

**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY  
IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF BULGARIA:  
A CASE STUDY IN BULGARIA'S RELATIONS  
WITH RUSSIA (1878-1915)**

**A Master's Thesis**

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September 2005**

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WITH RUSSIA (1878-1915)**

**The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University**

**by**

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MASTER OF ARTS**

**in**

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA**

**September 2005**

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis will analyze the change and continuity in Bulgaria's foreign policy regarding relations with Russia, from the establishment as a principality under the suzerainty of Ottoman Empire in 1878, to Bulgaria's entry into the First World War in 1915. After the establishment of the Bulgarian principality in the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the focal point in Bulgaria's foreign policy was relations with Russia. In contrast to expectations, Bulgaria did not turn into a vassal state of Russia but instead pursued a national policy to create a 'Greater Bulgaria', the borders of which had been drawn in the Yeşilköy Treaty of 1878. Russia's insistence on interference in Bulgarian internal affairs and its inconsistent policies further deteriorated relations between the two states. After the catastrophic result of the Balkan Wars, Bulgaria even became the enemy of Russia by joining the Central Powers in the First World War. Bulgaria's decision in 1915 denoted the failure of Russian diplomacy in Bulgaria.

## ÖZET

Kalaycı, Burcu

Master Tezi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yar. Doç. Sean Mc Meekin

Eylül 2005

Bu tez Bulgaristan'ın 1878 yılında Osmanlı himayesi altında prenslik olarak oluşumundan 1915'te Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na girişine kadar Rusya ile ilişkileri göz önünde bulundurularak, Bulgar dış politikasındaki değişiklik ve devamlılığı inceleyecektir. Berlin Antlaşması'nda Bulgaristan Prenslığı'nin kurulmasından sonra Bulgaristan için dış politikanın odak noktası Rusya ile olan ilişkilerdi. Beklenenin aksine, Bulgaristan Rusya'nın tebaası olmadı, milli politikası doğrultusunda Yeşilköy Antlaşması'nda sınırları çizilen Büyük Bulgaristan'ı oluşturmaya çalışan bağımsız bir devlet haline geldi. Rusya'nın Bulgaristan'ın içişlerine karışması ve tutarsız politikaları iki devlet arasındaki ilişkileri daha da kötüleştirdi. Balkan Savaşları'nın yıkıcı sonuçlarından sonra Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Bulgaristan Merkez Kuvvetlerin yanında savaşa girerek Rusya'nın düşmanı haline bile geldi. Diğer taraftan, Bulgaristan'ın bu kararı Bulgaristan'daki Rus diplomasisinin de çöküşü anlamına geliyordu.

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## INTRODUCTION

The decline of the Ottoman Empire and the accelerating development of the Balkan nationalism in the nineteenth century in particular motivated the Russians, playing a role the protectors and the benefactor of Slavdom, to take side with Balkan nations such as Bulgaria. For the Balkan nations, relations with Russia offered the prospect of assistance to gain their independence.

Bulgarian nationalism, which developed later than in other Balkan nations, basically because of the territorial proximity to the center of the Ottoman Empire, was also promoted by Russia. Between 1856 and 1876, some five hundred Bulgarian students received Russia's scholarship for study. The underlying reason for Slav brother to back the Bulgaria was that Bulgaria could be a potential satellite, an effective base close to the Straits and also an outpost for spreading Russian influence.

Bulgaria showed a national awakening towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The growing economic prosperity of this nation also had an effect on development of national awakening among the Bulgarians. The main step for the establishment of roots of the Bulgarian national ideology was the separation of Bulgarian Orthodox Church from Greek influence. In 1870, with Russian support, a Bulgarian exarchate was established and regarded as the bridge to the political independence of the Bulgarians. This national church also

had the right to extend its influence over any neighboring diocese in which two thirds of the people voted for it. It provided significant opportunity for the aggrandizement of Bulgarian influence on Macedonia for the next two decades in the extent of other Balkan states.

The small Bulgarian uprisings culminated in April 1876 with a major revolt. However the Ottoman government managed to suppress the rebellion. In the Istanbul Conference of 1877, Russia tried to solve the problem by peaceful means. Especially, Count Ignatiev, the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul, favored Bulgarian claims, but the Porte rejected the terms. The failure of the conference to obtain concessions from the Ottoman Empire led the Russian intervention. After the defeat of the April uprising of 1876 and the unsuccessful attempt to resolve the Eastern Question, especially intensifying on the faith of Balkan nations in that period, in 1877 Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire to expand its influence in the Balkans and defeated the Ottomans. When the Ottomans sued for peace, a conference was held in Yeşilköy (San Stefano) in 3 March 1878.

The most important result of the Yeşilköy Treaty, sponsored by Russia, was the creation of a new tributary Bulgarian Principality under the Ottoman Empire, which included most of Macedonia. Russia envisioned a station to spread Russian influence in the Balkans. In helping to create the Bulgarian state, initially the Russians earned the gratitude of the Bulgarian people. Russia counted heavily on Bulgaria, expecting that its influence in that country would be accepted and unchallenged. However, this preliminary treaty was revised with the insistence of Great Powers who feared Russia's increasing influence in the

Balkans. After the replacement of the Yeşilköy Treaty by the Berlin Treaty after six months, the Bulgarians were embittered because the 'Greater Bulgaria' was partitioned into three pieces. In the following years the restoration of the boundaries established in the Treaty of Yeşilköy became the goal of Bulgarian nationalists.

In this context, the relationship with the Russians was significant for both the internal and external affairs of newly established Bulgarian autonomous principality. In the beginning, the Russian authorities supervised the organization of the new government; Russia played an active role in achieving Bulgarian autonomy, but the commitment and gratitude did not lead to subservience and dependency. The relations between the Russians and Bulgarians soon grew strained because of Russia's interference to the Bulgarian internal affairs curbing establishment of independent Bulgarian policy.

For the next two decades, the dynamics of Bulgarian foreign policy were based on the realization of national aspirations and in this path; Bulgaria chose to sacrifice its liberator for the national ideals. There were of course fluctuations in the relationship with Russia: in spite of having smooth relations with the personal regime of Ferdinand after 1896, the two sides never became affable towards each other. At the end, when the World War I broke out, the only Balkan state, which allied itself with the foes of Russia, was Bulgaria.

There was a large variety of causes for the rupture of Russo-Bulgarian relations: the absolutist ambitions of Prince Alexander von Battenberg, the first Prince of Bulgarian principality and his Russophobia; the struggle of the Western Great Powers especially Britain and Austria-Hungary, against Russian

influence in the Balkans; most importantly the natural development of the Bulgarian nation. As relations with Russia deteriorated, the Bulgarians began mythologizing their war of independence writing Russia out of the story. The inconsistency of Russian policy in Bulgaria allowed the Bulgarians to assert their claim to independence.

This thesis will analyze Bulgaria's relations with Russia after its establishment as a principality in 1878 to its entry into the First World War as an enemy of Russia. My aim is to explain the main components of the gradually deteriorating relations between Bulgaria and Russia, and how Bulgaria transformed itself from a vassal of Russia into an enemy.

This thesis consists of three main parts after the introduction. In the first chapter, I will discuss the repercussions of the Yeşilköy and Berlin Treaties for Bulgaria, the role of Russia in the establishment of Bulgarian principality and the inconsistent policies of the Russian ministers. Most important developments affecting bilateral relations between the Bulgarians and Russians such as unification of the Eastern Rumelia with the Bulgarian principality will be examined.

In the second chapter I will focus on the foreign policy of Prime Minister Stefan Stambulov and his Russophobe politics, especially the impact of the Macedonian problem, internal conspiracies between the Russophiles and Russophobes, the strife between the king and the prince, on Bulgarian relations with Russia. Bulgaria's declaration of independence and the Russia's mediating role in this crisis will also be observed.

In the third chapter, Bulgarian road to the Balkan wars and the Russia's aim at the beginning of the twentieth century will be mentioned. The Russo-Bulgarian relations and Bulgaria's disappointment to establish 'Greater Bulgaria' at the end of the wars and the last change to compensate its losses in the First World War are the last parts of this thesis.

The final chapter examines the consequences of the deterioration in Russo-Bulgarian relations, as the two nations found themselves on opposite sides in World War I. The reality was that Russia had made an incredible mistake in Yeşilköy by creating 'Greater Bulgaria'. For nearly two decades, this newly-emerged state gradually established its own national identity at the expense of Russia's interests in the Balkans. The Yeşilköy "syndrome" brought two nations fighting against each other at the end.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **ROLE OF RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BULGARIAN PRINCIPALITY**

#### **1.1. The Treaty of Yeşilköy and the Dream of ‘Greater Bulgaria’**

The 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian war was a matter of crucial importance in drawing the borders of the Balkan states and the establishment of Bulgaria in particular. The war laid the foundation of the Bulgarian state. It should be remembered that, in the course of war, the Bulgarian volunteer force was built up with the direct assistance and command of Russia. The activities of the Bulgarian voluntary force contributed to both the Bulgarian national movement and to Russian victory in this war.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the capture of Plevna and Edirne by the Russian armies on 10 December 1877, the Ottoman Empire had no choice other than to make peace, so it appealed to the Great Powers. An armistice was signed on January

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<sup>1</sup> During the war, the Bulgarian volunteers numbered 6,000 men (three brigades). It should also be added that the formation of Bulgarian national military force after the war was totally the business of Russia despite the hindrance of Russian this sort of activities in the Berlin Treaty. In this army, there were thirty infantry battalions, eight batteries, six cavalry squadrons, two companies of field engineers and a company of siege artillery, a total of 31.400 troops. Ilia Iliev and Momtchil Ionov, “the Influence of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 on Balkan Armies”, in *Insurrections, Wars and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, Béla K. Király and Gale Stokes eds. (New York, 1985), p.363

31, and a preliminary peace was agreed upon 3 March 1878.<sup>2</sup> In the negotiations, Panslavist ideas were prominent among the Russian negotiators and Russia ardently pursued this doctrine, in theory, in the interest of Slav people, but, of course, its real aim was to expand Russian influence in the Balkans. Russia expected Bulgaria to be a subservient state in the diplomatic and political atmosphere and on the other side, the Bulgarian people, in turn, saw Russia as a protector.

The most critical articles of the Treaty of Yeşilköy of 3 March 1878 were concerned with the creation of an Autonomous Bulgarian Principality, including all territories up to the Black Sea in the east, Lake Ohrid in the west, the Danube in the South, except northern Dobruca and the Aegean Sea in the south except Salonika and Thrace. These borders were as much as any Bulgarian nationalist could ever dream.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that although they would soon be revised, the Yeşilköy borders composed the archetypal Bulgarian state and from that point, the Bulgarians struggled to reach these lines again.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, while drawing the borders of the principality, Russian diplomats did not invent it arbitrarily. Instead, they took into consideration which territories were inhabited by a predominantly Bulgarian population, as laid out in the Istanbul Conference in 1876-1877<sup>5</sup>.

Count Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatiev, the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul, was the organizer of this treaty as the chief Russian negotiator and praised the

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<sup>2</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p.173

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge, 1997), p.85

<sup>4</sup> This treaty was considered as the liberation of Bulgaria and still celebrated as the national day of liberation

<sup>5</sup> A conference of ambassadors met at Istanbul to compel the Porte to issue certain reforms on behalf of the Christians. So the Ottomans made an attempt by declaring a liberal constitution according to which all subjects were equal before the law regardless of creed. However Russia did not satisfy and the mission of the conference fell.

treaty as ‘an eloquent expression of Pan-Slav aspirations’<sup>6</sup>. He was also representative of the Russian Near Eastern policy to preserve and reinforce its influence among the South Slavs.<sup>7</sup> Internal provisions for the government of the principality of Bulgaria were also to Ignatiev’s liking.<sup>8</sup>

According to the provisions of this treaty, Bulgaria would be given full autonomy, governed by an elected prince (with the assent of the powers and to be confirmed by the Sultan; the prince should not be a member of the reigning house of any great powers), would pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire, have a national army, and the countries would be occupied by no more than 50,000 Russian troops for two years while excluding the Ottoman army in the principality.

Furthermore, a Bulgarian assembly would be formed to work out an administrative statute. Other provisions presenting the diminishing role of the Ottoman government were the destruction of the Ottoman fortresses on the southern bank of the Danube and the disposition of the real property of Muslim people who emigrated to the Ottoman territories.<sup>9</sup>

In this treaty Russia not only granted Bulgaria the most generous possible frontiers, but also created most suitable conditions for Russian influence in the principality.<sup>10</sup> As a result, it seemed that after the treaty the chief controller in the Bulgarian Principality was the Russian Empire, it was visible that this area would become a Russian satellite, so the establishment of the biggest principality

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<sup>6</sup> William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890* (New York, 1956), p.138

<sup>7</sup> Hristo Hristov, “Retrospect and Analysis of the San Stefano Treaty”, in *Insurrection, War*, p. 340

<sup>8</sup> B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880* (London, 1962), p. 411

<sup>9</sup> Hristov, “Retrospect”, p.339

<sup>10</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism- Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886* (Connecticut, 1978), p.7



in the Balkans would no doubt provoke objections of other countries in the region. As Valentine Chirol wrote, “Bulgaria, once erected into a fair-sized second-class Power, would, it hoped and believed, be wholly devoted to Russian interests, and prepare the way for Russian supremacy in the Balkans.”<sup>11</sup>

Among the territories of the Balkan Peninsula, the region settled by Bulgarians was of primary importance for Russia as its geographic proximity to the Straits, because one of the main objectives of Russian Balkan policy was the control of the Straits which were the ‘the key to Russia’s back door’<sup>12</sup>. Russia was willing to secure a strong advance post toward the Straits, and it drew attention to other Slavs in the Balkans to protect its own position in the Balkans. As a great power, Russia showed Panslav sympathies to the Bulgarian people and posed a liberator role to maintain its control, prestige and power.

All in all, the Yeşilköy Treaty would pave the way for Russia’s consolidation and preservation of its influence among the Bulgarians through Russian army occupation for two years. On the other side, the creation of a tributary Bulgarian principality with aspired frontiers would be the first step of the political independence in future, the ultimate goal of the Bulgarians. However, the contradiction between the Russian and Bulgarian interest would bring forward an incredible tension between two nations for the following two decades.

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<sup>11</sup> Valentine Chirol, “the Attitude of the Great Powers”, in *the Balkan Question*, Luigi Villari ed. (London, 1905), p.241

<sup>12</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.3

## **1.2. Establishment of the Bulgarian Principality in the Treaty of Berlin and Bulgarian Disappointment**

Considering its conclusions, the Yeşilköy Treaty became the most critical one for future of the Balkan states in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the threat posed to the European balance of power was the main reason of the rearrangement of the Yeşilköy Treaty. It was harmful to the interests of Austria and Britain. The latter was concerned about the approximate position of the principality under the control of Russia, and thought that it would give a great chance to Russia to access the Aegean Sea and also control Istanbul. The Romanian, Greek, and Serbian governments also showed their dissatisfaction. During the war, the Greeks were forced to remain neutral and at the end of the war they received nothing. The Serbs were also dissatisfied about the establishment of a Bulgarian principality in their next door. They were worried that Bulgaria would bring Russian power too far into the Balkans. They were certain that Russian patronage would be placed exclusively behind Bulgarian national aims. Salisbury, the British Foreign Minister, summed up the matter, saying he was against Bulgaria since it would increase the Russian influence in the Balkans and for him, the new Bulgaria would be a strong Slav state under the control and patronage of Russia.<sup>13</sup>

In response, Gorchakov, the Foreign Minister of Russia claimed that the new Bulgaria did not emerge from the Yeşilköy Treaty, but its germ was founded by the Istanbul Conference and these borders were just the mature type

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Jelavich, *ibid*, p. 7, Arthur May Hyde, *A Diplomatic History of Bulgaria* (Connecticut,1974), p. 84

of it.<sup>14</sup> In a note of March 28, 1878, Gorchakov stated that the exclusive aim of the temporary administrative measures in Bulgaria ‘is to contribute to national development and make possible the convocation of the first Bulgarian assembly for finalizing the organization of the principality’.<sup>15</sup> However, Russia’s inept policy on Bulgaria would indicate that the virtual aim was the aggrandizement of Russia’s influence in the region.

On 6 March 1878, Austria-Hungary proposed a European Congress necessary for the reexamination of the treaty. The main aim of Great Powers was to avert Russia as a dominant power in the Balkans. In this congress, Otto von Bismark put pressure on Russia to submit the Treaty of Yeşilköy to the scrutiny of the Powers, and Russia yielded.<sup>16</sup> ‘The Yeşilköy Bulgaria’ was opposed mainly by Austria and Britain. In the Congress of Berlin, the ethnographic uniformity of the Bulgarian people was ignored and Greater Bulgaria dismantled into three parts. The biggest part, between the Balkan Mountains and the Danube, became a tributary autonomous principality attached to the Ottoman Empire. Macedonia and southern Thrace were returned to the Ottoman Empire. Thus the Greater Bulgaria, including over 164,000 square km and 4,500,000 inhabitants, would be shrunk to 64,000 square km and 1,850,000 inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> The Bulgaria in the Berlin Treaty was just 37.5 percent of the size of Yeşilköy Bulgaria. In the south of the Balkan Mountains, the province of Eastern

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<sup>14</sup> Hyde, pp.84-85

<sup>15</sup> Vladien N. Vinogradov, “The Berlin Congress of 1878 and the History of the Balkans”, in *Insurrection, Wars*, p. 327

<sup>16</sup> Bismark wished to preserve the stability in Europe that enjoyed after the Treaty of Paris in 1856, since when no Great Power had been allied to another. And in the conference he did not support Russia and this produced Russian resentment.

<sup>17</sup> In accordance with the treaty, Serbia and Montenegro were declared independent, Rumania became independent too and Dobruca was also given to Rumania but it gave southern Bessarabia to Russia. Russia also received Batum, Kars and Ardahan, too.

Rumelia<sup>18</sup> was established as an autonomous province of Ottoman Empire with a Christian governor.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of Russian administration in Bulgaria was debated; eventually it was decided that the Russian commissary was to be maintained only for nine months.<sup>20</sup> After the Berlin Treaty, the Russian delegates expressed their shock and Gorchakov declared that: “I only regret having had to add my signature to such a transaction” and continued “I consider the Berlin Treaty the darkest day in my life”. To Aksakov, one of the founders of Panslavist principle, the work of the Congress, Bulgarian partition, in particular, was a shameful betrayal of the “Slavic cause” for which Russian soldiers had shed their blood. He exclaimed, “we are burying today the principles and traditions of our forebears, our own wishes; we are burying Russian glory, Russian honor, Russian conscience...”<sup>21</sup>

Though ‘Greater Bulgaria’ was partitioned, the establishment of the first national government in the new Bulgarian principality was given to Russia. This was as a great opportunity for Russia to intervene in Bulgarian domestic politics; in particular, Russian officials were assigned to form the new administration. Further, although it was not stated in the treaty, all the Powers recognized Russian predominance in the area and thought that Russia would supervise the

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<sup>18</sup> Beaconsfield insisted that they should not have called this area ‘the south Bulgaria’ but ‘Eastern Rumelia’, since the Bulgarians in Rumelian region would eventually want the unification of north and south parts. Hyde, p. 88

<sup>19</sup> The governor should be nominated by the Sultan every five years, and its capital would be Filibe.

