁷²¹

Midhat Pasha managed to reorganise the province in a short period of time. His strong will, firmness and consistency in application of the reforms, proved the success of the reformation program which was prepared and executed by himself. After three years of governance, before he left the position, the results of his work were visible: 3, 000 km of roads, 150 km railway, 1, 420 bridges and 34 telegraph stations, 7 hospitals. All the social classes were included, directly or indirectly, in the process of reformation and modernization of the province. The workforce of orphans, vagrants and prisoners was effectively used for building roads and bridges. Every subject had to attend particular hours of labour in the construction works. A hierarchy of administrative and judicial council with mixed memberships was created.⁷²² This allowed the non-Muslim communities to take a ruling role in their villages and gained governing experience that was successfully applied later in the organisation of Bulgaria Principality and Eastern Rumelia Province. Midhat Pasha's work improved the economy of the province, encouraged the peasants to cultivate the lands, to increase the production and brought peace in the region. These three years of Midhat's governing made the Bulgarian lands a model province for the other provinces in the Empire. Some of the measures executed

⁷¹⁹ Metin Ziya Köse, s.v. "Mekteb-i Osmani" in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 21, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mekteb-i-osmani>

⁷²⁰ Raia Zaimova, The Sultan's Subjects at the "Ottoman Imperial School" after the Crimean War.– In: Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk-Bulgar İlişkileri bildiriler, Uluslararası Sempozyum, 11-13.05.2005 (Eskişehir: Osmangazi Üniversitesi), p. 271.

⁷²¹ Krasimira Daskalova, "Developments in Bulgarian Education: from the Ottoman Empire to the Nation-State and beyond, 1800-1940s.", *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 4, No 1, (2017), p. 1-29.

⁷²² Georgi Pletnov, *Politikata na Mithat pasha v Dunavska Vilayet* (Veliko Trnovo 1994), p. 80-81, 89-151.

in the Danube Province were later applied in the other *Vilayets*. Even after Midhat Pasha was replaced, the development and modernization of the province continued.

Along with the occupation of the agricultural enterprises, a group of Bulgarians was engaged in trade. The commercial connections of the Bulgarian lands with the outside world were settled before the *Tanzimat*. In 1871, Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed a Commercial Treaty that opened the Straits for international trade. This stimulated the development of the Black Sea coast. A special agreement signed in 1815, set the rules for Austrian navigation on the Danube River, and in 1830, Austria received exclusive privileges. Therefore, the Bulgarian lands became important to the European countries as they connected to European markets. The additional impetus for the Bulgarian trade was the Balta-Liman Treaty signed in 1838, between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. The agreement favoured the British cereals trade in the Empire.⁷²³ In the spirit of the Reformation Edict, that promised equal rights to all subjects of the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian population was granted the opportunity to carry on trade everywhere inside and outside the country.⁷²⁴ Thus, the Bulgarian merchants were able to develop their business and to establish relations with the outside world. This also changed and improved their status in the Ottoman Empire.

As part of the expansion of the Ottoman trade, the Bulgarian pre-modern commercial and manufacturing enterprises advanced in the second part of 19th century. The Bulgarian population specialized in the production of textiles, mostly wool materials for the Ottoman army. The textile industry was spread in the mountain regions. The system of *chifliks*, that continued to exist and expanded in the Bulgarian lands, specialized in the production of particular products. For example, in the region of Macedonia, the cotton industry was created and rice farms emerged in the valley of Plovdiv, in the north-east territories. There were cereals farms around Dobrich and Ruse.⁷²⁵

The result of the *Tanzimat* era was the birth of a new Bulgarian society which achieved economic and social relations similar to those of the modern societies of the new age but in the early stages of progress. Because the profit from lands cultivation was preserved as a 'bulk of wealth' for the Ottoman ruling class, the rest of the Ottoman society was left with the opportunity to thrive through commerce and industry.⁷²⁶ A

⁷²³ Tsvetana Georgieva, and Nikolai Genchev, *Istoria na Bulgaria XV-XIX vek* (Sofia: Anubis 2006), p. 314.

⁷²⁴ Lampe and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p. 140.

⁷²⁵ Genchev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdane*, p. 140

⁷²⁶ Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman*, p. 113-114

tendency in the 19th century as regards ethnical groups which became dominant over particular professions was noticed.⁷²⁷ The Bulgarian population is a proof of this tendency.

The Bulgarian mountain towns arose as centres of craftsmanship production and around the end of the first half of the 19th century, the final specialization of the industrial regions in the Bulgarian lands according to climate, environment conditions and the needs of stock developments, was almost accomplished. In the past years, the regions of Sredna Gora and Rhodope Mountain were centres of sheep-breeding. Later, they developed as centres of wool production. The towns of Gabrovo, Koprivshitsa, Kalofer, Sliven, Kotel, Karlovo, Sopot, Kazanlak, Pirdop, Panagyurishte, Ahachelebi, Daradere, Samokov, Plovdiv and Tarnovo concentrated the artisans' production of wool goods. Most of the towns were also engaged in silk and cotton textile manufacturing. Leather manufacture opened in Gabrovo, Tarnovo, Etropole, Kazalak, Stara Zagora, Pazardzhik, Karlovo, Panagyurishte, Haskovo, Vratsa, Samokov, Ohrid and Shumen. The artisans' towns produced various crafts such as cloak, homespun, wool braid, carpets, silk and cotton textile, leathers, shoes, milling, iron, weapons, copper crafts, golden and wooden crafts, agricultural tools, earthenware. The production met the needs of the local population on the one hand but on the other hand it was exported to the Empire's markets in order to satisfy the public requirements of the Capital and the growing town population. The mining and metal production flourished in Samokov, Nevrokop, Demirhisarsko, Siarsko, Chiprovtsi, Kyustendil, Etropole, Strandzha Mountain, Kratovo etc. Gabrovo, Samokov and Sliven grew as metalworking centres. In those cities, the production of weapons developed. The craftsmanship enterprises became the main occupation of the Bulgarian population in the mountain towns. Panagyurishte was an example of a developed town; it distributed as follow: leather manufacture - 32, cotton - 120, production of goat-hair rugs, bags - 150, furriery - 8, mining - 12, fuller's trade - 28, manufacturing of homespun - 69, coppersmith's trade - 26, soap workshop -10, goldsmith's - 23, tar-making workshop -8, packsaddle maker - 5, forger - 28, dyeing - 9, miller - 29, rose distillery - 8, patten shoes - 9.⁷²⁸ The development of the craftsmanship industry was an answer to the needs of the Ottoman government and its governance apparatus. The artisans became the largest occupation group in the towns in the Bulgarian lands, they amounted to 60 000 in 45 cities according to the work of John

⁷²⁷ Karpat, "Ottoman Relations", p. 392.

⁷²⁸ Genchev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdane*, p. 146-147.

Marvin and R Jackson in 1866 and their number exceeded three times the number of merchants.⁷²⁹

5.1.4 The Bulgarian National Movement

The economic and cultural advance in the Bulgarian lands went along with the process of spreading the ideas of liberalism and nationalism among the Bulgarians. The beginning of the Bulgarian national movement was connected to the struggle for an autonomous church and it later developed into an armed struggle for independence. The struggle against the Greek Patriarchate, joined from outside the endeavours of the Bulgarians who lived inside the Ottoman borders, and it revitalized the awareness of the Bulgarian identity among the population and united the Bulgarian population.⁷³⁰ Inside the Greek millet, without an institution to represent the Bulgarian population in front of the Ottoman authorities, the Bulgarian population was exposed to the oppression of the Greek clergy. It was well known that the Greek priests were engaged in money-lending with high interest in the Bulgarian lands. The residence of the priests also required additional costs that were a burden for the population. The Bulgarians resented that the public worships were not performed in the Bulgarian language but in Greek. The Bulgarian churchmen were not allowed to higher church offices.⁷³¹ Thus, the Bulgarian population did not have an institution or leader to protect their religious or other rights, to keep them together and to preserve their identity. The actions of the Patriarchate, following the doctrine of the Hellenic ideology, were trying to abolish the ethnical and linguistic differences, enforcing the Greek education and language inside the Greek millet. The Bulgarian population was part of the Greek millet until 1870. This policy threatened the foundation of the Bulgarian identity and raised the anxiety for preserving its individuality. It also inaugurated the fight against the Greek authorities. This struggle began in 1849 when the Sultan's *Firman* was published as it allowed the construction of the Bulgarian church in Istanbul. This document officially approved the existence of Bulgarians as an ethnic group, recognized by the Ottoman authorities.⁷³² Later, the Bulgarian population prepared an organised action and rejected the supremacy of the Patriarchate in 1860. But only 10 years later, in 1870, the Bulgarians were allowed to have their own autocephalous church. The jurisdiction of the Institution spread over

⁷²⁹ Lampe and Jackson, *Balkan Economic*, p. 142.

⁷³⁰ Karpát, "Ottoman Relations", p. 424-429.

⁷³¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman*, p. 117.

⁷³² Jelavich, *History of the Balkan*, p. 343.

Bulgarian lands north and south of the Balkan Mountains including Nish and Pirot. The decree provided an article regarding the territories in Macedonia inhabited by Bulgarians, permitting them after election to be integrated in the Bulgarian Exarchate.⁷³³ An Exarch was appointed at the head of the Bulgarian Church and was recognized by the Porte at the head of the Bulgarian millet. The divine worship started to be conducted in the Bulgarian language. The Exarchate was designated with the mission to take care of its laymen in the Ottoman Empire through the incorporation of religious norms. Aside from legitimating the Bulgarian church, the significance of the *Firman* was vivid by sketching the boundaries of the Bulgarian ethnic Diaspora within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Later, this paper was the only legal document recognized by the Great Powers and it was used for creating the new Bulgarian state.⁷³⁴

So, at the beginning, this movement occurred as a ‘silent revolution’ that mostly involved the Bulgarian merchant class and the nascent Bulgarian intelligentsia, they together supported the education of the Bulgarian youth. Later, the literacy movement expanded and created a national identity in the future generations which supported the idea of liberation and national state.⁷³⁵

In comparison with other national movements of the Balkan population, those of the Serbs and the Greeks, the Bulgarian national movement firstly emerged as a cultural revival and it sought to relieve the Bulgarian population from Greeks’ cultural and religious influence that had gained power because of the Hellenic ideology. Thus, the Bulgarian national movement was preceded by the ‘*Bulgarian Renaissance*’.⁷³⁶ During this ‘*Renaissance*’, two groups developed among the Bulgarians, divided by different ideologies.

The roots of both groups came from a trade class but each group descended from a different class of the Bulgarian society. The difference was the time and conditions under which they descended. Because of this difference, they followed different ideas for the accomplishment of the Bulgarian national movement. The conservative group or the group of ‘elders’ as they were called, accumulated their economic advantages before

⁷³³ Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 82-83.

⁷³⁴ For further details: Markova Zina, “Rusia i bulgarskiat tsirkovno-natsionalen vapros (1856-1864)”, in *Izbrani Sachinenia Vol. II*, ed. Zina Markova (Sofia: Al “Prof Marin Drinov” 2008).; Andrei Pantev, “Anglia i bulgarskia tsarkoven vapros (1860-1870)”, in *V chest na akademik Dimitar Kosev. Izsledvania posluchai 70 godini ot rozhdeniето mu*, (Sofia: BAN 1974).

⁷³⁵ Inalcik, *Tanzimat and BulgarMeselesi*, p. 23-24.

⁷³⁶ For details: Petar Nikov, *Vazrazhdane na Bulgarskia narod. Tsarkovno-Natsionalni borbi i postizhenia*. (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov” 2008).

the *Tanzimat*, and most of its members were able to grow up in the Ottoman social system. The conservative group was represented by the wealthy class of merchants and the notables class, which emerged in the Bulgarian colonies in Istanbul and Bucharest. Between 1841 and 1845, in Paris, Alexander Exarch established a circle from Bulgarian students who came from wealthy Bulgarian families that represented the upper Bulgarian class. These people were later appointed for service in the Ottoman Government. One of them was Nikola Bogoridi, who worked as attaché in the Ottoman Embassy in Paris after Alexander Exarch; another was Stefan Bogoridi who was a member of the *Tanzimat* Council and he received the title of imperial counsellor. Also, Aleko Bogoridi was a member of the State Council and minister of the Post (later he became Governor General of Eastern Rumelia), Gavril Krastevich, Stoyan Chomakov, Georgi Atanasovich.⁷³⁷ This group declared itself to be against armed revolutionary actions. They believed that the national movement had to develop on cultural basis and economic progress of the Bulgarian population.

The group of ‘youngster’ was entirely the product of the *Tanzimat*. A significant number of Bulgarians took advantage of the improved economic conditions in the Empire and they succeeded to become merchants, manufactures and artisans. Even more, they expanded their enterprises outside the Empire. Those who settled abroad created colonies and succeeded in obtaining a new social status occupying positions such as influential merchants, officials and scholars. For a very short period, these groups were able to raise an intelligentsia which became the bearer of the national ideas and devoted to spread them among their ethnic groups.⁷³⁸ This young intelligentsia emerged by receiving education in the Ottoman or European schools and had the opportunity to travel abroad. Thus, it had the opportunity to experience radical ideologies in Europe and it was deeply influenced by those ideas.

As regards the young intelligentsia which graduated from the Bulgarian schools, these people invoked radical measures. They initiated the organisation of armed bands that had to inflame national uprising in the Bulgarian lands.⁷³⁹ The groups were divided into ‘elders’ and ‘youngster’, according to their age and social position.

The above-mentioned new born intelligentsia chose the way of enlightenment. From 1835 until the end of the *Tanzimat* era, 1,658 schools were opened with the support of

⁷³⁷ Pier Voalri, *Mezhdu dva sviata Bulgaria and Iztochna Rumelia XVIII-XIV*, (Sofia:Kama 2005), p. 167-170.

⁷³⁸ Karpat, “Ottoman Relations”, p. 397.

⁷³⁹ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, p. 163.

the Bulgarian merchants and manufacturers class. The powerful Bulgarian colony in Istanbul became a dynamic force of this cultural revival. Only in Istanbul, in the neighbourhoods inhabited by the Bulgarians: Fener, Pera, Langa, Topkapı, Ortaköy, Kumkapı and Hasköy, seven schools were opened.⁷⁴⁰ Throughout the school networks, where the teachers were representatives of the intelligentsia, the national ideas easily spread among the rising generation. The cultural revival was followed by the national revival that later transformed into a revolutionary movement.

But this revolutionary movement could not develop into an organised movement led by a single leader or an organisation. There were several organisations, supported by the Great Powers, which in most cases acted independently. They sometimes cooperated with the Serbian and Greek revolutionary organisations. The basic method of action was the formation of small armed groups that were sent in the Bulgaria lands.⁷⁴¹ In the year 1870⁷⁴², a single revolutionary organisation was formed and joined the forces of all radical groups existent on the territory of the Ottoman Empire and also outside, with the purpose to struggle for an independent and autonomous Bulgarian state. If this was not possible, they agreed to a federation with one of the Balkan countries.⁷⁴³ The young intelligentsia chose the way of the revolution. They preferred to struggle for Bulgarian independence, relying on their own forces, without help from any of the Great Powers. The other group obtained a moderate course of action and their program contained the extension of the Bulgarian population's rights as autonomous institution established inside the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴⁴

Both groups failed to achieve their goals and they realised that, without significant support from the European Powers, the Bulgarians could not accomplish their national movement. The choice was obvious taking in consideration the political situation. The British Empire took a stand for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire's integrity.

⁷⁴⁰ Eser, *Philetism' in the Balkans*, p. 51-52.

⁷⁴¹ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 345.

⁷⁴² The Bulgarian Historiography presents several thesis about the exact time when a single revolutionary organisation was established under the name "БРИК" (Central Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee). The most spread theory is that the Organisation is formed in 1869. This hypothesis is supported by Dimitar Strashimirov, Ivan Undzhiev, Krumka Sharova i Nikolai Genchev. Dimitar Kosev argues that the organisation is established in 1872 after the general meeting of the two centres of the organization - one was inside the Ottoman Empire and the other was located in Bucharest. Only Aleksandar Burmov puts forth that the organization is formed in 1870. His theory argues that the establishment of the Central Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee has to be connected with the preparation of the first political program of the organization issued on August 1, 1870 in Geneva. Mitev, *Bulgarskoto Vazrazhdane*, p. 112-113.

⁷⁴³ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 346.; Georgieva and Genchev, *Istoria na Bulgaria*, p. 506.

⁷⁴⁴ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 342.

Austro-Hungary was strongly against the Balkan national movements. France was more interested in the Mediterranean coasts than in the situation of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴⁵

The reforms implemented in administration, economy and education established the beginning of an intensive process to improve the life conditions in the Bulgarian lands. This process recognized by the Bulgarian historiography as “Bulgarian Renaissance” continued until the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877 and it accomplished the establishment of the Bulgarian state. The *Tanzimat* era laid the foundation for the future advancement of the Bulgarian lands.

5.2 The Ottoman Empire and the Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

Unlike Britain and Russia, the Ottoman Empire was not in a position to struggle to establish any influence in the province. Eastern Rumelia was a territory which was part of the Empire’s possessions until the Russo-Ottoman War, which occurred between the years 1877-1878. So, after the Treaty of Berlin, the Ottoman Empire had to restore its authority over these lands, fact which determined a different position in comparison with the status of the two Great Powers that played an active role during the organisation of the province. However, as well as during the Congress of Berlin, the Ottoman delegates were just spectators throughout the process of establishment of the province. The Ottoman authorities remained silent spectators of the struggle between Russia and Britain, without a chance to interfere and to stand for their rights of sovereignty that had been ensured by the Treaty of Berlin. Substantially, the appearance of Eastern Rumelia was not different from the model established at the beginning of the 19th century as regards the territories of the Ottoman Empire where the Ottoman authority was replaced with nominal Ottoman sovereignty, strongly dependent on one of the Great Powers involved in the Eastern Question.⁷⁴⁶ As regards Eastern Rumelia, it exceeded the borders of regional policy and the bilateral relations of Russia and the Ottoman Empire, drawing the attention of all Great Powers. The Ottoman Empire’s attitude towards the establishment of Eastern Rumelia should be studied in the context of the foreign policy applied by Sultan Abdulhamid II, after signing the Treaty of Berlin.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁷⁴⁶ Mirkova, “Population Politics”, p. 956.

In his article, F.A.K. Yasamme takes up the foreign policy of Abdulhamid in the light of the need for the boundaries of the Empire to be protected after the Treaty of Berlin. The vast expanse of the Empire and the lack of communication made it impossible for the Ottoman troops to move fast and forced them to support key areas. This situation threatened the ability of the Ottoman army to protect the borders of the Empire, especially the European ones. The weakest line of defence was found to be the border with the Principality of Bulgaria. The stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin not only diminished the Sultan's possessions in the Balkan Peninsula but they relocated the frontier, contiguous to the Empire's capital, fact that was very unfavourable and it deprived the Turks from a real possibility to protect the capital. The strategic natural barriers such as the Danube River and the Balkan range were left within the borders of the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of Eastern Rumelia. Also, the Ottoman state was left without a port on the European coast of the Black Sea. These new realities determined Abdulhamid II to adopt a policy of non-confrontation and to avoid any possibility of a military conflict in the Balkan region. Besides, the Sultan considered it useless to conclude a particular alliance with any Great Power because no union would have been able to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. If any European Power had signed such an alliance, it would have faced the interests and demands of another power, which would not create a conflict just to defend the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴⁷

An example of this political course obtained by the Sultan was the relationship of the Ottoman Empire with Britain. During the crisis of 1876-1878, as a matter of principle, Abdulhamid's attitude towards Britain remained unchanged, aligned with the general tendency for the protectorate that Britain was pursuing, to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But that path had changed since 1878, which widely impacted his attitude towards the establishment of the Province of Eastern Rumelia.

