

**A “Lasting Solution”:
The Eastern Question and British Imperialism, 1875-1878**

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Acknowledgements often mention the trouble of making sure every person who helped the author is named and thanked. For me the problem is not so much the identity of those who have aided me, but rather making sure I thank everyone properly. At the risk of a cliché, I would say that this might be the single hardest part of the dissertation process in that appropriate gratitude cannot be cloaked, as much academic writing is, by vague or pedantic language. A thank-you deserves to be said as clearly as possible.

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Dedication

To Kaja, for all her patience, caring, and love.

Abstract

From the late eighteenth century until the 1920s, one of the preeminent international issues in Europe was the so-called “Eastern Question,” a term that refers to the events and dynamics related to the decline of the Ottoman Empire’s political and economic power. European states were concerned about the Eastern Question because the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire held the potential to destabilize existing international relationships, which European leaders feared would lead to economic calamity, political strife, and war. There thus emerged a discussion about the ways Europe might manage Ottoman decline, whether in terms of reversing such decline or gaining from it territorially and politically. The relevance of the Eastern Question to European politics coincided with the rise of what scholars call the “new imperialism,” a period of rapid territorial expansion that lasted from the second half of the nineteenth century until the First World War. In Britain the greatest wave of “new imperial” expansion began in the early 1880s, usually dated to Britain’s occupation of Egypt in 1882. Yet few studies have explored how discourse about the Eastern Question may have influenced Britain’s version of the “new imperialism.” This dissertation explores the intersection between British politics, public discourse, and diplomacy during the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878, a critical moment in modern European history. I argue that Britain’s later imperial projects would not have taken the particular shape, or even had the scope, they did without Britain having experienced the Eastern Crisis as a domestic political and cultural event. Long considered a problem confined to traditional diplomatic history, I show how during the Eastern Crisis issues related to the Eastern Question (and “the East” at large) entered into and affected British politics and society,

leading Britons to promote imperialism as providing a “lasting solution” to Eastern and, more generally, global disorder. I focus on the 1876 Bulgarian Atrocities, the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, the 1878 Cyprus Convention, and the 1878 Congress of Berlin—all events that were widely discussed in both the public and governmental arenas of Victorian society.

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Introduction: A Question of Empire

The study of the history of empire and imperialism stands as one of the main pillars of the field of British Studies. Some aspects of this history have, however, been woefully overlooked. If one examines nineteenth-century sources it is clear that a central component of Imperial British discourse revolved around a phenomenon known, in the past and now, as “the Eastern Question.” My dissertation sets out to rectify this gap between history and historiography, bringing what was once in the foreground of the Imperial British gaze out of the background of the recent memory of scholarly inquiry.

“The Eastern Question” has historically been used to name a set of wars and international/diplomatic events related to the decline and breakup of the Ottoman Empire, especially from the last quarter of the eighteenth century on. Such was the importance of the Ottoman Empire in providing a bulwark for the protection of Britain’s Mediterranean and Indian trade routes, especially against the perceived expansionism of Russia, that as Ottoman power contracted it became increasingly common in Britain to associate any matter that related to the Ottoman Empire with its effect on the status of “the Eastern Question,” a force that “haunted” British diplomats and other officials.¹ From the historical perspective, however, the label of “the Eastern Question” has never offered many clues on how to unravel the “whole knot of problems rolled into one” it refers to and evokes.² John Morley described it as “that shifting, intractable, and interwoven tangle of conflicting interests, rival peoples, and antagonistic faiths that is veiled under

¹ Gary J. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 240.

² Norman Dwight Harris, *Europe and the East* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1926), 25. Hereafter, I refer to the Eastern Question sans quotation marks, except where it may be explicitly necessary to do so.

the easy name of the Eastern Question.”³ Despite (or perhaps because of) this hazy tangle, as the nineteenth century progressed Britons and other Europeans paid increasingly close attention to the status of issues to which this “easy name” was attached. In Britain this tendency was combined with the dynamics involved in the expansion and administration of a growing global empire, meaning that discourse about “the East” and the Ottoman Empire ended up being ultimately carried out in the same arenas that either were sources of information about imperial interests or were directly responsible for the functioning of Britain’s empire.

Moreover, Russia’s involvement in the problem (as a rival in power over the Eastern expanse) was complicated by the conflict between those who felt an affinity for Russia as a fellow Christian country embroiled in Eastern issues and those who had a deep-seated suspicion of Russia’s overall intentions. Thus in a cyclical process, the issue of the Ottoman Empire’s decline in power (and, from another angle, Russia’s ascent) drove interest in and dialogue about how that change affected Britain and its empire, and the influence of this discourse increased the attention British society paid to Eastern concerns which might give them insight into the problem. Britain’s understanding of the East and the Eastern Question needs to be understood in relation to the wider trajectory of the history of the British Empire. Conversely, the history of the British Empire is not complete without a discussion of the Eastern Question.

My dissertation focuses in on the so-called “Eastern Crisis” of 1875-1878.⁴

Although dialogue about Ottoman decline had been a mainstay of the realms of British

³ John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, new ed., vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 476-477. The Eastern Question scholar J. A. R. Marriott also used Morley’s characterization for his book, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 2—this book was first published in 1917, see n. 44.

⁴ This set of events has also been called the “Near-Eastern Crisis” or the “Great Eastern Crisis,” to distinguish it from other crises associated with the East.

foreign policy and diplomacy since the late eighteenth century, the 1860s and 1870s saw an rapid increase in interest in the underlying causes of the problems implied and the most appropriate solutions that would both ensure general order in the East and, crucially, provide lasting support for the British Empire's economic and political interests. As the Ottoman Empire became more and more unstable, the question emerged of whether Britain should continue to support it, or work with the other Great Powers (especially Russia) to take control of the Ottoman sphere of influence. The issue was complicated by competition between Britons who advocated maintaining the legacy of the centuries-old British-Ottoman alliance and those who felt that expanding "Christendom," no matter the national manifestation, was preferable to abetting "Turkish despotism."

Crucially, over time, I contend, this discussion became less limited to the political and intellectual elite who had previously been the ones directly invested in an understanding of international and imperial affairs. More and more of the British populace attempted to take part in the affairs of the state and of the empire, motivated by recent enfranchisement reforms and informed by a growing range of print media. The Eastern Crisis directly confirmed and activated these wider transitions, in the sense that British society as a whole began to see Eastern affairs as inextricably linked to imperial affairs—a change which impacted the future shape and justification for the British Empire as a whole. The effect that debate surrounding the Eastern Question had on focusing Britain's external gaze on its expanding global empire needs to be explored and articulated.

My dissertation provides a venue for this task. In particular I want to propose an alternative vision of the Eastern Question that places it in a more central and visible location within our understanding of modern Imperial British history. My hypothesis is

that it is necessary to include an intensive discussion of the dynamics that surrounded Britons' experience of the Eastern Question in the narrative of Britain's rise as a modern state and a global imperial power, treating these dynamics not only as an ancillary force but a necessary condition in leading Britain down the particular trajectory it took. We need an examination and critique of the actual language used by those directly engaged in dialogue about the Eastern Question, the actions they undertook vis-à-vis this discourse, and the socio-cultural, intellectual, and political conditions that provided the environment and the basis for their participation. The information necessary to prove my claims comes from a wealth of data that exists at both the public level of British society and the private arenas of elite policymaking. I use this material to provide an exploration of the extent and influence of Britain's experience of the Eastern Question, focusing in on the key period of 1875 to 1878 to gain insight into its place in the narrative of Britain's development as a modern imperial state. To approach this issue, a brief overview of the background to the historical events and forces at work in this problem is in order. I then map out the major debates related to my research, provide brief descriptions of this work's chapters, and give a description of the sources and the general method I employ.

Historical Background:

An Historical Overview of the Eastern Question to 1875:

The phrase "the Eastern Question" has been used to refer to many subjects, not to mention a substantial timeline. Scholars have made various attempts to distill it down to single statements or limited criteria, either in strict, itemized detail,⁵ or in terms of a vague expression of the Eastern Question's complexity itself, as in John Morley's

⁵ See, for example, Marriott's page-long, six-part definition on pp. 2-3 of his book.

description. One of the better attempts at a brief definition comes from Norman Dwight Harris' book, *Europe and the East*:

The [Eastern Question] may be defined briefly as the internationalization of all trade routes and the establishment of an interstate *modus vivendi* in the Near East, which will protect and conserve the commercial, financial, and political rights and interests of all the nations of the region, and which will ensure a permanent peace from Belgrade to the Persian Gulf and from Egypt to the Caspian Sea.⁶

The value of Harris' definition is that it provides both a material and a geographical dimension to the problems implied by the invocation of the term "the Eastern Question." However, it lacks an historical dimension and does not mention what is, I think, the crucial element of concern about the Ottoman Empire's decline. For this aspect and for the historical angle in general, there is perhaps no good single definition of the Eastern Question, and it is rather more useful to speak of its history by outlining the major events that have been seen to make up its narrative. A key text in this aspect, indeed in all aspects of the past study of the Eastern Question, is J. A. R. Marriott's book on the topic, first published in 1917 and still, for better or for worse, a standard source. Marriott attempts to situate the Eastern Question as, in his time, the latest episode in an "immemorial" conflict between the "habits, ideas, and preconceptions" of the East and the West,⁷ although he finds it necessary to limit his main discussion to the shape of the conflict that arose in the eighteenth century regarding "the demise of the sick man" (the term Emperor Nicholas I gave the Ottoman Empire), and this issue's effect on the international politics of the European Powers, especially Russia and, eventually, Britain.⁸

⁶ Harris, 25. It should be noted that he prefers to refer to the Eastern Question as the "Near-Eastern Question," based on the physical location of the problems it relates to, yet on p. 23 he acknowledges that "the Eastern Question" is more commonly used.