<sup>20</sup> The roots of Russian administration went before the outbreak of war; a special commission had been set up to deal with the administration of Bulgaria with the head of Vladimir Aleksandrovich Cherkassky, the organizer of a civil administration in every district. When he died he was succeeded by Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov. Mercia Macdermott, *A History of Bulgaria 1393-1885* (London, 1962), pp. 309-310

<sup>21</sup> Michael Florinsky, *Russia, a History and an Interpretation* (New York, 1953), v.II, p.1024

organization of the autonomous principality.<sup>22</sup> The War Minister of Russia, Dmitrii A. Miliutin stated his hope and declared that: "...whatever the limits the Congress sets on southern Bulgaria, northern Bulgaria will serve as a nucleus for the future unification of the entire Bulgarian people".<sup>23</sup> Most European statesmen expected that Bulgaria would not be an autonomous state in true sense, but a Russian client within the Russian sphere of influence.<sup>24</sup>

From the Bulgarian side, given these provisions of the Berlin Treaty, it was likely to expect Bulgarian disappointment, since the Bulgarians waited for the independence and it dispersed the Russian Bulgaria. Ivan Geshov, the future Prime Minister said that:

When the ominous month of July 1878, we in Plovdiv read the Times the first published text of the agreement, in which a short sighted diplomacy in Berlin partitioned our homeland, we were left crushed and thunderstruck. Was such an injustice possible? Could such an injustice be reversed?<sup>25</sup>

This treaty did not satisfy Bulgarian expectations. After news of the treaty spread, as the Geshov's statement shows, that their ideal Bulgaria would be broken up, the Bulgarians became furious. They even thought that it would be preferable to live in a united administration under the Ottoman rule rather than being divided.<sup>26</sup> It was a national catastrophe that changed the Yeşilköy Treaty from a reality to myth, a rallying point for the nationalists.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge, 1990), vol.I, p. 367

<sup>23</sup> David Mackenzie, *Imperial Dreams, Harsh Realities, Tsarist Russian Foreign Policy, 1815-1917* (Forth Worth, 1994), p.85

<sup>24</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.28

<sup>25</sup> Richard C. Hall, *Bulgaria's Road to the First World War* (New York, 1996), pp.3-4

<sup>26</sup> Egon Caesar Conte Corti, *Alexander von Battenberg* (London, 1954), translated by E. M. Hodgson, p.31

<sup>27</sup> Imanuel Geiss, "The Congress of Berlin, 1878: An Assessment of Its Place in History", in *Insurrections, Wars*, p. 35

### **1.3. Changing Patterns of Relations with Russia: From the Berlin Treaty to Eastern Rumelian Crisis (1878-1887)**

#### **1.3.1 Election of Alexander von Battenberg and the Russian Administration**

The Berlin Treaty required an Assembly of Notables (*sobranie*) was to meet under the superintendence of a Russian Imperial Commissioner to form a constitution, before the Bulgarian Prince was elected. Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov (1820-93), a skilled commissioner with liberal inclinations, became the head of the Russian provisional administration between the Berlin Treaty and the election of a Prince.<sup>28</sup> He was also the innovator in the preparation of the draft constitution.<sup>29</sup> The draft constitution was sent to St. Petersburg for approval. The problem with him was that he behaved as if he was the actual ruler of the principality. For example, he filled all the main posts in the Civil Service with the Russians.<sup>30</sup>

This constitution, adopted on 10 February 1879 in Turnovo was an extremely liberal document.<sup>31</sup> It was the creation of both Russian officers and Bulgarian liberals.<sup>32</sup> Russian Governor, General Prince Dondukov, tried to establish a fairly liberal constitution, which provided not only for the necessary

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<sup>28</sup> Corti, p.31. The assignment of Korsakov as the Russian Minister in Bulgaria was also the same in Romania by the appointment of Kiselev.

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, p.180

<sup>30</sup> Chirol, p.246

<sup>31</sup> It provided universal suffrage and limitations of the powers of the Crown. The constitution provided several individual freedoms: The citizens were guaranteed the inviolability of his person, his prosperity and his correspondence; there were to be no arbitrary arrests, nor any religious discrimination. Freedom of movement was to be limited, that of expression was guaranteed by the interdiction of any limitation upon the press; freedom of associations was limited to the extent that it was not to endanger the security of the state.

<sup>32</sup> It was mainly based on the Serbian and Romanian Constitutions. Russian government thought that Bulgarian people with their revolutionary characteristics could only be held under control by a liberal constitution in order to gain their confidence.

ministries, but also for a popularly elected assembly, for the limitation of the power of the prince and to serve as a bulwark of the Russian influence.<sup>33</sup> Many Russian officials and civil servants were appointed. Most importantly, General Dmitrievich Parensov became the Bulgarian minister of war and assigned for training and organizing a Bulgarian army. Moreover, Alexander Petrovich Davydov, the consul-general in Sofia was appointed as the first diplomatic agent accredited to the autonomous principality. So, at first glance after the Berlin Treaty, Russia was breathing down Bulgaria's neck all the time.

During the formation of the constitution, in the Assembly of Notables, there were representatives not only from Bulgaria but also Rumelia, Macedonia, Thrace and Dobruca.<sup>34</sup> It was essential that Bulgaria still did not approve fall of 'Greater Bulgaria' in the Treaty of Berlin by calling the representatives from the outside of frontiers of principality.

After the establishment of the constitution, two parties were formed in Bulgaria, one led by Tsankov, Karavelov and Slaveikov on the liberal side, and Volkovich, Nacovich, Grecov and Stoilov on the other.<sup>35</sup> The conservatives were the rich Bulgarians, and they were more educated in foreign policy; they were pro-Russian, and they pursued Russian foreign policy. Many of its members had been educated in central and western Europe. They believed that the Bulgarians were not ready for democratic-self government. On the other hand, Liberals, many of whom were educated in Russia and influenced by nihilist-revolutionary ideas,<sup>36</sup> were more democratic and represented the Bulgarian bourgeoisie: they

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<sup>33</sup> Langer, *European Alliance*, p.336

<sup>34</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.28

<sup>35</sup> Hyde, p.95. These figures were prominent in the next decade of the Bulgarian diplomacy.

<sup>36</sup> L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York,1966), p.427

were opposed to foreign influence in general and to autocratic Russia in particular. Majority of the people sided with the Liberals. Crudely stated, the struggle between Conservatives and Liberals or between the Russophiles and Russophobes in Bulgaria was one of the disrupting reasons for the next decade that not only led the Bulgaria into internal disorder but also created a sound base for splitting the Russo-Bulgarian relations. An even more controversial point was that the Russian ministers in Bulgaria were not agreed on Bulgarian policy. While Parensov was supporting liberals, Davydov was in favor of the Conservatives.

Moreover, the attitudes of the Bulgarian Prince, Alexander von Battenberg, led to a conflict between the liberal party and the Russian military officials. For instance, Parensov, the Russian minister of war in the first cabinet tried to stop Prince's activities, on the other hand, the agent of Russian foreign office, Davydov, adopted a strikingly different attitude; he supported the politics of the Prince with respect to changing the constitution and the conservatives<sup>37</sup>.

As Charles Jelavich emphasizes, 'one of the most glaring weaknesses of the Russian handling of the Bulgarian problem was the failure to formulate and enforce a single line of action.'<sup>38</sup> An important reason for the failure of the Russian policy in Bulgaria was that Russian diplomatic and military representatives did not follow the same policy and there was no conformity in their politics. This caused further tension between the Russians and Bulgarians. The Bulgarian statesmen did not want to rule the principality with a liberal constitution but the Russians tried to establish a constitutional regime.

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<sup>37</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, "Russia and Bulgaria, 1879: The letters of A.P. Davydov to N.K.Giers" *Südost-Forschungen*, vol.15 (1956), p.427

<sup>38</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.279



For example, the Russian minister of war, D.A. Miliutin, was mostly effective in the formation. What he believed was that Russia's position on Bulgaria could be best maintained through the inauguration of the constitutional regime desired by the Bulgarian political leaders.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, all the Russian military officials and the Russian governor-general, A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov, backed the liberals and the constitution in Bulgaria.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Russian administration in the principality aimed to establish a modern administration as much as possible, and to become an ideal place to live in.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the reason behind Russia's back for a liberal constitution was to make the Eastern Rumelian Bulgarians more eager to unite with them.<sup>42</sup>

Eventually, in April 1879 the assembly, under Russian pressure, elected Alexander von Battenberg as the Prince of the Bulgarian principality.<sup>43</sup> not being a member of the ruling dynasties of any great powers in the Treaty of Berlin, he would be an ideal prince for Bulgaria. When he was with the Tsar Alexander II (1856-1881) just on the day of becoming the prince, a delegation from Bulgaria came to greet him and to show their gratitude to the Tsar. The wording of the Tsar to them was meaningful: 'From my hands receive your Prince, love him as I love him.'<sup>44</sup> Predictably, during the reign of the Tsar, Bulgaria's relations with Russia were relatively cordial, Russian support was given firstly because of the

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<sup>39</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, "Russia and Bulgaria", p. 427

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History*, p. 368

<sup>42</sup> Hyde, p.95

<sup>43</sup> Alexander von Battenberg (1857-1893), 22 years old, was the nephew of the Tsaritsa- and was volunteer in the war against the Ottoman Empire, he had been the prince of Hesse, and he was related by marriage to the English royal family. He was the ideal candidate for the Russian Tsar Alexander II, and when the Tsar encouraged him to become the prince, he said that: 'Don't make a lot of difficulties. You have always assured me that you are loyal to me, to my house and to Russia, and that you love us!' Corti, p.39

<sup>44</sup> Hyde, p.98

family relationships.<sup>45</sup> However, the assassination of Russian Tsar Alexander II on 13 March 1881 influenced both the Bulgarian and Russian political atmosphere.

The election for the assembly was held on October 12 1879, and with the result of the election, the majority became liberals, the party of Tsankov and Karavelov. After the outcome of the election, he had to nominate a brutal Russophile and the head of the liberal party- Dragan Tsankov. However, from the beginning, working the liberals was impossible for him. He preferred to form Conservative leaders, and he was not in touch with liberal party of all, and he did not make any effort to collaborate with the Russians in Sofia. Moreover, having trusted on the English support, he dared to object the Russian interest within the principality.<sup>46</sup>

Beside the troubles of the liberal party in Bulgaria, Battenberg was not pleased with Russian officials either. The minister of war was Russian and there were many Russian officials in other ministries. Russia wanted Bulgaria to be its province. 'on the one hand, Russia was anxious to control Bulgaria, and Bulgaria expected help and counsel from her benefactor.'<sup>47</sup> Battenberg at first was indebted to Russia for the independence; however, it did not mean that Bulgaria did not have a genuine and independent policy. The dilemma between Russia and Bulgaria was that the former wanted to control Bulgaria and the latter desired to gain full independence.

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<sup>45</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, p.180

<sup>46</sup> Langer, *European Alliance*, p.337

<sup>47</sup> Hyde, p.103

Battenberg was not pleased with constitutional limits to his power<sup>48</sup>. He believed that the liberal party was not the appropriate party for his views. He thought that his people would follow him rather than the liberals. He suspended the constitution on May 9, 1881, and tried to amend it. In this, he received help from new Russian Tsar Alexander III, who was very conservative and opponent of liberalism. Eventually he dismissed the liberal government on May 1881 with the help of two Russians; Russian Minister of Bulgaria, General Ehrnroth, and Hitrovo, the Russian agent in Bulgaria.<sup>49</sup> The Tsar also condemned the liberal party in Bulgaria as being revolutionaries and socialists. And the new election accepted all the demands of Alexander III, however all these changes made the things worse, as Stavrianos says ‘the basic difficulty was that neither Alexander (Battenberg) nor the Conservatives had enough popular backing to rule the country without leaning upon Russia. Yet they were not willing to pay the price for it.’<sup>50</sup> Initially, Battenberg independently rose against the Russian figures in Bulgaria. However, after he realized that he could not achieve his goal without the support of the Russian Tsar, he relied upon him for support.

During the reign of Alexander III, with the new Russian ministers in Bulgaria, relations between Bulgaria and Russia began to deteriorate. These representatives of Russia firstly sought to work with the Conservatives, but the Russians and Bulgarians could not work together. The Russians regarded Bulgaria as a Russian military outpost and political dependency.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Alexander III did not care for Bulgarian nationalism: ‘The Slavs must now serve

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<sup>48</sup> He considered the constitution in general as ‘an act of negligence or ignorance on the part of the Russians’.

<sup>49</sup> Hyde, p.113

<sup>50</sup> Stavrianos, p.430

<sup>51</sup> Hyde, p.114

us not we them.<sup>52</sup> Alexander III thought that Bulgaria was little more than a Russian satellite or a province of his own empire.<sup>53</sup> Battenberg's understanding was completely different from the Tsar: he thought that as they were both sovereign leaders, he could treat him as equal. Needless to say, it was impossible to expect harmonious relations between Bulgaria and Russia in this context.

During his reign, it was difficult to deny Battenberg's responsibility for the deteriorations of relations with Russia.<sup>54</sup> But, also the approach of Russian administration was also so inconvenient that led to sour the relations. When Battenberg came to Bulgaria, he was astonished that he was besieged by the Russians wishing to be appointed to significant official posts. Moreover, he found himself surrounded by the Russian agents. Intrigues of this sort in Bulgaria could also be founded in political life: Russia began to back the party that was opposed to the regime of Battenberg after having understood his self-determining objectives in Bulgaria.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, the railway issue created further problems. The Treaty of Berlin required the Bulgarian principality to build the Ruse-to-Varna railway by the Bulgarian administration. However, as the Bulgarians could not afford to construct the railway, by refusing to construct the lines, the liberals therefore stalled exploiting some ambiguity about the route which the line was to take.<sup>56</sup> Then, Russia insisted that the Bulgarian government allow them to construct a railway from the Danube in the north-east to Sofia or one from Danube across

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<sup>52</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.283

<sup>53</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *the Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle and London, 1986), p.162

<sup>54</sup> Langer, *European Alliance*, p.337

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Constant, *Foxy Ferdinand 1861-1948, Tsar of Bulgaria* (London, 1979), p.24

<sup>56</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p. 48

the Balkan Mountains to the Maritsa Valley. However, Bulgarian refusal to the Russian proposal of building a railway from Sofia to Danube made the Russian side annoyed, since the strategic importance of that railway was so high for Russian army which might in future operate in the Balkans. So, here, it can be observed that from the beginning, Russian and Bulgarian interests were not identical; this sort of matters would gradually build up tension between two Slavs.

About the railways, which were on the agenda for a long time, the Prince and the conservatives came into conflict with Russian Generals. In order to get rid of Russian generals, Battenberg visited Russia in 1883 to persuade the Tsar about the removal of them.<sup>57</sup> The Tsar, however, was aware of the real ambition of Battenberg in Bulgaria and ‘not only refused to remove the Generals, but even began to consider the removal of Alexander himself.’<sup>58</sup>

During the following years, the troubles between Russian and the Bulgarian officials grew. Russia’s continued interference in Bulgarian internal policy eventually created strong opposition in 1883. Political parties supported the Prince. Likewise, Alexander reestablished the constitution again with the object of reconciliation with the liberal party and won the confidence of his people in order to form unity in the principality against Russia.<sup>59</sup> So three different sides of the Bulgarian principality, namely, the prince, the liberals and the conservatives had turned against Russia. The whole Bulgaria formed a ‘national front’ against Russia’s interference in Bulgarian domestic affairs.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>57</sup> Macdermott, p.330

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan*, p.183

<sup>60</sup> Stavrianos, p.430

humiliated Russians left the principality. Russia's prestige in Bulgaria was gravely undermined.

Aftermath of this disobedience, there began intrigues of the Russians to change the government and even to form a provincial one. So, the year 1883 was a turning point in Russo-Bulgarian relations. Before that year there had been disputes between Russophiles and Russophobes on how Bulgaria should react to Russian interference, and the Bulgarian policy was not so clear about the reaction against Russian officers. However, by 1883 all Bulgaria was against Russian domination in the principality, and from this point on, Bulgaria gradually began to alienate itself from Russia's 'benevolent' policy towards the principality.

It is crucial to emphasize that the repercussions of two-sided Russian policy was not so helpful in Bulgaria. Collapse of Russian policy gave a nation to create its self- politics, which owed its autonomy to Russia. While Bulgaria tried to establish its own national politics, Russia tried to keep Bulgaria under control. Further, the contradictory aims of the Bulgarians and Russians were the underlying reason for the deterioration of the relations.

### **1.3.2. The Unification of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgarian Principality**

The expression of 'Eastern Rumelia' was first brought up in the discussions between Russia and Bulgaria over the Treaty of Yeşilköy on 3 May 1878. In accordance with this treaty, Eastern Rumelia was to remain under the political and military rule of the Ottoman Sultan while enjoying some

administrative autonomy. A Christian governor general was to be nominated by the Ottoman government with the assent of the great powers for a term of five years. The organization of this province was left under the common responsibility of a European commission and the Ottomans, and internal order was to be maintained by a local recruited gendarmerie and militia whose officers were to be appointed with due regard for local circumstances by the Sultan.<sup>61</sup>

From the beginning of the war of 1877-78, Russia chiefly displayed its aim to save the Slavic provinces from the Ottoman dominance. After the establishment of Russian administration in the Bulgarian Principality, there was a prevailing supposition in the province, incited by the Russian administrator, that one day they would unite with Bulgaria. Ultimately, the administration in the Eastern Rumelia in a very short time turned into disorder, and in 1885 the uprisings for the unification with Bulgaria broke out. However, at the end of this crisis, Russia would be greatly disappointed and Battenberg would gain increasing support from the Bulgarian people with his successful victory.

The Bulgarians in Eastern Rumelia, like the ones in northern Bulgaria, not only refused to be under Russian patronage but also desired the integration of the other parts of Greater Bulgaria broken into pieces according to the Treaty of Berlin. Moreover, Eastern Rumelia Bulgarians were never content to live separate from the Bulgaria proper. With the slogan of ‘Bulgaria is for Bulgarians’, they tried to send back Turkish immigrant tribes turning their homeland after the war by a great harassment.<sup>62</sup> In addition to the antagonist

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<sup>61</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.85

<sup>62</sup> Mahir Aydın, *Şarki Rumeli Vilayeti* (Ankara, 1992), p.30 After the unification of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgarian Principality, the total population was about three million and about 800 thousand of them Turkish people. In literature, there are many important works focusing on the

attitude of the Bulgarians, one of the reasons why Turkish population could not return to their homes was Russian commissioners' unfair and biased policy toward Turks.<sup>63</sup>

As Charles Jelavich argues: 'from 1878 to 1885, agitation for [unification] was continuous in both Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. To the Bulgarians, union was the only rectification of a grave injustice upon their nation by the great powers; it is the one issue on which opinion was unanimous throughout the century'.<sup>64</sup> The Eastern Rumelian Bulgarians, considering the establishment of Eastern Rumelia as an artificial division from Bulgaria, were waiting for the strengthening of the Bulgarian exarchate. They began to spread national provocation and anti-Russian and anti-Ottoman policy in the province. Committees were organized and 'gymnastic societies' in which the Rumelians were educated for revolutionary activities and given weapon-training. With these preparations, local Rumelian officials too expected that union was only a matter of time.<sup>65</sup> The activists also established a committee in Filibe (Plovdiv), the capital of Eastern Rumelia, to arrange their activities. This Bulgarian Secret Central Revolutionary Committee (BSCRC) was reorganized with the objective

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condition of the Turkish people and their effect in the political life of Bulgaria; Bilal Şimşir, Ömer Turan and Bernard Lory can be given as example.

<sup>63</sup> First of all and most significantly, there was a great hostility between the Turks and Bulgarians in the province during this period. During the war of 1877-78, there was a great migration of Turkish population to Istanbul and to Anatolia, and after the war, as we stated above; with the Berlin Treaty there is a big disappointment among the Bulgarians because of the loss of Big Bulgaria. So the lands left by Turkish population were so inciting to settle and live for the Bulgarian population. This aspiration of the Eastern Rumelian Bulgarians was foremost reason for the emergence of antagonism between two populations. Aydın, p.31

<sup>64</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.205

<sup>65</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History*, p.369



of uniting Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. It was also known that these societies received weapons and combat training from the Russian army.<sup>66</sup>

The first uprising began in Otlukköy with the slogan of ‘Damned Eastern Rumelia, Long Live Union!’ and the events spread to the Konar. On 18 September 1885, the rebels arrested governor general Gavril Paşa Krestovich, who was known to be in the Russian interest. Gavril Paşa offered no resistance and declared ‘I am a Bulgarian and shall not call in the Turks. I wish happiness to the Bulgarian people’.<sup>67</sup> The rebels formed a provisional government and issued a presumptuous manifesto proclaiming the union of Eastern Rumelia with the principality of Bulgaria. Moreover, in order to prevent the attack of Ottoman Empire, the revolutionary groups sabotaged the railway going to Edirne.

At the beginning, Russian representatives in the province had encouraged the push for Bulgarian unity. Russian officials in the Eastern Rumelia even promoted revolutionary activities and even supplied arms for the population.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, some Russian volunteers went to Eastern Rumelia to incite the people after the Berlin Treaty. Nevertheless, we should reiterate once again that, the Tsar’s personal relations with Prince Alexander von Battenberg of Bulgaria had deteriorated steadily since 1883 with the restoration of Turnovo constitution again, because the new Prince’s reactions to Russian administration in the principality.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Ottoman Archives of Turkish Prime Ministry [Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, hereafter BOA], Y.A. HUS. Dosya No: 183 Gömlek No: 19, 13 Zilhicce 1302

<sup>67</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, p.431

<sup>68</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *the Establishment*, p.64

<sup>69</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.131

After this momentous change, Russia altered its policy towards the principality. The Tsar's new policy was to weaken Bulgaria and eventually end Battenberg's personal regime. Russia thus opposed the union with Bulgaria, which was unexpected by the other states. Russia declared its disapproval as soon as the rising took place and preferred to be on the side of the Treaty of Berlin.