5.2.1 The Ottoman Empire and the Administrative Organisation of Eastern Rumelia

The Treaty of Berlin, according to article 13, created a province which had to remain under the direct political and military power of the Sultan, but with administrative autonomy. In the following articles, up to 22, its boundaries were set. At the head of the

⁷⁴⁷ F. A. K. Yasamee, "Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman defence problem", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 4, No1, (1993), p. 23.

province a Christian Governor General had to be appointed for a period of 5 years. He was nominated by the Porte with the consent of the Great Powers. The Governor General also had the right to summon the Ottoman troops in case of necessity and threat to the safety of the Province. The gendarmerie and the militia had to be created, to ensure the order in the province. A European Commission had to draw up the Organic Statute of the province. The Sultan had the right to protect the borders of the province on land and on the sea, to build fortifications and to hold troops in them. The internal order of Eastern Rumelia had to be maintained by a native army, which had to be assisted by the local militia. At the creation of these two military forces, the faith of the local population would be taken into account and the officers had to be appointed by the Sultan. All treaties and conventions signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers were in force for the Province.⁷⁴⁸ The province, organised on these stipulations, rendered the perspective that the region and the local inhabitants could continue their peaceful life within the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

However, as result of the work of the European Commission, under the Ottoman authority, a province was created and its Organic Law consisted of “495 articles that were much too complicated for the province” and the administrative apparatus was very complex and large.

Before the war of 1877, the present Province of Eastern Rumelia was divided into two Sandjaks and fourteen Cazas. The two Prefects with the fourteen Baillis, who then governed the Province, were found more than sufficient. Now, about the System with which the French delegate has endowed it, there are six Departments and twenty-eight Cantons.....A province which contains at the utmost 800,000 inhabitants - the population of a City of the second rank - has been endowed with an Executive worthy of a Kingdom. Besides the Governor General, there is the Secretary General or Director of the Interior, Directors of Justice, Public Works, Education, and a Commander in Chief of Militia and Gendarmerie.⁷⁴⁹

A province with this form of ruling institutions, which was close to a self-government state formation, diminished significantly the prerogatives of sovereignty and alienated itself from the centre of authority. So, the Ottoman Government’s attitude in this situation required particular attention.

Before the European Commission began its labours for the elaboration of the Organic Law and the organisation of the Province, particular views were exchanged between the

⁷⁴⁸ A. Dyurastel, *Mezhdunaroden Almanah na Bulgaria 1898* (Sofia: Pridvorna Pechatnitsa Bratia Proshenko 1897), p. 31-34.

⁷⁴⁹ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 368-369.

Powers and the Ottoman Empire regarding the groundwork for the future Organic Law. Among the documents, a very interesting conversation between the British Commissioner Wolff, and “a Turkish statesman at present staying in Vienna”, revealed the views of the Ottoman authorities as regards the Constitution which had to be implemented in Eastern Rumelia. The Ottoman statesman stated that Eastern Rumelia was the only gained territory and because of this status, it should become in reality a province of the Empire, where the power of the Sultan had to be exercised in the same way as over every other part of his possessions. At the beginning, this had to be achieved by establishing the rights of the province and “the rest should be left to the Sultan”. He also pointed out that the Slav races should not receive too much power because the scenario from February 1878 could be repeated. In that way, the Treaty of San Stefano could materialize into a united Bulgaria and the result would be a permanent influence of Russia over the Ottoman capital. He openly said that “what was really wanted in Eastern Rumelia was not self-government, but, if he might use the phrase, ‘self-administration’”. For the officials, such a system of voting had to be established, which would provide the protection of the minorities from the province. Probably a scheme of “three-cornered constituencies” would be suitable, according to three different ethnic groups: Bulgarians, Greeks and Muslims. The management and farming out of the state property should be preserved for the Ottoman authorities, instead of being entrusted to the administration of the province.⁷⁵⁰ The person in question, who expressed these views for the organisation of Eastern Rumelia province, was probably Caratheodory Pasha because another document demonstrated that he was in Vienna at that time and the Ottoman authorities were waiting for his return to Istanbul in order to be appointed Commissioner in the European Commission.⁷⁵¹

The Grand Vizier took a slightly different position, expressing “that the wish of the Porte was for formation in Eastern Rumelia of a state of things which should be the envy of surrounding States and communities”. This had to be understood as the desire

⁷⁵⁰ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, August 24, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 8-10.

⁷⁵¹ Parliamentary Papers, *Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 10, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 12.

of Saffet Pasha⁷⁵² to introduce a strong and efficient executive authority in the Province with freedom and prosperity of the governed.⁷⁵³

Both views presented the idea that the strong authority of the Sultan had to be introduced in the Province. In the opinion of Caratheodory Pasha, this had to be done through restricting the rights of the Bulgarian population, at the expense of those of the minorities. The view of the Grand Vizier described an authority which had to meet the demands of all ethnical groups in the province. According to these thoughts, in the first official meeting held on the 1st of October 1878, the Grand Vizier made a short speech stating that “the object of the Porte was to consult the happiness of the people of Eastern Rumelia, to soften the bitterness that exists among the population, and to establish a form of governance calculated to guarantee their freedom and happiness”⁷⁵⁴.

The Ottoman authorities delayed the nomination of their delegates in the Commission and the British Government was forced to urge the Grand Vizier and the Sultan. For the Ottoman Commissioners from the European Commission, Assim Pasha⁷⁵⁵ was appointed as first Commissioner and Abro Effendi as second Commissioner.⁷⁵⁶ Abro Efendi belonged to the group of Fuad Pasha and he had begun his career at the time of Reshid Pasha. Assim Pasha was the former president of the Council of State (Şura-yı devlet).⁷⁵⁷ He promised to work together with Wolff, the British Commissioner.⁷⁵⁸ From the very beginning, the Ottoman Government relied upon the support of the British authorities as regards the organisation of administration of Eastern Rumelia.

After the first sitting of the European delegates, the British Commissioner was called by the Ottoman Commissioner and they met to discuss further measures which would be taken regarding the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin for administration of the province

⁷⁵² Azmi Özcan, s.v. “Saffet Mehmed Esad Paşa” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 27, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/saffet-mehmed-esad-pasa>

⁷⁵³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 10, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 12.

⁷⁵⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis Salisbury, Therapia, October 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 29.

⁷⁵⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, September 24, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 12.

⁷⁵⁶ F.O. 195/1220, from Sir A.H. Layard to Marquid of Salisbury, Therapia, October 2, 1878, (No 1211), PRO.

⁷⁵⁷ Mahir Aydın, “Şarki Rumeli Vilayeti”, PhD thesis, (Istanbul University 1989), p. 35.

⁷⁵⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 28, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 28.

during the transition period. The Grand Vizier refused to appoint a Governor General immediately because he would have no authority to support him and then he would be placed in a “humiliating position”. Therefore, he empowered the Ottoman statesmen to communicate and to discuss the issue with the British delegate. The Grand Vizier desired the Commission to govern the administration of the province and, after the organisation of the province was accomplished, to hand the government over to the new Governor General. However, the British Commissioner opposed this strategy and it remained that the Porte and the Commission had to act in strict conformity with the Treaty which, unfortunately, did not entitle them to such procedures. Also, Abro Effendi did not miss to mention the disappointment of his Government as refers to the decision for permanent Presidency of the European Commission which was not given to the Ottoman delegates. He considered it more practical for the Commission to move to Plovdiv and there to organise the governmental authorities and military forces such as Gendarmerie and Militia and then to appoint the Governor General. Nevertheless, the British Commissioner again stressed that “the question was not what was most desirable, or practical, but what the Treaty laid down”, and the Ottoman authorities had to execute its duties accordingly. Otherwise, the longer the Porte delayed to accomplish its duties, the more Russia could advance towards Eastern Rumelia, prolonging its administration there.⁷⁵⁹ Indeed, the British authorities were anxious about the situation and they requested that a Governor General should be appointed with “as little delay as possible, so that Russia would not continue to create institutions in Eastern Roumelia which would force on the Commission a work of destruction before being able to construct”⁷⁶⁰. Obviously, the Ottoman authorities were trying to avoid any particular engagement regarding the organisation of the Province and they made attempts to shift these duties to the European Commission. The Porte probably did not want to face and confront Russia because it realised the power which Russia was able to acquire with its strong political and military presence in these territories. Even if Britain declared to support the Sultan against Russia, these engagements concerned only the preservation of the Asiatic lands of the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottoman authorities made

⁷⁵⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 32-33.

⁷⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 5, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 41.

particular endeavours to impose their views for the organisation of the Province, if not by direct influence, at least through the obstruction of the commission's work.

The first action taken by the Ottoman Government, as regards the organisation of the Province, was the proposal for an Organic Law which had to be applied in the Province. The Ottoman authorities also made a promise that, if the project was approved by the Commission, the Porte would state its intention that a similar Organic law with the necessary amendment, would be applied to the rest of Ottoman provinces in the European part.⁷⁶¹ Actually, the Ottoman Government and the Sultan used very cleverly the fact that the future of the Macedonian province, which had been returned to the Ottoman Empire, engaged significantly the interests of the Great Powers. The project was a modification of the *Law of the Vilayets*. That is the reason why it was rejected by the other Powers. However, the Ottoman Empire did not take any further steps to modify the project in the sense of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, which required the implementation of an administrative autonomy in the Province. Indeed, it distinguished itself from the model of the *Vilayet* system and it claimed a different framework for an Organic Law. Thus, the Porte left the elaboration of the Organic Statute in the hands of the Great Powers.

The Ottoman authorities did not carry out a more active policy to occupy their position of sovereign in the Province. From the first moment, the Ottoman Government refused and abstained from application of an active political role as regards the organisation of the Province. When the question arose for the authority which should be in charge of the administration of Eastern Rumelia while the Commission was engaged in drawing up the Organic Law, the British authorities struggled that the Ottoman Government should take over the administration. However, the Grand Vizier expressed uncertainty whether the civil administration of Eastern Rumelia was to be in the hands of the Porte until the new organisation was carried out.⁷⁶² As a counter measure, on the 26th of September 1885, the Grand Vizier proposed "the civil administration of Eastern Roulmelia should be resumed by the Porte in conjunction with the European

⁷⁶¹ *F.O.* 195/1220, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 31, 1878, (No 1353), PRO.

⁷⁶² *F.O.* 195/1220, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, September 23, 1878, No 6A, PRO.

Commission, in preference to its assignment to the Porte alone”.⁷⁶³ Apparently, the Ottoman authorities were embarrassed by the Russians’ influence over the local population in the Province and they realised the consequences of any other collisions between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The French Prime Minister, W. Waddington, made a correct remark that it would be greatly difficult to establish an Ottoman administration in the territories occupied by the Russian army.⁷⁶⁴ In this situation, the Porte needed the support the European Commission to re-establish its authority. The proposal of the Grand Vizier was approved by the British Government.⁷⁶⁵ Most of the time, it could be observed that before taking a particular action regarding the issues of Eastern Rumelia, the Porte sought advice from Britain and avoided to take independent decisions.

As the Ottoman Government was not able to participate actively in the organisation of the Province, it preferred to wait and observe the development of the process. Even from the beginning, the Ottoman Government delayed the application of the instructions regarding the work of the European Commission. Later, it could be seen that the absence of proper instructions to the Ottoman Commissioners, caused postponement in the work of the Commission, as they were unwilling to take upon themselves the responsibility of decision on any matter of importance, and they accepted the decision of the other Commissioners almost in every case with a reserve. The British Ambassador was forced many times to warn the Ottoman Government.⁷⁶⁶ This attitude was incomprehensible because the Ottoman authorities promised to support their commissioner for the British actions in the Commission. Nevertheless, most proposals and projects as regards the organisation of the Province opposed the Ottomans’ interest in Eastern Rumelia.

Even though the Ottoman authorities agreed to act in accordance with the British authorities against the Russians, they did not receive unconditional support, which made the Ottoman authorities hold back from applying particular strategies. Nevertheless, the

⁷⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, September 26, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 19.

⁷⁶⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Lord Lyons to Marquis Salisbury, Paris, October 12, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 37.

⁷⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir A. H. Layard, Foreign Office, September 30, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 19.

⁷⁶⁶ *F.O.* 195/1220 from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 28, 1878, (No 1591), PRO.

actions of the Ottoman Commissioner, Assim Efendi, were interesting and indicative as he asked the British Commissioner to remonstrate with the Governor General of Plovdiv and determine him to cancel the order for dispatch of certain Ottoman families from Eastern Rumelia to Adrianople. When Wolff told him that he could not take the initiative of a movement of that kind and that it was better for the Ottoman delegate to do this himself because he was the natural protector of these people, he answered that he did not feel authorized to make such applications.⁷⁶⁷ If the Ottomans wanted to restore their authority in Eastern Rumelia, they had to show their readiness to defend this right. However, considering the Ottoman authorities' attitude, they avoided to exhibit similar eagerness.

During the labour of the European Commission, the Ottoman delegates endeavoured to secure the Sultan's rights in the province, rejecting the proposals which would have restricted his authority, but for them this task was really beyond their abilities as the work of the Commission was embroiled in the struggle between Russia and Britain for their influence in Eastern Rumelia. Anyway, the Ottoman Commissioners refused to admit the restriction about the sanction of the laws by the Sultan within a certain time, in order to prevent undue delays. They declared "it to be an infringement of the sovereign rights, which was for the Porte, and not for themselves, to accept".⁷⁶⁸ Even if it did not achieve its aim to force the other Commissioners to forsake this idea, at least it hindered much of the progress of the Commission.

Another question, which significantly disturbed the Ottoman authorities, was the right of veto of the Sultan. Caratheodory Pasha found out the right of veto which was proposed to reserve to the Sultan as a "nugatory". According to him, if the Sultan had used his power of refusal, all the Great Powers would have stood against him, and if he had restrained from using the power of veto, he would have allowed laws to be issued against the national interest. Also, he stated that the problem was not that the laws were wrong, but they had been incorrectly administered. Therefore, before the Commission entitled the population to make their own laws, it had to provide the appointment of proper functionaries who should apply these laws.⁷⁶⁹ The problem arose from the

⁷⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 6, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 247.

⁷⁶⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 15, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 283.

⁷⁶⁹ F.O. 78/3034, Memorandum, January 4, 1879, p. 135-138, PRO.

controversial character of the right of veto, as some laws could contain advantageous articles and, at the same time, stipulations which might be very convenient for the Province, but destructive to the interests of the Ottoman Empire.

The project of the Provincial Assembly was presented by the Russian authorities during the discussions. It interested the European Commission as regards the form and the composition of the Assembly, but it was also recognised as harmful to the Sultan's authority in the Province. The Ottoman Commissioner, Abro Efendi, compared the future Assembly with that of the British Parliament. If Eastern Rumelia's Assembly had been given prerogatives similar to those of the Parliament of any other independent state, the Province would not have remained an Ottoman possession. He insisted that the Province should remain an Ottoman province, so the delegates would not have to create a Parliament but a simple national representation, whose efficiently would allow it to exercise control over the executive authority.⁷⁷⁰ However, as most of the discussions which appeared in the Commission, the Ottoman delegates abstained from any firm opposition or exercising the right of veto in comparison with the Russian Commissioners. The Ottoman representative remained outside the struggle between Russia and Britain.

An objection in the similar sense was made against the Permanent Committee. The Ottoman Commissioner said that the institution was a threat for the executive authority. He explained his opinion with the statement that a danger would occur if the Permanent Committee would interfere in all ordinary works, reducing the executive authority, which was supposed to be strong. Also, the mixture of so heterogenous authorities could provoke disorders.⁷⁷¹ The restrictions which the Permanent Committee would impose over the executive authority and the apprehension that the Governor would be just a subordinate, could significantly affect the Sultan's authority, too.

The Ottoman Government was not satisfied with the proceedings of the European Commission at all. In some parts of the proceedings, the Ottoman authorities considered them "to go much further than was warranted, or contemplated, in the Treaty of Berlin". Caratheodory Pasha said that, during the Congress which he attended as a representative of the Empire, he understood that the establishment of the new province, except for the changes applied to some special provisions, the administration and conditions of the

⁷⁷⁰ Manolova, *Rusia i konstitusionnoto*, p. 122.

⁷⁷¹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia', from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 11, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 447.

province, had to be left the way they had been previously elaborated according to the *Laws of the Vilayets*. However, it appeared that the Great Powers altogether with their actions were destroying the authority of the Sultan in Eastern Rumelia. This strategy opposed the spirit of the Treaty and the intentions of the majority of the Powers which supported at the Congress the preservation of the Sultan's power in this region.⁷⁷²

The Minister of Foreign Affairs criticised even more sharply the European Commission after the adoption of Kallay's program as the project went far beyond the spirit of the Treaty of Berlin. He reminded the British Commissioner Donoughmore about the language and promises made by friendly Powers in Berlin, stating: "You have lost this and that province, but you retain Eastern Rumelia". But, if this program were indeed achieved, a virtually independent state would be created. He said that the Ottoman Government had already made great concessions when it accepted a Christian Governor General, admitting the formation of the local Militia and Gendarmerie. Thus, the Ottoman authorities agreed that the province should be a privileged state in the Empire. He thought that the Commission should adopt the following course: "The Ottoman Commissioner should have laid the law of the vilayets and the 'mitigated proposals' of the Conference of Constantinople before the Commission and should have invited a discussion upon amendments to these laws. He thought that a much more workable settlement would have been produced than a gigantic Constitution which was projected."⁷⁷³ The Ottoman Commissioner also remonstrated against the project for the Organic Law, stating that "institutions, as those indicated in Kallay programme, militate against the idea that Eastern Rumelia has been saved to Turkey, out of the general fire".⁷⁷⁴ The Ottoman Government opposed the liberal character of the Organic Law as they were aware of the implications as regards the Sultan's authority in the Province. For the Ottoman authorities, it was very important to secure the rights of the Muslim population in the province. So, when the chapter about religious rights was discussed, the Ottoman Commissioners insisted that the privilege given to the Bulgarian Church should be extended to all religious communities. Thus, it was approved that all religious groups had to accept their *Berats* either from the Sultan or from the Governor General.

⁷⁷² *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 23, 1878, p.53-54, No 57, PRO.

⁷⁷³ *F.O.* 881/3910, Memorandum from Lord Donoughmore, Constantinople, January 4, p.306, No 351, PRO.

⁷⁷⁴ *F.O.* 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 9, 1879, p.131-134, No 16, PRO.

This was an important amendment which ensured equality for all religious communities and, at the same time, it restricted the advancement of the Bulgarian religious community. Simultaneously, the Ottoman Government tried to diminish the influence of the Great Powers over the relationship between the Empire and its province. Therefore, the Ottoman authorities refused to accept the provision from the Chapter of finance, which stipulated that the Great Powers should be consulted about the augmentation of revenue in Eastern Rumelia after ten years. The Porte suppressed the stipulation and stressed upon this question to be settled between “the Central and the Provincial Government alone”. The proposal of 35% of incensement of the revenue was rejected by the Russian Commissioner, Prince Tzeretelev, with the threat that, if that provision were accepted, Russia would be forced to open several other questions, closed at the moment. So, the Ottoman delegates stepped out and agreed with 30%.⁷⁷⁵

5.2.2 The Ottoman Empire and the Military Defence of Eastern Rumelia

The Balkan garrisons’ stationing on the north frontier of Eastern Rumelia was a right stipulated by the Treaty of Berlin, which aimed to ensure the defence of the province. For the Ottoman authorities, this right provided the safety of its borders and it was greatly important against the Russian menace. However, the Russian opposition raised objections against the establishment of garrisons in the Balkans and also a strong resistance was proclaimed by the Bulgarian population in this regard. As a consequence, the Ottoman authorities found themselves in a very difficult situation.

The Governor of Carlovo, Mr. Rainov, in a long conversation with British delegates Wolff and Walpole, explained how much apprehension induced the idea of the Ottoman troops’ return in the region among the Bulgarians.⁷⁷⁶ The troops would not be subordinated to the Governor General, which meant that they would not be amenable to ordinary tribunals. Because of their placement as small detachments in block-house, the troops threatened the areas where they would be quartered. All these details raised the objections of the Bulgarian and Russian authorities.⁷⁷⁷ Also, the British authorities

⁷⁷⁵ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 10, 1879, p. 508-509, No 581, PRO.

⁷⁷⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, November 23, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 178-179.