⁷ Marriott, 1.

⁸ Ibid., 5-10.

With this definition in mind, the most commonly employed starting point of the Eastern Question is the 1774 Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, the formal outcome of the First Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774. In this treaty Russia, the victor, gained two major rights it had not had prior to the war: first, free navigation of the Black Sea and the right to use, by merchant vessels, the Ottoman-held access way to the Mediterranean, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits; and second, the right to keep a Russian-controlled Orthodox church in Constantinople and internationally represent “those who serve it,” a “vague and potentially dangerous phrase,” as M. S. Anderson puts it.⁹ Indeed, in the many conflicts between Russia and the Ottoman Empire over the next century and a half, the contested issue of Russia’s protection of Christians living in Ottoman territory generally entered into any discourse on the particular justification for the Russian side. This should not, however, be seen as some kind of long-term project by Russia to deliberately undermine the Ottoman Empire. Rather, when conflicts arose between Ottoman authorities and their Christian subjects, Russian leaders felt that it was their duty, based on the 1774 Treaty, to intervene on the Christians’ behalf.

If the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji established a specific type of interest that Russia had in the future of the Ottoman Empire, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the formal annexation of the Ionian Islands in 1807 established a French interest and, ultimately, a British one.¹⁰ To be sure, long before the rise of Napoleon France had been deeply invested in the fate of the Ottoman Empire, as France had for the most part a favorable economic and political relationship with the Ottomans. But as time went on

⁹ M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London: Macmillan, 1966), xi.

¹⁰ Until 1797 the Ionian Islands were a Venetian possession, but their significance to the Ottoman Empire, and hence to the status of the Eastern Question, was their close proximity to Ottoman Greece and the fact that they were administered from 1797 until their annexation into the French Empire in 1807 jointly by France and Russia, and 1815 by the British. See Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14-16.

France's involvement in the Ottoman Empire revolved more and more around the objective of a permanent solution to the Eastern Question that would ultimately benefit France's economic and political goals. Indeed, one early nineteenth-century writer went as far to remark that the Eastern Question was "essentially a French question," as the policy of direct and indirect involvement that France had in supporting the Ottoman Empire, especially against Russia, was seen by French diplomats and statesmen as being linked directly to France's security and prosperity.¹¹

The goal of British involvement in the Eastern Question and the status of the Ottoman Empire was quite similar to France's, especially as British traders and warships turned the Mediterranean into, as the saying went, a "British lake." Indeed, by the early nineteenth century all of those intimately involved in the Eastern Question had the same general goals, including of course the Ottomans themselves: each country sought to protect and extend its strategic, economic, and religious interests (especially in the case of Russia) in the regions under Ottoman authority or, crucially, abutting Ottoman territory. Yet it is in the next key event in the narrative of the Eastern Question, the Greek War of Independence fought between 1821 and 1829, that it becomes clear that the way these goals were prosecuted differed greatly, and the particular dynamics of Britain's involvement began to make it into a complex, increasingly central participant in the many subsequent conflicts that arose regarding what was perceived to be the imminent death of the Ottoman Empire.

The issue of Greek independence was the first major element of the problem of Ottoman decline that inspired a popular response in Britain counter to Britain's

¹¹ Qtd. in *Remarks on the Conduct and Probable Designs of Russia* (London: James Ridgeway, 1832), 177. This quote is, as this work states, from the introduction to French edition of the text. It identifies no author for this introduction's claims.

traditional policy of arresting this decline. This was mainly due to the fact that many Britons, especially those with education and liberal beliefs, felt an affinity to Greece based upon the importance of ancient Greece in the Western worldview.¹² The fact that Greek Christians rose up against Ottoman authority in 1821 was seen through the prism of this “philhellenism,” and a movement for intervention on the side of the Greeks—something exactly counter to formal British policy—arose and took hold as an alternative political and cultural opinion on the Eastern Question around which Britons could assemble in the broader arenas of British society. The influence of an emerging free press (where the liberal *Morning Chronicle* dueled with conservative papers,¹³ with *The Times* defining the center¹⁴) and the dramatic involvement of Lord Byron as a Greek volunteer began to make the Eastern Question a component of popular society. Not just a dusty issue of high politics, the Eastern Question now could evoke deeply held and potentially divisive sentiments, which complicated British policymakers’ attempts to form a policy that would keep the Ottoman Empire alive and protect Britain’s trade and imperial interests. Indeed, when a combined Russian, French, and British fleet defeated an Ottoman-Egyptian one in the Battle of Navarino in October 1827, the liberal quarters of British political and popular society cheered the outcome as advancing the ultimate goal of an independent Greece,¹⁵ while the Tory Duke of Wellington deemed the battle an “untoward event” counter to the principles of British foreign and imperial policy.¹⁶ Although British politicians continued the traditional policy of ultimately protecting the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, the theme of questioning and perhaps reversing that

¹² Bass, 48.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

¹⁴ See G. A. Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliffe* (London: Longman, 1978), Chapter 6, “The Age of *The Times*,” 152-177, especially pp. 153-155.

¹⁵ Bass, 148.

¹⁶ See Steven Schwartzberg, “The Lion and the Phoenix – II,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 3 (1988): 287-311, especially pp. 294-296.

policy had become entrenched in the collective British mind. Yet as the Duke of Wellington's comment suggests, Britain's wider foreign and imperial interests began to be connected more and more closely to their stance as a force of order in the resolution of the Eastern Question, no matter the shape of debate about it at home.

We might combine the next two major events in the timeline of the Eastern Question into one discussion, as an understanding of each is dependent on the other and their relationship illustrates a major theme that appears throughout my research, namely the connections and contradictions between the public and diplomatic sectors of Britain's involvement in the Eastern Question. The first of these is the agreement at the 1841 London Straits Convention by diplomats from all five Great Powers (Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia) to close the Dardanelles to any non-Ottoman warship unless the Ottoman Empire was at war, which was intended as a way to ensure that no European state could directly benefit from attacking the Ottoman Empire without calling for the direct reaction of another Power.¹⁷ When France broke this agreement in June 1853 by moving a fleet to the Dardanelles in support of France's challenge to Russia's status as the protector of Ottoman Christians (guaranteed by the 1774 treaty discussed above), this helped bring about the Crimean War, the next major point at which the Eastern Question figured prominently in European and British politics and society.

Fought from 1853 to 1856, the Crimean War pitted an allied force made up of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and Sardinia against Russia, which fought a losing battle to restore its right to oversee the interests of Ottoman Christians. An immensely

¹⁷ Moreover, this agreement effectively nullified a secret article of an earlier agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Russia—the 1833 Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi—that was to give Russian warships exclusive rights to the Dardanelles in a time of war—see Anderson, 106.

costly,¹⁸ destructive,¹⁹ and controversial war, the Crimean War established the trajectory and general shape of the Eastern Question and the issue of Britain's relationship to the Ottoman Empire in later British discourse. Beyond the war standing as an important aspect of the general background of the Eastern Question, three facets of the conflict help frame my research focus: first, the impetus and escalation of the war can in many ways be traced to the making and breaking of a number of important, yet contradictory treaties regarding who held authority to intervene in Ottoman matters; second, the horrific reports of bloody battles and rampant disease made it a contentious, eventually unpopular war in all the home countries of those involved, giving rise to the feeling that any resolution to the Eastern Question would be involve disruptive, disturbing event; and third, Britain's opposition to Russia in the war motivated a strong sentiment of mistrust of Russia in an increasingly large portion of Britain's political and public sectors, which would remain an important aspect of Britain's international and imperial affairs for at least the next half century.

Although Britain's entry into the war in 1854 was not based upon any direct provocation by Russia of the British Empire but rather was wrapped up in the diplomatic potentialities of the threat of Ottoman subjugation under Russia, much of British society supported it, having become over the years, and especially since the highly-publicized Russian destruction of an Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Sinope in 1853, "wildly Russophobic."²⁰ Yet as in the Greek War of Independence, this view was not universal:

¹⁸ G. N. Clark lists Britain's expenditures fighting the Crimean War at £70,000,000, of which £38,000,000 came from taxes and £32,000,000 from loans, although this cost affected the industrially-strong British economy much less than it did the less wealthy Ottomans and Russians—see *The New Cambridge Modern History: The Zenith of European Power: 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 486-487.

¹⁹ Upwards of 300,000 troops died, most of disease and most within less than two years of the war's length.

²⁰ Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 101.

many Liberals spoke out against Britain's involvement, such as Richard Cobden who blamed the fomenting of militarism in British society on a cyclical process whereby a segment of public opinion was made popular by the influential pro-war newspapers (especially *The Times*), driving public opinion to reflect what such papers felt was the right course of action.²¹ Indeed, while the diplomatic angles on the problem may have been appreciated most by the editors of the papers and by the leading politicians who often wrote the leaders (anonymously), it was the vigorous calls for war by these figures that made this phase of the Eastern Question into a highly contested public affair.