Having in mind Russia's policy towards the principality in the context of Eastern Rumelia, when the news of uprising immediately spread to Bulgaria, the Bulgarians showed their consent with the demonstrations in favor of union. Later, the Rumelians suggested to Prince Alexander to come and take up the governance of Eastern Rumelia.<sup>70</sup> Battenberg was in Varna at this time and received the following telegram:

To His Highness Prince Alexander!

The entire population of the South Bulgaria has today proclaimed in all towns and villages the Union with North Bulgaria, with Your Highness as Prince. The South Bulgarian army has taken the oath of loyalty to Your Highness and occupied the Turkish frontier. It is waiting impatiently to see its new Chief in its midst and to receive his orders. Major Nikolajev, Commander in Chief of all South Bulgarian Troops.<sup>71</sup>

Without doubt, receiving this message was one of the most difficult times of Battenberg in his life. He faced a choice of accepting the union or being abdicated by the Russians. At first, he was not sure whether to back the *fait accompli* or not. From another perspective, Macdermott claims Battenberg was

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<sup>70</sup> His ministers also urged him that he should take the leadership of the movement. The liberal president of the National Assembly, Stefan Nikolov Stambulov (1854-1895), forced the issue by telling that: 'Sir, the union is made –the revolt is an accomplishment fact, past recall, and the time for hesitation is gone by, two roads lies before Your highness: the one to Plovdiv and as much farther as God may lead; the other to Sistova, the Danube and Darmstadt, I counsel you to take the crown the nation offers you.' Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p. 217

<sup>71</sup> Corti, p.163-164

fully aware of what was going on, although to avoid international complication, he pretended to know nothing.<sup>72</sup> What was the virtual concern of Battenberg was that in the previous month he had met with, N. K. Giers, the Russian foreign minister, and had given his assurances that he would not promote unification. The union was also in violation of the Treaty of Berlin and could not be accomplished without great powers' approval. Russian opposition could be accepted. Nevertheless the Prince was fully aware that, unless he retained the leadership of the Bulgarian national movement, he would lose his throne. Moreover, the Bulgarian people were in favor of unification. He therefore accepted the situation and gave his full support to the union.<sup>73</sup>

From the Russian side, the impact of the news was met by great anger in St. Petersburg. The Tsar at once forbade all Russian officers serving in Bulgaria to participate in the movement. He then summoned all Russian officers to return from Bulgarian army. Finally he declared that the union was illegal and this action was undertaken without his consultation.<sup>74</sup> The Tsar reaffirmed his support for the Treaty of Berlin, and promised to preserve the Sultan's sovereign rights.<sup>75</sup> Amazingly, Russia also offered support if the Ottoman Empire decided to occupy Eastern Rumelia, they could take action together against Bulgaria.<sup>76</sup> It was interesting that after seven years Russia now sided with the Berlin Treaty from which it was a few years ago severely damaged and switched the other side. Russia now supported the use of Ottoman military force against Bulgaria.

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<sup>72</sup> Macdermott, p.339

<sup>73</sup> Jelavich, *History*, p.370

<sup>74</sup> Corti, p.166 By withdrawing all of the Russian officers in Bulgaria, The Tsar tried to intimidate the prince that without Russian back the union would be risky and Russia could even take measures to bring down the prince.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> BOA Y.A. HUS. Dosya No: 184 Gömlek No: 54, 12 Muharrem 1303

The Tsar sent a telegram to the prince saying that: “Russia has made so many sacrifices for Bulgaria that she has the right to expect the Bulgarian people to ask St. Petersburg for advice before making such important decisions.”<sup>77</sup>

In this context, Russia’s position entirely changed. Now, St. Petersburg had lost the control of the Bulgarians, it no longer wanted them to be strong. It is possible to assert that for Russia, Yeşilköy was a mistake in the sense that it now created a nation opposed to its Pan-Slavic policy. Bulgaria in contrast now began to establish ‘Yeşilköy Bulgaria’ while breaking the relations with Russia.

On this occasion, Battenberg could not expect Russian support. A Bulgarian delegation, headed by Metropolitan Kliment of Turnovo and the representative of the assembly and Eastern Rumelia went to Copenhagen to speak with the Tsar and Giers<sup>78</sup>, but the Russian decisiveness was also visible from what the Tsar told Bulgarian delegation: “There can be no question whatever of dissolving the union, but as long as you keep your present government, expect from me nothing, nothing, nothing!”<sup>79</sup>

So Russia refused support for Bulgarian union with Eastern Rumelia. Russia could not approve the means the Bulgarians appealed simply because it was against his majesty.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the Tsar was opposed to the unification for fear that the Bulgarian Prince would get closer to the English government, the signatory power in the Berlin Treaty and in that way Russia would lose

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<sup>77</sup> Corti, p.167

<sup>78</sup> Barbara Jelavich, “Tsarist Russia and the Unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, 1885-1886” in *Imperial Power and Development: Papers on Pre-Revolutionary Russian History*, Don Karl Rowney ed. (Ohio, 1990), p.101

<sup>79</sup> Langer, *European Alliance*, p.348,

<sup>80</sup> Hyde, p. 144

influence.<sup>81</sup> The British government was beginning to view Bulgarian nationalism as a valuable way to hinder the Russia's domination of the Eastern Balkans. The Bulgarians also knew that Russia was not happy with this way of annexing Eastern Rumelia to Bulgaria. Russia was in favor of a direct military interference by the signatory powers of the Berlin Treaty. But Bulgaria refused and did not allow any Russian intervention.<sup>82</sup>

The Great Powers' ambassadors met in Istanbul to discuss the crisis, but the conference could not reach a decision. Serbia (with Austrian backing) declared war against Bulgaria to prevent Eastern Rumelian union, which would change the balance between Balkan states. Serbia was also concerned that the irredentist spirit of Bulgaria could spread to Macedonia as well. Even though, the Bulgarian forces had no senior officers to organize them and no organized commissariat to feed them or their animals, Battenberg's army with Rumelian revolutionary forces won the two-day battle in Slivnitsa with an excellent defense with his young officers who had replaced after Russian official withdrawal.<sup>83</sup>

Battenberg's successful campaign was important in the history of Bulgaria because it made it impossible to preserve the status quo, as he desired above all. The Prince became at once a national hero with his national army, got rid of Russian officers; and the Russian press, which was never allowed to depart far from the views of the autocracy, was full of praise for the Prince and for the

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<sup>81</sup> This crisis indeed indicated the rivalry between Russia and England, which previously opposed to larger Bulgaria for the reason that Bulgaria would not be a Russian puppet, but now had the chance the principality into a block against Russian expansionist policy toward south.

<sup>82</sup> Turan, p.67

<sup>83</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *the Establishment*, pp. 166-167 At the end of the war, the Peace Treaty of Bucharest was signed and reestablished the *status quo ante* between Serbia and Bulgaria.

Bulgarian army, which had been of course a Russian creation.<sup>84</sup> Yet, it demonstrated more inconsistency in Russia's policy towards Bulgaria; there was a simultaneous Slavic pride and Pan-Slavism erupted again in Russia. This was merely an echo of the Yeşilköy Treaty. The problem with Russia's policy was that it was prone to this kind of romanticism.

The striking point in the Bulgaria's relations with Russia considering the Serbia-Bulgarian war was that Bulgaria determinedly displayed that it had both the potential and the capability to take action independently. Likewise, the absence of the Russian officers was the indication that this victory was a national one and free from Russian help.

After the war, the conference was held in Istanbul and the Agreement of Tophane was signed on April 5, 1886.<sup>85</sup> This unexpected victory had a favorable effect on Bulgaria's international standing, and therefore on the ultimate course of the Istanbul Conference. This victory of the Bulgarian army not only changed the color of the Eastern Rumelian Crisis but also attitude of Battenberg towards the Ottoman Empire.<sup>86</sup>

According to the treaty, the union was supposed to be only a personal one. Alexander Battenberg was Prince of Bulgaria and governor general of Eastern Rumelia. Throughout the negotiations, the Russian government objected to the first article of the treaty, which mentioned 'Alexander' by name as the governor of Eastern Rumelia. In other words, the 'Bulgarian Prince', and not

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<sup>84</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.234-235

<sup>85</sup> F.A.K. Yasamee, *Abdulhamid II and the Great Powers 1878-1888* (Istanbul, 1996), p.176

<sup>86</sup> For the Turkish position and policy during the crisis please see: Mahir Aydın, *Şarki Rumeli Vilayeti* (Ankara, 1992), Süleyman Oğuz, *Osmanlı Vilayet İdaresi ve Doğu Rumeli Vilayeti (1878-1885)*(Ankara, 1986), Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, *Mesail-i Mühimme-i Siyasiyye* (Ankara, 1957) F.A.K Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy, Abdulhamid II and the Great Powers 1878-1888*, (Istanbul, 1996)

‘Battenberg’ personally, was named as the Governor-General. It was another opportunity for the Tsar to show his persistent disapproval of his cousin.<sup>87</sup> The deletion of his name would make it possible for Russia to secure his removal either as prince of Bulgaria or as governor of Eastern Rumelia, and thus break the union.

Moreover, this arrangement was considered a betrayal against Russia and Orthodoxy. According to article 4 of the Tophane Treaty, in case of a war between Russia and Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarians would take side with Ottoman Empire. So, under Russian pressure, the Sublime Porte had to remove this article when submitting it to Istanbul Conference. The military agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria was not to be permitted.<sup>88</sup>

The Prince had assumed the leadership of the movement for the unification. But he had failed to persuade the great powers to establish a uniform administration for the two provinces. He objected strongly to the change in the terms made with Ottoman Empire.<sup>89</sup> ‘I cannot and will not’ he said, ‘lend a hand to the reestablishment of international sovereignty on Eastern Rumelia which was the principal cause of the government without strength, without authority, not respected, and consequently even injurious to the interests of the people.’<sup>90</sup> However, at the end, because of ‘lacking enough great power support, first the Ottoman Empire and then Bulgaria were forced to accept these modifications’.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Hyde, p.157

<sup>88</sup> Hyde, p.156

<sup>89</sup> Later he wrote to Queen Victoria that the failure of the original Ottoman-Bulgarian and the subsequent signing of the protocol in the form desired by Russia was ‘my political death warrant’. Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p.241

<sup>90</sup> Hyde, p.157

<sup>91</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p. 240

Understandably, after the unification, the victory and subsequent increase in Bulgarian nationalism made the relations between Russia and Bulgaria worse. Bulgaria was taken seriously in the international arena. Russia's departure and the war with Serbia had a great effect on the development of the national sentiment of the Bulgarian people.<sup>92</sup> The unification both enlarged the territory of the Bulgaria and also it increased its political importance in the Balkan Peninsula. From now on, the Tsar realized that unless relations improved between Bulgaria and Russia, the obdurate prince should be overthrown immediately. For Russia, the unification, originally had been supported by it before, increased the credit of Bulgarian Prince instead of the Russians within the principality.

### **1.3.3. The Abdication of Prince Alexander von Battenberg and the Election of Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg**

Predictably, after the unification of Eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria, Russian agents in Bulgaria tried to incite the Bulgarians saying that 'You shall never have the effective union of your country as long as Battenberg remains on the throne!<sup>93</sup> Even, some thought that 'the ultimate result of this crisis would be either with Prince A. Battenberg against Russia or with Russia without Prince A. Battenberg'<sup>94</sup>. In other words, nothing less than Battenberg's abdication would satisfy the conspirators.

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<sup>92</sup> John Macdonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People* (London, 1979) , p.80

<sup>93</sup> Constant, p.29

<sup>94</sup> Stojčo Grânčarov, "Bulgarian Political Life" in *Bulgarian Historical Review*, vol.7 (1979), pp.8-9



Russia showed a great animosity against the Prince and warned that Battenberg should not be named the new governor of Eastern Rumelia. In the light of this development, after the unification, the future of Battenberg seemed desperate, as Russia perceived him as the main obstacle to reestablish his policy in Bulgaria. The Russian agents in the principality argued that the nation could achieve nothing without Russian support, and that Battenberg's hostile policy towards Russia was an obstacle against Russia's help to the Bulgarians.

Inevitably, Russian agents supported the organization of a coup against Battenberg.<sup>95</sup> On 20 August 1886, Battenberg was kidnapped in his palace. It was said that the Tsar ordered him to abdicate for the future of Bulgaria. After the abdication, Zinoviev, the head of the Asiatic Department and thus of Bulgarian affairs, described the prince as the "ulcer that had been grafted" on Bulgaria. In his view, the Bulgarians were still children who needed firm Russian guidance.<sup>96</sup> However, abdication would not be a permanent solution for Russia as the Bulgarian leadership continued to their policy of rigid resistance to the Russian control.

After Battenberg's abdication, a provisional administration was established under Metropolitan Clement, the Russophile church leader. However, the public did not support him. As it was stated above, there was a Russian and Bulgarian quarrel in the principality, the Tsar of Russia would not allow Battenberg's return. It was a period of interregnum and the principality

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<sup>95</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*, p. 112 there were also support coming from some army officers who thought that they were not decently granted for their success in the Serbia-Bulgarian war. Moreover, some were the Russophile politicians in Bulgaria, who conceived that Bulgaria could only gather Macedonian territory with the back of Russia; an anti-Russian Prince did not fit their interests.

<sup>96</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, p.192

was governed by the regency. So Stefan Stambulov, the rising figure in the next decade of the Bulgarian history, organized a counterrevolution and persuaded Battenberg to return to Bulgaria.

However it was not the end of Battenberg's troubles. Assuming the Russia's help in his return, Battenberg sought to reconcile with Russia and sent an interesting telegraph, as a golden bridge between two states<sup>97</sup>, to the Tsar saying: 'Russia gave me my crown: I am ready to return it into the hands of her sovereign.'<sup>98</sup> However the Tsar replied: "I cannot approve your return to Bulgaria foreseeing disastrous consequences to country already so severely tried...Your Highness will judge what is your proper course".<sup>99</sup>

The Tsar's unyielding stance made clear that Alexander had to leave Bulgaria, in spite of the insistence of Stambulov. As Stavrianos claims "Alexander succumbed to the weight of Russian pressure."<sup>100</sup> Still, Battenberg's abdication would not restore Russia's influence in the region, as the new government maintained its independent attitude.

After Alexander's departure, Russia tried to strengthen its supremacy in the principality. The Tsar sent General Nicholas Kaulbars,<sup>101</sup> as a commissioner to elect a new prince. Kaulbars firstly wanted all arrested conspirators who organized the coup to be released.<sup>102</sup> In addition to this, he thought that the desire of the Bulgarians was to be protected under the Russian Empire, so every

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<sup>97</sup> Constant, p.32

<sup>98</sup> Stavrianos, p. 434

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.* He went to Austria and lived there until his death in 1893, and then his body brought to Sofia for burying.

<sup>101</sup> He was the brother of General Kaulbars who had been Minister of War in Bulgaria five years before.

<sup>102</sup> Constant, p.33

opportunity he attempted to express his feelings and could not grasp the anti-Russian attitudes of the society.<sup>103</sup>

Predictably, Stambulov resisted Kaulbars' presence in the principality. General Assembly held the elections on 10 October 1878 without consent of Kaulbars. 'He frustrated the conspiracy of General Kaulbars, and quelled a military conspiracy that had been originated by Russia at Silistria and Rustchuk, thus protected the elections.'<sup>104</sup> Without any doubt, this action of Bulgaria was a strong resistance against Russia by declaring that they were self-sufficient and they could stand on their feet.

Kaulbars, with his authoritative nature, irritated the Bulgarians and increased Russophobe feeling in the principality. Stambulov's party won a large majority in the elections. Being unsuccessful, Kaulbars terminated all diplomatic relations and left Bulgaria with all Russian consuls and agents: in this way, Russia broke its diplomatic relations with its former protégé.<sup>105</sup> Russia, poking its nose into Bulgaria's internal affairs, had again failed. From the beginning of the establishment of the principality, Russian Balkan policy was plagued by inconsistency in Bulgaria and Russia's blundering brought a strong reaction in to foreign intervention, weakening Russian influence in the principality.

More turmoil was to come. As Prince, the Bulgarian assembly elected Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg,<sup>106</sup> (1861-1948) without the approval of the Russian

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Will Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People with an Account of Balkan Wars, Macedonia and Macedonian Bulgars* (Boston, 1914), p.76

<sup>105</sup> Chirol, p.253, For his unsuccessful mission he was called as Sofiasco. Constant, p.33

<sup>106</sup> Firstly Assembly voted for the Waldemar of Denmark, the Tsar's brother-in-law, for the principality. However, Russia refused to recognize the election as valid so Prince Waldemar declined the crown, then, King Charles of Rumania was shown as a candidate, and again Russia opposed him. The Last candidate, Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg, a German and Catholic, was the

Tsar. In accordance with the Treaty of Berlin, the election of Prince of Bulgaria by the assembly had then to be confirmed by the great powers. Thus, Russia did not accept Ferdinand as the new prince, claiming the election was illegal. Russian claim seemed reasonable. However, as regards Bulgaria's new stance, Sofia would not hesitate to take action without Russia's consent. The essence of the Bulgarian policy was to establish their self-national policy. For sure, in the new election, Russia's approval would change nothing.

Russia's objection was to the Assembly which had acted illegally, namely, without its consent. Besides, Russia had been offended by the Bulgarian nationalists' attitudes towards the Russian General Kaulbars. So it would likely recognize any decision taken by assembly. Further, as Russia refused, the other great powers, for fear of offending the Tsar, refused to recognize the new prince. Relations between Bulgaria and Russia now worsened further.

In conclusion, there were a number of reasons for the deterioration of Bulgaria's relations with Russia between 1878-1887; compounding the Tsar's mistrust was the autocratic and brutal policy of the Russian officials in Bulgaria. On the other side, Bulgarian national awakening and the desire for a self-governing state was the Bulgarian priorities in their relations with Russia. Unsurprisingly, Russia did not want to accept the Bulgarian people's will to gain national independence or freedom, and Bulgaria could not endure gross interference in their domestic affairs. To sum up, Russia did not have a harmonious policy towards the Bulgarians and Bulgaria had a great desire for

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youngest son of Prince Augustus of Saxe-Gotha and Princess Clementine of Bourbon-Orleans, a daughter of King Louis Philippe of France.

national unification to realize 'Greater Bulgaria', these two main conditions led the alienation of two states towards each other.

**CHAPTER TWO:**

**RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

**AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

**2.1. Prime Minister Stefan Stambulov's Regime: The Macedonian Question and the Rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire**

After Ferdinand's election, Stefan Stambulov became the Prime Minister of Bulgaria between the years 1886 and 1894. He strongly pursued an anti-Russian and pro-Ottoman policy.<sup>107</sup> His overriding character was stubbornness he unwaveringly refused to work with Russian agents striving for the fall of Ferdinand. This gained him Russia's hostility. Under Stambulov's regime, Russia had no representation at Sofia.<sup>108</sup> Another important figure of his term was the considerable development in the Bulgarian army; he restructured and renovated the army in 1888 and the size of the armed forces' size increased by

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<sup>107</sup> The interesting thing about him was that he was firstly Russophile and revolutionary, he even managed an uprising against Ottoman Empire at Strazagora in 1875, he joined the Bulgarian irregulars in 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian war. However, after the liberation he defended the Bulgarian constitution and so he was against Alexander Battemberg, who wanted to suspend the constitution in 1881, and again when Battemberg decided to restore the constitution, Stambulov sided with Battemberg and then became a strong Russophobe until his own death.

<sup>108</sup> Will Monroe, *Bulgaria and Her People with an Account of Balkan Wars, Macedonia and the Bulgars* (Boston, 1914), p.77

50 percent.<sup>109</sup> His regime was also known as being rigid and he was said to have ruled Bulgaria with an iron hand.<sup>110</sup>

During Stambulov's period, the Macedonian question was always on the agenda in foreign policy. To reiterate, in the Yeşilköy Treaty, the Bulgarian principality was composed of the prominent part of the Macedonian lands, however, with the opposition of England and Austria, this treaty was reorganized with the Berlin Treaty and Macedonia had been returned to Ottoman Empire. It was certain that Bulgaria was still great desired to realize the boundaries of Yeşilköy, which included the Macedonian lands.<sup>111</sup>

In 1870, a *ferman* had been issued to establish a Bulgarian Exarchate in the areas including Plovdiv, Varna and the lands to Danube.<sup>112</sup> More importantly, this exarchate could extend its jurisdiction over the areas outside of Bulgaria proper upon the vote of two-thirds of the inhabitants.<sup>113</sup> So, this created the origins of not only Bulgaria's Macedonian ambitions but also the origins of the friction between the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians. At the same time, the Ottoman's declining authority was prevailing still in the region and Macedonians realized that as long as this system continued, they had no future. Many revolutionary movements were established with the slogan of 'Macedonia for Macedonians'. The IMRO, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, in particular caused turmoil by their terrorist activities, especially in the beginning

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<sup>109</sup> Victor Roudometof, "The Social Origins of Balkan Politics: Nationalism, Underdevelopment and the Nation-state in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria 1880-1920", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 2000, p.157

<sup>110</sup> Wesley M. Gewehr, *the Rise of Nationalism in the Balkans* (New York, 1932), p.75

<sup>111</sup> The Bulgarians of Macedonia tried to maintain their national spirit in churches and schools. In the period of Stambulov, they could not hope any support from Russia.