⁷⁷⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*’, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 1, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 235.

practiced a more active policy on that issue than the Ottoman Government. Wolf shared his anxiety about these difficulties with Assim Pasha. The Ottoman Commissioner suggested that such difficulties could be avoided by charging the Governor General with the payment of a fixed number of troops which had to secure the regular payment of the troops whose presence bothered the Bulgarian population. Besides, the Ottoman Commissioner suggested that any acts of violence against the neighbouring communities should be avoided in the following way: if the general law of the Empire was applied, then the soldiers, who were guilty of offences against civilians, would become responsible in front of civil tribunals.⁷⁷⁸ However, the issue was more serious than the Ottoman statesman thought as it required great care which was beyond the competency of the European Commission. Because the population and the militia were trained and armed, even if the Ottoman authorities had been able to overwhelm this opposition, the restoration of the Sultan's power would have been achieved by bloodshed which would menace the peace in the region. The issue occurred as very complicated and controversial, involving again the interests of Britain and Russia. The Ottoman Empire was not able to look for any particular solutions but it obtained a political course to put pressure on the Great Powers in order to force the Russian authorities to allow the Ottoman troops' presence in the Province. Furthermore, the Balkan garrisons were more a political matter of particular importance which could determine the regional balance of powers in the Balkans. So, if at the beginning, the Ottoman authorities firmly insisted on sending the Sultan's troops in the province, they later realised the trouble which could arise because of this measure.

The decision reached by the Great Powers, for the establishment of the Ottoman Garrisons on the Balkan line, aimed to fulfil a particular political task. Nevertheless, it could be noticed that this task underwent changes after the European Commission began its work in the province and got acquainted with the real matter of things. At the time of the Congress of Berlin, the British authorities stated that the Balkan garrisons were necessary for the Ottoman Empire to defend its capital and European provinces against Russia's requests. Later, when Britain realised the Russian influence over the Bulgarian territories and the violent propaganda for the union between the province and the Principality of Bulgaria, its aim was to keep them separate. The Ottoman authorities

⁷⁷⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *'Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia'*, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, December 12, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 276

also realised this alternation in the Balkan garrisons' function and they accepted it as the only chance to keep the province in their hands.⁷⁷⁹ The Balkan garrisons had to be a barrier against the feelings of the Bulgarian population for union, which would give a chance for the Sultan to re-establish his authority in the region.

Probably the latter purpose for the presence of the Ottoman garrisons was presented at an early stage of the Congress of Berlin but it was not revealed this hidden strategy. To this argument lead the expression of the Count Andrassy, "the garrisons are not required for the purpose of resisting an invasion or the attacks of a regular army, but are required to maintain the separation of the Principality of Bulgaria and the Province of East Roumelia, as established by the Treaty of Berlin"⁷⁸⁰. If the purpose of the Balkan garrisons was established, even from the beginning, to represent an obstacle between the northern and southern part of Bulgaria, in this case it should be concluded that none of the Great Powers, that attended the Congress of Berlin, was confident in the ability of the Ottoman Power to re-establish its authority in Eastern Rumelia and to keep it under its possession. Therefore, it is probable that the Great Powers were only trying to secure their interest in the region through the Ottoman Empire and its military resources against Russia's increased influence after the war. The further consideration of the Austro-Hungarian Prime Minister supports this idea:

He does not think it possible to suppose that the European Powers would tolerate an open invasion of Turkey by the Principality which they had just called into existence under certain conditions, but in consequence of the Sultan being, to his infinite regret, deprived of the right of maintaining his troops within East Roumelia, it is only by keeping moderate garrisons along the Balkans that we can hope to see the separation of that province from Bulgaria carried out, and if the Porte should not avail itself now of this right, we must be prepared very shortly to find that Russia had practically succeeded in securing the fulfilment of all it had proposed by the Treaty of San Stefano.⁷⁸¹

The attitude of the Ottoman authorities to give up their right to place Balkan garrisons met the dissatisfaction of Austro-Hungary and Britain. As regards the placement of Balkan garrisons and the restoration of the Ottoman authority in the Province, these issues faced the relentless opposition of the Russian Government and the Bulgarian

⁷⁷⁹ *F.O.* 881/3923, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, February 27, 1879, p.456, No 585, PRO.

⁷⁸⁰ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Sir H. Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, March 30, 1879, p.73-74, No 70, PRO.

⁷⁸¹ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Sir H. Elliot to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, March 30, 1879, p.73-73, No 70, PRO.

population. Therefore, the Porte had to find another measure through which to provide the establishment of its power over Eastern Rumelia. One of the opportunities was the organisation of the gendarmerie as stipulated by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. Similar military forces were prepared for the territories which were about to be evacuated by the Russian troops, such as the province of Adrianople. However, when the British Ambassador Layard, posed the problem in front of the Sultan and the Grand Vizier, Hayreddin Pasha⁷⁸², the latter answered that he desired to do this also for Eastern Rumelia, but he was hindered by the stipulation that the gendarmerie from Eastern Rumelia had to be composed by “natives indigenes”.⁷⁸³ The Ottoman Government was also entitled to name the officers who would be ready to take the command of the gendarmerie. The Ottoman authorities could have adopted at least these measures to try to secure the transfer of Eastern Rumelia to their authority but they defiantly refused. Only after significant pressures were applied by Britain, France and Austria on the 19th of February 1879, the Sultan appointed Colonel Vitalis as Commander of Gendarmerie.⁷⁸⁴ Nevertheless, this act was far from a real and active Ottoman policy to empower its military and administrative authority in the province.

At the beginning, the question about the Balkan garrisons was debated in the meetings of the European Commission, but it continued to be discussed at the Great Powers’ courts. At the end of February, the situation in the province was estimated by the Ottoman authorities as “*very gloomy nature*”. The news reached the Porte that the population was trained to the idea that it had to resist the entry of the Ottoman authorities and troops. It was not be conceivable that the Sultan could regain possession of the province by peaceable measures. This fear was also shared by the British authorities that expressed their opinion about the issue. As usual, the Porte’s views regarding the province were related to Britain’s political tendency. This was the first indication that the Ottoman authorities and the Grand Vizier would hold back from an armed occupation of Eastern Rumelia as the Grand Vizier “confessed that besides the bloodshed which it would lead to, and which was necessarily a most painful prospect, he also was aware that in the present state of the finances of the Empire, he hardly knew

⁷⁸² Atila Çetin, s.v. “Hayreddin Paşa, Tunuslu”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 27, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hayreddin-pasa-tunuslu>

⁷⁸³ *F.O.* 881/3923, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Pera, February 3, 1879, p. 265, No 316, PRO.

⁷⁸⁴ *F.O.* 881/3923, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, February 19, 1879, p. 338, No 412, PRO.

how he should feed one force required, much less how he should keep it efficiently clothed and equipped”⁷⁸⁵. Similar views were also expressed by Rauf Pasha, who decidedly opposed the Balkan garrisons stating that they were “useless, except on a great scale and difficult to victual”. He considered that the province of Eastern Rumelia was practically lost to the Porte and the introduction of Ottoman forces in the Province would only provoke an insurrection, which would involve Macedonia and the province of Adrianople.⁷⁸⁶ Rauf Pasha was nominated Governor General of the province of Adrianople. From the preserved correspondence, it can be seen that the British authorities maintained close relations with him and he enjoyed their confidence. The British authorities presumed to discuss important issues concerning the Ottoman Government with him. Henry Layard described Rauf Pasha as “a very conciliatory character, and very liberal in his opinions”, and a better governor could not be found to take over the Government of the Province of Adrianople after the Russian evacuation.⁷⁸⁷ The future development of the Province proved that Rauf Pasha had rightly estimated the situation.

Anyway, the position of the Grand Vizier and that of Rauf Pasha differed entirely from the plan for subordination of the province under the authority of the Sultan, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Caratheodory Pasha:

he thought the Porte ought, in the first place, to occupy the whole of the Vilayet of Adrianople, and so have a force ready to march into the Balkans the moment the Russians left. If troops entered in considerable numbers from the west, avoiding traversing Eastern Rumelia from south to north, he thought they would not meet much resistance, and when once they had taken up strong positions in the mountains, he trusted that the population would be overawed, and would, by degrees, consent to enjoy the Constitution which the European Commission had prepared for them.⁷⁸⁸

It could be assumed that the Ottoman political circles were divided by their opinion regarding the presence of the Balkan garrisons in the province, and by the policy which had to be applied for the implementation of the Ottoman power. Some members of the

⁷⁸⁵ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, February 27, 1879, p. 214-215, No 280, PRO.

⁷⁸⁶ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Phillippopolis, March 11, 1879, p. 244, No 324, PRO.

⁷⁸⁷ *F.O.* 881/3923, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, February 5, 1879, p.276, No 326, PRO.

⁷⁸⁸ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, February 27, 1879, p. 225-226, No 283, PRO.

Ottoman authorities firmly insisted that the right of the Ottoman troops, to occupy Eastern Rumelia, had to be applied by all means.

Later in the beginning of March, the Ottoman authorities revealed their new political course to abstain from any forceful actions as regards the military occupation of the province. The Grand Vizier stated his apprehension whether “it would be advisable that the re-establishment of the Sultan’s authority in Eastern Rumelia at the withdrawal of the Russian troops, should be carried out in conformity with the Treaty of Berlin, even with the apparent certainty that it will necessitate an appeal to force and the renewal of the conflict between Muslims and Christians.”⁷⁸⁹ This idea displayed indeed that the Ottoman authorities did not want to restore their power in the province by all means. They desired to avoid the occurrence of a new conflict in the province. The Ottoman statesmen realised very well the situation in the province of Eastern Rumelia where the Russian Provisional authorities were able to hold the ruling of local authorities and to assign it to the Bulgarian population. Besides, when the time would come to transfer the authority to the Sultan, the local Bulgarian population and the Ottoman authority could enter a conflict which would only compromise the Sultan, if he was compelled to impose his power by force. Thus, any presence of the Ottoman authorities in the province of Eastern Rumelia would be forever prejudiced. So, the Ottoman authorities considered as a wiser political course to avoid the military occupation sanctioned by the Treaty of Berlin, in the name of preserving the peace in the province. Even if this policy was not acknowledged, the attitude of the Ottoman Government demonstrated this idea. Furthermore, the Porte and the Sultan were not ready to take the risk on their own to carry out this provision of the Treaty, which would renew the conflict between the Muslim and Christian population. The attitude of the Ottoman Empire was understandable, taking into consideration that a forcible entry of the Balkan Garrisons concealed great dangers and difficulties not only because of possible bloodshed but also because it would cause agitation against the Ottoman Empire regarding its Christian subjects. Also, the Sultan wanted to know that if he took such a course, he would rely on the support of the British authorities. The Ottoman authorities stated very firmly this

⁷⁸⁹ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, March 3, 1879, p. 80, No 80, PRO.

in front of Britain, pointing out that they did not recede from responsibility, but they desired “to be guided by views of Her Majesty’s Government”,⁷⁹⁰.

Anyway, the Ottoman authorities were probably encouraged by the British authorities that supported the application of the article provided by the Treaty of Berlin as regards the Balkan garrisons. Even if Russia strongly opposed the article of the Treaty and the local population threatened to create a new crisis, in the end of March the Ottoman authorities asked the British officials to approach Russia’s Government to enable the Porte to occupy the Balkan range before the evacuation. According to the Grand Vizier, by this measure, the military occupation of the rest of the province could be avoided.⁷⁹¹ Maintaining this course, the Grand Vizier even proposed the withdrawal of the British fleet to be used as a countermeasure to persuade the Russian Government to allow the presence of garrisons in the Balkan Mountains before the Russian troops left the province.⁷⁹² However, this measure was not even discussed between the British and the Russian Governments. On the contrary, the British authorities used very skilfully the withdrawal of their fleet below the straits of Dardanelles, to force the Sultan to order the preparation of sufficient forces so as to occupy Eastern Rumelia two months later, in May, as they could not rely furthermore on the threat imposed by the presence of the British military forces in the region.⁷⁹³ At that time, General Baker, who worked in the service of the Empire, made the following estimation about the military resources of the Ottoman Empire to occupy Eastern Rumelia:

Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia will have a partially trained army of 60, 000 to 70, 000 men. Turkish battalions average 350 men guns and horses of the army were lost during campaign, and have been incompletely replaced; the cavalry has not been remounted since conclusion of peace. Administrative departments are in complete disorder. Turkey will not have 40, 000 men available for actions in Roumelia unless it withdraws its troops from Thessaly, Epirus, and Kossova. The troops sent to Adrianople are not supplied with transport. Turkey has indeed forms, which could be available and sufficient, but financial reasons prevent their

⁷⁹⁰ *F.O.* 881/3923, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, February 27, 1879, p.455-456, No 584, PRO.

⁷⁹¹ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 4, 1879, p.87, No 91 PRO.

⁷⁹² *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 4, 1879, p.87-88, No 91, PRO.

⁷⁹³ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, March 11, 1879, p.238, No 313, PRO.

utilization. The occupation of the Balkans would lead to disaster, unless supported by troops in Eastern Rumelia.”⁷⁹⁴

His observations demonstrated the reasons given by the Grand Vizier and by Rauf Pasha as objection to the Balkan garrisons.

The Sultan was also anxious that the occupation of the Balkans would put the Ottoman troops in a dangerous position, because they would be vulnerable to an attack both from the Principality of Bulgaria and the province of Eastern Rumelia. In case of any action against them, the Ottoman Empire would be accused of violating the Treaty of Berlin.⁷⁹⁵

Finally, the moderate views prevailed in the political circles of the Empire and the Sultan gave up his right to occupy the Balkan line. Also, the lack of sufficient forces and financial resources to maintain the Ottoman troops in the Province, determined the Ottoman course on that issue.

The negotiations for Balkan garrisons, which had to enable the occupation of Eastern Rumelia, were in an impasse. Therefore, Britain, which was supported by Austro-Hungary, was forced to find an alternative measure which would ensure its influence in the region, as it did not manage to do this through the Balkan garrisons. The Great Powers, except Russia, unified early in December around the idea that the Balkan garrisons could be replaced by a mixed occupation. The idea for a mixed occupation, which would bring the military forces of the European Powers on territories of the Ottoman Empire, was not convenient for the Ottoman authorities, too.

As a result, the first reaction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Caratheodory Pasha, was to object in front of the British Ambassador Layard, to the project for mixed occupation with the following application:“... how a Ministry which had been called to power by the Sultan to carry out the Treaty of Berlin, and which had engaged His Majesty to put it into execution to the latter, and in the spirit, could now advise His Majesty to agree to direct violation of it as an occupation of Eastern Rumelia by foreign troops would unquestionably be”. He also stated that, according to the Treaty, the duty of the Ottoman Government was to exert the right of the Sultan to meet the difficulties anticipated at the evacuation of the province by the Russian troops, by authorizing the Governor General to summon regular Ottoman troops to join the Militia in order to temper the disturbances and maintain the order as it was established in the Protocols of

⁷⁹⁴ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 18, 1879, p. 366, No 491, PRO.

⁷⁹⁵ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 8, 1879, p.390, PRO.

the Congress. Even if the British Ambassador tried to explain the extraordinary circumstances which forced such a measure outside the framework of the provisions of the Treaty, the Ottoman statesman considered that the danger was exaggerated by the Russian authorities. According to him, they agitated the population, looking for a pretext for prolonging their stay in order to accomplish the union with the Principality of Bulgaria. He also pointed out that the Russian Government knew very well that a mixed occupation, composed of troops of different nationalities, could not be accomplished without the risk of serious disagreements amongst the Great Powers. So, as a possible measure, Caratheodory Pasha proposed the following⁷⁹⁶:

As the term of three months, appointed by the Treaty of Berlin for the European Commission to frame the new Organic Law for Eastern Roumelia, was about to expire, and, as the Sultan named Rustem Pasha Governor-General of the province, the Porte might take advantage of these circumstances to address a Circular to the Signatory Powers, proposing that this term should be extended, and that Rustem Pasha should be authorized to proceed to Philippopolis to consider with the Commission the arrangements to be made for taking over the government when the time came for the departure of the Russians. These steps might, at the same time, be taken to commence the organization of the militia and gendarmerie provided by the Treaty of Berlin; so that, as soon as the Russians left, they could be replaced by a civil authority possessing the means of maintaining order.

From the proposed scheme, it became obvious that at the early stage of the proceedings of the European Commission, the dangerous ‘traps’ set by Russia for the future Ottoman authorities in the province, were not adequately estimated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Anyway, the Porte made a firm opposition on the following day, on the 31st of December 1878, and the Foreign Office sent instructions so that the question about the occupation should not to be discussed anymore.

The real embarrassment of the Ottomans, as regards the question of the mixed occupation, resulted from the precedent which could arise from a similar measure, and the other Great Powers which were interested in the Ottoman lands, such as Austria, would claim the necessity of a military contingent to be settled in Novi-Pazar and Macedonia. France would also desire to send troops in some parts of the Ottoman lands and Italy would probably want the same thing on the Albanian coast.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁶ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Pera, December 30, 1878, p.134-136, No 168, PRO.

⁷⁹⁷ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 23, 1878, p.53-54, No 57, PRO.

However, three months before the expiry of the Russian occupation, the Ottoman Government did not take any certain steps to prepare any measures to preserve the order in the province and to impose its authority. Some of the Ottoman statesman believed that no disorders would arise and the Bulgarians would not oppose the return of the Ottoman troops. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire should deal with the issue by itself.⁷⁹⁸

In the future months, the British officials made significant endeavours to convince the Ottoman Government to prepare the Gendarmerie, and they even threatened the Porte that, if the Ottoman authorities could not maintain the order in Eastern Rumelia, a European intervention was required and the consequences would result from the delay of the Ottoman Empire in the application of this action.⁷⁹⁹ Since the Ottoman Empire rejected so strongly the mixed occupation, it had to be at least ready to find other measures to replace the mixed occupation. Besides, the Ottoman authorities did not suggest any significant ideas about the measures which they intended to take. When the Foreign Minister was asked how he would deal with the Militia formed by Russians and composed entirely by Bulgarians, he replied that, after possessing the finances of the province, the Ottomans could cease the payments and the Militia would dissolve by itself.⁸⁰⁰ In this opinion, expressed by the members of the Ottoman Cabinet, an absence of clear and coherent political course was obvious as regards maintaining the Ottoman authority in Eastern Rumelia. The Ottoman Government did not acknowledge the violent feelings existent in the province, the propaganda of the Panslavist functionaries, the military training of the population and the opposition which they would meet when they enter the Province in May 1879.

On the other hand, in a conversation between the Sultan and British Ambassador, the former explained his desire that the Russian troops leave as soon as possible the Ottoman territory which they still occupied, as their presence near the Ottoman capital was a constant source of apprehension and danger. For this purpose, he stated his firmness to observe the Treaty of Berlin and to take measures to execute the remained engagements so as not to give any further pretexts to Russia for remonstrations against the Ottomans. The Sultan feared that, if the Russian troops did not withdraw from the

⁷⁹⁸ *F.O.* 78/3034, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Philippopolis, January 25, 1879, p.351-353, No 47, PRO.

⁷⁹⁹ *F.O.* 195/1215, from Salisbury to Marquis of Sir A. H. Layard, Foreign Office, February 1, 1879, No 18, PRO.

⁸⁰⁰ *F.O.* 78/3034, Memorandum from Lord Donoughmore, Constantinople, January 4, 1879, p.135-138, PRO.

province before the time for evacuation, they could prevent the transfer of the administration to the Ottoman Government.⁸⁰¹

Even the Sultan felt endangered by the presence of the Russian troops in the region. He desired to reduce his army as soon as the treaty with Russia was signed. Also, he asked the opinion of the British Government in this regard.⁸⁰² The actions of the Sultan could be explained by the dependency on Britain as regards the issue of Eastern Rumelia. The British authorities took a leading role and put the Ottoman Empire again in the position of spectator.

The Grand Vizier, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, maintained the statement that a mixed occupation opposed the Treaty of Berlin and “it would be a leap in the dark fraught with danger to Turkey”. In order to prevent this inconvenience, both statesmen expressed their readiness to accept the nomination of a foreign subject as Governor General of the Province, instead of the mixed occupation. Both of them justified their application with the rumours which reached the Porte that the population of Eastern Rumelia would accept this concession with the satisfaction. The appointment of a foreign Governor was considered less dangerous by the Sultan and his Government than a joint occupation.⁸⁰³ The Ottoman Government had already experienced times when its territories were occupied by foreign forces and it knew the implications. A mixed occupation over the territories, which composed the core of its possessions, was a great menace for the protection of the integrity of the Empire. Furthermore, by making concessions to the local population, the Ottomans showed their eagerness to establish a good government in the province which would be a prerequisite to temper the spirits among the population and to diminish the Russian influence. The Ottoman authorities did not want the forces of a mixed occupation to have the role of mediator between them and their subjects.