Moreover, once the war started, discussion about it became nearly ubiquitous in Britain, due in large part to the fact that it was the first war experienced in real-time: William Howard Russell's correspondence—telegraphed to *The Times* daily—and Roger Fenton's photographs, not to mention the drama of Florence Nightingale and her nightly, lamp-lit nursing, brought the realities of war to those at home in a way that had never before been experienced. The influence of these new mediums in bringing the Crimean War—something that started ostensibly because of the diplomatic entanglements of the Eastern Question—to a wide audience made matters that had previously been confined to the highest echelons of British authority into items of public debate and political pressure.²² To be sure, the slow, often disastrous progress of the war effort, made known in critical detail by Russell and *The Times*, led to a popular outcry against the government under Lord Aberdeen, who resigned following the public's and his fellow politicians' criticism in 1855. His Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, complained that it was the press, especially *The Times*, that brought about Aberdeen's fall in that it promulgated an

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bass, 36.

opinion in the public eye that it was the government's fault that the British army and the other allied armies were unable to win decisive battles against the Russians.²³

After the war's official conclusion at the Congress of Paris, the treaty that resulted from the Congress was supposed to govern diplomatic affairs related to the Eastern Question, chief among these being the demilitarization of the Black Sea, the reaffirmation of the 1841 London Straits Convention, and the political and economic reorientation of the Ottoman Empire into the European fold—a sort of sixth Great Power on probationary status until it had enacted widespread structural reforms of its government, economy, military, and diplomatic apparatus.²⁴ The new Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, was considered a victor of a new peaceful European concert, and he shaped public opinion to build support for deepening the relationship between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire.²⁵ It also appears to be clear that this action cemented Britain's status as the leading power in the final resolution of the Eastern Question. From this point on, British foreign policy became centered on the protection of imperial strategic and economic interests, with a strong Ottoman Empire serving as the linchpin to the British Empire's solidifying hegemony in Eastern affairs. And as such it bears consideration that this may have also been, as Jack Snyder has claimed, the point at which it can be argued that the idea of a comprehensive expansion of the British Empire was formulated and put into effect, predicated on the continual implementation of the diplomatic advantages that Britain had gained in the Ottoman Empire and the East at large as guaranteed by the Treaty of Paris and the treaty's reflection in the "Crimean

²³ Ibid., 37.

²⁴ Anderson, 142-143.

²⁵ Koss, 101; also, Richard T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 15-16.

system,” as it came to be called.²⁶ Yet this kind of exercise would not have been possible without the garnering of public support for a policy that relied upon the fear and hatred of Russia and, at the very least, a general acquiescence toward an ongoing alliance with the Ottoman Empire. If political and diplomatic elites argued otherwise, and they often did,²⁷ a large segment of the press and of the politically and intellectually active component of Victorian society was there to assert the Palmerstonian angle.²⁸

Here we see the fascinating complexity of the relationship between the spheres of diplomatic activity and public activity in the history of the Eastern Question, a dynamic that took a deeper and deeper hold in Imperial British society and politics from the Crimean War on. This accordingly sets the stage for the great deal of discussion about the Eastern Question and British foreign and imperial interests in the years leading up to and during the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878. That more and more people became interested in the East and the Eastern Question can be therefore traced to more and more of them feeling that they had a stake in the outcome of the Eastern Question, as subjects of the Empire that oversaw an international and imperial policy that was predicated on overseeing the management of Ottoman decline and the expansion of the Empire. One must be careful, however, to avoid drawing a direct line of connection between the Crimean War and Britain’s expansionist mentality in the 1880s and 1890s, a tendentious act of which Snyder is at least partly guilty.²⁹ Although there is no doubt that the Crimean War and the political dynamics it produced had a great effect on the following

²⁶ Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambitions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 158-163.

²⁷ For example, Lord Salisbury, the later Conservative Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, famously said many years after the Crimean War, and after the disintegration of the Crimean system that, “England put her money on the wrong horse.”—Qtd. in Marriott, 265.

²⁸ See Koss’ chapter, “The Palmerstonian Ascendancy,” on pp. 121-166, which details the growth of the power of the press in politics and Palmerston’s part in this.

²⁹ Snyder devotes only about a page to the dynamics of imperialism post-Palmerston, even though he makes frequent references to the longer view of his thesis—see pp. 209-210.

generations of British external policy, there were surely events that augmented or superseded the state of imperial ideology and practice as it stood in 1856. On this matter, it was the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 that both greatly disrupted and eventually solidified the feelings given shape during the Crimean War, providing, I argue, a necessary condition for the character of the British Empire to come.

The Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878:

The Eastern Crisis has been mostly neglected in the last several decades of scholarship, which is problematic given how critical it is to the narrative of British and European history. When the Ottoman Empire's Christian subjects in Herzegovina rose up in 1875, sparking fraternal nationalist support from Christians in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria within the next year, the diplomatic consequences implied by the conflict's possible outcomes helped the Eastern Question to grow quickly into the "chief object of political interest in European politics," as the former ambassador to Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, wrote in *The Times*.³⁰ The problems were further compounded by the financial collapses of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in 1875 and 1876, causing an uproar among the lenders in the Great Powers, especially France and Britain, who together held the largest share of the debts. To Victorian society these events already constituted a crisis in the Eastern Question based on the uprisings and debt crises alone. But it was the next phase that made it into an historic problem.

In June of 1876 reports appeared in European diplomatic dispatches and newspapers detailing the Ottoman Empire's brutal suppression of the Bulgarians' uprising, in which Turkish irregulars, the *bashi-bazouks*, killed around 12,000 Bulgarian

³⁰ "Lord Stratford de Redcliffe on the Eastern Question," *The Times*, 18 May 1876, col. C, p. 10.

Christians. Rapidly, the political interest took on a moral tone, motivating Lord Salisbury to speak of the “profound divisions” and “rancorous animosity” that the Eastern Crisis inspired between political factions in government and popular society alike.³¹ William Gladstone’s famous pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, sold over 200,000 copies,³² giving a respected face to popular opposition to Benjamin Disraeli’s Conservative government, which preached an adherence to the authority of the Ottoman Empire in the matter. This pamphlet, plus the media coverage and Parliamentary inquiries, quickly led to a popular agitation movement that called for an end to Britain’s support of Ottoman administration in the Balkans and, for some, an end to Britain’s support of the Ottoman Empire at large.

Outside of Britain, Russia soon became deeply involved both in supporting the uprisings diplomatically and militarily, seeing this problem as part of its sphere of influence and concern. A major, bloody war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire ensued,³³ during which the Ottoman army was decisively beaten and forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano, which limited Ottoman authority in Balkans to an area roughly composing Thrace, a small portion of what its possessions in the Balkans were prior to the war. This treaty was seen by the other Great Powers to put too much power in the hands of Russia, the victors, and they insisted on a separate, multi-power conference to sort out the shape of the Balkans and the Near East, which would convene in Berlin at the invitation of the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. In place of the original treaty, the Congress of Berlin produced a complicated set of provisions whereby each power

³¹ Qtd. in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972), 2.

³² William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: John Murray, 1876).

³³ About 250,000 troops died fighting in the war, whose major combat operations comprised only about six months or so, with the majority of those who died coming from the victorious Russian side.

except for Germany got a certain section of territory or influence in the Ottoman Empire, while several independent states in the Balkans were formed or reaffirmed, chief among these the new principality of Bulgaria. Britain's representatives, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury, procured for Britain the confirmation of a secret arrangement they had made with the Ottomans before the Congress to take over the administration of Cyprus as a province under the British Empire's protection. Upon his return to London, Disraeli was hailed as the victor of the Congress, proclaiming he had brought "peace with honour" in Europe and to that stage of the Eastern Question. The administration of the new protectorate, Cyprus, and the construction of a diplomatic and economic relationships reflecting the new order would occupy British politicians for the remainder of 1878 and into 1879, but the Crisis was considered largely over at the close of the Congress of Berlin. The Eastern Question would not necessarily fade from view, however, as it continued to factor as an issue the more deeply involved the British Empire became in Near and Middle Eastern affairs, notably in Egypt, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

During the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 debate about it and the Eastern Question as a whole would come to saturate Britain's public scene, especially in the imperial center of London. By the end of 1878, *The Times* printed more than 350 articles titled "The Eastern Question."³⁴ Another major news source, the *Daily News*, considered the leading paper of the Liberals, printed over 150 articles with this same title over the course of the Eastern Crisis.³⁵ After the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire began, a major Conservative voice, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, became obsessed with proclaiming the

³⁴ A search of *The Times* title index reveals 359 articles published between the beginning of Herzegovinian Uprising in June of 1875 and the end of 1878 that are titled "The Eastern Question," with a common variation including a notable person's opinion about it, such as, in the case discussed in the previous note, i.e. "Lord Stratford de Redcliffe on the Eastern Question."

³⁵ A similar search of the *Daily News* index shows 159 articles for the period listed in the previous note, with a similar arrangement in title construction as well.

danger of Russia to British interests, calling for Britain's entry into the war to protect the Empire from Russian aggression toward British possessions, which it considered the next stage of Russian imperialism.³⁶ And although all of the news sources gave a general account of the proceeds of Parliamentary debate, their opinions on these proceeds differed widely, complicating the political and cultural scene as the shape of the public's view of the British Empire's interests and role in the Eastern Question was challenged, adapted, and remade as the Crisis progressed. In this context, not only was Parliament taken up daily with debating and responding to the Eastern Question and the particular events of the Crisis, but the Conservative-led government had to contend with a real threat to their image if they did not respond in a way that satisfied the public; and they hoped to avoid a situation like that Lord Aberdeen faced in 1855, when his government fell amidst widespread popular and political criticism over the progress of the Crimean War.