<sup>112</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 166

<sup>113</sup> The Serbs did not have the same right, but Serbian and Greek nationalists founded schools in Macedonia.

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After its failure in the Ilinden uprising, IMRO was severely affected by the outcome of the uprising and the ensuing reprisal. Later, it drifted under the influence of Macedonian Supreme Committee, following a pro-Bulgarian policy.<sup>114</sup>

Macedonia as a meeting place of all ethnic groups in the Balkans was an area of indefinite boundaries. From Salonika on the Aegean Sea, it followed the Valley of Vardar River northward to Üsküp, westward to the Lake Ohrid on the Albanian frontier, and eastward to Strumitza region on the Bulgarian border. Its territory was the bone of contention locating between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, as these three states imputed their so-called rights on the area to historical and ethnic concerns. This question was the matter of conflict after the revision of the Yeşilköy Treaty. The Serbs was especially active in region around Üsküp, which was also wanted by the Bulgarians, as had been promised them in the Yeşilköy Treaty. Greece had designs on Vardar Valley, hoping to receive southern Macedonia as a hinterland for a littoral on the Aegean by the Greeks. Both Greece and Serbia favored partition of Macedonia, but Bulgaria was willing an autonomous Macedonia under nominal Ottoman patronage until the time when it could be annexed by them.

What did Stambulov think about Macedonia? He pursued a patient and modest policy. He believed that disorder in Macedonia would give Russia a chance to intervene in the fight between Slav brothers in Balkans. So, he tried to show sympathy to the Ottoman Empire. His Macedonian policy was to ‘Bulgarianize’ it gradually and expertly while it was under the rule of Ottoman

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<sup>114</sup> Klimet Dzambazovski, Macedonia on the eve of the Balkan Wars, in *East Central European Society and the Balkan wars*, edited by Béla K. Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (New York, 1987), p.213



Empire.<sup>115</sup> Stambulov's amicable relations with the Ottoman Empire was allowed him to establish of two additional Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia, and to organize a large number of Bulgarian schools in different parts of the Ottoman Empire where the number of Bulgarians consisted of majority.<sup>116</sup> He believed that a revolution in Macedonia could give Russia an opportunity to interfere with no disinterested motive; so he was so eager to establish peaceful relations with Ottoman Empire which would sooner or later allow Bulgaria influence in Macedonia to grow.<sup>117</sup>

The Macedonian policy of Stambulov, in spite of its benefit to the Bulgarian problem, was attacked by not only by the Russophiles but also the Macedonians living in Bulgaria, who sincerely thought that the salvation of Macedonia could only be achieved by the aid of Russia. So they agitated for a government pursuing Russia's interests.<sup>118</sup> This contradiction would elevate the tension against Stambulovist Russophobe policy in Bulgaria.

The next question was what Russia thought about Macedonian problem. On the initial question on the partition of Macedonia, Russia backed Bulgarian claims, saying Bulgarian population constituted the majority in Macedonia. However, in 1890s, due to the deterioration of the bilateral relations between two states, Russia's policy reciprocally altered for not allowing the dominance over

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<sup>115</sup> Stefan Pawlovich, *A History of The Balkans 1804-1945* (London, New York,, 1999), p.140

<sup>116</sup> Monroe, p.63

<sup>117</sup> In 1889, Stambulov, in order not to disrupt the relations with the Ottoman Empire, refused the arrangement offered by Serbia, aiming to pursue good relations with Bulgaria, about the southern Slav unity as the necessary basis for the formation of a Balkan League. Moreover, in 1891, Charialos Tricoupis, the Greek Statesman, visited Sofia for partition of Macedonia between three powers-Serbia, Greek and Bulgaria as the basis of the construction of a Balkan league against Ottoman Empire, however, Stambulov, again bluntly refused it. William Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York, 1968), p. 310

<sup>118</sup> Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu* (Istanbul, 1996), pp.117-118

Macedonia and opposed the Bulgarian gains any more.<sup>119</sup> Even if the relations between the small state and the great power were reconciled in 1896 with the efforts of Ferdinand, it would no longer be the same as in 1878.

For Stambulov, the Ottoman Empire was seen as an enemy against Russia<sup>120</sup>. On the other side, regarding the friendly relations between Sofia and Istanbul, he even favored a personal union with the Ottoman Empire by which the Ottomans would become the masters of Bulgaria and a dual Ottoman-Bulgarian empire would be formed to resist the Russian encroachments; a similar idea was also explored in regard to Romania<sup>121</sup>. While Bulgaria was approaching to the Ottoman Empire on the other side, the bonds with Russia were loosening. In 1886 Russia even declared all relations with Bulgaria severed and withdrew to what it hoped would be a more successful policy of boycott and isolation.<sup>122</sup>

It should also be added that during the time of Stambulov, Bulgaria had no real friend in the Balkans. This antagonist policy of him towards Russia was not so painless for Bulgaria, because no other power could be counted on assistance.<sup>123</sup> The change in the Serbian government in 1887 in favor of Russia, and the Macedonian dispute with Greece gave incentive for Stambulov to improve the relations with the Ottomans. Stambulov knew the Bulgarian army was not ready to take a unilateral action to save Macedonia. So, the safest way to win Macedonia was to receive an external contribution. He believed that neither

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<sup>119</sup> BOA Y. PRK. EŞA. Dosya No: 41 Gömlek No: 64, 1 Şevval 1320

<sup>120</sup> Marin V. Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism", in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer (Seattle, London, 1994), p. 127

<sup>121</sup> Pundeff, p.128

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge, 1990), vol.2, p.60

a Balkan alliance nor Russia's help would fit the Bulgarian aim to save Macedonia because they could lead to the partition of the region. Thus, securing Macedonia should be realized by patiently building up Bulgarian cultural dominance under the Ottoman political power.

In the second half of 1887, Russia commenced a diplomatic campaign against Bulgaria. St. Petersburg insisted that the Ottomans, still the suzerains of the Bulgarian Principality, should intervene immediately in Bulgaria by sending troops to remove Ferdinand and Stambulov and thus Russia would establish its own new regime under the head of General Ehrenroth.<sup>124</sup> Without doubt, this suggestion was refused by the Sultan, who feared causing an international crisis. Considering the serious rupture of the relations between Russia and Bulgaria, the former, complaining the naughty son to his legal father, now straightforwardly began to protest the latter. In opposition to the Russia's exhausting policy, Ferdinand in every opportunity declared his loyalty to the Sultan to save his crown.

Towards the end of 1887, a number of Russians, led by Nabokov, who had been convicted previously of similar incitement, now tried to wake up a local rising in Burgaz and from this center wanted to unite the nation against the Prince and the Premier.<sup>125</sup> But they failed, as the people were not so concerned with them. Nabokov's movement was rapidly crushed by killing the leader and many followers of him. It was also known that the Russian legation at Bucharest was encouraging this group and other protesting the Bulgarians in the principality. After failing in these sorts of plots, in 1888, from this time on,

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<sup>124</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918, A History* (New York, 1983), p.126

<sup>125</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p. 127

Russian policy toward Bulgaria changed to one of declaring noninterference to the Bulgarian internal affairs. Nevertheless, St. Petersburg tried to convince the Bulgarian government that without Russian help, the internal tranquility would not be settled.

However, the Panitsa affair would reveal that Russian collaboration with the Russophiles in Bulgaria to dethrone Ferdinand and establish a new regime under Russian influence was clandestinely still alive. Major Kosta Panitsa<sup>126</sup>, one of the most popular officers of Macedonian origin in the army, thought that there could be no hope for liberation of Macedonia without Russian cooperation, and there could be no hope of Russian cooperation as long as Ferdinand remained in Bulgaria. He resolved to assassinate the prince.<sup>127</sup> According to *Svoboda*, he was in touch with Russian agents in Bucharest and other Russian diplomats as early as 1887.<sup>128</sup> However, the day before their conspiracy, he and his collaborator, a Russian merchant, were arrested. In Panitsa's house, diplomatic dispatches to and from Bucharest, showing Russian complicity in the plot through the Bucharest diplomatic office and even involved I.A. Zinoviev, head of the Asiatic department of the Russian foreign office, were confiscated.<sup>129</sup> Stambulov regarded the Panitsa plot as the most serious of all the threats he and Ferdinand had so far faced. After the trial, Panitsa was executed in front of the assembled Sofia garrison.<sup>130</sup> Russia's reaction to this affair was sensitive; the Russian press called Stambulov as murderer. 'The shooting of Panitsa was indeed a test for the

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<sup>126</sup> He had been the original member of the Eastern Rumelian Committee and prominent in national agitation over Macedonia, also had been the regiment auditor in the Eastern Rumelian war office. He had been a captain during Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885.

<sup>127</sup> Duncan M. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria* (London, 1993), p.161

<sup>128</sup> John Macdonald, *Czar Ferdinand and His People* (London, 1979), pp.168-169

<sup>129</sup> Perry, p.165

<sup>130</sup> Stambulov was so determined that this guilty was so severely punished. He even threatened to resign of Panitsa were not executed.

new Bulgarian regime, a test that was passed with conspicuous success. Once more the Russians had staked their money and had lost.<sup>131</sup>

In 1889, Bulgaria's relations with Russia entered a new phase. The abdication of King Milan in Serbia and the new regencies' Russophile attitudes gave a chance to Russia for forming a new protectorate in the Balkans. With a new ally in Serbia, Russia did not need to search a prompt way to consolidate the relations with Bulgaria. Moreover, after this political change in Serbia, Russia began to assist the growing propaganda campaign of Serbia in northern Macedonia.<sup>132</sup>

On the other side, due to having smooth relations with Ottoman Empire, in 1890, Stambulov requested both the recognition of the prince and also concessions for Macedonia to withstand Russian boycott and hostility. However, because of Russia's insistence, Ottoman Empire did not recognize the prince but accepted to send a representative to Sofia to supervise the *vakıfs* and also *berats* were promised for the Üsküp, Ohrid and Manastır dioceses. Further, the exarch had received the right to get into contact with the Bulgarians Edirne and also publish a newspaper in Istanbul under certain conditions.<sup>133</sup> In 1894, Stambulov acquired for Bulgaria two more exarchist bishoprics in Macedonia, Veles and Nevrokop. This was a great success of Stambulov and also Prince Ferdinand as now it was an effective demonstration that the principality could exist in spite of not only lack of Russian aid but also severe Russian hostility. It was also an outstanding occasion for the Bulgarians observing the consolidation of the newly emerged regime through the ideal of 'Yeşilköy Bulgaria'. However, the

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<sup>131</sup> Hans Roger Madol, *Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the Dream of Byzantium* (London, 1933), p.55

<sup>132</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.135

<sup>133</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.138

Macedonian lobby would never satisfied with these reforms and always insisted on Stambulov to take more direct and stern action. Stambulov, in order to win the recognition of Prince Ferdinand as the lawful prince of Bulgaria, preferred to take softer actions and strengthen the religious and educational work of exarchate, rather that to support the schemes of revolutionaries.

Stambulov also got into conflict with the assembly about the declaration of independence problem; he thought that if Bulgaria proclaimed its independence, in the international arena, it could be accused of jeopardizing the peace as reviving the Eastern question.<sup>134</sup> So he supported the maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty, thus in case of any power declared war on Bulgaria, Bulgaria would not remain alone, because it would also be Ottoman and also the European powers' concern.<sup>135</sup>

Stambulov's time was full of intrigues and conspiracies.<sup>136</sup> To save the country, he harshly punished the brigands, who were mostly both Panslavists in the service of Russia and also Macedonian revolutionary bands. However, his rigid regime brought forth his enemies, which grew in number day by day. From the beginning there were battle against Stambulov, but being disorganized, the opposing side achieved nothing. The more Stambulov employed authoritarian means, the more his reputation suffered. Due to his rigid Russophobe policy, Panslavists in and outside Russia began to attack the minister. Their aim was to terrify the Prince into subservience to Russia. Even if he stood firm against his

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<sup>134</sup> Charles Jelavich, "Russo-Bulgarian Relations, 1892-1896: With Particular Reference to the Problem Of the Bulgarian Succession", *the Journal of Modern History*, vol.24 (Dec. 1952), p.344

<sup>135</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Russo-Bulgarian...*, p.346

<sup>136</sup> There were attempts to override the government (which was mostly thought planning by Russia) and there were also a conflict between Holy Snod, who was against the new Catholic prince and Stambulov.

political opponents, about whom he thought as Russian puppets, his efforts to save Bulgaria nearly brought his end. In March 1891, an assassination attempt against Stambulov failed, because the assassins confused Stambulov with the Minister of Finance M. Belchev, walking back home after a dinner, and they killed Belchev, who resembled Stambulov in appearance.

Furthermore, after Belchev's assassination, in 1892, Stambulov's close friend and adviser Georgi Vŭlkovich, the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in Istanbul was assassinated, too.<sup>137</sup> Stambulov was so depressed by all these assassinations, which exposed Russian conspiracies and all struggles between Russophiles and Russophobes in Bulgaria.<sup>138</sup> After the assassinations, the attitude of the Stambulov's government against the Russophiles became so severe that some three hundred Russophiles, who directly related with assassinations or not, were sent to prison and met with harsh treatment. However, his tough policy against the Russophiles or Russia itself began to create a frustration among the Bulgarians.

Stambulov believed that there was Russian involvement, but the Russian government denied any connivance in these murders. From this point, the intrigues against Stambulov were stepped up by the Russophiles in Bulgaria, which added one more blow to the bleeding Bulgaria's relations with Russia. In this vein, as a reaction to the assassinations, Stambulov continued to turn towards the Ottoman Empire and insisted on the recognition of the Prince for the

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<sup>137</sup> About the assassinations, the government had documents showing that the Russian government backed such plots and that after the murder of Stambulov the turn would be for Ferdinand. So the ultimate turmoil in Bulgaria led Russian military intervention and protectorate. Perry, pp.180-183

<sup>138</sup> It was also speculated that some rebellious people from Serbia, Romania and Russia came to Bulgaria to elevate the tension between Russophiles and Russophobes. BOA Y.PRK. EŞA. Dosya No: 13 Gömlek No: 33, 20 Şaban 1308

hope that this kind of murders would diminish under the head of a recognized prince.<sup>139</sup> Thanks to the recognized and legal prince, he hoped, the influence of Russia in Bulgaria would diminish.

At that moment, both Ferdinand and Stambulov sought ways to increase to prestige of the prince through gaining recognition eventually. On one hand, in 1892 the unrecognized Ferdinand visited European states to gain strength from them<sup>140</sup>: he even met with Bismark and Queen Victoria of England. In the same year, Stambulov was invited by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II to Istanbul, and he was well greeted, while Russia wanted to disrupt that visit.<sup>141</sup> The meeting between Stambulov and Abdulhamid was considered by many European statesmen as an unofficial recognition of the prince and the regime. Without a doubt, the Russian Tsar was not so pleased with Ferdinand's visit and his meeting with heads of state and officials.<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, there was another chance to reinforce the regime: The prince could marry and thus establish a dynasty for Bulgaria. This might provide protection against Russian intervention in case the Prince was killed. Moreover, it would also increase Ferdinand's reputation in the eyes of the Great Powers. Between the years 1890 and 1893, Stambulov was engaged in this matter, and the most suitable bride was Princess Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma. But the problem was that she came from a Catholic family and this was contrary to the Constitution, which required all Bulgarian Princess except the first to profess Orthodox creed. Eventually, with the influence of Stambulov despite many

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<sup>139</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, pp.144-145

<sup>140</sup> BOA Y. PRK.TKM. Dosya No: 21 Gömlek No: 27, 23 Zilkade 1308

<sup>141</sup> BOA Y.E.E., Dosya No: 38 Gömlek No: 62, 7 Rebiulevvel 1308

<sup>142</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, pp. 183-185



obstacles, the related article was amended by the vote in the *Sobranie*<sup>143</sup> and Ferdinand married with Princess Marie Louise in Italy in 1893. This was without doubt a severe blow to Russia since the role of religion had a significant place in Russo-Bulgarian relations.<sup>144</sup> Several Bulgarian ecclesiastical officials who had been educated in Russia demonstrated their adherence to the Prince. The Bulgarian orthodox hierarchy was the most important element that Russia could have influence on Bulgarian people; however their loyalty to the Prince was a vindication for Russia's diminishing influence on Bulgaria. Further, as Charles Jelavich pointed out;

Although Alexander III pursued a nationalistic policy himself, he could not understand that the Bulgarians could have a similar policy and that they would not willingly exchange Turkish and Russian overlordship. To the end of his reign Alexander refused to recognize that the Bulgarian people really supported the independent policy of their government.<sup>145</sup>

The reaction of St. Petersburg could also be attributed to the Tsar's perception towards the Bulgarian people and the government itself. Whatever the reason of Russia's anger to all these policies, the reality was that towards their national aspirations, Bulgaria had come a long way since 1878 in emerging from Russia's shadow.

In 1893, frictions between Stambulov and Prince Ferdinand appeared. Ferdinand was as passive a ruler as he seemed in his initial years. 'He dreamed

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<sup>143</sup> The last version of the article was "the Prince of Bulgaria shall profess none but the Orthodox faith. Only the Prince who, by election, has ascended the Bulgarian throne, if already professing some other Christian faith, then he and his first successor may remain in that faith". Charles Jelavich, "Russo-Bulgarian Relations, 1892-1896: With Particular Reference to the Problem of the Bulgarian Succession", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol.24 (December 1952), no.4, p.345

<sup>144</sup> For detailed analysis see: Stefan Detchev, "Religion and Identity in the Bulgarian Public Sphere (Russophile and Russophobic Ideologies in 1880s and 1890s)", [www.ksg.harvard.edu.tr/kokkalis](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu.tr/kokkalis)

<sup>145</sup> Charles Jelavich, *Russo-Bulgaria*, p.350

of leading Bulgaria to the position of the predominant power in the Balkans.<sup>146</sup> It should be admitted that he had to depend on Stambulov as he gave his support during the candidacy. Nonetheless, Ferdinand, being a non-recognized Prince, was afterward fully aware of the dangers of his own position. The only choice to overcome this hardship was for him to reconcile with Russia. So from his perspective, then, the main obstacle became Stambulov himself. But he waited until he felt strong enough to dismiss his minister to establish his own ultimate dynasty.

The root cause of the hostility between Stambulov and Ferdinand was the recognition of the legal status of Ferdinand's election by the Russian Empire. Stambulov thought that the recognition by Russia would bring catastrophe and intrigue against the established order of things that would follow with the return of Russian minister and the Russian consuls.<sup>147</sup> Stambulov worried that thawing of Russo-Bulgarian relations would allow the spread of Russian influence again. So there began the friction between the minister and prince pertaining to taking Russian side or not.

Ferdinand was determined to take this issue seriously. Aware of the fact, that recognition by Russia was impossible so long as Stambulov remained in power. So the prince endeavored to get rid of the prime Minister as soon as possible and establish a Russophile government.<sup>148</sup> Russian presence within the

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<sup>146</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle and London, 1986), p.169

<sup>147</sup> Monroe, p.79

<sup>148</sup> When Ferdinand was in Vienna he got the chance to meet Lobanov-Rostovskii, the Russian ambassador and spoke frankly with him that he was ready to remove the minister-president Stambulov if Russia so desired. Perry, p.205

principality caused severe conflicts and crisis but its absence could also be explosive in Bulgarian politics.

The divergence of attitudes towards Russia in the struggle for the salvation of Bulgaria was the main friction between Stambulov and Ferdinand. In governing circles, there emerged an understanding that as long as Stambulov lived, the desired reconciliation with Russia and the recognition of the election of the Prince Ferdinand were unachievable.<sup>149</sup> Further, his punishment of political opponents whom he regarded as the tools of Russia and the growing political importance of a group of statesmen pursuing strong Russophile ideas also triggered anti-Stambulovist propaganda. Eventually, because of the Prince's opposition, Stambulov gave up and resigned in 1894.<sup>150</sup> It is noteworthy that in an interview he publicly said that:

I am persuaded that the interests of Russia and of Bulgaria are diametrically opposed and that is not possible to have peace between us. [His opponents] Karavelov and Tsankov are persuaded of the opposite. According to them, the new direction of our politics is doomed for Bulgaria, the salvation being only in union with Russia. Naturally, they view me as an enemy of our fatherland. I completely understand them when they wish me dead, and I probably will be.<sup>151</sup>

It was Stambulov who built the conditions for the election of Ferdinand as a prince of Bulgaria, and thereby created the enemy who brought about his own downfall. His openly anti-Russian stance only inflamed Russophile-Russophobe tensions in Bulgaria.<sup>152</sup> After his resignation, A. G. Hulme Beaman, Stambulov's British biographer and friend, said that:

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<sup>149</sup> Monroe, p. 81

<sup>150</sup> In 1895, Stambulov was assassinated, and during his last two days in the bed, he repeated that his murderer was the prince.