The financial situation of the Ottoman Empire was one of the main obstacles which impeded the Porte from imposing its authority in Eastern Rumelia. The empty treasury and the absence of income from revenues until the month of May forced the government

⁸⁰¹ *F.O.* 881/3910, from Sir A. H. Layard to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, January 2, 1878, p.263-264, No 278, PRO.

⁸⁰² *F.O.* 195/1214, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir A. Henry Layard, Foreign Office, January 29, 1879, No 133, PRO.

⁸⁰³ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 25, 1879, p.507-508, No 759 PRO.

to borrow money often with unfavourable interest.⁸⁰⁴ Without a steady income, the Empire was not able to send troops and officials because it would not be able to pay them on time, fact which could provoke only further difficulties and disorders in the province and it would lead to the union with the Principality of Bulgaria. This situation facilitated the control over the Ottoman Government by the British authorities. The British Cabinet promised to secure a loan only if the stability in the Ottoman Empire was preserved as any changes of the Grand Vizier were not desirable. Otherwise, the negotiations for the loan would be cancelled. At the same time, the Grand Vizier had to be convinced through similar reasons, to assure the public that adequate precaution measures had been taken against possible disturbances in Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁰⁵ When they referred to adequate precaution measures, Britain had in mind the formation of gendarmerie, the preparation of the military forces which would be sent to the province or the acceptance of a mixed occupation.

The question about a joint occupation created significant disagreement in the opinion of the members of the Cabinet and the Sultan, when the Organic Law was almost accomplished and the time approached for introduction of the Ottoman authorities in the province.⁸⁰⁶ The endeavours of the European Commission for the organisation of Eastern Rumelia would not achieve the aims desired by the British Government if the Sultan was not able to impose his power in the Province and to maintain his governing rights there. So, the British ambassador was instructed to communicate to the Grand Vizier and, if necessary, to the Sultan about the state of affairs in the foreign courts as regards the proposal for a mixed occupation which was considered the only measure to secure the Ottoman authority in the province:

Lord Dufferin, Count Schouvaloff, Count Andrassy and Sir H. Wolff, who all have in various ways means of knowing, and are friendly to the Berlin Treaty, press the mixed occupation keenly. Prince Gorchakow and the military party at the Czar's Court are strongly against it, and if they can delay till Schouvaloff is gone they will draw back out of their recent proposals. Germany also dislikes it. If, therefore, the Turks now refuse, they will please all their enemies and disregard the advice of all their friends. The moment it is known that Turkey refuses

⁸⁰⁴ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 26, 1879, p.511, No 770, PRO.

⁸⁰⁵ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, March 27, 1879, 6 a.m., p. 512, No 775, PRO.

⁸⁰⁶ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 28, 1879, p. 522, No 803, PRO.; *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 31, 1879, p. 544, No 851, PRO.

everyone will look forward to a sanguinary campaign in Eastern Rumelia. What chance such a prospect of capitalist lending money?⁸⁰⁷

Rauf Pasha spoke as one of the advocates for the idea of a joint occupation. He was in favour of the mixed occupation because he recognized in it the only means of maintaining the order in Eastern Rumelia and providing a peaceful inauguration of the new governing authority, after the evacuation of the Russian troops.⁸⁰⁸

During the month of April, when the final arrangements were established regarding the introduction of the Organic Law and the new authority in the Province, the question about the mixed occupation continued to be discussed. The British authorities put pressure again and even threatened that “retention of province under the dominion of the Sultan depended on acceptance, which must be immediately, or it would be too late”. So, the proposal for a mixed occupation, made by Russia this time, was accepted to be considered by the Ministers’ Council.⁸⁰⁹ Also, the Porte issued a Circular to its representatives in the Great Powers’ courts, which left the question open, giving the impression that they did not reject the mixed occupation.⁸¹⁰ However, as previously in December, the British officials decided to abstain from further persuading the Porte to accept this time the Russian proposal for a mixed occupation but they transmitted to the Sultan and the Grand Vizier their concern for a matter of vital importance: the existence of sufficient Ottoman troops to be prepared to occupy at least Burgas and Ichtiman.⁸¹¹ The British authorities explained their opinion fluctuation by the strong objection of the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Indeed, they stated that they did not withdraw entirely their recommendation for a mixed occupation but they were trying “to find means of obviating, or at least postponing, the necessity”.⁸¹² The vague attitude of the Porte as regards the issue of the joint occupation really threw into confusion Britain and it revealed the confusion existent among the Ottoman governing circles:

⁸⁰⁷ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, March 31, 1879, 6:45p.m., p. 546, No 861, PRO.

⁸⁰⁸ *F.O.* 78/3037, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to from Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 4, 1879, p. 168, No 153, PRO.

⁸⁰⁹ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 2, 1879, p. 80, No 89, PRO.

⁸¹⁰ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 2, 1879, p. 80, No 90, PRO.

⁸¹¹ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 2, 1879, p.83, No 98, PRO.

⁸¹² *F.O.* 881/3940, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 3, 1879, 11.15 p.m., p.90, No 114, PRO

It is not easy to understand the action of the Porte in regard to this question. On Monday I was informed by His Majesty's Minister at Constantinople that the Sultan had confirmed the decision of the Council of Ministers to accept the proposal. On Wednesday morning, however, I learned from Mr. Malet that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had shown him a Circular which in effect rejected it, and it was added that this change of decision was attributable to the representations of the French Ambassador. In consequence, after consulting an alternative proposal, I instructed Mr. Malet at the same time to cease for the moment from urging the Porte to accept the plan for mixed occupation.

In the evening of that day (Wednesday, the 2nd instant) Musurus Pasha communicated to me a long telegram from his Government, which, from its terms, appeared to be a Circular, and which, after setting forth the dangers of a mixed occupation, proposed to satisfy the population by keeping the Vali for the present out of the province, sending in his place a Lieutenant-Governor. The telegram added that this proposal "dispense pour le moment les Cabinets amis, a la bonne volonte desquels la Sublime Porte rend homage, des sacrifices et des embarrass que peut-etre la marche des evenements memes pourrait leur epargner ("releases at the moment the amiable Cabinets, whose goodwill is highly honoured by the Sublime Porte, from the sacrifices and the embarrassment that might be avoided, perhaps even due to the course of events themselves)." Musurus Pasha himself understood this document to amount to a distinct refusal of a mixed occupation.⁸¹³

Later the Ottoman Government rejected the Proposal for mixed occupation.⁸¹⁴ However, the idea for a joint occupation of Eastern Rumelia was rudimentary not only because of the strong opposition of the Ottoman Empire. Then, a new proposal occurred to occupy some points of strategic importance. The Grand Vizier adopted the idea and he regarded it as the best strategy to occupy Burgas in force, to concentrate troops at two or three points such as Djuma, Rhodope and Adrianople and, by accepting these measures, the question for occupation to be left for future considerations.⁸¹⁵ Later, in April, the necessity for readiness of the Ottoman troops to occupy Burgas and some places near Ihtiman remained again to be influenced by Britain as the Porte prolonged the preparations. This time, with the warning that "if Turkey makes no effort to retain the Province, England cannot be responsible for the fatal consequences that will follow." The menace was strengthened by reports which contained information that, when the Russians retire, they would instigate a revolution and try to annex the province to the Principality of Bulgaria.⁸¹⁶ Indeed, the Ottoman Empire did not have at its disposal sufficient military forces to occupy these positions. Rauf Pasha reported that he had

⁸¹³ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Marquis of Salisbury to Lord Dufferin, Foreign Office, April 4, 1879, p. 94, No 129, PRO.

⁸¹⁴ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 4, 1879, No 489, PRO.

⁸¹⁵ *F.O.* 901/12, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 14, 1879, No 9, PRO.

⁸¹⁶ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 6, 1879, No 492, PRO.

only fifteen battalions and 150 gendarmes in readiness.⁸¹⁷ The Minister of Foreign Affairs also confirmed the insufficient forces that the Ottoman Empire had at its disposal, and in order to have sufficient forces on the frontier, the Ottoman Government would be obliged to leave the lines of Tchataldzha improperly garrisoned, and thus to expose the capital to danger.⁸¹⁸ On the 7th of April, it became clear that the Ottoman Empire would not be able to occupy Ihtiman. Meanwhile, the scheme for a mixed occupation was entirely forsaken by Britain and Russia because the arrangements of the details presented so many difficulties.⁸¹⁹

This path could explain the behaviour of the Ottoman Government which, on the 7th of April 1879, informed the British authorities that it was ready to send a Circular on the following day, stating the acceptance of the mixed occupation⁸²⁰ (suggesting that Russia should abstain from active participation and the Ottoman Empire would do the same). Nevertheless, 2 days later, on the 9th of April, it was announced that the Circular would not be sent. Indeed, all this dilatoriness and complication of the issue had another aim. The Sultan stated the following views, explaining why he rejected the mixed occupation: “His Majesty said that they want of preparation to facilitate Eastern Roumelian question was due to financial duties. If England was prepared to uphold him in the Balkans, he was ready to place himself at the head of his army to vindicate his right. As matters stood, he had no means of entering on an offensive campaign, and it would be unpardonable to plunge into a war without prospect of carrying it to a successful issue.”⁸²¹

As a response, Lord Salisbury communicated the following: “In reply, I have to state to you that Her Majesty’s Government have not withdrawn from the engagement they have taken that they will assist the Sultan to enforce the evacuation of Eastern Rumelia by the Russian troops if this has not been already done within the stipulated time. But it is most important that you should impress upon His Majesty that he must rely upon his

⁸¹⁷ *F.O.* 78/3041, Sir H. Drummond Wolf to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 4, p. 283-284, No 132, PRO.

⁸¹⁸ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 5, 1879, p. 99-100, No 139, PRO.

⁸¹⁹ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 7, 1879, p. 178, No 221*, PRO.

⁸²⁰ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 7, 1879, p. 177-178, No 220, PRO.

⁸²¹ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 9, 1879, p. 195, No 257, PRO.

own resources for the repression of any insurrection on the part of his subjects, unless there is evidence to show that they are receiving assistance from any foreign Power”.⁸²² At the same time, when the stipulation of the Treaty of Berlin was achieved, the Ottoman Empire negotiated to obtain a loan from Britain. The Ottoman Government was weak to impose its military authority in Eastern Rumelia, fact that Britain desired so much and the Ottoman authorities wanted to put pressure on the British Cabinet. The Sultan explained the financial status of his country and stressed upon the fact that “if England had good will towards the Ottoman Empire, it should extend hand to it now for that, if it delayed, the ruin would be complete, and then the friendly intention of which he had had so many assurances, would be of no avail”⁸²³. After the Congress of Berlin, the British friendship towards the Ottoman Government, which had to pay for the British support when it signed the Crete convention,⁸²⁴ had already arisen the doubts of the Sultan and he sought for proofs.

The Ottoman Empire was gradually forced to renounce some claims regarding its authority in Eastern Rumelia: the Balkans garrisons were rejected and the only military forces, which remained at the disposal of the Porte, were the gendarmerie and the militia. However, the influence of the Sultan over these forces was disputable. So, on the 22nd of April 1878, Rauf Pasha reported the readiness of the Sultan to accept the recommendations of the British officials that the order in the province should be entrusted to the local Militia under the authority of the Governor General and the European Commission, which was supposed to prolong its staying in the province, could be accepted as a purely temporary expedient. The Porte thought that it was greatly important that the Sultan should have at his discretion as many troops as the circumstances would permit, but they should not enter into contact with the local population. The troops had to occupy the region immediately after the evacuation, and they had to be ready, as fast as the state of the affairs allowed, to occupy one or two important points on the Balkan frontier. The British Commissioner Wolff had a meeting with the Sultan on the same day. During the meeting, the Sultan expressed his anxiety

⁸²² *F.O.* 881/3940, from Marquis of Salisbury to MR. Malet, Foreign Office, April 10, 1879, p. 199, No 272, PRO.

⁸²³ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 28, 1879, p. 138, No 163, PRO.

⁸²⁴ Vahdettin Engin, *Bir Devrin Son Sultan II.Abdülhamid* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi 2017), p. 47-50.

about the difficulties which resulted from the return of the Ottoman troops to Eastern Rumelia.⁸²⁵

Nevertheless, none of these measures was applied by the Porte in May, when the time came for introduction of its power in Eastern Rumelia. The two rival Powers, Britain and Russia, had already managed to reach consent about the future of Eastern Rumelia. In the middle of March and after the elaboration of the Organic Law was almost accomplished, Russia and Britain ostensibly brought forward their contradictions regarding the organisation of Eastern Rumelia. After they reached the final agreements, they took some measures which aimed to persuade the Porte that no more difficulties would be desired on that issue. Thus, the Sultan was forced by both Powers to accept implicitly “the necessity of respecting and maintaining inviolate the rights and privileges granted to the Province of Eastern Rumelia, by the Constitution being drawn up by the European Commission”.⁸²⁶ In accordance with this allegation, at the beginning of April, Russia took the commitment that it would not give any support to the population of Eastern Rumelia to oppose the arrangements, and the Russian Government would use all its influence to procure the peaceable acceptance of the population.⁸²⁷

Actually, it was more important for Britain to secure its influence over Eastern Rumelia than the Ottoman Empire’s governing rights. All these agreements were made without the knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and they prove the statement that, during the organisation, the Porte was in the position of a spectator. Even if the British Government boasted its friendship with the Sultan and affirmed its readiness to protect the Ottoman interests in front of the European Powers, it was ready any time to ignore the Ottoman interests in order to secure its own interests in the region. Thus, the Sultan faced *a fait accompli* in the organisation of Eastern Rumelia and he remained to govern a province with significant degree of self-government authority and a population that dreamed of union with the Principality of Bulgaria.

⁸²⁵ F.O. 78/3038, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 22, 1879, p. 1-11, No 172, PRO.; F.O. 901/12, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, Foreign Office, April 22 1879, No 204, PRO.

⁸²⁶ F.O. 901/12, from Lord Dufferin to Prince Gorchacow, St. Petersburg, March 15, 1879, PRO.

⁸²⁷ F.O. 901/12, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 10, 1879, No 5, PRO.

5.2.3 The Introduction of the Ottoman Authority in Eastern Rumelia

One of rights given to the Porte by the Treaty of Berlin was the appointment of a Christian Governor General to rule the province in the name of the Sultan. However, this assignment had to be approved by the Great Powers, fact which actually restrained the possibly of the Ottoman Government to take this decision independently and at its own discretion. The first nomination of the Porte for a Governor General was made on the 16th of December, 1878. The Governor General of Lebanon, Rustem Pasha, was nominated. However, when the Porte faced a strong opposition against the nomination of Rustem Pasha, and rumours were spread in the political circles that Rustem Pasha himself refused to accept the appointment, the idea emerged among the Ottoman authorities that a sort of compromise could be found through the nomination of a member of the ‘Hospodarian families of Roumenia’. Therefore, Prince Antoine Bibesco was proposed in this regard. This proposal was made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁸²⁸ The ‘Hospodarian families’ were connected with the Porte and during the years they had served the Porte. In exchange for their good service, they enjoyed particular privileges. So, a member of these families was regarded a right choice because he would be obedient to the Sultan and could impose the Sultan’s influence in the province. In this proposal, the British officials recognized “an opportunity to repeat the stratagem which united Moldavia and Wallachia under Prince Cuza”⁸²⁹. So, it was forsaken very fast.

The idea of a foreign Governor was widely discussed under the Russian pressure and the opposition of the Bulgarian population against the nomination of an Ottoman subject. Also, the Ottoman Government was unanimous on the question about the appointment of a European Governor. The Grand Vizier stated that the arguments in favour of such nomination failed to convince him because “if the objective was a better government, he thought Rustem Pasha, who was an Italian, would be as good a Governor as a Swiss or Belgian. If the objective was to weaken the relationship between the province and the Sultan, under those circumstances, His Majesty’s Ministers could not recommend it.”⁸³⁰ The nomination of a foreign subject for Governor of Eastern

⁸²⁸ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 10, 1879, p. 235, No 294, PRO.

⁸²⁹ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, March 11, 1879, p. 239, No 316, PRO.

⁸³⁰ *F.O.* 881/3933, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 5, 1879, p. 95, No 104, PRO.

Rumelia was unacceptable for the Sultan and for the British officials, too. The appointment of a European candidate aroused the fear of the two countries that the Government could become subjected to the interests of one of the rival powers, which could lead to the alienation of the province from the Porte. Furthermore, a person without particular knowledge of the political situation in the Balkans and in the Province, could not manage the difficult task of governing the province.

In the month of March, the question about the nomination of the Governor of the Province was still under discussion between the Great Powers, and different candidates were put into circulation. Britain and Russia had already discussed the nomination of one particular figure - Aleko Pasha. Some information about the negotiations held between the two Powers also reached the Porte. As regards this issue, on the 14th of March 1879, the Porte informed the British Government that the Grand Vizier was thinking to provide an Assistant for Rustem Pasha, in the person of Aleko Pasha, because such an act could temper the spirits of the population from Eastern Rumelia regarding the nomination of Rustem Pasha.⁸³¹ The Ottoman Empire was not completely ready to give up the nomination of Rustem Pasha but it showed willingness to make concessions on the issue in order to find a suitable solution.

However, at the beginning of April, the question about the appointment of Rustem Pasha faced an “uncontrollable dislike to going”. The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated the Porte should change its attitude regarding the question. The Ottoman Government was well informed about Russia’s strong opposition against the nomination of Rustem and its acceptance attitude that “if the Porte named another Ottoman functionary, he would be accepted”, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs communicated. He also added that Aleko Pasha would be accepted by all the European Powers and by Eastern Rumelia and he could rely on his fidelity to the Sultan.⁸³² Indeed, the words of Caratheodory Pasha showed that the Porte was enlightened about the negotiations between Britain and Russia about the nomination of Aleko Pasha and it is probable that the Russians themselves put pressure on the Ottoman Government to accept this nomination. The dialogue between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was not completely closed. Even if the Ottoman Government relied on the support of the British Empire against Russia in Eastern Rumelia on some issues, which commonly interested the two

⁸³¹ *F.O.* 901/12, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 14, 1879, No 5, PRO.

⁸³² *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 1, 1879, p.1-2, No 3, PRO.

states, the Powers were able to reach consent. The nomination of Aleko Pasha was one of these cases. For Russia, he was an orthodox of Bulgarian origin and for the Porte, he was an Ottoman subject whose long service for the Ottoman Government proved his loyalty. The different qualities of his personality united the desires of the both governments.

Thus, a correspondence about the acceptance of Aleko Pasha by the Porte, was immediately exchanged between Russia and Britain, as a possible nomination instead of Rustem Pasha.⁸³³ On the 10th of April 1879, Russia informed Britain that they instructed Russian Ambassador Lobanov to press the Porte to take the necessary steps at once, in order to carry out this nomination.⁸³⁴

With the nomination of Aleko Pasha, the question about the prolongation of the European Commission in the Province of Eastern Rumelia had to be established, too. After the inauguration, the role of the Commission would be to assist Aleko Pasha during the first year of his service. Both the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Foreign Affairs took the position against this measure proposed by the European Powers. They explained their opinion with the apparently peaceable disposition of the Bulgarian population which had been displayed towards them. The Ottoman statesmen regarded the European Commission's remaining in Eastern Rumelia "useless and perhaps mischievous". Indeed, it was recognized as a great menace to the Sultan's authority.⁸³⁵ The Province would practically be governed by the Commission which would open the way for further influence of the Great Powers in the initial affairs of the Ottoman Empire, regarding not only Eastern Rumelia but also the rest of the European provinces of the Sultan. The Turks requested the European Commission to remain in the province only until the accomplishment of the order and the introduction of the Ottoman authority. They recognised the Commission as a bridge between the departure of the Russian authorities and the arrival of the Ottoman Government⁸³⁶. The Porte was apprehensive about the difficulties and the resistance it would face during the introduction of its authority because of the Bulgarian population.

⁸³³ *F.O.* 65/1038, to Lord Dufferin, Foreign Office, April 2, 1879, No 150, PRO.

⁸³⁴ *F.O.* 195/1217, from Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Malet, Foreign Office, April 10, 1879, No 523 A, PRO.

⁸³⁵ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 12, 1879, p. 411, No 210, PRO.