Those wanting more information could turn to a spate of pamphlets and books on the Eastern Question and the Crisis, many of which capitalized on the fury over the Atrocities, such as *The Eastern Question: Its Facts & Fallacies* and *The Eastern Question: The Three Great Perils of England*, both of which contain sympathetic portrayals of the Bulgarian cause and admonishments for political leaders who were sticking to support for the Ottoman Empire.³⁷ Some works were hastily produced to address the public interest in the ongoing events, like 1877's *Two Years of the Eastern Question* and 1878's *The Russo-Turkish War: Including an Account of the Rise and*

³⁶ H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism*, vol. II (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887), 340.

³⁷ Malcolm MacColl, *The Eastern Question: Its Facts & Fallacies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1877); *The Eastern Question: The Three Great Perils of England* (London: W. Ridgeway, 1877). Later, MacColl would write an additional, reflective book on the Eastern Crisis, *Three Years of the Eastern Question* (London: Chatto, 1878).

Decline of the Ottoman Power and the History of the Eastern Question.³⁸ Also, those inclined toward the Conservative view could learn about the supposedly acute danger of “Panslavism” (i.e. the belief that all Slavic peoples should form together into a single, unitary state led from Constantinople) and a Russian-controlled Balkans, as Russian General R. A. Fadeyev’s 1871 book, *Opinion on the Eastern Question*, went into a popular second edition in 1876, while the Russian threat was proposed in the publishing in Britain of confidential papers from Russia’s Constantinople ambassador, P. N. Ignatiev, in *Russian Intrigues: Secret Despatches of General Ignatieff and Consular Agents of the Great Panslavic Societies*.³⁹ Finally, after the Bulgarian Atrocities, political pressure groups like the Eastern Question Association and assemblies like the National Conference on the Eastern Question quickly formed to give voice to those “Atrocitarians” pushing for Britain’s official support for the Bulgarian uprisers, while large crowds, albeit less organized than those of the Atrocitarians, gathered to cheer on members of the Conservative government who advocated adherence to the diplomatic status quo.⁴⁰

Although those involved in the debates that took place “behind closed doors” were aware of popular opinion and, it is clear, responded to these pressures, the way they responded was organized along the lines of existing policies, opinions, and institutional structures of government that had to be satisfied for systematic action to take place, especially in terms of Great Powers diplomacy. The Cabinet worked according to a strategy regarding the Eastern Question and the Crisis that would ensure a powerful role in the Great Power system, an influential position in the regions affected, and the

³⁸ Antonio Carlo N. Gallenga, *Two Years of the Eastern Question* (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1877); Henry Montague Hozier, *The Russo-Turkish War: Including an Account of the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Power and the History of the Eastern Question* (London: Mackenzie, 1878).

³⁹ R. I. Fadeyev, *Opinion on the Eastern Question*, 2nd ed., trans. Thomas Michell (London: Edward Stanford, 1876). P. N. Ignatiev, *Russian Intrigues: Secret Despatches of General Ignatieff and Consular Agents of the Great Panslavic Societies* (London: W. Ridgeway, 1877).

⁴⁰ See Shannon, 241n1.

Conservatives' continued political control in Britain itself. Even before the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War politicians debated whether, how, and where Britain should take some direct territorial role in the Ottoman Empire to provide a staging area for British troops should Russia continue to expand into the Ottoman Empire and into the British sphere of influence, an event that most Conservative administrators (and not a few Liberal ones) saw as imminent. After a long and complex debate among Cabinet members, officials in the Foreign and War Offices, and diplomats in the field, Cyprus was chosen as this proposed staging ground.

Yet this shift was not achieved without imposing some stresses on the political and ideological status quo. Disraeli's Cabinet was deeply divided at certain points in the years of the Eastern Crisis, from minor issues like particular diplomatic actions to the overall formulation of Britain's Eastern policy.⁴¹ Disraeli and Sir Henry Elliot, the longtime ambassador to Constantinople when the Crisis began, were convinced that protecting the Ottoman Empire from further decline—or at least slowing decline down—was essential to the protection of the British Empire's interests, which required an aggressive policy vis-à-vis Russia after the Russo-Turkish War began. Before the war Disraeli's Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, agreed with this opinion of Ottoman protection in principle, but they both eventually came to see a fight with Russia as dangerous to the future of the Empire. Both resigned in early 1878. Sir Michael Hicks Beach replaced Carnarvon, while Derby was replaced by Salisbury, who had been serving as India Secretary and advocated a middle road between Disraeli's strict adherence to the Crimean system and Derby's feeling that the

⁴¹ See Seton-Watson, Chapter VII, "The Growth of Cabinet Dissensions," 233-271.

protection of the Ottoman Empire was not worth war with Russia.⁴² Sir Henry Elliot had meanwhile been replaced by Sir Austen Henry Layard in Constantinople, an “expert” in Eastern affairs thought to be better suited for the job. He was further considered more level-headed and impartial than the “very Turcophil” Elliot, whom Salisbury, the future Conservative leader, essentially despised.⁴³

From this point on, the dialogue among the Cabinet members and with the embassy in Constantinople became much smoother, and the emphasis in what policy was pursued became less and less concerned with a continuance of the Crimean system, but with devising a new method for ensuring the continued (and greater) dominance of the British Empire in the managing of the Eastern Question and in the Near East itself. Notably, any actual confidence in the Ottoman Empire as anything other than a lesser evil was now absent from dialogue, and the notion of how to protect the Empire amidst the Eastern troubles became paramount. Further, politicians and the press debated imperial protection versus diplomatic intervention. This argument was resolved by putting people in power who recognized the general importance of continuity in Eastern policy but who first and foremost wanted to ensure the power of the British Empire in Eastern affairs and, indeed, in a European and global sense. This policy had tremendous durability and garnered a significant level of popular support as well. Arguments for a less imperial structure to external British policy faded as imperial expansion gained widespread political and popular support. Britain’s experience of the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 played a role in setting part of the groundwork for this transition.

⁴² Ibid., 242.

⁴³ Anderson, 191

The Historiography of the Eastern Question:

The Eastern Question has been treated most often as an objectively identifiable episode or historical facet of modern international politics: as addressed above, it was the problem of what was to be done if and when the Ottoman Empire fell apart. Most works agree on a standard period in which the Eastern Question was of importance, beginning with the First Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 and ending with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire shortly after the end of the First World War, usually dated to the Treaty of Sèvres and the foundation of the state of Turkey, both in 1923. Scholars of the Eastern Question have in general been comfortable with these rather basic temporal and interpretive parameters, speaking of it as a bounded period with finite results.⁴⁴ As a result, I argue, the very *study* of the Eastern Question has proceeded with the presumption that the matter is “over” or “solved,” i.e. with the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. This has defined the field in the post-1923 period, when the three major British historians of the Eastern Question of the first half of the twentieth century, J. A. R. Marriott, R. W. Seton-Watson, and Harold Temperley, shifted to writing about the Eastern Question within the genre of general posterity, having written about it as an ongoing topic before 1923 and an ended, historical phenomenon after 1923.⁴⁵ Other

⁴⁴ For works with these characteristics, see for example: David Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia, 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism* (London: Methuen, 1977); G. D. Clayton, *Britain and the Eastern Question: Missolonghi to Gallipoli* (London: University of London Press, 1971); M. S. Anderson, ed., *The Great Powers and the Near East, 1774-1923* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970); Arnold Toynbee, *Turkey: A Past and a Future* (New York: George H. Doran, 1917), notice the year the famous economic historian published this work, 1917, forming a metaphorical crossroads in Turkish history.

⁴⁵ Seton-Watson's major work on the topic, the already-noted *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics*, is still one of the best, yet he characterizes the Eastern Question as having given over to nationalism as the defining issue in Turkey and the Balkans (see pp. ix, 560-561, 570). Throughout its reprintings, Marriott's seminal study, first published in 1917, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1917), follows this formulation

books and articles related to the Eastern Question have made a line of demarcation before which it had shaped international politics and after which it was a memory that had passed away.⁴⁶ Of course, in contrast to this historiography we are still encountering on a regular basis the problems related to Europe's "solution" to the Eastern Question.⁴⁷ Moreover, beyond the actual effects of the Eastern Question, even as an historical phenomenon there has been surprisingly little discussion of it within the framework of theoretical or interpretive developments in historical scholarship in the last half-century.⁴⁸

It appears, then, that perhaps the "end" of the Eastern Question as a piece of history and a topic of study is related to a deeply inscribed—and deeply flawed—notation that in the post-Great War period, the prewar categories had been replaced by new ones. That is, from the 1920s onward, interest in the Eastern Question waned, as new (and reformatted) political issues—nationalism, communism, ailing colonial empires—took over public discourse and the experts on the Eastern Question *themselves* wrote about it as a completed episode or as one "altered...out of all recognition."⁴⁹ Research on the

(i.e. "historical," thus in the past, ended), and only in his epilogues for each subsequent edition does he make brief, prosaic nods on the present and the future of the Eastern Question. Harold Temperley's work underwent a similar shift, as evidenced by his last project, a three-volume work called *England and the Near East*, of which only the first volume was ever published, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London: Longmans and Green, 1936), in addition to works like, with Lillian Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), and, with Temperley and A. J. Grant, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century (1789-1914)* (London: Longmans, 1928).

⁴⁶ Elie Kedourie, "Britain, France, and the Last Phase of the Eastern Question," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (1969): 189-197. Note the similarity of this title to a well-known 1968 book on the origins of Greek-Turkish relations by Harry J. Psomiades, *The Eastern Question: The Last Phase: A Study in Greek-Turkish Diplomacy* (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1968); Morris Jastrow, Jr., "The Turks and the Future of the Near East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 84 (1919): 30-40.