<sup>151</sup> Perry, p.205

<sup>152</sup> Perry, p.237

When he quitted the Presidential chair, Stambulov could probably remember how he had consolidated the union; held the country single-handed against the kidnappers of Prince Alexander; ruled it as Regent in the teeth of Russia; driven out the Russian Commissioners and Consuls; brought in a new prince, and kept him on the throne through a series of plots and dangers from within and without; reconciled the Church and the state, and draw close ties between Bulgaria and her Suzerain, the Sultan.<sup>153</sup>

## **2.2. Personal Regime of Prince Ferdinand: Reconciliation with Russia and Russia's Recognition of Prince Ferdinand**

After Stambulov's resignation, the major barrier to reconciliation with Russia was gone. When Stambulov resigned, the Prince appointed a complete Russophile cabinet headed by Constantine Stoilov (1853-1901), a conservative ruler.<sup>154</sup> His chief goal was to put the relations with Russia on a normal footing.

After the end of Stambulov's regime, Russophile faction was resurrected. The extremist Russophile Karavelov was permitted to publish a newspaper called *Zname* (Banner).<sup>155</sup> Ferdinand and Stoilov, supporting one another, also release a number of Russophiles from prison. Russophile Metropolitan Kliment, for example, was released soon after the fall of Stambulov. Stoilov took additional measures to improve relations with Russia: elimination of Radoslavov, supporting Austria as the protector of Bulgaria and censorship against the press of Stambulovists was the important ones. The head of Progressive Liberal Party, Tsankov, another strong Russophile rapidly supported Ferdinand as a legitimate ruler.

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<sup>153</sup> Perry, p.240

<sup>154</sup> Langer, *Diplomacy*, p.313

<sup>155</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.163

Russophobe generals in the army were forced to retire.<sup>156</sup> In short, Russophile circles in Bulgaria regained their position and had the chance to join governance. Stoilov clearly expressed the new policy of Bulgaria in an interview:

It is not in our character to provoke Russia. If Germany and Austria and the other great powers are well disposed towards Russia why should we, a small state, play the role of the dog which barks at her?<sup>157</sup>

Relations between Bulgaria and Russia improved dramatically under the new regime of Stoilov. In Russian diplomatic circles, there were rumors that after the fall of Ottoman Empire, Russia would again reconcile with Bulgaria.<sup>158</sup> Nonetheless, this was not to say that Bulgaria was willing to let itself fall entirely into the hands of Russia. In 1894, Stoilov made a speech on the *Sobranie* on foreign affairs and said:

Bulgaria was prepared to do all it could do secure good relations with Russia but there were limits to the concessions she could make. She could not allow Russian possession or even use of Burgas and Varna<sup>159</sup>, she could not accept Russian officers again into the Bulgarian army, and of course she could not consider any change of Prince.<sup>160</sup>

It is an indication that Bulgaria's relations with Russia would not be the same as it was during the process of liberation. Henceforth, even if Bulgaria had gained the confidence of Russia, it was not as a vassal but a state with its own politics and national identity.

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<sup>156</sup> Further, the Panslavist committees restarted their activities in Salonika. BOA Y. PRK. ASK. Dosya No: 160, Gömlek No: 15, 4 Zilhicce 1317

<sup>157</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.164

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Here, Stoilov wanted to declare that he would not allow the use of Burgas and Varna by the Russian navy.

<sup>160</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.165

About the Macedonian question, after the fall of Stambulov, there was no further obstacle to the full expression of what Macedonian revolutionaries desired. In June 1895, a number of extremists, several of them former officers of the Bulgarian army, formed raiding parties and crossed the frontier into Macedonia. Even one of them succeeded in seize the town of Melnik and hold it for some time against the Ottomans before he was obliged to flee across the border.<sup>161</sup> In this position, the raiders hoped for the action of great powers under the leadership of Russia. But, despite the reconciliation between Russia and Bulgaria, Russia was not eager to get into the conflict and wanted to preserve status quo in the peninsula.

The other important issue was the recognition problem which was already a constant headache since the election of Ferdinand. When he was elected by the *Sobranie*, his first and foremost stipulation was to be recognized by the Ottoman and Russian Empires. However, when he realized it was impossible at that stage, he took the risk about his future and came to Bulgaria. Ferdinand decided to brave Russian hostility and built his position in Bulgaria by playing up to the forces and ideals of Bulgarian nationalism.<sup>162</sup>

Till 1896, Russia refused to recognize Prince Ferdinand as the ruler of Bulgaria. Other powers were also waiting for Russia's consent before offering recognition.<sup>163</sup> The reason behind Russia's refusal to accept King Ferdinand as a legitimate ruler was that according to the Berlin Treaty, any Prince had to have

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<sup>161</sup> Langer, *Diplomacy*, pp.313-314

<sup>162</sup> Pundeff, p. 128

<sup>163</sup> Stambulov and Ferdinand doubled the size of the army to feel that this would give them more protection. Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.126

the approval of the signatory powers, and that condition it had not been followed.

After Nicholas II became the new Tsar of Russia, Ferdinand thought that it would be a chance to get closer with Russia. He lobbied for his recognition by the Tsar and to rule over an independent state.<sup>164</sup> To win the Tsar's sympathy, Ferdinand unveiled the statue of Alexander II on the square opposite the *Sobranie*, and the built monument commemorating the battle of Shipka pass.<sup>165</sup> Primarily, Ferdinand's little son was converted from Catholicism to Orthodoxy in 1896. This was an important step to restore the relations with Russia after the fall of Stambulov. They even asked the Tsar to be the godfather who performed the conversion. Nicholas II was willingly agreed and sent his representative to Sofia. By this conversion, Ferdinand sacrificed his son's faith entirely for Bulgaria.

In the wake of this conversion, in February 1896, a special envoy was sent to Bulgaria and Russia recognized Ferdinand as a legitimate ruler. Following Russia, the other powers offered Bulgaria recognition as well.<sup>166</sup> It is important to note here that the day of recognition was the anniversary of the Yeşilköy Treaty; it might indicate reestablishment of the friendly relations between two powers as before. After the recognition in 1896, Ferdinand mostly pursued a Russophile policy.<sup>167</sup> The officers appointed under Stambulov's

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<sup>164</sup> Jelavich and Jelavich, *The Establishment*, p.193

<sup>165</sup> René Ristelhueber, *A History of the Balkan Peoples* (New York, 1971), translated by Sherman David Spector, p.141

<sup>166</sup> Langer, *Diplomacy*, p. 314

<sup>167</sup> In a meeting, Ferdinand complaint that for eight years European powers had not been interested in Bulgaria and his regime. He stated that he was offended by their careless. BOA Y.PRK. BŞK., Dosya No: 42 Gömlek No: 59, 17 Safer 1313

regime were removed. Moreover, Russian training was promoted in the army.<sup>168</sup> However, Ferdinand, who was also called as “Fox of the Balkans” by a historian<sup>169</sup>, would guarantee the security and the stability of his country as much as possible. So, while he was pursuing smooth relations with Russia, on the other side he signed a Defense Pact with the Ottoman Empire in 1898.<sup>170</sup>

Ferdinand gave his attention to the Macedonian issue, hoping to restore all Bulgarian territories of the Yeşilköy Treaty. Sofia used two types of policies regarding Macedonian question. First, Bulgaria assisted revolutionary activities in Macedonia and tried to attract the Slavic inhabitants of Macedonia to its side. In this effort, the Bulgarian exarchate had a tremendous role, because if two-thirds population of a district was willing to join the exarchate, they had a permission to join.<sup>171</sup> Secondly, it tried to make negotiations with Russian and the Ottoman Empire. Ferdinand had managed to get affirmation from the Ottoman Empire; Abdulhamid II had issued two degrees, which confirmed that new bishoprics should be placed under the jurisdiction of the exarch in 1894. However, from the Russian side, Ferdinand could not meet his expectations like recognition question.

Russia’s political ambitions were focused on Far East in the 1890s and the early 1900s.<sup>172</sup> Russia wished only to preserve the status quo in the Balkan Peninsula. Considering the Macedonian problem, it was not so desirous to back an uprising by Bulgaria.<sup>173</sup> St. Petersburg gave no encouragement to Bulgarian

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<sup>168</sup> Gewehr, *The Rise*, p.77

<sup>169</sup> Eugene De Schelking, *Recollections of a Russian Diplomat* (New York, 1918), p.218

<sup>170</sup> BOA Y.PRK. HR., Dosya No: 22Gömlek No: 47, 22 Rebiulevvel 1314

<sup>171</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan*, pp.213-214

<sup>172</sup> Especially, the opening of Trans-Siberian railway opened vistas of Russian domination in China. The war between Chian and Japan was the Russia’s main concern.

<sup>173</sup> Langer, *Diplomacy*, p.314



claims in Macedonia. By the end of the 1890s, Russia was even considering the partition of the territory with the Serbs who had supremacy in the west of Vardar.<sup>174</sup> By this method, Russia tried to strike the Bulgarians from their sensitive point. The reconciliation with Russia by means of recognition of Prince Ferdinand did little for Bulgaria in Macedonia. In 1897, Russia also had made an agreement with Austria to safeguard the peace in the southeast. This policy of cooperation with Austria-Hungary endured till 1908 and kept the peace in the Balkans even though the Macedonian question in these years repeatedly created a situation of crisis.

Still, despite friction over Macedonian question, Russia and Bulgaria had no wish to offend each other. To appease Russian concerns, Sofia took measures to control the move in Bulgaria. The Supreme Macedonian Committee, for example, aimed to conquer Macedonia by force. St. Petersburg was especially bothered by the activities of committee. Their propaganda continued and even in 1902 the provocateurs sent guerillas into Macedonia until absolute anarchy prevailed in that unfortunate region.<sup>175</sup> Bulgarian Premier Danev agreed to meet with the Russians to solve the problem. Danev had to accept Russia's overtures mostly because the amount of loans Russia gave Bulgaria was undeniable. So, in Sofia some Macedonian activists were expelled from the country and both civil servants and army officers were forbidden membership of the committees. The frontier line was strengthened by a new armed gendarmerie and as a last measure; the important *komitacis*, members of the insurgent bands, with their leaders were taken under custody on the frontier. These negotiations

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<sup>174</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.238

<sup>175</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.275

over Macedonia also led to a financial and military convention, signed with Russia.

The military convention with Russia was accepted by Danev in May 1902. In May 1902, It had a secret character and was not subjected to the endorsement of the national assembly as it should have in accordance with the constitution.<sup>176</sup> Most of the war and foreign ministers of the period 1903-1912 did not know about it at all. Russia agreed to help Bulgaria if the latter was attacked by Romania assisted by Austria.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, the Russian military attachés were authorized to return to Bulgaria, although in practice this never happened. The Russian attaches would also have right to get knowledge about Bulgaria's secret mobilization plans. It is obvious that this convention increased Russian interference in Bulgarian military. However, the convention was not approved by Ferdinand, and its validity was always questionable. This convention was also important as showing that Russia's Balkan dreams were still surviving and the existence of Russophiles who advocated promoting Bulgarian national interests through alliance with Russia.

### **2.3. Declaration of Independence: the Ottoman Reaction and Russia's Mediating Role**

By 1908, the agreement between Austria and Russia was collapsing. Baron Lexa von Aehrenthal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary, was planning a coup to annex the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia Herzegovina,

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<sup>176</sup> Stojčo Grânčarov, "The Bulgarian Political Life" in *Bulgarian Historical Review*, vol. 7 (1979), p.46

<sup>177</sup> However, Russia did not back Bulgarian in the Balkan Wars, as it will be seen in the next chapter.

which had been administered and occupied by Austria since the Berlin Treaty. By the annexation, Austria planned to halt the dream of Serbians to create 'Greater Serbia'. On the other hand, Russian was contemplating the opening of the Straits to the Russian warships. By July 1908, Isvolsky suggested to Aehrenthal that if Russia and Austria came to a preliminary agreement, they might convince the other signatories of the Berlin Treaty with a good chance of getting them to consent to the proposed changes.<sup>178</sup> Aehrenthal also gave a hint to Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand about his intentions, and the latter seemed to figure out what was aimed: were the status quo to be disturbed by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria, Vienna would welcome it if Sofia also violated the Berlin Treaty by declaring Bulgaria's independence.<sup>179</sup> In this way, Austria gave tacit support for Bulgaria to declare its independence.

Even before Ferdinand's recognition by the Great Powers, he had spoken of his desire for independence. In that year Ferdinand was preparing for the twentieth year celebration of his throne. In 1908, the international arena was favorable for Bulgarian independence; Russia was still dwelling on internal disorders following its defeat in the war with Japan and subsequent revolution. The Ottoman Empire had been destabilized by the Young Turk Revolution organized by the Committee of Union of Progress. Ferdinand naturally wanted to exploit this new regime in Istanbul in his bid for independence.

In September 1908, the Geshov crisis led to a break-up in the relations between Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. During that time, Geshov was the Bulgarian agent in Istanbul. The Ottoman government did not invite him to an

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<sup>178</sup> Stephen Constant, *Foxy Ferdinand Tsar of Bulgaria* (London, 1979), p.218

<sup>179</sup> Constant, pp.218-219

official banquet for the foreign diplomats to the honor of Sultan's birthday in Istanbul since Bulgaria was still a province of the Ottoman Empire. The Bulgarian government was very offended and counted that action as a provocation to remind the Bulgarians their provincial status. After an official protest, Bulgarian government recalled Geshov.

Several few days later, another incident complicated and exacerbated the relations with Ottoman Empire. The workers of the Oriental Railroad, which linked Istanbul with the rest of Europe, went on a strike in late September 1908<sup>180</sup>. And Bulgaria, for economic and military security, took over the entire line in Eastern Rumelia and did not give it back after the strike. Later they declared that this line would be integrated with Bulgarian State railroad; creating a diplomatic crisis. There was a general concern that Ferdinand was just about to declare Bulgaria's independence, threatening the delicate balance of power in the Balkans.<sup>181</sup>

Particularly, St. Petersburg considered that Bulgaria's independence as that moment would be the most dangerous to Austrian government. An exasperated Ottoman Empire would vent its resentment on small Bulgaria rather on the more powerful Austria-Hungarian Empire.<sup>182</sup> It meant that the crisis would take an anti-Slavic direction. N.V. Charykov, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, asked Bulgaria to delay the declaration of independence until March 1909, giving diplomats time to solve the problem by

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<sup>180</sup> For a detailed analysis see: Peter Mentzel, "The Bulgarian Declaration of Independence and the 1908 Oriental Railway Strike: Conspiracy or Coincidence", *East European Quarterly*, vol. 37 (January 2004), no.4, Hasan Ünal, "Ottoman Policy During the Bulgarian Independence Crisis, 1908-1909: Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria at the Outset of the Young Turk Revolution, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.34 (October 1998), no.4

<sup>181</sup> Hasan Ünal, Ottoman Policy, p.146

<sup>182</sup>Božidar Samardžiev, "Great Britain's Policy towards the Declaration of Bulgaria's Independence", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, vol.15 (1987),no.4, p.35

means of negotiations.<sup>183</sup> Russia informed Sofia that it was to support the declaration of independence, desiring to attain the consent of France, Britain, Italy and Germany even, but it should only take place after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>184</sup>

However, Ferdinand did not give credence to these warnings and declared his independence on 5 October 1908. He proclaimed himself the ‘Tsars of the Bulgarians’, which greatly angered the Ottomans, as it meant that Ferdinand would have an authority and encouragement for rule over the Bulgarians in Macedonia. Marin Pundeff argues that:

In assuming the title of *tsar* used by the Bulgarian medieval rulers, Ferdinand sought once again, as in naming his son after Boris I, to tap the deepest sources of Bulgarian historical traditions and nationalism. Greatly stimulated by proclamation of independence and the revival of the medieval tradition, the nationalists explained that “Tsar of the Bulgarians”, rather than “of Bulgaria”, signified the unity of Bulgarians everywhere under the scepter of Ferdinand.<sup>185</sup>

So, declaration of Bulgarian independence, emanated from Bulgarian national aspirations, was a great challenge to Russia’s role of ‘big brother’ on the Slavic nations. Ferdinand demonstrated his resolve to establish ‘Greater Bulgaria’ by declaring himself ‘Tsar of the Bulgarians’. The day following the declaration, on 6 October, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. This annexation was thought to be related with the declaration of independence of Bulgaria, which of course greatly irritated diplomats, especially Isvolsky.

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<sup>183</sup> Ünal, Ottoman Policy, p. 146

<sup>184</sup> Samardžiev, Great Britain, p.35

<sup>185</sup> Pundeff, p. 133

The initial reaction of the Tsar Nicholas II was to call the declaration of independence as ‘act of megalomaniac’.<sup>186</sup> To respond the Russian Tsar Ferdinand immediately affirmed that he was placing himself on an equal plane with the Autocrat of all the Russians-who had so long held him at arm’s length.<sup>187</sup> Maybe, the most embarrassing point for Russia, the so-called liberator of the Bulgarians, was that this action had been carried out in consent with Austria not Russia.

After the annexation, when Isvolsky learnt Britain would not grant Russia special privileges in the straits, it was a severe blow to Russian position against Austria.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, the annexation meant the end of 1897 agreement between Russia and Austria which had served the preservation of balance system in the Balkans in a great extent.<sup>189</sup> In 1909, Russia now had to find a way to restore its interest in the Balkans as counter revenge against Austria-Hungary’s last action to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina and this conflict between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire could be an opportunity to draw Bulgaria into Russia’s sphere of influence.<sup>190</sup>

At the same time, the dispute between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire turned out to be a “money crisis”. The latter was demanding tribute for the loss of Eastern Rumelia. Bulgaria was supposed to pay taxes to provide for Eastern Rumelia’s share of the Ottoman Public Dept.<sup>191</sup> Further, the Oriental Railway Company was claiming compensation for the loss of its property in southern

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<sup>186</sup> Constant, p.223

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> The annexation crisis ended in a complete diplomatic victory for Austria-Hungary which was so humiliating for Russia. Isvolsky soon replaced by Sergei Sazanov.

<sup>189</sup> Samardžiev, Great Britain, p.29

<sup>190</sup> BOA Y.A. HUS. Dosya No: 526 Gömlek No: 89, 30 Muharrem 1327

<sup>191</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.313

Bulgaria. For all of them, Bulgaria could afford only 82 million francs while the Ottoman Empire was demanding 125 million francs.<sup>192</sup> Thanks to the Russian initiative, the crisis between the Ottomans and Bulgarians was solved. The total money demanded by the Ottomans would not be paid totally by the Bulgarian side, but instead Russia ceased from its right to receive war indemnity which had been levied on Ottoman Empire after the war of 1877-78. Moreover, Russia also lent 82 million francs to Bulgaria in form of a loan with the modest level of interest-4.25 per cent.<sup>193</sup>

On 16 March 1909 in St. Petersburg, an agreement was signed in accordance with the Isvolsky's proposal, and two sides demobilized their extra army units. Ottoman Empire had to accept the independence of Bulgaria. What is more, Ferdinand received a major loan from Austria, and Ferdinand's attitude to two powers had a dualistic character on the point that, Bulgaria on the one side had been approached to Austria and on the other side it, at last had achieved to consolidate the relationship with Russia. So after the resolution of the crisis, the upcoming war between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire in the peninsula was halted by the intermediary role of Russia and also Bulgaria won its full independence. In the end, by the recognition of Russia, Italy, Germany, French and Austria he was called as 'the King of the Bulgarians'.

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<sup>192</sup>In the settlement of the crisis, we should also take into consideration the British policy. The British government had a great effort to settle the Ottoman-Bulgarian crisis and took a pro-Ottoman stand for the maintenance of the Ottoman regime and also their influence in the Empire. Britain supported the maximum financial demand from Bulgaria in favor of the Ottoman Empire. For British side see: Hasan Ünal, "British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire during the International Crisis: Bulgaria's Declaration of Independence and the Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1908-1909", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, vol.29 ( 2001), no.1, Božidar Samardžiev, "Great Britain's Policy towards the Declaration of Bulgaria's Independence", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1987, no.4

<sup>193</sup> Austria warned Ferdinand that this offering of Russia could lead to financial independence to Russia.