⁸³⁶ *F.O.* 901/12, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, March 14, 1879, No 5, PRO.

At the beginning of May, the Ottoman authorities also expressed their anxiety about the condition of the Muslim population left in the Province. In the conversation between the British Commissioners (Wolff and Donoghmore) and the Sultan, the latter asked the British Commissioners to tell him their views about the present state and possible future of the Muslim population in the Province.⁸³⁷ The emigration in large numbers, caused by the pressure of the Russian Provisional Authorities and the reports for the ill-treatment of the Muslim population, made the Ottoman Ambassador in London to remonstrate in front of the British Government. The oppressive conduct towards the Muslim population and the induction of the Bulgarian population, to emigrate from Adrianople to Eastern Rumelia, was looked upon by the Ottoman Foreign Minister as part of a plan that aimed to remove all Muslim population from Eastern Rumelia and replace it with Christian inhabitants.⁸³⁸ However, in the previous year, in November, the Grand Vizier endeavoured to oppose the attempts of the Russian authorities to apply a repatriation of 2000 Bulgarian subjects from the province of Adrianople to Eastern Rumelia. According to the Grand Vizier, these Bulgarians did not have an inch of land in this country and their repatriation to Eastern Rumelia was achieved with the purpose to put them in possession of the house and lands belonging to the Muslim population. The Ottoman authority rejected the proposal for exchange of properties between the lands left by Bulgarian population in Adrianople and those abandoned by the Muslim population in Eastern Rumelia, realising the dangerous consequences of such an act.⁸³⁹ As regards the situation of the Muslim population in Eastern Rumelia and its need for help, two Ottoman Delegates suggested that the Porte should send two more officers who would be employed for the emigration problem of the Muslim subjects. It was also suggested to send to this population a financial support so as to support their life in the province as a measure to prevent their leaving. The proposal was accepted by the Porte and on the 1st of December, two officers were appointed and the amount of 60 000 kurush was granted.⁸⁴⁰ The Ottoman authorities were aware of the actions of the Russian Government but they did not have the power and the means to hinder these

⁸³⁷ *F.O.* 78/3038, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, May 12, 1879, p. 411, No 210, PRO.

⁸³⁸ *F.O.* 901/12, from Sir H. Drummond Wolff to Marquis of Salisbury, Foreign Office, May 13, 1879, No 232 A, PRO.

⁸³⁹ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence Respecting the Proceedings of the European Commission for the Organization of Eastern Roumelia*', from Grand Vizier to Assim Pasha, October 24/ November, 1878 Turkey No 9 (1879), p. 119.

⁸⁴⁰ Aydın, "Şarki Rumeli", p. 37-38.

actions as they were deprived from the opportunity to impose their military and governmental authority in Eastern Rumelia, becoming a prisoner of the political interests of Russia and Britain. The Ottoman Government regarded the support of the British Government as the only chance to protect the Muslim population.

Eastern Rumelia was not the only province of the Ottoman Empire in which, as a result of the Treaty of Berlin and autonomous rights which were granted, the process of emigration of the Muslim population could be noticed. Andreas Lyberatos makes a comparison between Eastern Rumelia and Crete by evaluating the model of autonomy implemented in them and how this had a repercussion over the ethnic structure of the provinces. Firstly, in both provinces an ethnic problem appeared, caused by the monopolization of the rule by one of the ethnic groups which inhabited the province. In case of Eastern Rumelia, the dominance was achieved by the Bulgarians and in case of Crete, the prevalence was accomplished by the Greeks. This provoked a situation of uncertainty among the Muslim population and they answered by emigration. Also, he explained that the monopolization in Eastern Rumelia was much more pronounced than in Crete. At the same time, both provinces had problems with internal conflicts between ethnic groups, but in Eastern Rumelia, the struggle was either against the Greeks in the towns or the Muslims in the villages. The second problem was the land problem expressed in the transfer of property from Muslims to Bulgarians in Eastern Rumelia and to Greeks in Crete. In case of Eastern Rumelia, these actions were supported by the Russian authorities during the occupation, but there was also a strong pressure made by the Great Powers, especially Britain, to defend the rights of the Ottoman population.⁸⁴¹

The problem of the Muslim population's emigration from the Ottoman territories, left under autonomous authorities, was a serious one which, on the one hand called forth difficulties to the Porte to take care of the arriving population, and on the other hand, diminished the power of the Empire in these regions, strengthening the position of the Christian population. These actions also deepened the process of formation of national self-determination and the demands for a national state. In case of Eastern Rumelia and Crete, the national state had already been established and the population dreamed of a union.

As a result of the Treaty of Berlin and the work of the European Commission, the province had neither the level of autonomy and rights of the self-governed Principality

⁸⁴¹ Andreas Lyberatos, "Crete and Eastern Rumelia: The Model of Autonomy in European Turkey (late 19th –early 20th Century)", *Cretica Chronika* 36, No 3 (2016), p. 73-92.

of Bulgaria, nor the status of a traditional imperial *vilayet*. It was logical to expect that it would gravitate either towards Sofia or Istanbul, namely it would take the path of the unionist movement or it would come back to the mother empire. For an independent role, as a core of a rally point of the Bulgarian national or modernization process, the region had neither territorial resources nor human wealth. In proving the obvious Bulgarian character of the region, it is a matter of time and geopolitical configuration that Eastern Rumelia to be absorbed either by Bulgaria or the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁴² The indication that a similar process had developed inside the Bulgarian population in the province, appeared even before Eastern Rumelia took the path as an autonomous province.

According to the Great Powers, the European Commission and the Ottoman Empire waded through the difficulties in establishing the administration of Eastern Rumelia. Both the Ottoman Government and the Sultan continued to wonder regarding the future development of the Province. The Grand Vizier shared with British Consul Mallet a conversation of the Sultan with some Bulgarian members of one of the leading parties in the province, which proposed the Principality of Bulgaria and the province to be united under the Sultan's authority. Regarding this suggestion, the Grand Vizier "observed that in the long run, the provinces would be united, and he asked himself whether it would not be better that the union should take place with the sanction of the Sultan, who might then make his own conditions, that they should gain the complete freedom which would be the consequence of a union made after the struggle. He believed that the Porte might hereafter find protection from Russia in a contented Bulgaria, enjoying liberty unknown in Russia"⁸⁴³. This kind of allegations came to demonstrate only how fragile was the belief of the Ottoman political circles that Eastern Rumelia would continue its future development within the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

5.3 The Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian Crisis in 1885

Even if during the Congress of Berlin, Sultan Abdulhamid II realised the ambiguous support of the British authorities for the Ottoman interests, it was only after 1882, when Britain took over the possession of Egypt, that the Sultan reconsidered his attitude

⁸⁴² Mitko Palangurski , *Nova istoria na Bulgaria I. Kniazhestvoto* (Sofia:Ciela 2013), p. 98.

⁸⁴³ *F.O.* 881/3940, from Mr. Malet to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, April 27, 1879, p. 562-563, No 651, PRO.

towards the British relations with the Empire. As the British influence in the Ottoman Empire dominated but, at the same time, the British authorities refused to abstain from an active policy for defending the interests of the Empire, the Sultan reckoned that the Empire had to outgrow the influence of the British authorities. He thought that the extension of the influence of another Great Power could give the opportunity for the Ottoman Empire to be released from the British tutelage. This other Great Power was Germany as it was not directly interested in the Ottoman Empire's lands. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire could attempt to approach Russia, too. After 1881, Russia faced the hostile attitude of the Bulgarian state, instead of the expected obedience, in exchange for the gratitude of the Bulgarian population for their 'liberation' by the Russians. Furthermore, if Russia could not physically possess the Straits, it was considered that the Straits would better remain under Ottoman control. Sultan Abdulhamid II also reckoned that an amicable relation with Russia would contribute to the maintenance of tranquillity in the Balkan states, especially in Bulgaria. This piece of the Balkans was greatly important for the Ottoman Empire to be able to preserve its authority in Macedonia, which was claimed not only by the Balkan states – Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, but also by Austro-Hungary. The Ottoman Empire had to be cautious about the occasion of establishing a Balkan alliance against it, too. These perceptions of the Sultan impersonated an entirely new political course which appeared in the mind of the Sultan. He decided to look for German friendship and, at the same time, he could not entirely undermine the British influence over the Ottoman Empire. This had to be used as a measure to restrict Britain's interference in the Ottoman internal affairs. So, the Ottoman authorities could continue to meet the British demands only when they did not contravene with the interests of the Ottoman Empire. Another aspect of the Sultan's foreign policy was his view that the Ottoman position in Asia and Arab provinces had to be strengthened so as to establish there a basis for powerful Ottoman authority, because these territories attracted more and more the Great Powers. After the Treaty of Berlin, the rivalry between the Great Powers shifted towards the Asian lands.⁸⁴⁴

Gladstone's Government fell in June 1885 and Lord Salisbury's conservative party came to power. Thus, the Porte's anxiety increased. The Ottoman Ambassadors from the European countries were instructed to inquire about the consequences that could

⁸⁴⁴ Arakli, "The Problem of External", p. 44-53.

appear in the political relations of the Great Powers. The Sultan was especially interested in the relations between Germany and Britain and Russia and Britain.⁸⁴⁵

5.3.1 The Ottoman Empire and the Act of Union

Amongst the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire was probably the most surprised by the news about the Union between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. The first days after the news about overthrowing the Government and the Governor General, followed by the proclamation of the unification, the Porte, as British Ambassador White reported on the 21st September 1885, “did not realize the grave nature of the events that have taken place in Eastern Rumelia”.⁸⁴⁶ Indeed, the information that reached the Ottoman authorities regarded the increase of the activities of the Unionist movement in the months of spring. The Porte was informed that a large number of guns and ammunitions were sent by the Revolutionary Committee from Sofia to Macedonia and Eastern Rumelia. The activities of the Committee, that induced the fear of the Muslim population, became a reason for the application of the preparation procedures for their emigration. The Porte remonstrated against the organised meeting of the Revolutionary Committee in the Province, and it sent an order to the Governor General to prevent the attendance at the meeting. In case the Governor General was not able to accomplish the order and he considered that the tranquillity of the Province was endangered, the Ottoman authorities advised the Governor to send for Ottoman military forces. In case the Governor General could not master the situation, further support could be asked from the representatives of the Great Powers in the Province.⁸⁴⁷ However, the Ottoman authorities did not provide any further precautions against the disorders arisen from the agitation for the union. F.A.K. Yasamee explains this attitude of the Sultan and the Porte in the following way: the Ottoman authorities assumed that, because Russia had already declared its policy for preservation of the *status quo* in the Balkans and compliance with the Treaty of Berlin, in front of the Sultan and during the meeting of the League of the Three Emperors, it would put pressure on the Bulgarian Government in the Principality and in the Province, to suppress the Unionist movement.⁸⁴⁸ Thus, the

⁸⁴⁵ BOA.İ.HR.377-21815, June 9, 1885.

⁸⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 21, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 4.

⁸⁴⁷ BOA.Y.A.HUS 181-58, April 8, 1885.

⁸⁴⁸ F.A.K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy. Abdulhamid II and the Great Powers 1878-1888* (Istanbul: The İsis Press 1996), p. 153.

Ottoman authorities, as before in the year 1878, relied on the foreign power to settle an issue that referred to its internal affairs. Mahir Aydın explains this attitude of the Sultan and the Porte by the general political course followed by Sultan Abdulhamid during his reign. He avoided solving the crisis through military interventions and preferred the diplomatic methods. However, if the Ottoman Empire was not in possession of the necessary power to apply this political program, the Sultan's policy would be characterised by the historian as a 'romantic one'. In the same way as the first example of such a political course, Mahir Aydın highlighted the decision of the Sultan not to occupy the Balkan range in accordance with the rights given to him by the Treaty of Berlin in 1879.⁸⁴⁹

Sultan Abdulhamid II set up a particular political course towards his possessions where the Christian population was predominant. According to the Sultan's policy for preserving the dominance of the Muslim population's rights and strengthening their position in the Empire, the Sultan considered that, if the Ottoman authorities were able to restrict the further extension of the autonomous rights and governmental services of the Empire in the provinces, such measures could provide the status restoration of a Muslim ruling class. On the other hand, if the enlargement of the Christian rights was prevented, it would suppress the national aspirations of these groups.⁸⁵⁰

Eastern Rumelia was not only inhabited with dominant Bulgarian population but it was acquired the rights of the autonomous province with a Christian governor general from Bulgarian origin. The Ottoman authorities possessed only nominal authority in Eastern Rumelia after it did not executed its right to occupy the Balkan range the Sultan abstained from exercising an active political role in the developments of the province.

The confusion of the Sultan in regard with events in Eastern Rumelia was revealed by the Grand Vizier Said Pasha⁸⁵¹ before he was replaced. The Ottoman statesman explained the complication which occurred in the first days, after the news about the revolutionary act reached the Porte and the Sultan. It became obvious from his explanation that the events in Eastern Rumelia came as a surprise to the Ottoman authorities and spread the alarm.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁹ Aydın, "Tophane Konferansı", p. 117-118.

⁸⁵⁰ Arakli, "The Problem of External", p. 61.

⁸⁵¹ Zekeriya Kurşun, s.v. "Said Paşa Küçük", in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 27, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/said-pasa-kucuk>

⁸⁵² BOA. *YA.HUS* 183-19, September 23, 1885.

In the first days, the Ottoman authorities supposed that an act of such importance, which infringed the Treaty of Berlin, could not be carried out without the support of some of the Great Powers. Therefore, the first action of the Porte was to try to understand from which country Prince Battenberg had obtained support and to send a telegram to all the Great Powers, communicating them the intention of the Ottoman Government to take measures to execute its right given by Article 16 from the Treaty of Berlin, to summon troops in the Province in case the order was threatened.⁸⁵³ This course was endorsed by the military party in the Ottoman Government, which insisted that the Ottoman troops should enter the Province and Principality from the ports of Varna and Burgas.⁸⁵⁴

Meanwhile, during the first days after having received the news about the union, the Ottoman Government began to seek for advice as refers to what course to pursue. Therefore, the Porte addressed to the German officials. The German Ambassador in Istanbul communicated that Bismarck believed that the most appropriate way to preserve the rights of the Ottoman Government, as regards the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, was to apply for the strong support of the Russian Emperor in order to prevent the infringement by Prince Alexander of the provisions from the Treaty and to restore the previous order in the Province.⁸⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, the action of Chancellor Bismarck was in accordance with his political game, to increase the tension between Russia and Britain, as he had already been informed about the positive attitude of the British Government and the disapproval of the Russian authorities towards the unification act of Bulgaria. Because the Ottoman Empire was Britain's traditional ally in this situation, when the British authorities approved an act which threatened the integrity of the Empire, Bismarck did not want to miss that chance.

The Russian principal opposition against any alternation in the *status quo* was affirmed by the declaration made by the Russian Foreign Minister, Nikolay Giers. According to the information received, Russia's resentment against Prince Battenberg's action was reported and, because they did not approve the revolutionary act, the Russian authorities expressed the view that the Prince could no longer stay on the Bulgarian throne. The Russian Government considered the action of the Prince as an attempt to take revenge on the Russian disapproval of his recent policy and to deprive the Russian Empire from the sympathy of Bulgaria's public opinion. According to the news received from the

⁸⁵³ BOA. Y.A.HUS, nr. 183.16, September, 19 1885.

⁸⁵⁴ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria', from White to Salisbury, Therapia, September 21, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 4.

⁸⁵⁵ BOA.Y.A.HUS 183-21, September 21, 1885.

Russian political circles, the Emperor censured the Prince's actions and ordered the Russian officers from the Bulgarian army to attend the movement. Also, the Emperor dismissed the Minister of War, the Russian General Kantakuzin.⁸⁵⁶ The information received from the Russian Court abolished the Ottoman suspicions arisen during the first days after the crisis outbreak and influenced the Sultan's mind in favour of a political course for cooperation with the Russian Government for the settlement of the crisis.

The approach of Abdulhamid II towards the crisis in Eastern Rumelia was influenced by the general consideration that Russia desired to preserve the *status quo* in the Balkans, but at the same time, he expressed doubts because in the long term, the demands of Russia in the region included the establishment of a powerful Bulgarian state and recognized the Union as one of main aims of the Russian diplomacy. However, at the same time, Russia was associated with the Three Emperors' League, where arrangements were discussed between Russia and Austro-Hungary for division of the Balkans. Not even the Sultan knew exactly the details of the agreements but he was aware of the aspirations of the two Powers. So, to prevent an expansion policy which could lead to further difficulties in the region, Russia had to ensure that its regional interests were not menaced and thus, it would continue its policy for preservation of the *status quo* in the Balkans. Therefore, the Sultan decided to act together with Russia and the allies to settle the crisis. Furthermore, Britain was not as interested as Russia in threatening the Ottoman authority in the Balkans, which raised claims to replace the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Peninsula.⁸⁵⁷ Thus, the outbreak of the Bulgarian crisis provoked rapprochement between St. Petersburg and Istanbul, which influenced the further political course followed by the Porte and its initiatives for the settlement of the issue.

On September 21st, the Council of Ministers was in session and decided, before having taken any measures, to address a note to the European Courts, protesting against the disorders occurred in Eastern Rumelia and invoking the application of the Sultan's right to send troops to defend his territories, stating at the same time that military preparations had been made.⁸⁵⁸ The Circular was sent on the 23rd of September 1885,

⁸⁵⁶ BOA. A.MTZ.04 19-35, September 21, 1885.

⁸⁵⁷ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 154- 155.

⁸⁵⁸ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Sir W. White to the Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 7.

declaring that, as the Treaty of Berlin was a solemn act resulted from the agreement of the allied Powers of Europe, they would unite their efforts to uphold the maintenance of the stipulations from the Treaty. The Ottoman Government expressed its hope that the Great Powers would response favourably to the desire of the Porte to conclude the disturbance and to reinstate the Province according to the Treaty, by imposing the Ottoman troops' right to enter the province.⁸⁵⁹ Sultan Abdulhamid II officially put the resolution of the Bulgarian crisis in the hands of the Great Powers.

It could be noticed that Sultan Abdulhamid II was in a state of uncertainty about the course he should take as regards the crisis in Eastern Rumelia: "On the one hand, he is adverse to undertake an expedition into Eastern Rumelia, dreading greater complications and revolts in Albania and Macedonia, while, on the other hand, he is unable to dismiss from his mind the effect that inaction in that quarter may produce upon his Muslim subjects." The British Commissioner concluded that the Sultan would incline towards a peaceful solution to the crisis and he was looking for the support of the Great Powers for this purpose, which would enable him to resist the pressure caused by the military party in the Government, expressed by military advisers and some of the Ministers. The British Ambassador also pointed out that Germany was the only power that could guide the Sultan and influence his decisions as he would regard suspiciously any recommendation coming from Russia and Austria-Hungary.⁸⁶⁰

Indeed, he was right in his estimation of the Ottoman authority's attitude. In accordance with the view of the German authorities, after further consultations with them and receiving their approval, the Sultan sent a communication to the Russian Emperor, seeking for Russian support to find a solution to the crisis, which would restore the *status quo*.⁸⁶¹ The Russian authorities declared on time the readiness to use their influence on the Bulgarians and to force the Prince of Bulgaria reinstate the previous order in the Province.⁸⁶²

The French Ambassador in the Ottoman Capital assessed that the act of union could seriously impact the internal stability of the Ottoman Empire, threatening the position of Sultan Abdulhamid II on the throne. Similar developments of events in the Empire

⁸⁵⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria', from Assim Pasha to Musurus Pasha, Constantinople, September 23, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 9-10.

⁸⁶⁰ Parliamentary Papers, 'Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria', from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 24, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 14-15.; *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury Therapia, September 24, 1885, No 391, PRO.

⁸⁶¹ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 156.