⁴⁷ This is, in fact, the underlying issue in David Fromkin's much-reprinted book, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (New York: H. Holt, 1989). The same goes for Misha Glenny in his works on the Balkans, such as *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Viking, 2000)—also, see his review article, "Only in the Balkans," on the work of Vesna Goldsworthy and Maria Todorova, *London Review of Books*, April 29, 1999, 12-14.

⁴⁸ A notable exception is Peter Jeffrey's book, *Eastern Questions: Hellenism and Orientalism in the Writings of E. M. Forster and C. P. Cavafy* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ Seton-Watson, 1.

Eastern Question has followed this opinion: as an historical issue supposedly “solved” at some point, scholars have spent little time examining the Eastern Question alongside the wider aspects of British and European history to which it relates and which have become important to scholars in the years since the 1920s.⁵⁰ And while this may help explain the Eastern Question’s general lack of presence in scholarship over the last several generations, it is these same critical ways of thinking about the nature of institutions and thought processes that have arisen in the same period that provide to us an opportunity to demonstrate how the Eastern Question has a deep connection to history of the British Empire and to European history as a whole.⁵¹

A further problem worth noting is that the study of the Eastern Question as a whole is largely characterized by an emphasis on the British position, which is both understandable given the power of the Anglo-American academy and ironic given the focus of this study. This is not to say that exploring the British perspective on the Eastern Question by necessity limits the conclusions one might draw, but rather that taking into account research on Britain’s “competitors” in the Eastern Question is illustrative of the wider issues involved. If we are to accept that Russia was posited as Britain’s main opposition in overseeing the Eastern space, then work on the Russian component of the Eastern Question deserves a brief glance. In the 1930s the British historians B. H. Sumner and W. N. Medlicott worked to remove the conspicuous pro-British, Russophobic undertones that had marked earlier English-language scholarship. Sumner’s

⁵⁰ For example, even M. S. Anderson, who wrote the most up-to-date comprehensive study on the Eastern Question, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, states in the preface that his book is predominantly an update of J. A. R. Marriot’s work on the Eastern Question written a half-century previously, adding the findings of more recent research to build on Marriot’s foundations. A. L. Macfie has more recently written a small book on the Eastern Question, but though useful it is a basic overview of the issue and sticks to most of the established parameters of the subject—see A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, revised edition (New York: Longman, 1996).

⁵¹ Michelle Tusan has raised this question in a recent article, “Britain and the Middle East: New Historical Perspectives on the Eastern Question,” *History Compass* 8, no. 3 (2010): 212-222.

monograph, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880*, did much to reveal the actual motivations behind Russia's involvement in the Eastern Question.⁵² Sumner's great accomplishment was to lift the veil of political intrigue draped over previous discussions of Russia's stakes in the Eastern Question, actively avoiding "partisan spirit" to posit a clearer portrait of the domestic pressures and international commitments Russia had in the Balkans.⁵³ Similarly, Medlicott attempted to deconstruct the belief that shrewd politics on the part of Britain had kept Russia from controlling the state of play in the Balkans after 1878.⁵⁴ Instead, as Alfred Rieber writes, Medlicott argued that the "smaller states" in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire "could and would continue to defy the powers" in an attempt to maintain latitude of movement.⁵⁵

The 1960s-1980s saw the development of Sumner's and Medlicott's new direction, especially via the influence of Charles and Barbara Jelavich's work on Imperial Russian foreign policy. Barbara Jelavich's *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy: 1814-1914* and, especially, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914* showed that Imperial Russia's foreign policy and diplomatic establishments were nowhere near as all-powerful and unified as Russia's critics made them out to be.⁵⁶ In her opinion one has to understand the difference between Russia's *involvement* in the Balkans and Russia's *power* over the political and physical shape of the Balkans, a distinction she gives shape to by describing the limits of Orthodox affinities and how nineteenth-century Balkan nationalists postured friendship with Russia so as to "exploit" Russian aid for specific

⁵² B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880* (Oxford: OUP, 1937).

⁵³ Alfred J. Rieber, "The Historiography of Imperial Russian Foreign Policy: A Critical Survey," in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Hugh Ragsdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 415-416.

⁵⁴ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880* (London: Methuen, 1938).

⁵⁵ Rieber, 415.

⁵⁶ Barbara Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy: 1814-1914* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1964); *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

national or regional ends.⁵⁷ Likewise, L. S. Stavrianos showed how one must not assume that Russia held general sway over its Orthodox brethren: while Bulgaria might have looked to Russia for political and ideological direction, Romania was just as likely to rely on France while Serbia and Greece had complex foreign relationships in their own right.⁵⁸

By broadening and deepening the narrative, scholars like the Jelavichs and Stavrianos sought to avoid the old traps associated with studying the Eastern Question solely as a problem of the international conference room.⁵⁹ Indeed, even in works that specifically focused on the Eastern Question, such as in Barbara Jelavich's *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887*, the Eastern Question comes across as much more than the mere decline of the Ottoman Empire; it was a venue for Great Powers to manage and, often, gain from that decline according to diplomatic conventions of the time.⁶⁰ One thus wonders if perhaps taking such oblique approaches to the Eastern Question might guide us in answering some of the central questions posed in this dissertation. Just as the Jelavichs expanded the scope of the study of the Eastern Question by looking more closely at the stakes Russia had in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire (and the regional dynamics of the same), I argue that the Eastern Question takes on new significances when viewed through the lens of Britain's domestic

⁵⁷ Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914*, ix. This point is further borne out by Charles and Barbara Jelavich's *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), especially in their discussion of how Russia attempted, and often failed, to tie together its foreign policy aims and the aims of the variety of national movements in the Balkans in the 1870s—see Chapter 10, “The Crisis of the Seventies,” on pp. 141-157.

⁵⁸ L. S. Stavrianos, “The Influence of the West on the Balkans,” in *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 209-211.

⁵⁹ Indeed, on p. x of *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914*, Barbara Jelavich notes that her book specifically does not follow the traditional narrative of the Eastern Question but proceeds along an alternative route.

⁶⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

political scene and the development of external policies predicated on territorial expansion and control.

The Eastern Question and the “New Imperialism”:

One of the major debates related to my research concerns the means and method by which the European Great Powers began to expand territorially in rapid fashion in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the so-called “new imperialism” of the 1880s on. For many years, the reigning thesis on this issue from the British perspective came from John Gallagher’s and Ronald Robinson’s work in the 1950s and 1960s, especially their 1953 essay, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” which explains how Britain preferred to extend its influence—or merely get its way—using “informal” tactics, such as putting economic or political pressure upon foreign states in order to make sure the British Empire was in the dominant position in the relationship.⁶¹ If such tactics failed, this theory goes, Britain would employ a “formal” solution, which meant a military engagement like the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian War.⁶² This theory has many compelling components, yet as A. G. Hopkins and Freda Harcourt show, Robinson and Gallagher put too much emphasis on Britain’s response to external political events, overlooking how Britain’s own political and social scene influenced foreign policy decisions to take on an imperial flavor.⁶³ Instead of thinking about the “new imperialism” and its politically- and economically-intertwined components as the result of world events that subsequently motivated British intervention and empire-building, Hopkins and Harcourt both argue

⁶¹ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *Economic History Review* (New Series) 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-15.

⁶² *Ibid.*,

⁶³ A. G. Hopkins, “The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882,” *Journal of African History* 27 (1986): 363-391; Freda Harcourt, “Disraeli’s Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,” *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980): 104-109.

that it was discourse within British society, from Cabinet meetings to public politics, that drove decisions to formally intervene, occupy, and incorporate territories into the Empire, despite information being available that supported informal resolutions.⁶⁴ The “new imperialism,” then, can be seen in many ways to have been born out of the policies Britain employed in interacting with the foreign world and even in the governance of the metropole.

This issue enables me to identify more precisely the similarities and differences between Britain’s foreign policy and imperial policy, both of which were at work in the Eastern Question and during the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878. To be sure, foreign policy did not *need* to involve the Empire, as Britain’s foreign interaction was chiefly articulated in regard to its role as a major *European* state. By the same token, imperial policy did not necessarily have to be connected to Britain’s broader foreign policy; much of imperial policy, of course, dealt directly with the internal affairs of colonial development and administration. Nonetheless, although foreign policy (and its diplomatic arm) and imperialism are not one and the same, over the course of the nineteenth century Britain’s interaction in the foreign sphere increasingly became associated in British politics and society with the idea of protecting and extending Britain’s imperial interests. Events and dynamics associated with the Eastern Question played a key role in the manner in which this shift occurred, as it set the political groundwork for how this protection could be secured, i.e. the practice of territorial acquisition proceeded from existing processes in international politics. For example, Britain’s participation in the Berlin Congress of 1878 was conducted as an affair of foreign policy, right up until the moment that Britain, as a result of the highly-publicized international conference, took over Cyprus as an *imperial*

⁶⁴ Hopkins, 374; Harcourt, 91-94, 97-104, 108-109.

protectorate, an action seen to serve both foreign and imperial policy needs.⁶⁵ We can, additionally, invert this view: Britain's long-term, consistent fears about Russia's gains over the Ottoman Empire and Russian expansion in Central Asia—seen to threaten Britain's power in India—without a doubt affected British foreign policy regarding Russia as a player in the European Balance of Powers during the years of the Eastern Crisis and after.⁶⁶ As scholars have recently questioned how this conflict, the so-called “Great Game,” reflected Britain's problems and responsibilities in India and Central Asia, we might ask how Britons sought to use the Eastern Question as a venue for debate over this issue.⁶⁷ In this context we should proceed to interrogate the notion that British imperial expansion from the last two decades of the 1800s was spurred on by external forces that were “new” to the British worldview, which forced British policymakers to respond. Evidence shows that the “new imperialism” is linked to a much longer history of British interaction and intervention in world affairs, extra-territorially but *as* a global empire, and thus we must consider in what ways this tradition helped inform territorial expansion in the late 1800s, especially, my work argues, from the period encompassing the Eastern Crisis and onwards.⁶⁸

Moreover, broader debates over the history of British imperialism could benefit from an up-to-date analysis of the Eastern Question in British politics and society. There

⁶⁵ See Chapter 7 of Holland and Markides' book, “The Peculiarity of Cyprus,” on pp 162-188.