The solution of the crisis thanks to Russia, Bulgaria on behalf of the Entente powers, considerably increased its political influence in the Balkans. Bulgaria's declaration of independence triggered Russia's Balkan policy, Russia sought to recover its morale after its defeat in Russo-Japanese war in 1905. But, the real beneficiary was Bulgaria itself. From Russia's perspective, it was a hollow victory. Temporarily, Russia at least reconciled with Bulgaria. However, it would not produce tangible results regarding the subsequent Balkan wars.

Considering the general scheme of the Balkan Peninsula after the full independence of Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria, there began both greater rapprochement of the Balkan countries to protect the peninsula from further penetration by Austria-Hungary, and also efforts to unite the Balkan people. So the Balkan League of 1911 was so near to come.



**CHAPTER THREE:**  
**THE BALKAN WARS AND**  
**BULGARIA’S ENTRY TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

**3.1. Balkan System of Alliance and Russia’s Dominance in the Balkans**

The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 were the result of the national aspirations of the Balkan states, which perceived the territories of Ottoman Empire in Europe as theirs, and had been taken from their hands by force centuries before. So their main task was to liberate their brothers outside of their territorial borders and also win territorial aggrandizement at the expense of their rivals. The Yeşilköy “syndrome” in Bulgaria now spread to the all the Balkan states. For Bulgaria in particular, these wars were regarded as the wars of liberation to unite the Bulgarian nation into the Yeşilköy Bulgaria.

When Italy launched war against the Ottoman Empire in 1911 over Tripoli and reached Ottoman possessions in the eastern Mediterranean, this event gave Balkan states a great opportunity to unite against their ‘sick’ enemy and they hastened their negotiations. In one year, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro tied themselves by bilateral agreements. With the Serbia-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance on 13 March 1912, Greece and Bulgarian alliance on 29 May 1912, Bulgarian and Montenegrin understanding on 28 August 1912, and

Serbian-Montenegrin Treaty of Alliance on 6 October 1912, Balkan unity was formed and they were prepared to confront Ottomans.

Complicating the Balkan conflicts was the rivalry between Russia and Austria-Hungary. Their competition never ended: even during their Balkan entente from 1897 to 1908, they carefully observed each others actions in the peninsula.<sup>194</sup> Since Russia's defeat by Japanese in 1905 and weakening of Russia's diplomatic leverage comparing to the Austrians in 1909, the Russians had sought a more active role in the Balkans.

Alexander Isvolsky, Foreign Minister of Russia had commenced a policy to consolidate the relations between Balkan states under the supervision of Russia. Especially, the aim of Russia was to build a wall against the German or Austria-Hungarian penetration to the Balkans until Russia was prepared to act decisively and unilaterally.<sup>195</sup> Russia tried to preserve the status quo in Balkans as much as possible, while still showing that they had Slav interest at heart. To Russia, the Slav states must unite and work together and thus fulfill the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan states'. The Balkan alliance for Russia meant the Slavic League under the patronage of Russia arbitrating and reconciling between the Slav nationalities and so forestalling Austria from utilizing their contentions.<sup>196</sup>

Russia encouraged the formation of an anti-Austrian Balkan union between Bulgaria and Serbia. The policy was mainly implemented by Anatole

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<sup>194</sup> Edward C. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912* (University Park, 1965), p.61

<sup>195</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p.228

<sup>196</sup> Douglas Dakin, "The Diplomacy of the Great Powers and the Balkan States, 1908-1914", *Balkan Studies*, vol.3 ( 1962), p.334

Vasil'evich Nekliudov<sup>197</sup>, Russian ambassador in Sofia and Nicholas Genrikovich Hartwig<sup>198</sup>, Russian ambassador in Belgrade.

In the negotiations, the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1904 would be the basis of the negotiations.<sup>199</sup> This agreement provided for military cooperation against both the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires<sup>200</sup> and the arrangement for Macedonia, being a major dispute between two Slavic states from the beginning. This treaty was compromised in a secret annex that in the event that autonomous status for Macedonia proved impossible to achieve, the province would be partitioned and giving the northern part to Serbia and the southern part to Bulgaria. Ownership of the 'disputed zone' was to be decided by Nicholas II of Russia. These negotiations began in September 1911 till March 1912, within the supervision of Russian representatives, whose aims were to preserve status quo and the formation of affront against the Habsburg Empire.<sup>201</sup>

To reach an agreement between Bulgaria and Serbia was not easy. During the negotiations, Bulgaria was so reluctant to discuss the partition of Macedonia. After several months, they finally narrowed their differences to a

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<sup>197</sup> He permanently pointed out that Russia should not remain neutral in a Balkan war and should make every effort to keep Bulgaria from joining Austria-Hungary; he also backed Bulgaria during the months of disputing with Serbia over the division of Macedonia.

<sup>198</sup> Despite having German name, he was an extreme Russian nationalist. His policy pursued two aims: encouragement and support of the Slavic nations in the Balkans and the division of the Ottoman's European possessions among them, and also the realization of the "secular task of" Russian diplomacy that is to control over the shores of the Bosphorus, the gateway to the "Russian sea". He also differed from other Russian diplomats that Russia should have favored Serbia over Bulgaria. He believed Serbia was more dependent than Bulgaria, whose stronger position permitted it to act more independently.

<sup>199</sup> Andrew Rossos, *Russia and the Balkans: Inter-Balkan Rivalries and Russian Foreign Policy 1908-1914* (Toronto, 1981), p.37

<sup>200</sup> The *casus foederis* would be the main principle incase: if Serbia and Bulgaria were attacked by third power; if the Ottoman Empire attacked any of the Balkan states; if Austria-Hungary attempted to occupy Macedonia or Albania; or finally, if the internal troubles in the Ottoman Empire threatened 'the peace and tranquility of the Balkan peninsula' or the interests of 'Bulgaria or Serbia demanded that the question should be settled'. Rossos, *ibid.*, p.37

<sup>201</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, pp.229-230

small disputed area, the division of which, assuming a victorious war against the Ottomans, was to be decided by the Russian Tsar.<sup>202</sup> This time, after three months of negotiations, in May 1912, Bulgaria signed an alliance with Serbia, at times facilitated by energetic encouragement of the Russian minister in Belgrade, Hartwig and Nekliudov.<sup>203</sup> The importance of Russian support in the negotiations was emphasized by both sides because they needed Russia as the arbiter of their own differences, and also its political support was essential to prevent great powers from avoiding any gains at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>204</sup>

In the international arena, Bulgarian position was favorable compared to Serbia's. Because for both Russia and Austria-Hungary, having friendly relations with Bulgaria were advantageous and necessary.<sup>205</sup> For Russia, Bulgarian position was critical considering Straits and Istanbul. For Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria could be a check against Serbian expansion and also Austria's interests in the Near East.<sup>206</sup> These advantages allowed Bulgaria to act more freely than the other Balkan states.

This unity between two former rivals gave a great satisfaction to Russia. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Dimitrievich Sazanov felt that this alliance sponsored by St. Petersburg would give Russia some control over events and help defense its interests in the Balkans. He wrote that:

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<sup>202</sup> Thaden, p.76

<sup>203</sup> L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans 1815-1914* (New York, 1963), p.113

<sup>204</sup> The negotiations made Sazanov increasingly impatient by Serbian and Bulgarian intransigence about minor towns and rivers. Thaden, pp.76-77

<sup>205</sup> Rossos, p.18

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*

We could only endeavor to lessen the acuteness of the situation by taking an active part in bringing about a rapprochement between the various Balkan states. We hoped that by showing a united front they might reduce the risks attendant on their inevitable struggle with the Young Turks over the Balkan problem, and perhaps with Austria-Hungary also, in the event, always to be reckoned with, that the latter should attempt a fresh hostile move.<sup>207</sup>

Russia thought that this alliance would bring an end to the disputes between Slavic states of the Balkans and eventually that unity would bring them to the sphere of influence of Russia. It could also provide assurance to Russia to be the dominant figure in the peninsula and increase its influence on Straits regarding the ultimate demise of the Ottoman Empire. In addition to this, the clauses related with defense against Austria-Hungary were also important for opportunity of the Russian penetration to the peninsula. As William Langer said “the beauty of a Balkan League would be that it could be like a two-edged sword, against the Austrians or the Turks, as the situation demanded”.<sup>208</sup>

Naturally, the perceptions of the two Balkan states were different from Russia's. The main impetus for the alliance was not the threat of Austria-Hungary, but their irredentist policy in the region. Having felt the Ottomans' decaying, they grasped the opportunity to share their scope of interests and the clauses directed against Ottoman Empire were their main considerations rather than the ones related with Austria-Hungary. So, as all these views suggests Russia and the two Balkan states considered their own interests which were not matching each other. Again, the Yeşilköy “syndrome”, created by Russia, rose again. Bulgaria now as an independent state pursued its own national interests in

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<sup>207</sup> Thaden, p.86

<sup>208</sup> William Langer, “Russia, the Straits Question and the Origins of the Balkan League, 1908-1912”, *Political Science Quarterly*, V.XLIII ( September 1928), p.335

the Balkans. The scourge of Bulgarian irredentist policy became a constant headache for Russia.

Further, in addition to this alliance system, building on controversial basis, the Great Powers were concerned about each other's intentions; Russia was also suspected by the other powers for its encouragement to form alliances and expel the Ottomans from Macedonia. Austria-Hungary feared Russia's role in this initiative. And Germany was worried about the situation of Ottomans, as at that time it was backing the preservation of Ottoman Empire integrity.

After secret Serbia-Bulgarian military and political agreement in 1912, the Sofia government also opened the talks with Greece for an alliance, the Greek Premier Elephtherios Venizelos in particular had been eager to reach an arrangement with Bulgaria directed against The Ottoman Empire since the spring of 1911.<sup>209</sup> However, both sides were under pressure about their claims on Macedonia, they were cognizant of the difficulty of the establishment of a formal agreement. Besides, they could not rely on the arbitrator role of the Russia as this Slavic state was not so enthusiastic to see Greece and Bulgaria as allies. Further, as this alliance was bound to be anti-Ottoman not anti-Austrian, Russia always had suspicion since the beginning of the negotiations.<sup>210</sup> After several negotiations, in the final meeting, Greece gave up its demand that provisions for the division of Macedonia to be included in the agreement and also Bulgaria had to abandon its insist on an open statement in favor of Macedonian autonomy.<sup>211</sup> Eventually, on 29 May 1912, these two states signed a treaty providing for

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<sup>209</sup> Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913 Prelude to the First World War* ( London and New York, 2000), p.12

<sup>210</sup> M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923* (New York, 1966), p.292

<sup>211</sup> Rossos, p.51

political and military cooperation against the Ottoman Empire without stipulating any specific division of Ottoman territories.<sup>212</sup> In this treaty, sides were definitely planning to attack The Ottoman Empire. Here, it should be pointed out that this agreement was not the indication of Bulgarian-Greece lasting friendship, but the eradication of the suspicion and the need for dependency on each other.

In 1912, Greece also negotiated with Serbia and Montenegro, and Bulgaria negotiated with Montenegro.<sup>213</sup> Thus the Balkan league was complete: Bulgaria had a formal alliance with Serbia, Greece and Montenegro. Serbia had a written alliance with Montenegro. Centering at Sofia, all these military and political agreements signed by the Balkan states to form the Balkan alliance had the aim of putting a complete end to Ottoman role in the Balkans despite its complexity. It was the failure of Russia's Panslavist policy to liberate the Slavic nations while keeping them under its control. From now on, it was so clear that Russia created a monster born in 1877.

Now, all of the powers had become deeply concerned about the dangerous situation, almost in all states there were growing pressures to wage a war and the public opinions were by and large bellicose.<sup>214</sup> Russian government sent direct warnings to Balkan capitals and entered into discussions with the great powers.<sup>215</sup> When the Balkan allies gave the signs of acting independently and attacking The Ottoman Empire on their own, then Russia began to curb them

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<sup>212</sup> However, this ambiguity created problems; Bulgaria tried to make an alliance with the Greeks and was confident that their own stronger army could seize the Macedonian territories before the Greeks could arrive, but this fault of Bulgaria would have important effects in the Balkan wars.

<sup>213</sup> In reality, Russia was opposed to the joint of Montenegro to the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance. It thought that Montenegro could make the alliance uncontrollable and St. Petersburg was even concerned about that Montenegro would betray the arrangement to Vienna. Dakin, p.348

<sup>214</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, p.231

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

as much as possible. Certainly, As Douglas Dakin assessed ‘this Balkan League was like a diplomatic weapon forged by Russia; it was designed by Russia to restrain Austria; but if only bluff was intended it was a dangerous weapon for its charge was likely to explode of its own accord’.<sup>216</sup> Russia and Austria-Hungary warned the Balkan powers not to incite any kind of conflict in the peninsula. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei D. Sazanov reminded Bulgaria and Serbia that Russia had supported alliance between them because it promised to eliminate the divergences between them. But Russia realized that this alliance was purely their own selfish interests. Sazonov continued,

In the event that in spite of our warnings the two states decide now to employ their alliance to launch a joint attack on Turkey... and to expose their territorial integrity and independence to a ruinous ordeal, then we deem it our duty to warn them in advance that in such a case we will be guided solely by our concern for the direct and immediate interests of Russia.<sup>217</sup>

Such warnings were fruitless: Balkan states closed the eyes to Russia’s orders. They would go to war with The Ottoman Empire, unless the latter made reforms to provide for administrative autonomy considering the ethnic nationalities in the Ottoman territories. They received no such offer from the Porte. And eventually, armed conflict began with Montenegrin declaration of war against the Porte on 8 October 1912. The Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian governments decided to go to war on 17 October.<sup>218</sup> This was a major failure of the Russian diplomacy. All the Balkan states were aware of the fact that the great powers would never be able to cooperate long enough and closely enough to enforce their threat of no annexation.<sup>219</sup> As a last word, there was an excellent

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<sup>216</sup> Dakin, pp.347-348

<sup>217</sup> Rossos, p.65

<sup>218</sup> Dakin, p.353

<sup>219</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans 1815-1914*, p.534



sentence of the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré about Russia's failed policy in the Balkan crisis : "It is too late to wipe out the movement which Russia has called forth... she is trying to put on the brakes, but it is she who started the motor."<sup>220</sup> Russia assumed Bulgaria as a potential protectorate. However, after the Yeşilköy Treaty, Russia prepared its own failure in the Bulgarian policy. Now, the old Slavic vassal state ruined all Russian dreams in the Balkans.

### **3.2. The Balkan Wars 1912-1913 and the Outcomes for Bulgaria**

#### **3.2.1. The Failure of the Russian Policy and the First Balkan War**

Ottoman control in the Balkans, especially in Macedonia and Albania, had deteriorated by the end of 1912. The revolt of the Albanian tribes and the provocation of the Macedonian revolutionary activities, protest meetings and massacres were out of control of the Ottoman controls. Russian leaders had not desired to make the Balkan conflict an international issue. They had wanted to delay any decisive changes in the Balkans until Russia was powerful enough to take into control the whole peninsula.<sup>221</sup> Yet, when Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece and Montenegro decided to wage a war against the Ottoman Empire, Russia felt badly let down, it tried to forestall the outbreak of the war before, but when it failed then to localize it in collaboration with the other great powers.<sup>222</sup> Until the outbreak of the war, Russia blamed Bulgaria for the failure of the status quo in

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<sup>220</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, pp.113-114

<sup>221</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, p.232

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*

the region, but after the beginning of the war, Russia began to blame The Ottoman Empire for failing on reforms and for the war itself.

After breaking off the status quo in the Balkans, Sazanov insisted on the principle that “as long as Ottoman Empire survived, we would not tolerate any other power, great or small, at Istanbul or Straits. After ‘sick man of Europe’ passed away, the region was to come under the control of the Russian Empire.”<sup>223</sup> However, with the outbreak of war, Russian policy ultimately collapsed.

The small states of the Balkans now dared to give a blow to Ottomans themselves instead of following the advice of Russia. The public opinion in many states was also in favor of the Balkan war.<sup>224</sup> The Balkan states’ plan was for Greeks and Serbs to advance from the south and north on Salonika, while Bulgaria would advance on Istanbul. The Montenegrins were to advance on Skutari. Also, in accordance with the terms of the military convention with Serbia, Bulgaria promised to supply an army not less than 200,000 soldiers in case of an attack from Austria-Hungary.<sup>225</sup>

In the war, the Ottoman army was defeated, holding out only at the fortresses in Edirne, Yanina and Skutari. Bulgarian Army occupied Kırklareli on October 24 and Ottoman defense in Lüleburgaz completely collapsed due to the superiority of the Bulgarian artillery. The Ottomans had to retreat towards the Çatalca lines, the main defensive works before Istanbul. In November 1912, with

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<sup>223</sup> This was main principle in the negotiations between Russia and Bulgaria in 1902, 1910 and also in the Serbian- Bulgarian negotiations of 1912.

<sup>224</sup> Huge demonstrations in the allied capitals and also in other towns took place. And they came together under the slogan of the Balkans for the Balkan people.

<sup>225</sup> Petar Opačić, “Political Ramifications of Serbo-Bulgarian Military Cooperation in the First Balkan War”, in *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, edited by Béla K. Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (New York, 1987), p.87

the advance of the Bulgarian army, the capture of Istanbul appeared imminent.<sup>226</sup> However, Russia was completely opposed to Istanbul falling into Bulgarian hands. Sazanov declared that on the Bosphorus there could only be the Ottomans or Russians.<sup>227</sup> Sazanov also wrote to Alexander Isvolsky, Foreign Minister of Russia that if the Bulgarians went into Istanbul, they would be attacked by Russia within twenty-four hours. In Istanbul, Bulgarian forces could face the Russian Black Sea fleet.<sup>228</sup> So, the small Balkan state was now in a position to confront with their liberator.

On the other hand, Ferdinand of Bulgaria was dreaming to enter Istanbul as ‘Byzantine Emperor’ and to make it the new capital of even larger Bulgarian state.<sup>229</sup> Nonetheless, Russia, desiring the control of straits for two centuries, would not allow Bulgaria in. Russian diplomats appealed to Britain and France to restrain the Bulgarians, but Ferdinand did not bear in mind their warnings, he thought that it was not just a matter of entering Istanbul, but since his arrival in Bulgaria he had contemplated placing upon his head the Crown of Byzantium.<sup>230</sup> So, he decided to advance.<sup>231</sup> Bulgaria’s Prime Minister Ivan E. Geshov also thought the temporary occupation of Istanbul would give them the most and effective guarantee for the conclusion of a peace treaty favorable to Bulgaria.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Stephen Constant, *Foxy Ferdinand 1861-1948, Tsar of Bulgaria* (London, 1979), p. 256

<sup>227</sup> Constant, p.257

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> It was said that he sent an order to Sofia for the parade uniforms of the Royal Guard, the State coach and six white horses, according to the Russian Minister in Sofia, he also asked for his Byzantine emperor’s costume. Moreover, he pictured himself making his entry in to Istanbul.

<sup>230</sup> Hans Roger Madol, *Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the Dream of Byzantium* (London, 1933), pp.173-175

<sup>231</sup> The public opinion in Bulgaria was divided, some radicals supported to enter Istanbul, but some circles was concerned about Russian reaction and did not want to offend it.

<sup>232</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918, A History* (New York, 1983), p.413

The Bulgarian side launched their assault, but with loss of at least 10,000 men. But this time Ferdinand's army was thrown back by the Ottoman forces in Çatalca defense. Moreover, Bulgarian army had to fight against cholera and dysentery, also the shortages of food and ammunition affected the Bulgarian failure. So the Bulgarians surrendered to advance to Istanbul. However, the earlier victories of Bulgaria had led The Ottoman Empire appeal for armistice.

During the Bulgarian advance, Russia anticipated that the Bulgarians would not do anything upsetting them by attacking Çatalca. However, the Ottoman defeats were unwelcome to Russia. Sazanov told the Bulgarian minister in St. Petersburg that "Be content with San Stefano Bulgaria and do not enter Constantinople under any circumstances, because you will otherwise complicate your affairs too gravely!"<sup>233</sup> Sazanov also threatened that Russia might allow the intervention of Ottomans' protectors, Britain and France. Further, Vladimir Kokotsov, the Prime Minister of Russia and Tsar agreed that the Russian ambassador in Istanbul should be empowered to summon the Black Sea squadron if this seemed necessary.<sup>234</sup> So, Russia's reaction to Bulgarian advance through the straits was to intimidate it as much as possible.