⁸⁶² *BOA. YA.HUS* 183-26, September 26, 1885

could lead to the ruin of the established political order and could menace the European peace. He also noticed that the Sultan delayed his decisions, vacillated and did not take any certain measures for pacification of the complex situation in the Province. The British Ambassador expressed his views in a similar statement: “The Sultan and the Porte appeared to have lost all energy and decision; they seem quite incapable of spontaneous action independent of foreign advice.”⁸⁶³

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Court debated on governmental changes. On the eve of September 24th, 1885, Sultan Abdulhamid replaced the minister of war, foreign affairs and the Grand Vizier, with the aim to decrease the tension in the Ottoman society, because these governmental measures excluded the military party. The new Cabinet undertook diplomatic measures for consultations.⁸⁶⁴ The current Grand Vizier was replaced by Kamil Pasha.⁸⁶⁵ The new Cabinet seemed to accept the political course for a peaceable solution to the crisis and it immediately expressed its support, proposing measures which would prevent the expansion of restlessness in Macedonia and Thrace. It desired to appeal to the Great Powers as soon as possible, in order to suggest suitable diplomatic measures for restoration of the order in Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁶⁶ These enterprises of the Ottoman authorities clearly revealed the position and the course which were desired by the Sultan for non military intervention in the Province.

As regards the advice of the new Cabinet, orders might have been given for eighty battalions of redifs to be embodied.⁸⁶⁷ However, as no further movement of troops across the frontier was executed and no troops were sent forward from the capital, we could regard that these were only measures which had to force the Great Powers towards a particular decision. Meanwhile, the Porte warned the governmental authorities in Macedonia, to prevent any occasions for complaints or armed collisions

⁸⁶³ F.O. 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 27, 1885, No 407, PRO.

⁸⁶⁴ Hristo Glushkov, “Frantsia, Osmanskata imperia i Saedinenieto na Bulgaria (1885-1886)”, *Istorieski pregled* 41, No5, (1985), p. 71.

⁸⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, September 25, 12:35 p.m., 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 18; For further detail about Kamil Pasha see: Atila Çetin, s.v. “Kıbrıslı Kamil Paşa”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi* (2001), accessed January 27, 2019, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kinrisli-kamil-pasa>

⁸⁶⁶ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 156.

⁸⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers, ‘Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 28, 1885, 5:20, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 31

between the Bulgarian and Muslim population. Similar orders were given to the Muslim population from the Rhodope Mountains to avoid any insurrection.⁸⁶⁸

However, White's observation, that was reported to Lord Salisbury, revealed the changes of the Sultan's political course since the first days of the crisis, and it also expressed the "considerable difficulty in accounting for the inactivity of Turkey and the Sultan's hesitation at the first receipt of the news from Rumelia". The British Ambassador argued that, if at that moment the Sultan had been given the orders to cross the border of the Province, with whatever number of soldiers, the Ottoman Government could finally impose its right to defend its authority in Eastern Rumelia, and this strategy would gain significant sympathies in the Empire. But as White added after a few days spent in vacillation and consultations with the foreign courts, the Sultan changed adopted "the only course suited to his character, i.e. to wait for what may yet happen, and to follow a dilatory and expectant policy". The Ottoman Government's withdrawal from military intervention could be explained by the Sultan's personal fears for his safety, which could be threatened by moving the garrisons from the Capital to the Province. Besides, no foreign ambassadors would declare themselves in favour of an immediate action. Furthermore, the Russian Emperor's attitude of disapproval towards Prince Alexander, gave hopes to the Sultan that Russia would be able to restore the order in Eastern Rumelia and the Prince would be forced to return to Sofia and he would probably not continue to rule.⁸⁶⁹

But, if the Ottoman authorities were accused of passivity, some questions would arise. Since the establishment of Eastern Rumelia, the Province became more a European issue than an Ottoman issue. The Province was under powerful Russian influence and Britain was looking for an accession to undermine Russia's dominant position. Eastern Rumelia, even after its establishment, continued to be a theatre where the two Great Powers measured their swords.

Moreover, immediately after the outbreak of the crisis, Greece threatened that, if there was a delay in the return to the *status quo* in Eastern Rumelia, or if the occupation of this Province by the Ottoman military was postponed, the Greek authorities feared that they could not prevent a rebellious movement in the surrounding provinces, and

⁸⁶⁸ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 157.; *F.O.* 195/1498, Mr. Wortley to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 2, 1885, PRO.

⁸⁶⁹ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia September 29, 1885, No 407, PRO.

especially in Crete.⁸⁷⁰ Serbia also remonstrated against the act of union and, on September 27th, 1885, the Ottoman Ambassador reported that, because the Serbian Government no longer trusted the Ottoman Government to make a move for restoration of the *status quo* in Eastern Rumelia, the military preparations were continuing rapidly and the Serbian Government intended to send its troops to the Ottoman border.⁸⁷¹

The military preparations, which were being made by the Ottoman authorities, were reported as active or defensive operations on the frontier with Eastern Rumelia. Nevertheless, the condition of the army was in a very weak state. Orders were given to the Ottoman troops, settled on the Bulgarian - Ottoman border, not to fire against the Bulgarians. The general feeling amongst the Ottoman subjects, as regards the Eastern Rumelian issue, “was decidedly in favour of immediate advance in Eastern Rumelia, and the re-establishment of the Sultans Power”, reported the Governor of Adrianople, Handji Izzet. It was considered among the Ottoman ruling circles that, if the Treaty of Berlin was not upheld, the Empire would lose the core and it would be followed by the utter dismemberment of its territories, which would be only a matter of time.⁸⁷² In this political atmosphere, Sultan Abdulhamid II continued to wait and see what turn things would take.

Meanwhile, the Grand Vizier prepared a program, assuming that the union was irreversible. Five terms were stipulated for the settlement of the crisis: “the Empire must sacrifice no territory outside Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia; the Bulgarian and Eastern Rumelian tributes must remain intact; the Empire must garrison the Balkan Range, as provided by the Treaty of Berlin; all fortifications in Bulgaria must be demolished, again as provided by the Treaty of Berlin; the terms of an eventual settlement must offer the Empire’s neighbours no pretext for aggression.”⁸⁷³

Latter, the program was supplemented by another condition, at the insistence of the Sultan - the dismissal of Prince Alexander. For this purpose, the Sultan believed that he would receive the support of Russia and the other Great Powers would not object to this situation.⁸⁷⁴ The program was prepared on September 23rd, which explained its contents and the term provided by the Sultan for the replacement of Prince Battenberg, because the British position as regards that issue had not been officially revealed yet. Besides,

⁸⁷⁰ *BOA Y.A.HUS* 183-34, September 24, 1885.

⁸⁷¹ *BOA Y.A.HUS* 183-75, September 27, 1885.

⁸⁷² *F.O.* 195/1498, from Mr. Wortley to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia October 2, 1885, PRO.

⁸⁷³ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 158.

⁸⁷⁴ Pancho Dorev, *Dokumenti za Bukgarskata istoria, vol IV* (Sofia: BAN 1942), p. 65-66, No 108.

the Ottoman authorities had not realised yet, that the question of Eastern Rumelia would be indeed a question for the future of Prince Battenberg on the Bulgarian throne. Because of the changes applied by the Ottoman Cabinet, the atmosphere in the Ottoman capital also assumed different aspects. The British Ambassador expressed his embarrassment that the Russian influence over the Ottoman Government would increase.⁸⁷⁵ The close relation between the Russian Ambassador⁸⁷⁶ and the Sultan during the first days of the crisis, demonstrated that the Ottoman authorities were looking for an ally against the favourable attitude of the British authorities towards the act of union.

5.2.2 The Meeting of the Ambassadors

When the British authorities announced their suggestion for a personal union as the solution to the Eastern Rumelia crisis, the Sultan rejected it and he missed the opportunity for a swift settlement of the issue. The British Empire approved the act of union and its position induced the Sultan to draw closer together Russia and the Ottoman Empire. At the end of September, Sultan Abdulhamid II addressed a personal proposal to collaborate for the settlement of the crisis. The proposal was met warmly and satisfactorily in St. Petersburg. The support received from the Russian authorities reassured the Sultan's claims for the reconstruction of the order in the Province, according to the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin.

The Ambassadors of the Great Powers travelled to Istanbul in the next few weeks, to discuss further measures for the settlement of the crisis. The task of the informal meetings of the Ambassadors, which the Ottoman Government accepted, was summarized in three points: "1. To express to the Sultan the sense entertained by the Powers for him having abstained from shedding blood and encouraging His Imperial Majesty to preserve that line. 2. To express a strong blame for the violation of the Treaty of Berlin which had been committed in Eastern Rumelia by ... (unreadable text) which disapproval subsequently worded so as to convey a hint to the other restless states in the Peninsula without mentioning any of them by name. 3. Practical suggestions for the prevention of a collision."⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁵ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 25, 1885, No 392, PRO.

⁸⁷⁶ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, September 28, 1885, No 401, PRO.

⁸⁷⁷ *F.O.* 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 6, 1885, No 418, PRO.

The Sultan and the Ottoman authorities expressed their satisfaction due to the endeavours of the Ambassadors to find a solution to the crisis in Eastern Rumelia, which resulted from the Resolution. They were especially pleased by the content of the Resolution that condemned the infringement of the Treaty of Berlin by the Bulgarian Prince. Two days after the text of the Resolution had been accomplished, the Ottoman Ambassador in London met Lord Salisbury and stated that “a summons should be addressed to the Prince of Bulgaria by the Great Powers, calling on His Highness to restore the *status quo ante* in Eastern Rumelia, and announcing that, should the Prince fail to comply, the Sultan’s troops would immediately march into the province”. Together with this application, Musurus Pasha expressed the desire of the Ottoman authorities that the letter of the Treaty of Berlin should be strictly respected, and that the settlement accomplished in 1878 had to be absolutely restored. This political course stated by the Ottoman Ambassador went further than the official course recommended by the ‘three Cabinets’.⁸⁷⁸ The future political course suggested by the Governments from Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg did not intend to allow a military intervention of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Rumelia. The statement expressed that “the Powers will not shield the provinces from exercise by the Sultan of his sovereign rights”⁸⁷⁹.

This political course which the Ottoman Empire had intended to pursue revealed the intention of the Ottoman authorities to ask the Ambassadors of the Great Powers to continue their labours and to assist the Ottoman Empire so as to re-establish the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, which even entitled the Ottoman army to occupy the Balkans. Such a situation never appeared after the Treaty had been signed. When the Grand Vizier was asked about the opinion of the Porte as regards the arrangements which should be made in order to prevent the recurrence of disturbances, he said that the Ottoman authorities expected, after Prince Alexander had departed from the Province, that the Ottoman Empire together with the Great Powers would open negotiations with the Principality of Bulgaria with the purpose to consider a revision of the new status of things. The Grand Vizier pointed that the Russian authorities also wished to pursue a similar course. Further conversations between the British Ambassador and the Grand Vizier revealed that the latter was aware of the effect that such a political course would have for the advancement of the Russian influence over the Balkans, but the Grand

⁸⁷⁸ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, October 16, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 129.

⁸⁷⁹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir A. Paget to Marquis of Salisbury, Vienna, October 15, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 126.

Vizier did not have the power to resist. Preventing Prince Battenberg from taking hold of the Bulgarian throne was the only condition which could interrupt the assimilation of the institutions of the Principality by Russian agents.⁸⁸⁰ This attitude of the Ottoman authorities left the impression that the Porte and the Sultan acted under the influence of Russia, without realizing the real menace if a Russian dominance had been established in the Principality and the Province. To prevent Prince Battenberg from dismissal would mean to prevent the Russification of the region in proximity to the Ottoman capital.

However, the Circular note addressed to the Great Powers included the reply to the Resolution that had been prepared in a more moderate tone, in comparison with the considerations previously stated by the Ottoman statesmen. The Porte appealed to the Great Powers for obtaining measures with which to restore the order in Eastern Rumelia, respecting the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, but the Ottoman authorities abstained from mentioning any independent intervention in Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁸¹

After the Sultan had decided to count on Russia for restoration of the *status quo* in Eastern Rumelia, he became later a prisoner of the policy of the three allies: Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany. Also, there were disagreements between Russia and Austro-Hungary on the compensation for Serbia and the removal of Prince Battenberg. Austro-Hungary was embarrassed by the opportunity for the Russian influence to be strengthened in Bulgaria, once with the deposition of the Prince; on the other hand, Russia was anxious about the claims raised by Austria because Vienna wanted to receive compensations for Serbia. However, they managed to disguise their distinctions and agreed upon the formula for restoration of the *status quo* in the Province, and the Sultan had to achieve this political program. The three Powers decided to use the predisposition of the Sultan so that he would invite the Great Powers to participate in an official Conference.⁸⁸²

5.3.3 The Tophane Conference

On October 22nd, 1885, the Ottoman authorities addressed an official invitation to all the Great Powers for their participation of the Conference, whose purpose was to establish a basis for deliberations as regards the maintenance of the Treaty of Berlin and the

⁸⁸⁰ F.O. 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 16, 1885, No 443, PRO.

⁸⁸¹ Parliamentary Papers, '*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*', from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 18, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 140-142.

⁸⁸² Medlicott, "The Powers and the Unification", p. 82.

restoration of the previous state of the affairs in Eastern Rumelia.⁸⁸³ The official invitation was followed by long and difficult consultations about the preliminary agreements on the subjects that should be debated at the future official Conference. The Ottoman authorities firmly insisted in front of the Great Powers that the basis for considerations had to be the *status quo ante*. Besides, the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha and The Minister of Foreign Affairs Mehmed Said Pasha, who advocated for a more moderate course and had doubts about the opportunity for returning to the *status quo*, declared in front of White that the Ottoman Empire did not have intentions to apply military measures, as they believed that the resolution issued by the Conference would be suffice to restore the former state of affairs. They also added that the Porte would not come with any proposal but it would only state general principles and leave the Powers to advice the Sultan.⁸⁸⁴ They considered that they relied on “the moral effect which would be sure to be produced by a unanimous declaration in favour of the *status quo ante*, provided it was unanimous and sincere”, and such a measure would be sufficient. The Ottoman Statesmen rejected White’s objection to this political course, which, according to his opinion, had to be replaced by an attitude of satisfying the wishes of the population so as to prevent a ‘conflagration’. They explained their reservation by the attitude of Greece and Serbia, which declared that if the *status quo ante* had not been restored, they would have regarded the situation as a *casus belli*.⁸⁸⁵

Until the middle of October, except for Russia, the rest of the allies from the League of Three Emperors were inclined to accept the proposal of a personal union and the appointment of Prince Battenberg as Governor General of Eastern Rumelia. Even the Ottoman Empire was not foreign to this idea, although it preferred to wait until the Powers reached particular arrangements on the subject.⁸⁸⁶

On the eve of the Conference, the Great Powers still remained divided by their views for a solution and they even strengthened their positions. Britain made it clear that it would not agree on summoning Prince Battenberg to leave Eastern Rumelia because such an act would endanger his position. On the other hand, the allied Powers put pressure on the Sultan, to consolidate his attitude as regards their suggestion to invite the Bulgarian

⁸⁸³ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Musurus Pasha to Marquis of Salisbury, Imperial Ottoman Embassy, London, October 22, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 165.

⁸⁸⁴ F.O. 195/1505, Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 3, 1885, No 477, PRO.

⁸⁸⁵ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 3, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 201.

⁸⁸⁶ F.O. 195/1498, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, October 30, 1885, No 467, PRO.

Prince so as to restore the *status quo*. This situation made the Sultan mindful. F.A.K. Yasamee explains that “in the first place, Abdulhamid feared that the Bulgarians would be encouraged to defy the Powers, and that the Three Empires would then ask him to proceed unilaterally, and to use armed force to secure a restoration of the status quo.” Furthermore, the Sultan was convinced that a military response, in case of a refusal of Prince Alexander to leave Eastern Rumelia and to restore the previous order in the Province, would only deepen the crisis. The situation threatened to develop into a war of the Balkan states against the Empire.

The Sultan’s apprehension was also aroused by the demands of Russia and Austro-Hungary for division of the Balkan Peninsula. The Sultan desired to avoid such a situation that could result in a regional war and it might not be restrained by the obligations stipulated in the Treaty of Berlin and by the agreements concluded within the League of the Three Emperors.⁸⁸⁷ There was a collision risk between Russia and Austro-Hungary in the Balkans. Also, a settlement for partition equally threatened the Sultan’s authority in the Balkans. The Sultan did not want to be involved in a war with uncertain outcome. He supposed that the Ottoman Empire would find itself in a very difficult position because it was supported by Austria, Russia and Germany and, at the same time, all its initiatives were thwarted by the British opposition.⁸⁸⁸

The Grand Vizier summarized the political situation on the eve of the Conference very accurately: Bulgaria desired union with Eastern Rumelia; Russia struggled to continue its influence in the Principality of Bulgaria; Britain wanted to remove Russia's influence from Bulgaria. As refers to Italy, it did not support any of the Powers because it could not obtain anything, and expressed only its support for the preservation of the Treaty of Berlin. Although Austria-Hungary seemed to be in favour of Russia, it wanted to take advantage of the crisis. Germany wanted to protect the Ottoman rights without breaking the relations with its allies, Russia and Austria-Hungary. France wanted to be seen by Russia and, for this purpose, it supported Britain and took an attitude in favour of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁸⁹ The situation proved that the issue which concerned the Great Powers was neither the demands of Eastern Rumelia’s population nor the Sultan’s rights there, but their imperial interests. The Ottoman authorities walked straight into the trap of the Anglo-Russian rivalry.

⁸⁸⁷ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 162-163.

⁸⁸⁸ *BOA. YA.HUS* 184-109, October 31, 1885.

⁸⁸⁹ *BOA. YA.HUS* 184-108, October 31, 1885.

Meanwhile, the League of the Three Emperors prepared a program which was presented to the Porte on October 30th, 1885, by the German Ambassador. The program consisted of three articles and two assessments and it was proposed to be submitted to the Conference by the Ottoman Delegates: 1) the conference had to agree upon sending summons to Prince Alexander, inviting him to evacuate the Province and to restore the previous order in Eastern Rumelia, according to the provisions from the Treaty of Berlin; 2) after the Bulgarian soldiers left Eastern Rumelia, to send an Extraordinary Ottoman Commissioner to Plovdiv so as to establish the executive authority until the decision of the Conference entered into effect. Besides, the Commissioner would be designated with the authority to reduce the number of military forces to the usual number, and 3) as soon as the population from Eastern Rumelia accepted the decisions of the Conference, the Sultan would order the revision of the Organic Law which should implement some improvements in the administration and economy of the Province, in the name of peace and happiness for the population. If the Porte and the Sultan agreed upon the basis of the program, they had to submit it at the second meeting of the Conference, where the ambassadors of Germany, Russia and Austro-Hungary would declare their support for the proposal.⁸⁹⁰

After the first meetings of the Conference, on the 4th of November 1885, the Sultan gave instructions to the Ottoman representatives to avoid coming out with any “difficult proposals” since they could not assure him that these suggestion would meet unanimous support at the Conference. Therefore, Abdulhamid abstained from proposing the program of the Three Emperors. The existing divergence in the views of the Great Powers made the Sultan obtain a policy of temporizing, which aimed to prevent him from taking sides.

However, Mehmed Said Pasha stated that the Ottoman authorities would not object to the British proposal which implied to carry out an enquiry for the amelioration of the life conditions of the inhabitants from Eastern Rumelia, if all the Powers accepted it. If the proposal had been approved, the Porte would have insisted that all ethnic groups that inhabited the province should be consulted and, in the meantime, the Porte would requisite the settlement of a provisional authority to restore legality and to prevent assimilation, which had been applied lately by the Principality of Bulgaria. When the

⁸⁹⁰ BOA. Y.PRK.BŞK. 10-7, October 30, 1885, *Izvestia na Darzhavnite Arhivi, 120 godini ot Saedinenieto*, Berlin around October 26, 1885 (A copy of a secret note of the Deputy Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, Count von Bismarck, in regard with the convening of the Conference of the Ambassadors in Constantinople), No 21, Vol. 89(2005), p. 161-162.