⁶⁶ See Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1992); also, Karl Ernest Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington: Counterpoint, 1999).

⁶⁷ See, for example, B. D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), especially Chapter 2, “The Myth of the ‘Great Game’” on pp. 34-60.

⁶⁸ Walter G. Wirthwein notes in his book, *Britain and the Balkan Crisis, 1875-1878* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 12, that one of his goals is to look for foundations of the “new imperialism” in the 1875-1878 period. This is the only work I have found that specifically cites the “new imperialism” as a theme, although this aspect of his discussion is more of a subsidiary goal than a central one. Nevertheless, this precedent is important to note, as is Seton-Watson's invocation of the term for his first chapter, “Disraeli and the New Imperialism,” on pp. 1-15 of his book, which he employs as an introduction to Disraeli's return to power in 1874.

has long been a tension between whether economic motives or political ones primarily drove British imperialism.⁶⁹ There is little doubt, however, that it is not possible to view the Eastern Crisis as proceeding along the lines of one of these forces without balance from the other. As Britain's obsession with protecting the route to India shows, economic factors and political factors were so tightly intertwined that it might be inappropriate to separate them, even if this may seem expedient. There are works that weave the political and the economic together effectively, such as Peter Cain's and A. G. Hopkins' theory of "gentlemanly capitalism," which states that the nineteenth century saw a progressively closer bond formed between the landed gentry and the financial elite of the City of London.⁷⁰ This fueled the creation of a society wherein broad political decisions (wars, treaties, imperial budgets) were dependent on financial decisions (loans, investment, handling of imperial revenue) and vice versa.⁷¹ Cain and Hopkins call this an "invisible empire" in that nearly all of this process happened separate from actual discussions about imperial subjects.⁷² However, how "invisible" it really was might be in question. Indeed, we might "democratize" our view by involving the actual *people* who made up the workings of Britain's political and financial institutions, such as Jon Agar has shown in his work on the growth, culture, and politics of London's clerk corps.⁷³ As the Eastern Crisis involved conflicts over "the public's" opinion of Britain's diplomatic and imperial maneuvers, it makes sense to question how the British public defined itself

⁶⁹ This conversation is affected by the influence of using theories of "political economy" to understand the British Empire, such as in Lance E. Davis' and Robert A. Huttenback's *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For a discussion of this technique, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 147-148.

⁷⁰ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945," *The Economic History Review*, New Series 40, no. 1 (1987): 1-26.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8-11.

⁷³ See Jon Agar, *The Government Machine: A Revolutionary History of the Computer* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), especially pp. 52-55 and 59-63.

according to the various regions, traditions, and livelihoods it contained. The fact that the growing clerk demographic eschewed class-based antagonism toward their employers (as opposed to much of the laboring class), and, moreover, tended to vote Tory, should motivate us to question if and how this dynamic may have helped shift debate about the Eastern Question into imperial territory.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, I would caution that we cannot go too far into the economic motivations for imperialism in the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis without losing sight of the way in which the British populace interfaced with the problem in explicit ways. Namely, it is important to raise the issue of Britons' awareness of the problems in question—a subject to which Bernard Porter's suggestion that Britain experienced an “absent-minded” imperialism may contribute.⁷⁵ Porter argues that British society was relatively unconcerned with empire at least until 1870s and 1880s, and even thereafter it was never the preeminent issue with which Britons were concerned.⁷⁶ Porter may overstate the point by often painting British imperialism as totally covert, but there are many aspects of his interpretation that are compelling. Notably, the way in which the Eastern Question transitioned from a problem of foreign, diplomatic policy to one of imperial strategy during the Eastern Crisis matches the general shift that Porter (and others, like Robinson and Gallagher and Cain and Hopkins, before him) have commented on. Ironically, the legacy of an “absent-minded” view of British imperialism may account for the treatment of the Eastern Question as an issue of Balance of Powers

⁷⁴ Cain and Hopkins, 18.

⁷⁵ See Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). It is worth noting that “absent-minded imperialism” is not an idea solely of Porter's invention, but it is the most relevant work that takes up and investigates the riff on J. R. Seeley's observation that the British Empire had expanded in an “absence of mind”—see Seeley's *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 8. Peter Rivièrè took up the same topic in his book, *Absent-Minded Imperialism: Britain and the Expansion of Empire in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Austin: Taurus Academic Studies, 1995), but Porter's work is more wide-ranging and provocative.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

diplomacy that existed separate from empire, namely in that the source material with which historians are presented makes it seem as if this divide were more distinct than it actually was. How the Eastern Crisis acted as a catalyst to a more mindful imperial society may provide insights into the wider field of imperial history.

The Eastern Question and “New” Diplomatic History:

As the Eastern Question has so often been treated in past scholarship as a piece of diplomatic history, the need to engage the recent developments within that field is vital. Diplomatic history (and its close partner international history⁷⁷) is one of the oldest sub-disciplines of history and is directly related to the development of many of the historical techniques we use in the modern period. Historians’ emphasis on primary sources, treating history like a science, and on placing historical actors within epochs that help define their actions owes much to the field, as formulated by scholars like Leopold von Ranke, considered the father of diplomatic history and international history.⁷⁸ Yet in terms of method and theory, there is a good argument that in general these fields have made up “one of the most conservative discourses within our conservative discipline [i.e. history].”⁷⁹ Indeed, though historians like von Ranke gave shape to the reasons for an historical actor’s actions, that actor was almost invariably a “great man,” as great men were for a long time seen to be the primary makers of history. Von Ranke’s and his disciples’ emphasis on investigating the elite levels of international politics and

⁷⁷ The terms “international history” and “diplomatic history” are often deployed in confusing ways. For our purposes, we can see them as having roughly the same methodological and theoretical background, but they refer to slightly different emphases: international history generally refers to the whole apparatus of foreign policymaking, while diplomatic history focuses in on the interface wherein foreign policy is executed.

⁷⁸ See Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

⁷⁹ Patrick Finney, “International History, Theory and the Origins of World War II,” in *The History and Narrative Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 390.

diplomacy led to the formulation of what is known as the “realist” vision of international relations, which is based on the *Primat der Aussenpolitik*—the “primacy of foreign policy.”⁸⁰ Realists, whose perspective made up the primary viewpoint on diplomatic history until the 1960s and who remain powerful in the field today, generally have “long thought of inter-state relations as a realm apart from domestic politics.”⁸¹

Yet it is clear that there are powerful domestic causes of foreign policy decisions, and in the last half century a great number of scholars of international relations and diplomatic history have shifted toward thinking about internal or domestic causes of foreign policy, or *Innenpolitik*, led by “new” diplomatic historians like Paul Kennedy and Arno Mayer. Mayer, for example, theorizes that to understand why and in what way war and other international strife has occurred in the history of the modern period, it is necessary to look at the domestic conditions that motivated a society’s elites to take action.⁸² He sees external policies as “reflexes” based on pressures from forces within.⁸³ Kennedy’s work, which is more directly connected to the history of the British Empire than Mayer’s, links together the forces at work in Britain’s imperialism, diplomacy, and socio-economic policy to show that Britain’s domestic concerns had a significant effect on Britain’s foreign and imperial activities.⁸⁴ Jack Snyder echoes these opinions, seeing Britain’s external policies and initiatives as upheld by domestic political forces, whose leaders were ultimately concerned with securing strategic protection for British foreign and imperial interests in a manner that could garner widespread support, both from the

⁸⁰ Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review,” *International Security* 17, no. 1 (1992): 179.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Arno J. Mayer, “Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870-1956,” *The Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 3 (1969): 292-303.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁸⁴ Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Power, 1865-1980* (Winchester: Allen & Unwin, 1981); see also his chapter, “Britain as Hegemon?” in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 151-157.

elites and the body politic.⁸⁵ Understanding the influence of domestic forces on international politics and the execution of policy via diplomatic channels is therefore essential to understanding how, why, and from whom these policies issued. At the same time, it is still necessary to take into account how the structure of the diplomatic apparatus itself changed (or stayed the same) over time and the rules of the international system affected the formation and execution of policy, as Raymond Jones and Fareed Zakaria have respectively cautioned.⁸⁶ Domestic causes must be included in explanations of external activity, but one must frame *precisely* how such a dynamic worked and to what degree it actually effected policy, as diplomacy was still carried out in many ways separate from or counter to domestic concerns, sometimes intentionally so.

Britain's experience of the Eastern Question and of other "Eastern" matters is deeply related to this issue, and accordingly both the claims of the "new" diplomatic history *and* the important caveat regarding the power of the international and diplomatic systems need to be examined. Since R. W. Seton-Watson's definitive work on diplomacy, British domestic politics, and the Eastern Question, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics* (1935), little work has been done that directly tackles the issue of British domestic sphere's role in policymaking regarding Eastern matters specifically.⁸⁷ There are a few exceptions to this. For example, in the early 1960s Richard Shannon investigated the Bulgarian Agitation and domestic political figures, but he explicitly focused on the "personal" element of these

⁸⁵ Snyder, 154.