Russia's policy during the crisis was hindered by the usual inconsistency. Hartwig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade, and Colonel Georgy Romanovski, the military attaché in Sofia, disregarded their own national policy and vigorously encouraged against The Ottoman Empire the states to which they were accredited. It had been also the same during the time of Alexander

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<sup>233</sup> Rossos, p.87-88

<sup>234</sup> Anderson, p.294

Battenberg, in which the Russian agents played on the opposite side in the same space- Bulgaria.

It was ironic that Bulgaria, a Russia-liberated nation, was now daring to conquer the city that had been in Russia's dreams for centuries. The advance of the Bulgarians to Istanbul was a strong blow to Russia's control over Bulgaria and the balances of power between two states, which had always been in favor of Russia. It was excellent example of how Russia had to choose between its own interests or the new Slavic state whose existence was mostly the result of Russian doings<sup>235</sup>. Sazanov would do what he could do for Bulgaria, but he would not permanently sacrifice Russia's own interests for Sofia's benefit.<sup>236</sup> Had the Bulgarians captured Istanbul and Straits, it would have been humiliating for the Russians to see their former vassal posing as Byzantine Emperor! Bulgaria and Russia would have changed their roles. Bulgaria, having straits in its hands, could have controlled Russia by permitting passing from the Straits.

Forgotten in the drama over Istanbul, the original objective of Bulgaria had been to capture Macedonia with its main city and seaport, Salonika. However, geography determined who fought where.<sup>237</sup> The terms of the treaty with the Balkan states had compelled Bulgaria to make Istanbul its objective and Thrace its campaigning ground.<sup>238</sup> However, Macedonia had remained its main target. As Bulgaria drew its forces into Eastern Thrace, the Macedonian territories were left to Greece and Serbia. When Bulgarian units advanced

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<sup>235</sup> Ronald Bobroff, "Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-1913", *The Russian Review*, vol.59 (January 2000), p.77

<sup>236</sup> Bobroff, *ibid.*, p.78

<sup>237</sup> *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Joseph Held (New York, 1991), p.71

<sup>238</sup> Constant, p.262

through the western frontier, Salonika, they found that Macedonia was already occupied by the Greeks and Serbians. Besides, the Serbs were not willing to respect the treaty with Bulgaria regarding the division of Macedonia.<sup>239</sup> So the Balkan allies found themselves in a condition like a Gordian knot. They were all entwined together in mutual greed on Macedonian problem. The Balkan states now demonstrated the signs of being in the 'powder keg of Europe' by their irredentist policies.

Even if an armistice was signed, no side was satisfied with their possessions. Greece even did not recognize armistice in order to continue the siege of Yanina. Hostilities between the sides were not settled down at the conference in London<sup>240</sup> because of the disputes mainly on Albania, Edirne, Istanbul, the frontier of Romania. In the end, discussions producing no results were put an end by a coup in Istanbul on 23 January 1913.<sup>241</sup> So, Balkan states, seeking to break armistice resumed the hostilities and in the second round of the first Balkan war, Bulgaria captured Edirne (by a combined Serbian and Bulgarian army), Greece Yanina and Montenegro Skutari.<sup>242</sup>

After the fall of Edirne, the last fortress city between Bulgaria and The Ottoman Empire, the concentric attack by the allied armies quickly ended the

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<sup>239</sup> Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Belgrade encouraged Serbia to hold on to Macedonia against the Bulgarian aim to establish Greater Bulgaria.

<sup>240</sup> Firstly the ambassadors of the belligerent states met in London to conciliate, but later another conference of the ambassadors of the Great Powers met there to prevent Balkan states from making peace by themselves. For a detailed analysis see: Georgi Markov, "The Bulgarian Delegation at the London Peace Conference (December 1912-May 1913)", *Bulgarian Historical Review* (1984)

<sup>241</sup> The Committee of Union and Progress, led by Enver Paşa, had brought about a coup. They were so decided to save Edirne and go on the war. Kamil Paşa the Grand Vizier abdicated and even the Minister of War, Nazım Paşa was killed in the coup. The new government sent a proposal to London about the partition of Edirne but Balkan allies immediately rejected it.

<sup>242</sup> The vilayet of Edirne had been a question between Russia and Bulgaria, when Danev appealed for including Edirne in the Bulgarian sphere of influence, Sazanov reminded that it had been left outside the frontiers of San Stefano Bulgaria. Dakin, p.343

war in military terms. The Ottomans asked for mediation of powers. By the Treaty of London on 30 May 1913, they had to cede the territories in the west of Enez-Midyе line, drawn from Enez near end of Meriç to Midye on the Black Sea, in Eastern Thrace.<sup>243</sup> The Ottoman possession in Europe was diminished to a small area around Istanbul.<sup>244</sup>

After the end of the first Balkan war, three Balkan states began to quarrel with competing claims on captured territories, Macedonia in particular since the claims on Macedonia were not decided. It is possible here to cite the words of Count Ignatiev in the middle of nineteenth century about the nature of the Balkan people, which was also suitable for the atmosphere of the eve of the second Balkan war:

It is inevitable that once the struggle with the Turks is ended, race rivalries will reappear and nothing stable will be built in the Balkan Peninsula until many years have elapsed. But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.<sup>245</sup>

As Count Ignatiev highlighted the nature of the Balkan states, the Russians had made an incredible mistake at Yeşilköy, of unleashing these ethnic rivalries. So, the ingratitude of the Bulgarians came into being. About the Macedonian question, the Bulgarians were so greedy that some Bulgarian statesmen even began to demand the whole of Macedonia.<sup>246</sup> Bulgaria also violated the clauses of the treaty between Serbia as the Bulgarians had not given

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<sup>243</sup> It was also stipulated that the future of Aegean Islands belonging to The Ottoman Empire which now claimed by right of military occupation and the vote of their inhabitants should be decided by the Great Powers. A more absolute concession to Greece was the withdrawal of Ottoman sovereignty in Crete, also there were stipulations related with financial requirements. Also, in the treaty, a new state of Albania was established which would be governed by a prince elected by the signatory powers.

<sup>244</sup> Branimir M. Jankovic, *The Balkans in International Relations* (Hong Kong, 1988), p.120

<sup>245</sup> “ Zapiski Grafa N.P. Ignatieva (1864-1874),” *Izvestiia Ministerstva Inostranykh Del* (1914), Bk. III, p.108, cited from Stravrianos, *The Balkans*, p.535

<sup>246</sup> Stravrianos, *ibid.*, p.538

the Serbians military assistance in the Vardar Valley while the Serbians for their part had aided the Bulgarians. The Serbians thought they were right to demand territorial compensation in Macedonia; firstly because they sided with Bulgaria by sending 50,000 men to Edirne, but Bulgaria gave them cold shoulder instead. Another fact was that while Serbia was disappointed for its hopes of reaching the Adriatic coasts, Bulgaria acquired Thrace. So Serbia thought that it had right to claim compensation.

Meanwhile, a new danger emerged in the northern side of Bulgaria. Romania began to ask compensation from Bulgaria for latter's invasions and threatened Bulgaria to seize Silistra, whose population was entirely Bulgarian. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, Stoyan Danev appealed to Sazanov to stop Romania, but he refused to do since this would mean intervention on behalf of Bulgaria against Serbia and Greece.<sup>247</sup> However, it was not the end of the hope of Bulgaria, Danev and King Ferdinand renewed their proposals both the Bulgarian Minister in St. Petersburg and the Russian Minister at Sofia to bring the cessation of hostilities but Russia, fearing of Bulgaria's aspirations on Istanbul and suspicious of its future policy, did not take action for and Romanian forces advanced into Bulgarian territory.<sup>248</sup>

There were also disputes on the establishment of an Autonomous Albanian state. But Serbia demanded additional territories in Macedonian territories claimed by the Bulgarians, in exchange of sacrificing to the new state. Moreover, between Bulgaria and Greece, Salonika was the sticking point. Romania was also insisting on its claims on Dobruca.

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<sup>247</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *the Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (Cambridge, 1938), p.376

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*



The prevailing atmosphere in Balkan Peninsula after the first Balkan war was full of profound differences, underlying motives which troubled the allies and also secret negotiations, intrigues and suspicions, which would eventually drag them into another disastrous war. Clearly, the First Balkan war did not provide a consistent and final resolution to the national and political issues of the Balkan nations. The respective positions of the Balkan states were much the same as they had been when this question faced Europe in 1912.<sup>249</sup>

In January 1913, Prince Alexander of Serbia and Prince Nicholas of Greece came together in Salonika for an alliance against Bulgaria for the partition of Macedonia.<sup>250</sup> They requested Bulgaria to revise the Macedonian frontiers between allies, but certainly Bulgaria refused it.<sup>251</sup> Its former benefactor, Bulgaria requested Russia, to solve the conflicts between Serbia about Macedonia. However, the hope of Bulgarians would be shaken when Russia advised the Bulgarians to give the Serbs some additional territory from their share of Macedonia. Meantime, in June 1913, Serbian-Greek Treaty was signed in Salonika directed against Bulgaria.<sup>252</sup> The Russian Tsar instantly sent telegrams to the Serbian and Greek Kings warning that:

A war between the allies would not leave me indifferent; in fact, I should like to make it clear that the State which commences war will be held responsible before the Slav cause and that I reserve to myself full liberty concerning the attitude which Russia will adopt at the end of such a criminal war.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Helmreich, p.369

<sup>250</sup> Constant, p.269

<sup>251</sup> In Macedonia, the Serbians and Greeks closed the Bulgarian schools; members of IMRO were severely oppressed.

<sup>252</sup> Each side promised to support the other with 150,000 men against an attack by a third power.

<sup>253</sup> *The Nations of To-day, Bulgaria and Romania*, edited by John Buchan (London, 1924), p.81

Here, Russia revealed its two-sided policy again. Russia tried to support Slavs on the one hand, to maintain stability and preserve status quo on the other hand. However, it was not possible to attain the same aims at once.

### **3.2.2. The Inter-Allied War and Bulgaria's Failure**

To resolve the disputes, the sides appealed to St. Petersburg. Russia, fearing to disappoint each of them, failed to take a definite and consistent stand on each claim. Sazanov promised over and over again to support the territorial pretensions of each party. Yet, it was impracticable as every side's claims were conflicting and overlapping with each other. So, the last minutes efforts of the Russia did not halt the Inter-Allied war.

It was a great disappointment for Bulgaria that Russia, the founder of the alliance was now irresolute; it could mean the end of the alliance too. The inconsistency of Sazanov's policies weakened Geshov's position and helped to bring about his downfall. In this circumstances the Bulgarian authority was also upset, at last the Prime Minister Ivan E. Geshov resigned office on May 1913. The new Prime Minister, Stoyan Danev, known as strong Russophile, aimed to preserve Balkan alliance by enlisting Russia to resolve the conflict with the Serbs, but even he was disappointed from the inconsistency of the Russian attempts.<sup>254</sup> The Russian side was reluctant to accept the responsibility of the arbitration under the conditions of London Treaty, simply because Sazanov was frustrated by the attitude of Bulgarian pretensions to Istanbul.

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<sup>254</sup> Constant, p.262

Besides, both Ferdinand and Prime Minister Danev were threatened with assassination by Macedonian groups if they would require Russian arbitration.<sup>255</sup> There was also a growing discontent in the Bulgarian army. General Mikhail Savov, the commander-in-chief, rejected Russia's mediating role and wanted to invade whole Macedonia and later demanded from the Bulgarian government to decide fight or demobilize the army.<sup>256</sup> At the same time, the public opinion in Bulgaria was mostly pro-war. Ferdinand was also under a great pressure to wage a war on behalf of Macedonia. Simultaneously, Savov was urging Ferdinand to attack, believing that the army could defeat the Greeks and Serbs.<sup>257</sup>

With tacit Serbian-Greek agreement, Danev, with the consent of Ferdinand, asked Russia to make a seven days arbitral award on the basis of the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty. However, Sazonov, resenting the time-limit, told the Minister in Russia that he wished to wash his hands of Bulgaria and continued:

...you are free, Russia and Slavdom are rejected...after your declaration I communicate ours to you! Do not expect anything from us and forget the existence of any of our engagements from 1902 until today!<sup>258</sup>

In effect Russia had renounced the Russo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1902, which was the legal basis for Russian support for Bulgaria in the case of current problems on Macedonia and Romania. However, Russia did not back Serbian territorial claims against Bulgaria either; the policy of St. Petersburg was to alienate no side. Even if Russia was fully aware of the everlasting territorial claims of Balkan States, it failed to arbitrate them and ultimately the Balkan allies were alienated from each other.

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<sup>255</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, p.539

<sup>256</sup> Anderson, p.298

<sup>257</sup> Constant, pp.278-280

<sup>258</sup> *The Nations*, p.81

So, for Ferdinand, there remained no other choice other than attack. With no formal declaration of war, he ordered the General staff to attack Greek and Serbian lines in Macedonia on 29 June 1913.<sup>259</sup> It was also rumored that Ferdinand relied on Austria's coming to the assistance of Bulgaria.<sup>260</sup> Without doubt, this decision, emerged from a deadlock would bring a catastrophic ending to Bulgaria.

Greece and Serbia answered with a declaration of war. Soon Montenegro and Romania, too declared war on Bulgaria. Lastly, the Ottoman Empire followed suit. The only country in Europe to suffer invasion on every frontier from every neighbor was Bulgaria.<sup>261</sup> From the west, Bulgaria suffered the attacks of Serbia on the left bank of the River Varna. Serbia took north and central Macedonia, including Monastir. From the south, Greece was advancing and received Salonika, Kavala and greater part of the coast of Macedonia. Above all, the Bulgarian troops in Salonika were forced to capitulate after a great loss. In the north, Romania crossed the Danube with 150,000 soldiers and occupied the Dobruca quadrilateral without opposition. And also the Ottoman Empire advanced and regained the greater part of Thrace, including Edirne and Kırklareli.<sup>262</sup> There was none to save it and its enemies had surrounded from every side. The Second Balkan War was Bulgaria's disaster and a term of supreme humiliation.

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<sup>259</sup> However the attack was the Ferdinand's decision, we should also point out that the Governments of Serbia and Greece should share the responsibility of the second war. They all had extensive claims on Macedonia too. Moreover, they were preparing for the second war.

<sup>260</sup> Jacob Schurman, *Balkan Wars, 1912-1913* (Princeton, 1916), p.xxii

<sup>261</sup> Richard Hall, *The Balkan wars*, p.140

<sup>262</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, p.117

In the Second Balkan War, Bulgarian government misestimated the Russian interests regarding the Balkans. Bulgarian attack on Serbia meant the split of Balkan League, which angered Russia as it would benefit Austria. The fatal decision to attack the Serbian and Greek positions in Macedonia on June 29 was made by Ferdinand himself as commander in chief, presumably for the purpose of forcing Russia to intervene diplomatically and rule in Bulgaria's favor.<sup>263</sup>

Ferdinand and Danev did not realize that Russia's policy was not so friendly to them; they thought that a military incident would force Russia to give a favorable arbitral award.<sup>264</sup> Also, the Bulgarian side underestimated the capability of the Greeks and Serbians to offense in such rapidity.

After such a calamity, it seemed that Bulgaria would have to accept peace at any price.<sup>265</sup> And Russia presented a proposal to all sides for the armistice, but its efforts had produced no results. Repeated efforts did not stop Rumanian advance and also Serbia and Greece did not accept Russian proposal.<sup>266</sup> This severely affected Bulgarian politics. Russia's inability to stop the Rumanian advance and the failure of the Russian arbitration led to the fall of the administration on 13 July. In some Russophobe circles, it was said that Danev had made a mistake by relying on Russian support. The head of the new government was Vassil Radoslavov, who was perfectly Austrophile. He immediately appealed to Austria for help for finding a way to save the country from this catastrophe. But Austria preferred to wait instead of giving a quick

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<sup>263</sup> Marin V. Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism", in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle and London, 1994), edited by Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer, p. 135

<sup>264</sup> Richard C. Hall, *Bulgaria's Road to the First World War* (New York, 1996), p.333

<sup>265</sup> Helmreich, p.380

<sup>266</sup> Helmreich, p.383

response. He had no choice other than to submit unconditionally in order to obtain an armistice. On the other side, Russia failed to halt the advance of Romania from the north despite Danev's several appeals.<sup>267</sup>

Defeated in the Second Balkan war, Bulgaria had to make territorial concessions under the Treaty of Bucharest on 10 August 1913. Romania received the Southern Dobruca. Macedonia was partitioned between Serbia and Greece and Bulgaria, but Bulgaria received the smallest part of southeastern Macedonia, known as Pirin Macedonia, a net gain of 9,663 square miles. The Ottoman Empire regained territories in Thrace.<sup>268</sup> Bulgaria accepted these sacrifices because it hoped that this treaty would be revised by the Great Powers in a conference. The leader of the Bulgarian delegation at Bucharest stated that "Either the Powers will change it, or we ourselves will destroy it".<sup>269</sup> But Serbia, Greece and Romania strongly opposed to the revision of the treaty. Thus, at the end of the Balkan wars, Serbia and Greece nearly doubled their territories at the expense of Bulgaria.

All in all, it is already well-known that there was no mutual trust for the dream of ever lasting Balkan alliance before and during the wars. Each side was suspicious of the others: they had made alliances simply because of Russian pressure, Ottoman weakness and the advantageous environment of the Ottoman-Italy war. All these inspiration brought the Balkan states together. The first war saw Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro allied against the Ottoman Empire, and in the second Balkan war, Bulgaria found itself in the middle of its

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<sup>267</sup> Adversely, in Bulgaria there was an opinion that Russia itself urged Romania to take action against Bulgaria. Constant, pp.280-281

<sup>268</sup> Bulgaria and The Ottoman Empire signed a separate agreement in Istanbul 30 September 1913; the Russian anyway just did half-hearted attempts to hold Edirne for Bulgaria.

<sup>269</sup> Richard Hall, *The Balkan Wars*, p.125

enemies and also the Ottoman Empire. It brought the ultimate defeat of Bulgaria and its irritant repercussions. It had to withdraw from the territories just gained from the Ottomans in the first war; Sofia was also irritated by the annexation of Macedonian territory by Greece and Serbia.

Bulgaria was the state which had attained the most significant successes, and also the most sacrifices, as Pundeff asserted:

The nation was stunned. Within a month, triumphs, and world acclaim had turned into utter defeat and humiliation. Macedonia, as Bulgarians thought of it, was no longer under a disintegrating empire but in the hands of assertive bent on driving Bulgarian influence from the parts they had seized. In southern Dobrudja and eastern Thrace, Romania and Turkey had the same objective.... Internationally, Bulgaria had ended up friendless, despite the injustices it had suffered; even Russia, the liberator of 1878, had sided with Romania and Serbia.<sup>270</sup>

With the Balkan Wars, Sofia in particular had not desired a geographic division of Macedonia with Greece and Serbia. In addition to this, the noncommittal attitude of Russia and its obscurity, however being a guarantor of the March 1912 Treaty, was another underlying reason for the calamity of the Balkan wars.

During the war, an important element undermining Russia-Bulgarian relations was that, in the wake of declaration of independence of Bulgaria in 1908, Serbia became more important state for Russia than Bulgaria.<sup>271</sup> As seen from the Balkan wars, Bulgaria had been willing to enter to Istanbul, the city in Russia's dreams for centuries on one side; and Serbia as Austria-Hungary's enemy, whose territorial ambitions was no longer coincided with Russia, on the other hand could be a bulwark against Austria, Russia's main challenger in the

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<sup>270</sup> *The Columbia History*, p. 72

<sup>271</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.424

Balkans. For Russia, Serbia had become the most dependent and least threatening bastion in the Balkans.<sup>272</sup>

After the second Balkan war, Bulgaria was leaning in the direction of an alliance with the Central powers for its considerations about Macedonia, which was still in the center of Bulgarian interests. The treaty of Bucharest drove Bulgaria into the arms of Austria, as it seemed Russia had abandoned Sofia. After the Balkan Wars, Russian Balkan policy was strongly criticized by the Russian press; the conservative *Novoe Vremia*, published articles under such acerbic headlines such as “Diplomatic Mukden” and “Diplomatic Tsushima”.<sup>273</sup>

### **3.3. The Outbreak of First World War and Bulgaria’s Entry into the War on the Side of Central Powers**

The Treaty of Bucharest did not settle anything but annihilated all earlier possibilities and combinations for reaching and maintaining a balance in the Balkans between states. The period between the end of second Balkan war and the beginning of First World War was little more than a breathing spell during which the Balkan states jockeyed for position.<sup>274</sup> When the world war began, small Balkan states, one by one, would collaborate with the big powers that were able to meet their ambitions.