Sultan was asked if he could entrust the Bulgarian Prince with the provisional authority until a final resolution was established, he answered that there was no possibility to obtain Russia's consent for the designation of the Prince. The Sultan feared that the Conference might have been cancelled.⁸⁹¹

The first proposal of the Ottoman Government, affirmed on the eve of the Conference, referred to the restoration of the order in the Province before the act from September 18th, 1885, which had to defend the Sultan's rights in the Province, ensured by the provisions from the Treaty of Berlin. This attitude of the Ottoman authorities left the impression that the Porte refused to accept and to realise the real situation and the changes brought by the revolutionary movement from Eastern Rumelia into the political atmosphere on the Balkan Peninsula. In this regard some authors argue that the Ottoman delegates became spokesmen for Austro-Hungary and Russia at the Conference, especially when the likelihood of Prince Alexander to withdraw with his troops from the Province was discussed.⁸⁹²

Thus, the second meeting of the Conference was opened with the general declaration of the Ottoman Plenipotentiaries, requesting the cooperation and advice of the Great Powers as regards the restoration of legality of the Sultan's authority in Eastern Rumelia. The meeting concluded with the decision that the Ottoman authorities should formulate some definite proposals with reference to particular measures for the restoration of the *status quo ante*.⁸⁹³ The Grand Vizier revealed the following day what measures would be suggested in order to reach an agreement in Eastern Rumelia. He asserted that the Ottoman authorities would refrain from proposing any invitation or summoning Prince Alexander, but they would ask that persuasion should be used to induce him to withdrawal himself and his troops to Bulgaria. Regarding the hostilities of Greece and Serbia, the Ottoman authorities considered that the wisest solution would be a moral pressure. The Grand Vizier also stated that if Prince Battenberg had abstained from interference in useless matters, his position as Prince of Bulgaria would have remained untouchable inasmuch as his declaration of obedience to the Sultan, on his arrival in Plovdiv, was appreciated by the Sultan. He also acknowledged that the Ottoman Empire could not "expose itself to a war, to the consequences of disregarding

⁸⁹¹ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 6, 1885, No 181, PRO.

⁸⁹² Hristo Glushkov, "Frantsia, Osmanskata imperia", p. 75.

⁸⁹³ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 7, 1885, No 185, PRO.

the advice of the three Emperors”. Nevertheless, the Grand Vizier promised to accept the proposal of the British Ambassador for consulting the wishes of the population from the Province. The Porte also approached indirectly the British Ambassador asking about the support they would rely on, in case “they incurred risk of collision by not adopting the course on what they had now resolved”.⁸⁹⁴

The British Ambassador observed, after Mehmed Said Pasha’s long visit, that the Ottoman authorities’ uncertain attitude resulted from two apprehensions. Firstly, the Sultan reckoned that Britain desired to provoke a quarrel between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and secondly, the cancellation of the Conference would make Russia and Austro-Hungary take over all questions regarding the Balkans, using as pretext the British actions in Egypt. The Ottoman authorities were concerned about Britain’s attitude, because they perceived that Britain had “more to gain than to lose by delaying a crisis in European Turkey to which the breaking down of the European Concert and the provoking attitude of the three Empires would inevitably lead”.⁸⁹⁵ The anxiety of the Sultan, caused by the ambiguous support of the League of the Three Emperors, influenced the Ottoman authorities to approach Britain.

At the third meeting of the Conference, the Ottoman authorities presented their proposal with tangible steps for the arrangement of the crisis in Eastern Rumelia. The program included three points:“(1) that they should not incur material or territorial losses;(2) that they should exercise their right under the Treaty of Berlin of occupying the Balkans; and (3) that such arrangement should become in Eastern Rumelia as it will avoid giving the minor States a pretext action”. This program had the same contents as those of the program prepared by the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha and in the first days after the outbreak of the crisis. In addition, the Ottoman Plenipotentiaries suggested that “*indulgence*” should be extended on Prince Alexander’s infringement act against the Treaty of Berlin. It was also proposed that a new Governor General must be appointed in Eastern Rumelia and Prince Alexander had to be persuaded to hand over the Province to the assigned Governor General. The proposal of the Ottoman authorities met the hostility of the delegates from Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany, for reasons of

⁸⁹⁴ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 8, 8 p.m., 1885, No 488, PRO.

⁸⁹⁵ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 8, 3.30 p.m., 1885, No 485, PRO.

insufficiency. At the next meeting, the Ottoman authorities had to bring forward again their proposal, in a more precise form.⁸⁹⁶

The Ottoman Government required that the Ottoman Ambassador, Musurus Pasha, should insist in front of Lord Salisbury on the following strategy: the British authorities would advise Prince Alexander to submit himself to the decisions of the Conference, and to withdraw his troops from Eastern Rumelia. He even implied that if Prince Alexander refused to yield, “the penalty would be the loss of his position as Prince of Bulgaria”.⁸⁹⁷ Such a locution used by the Ottoman Ambassador revealed that the Ottoman authorities already realised the importance of preserving Prince Battenberg on the Bulgarian throne, and they tried to defend their rights by manoeuvres between the struggle of Russia and Britain.

Before the next meeting, the Grand Vizier communicated to the British Ambassador that the Ottomans intended to maintain their proposal made at the previous meeting, with some additional explanations as regards the way of convincing Prince Alexander and the appointment of a new Governor General. Those ideas would be brought forward, but any coercion against Prince Alexander should be forsaken and indulgence should be conceded for all his acts. As the alternation would be made in the sense of the Sultan’s non hostile disposition towards the Bulgarian Prince, the Grand Vizier asked for British support.⁸⁹⁸

On the same day, November 11th, 1885, the British Ambassador received a message from Sultan Abdulhamid II, message which expressed the Sultan’s disappointment by Britain’s refusal to advise Prince Alexander to leave the Province. There was also stated that: “The Sultan would still however look entirely to England for support and friendly actions during the present crisis.”⁸⁹⁹ The development of the Conference and the attempts of the Three Emperors’ League, to force the Sultan towards a military intervention in the Province, made the Sultan re-consider his political course and approach the British officials. It must be clarify that except Bismarck neither Russia nor

⁸⁹⁶ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 9, 1885, No 191, PRO.; Parliamentary Papers, “*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*”, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 9, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 209-210.

⁸⁹⁷ Parliamentary Papers, “*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*”, from Marquis of Salisbury to Sir W. White, Foreign Office, November 12, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p.214-215

⁸⁹⁸ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 11, 1885, No 196, PRO.

⁸⁹⁹ F.O. 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 11, 1885, 12.30 p.m., No 194, PRO.

Austro-Hungary really desired a military intervention which would re-open the Eastern Question. The incitement for military intervention of the Porte by the League of the Three Emperors had an aim to force Prince Battenberg to restore the *status quo* and to oppose the British political course. The Sultan would fall in a trap if he continued his cooperation with the Emperors' League, because they were able to threaten him any time that they could renounce to support the Treaty of Berlin. Consequently, such an attitude could bring open hostilities to all the Balkan countries. Furthermore, they avowed that if no solution was found, they would be forced to seek a way to secure only their interest and they would forsake the interests of the Sultan.⁹⁰⁰ However, because the British authorities refused to make any concessions and they entirely objected to the political course of the Ottoman authorities for restoration of the *status quo*, the Ottoman authorities maintained their course in accordance with the program of the Three Emperors.

At the fourth meeting of the Conference, before the outbreak of the Serbo-Bulgarian War, the Ottoman Government presented its modified proposal:

1. To send a Special Delegate to Prince Alexander with a written invitation from the Sublime Porte, calling upon him, in the name of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and the Great Powers, to withdraw his troops from Eastern Rumelia.
2. At the same time, to instruct the Delegate to address a summons to the authorities and to the population of the Province, exhorting them both in the name of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and the Great Powers, to return to their obedience.
3. Thereupon, to send an Extraordinary Commissioner to Eastern Rumelia, who will have provisionally the powers of a Governor General until the appointment, according to the established usage and this Commissioner will undertake the establishment of order in the Province and the management of administrative business in conformity with the Organic Statute.
4. To instruct the Commissioner to take over the Administration of the country as soon as the Prince will have withdrawn.
5. The population from Eastern Rumelia, where the order had been disturbed, would obey and submit to the legitimate authority of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, and His Majesty, in a constant solicitude for the welfare of all his subjects, desired that a Mixed Commission to be instituted in agreement with the Powers, and he suggested to examine, according to the Report which shall be drawn up by the Commissioner, the improvements inspired by experience, which might be introduced into the Organic Statute of Eastern Rumelia, to secure the prosperity

⁹⁰⁰ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 164.

and material welfare of this province as well as the proper working of its administration.⁹⁰¹

As regards the rest of Great Powers, it was evident to them that the proposal was not “genuinely Turkish”. They realised that the Sultan endorsed the project under the influence of the Three Emperors’ Governments, also supported by Italy.⁹⁰² With reference to the last proposal of the Ottoman authorities at the Conference, the Sultan expressed in front of White that “he trusted the friendship of England to use its influence with Prince Alexander to yield, by returning with his troops to his own Principality, leaving the affairs of Eastern Rumelia to be arranged after his departure”⁹⁰³. Indeed, the Sultan realised that the position of the British authorities was the key for reaching an agreement and settling the crisis. The firm opposition of the British Government against the proposal of the Ottoman delegates at the Conference could ruin the work of the Conference, which would leave the Sultan to settle the question himself by bilateral negotiations with Prince Alexander. Therefore, the Ottomans could find themselves in difficult circumstances. They thought that Prince Battenberg would not leave the Province only because of verbal threats, which on the other side would encourage Serbia and Greece to look for territorial compensations that could be obtained only from the territories ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The absence of an agreement threatened the outbreak of a greater Balkan crisis. Furthermore, if the Conference had been cancelled, the settlement of the affairs in the Balkan Peninsula would have been left in the hands of Austro-Hungary and Russia, fact that could lead to the final dismemberment of the Sultan’s European territories.

The British and French Ambassadors refused to approve the Ottoman program, which thwarted the work of the Conference. In this regard, the Ottoman Ambassador was instructed to persuade the British Prime Minister to agree with the proposal, stating that the rejection of the approval at the Conference would give the Bulgarians the idea that they were supported by Britain and it would delay their return to obedience.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰¹ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 12, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 217-218.

⁹⁰² *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 13, 10.15 p.m., 1885, No 198, PRO.

⁹⁰³ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 15, 1885, No 199, PRO.

⁹⁰⁴ Parliamentary Papers, ‘*Correspondence respecting the affairs of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria*’, Said Pasha to Musurus Pasha, Constantinople, le 15 Novembre, 1885, Turkey No 1, 1886, p. 250-251.

Even if the Ottoman authorities appeared very desirous to be advised by the British authorities, they were also inclined not to renounce their present position. When Prince Alexander sent a letter to the Porte, the Ottoman ministers were debating whether to ask him to “return to legality by remaining in Bulgaria and letting matters in Eastern Rumelia to be restored to the previous state of things under the Sultan’s authority”⁹⁰⁵. After the outbreak of the Serbo-Bulgarian War, on the 14th of November 1885, the crisis received new prospects. The Serbian military hostilities were not only against the Principality of Bulgaria but against the sovereign possessions of the Sultan. Indeed, there were two opportunities in front of the Sultan: he could take advantage of the situation and summon his troops in Eastern Rumelia or he could wait and see the outcome of the military conflict, supposing that the Bulgarians would be defeated. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Prince sent a message to the Sultan, informing that he left with his troops “acting in defence of the Empire and asking what steps the Sultan proposes to adopt with that view”⁹⁰⁶. The Ottoman authorities recognized the right opportunity to reach a solution and they decided to propose immediately the execution of their proposal for appointment of a special Commissioner to be sent in Eastern Rumelia. At the same time, an Extraordinary Commissioner and a Mixed Commission would be established, with the task to investigate the requirements of the population. The British Commissioner was forced to yield and to accept the proposal of these two ideas, but he took them ‘ad referendum’⁹⁰⁷. However, the attempt of the British authorities failed when they wanted to force the Ottoman authorities to accept the British resolution for consulting the wishes of the population from Eastern Rumelia before the application of any further measures. A few days earlier, before the resolutions were proposed, Mehmed Said Pasha explained to White that the Sultan entirely opposed any similar measures, considering that such principles had already caused the Ottoman Empire the loss of the Danubian Principalities after the Congress of Berlin and the disintegration of the Empire. Actually, the Ottoman authorities were well

⁹⁰⁵ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 15, 1885, 2.45 p.m., No 200, PRO.

⁹⁰⁶ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 20, 1885, 11.15 a.m., No 210, PRO.

⁹⁰⁷ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, November 20, at midnight, 1885, No 212, PRO.

aware how distasteful this idea was to Russia, Austria and Germany and that these countries would never entertain it.⁹⁰⁸

The Conference was interrupted on November 26th, 1885, when it became obvious that the Great Powers could not reach a mutual agreement to the present situation, at least until the result of the Serbo-Bulgarian War. Since that moment, the Sultan had to deal on his own with the issue. The Governments of the Three Empires advised the Sultan to seek a settlement for the crisis in the frame of the rights given to him by the Treaty of Berlin and to restore his authority in the province by sending military forces and a Commissioner.⁹⁰⁹ One of the fears of the Sultan was that he could be left on his own without support from any of the Great Powers.

On November 30th, 1885, Mehmed Said Pasha informed the British Ambassador that the Porte had sent two delegates, Gabdan Efendi and Lebib Efendi, to the capital of Eastern Rumelia with the purpose of inviting the authorities of the Province to return to their obedience towards the Ottoman Empire and to restore the legal authority of the Sultan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs requested the British authorities to instruct their Consuls in Plovdiv to support the Ottoman Commissioners in their endeavours to accomplish this task. The British Ambassador refused to take any measures in this regard, objecting to the action of the Porte, which was considered by the British Cabinet as a unilateral step. These measures had been suggested at the Conference, but as it was cancelled, the Great Powers could not reach an agreement. So, the Ottoman authorities took independent actions, by applying their resolutions without the mutual approval of the Conference.⁹¹⁰ Indeed, the Sultan himself objected to the steps suggested by the Porte and his Minister, who also urged him to appoint an Extraordinary Commissioner and to prepare a military demonstration which would be achieved together with the mission of the Ottoman delegates. The Sultan preferred to wait for the results of enquires about the initial state of affair in the Province, and later to proceed with this program.⁹¹¹ The Consuls of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Italy in Plovdiv communicated to the Prefect of the town about the visit of the Ottoman delegates. It was reported that the purpose of the mission was to inform the population about the decision of the

⁹⁰⁸ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 20, 1885, 11.15 a.m., No 210, PRO.

⁹⁰⁹ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 167.

⁹¹⁰ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, November 30, 1885, No 222, PRO.; *BOA. Y.EE.* 115-2, November 28, 1885.

⁹¹¹ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 168.

Conference, namely the restoration of the *status quo ante*.⁹¹² However, as a decision in this sense had not been taken by the Conference, it raised suspicions why they took such a measure. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire gave orders for the enforcement of the military preparations on the frontier of the Province.⁹¹³

The unexpected swift victory of the Bulgarian army against Serbia changed the situation as regards the Bulgarian union. It became clear that *status quo ante* could not be restored. The attitude of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Germany also experienced changes. On the 5th of December 1885, the Russian Ambassador reported the modifications of the views from his Government and the German Ambassador Radowitz received instructions to give more moderate councils to the Sultan. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Government also delayed sending out the Extraordinary Commissioner, and even if a large force was concentrated near the border, the Porte hesitated to enforce a military intervention in Eastern Rumelia.⁹¹⁴

The mission of the two Ottoman delegates in the Province failed to achieve any results because they faced the resistance of the Bulgarian population that affirmed its strong determination to maintain the Union at all risks. The Ottoman delegates did not even have the occasion to issue the proclamation for restoration of the *status quo*. Their actions were forestalled by the Prefect “on the account of state of siege”. Thus, the Ottoman delegates left the Province, one of them travelled to Sofia, the other returned to Istanbul.⁹¹⁵

Only one choice was left for the peaceful settlement of the crisis from Eastern Rumelia. Even from the beginning, Abdulhamid avoided seeking a solution with military enforcement and he inclined to accept the formula for a straightforward agreement with Prince Alexander. The reason for this decision was also influenced by the modified language of the Russian Ambassador Nelidov, as refers to the Bulgarian Prince and the defence of the *status quo ante*.⁹¹⁶

⁹¹² *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 2, 1885, No 228, PRO.

⁹¹³ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 1, 1885, No 223, PRO.

⁹¹⁴ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 5, 1885, 6 p.m., No 230, PRO.

⁹¹⁵ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 6, 1885, 11 a.m., No 231, PRO.; *CDA*, f. 1599k, op. 1, a.e. 754, l. 63-64, 70.

⁹¹⁶ *F.O.* 195/1505, from Sir W. White to Marquis of Salisbury, Constantinople, December 6, 1885, No 232, PRO.

On the 9th of December 1885, Abdulhamid approached again the Ambassadors of Russia and Germany, expressing his desire to summon the military forces in Eastern Rumelia and to restore the order and Ottoman authority. This time his measures were disapproved and as Yasamee argues “Abdulhamid’s tactics of friendly passive resistance had paid off”.⁹¹⁷ The Sultan’s patience and policy for postponing an active political course brought him a desired result, the abstention from military intervention of the Ottoman Empire in the present crisis

5.3.4 The Tophane Agreement

After the defeat of the Serbian army by the Bulgarians, the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire were only left to elaborate the wording of the agreement for the personal union between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

In March, when the Tophane Conference was convened in order to elaborate the final provisions of an agreement for the settlement of the Union, the Russian authorities objected to mentioning the name of Prince Alexander as Governor General. Russia insisted that his personal name should be omitted and it should be written only the Prince of Bulgaria. The Russian Foreign Minister Giers, stated in front of the Ottoman Ambassador in St. Petersburg that, if Prince Alexander did not accept this solution, he should leave Bulgaria and a better prince could be appointed. In this attitude of the Russians and their readiness to risk the dismissal of the Prince, the Ottoman authorities recognized Russia’s aim to encourage the Ottoman Empire to implement the agreement without reference to the Prince, which would make him insist on refusing the provision, and thus, by rebelling against the agreement, a reason for dismissal would be created. The development in this sense would cause a number of difficulties and it was desirable to prevent them. Therefore, the most suitable political course for the Ottoman authorities was considered to be the maintenance of the relation between the Prince and the Sultan, and the assurance that the Prince would remain as Governor General of Eastern Rumelia.⁹¹⁸ It was obvious that the Ottoman authorities realised that the right political approach towards the issue was the establishment of friendly relations between the Prince and the Sultan. If Prince Battenberg would be able to preserve his status in

⁹¹⁷ Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, p. 169.

⁹¹⁸ *BOA.Y.A.HUS* 189-53, March 22, 1885.

the Principality, the position of the Sultan as a sovereign would also be secured and it could diminish the influence of the Great Powers, especially Russia.

The crisis, which arose from the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, continued for approximately six months and Gabdan Efendi who was the Ottoman Commissioner had plenty of opportunities in the capital of the Principality - Sofia, to carry on conversations with Prince Battenberg, both officially and unofficially, on various topics as regards the present European diplomacy. When the Bulgarian crisis was almost at its end, Gabdan Efendi noted his personal observations about the origin, the development of the crisis, Bulgaria's position and the Ottoman Empire's attitude in this regard. He affirmed that the political position of the Prince was stronger than the position of the Porte due to the difference of status between him, the Sultan and the Ottoman Government in the European diplomacy. The Sultan received communications about the views, ideas and announcements of the Great Powers through the official diplomatic channels. In comparison with the Sultan, Prince Alexander was aware of the facts behind all this official information. He was also cognizant with the secret intelligence of the European monarchs through unofficial diplomatic channels which revealed the secret thoughts and demands of the European Powers. These thoughts were often diametrically opposed to the official discourse. The Prince was close to the ruling dynasty of Britain, Germany, Russia and, because his father was a close friend of the Emperor of Austria, he received information from various sources. Furthermore, he benefited from the support and protection of particular European Monarchs. These circumstances enabled the Prince to envisage and to deal with the initiatives of his opponents amongst the Great Powers. However, the Prince's thoughts and attitude towards the Ottoman Government never changed since the crisis outbreak. During the entire period, he asked the Ottoman Commissioner to present his absolute loyalty to Sultan Abdulhamid. Prince Alexander struggled to neutralize the foreign interference in Eastern Rumelia.⁹¹⁹

In the autumn of the year 1885, when the act of union came into effect, Sultan Abdulhamid did not manage to attract the support of any of the Great Powers, in order to suppress the movement.⁹²⁰ The Sultan considered that a wiser political course would be the intervention of the Great Powers for the crisis settlement in Eastern Rumelia,

⁹¹⁹ *BOA.Y.A.HUS* 189-52, March 21, 1886.