⁸⁶ Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 9-10; Zakaria, 197.

⁸⁷ Seton-Watson's two contemporaries, Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson, spent some time on this as well—see n. 42 above.

actors and went no farther than the end of 1876.⁸⁸ Also, Gary Bass recently wrote a decent section on the Agitation and the Eastern Crisis in British politics in society in his book, *Freedom's Battle*, but I think his conclusion on the matter misses the point. Namely, Bass thinks that Britons' agitation for humanitarian causes was successful in bringing the Liberals back to power in 1880 and ushering in an era of interventionism based along Gladstonian lines.⁸⁹ I would argue that this assessment is backward: the style of intervention in the post-1880 period was based directly on the *failure* of Gladstone in affecting change within the domestic political system during the Eastern Crisis. Even when he returned to power in 1880, his actions bespoke an independent, imperial, actually more Disraelian external policy than, ironically, his own prior feelings and aspirations ever would seem to have allowed.

In any case, there is little work on the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis and their connection to the relationship between the forces at work in the metropole and British external policy. For example, histories of the Eastern Question have rarely engaged the rise of the political press and the British reading public—an issue that is especially important for considerations of political and cultural history post-1855, the year that Parliament repealed the tax on newspapers, which had been to this point prohibitively expensive for most people. Combined with the 1867 Reform Act, which doubled the electorate, and the continuing reforms in state-funded education, the advent of cheap newspapers changed the political face of Britain, making areas of discourse that

⁸⁸ Shannon, v-vi. Howard Malchow has also documented the leadership structure of several British pressure groups whose concerns were related to British policy regarding the East, such as the Eastern Question Association, the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, the Anglo-Armenian Association, and the Indian Reform Association, although Malchow does not put forth an analysis of the movements themselves—Howard LeRoy Malchow, *Agitators and Promoters in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli: A Biographical Dictionary of the Leaders of British Pressure Groups Founded Between 1865 and 1886* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983).

⁸⁹ Bass, 236-237.

had previously been confined to the economic and socio-political elite, like foreign and imperial affairs, matters of public debate. Of course, there had been points in the past in which public involvement in Britain's external actions had been significant, such as during the Greek War of Independence and the First Opium War from 1839-1842, in which the radical, Chartist *Northern Star* led the charge against the Whig Government's interventionist policies.⁹⁰ But the scale and variety of public debate grew to new and unprecedented heights after 1855, while the extension of the franchise in 1867 gave the public voice a new bite. By the time of the Eastern Crisis the role of the press in guiding political debate over Britain's external policies had given a new flavor to "public opinion" that was less based on representing political factions and more on the assumption that it behooved papers to direct their rhetoric at a broader audience than its core adherents. As Simon Goldsworthy has shown, one of the leading Liberal papers of the Eastern Crisis, the Darlington *Northern Echo* edited by W. T. Stead, saw an opportunity in print media that built on and amplified methods of preaching and other forms of oratory, broadcasting its view of the Eastern Question wholesale and with great effect.⁹¹ The Bulgarian Agitation was a test case for this practice, and such new forms of print journalism contributed to how the bulk of Britons came to see themselves as having a stake in matters that had previously been the province of the political and social elite.⁹² Later, during the Russo-Turkish War, Britons became obsessed with news from the war,

⁹⁰ See Shijie Guan, "Chartism and the First Opium War," *History Workshop*, no 24 (1987): 17-31. The British Library notes that the *Northern Star* had its highest circulation the year the war began, selling 48,000 copies per week; thereafter it dropped off—see "Northern Star," British Newspapers 1800-1900, British Library, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://newspapers11.bl.uk/blcs/NorthernStar.htm>. Despite the *Northern Star*'s leading role in presenting British opposition to imperialist policies, Paul French notes that the press at the time mostly supported the Government—see *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 43.

⁹¹ Simon Goldsworthy, "English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign: Including the Strange Case of W. T. Stead and the Bulgarian Horrors," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 3 (2006): 387-402.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 388-389.

allowing the populace to take part in a foreign conflict via a venue that was readily available, stimulating, and cheap.⁹³

Given the broader importance of investigating the domestic sphere's involvement in Britain's foreign and imperial affairs, I look at my focus era and subject as a productive place to engage in a larger debate about British democratization.⁹⁴ If we consider the evidence that throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century the Eastern Question was a public affair, during its crises an obsession, then it is vital that we integrate the domestic political and cultural forces that made it so.⁹⁵ This growing public concern had a political effect: as British society became progressively more literate and democratic, pressure from the body politic had a greater effect on the shape of external policy.⁹⁶ Moreover, as time went on the distinction between Britain's foreign and imperial interests became less and less clear, as a greater and greater proportion of domestic society appears to have followed the Disraelian proposition that a strong foreign policy was one that was organized around a strong global empire.⁹⁷ The connection between the areas of domestic society, the structures of the diplomatic system, and Britain's Eastern policy is hence very important to understanding the larger impact of the Eastern Question and the Crisis on the trajectory of Imperial British history.

⁹³ The high-selling penny papers, like the *Daily Telegraph* or *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, would cost about \$.37 in 2011 money. These far outsold the papers intended for a more firmly middle-class audience, like the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Times*, which were more expensive; these examples cost at this time 2d (\$.74) and 3d (\$1.11) respectively. The source for this conversion comes from the historical currency converter designed by the University of Wyoming's Eric Nye, see <http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>.

⁹⁴ For a suggestion of this shift in general terms, see Porter, 164-169.

⁹⁵ Bass, 239-242; also, see Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

⁹⁶ See Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

⁹⁷ See John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); also, Howard Malchow, *Gentleman Capitalists: The Social and Political World of the Victorian Businessman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 350-356. Also, see n. 68 above, regarding Malchow's work on the leadership of British pressure groups.

The Eastern Question and Victorian Politics:

If domestic pressures did indeed drive external policy, recent debates about the dynamics of Victorian politics are relevant to my inquiry. As an issue discussed in the halls of Parliament as well as in the pages of the political press, the shape of the Eastern Question in the British mind necessarily conformed to attributes whose relevance proceeded from other places and histories in the British milieu. By the same token, the Eastern Question could be invoked or leveraged by politicians and their press organs to back up a broader political platform. Indeed, when Gladstone wrote *Bulgarian Horrors* he was not only responding to the particular instance that motivated the work, but he was also portraying the Tory Government's response to the Bulgarian Atrocities as evidence that it was generally unsuitable as the leader of Britain's political structure. Likewise, when Disraeli arranged for the transfer of Cyprus to British control, this act was not just a proposed "solution" to the Eastern Question. Rather, it was calculated to resonate with that portion of the British populace that would find such an act to be evidence that the Tories should indeed continue to run the country.

As Britain was by this point a nation that determined its leaders by the election of individuals representing a political platform, one may view the Eastern Crisis through the prism of political language and rhetoric employed more generally. The scene of the Eastern Crisis was defined both by an existing norms in political dialogue and by great changes in the kind of rhetoric politicians used to promote their parties' position and denigrate their rivals. Jon Lawrence has shown how rhetoric promoting the Liberals as the "people's party" began to wear thin during the late 1860s and early 1870s, and the Conservatives made inroads into traditionally Liberal constituencies during Disraeli's

Second Ministry from 1874 to 1880.⁹⁸ Even after the Liberals returned to power in 1880, popular Toryism had developed such a strong rhetorical basis and organizational apparatus that it contributed to promotion of the socialist, Labour position (i.e. as a better counter-balance to the Tories than the Liberals) as the century drew to a close.⁹⁹ Although the Liberals remained a significant force for decades, the tactics and language they used to promote their position necessarily changed to meet new conditions of Britain's political space. The Eastern Crisis, as Seton-Watson observed, saw British leaders using the Eastern Question as a venue to wrangle over who should control Britain's political future.¹⁰⁰ I argue that despite rancorous animosity between the factions, the resolution of the Eastern Crisis saw the promulgation of a political ideal mating imperialism with moral responsibility, which entered into and altered British political rhetoric. Thereafter, the Liberals and Tories fought over the *direction* and *depth* of such policies, but the basic validity of British imperialism was taken for granted. Questioning it would have to wait until the rise of Labour and international socialism in the late 1890s to offer a new, distinct, and contrary set of principles.

Of course, Liberal ideals in the period in question could and were brought to bear upon Tory ideals during the Eastern Crisis, and Liberal leaders certainly offered substantive political alternatives to the Disraeli Government's chosen course. For example, British politics still felt the legacy of an anti-interventionism along the lines of Richard Cobden, who had seen British expansion in a colonial, official capacity as ruinously expensive, tending toward a culture of militarism, not to mention ideologically

⁹⁸ Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 91-98.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110-111, 122-127.