Bulgaria’s main territorial ambition was to acquire all of Macedonia, including important areas under Serbian control and the regions acquired by

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<sup>272</sup> Ljiljana Aleksić-Pejković, Political and Diplomatic Importance of the Balkan Wars, in *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, edited by Béla K. Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (New York, 1987), pp.382-383

<sup>273</sup> Michael Florinsky, *Russia, a History and an Interpretation* (New York, 1953), v.II, p. 1287

<sup>274</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, p.118



Greece, especially Kavala.<sup>275</sup> Dobruca was also the other concern of Bulgaria. Both Central Powers and the allies were concerned of Bulgarian claims against Romania and Greece. The national aim of Bulgaria was explicitly put forward by the Bulgarian Prime Minister after the entrance of Bulgaria on the Central Powers: “to unite the Bulgarian nation within its historic and ethnographic borders” This was also the declaration of Bulgarian everlasting aim to create ‘Greater Bulgaria’ in the Yeşilköy Treaty.

Bulgarian foreign policy after the two Balkan wars was simple: to take revenge from the Balkan rivalries and recreation of the Yeşilköy state by the acquisition of Macedonian territories, which were in possession of Greece and Serbia, and the section of southern Dobruca that Romania had taken in 1913. Bulgaria had already been on the lookout for an opportunity to compensate its lost of the Balkan wars. As Ferdinand explained, “I know all the reproaches that can be made against me, but I won’t leave it at that!... my hour will come. I shall have my revenge; I shall set fire to the four corners of Europe!”<sup>276</sup> Vassil Radoslavov also stated Bulgarian national aspirations, “Bulgaria cannot be denied its historical and ethnographic rights. It cannot exist without Macedonia, for which it had shed so much blood.”<sup>277</sup>

When the First World War broke out Bulgaria had no treaty assurances. From all sides, attempts were made to win the favor of the country. In which side it would take place was of great importance to the world because of Bulgaria’s strategic position to the Straits and Serbia. From both sides there was enthusiasm to offer Bulgaria the opportunity of recapturing large portions of territory lost in

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<sup>275</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle and London, 1986), p.288

<sup>276</sup> Constant, p.287

<sup>277</sup> Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p.285

the second Balkan war. Bulgarian policy during the first months of the war was cautious. In spite of German and Austrian encouragements to it, Bulgaria remained neutral. However, it was also known that Bulgarian government within the initiative of the Prime Minister Radoslavov was flirting with the two sides as long as it became clear which side probably won.<sup>278</sup>

When the war became general, Russia, after defending its new ally Serbia, promised 'genuine advantages' to Bulgaria if the latter would pursue Russophile policy and informed that Russia would accept any terrible in Macedonia caused by Bulgaria as 'hostile act against Russia'.<sup>279</sup> Without doubt, Ferdinand restated Bulgaria's neutrality.

About the entrance into the war, Bulgarian opinion was divided. There was a general desire for the acquisition of Macedonia, but the nation was not anxious to enter another war, because of the catastrophic casualties of the two Balkan wars-58,000 dead and 100,000 wounded people.<sup>280</sup> The country was in a great financial need and received a German loan, providing a total of 500 million gold leva at the five percent interest with a repayment period of fifty years.<sup>281</sup> However, the sentiment of gaining Macedonia overrode. Finally, Bulgaria, experienced a severe defeat, believed that Austria-Hungary could protect its interests. It so tended to draw closer to the Habsburg Empire and thus to some extent to the Habsburg's German ally.<sup>282</sup>

Even if in the governing circles there were a small voice of Russophiles, the logic of Bulgaria's position and the influence of the German ruler inclined

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<sup>278</sup> Hall, *Bulgaria's Road*, p. 334

<sup>279</sup> Hall, *Bulgaria's Road*, p.288

<sup>280</sup> Jelavich, *The Establishment*, p.289

<sup>281</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.433

<sup>282</sup> Anderson,p.302

Bulgaria's government towards the Central Powers. In some respects, under the mask of neutrality, the Bulgarian government was in sympathy with Central Powers.<sup>283</sup> However, in public opinion, there was a considerable opposition to fighting against Russia.<sup>284</sup> At the outset of the war, thousands of letters and gifts to the value of 170,000 leva had given to the Russian legation in Sofia.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, during the Bulgarian decision-making process to prefer which side, the opposition parties of the Bulgaria came together and demanded from Ferdinand that the ultimate decision should be the outcome of an assembly, comprising all party coalitions. Lastly, they informed the king that the Bulgarian people would never tolerate a war against Russia.<sup>286</sup> The best choice for Bulgaria was to preserve its neutrality. During the neutral period, Bulgaria wanted to wait and see which side was likely to win.

Russo-Bulgarian relations on the eve of the world war had already soured. Nicholas II had visited Romania and the territories taken by Romania during the Balkan Wars and he also received commander of the Rumanian regiment which fought against Bulgaria in Silistra.<sup>287</sup> The Russian support for Serbia and Romania was also well-known. Even, Sazanov openly addressed Bulgarian neutrality and not entering the war on the allied side as 'an unfriendly act'.<sup>288</sup>

During the war period Austria managed to draw Bulgaria's attention to the side of Central Powers. In addition, Russian commitment to Serbia was

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<sup>283</sup> Ivan Ilčev, "Great Britain and Bulgaria's Entry into the First World War", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1982, no.4, p.34

<sup>284</sup> There were even some Bulgarian officers who voluntarily served in the Russian army at the beginning of war.

<sup>285</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.435

<sup>286</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.448

<sup>287</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, pp.434-435

<sup>288</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.435

another reason for Bulgaria's sympathy on Central Powers, which meant the enemy of our enemy is my friend. The relations between Bulgaria and Russia had been strained by Russian diplomacy during the Balkan Wars. Once the Russian ambassador in Bulgaria, A.A. Savinsky told Ferdinand of Bulgaria that Bulgaria would have to demonstrate that it had deserved Russian support. Another time, he reminded the Bulgarians that 'You must not forget that Russia has its own political tasks, which exceed all the others in importance; that is what the Bulgarians have so often overlooked!'<sup>289</sup> So, it is clear that Bulgaria was no longer in the Russian sphere. Moreover, Russia's support of Serbia led Bulgaria turn its face to Austria, which means that the enemy of our enemy is my friend.

Sazonov regarded Bulgaria's entrance into the war as a challenge to Russian "historical mission".<sup>290</sup> He was suspicious that Bulgaria had a "historic" claims on Istanbul, and he was determined to block any military move that might jeopardize the consummation of the Russian plan. On 11 August 1914, Sazonov requested the Russian Minister in Sofia to make the following communication to the local government:

Explain to the Bulgarian government that we expect a precise and immediate reply to the Russian proposal on neutrality with the obligation to oppose the advance of the Turks, at the present time any attempt at ambiguity is dangerous.

If the Bulgars observe a benevolent neutrality with the above mentioned obligation we shall be in a position to assure them further territorial acquisitions, which will meet national ideal and desires. If we receive an unprecise answer we wish to make it clear to the Bulgarian government that Russia reserves herself the right to free action, a right which results from the alliance with Serbia, and that the responsibility for the consequences will fall upon the present political leaders in Bulgaria.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Jelavich, *The Establishment*, p.289

<sup>290</sup> Florinsky, pp.1346-1347

<sup>291</sup> *The Nations*, p.220

Bulgaria was unable to respond beyond declaring that Sofia would continue to observe strictest neutrality and secure the defense of Bulgarian territory.<sup>292</sup>

However, in autumn 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the war from the side of Central powers and this changed the situation for Bulgaria as the value of a Bulgarian alliance increased. And more importantly, the Dardanelles campaign of April 1915 increased the strategic importance of Bulgaria, the Central powers was in great need to transport the Ottoman Empire arms and ammunitions via Bulgaria. On the other hand, the Allies wanted Bulgaria to attack Istanbul, thus to open Straits in order to war supplies to Russia. The Dardanelles Campaign showed that any Balkan state which sided with the allies was risking its existence.<sup>293</sup> In Bulgaria, Ferdinand and Radoslavov were reluctant to bind themselves not only to the Entente, but also to the Central Powers, before the outcome of the war became fairly clear.<sup>294</sup> The allied powers could meet the demands of Bulgaria, sacrificing it to Macedonia and Kavala, but the question was how to make a bargain with Serbia and Greece in return of forgoing their gained territories.<sup>295</sup>

The Bulgarian debate was lively. The leaders of the opposition side were combined to appeal for a Balkan Alliance and more agitation against the government. Nikola Tsanov, the Radical leader was sure about and stated that:

You wish to entangle Bulgaria in a war against her liberator. This you cannot do, for it is against our Country's real interests and our secular traditions. If such an act is committed it will have the

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<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> Anderson, p.327

<sup>294</sup> Ivan Ilčev, Great Britain, p.39

<sup>295</sup> Anderson, p.327

most terrible consequences, for it will inevitably the definite destruction of Bulgaria.<sup>296</sup>

Despite the pull of Slavic sentiment, the Sofia government was determined to enter the war to realize Greater Bulgarian dream and also compensate the costs of the wars before. The war on the Ottomans was to be the noble chance for the Bulgarians to prove to the world that although they had received their freedom through foreign intervention, they deserved it.<sup>297</sup> Ferdinand and his consultants made up their minds that Germany should win the war after the defeat of the Russians. The Prime Minister, Vassil Radoslavov wrote to Ferdinand, “We think to-day, as we thought then, that the salvation of our State can only be found in a policy of intimate friendship with Austria-Hungary”.<sup>298</sup> So to gain Macedonia, on 6 September 1915, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers with a military convention. Bulgaria was now an official enemy of Russia. Schelking argued that the reason behind Bulgaria’s choice to ally with Entente Powers was Ferdinand’s personal relations with Germany: “The tragicomedy of the situation lay in the fact that it was through Russian diplomacy that Ferdinand first became a friend of German Emperor and this eventually led to his alliance with Germany in the Great War”.<sup>299</sup>

Treaty with Central Powers provided German and Austrian guarantees for the defense of Bulgaria, and also Bulgarian assistance in the case of an attack by one of Bulgaria’s neighbors on Central Powers. A secret annex guaranteed Bulgaria whole Macedonia.<sup>300</sup> For the third time in three years, Bulgaria entered into war for the hope of realization of Bulgarian national aspirations. After

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<sup>296</sup> Stanley G. Evans, *A Short History of Bulgaria* (London, 1960), p.154

<sup>297</sup> Pundeff, p.134

<sup>298</sup> Evans, p. 152

<sup>299</sup> Eugene De Schelking, *Recollections of A Russian Diplomat* (New York, 1918), p. 221

<sup>300</sup> Richard Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p.305

legally joining war, Bulgarian Prime Minister, Radoslavov told that Bulgarian territory would be extended to wherever the Bulgarian soldier set foot.<sup>301</sup> In the treaty signed with Germany and Austria, the Central powers guaranteed Bulgaria parts of Macedonia acquired by Serbia; the military convention also stipulated a joint campaign against Serbia.<sup>302</sup> So Bulgarian army drove towards Nish and moved into Struma and Vardar valley to cut off the Serbs' retreat. And at last, by the midst of December all of Serbia occupied.

In August 1916, Romania decided to enter the war on the side of Entente powers. It was also an opportunity for the Bulgarian side to take revenge of the last war, on September 1916 Bulgaria attacked the Southern Dobruca, and Romania had to appeal Russia for help. Immediately, additional Russian troops in this theatre entered the war. The battle had a historical importance, since the Bulgarian commanders now faced their former liberators, the same Russian army that had fought for Bulgarian independence of Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-78.

Only forty years after the establishment of the Bulgarian Principality, Russia encountered a humiliating rebuke from the nation which owed its existence. And yet, Bulgaria, almost from the emergence of its nation-state, had not remained an obedient brother of Russia: the Serbian-Bulgarian war, unification of Eastern Rumelia with the principality, Bulgarian national movements in Macedonia, election of King Ferdinand and declaration of independence had all proceeded without the consent of Russia. Each was a severe blow to Russia's authority in Bulgaria. However it should not have come to that momentous point.

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<sup>301</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p.451

<sup>302</sup> It should also be added here that after the Bulgaria's ultimate decision, in the country, the government tried to encourage pro-German propaganda with films, cultural associations and teaching of German.

At this juncture, imperial Russian foreign policy is also questionable. The duality and the futility of Russia, especially the lack of conformity of the agents and the ministers and also Russia's underestimation of building process of Bulgarian national identity through realizing Yeşilköy Bulgaria paved the way for its separation from the liberator.



## CONCLUSION

After the Berlin Treaty, the Great Powers expected that Bulgarian principality, though under the Ottoman authority, would be a vassal of Russia. However, Russian domination of Bulgaria was not welcomed by the Bulgarians. Sofia realized that the war of 1877-78 was for the establishment of Russian rule in the principality, not for liberation of Russia's Slav brothers. So, Bulgaria after 1878 increasingly displayed ingratitude towards its liberator, not content to remain a strategic outpost of Russia in the Balkans.

The irredentist foreign policy of Bulgaria after its establishment in 1878 was mostly based on Macedonian problems and relations with Russia. Bulgaria endeavored for free the Bulgarians still under the Ottoman dominance and uniting them in a common fatherland, especially known as 'Greater Bulgaria'. This Bulgarian dream had been realized in the Yeşilköy Treaty, but was split into pieces by the Berlin Treaty. However, it did not mean the end of the dreams: Bulgaria in every political step followed the Yeşilköy idea. The unification of Eastern Rumelia was a significant movement to satisfy the aspiration of Bulgarians. The Balkan war in 1912 was just a continuation in this path, in adding Macedonia to the Greater Bulgarian project.

In the Eastern Rumelian crisis in particular, Bulgarian-Russian relations were further exacerbated by the Russian opposition to the unification. After the

establishment of the principality, Bulgarian nationalism was identified with Prince Battenberg. He also began the gradual alienation of the Bulgarians from its liberator. After the abdication of Battenberg due to Russian pressure, during the period of Stambulov Bulgaria continued loosening its bands with Russia. Russian interference in the internal politics of Bulgaria, as in the expulsion of Prince Battenberg, had angered Stambulov, too.

After the fall of Stambulov, the relations between Russia and Bulgaria improved to the point where they made a secret military agreement in 1902. However, Bulgaria was so resolute on following its own path. In the Balkan Wars, Bulgaria decided to wage war independently to reach their ideal borders. The loss of territory in the last of these wars ensured the Bulgarians would seek compensation for in World War I. The resulting clash with Russian forces was the most momentous event in its history: Bulgaria dared to wage war against Russia, to whom it owed its independence.

After gaining its autonomy, Bulgaria's main goal was to always win national borders in accordance with Yeşilköy. The Bulgarian people in this period, like most newly awakened nationalities, were extremely sensitive to foreign interference. Sofia gave the emphasis on the development of the Bulgarian nationalism and construction of its own independent policy which could only make Russo-Bulgarian relations worse.

The Russian factor was always important in Bulgarian politics. The expectations of the Russians from the Bulgarians did not always serve the Bulgarian national interests. Russian policy in Bulgaria aimed to preserve and consolidate the position of influence and control obtained in 1878. However, the

Bulgarian reaction to Russian interference was strong: Bulgarian nationalists made it clear that the gratitude of a liberated people towards its liberator did not mean that the former must sacrifice its liberty. Simply put, Bulgaria did not want to be under Russian tutelage. Russia military occupation and political domination in the principality was doomed to fail.

So Russia's aim of saving its "little brother" from the Ottoman Empire failed. Russia eventually saw the collapse of its entire policy in Bulgaria, as failing to understand the Bulgarian thirst for independence not only from the Ottomans but from any other power. Instead of Russian military assistance, Bulgaria often demanded Russia's officials leave the country.

Moreover, another problem of Russian Bulgarian policy was that there was no consistency in the attitudes of the agents appointed to Bulgaria. Further, they wished the Balkan states to accord to them the same degree of docile submission, even servility and expected the regime to appreciate their leadership and also follow their orders with respect and gratitude. The failure of the Russian policy in Bulgaria was also the same in the other small Balkan states under the influence of Russia's Pan Slavist ideology. It was simple to think that Balkan states tried to receive economic and military contribution from Russia, however when they did not need the Russian help, they simply desired Russia to go back without intervening any kind of Balkan policies. We can remind here the words of Karavelov, a Bulgarian nationalist about Russia: "If Russia comes to liberate, she will be received with great sympathy, but if she comes to rule, she will find many enemies."

The Bulgarian case illustrates how difficult it was for the Great Powers to direct the small and the new-established states in the peninsula. The conditions were also the same for other Balkan states in their national building process. Russian military and diplomatic efforts made possible the widening of Serbian autonomy and its achievement of independence. Serbia was under the control of Russia till the 1813, but Russian influence and domination was weakened after 1878 with the independence of Serbia. Romanian autonomy and then independence were the result of successful Russian wars.

Likewise, the organization of autonomous Bulgaria in 1878 came about after a Russian victory. The Russian campaigns of 1828-1829 created the situation that enabled the powers to establish an independent Greece. However, the attitudes of the Balkan states were quite different and did not usually result in gratefulness of Balkan states towards Russia. Each small state tried to establish its own unique policy, rather than depending on a Great Power. Each was insistent on demonstrating that it was not just a puppet of the Great Powers.

The period between 1878 and 1915, nearly forty years, witnessed dramatic change in Bulgarian foreign policy towards Russia. After the Russo-Ottoman war, Bulgaria gradually isolated itself from Russia's heavy-handed interference. Especially after the 1880s, the situation deteriorated more. Bulgaria was not willing to give any sort of concessions to Russia which was in contradiction with its national aspirations. Relations with Russia remained subordinate to Bulgarian national ideals. Regardless of Russian policy, the unification of the Bulgarian lands was permanent in Bulgarian policy. During the

twentieth century, Bulgaria continued to explore all means and alliances to attain the dream of Yeşilköy.

After the Yeşilköy Treaty, Russia expected Bulgaria's obedience. However, what Russia faced was a Bulgarian monster which came back to haunt it with the entrance to the First World War in 1915 on the side of central powers. Bulgaria was the only Balkan country to ally itself with the enemies of Russia. Bulgaria's greed to establish an independent state, free from Russian interference transformed this nation from Russia's Slavic ally to an enemy.

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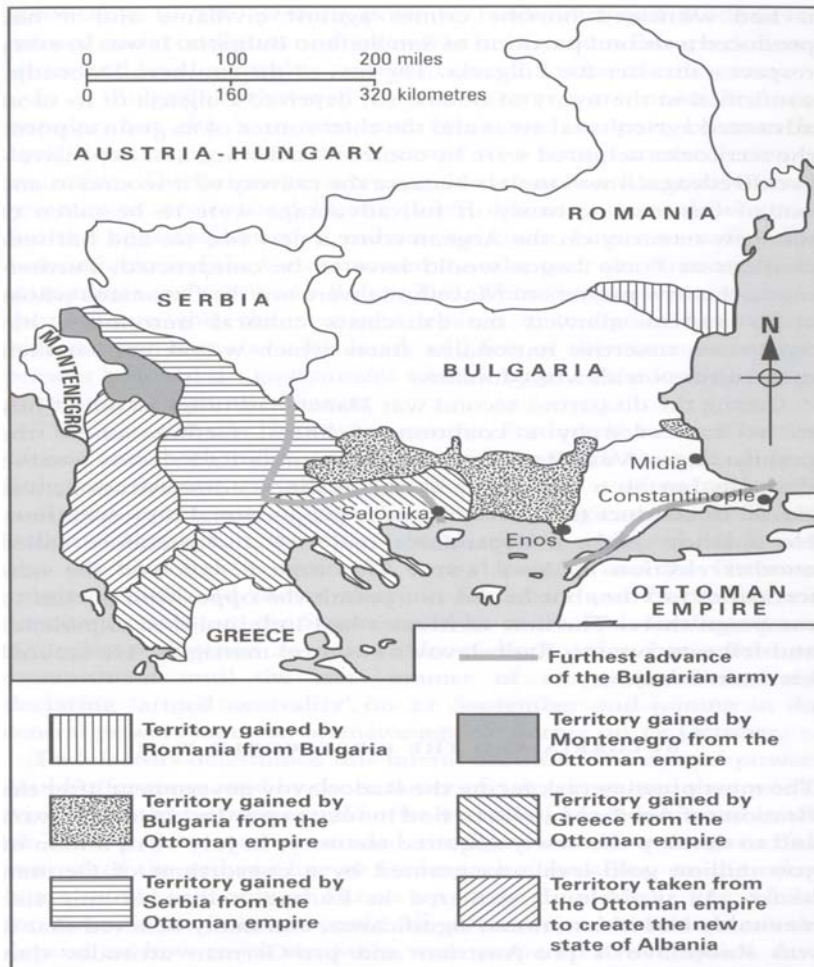
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