⁹²⁰ Roderic Davison, *Turkey a Short History* (Huntingdon, England: Eothen Press, 1988) p. 93

instead of the application of military force for the restoration of the *status quo*. He also thought that a war against Bulgaria could not remain localized and the events in Eastern Rumelia would surely induce the outburst of a revolutionary movement in Macedonia. Subsequently, Greece and Serbia could intervene, followed by the Great Powers. Also, Eastern Rumelia had already been reckoned as a lost part, since 1879. Even Sultan Abdulhamid realised the changes brought by the act of union in the political arena in the Balkans, with the establishment of a larger and more powerful national state. Therefore, he abstained from an active political and military intervention to prevent the consequences of such events. Sultan Abdulhamid and his political course targeted the gradual alienation from Britain and the decrease of Britain's influence over the Ottoman Empire. Instead, the Sultan desired to establish a friendly relation with Germany. This strategy influenced the Sultan's policy during the crisis in Eastern Rumelia. He agreed to collaborate with Russia because of the advice received from Germany, counting on the recently hostile attitude of the Russian Emperor towards the independent policy pursued by Prince Alexander. The Sultan completely ignored the opportunity to settle the issue face to face with Prince Alexander, even after the repeated attempts for approach made by the Prince. There was a constant fear that the situation might develop into a second Great Eastern Crisis that would result in the final partition of the European territories that belonged to the Ottoman Empire. This fear guided the Sultan to renounce the rights in Eastern Rumelia, given to him by the Treaty of Berlin.

Conclusion

The establishment and the development of the Province of Eastern Rumelia is an example that reveals a scene from the Anglo-Russian political rivalry during the 19th century, towards territories of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. The struggle for control over these territories, which would provide a dominant position in the Near East for one of these two Great Powers, discloses the role of even small parts of land with geostrategic importance such as Eastern Rumelia's significant role in the political struggle of the two Great Powers.

The Anglo-Russian political rivalry in the Balkans culminated in 1878. Because of the division of Bulgaria and the establishment of Eastern Rumelia, a particular degree of regional balance of power was successfully secured in the Balkans. Anyway, the compromise that was reached in Berlin, between the British and Russian interests, could not establish a lasting peace on the Balkan Peninsula, as the future events would demonstrate. Moreover, this compromise became the reason for a series of regional conflicts which impacted the development of the Balkan states and have even left traces until nowadays.

In 1878, the British Foreign Secretary - Lord Salisbury – insisted that the south part of Bulgaria to be separated and established as autonomous Province under the authority of the Sultan. The idea of the British Government was that the new Province should be created according to the model of the British colonies. This diplomatic move pursued two political tasks: firstly, to defend the Ottoman Empire against Russian hostilities with unforeseen outcome by establishing a natural barrier, and secondly to diminish the Russian influence on the Balkan Peninsula.

The Province of Eastern Rumelia was entirely a project of the British diplomacy, but to be able to apply the above-mentioned political tasks, the Province had to be organised in such a way as to assure its complete subordination to the Sultan's authority. Thus, at the beginning, the British authorities obtained a resolution that the Province had to be established as an ordinary Ottoman *Vilayet* and the strong authority of the Sultan had to be preserved. Furthermore, the Ottoman power had to be strengthened by securing the rights of the Muslim and Greek minorities against the predominant position of the Bulgarian element. Therefore, Eastern Rumelia would be turned into a multiethnic Province in the future.

However, this course of the British Cabinet was hindered by the political situation from the Province, the strong opposition of the Bulgarian population against the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, the absence of a vigorous Ottoman policy and the Russian energetic activities against the policy of the British authorities as regards the organisation of the Province. Indeed, at the beginning, the British officials were not really aware of what the Russian authorities had achieved with reference to the organisation of administration and governance in the Province. A governance institution had already been established in Eastern Rumelia and it prepared the foundation for the Bulgarian population to rule the Province.

As a result, Britain faced the joint opposition of the Russians and the Bulgarians and it was compelled to reconsider its political course regarding the organisation of Eastern Rumelia. Britain realised that, if it could not reduce the Russian dominance in Eastern Rumelia by subordinating the Province to the powerful Ottoman reign, this could be achieved by giving extensive rights of self-government to the Bulgarians. By allowing the population of the Province to have the opportunity to develop in its own way, then the Bulgarians would be able to free themselves from the Russian tutelage. Therefore, Britain adopted a strategy for elaboration of the Organic Law that would provide autonomy to the Province.

The strong opposition of the Bulgarian population against the division of Bulgaria developed into a national movement for union of the Province with the Principality of Bulgaria. Indeed, the British politicians realised that the unification was a matter of time. The documents had already revealed that tendency. Even from the beginning, Lord Salisbury did not believe in the ability of the Sultan to impose his power there, so the division of Bulgaria was considered a temporary measure. Because the Unionist Movement from the Province had never diminished, the British authorities thought that the unification could be accomplished only when it would contribute to Britain's interests in the region or, in other words, it could be used against Russia. In 1885, when the political situation in the Principality and in the Province indicated that the Bulgarian authorities alienated from the Russian Empire, Britain was ready to accept a unified Bulgaria. Actually, its reasons were similar to those from the year 1878, which imposed the division of "Great Bulgaria", restricting the Russian penetration in the Balkan Peninsula. The paradox of the British Diplomacy was that the British authorities and

Lord Salisbury himself had divided Bulgaria and, after 7 years, Salisbury was the politician who defended the Union.

The division of “Great Bulgaria” seriously undermined the position of Russia on the Balkan Peninsula. After the triumph of the Russian army against the Ottoman Empire, the Russian society blamed the Russian diplomats for the losses suffered in Berlin. The division of “Great Bulgaria” was considered even a greater loss than what had occurred in the Crimean War.

Indeed, the reality was different. Due to the Treaty of Berlin, Russia had the opportunity to establish its dominant position over the Principality of Bulgaria. The Treaty of Berlin provided Russia with manoeuvring grounds for further penetration in the direction of the Ottoman Capital and the Straits. Furthermore, the geographical position of the Principality enabled the Russian authorities to strengthen their position at the Black Sea and to interfere in the trade over the Danube River, because the Principality possessed the port of Varna and Ruse.

The Russian authorities considered the Bulgarian lands as their sphere of influence so they were not ready to abandon the Province of Eastern Rumelia. Therefore, the Russian Diplomacy made significant endeavours to diminish as much as possible the Sultan’s power there. They considered that this could be achieved by designation of the real autonomy, providing the population with extensive self-government rights. Furthermore, Russia struggled to secure a dominant position of the Bulgarian population in the governance of the Province and to establish the Bulgarian character of the governing regime there. Moreover, the administration of the Province had to be similar to that of the Principality of Bulgaria. It was greatly important for the application of this program to prevent the Ottoman Empire from occupying the Province. So, it had to obstruct the re-establishment of the Ottoman authority there. The Russian political objectives towards Eastern Rumelia were to secure the ground for the further union between the two parts of Bulgaria, fact that would restore the Russian position in the Balkans and would increase its influence.

In 1878, the Russian authorities ignored the Bulgarian demands for union and subordinated them to the Russian political interests. This political attitude continued to be pursued in the next years. Russia suppressed the activities of the Unionist Movement in Eastern Rumelia, which made the Bulgarians look for another way to achieve their national goals, which Russia had not calculated. In 1885, when the Bulgarians

disregarded Russia's warning that the political situation was not suitable for the achievement of a union, the Russian authorities rejected to support the act and they later opposed it. The real reason for their opposition to the Union was hidden in the fact that the unification did not serve the Russian interests. Furthermore, it reduced the Russian influence in Bulgaria and respectively in the Balkans in exchange for the increase of Britain and Austro-Hungary's dominance.

As refers to Eastern Rumelia, the British politicians realised that the Bulgarian population would like to be released from the Russian influence and to follow an independent political development, pursuing its national unification. However, the Russian officials did not foresee that, by suppressing the national desires of the Bulgarians and subordinating their development to the Russian political interests, Russia would lose its last client in the Balkans. Russia made an attempt to set up Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria as political corridors for its future manoeuvres in the Balkans, and the result of this political course was the alienation of the Bulgarians from the Russian Empire.

The correlation between the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which induced a struggle for control over the possessions of the Ottoman Empire and the preservation of the European peace, rendered the political situation very complex in the Balkans and it made the Ottoman authorities pursue a cautious policy as they were deprived from the opportunity to be a deceiving factor in the Balkan politics.

The policy of the Ottoman Empire towards the Province of Eastern Rumelia originated from the comprehension of the role obtained in the rivalry between Russia and Britain over the Empire. At the Congress of Berlin, the Balkan possessions of the Ottoman Empire were partitioned and the Ottoman delegates were not allowed to defend the interests of the Empire. The Empire entirely lost its sovereign rights over the Balkan lands. Only the Province of Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia were returned to it, but under the circumstances which provided the extension of the Great Powers' penetration rights there and the increase of the aspirations of the Balkan states.

The Ottoman authorities acknowledged Eastern Rumelia as a lost territory from the very beginning and they refused to struggle for the re-establishment of their authority there. Even if at the beginning, the Ottoman Empire received support from Britain to impose its strong authority and to secure the preservation of the Province inside the borders of the Empire, the Sultan and the Porte abstained from any active political measures in this

regard. Moreover, the Sultan relinquished his right to summon the Balkan garrisons and to occupy the frontier between the Province and the Principality of Bulgaria. Especially after the British authorities accepted the implementation of a governance program in Eastern Rumelia which would transcend the administrative autonomy, the Ottoman authorities rejected all proposals for any military forces to be installed in the Province.

As a result, the Sultan's authority in the Province was reduced to a nominal one. The Ottoman political circles realised that the Province established on this model would continue to be a controversial issue in the future between the interests of Russia, Britain and Austro-Hungary, which could bring only troubles to the Empire because the Sultan would be involved in the political game for repartition of the influence in the Balkans. The events that occurred in the year 1885 proved this assumption of the Sultan.

During the crisis from the year 1885, the Ottoman Empire abstained from taking active measures in order to attempt to cease the disorders in the Province and, thus, to prevent the Union. Instead, the Sultan preferred to submit the matter to the will of the Great Powers. The Sultan firmly rejected to resolve the crisis through a military intervention in Eastern Rumelia. The Porte also refused the proposal of Britain to make attempts for the settlement of the crisis by negotiations with Prince Battenberg. This policy of temporizing maintained by the Sultan was used as an excuse for the Great Powers to settle the crisis without taking into account the Ottoman rights and demands. Therefore, the Province of Eastern Rumelia was physically lost, which made the Ottoman Empire uncertain about the future in the Balkans.

There were several results from the Anglo-Russian rivalry over the Province of Eastern Rumelia. Firstly, the struggle between them made possible the Union of the Province of Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria because this movement served the British interests in the Balkans in the year 1885. It strengthened Britain's positions in the region, undermining the Russian status in the Province. Secondly, after 1885, as a result of Russia's policy towards the Bulgarians during the last 7 years and its hostile attitude towards the Union, the relationship between Bulgarians and Russians deteriorated for a long time. The fact forced the Bulgarian authorities to seek friendship among other Great Powers, which brought Bulgaria in the sphere of Germany during the First World War. Thirdly, the experience obtained by the Bulgarian officials through the times of crisis in 1885, facilitated the political circles from Bulgaria to realise that, by using the controversial interests of the Great Powers, the national ideal could be

achieved – the unification of Bulgaria’s lands inside the borders designated by the Treaty of San Stefano. Therefore, after 1885, all the Bulgarian Governments subjected the Bulgarian foreign policy to the idea of ‘liberation’ and annexation of Macedonia. Bulgaria gained self-confidence and in the future years, the Principality of Bulgaria infringed the Treaty of Berlin one more time in 1908, declaring its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, from 1912 to 1913, after the creation of the Balkan League, which was inspired by the Bulgarian state, the Balkan state acted independently and tried to solve the Eastern Question, dividing Macedonia amongst them against the will of the Great Powers.

We can conclude that the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin created such a political situation in the Balkans, that instead of extinguishing the fire arisen during the Eastern Crisis, it maintained the flames. Besides the ambitions of the Great Powers to exercise control over the Balkans, the Treaty pulled the trigger on the territorial desires of the Balkan states and on ethnic conflicts because the national feelings of the Balkan population were completely disregarded by the Powers during the creation of the map and the new order in the Balkans. In the future, this situation developed a rivalry between them for expanding their territories, which resulted in constant feelings of suspicions and revenge amongst the Balkan states. The policy of irredentism which would dominate the relationship between the Balkans states during the next century was a response to the Treaty of Berlin and it was caused by the continuous Anglo-Russian rivalry.

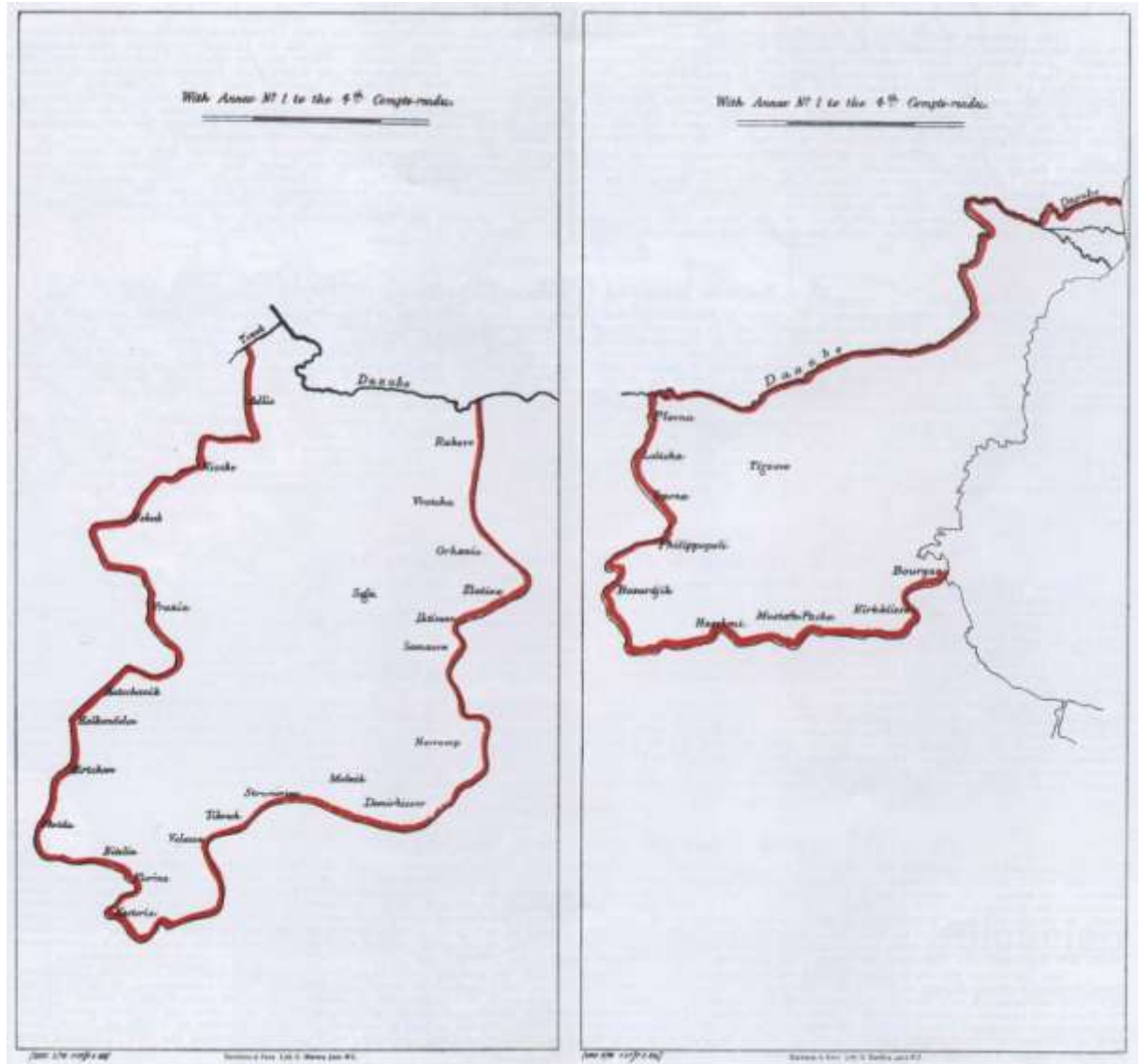
Maps

Map 1 Russian project for the creation of a Bulgarian state 1877



http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_bg.htm

Map 2 Project for division of the Bulgarian lands accepted at the Istanbul Conference 1877



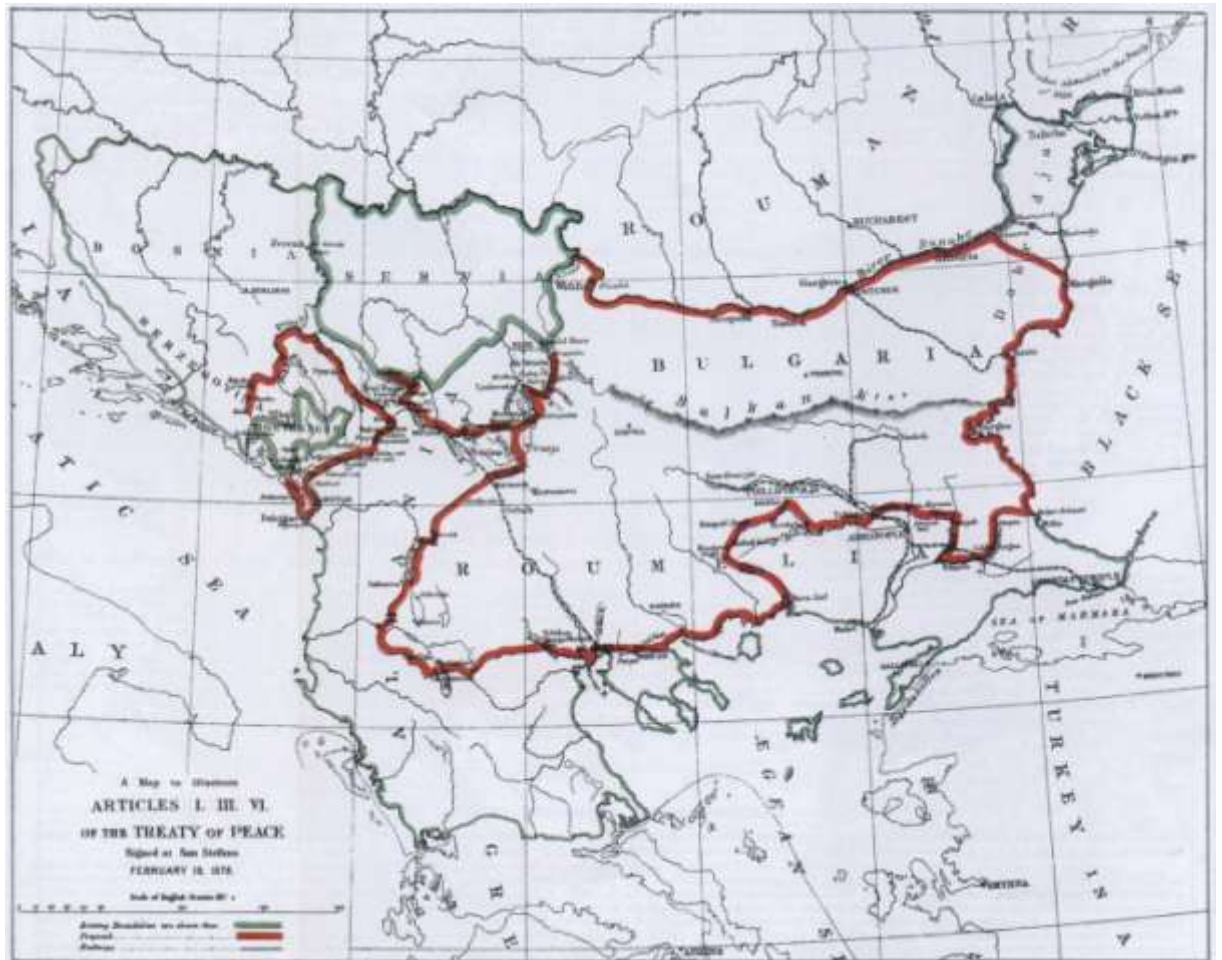
http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_bg.htm

Map 3 The diocese of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1870



http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_bg.htm

Map 4 Treaty of San Stefano 1878



http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_bg.htm

Map 5 Treaty of Berlin 1878



http://www.promacedonia.org/en/dr/dr_30-40_bg.htm

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Resume

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