¹⁰⁰ Seton-Watson, ix. Moreover, he notes that the Eastern Crisis should be seen as a competition over competing "visions" for Britain's global future rather than merely a "great controversy along party lines."

untoward.¹⁰¹ Although the direct influence of such beliefs had been overshadowed by ten years of Gladstonian liberalism by the time of the Eastern Crisis, the feeling that “sinister economic forces” were opposed to liberal free trade and democracy lurked in politics for the rest of the Victorian period.¹⁰² Beyond the economic aspect, which had in the early part of the nineteenth century been the principle brand of anti-intervention politics, Cobden (and his associate, John Bright) represented a pacifist, internationalist political view that would appear in the Eastern Crisis in the form of “peace” movements during the Russo-Turkish War.¹⁰³ Still, by the 1870s the shape of Victorian anti-intervention politics had grown beyond Cobden’s mostly economic arguments to include an element of involving Britain in foreign disputes if doing so was considered the “moral” thing to do.¹⁰⁴

In this way, Britain’s response to the Eastern Crisis was prejudiced by assumptions of how to approach foreign conflict. Just as Liberals accused Disraeli and the Tories of giving preferential treatment to the Turks, they argued for giving favor to certain groups in Britain’s interaction with the world. Maura O’Connor has convincingly argued for the influence of Italian nationalism (with its mouthpiece, Giuseppe Mazzini, and its totem, Giuseppe Garibaldi) in Victorian society and politics, noting that this transformed Britain’s diplomatic establishment to be more directly reflective of British culture.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the Eastern Crisis saw Liberals use some of the same language they had used in regard to Italian unification in regard to Balkan nationalism, urging the same

¹⁰¹ See Peter Cain, “Capitalism, War and Internationalism in the Thought of Richard Cobden,” *British Journal of International Studies* 5, no. 3 (1979): 229-247, especially pp. 244-246.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁰³ For the connections and distinctions between the economic and internationalist views, see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1968), 5-7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁵ Maura O’Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), especially Chapter Five, “The Cultural Politics of Diplomacy,” on pp. 117-148.

type of diplomatic tactics as had been employed in the former case. The Liberal alternative to the Tories' support of the traditional Ottoman power structure was to identify and support those Ottoman subjects who had a "natural" right to self-rule. As Britons attempted to understand and confront the various Ottoman Christian nationalisms, this belief developed into a salient feature of the Eastern Question.

However, with regard to the most prominent example of this dynamic during the Eastern Crisis, the agitation in Britain over the 1876 Bulgarian Atrocities, Stoyan Tchaprazov has shown that the moral element of the Eastern Question was always more important to pro-Bulgarian Britons than any national element.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Bulgarian independence never came to be as important to Britons as it was to Bulgarians.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps, though, one might reconcile the moral and the national by thinking of British society in terms of "blocks," in which moralists and friends of foreign nationalisms could cast themselves in common opposition to the pragmatic, traditionalist Tory establishment. In this, one of the most compelling takes on Victorian politics for the period in question comes from Eugenio F. Biagini, who has done some excellent work on late Victorian liberalism and popular democracy.¹⁰⁸ Biagini sees the late Victorian period as defined by a set of general liberal themes, which ran throughout and helped define responses to specific issues on both the elite and popular level.¹⁰⁹ Gladstone's tenure as the Liberal leader (which continued through his "retirement" phase from 1875 to 1880) witnessed the integration of liberal philosophical beliefs about liberty and morality into the politics of popular reform. During the Eastern Crisis, as Biagini

¹⁰⁶ Stoyan Tchaprazov, "The British Empire Revisited through the Lens of the Eastern Question," *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 48 (2007), <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/017443ar>.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ See Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 4-8.

shows, the Liberals experienced a reorientation around Gladstone's charismatic call for a Britain that represented general humanitarian beliefs both at home and globally.¹¹⁰ This new political emphasis proved popular and workable enough to propel him to victory over Disraeli in 1880, but it also led to disenchantment among Liberals who were not moved by Gladstone's reliance on "moral pathos."¹¹¹ Not all members of the Liberal Party saw Gladstonian liberalism as the only or the best kind.

Thus in understanding the political scene of the Eastern Crisis, we must consider its place in a longer view of the period leading up to the crisis over Irish Home Rule from 1885 to 1886, which saw anti-Home Rule Liberals, the Liberal Unionists, split off from Gladstone over his support for decreasing British control over Ireland—an outgrowth of his humanitarian beliefs that had proved so popular only half a decade earlier.¹¹² Indeed, Biagini thinks that the Bulgarian Agitation was a "trial run" for the rhetorical strategies Gladstone employed in the Home Rule debates.¹¹³ Yet while the bulk of Liberals could support or at least countenance Gladstone's friendship with national movements when it was abstract and "foreign," as in relation to the Eastern Question, when it came to Ireland this was for most a bridge too far.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, humanitarian values remained central to British politics long after Gladstone's defeat on Home Rule.¹¹⁵ In fact, humanitarianism may have been *essential* to the politics of imperialism, as advocates of the moral values regarding human life did not necessarily promote such beliefs to the exclusion of empire. As Bernard Porter has argued, even as the empire grew in the 1880s and 1890s "the growth of liberty remained the central theme, to which the empire was

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 385-387.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 423-424.

¹¹² Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, 353-357.

¹¹³ Ibid., 40-41.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 164-166.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 357.

grafted on: the latter presented as a means of *extending* liberty, through the spread of freedom and enlightenment, beyond Britain's domestic boundaries, either through settlement or by conquest (always provoked) and rule."¹¹⁶ Ironically, Gladstone's success at promoting a politics of humanitarianism provided some of the popular, pretty language in which imperial maneuvers could be cloaked. In all reality, Disraelian politics of glorious imperial pride were not so irreconcilable with those painting Britain as a selfless advocate for the global unfortunate.

The Eastern Question, British "Interests," and Gladstone vs. Disraeli:

It is also crucial to draw special attention to one of the most important pieces of political language that Britons used to express their stake in the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878, namely the almost ubiquitous deployment of a terminology centered on Britain's "interests" in the problems of the Eastern Question and the regions it affected. To be sure, this is in a broad sense certainly what the Eastern Question *did* center on, but ironically there is very little discussion of what these interests were and how they structured the relationship between the British Empire and Eastern political entities. To some degree, this haziness may be attributed to two facts: first, the bulk of literature on the Eastern Question has treated the subject as a matter of diplomacy and international politics and thus, in a Rankean sense, the nature and importance of these interests are implied directly by the rigorous actions of British representatives to protect them; second, perhaps those in the primary material whom we see using the term British "interests" were themselves unaware of the real shape and extent (or lack of extent) of such interests and felt that the protection of them, no matter how nebulous their identity,

¹¹⁶ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 241.

was a more important line of dialogue than questioning the details. Indeed, at least one contemporary to the Eastern Crisis drew attention to this very gap between language use and language meaning: in regard to a wide-ranging debate in Parliament in June of 1875 about the Ottoman Empire's economic problems and this issue's effect on British interests, it was recorded of William Cartwright, a Liberal MP, that "carefully as he had listened to the debate, he had not heard anyone state what the British interests in Turkey were."¹¹⁷ He believed "it was essential that some attempt should be made to define those interests."¹¹⁸ Tellingly, there appears to have been no attempt made to address this question directly in the remainder of the debate that day.

Many questions present themselves on this topic, yet I am particularly concerned here with how the use of the language of British "interests" factored as a component of the opinions posited and responses proposed by the different factions of Victorian society taken up with a resolution to the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis. This offers a useful insight into the debate regarding the dynamics of the all-important Gladstone vs. Disraeli battle, as *both* argued for the protection of British interests but in very different ways and upon very different ideological grounds: Disraeli thought that a system that integrated the military power of the Empire with that of trade was necessary, while Gladstone saw free trade and friendly relationships among the Great Powers—or an external policy of "civilisation and humanity," as he put it¹¹⁹—as the way forward for peaceful British prosperity.¹²⁰ This was all part of a broader war between the Liberals

¹¹⁷ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.225, col.207 (18th June 1875).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Qtd. in Seton-Watson, 566.

¹²⁰ See Paul Adelman, *Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics*, third edition (New York: Longman, 1997). Another nice distillation of these views can be found in Stephen J. Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli* (London: Routledge, 2005), especially Chapter 5, "Foreign Policy," and Chapter 6, "Imperialism and Empire," on pp. 85-123.

and the Conservatives over political control and over the public mind, with the successes and failures Gladstone and Disraeli achieved for their respective parties.¹²¹

Yet with the fall of the Disraeli's Conservatives in 1880 and the rise of Gladstone's Liberals Britain did not see the end of a strong imperial-minded governmental establishment (Disraeli's vision) and the advent of a limited empire with foreign policy centered on the fostering of European relationships (Gladstone's winning response), but the exact opposite.¹²² Pro-Gladstone writers in the tradition of John Morley, like Ann Pottinger Saab, would have us believe that post-Eastern Crisis British imperialism was not a product of Gladstone's humanitarian vision but existed in explicit opposition to it.¹²³ Not only is this warped by bias, it is not very logical: Gladstone's return to power in 1880 did not stop—and might even have fueled—the nascent growth of a well-defined liberal vision of imperialism such as that espoused by Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Rosebery.¹²⁴ Part of the answer to this quandary, I think, can be found in understanding how the language of “protection” operated in political debates, with British “interests” in the East being one of the major contested ideas. In other words, the question here is whether or not, as William Cartwright's observation suggests, the obsession over protecting these “interests” can be seen as indicative of not only Britain's various political, military, and economic investments, but also of certain rhetorical tools wielded by *all* the various political factions to prove the validity and

¹²¹ See Bass, Chapter 22, “Gladstone vs. Disraeli,” 266-296; Seton-Watson, 545-550.

¹²² Indeed, Freda Harcourt traces the social imperialism of the 1880s, which Gladstone in part oversaw, to Disraeli's earlier attempts to link together the “cherished attributes of liberal society” and the popular appeal of imperial strong-arm tactics—see pp. 108-109 of “Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing.”

¹²³ See Ann Pottinger Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes, 1856-1878* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹²⁴ Even another Gladstonian, H. C. G. Matthew, concedes that the tendrils of post-Gladstone liberal imperialism reached back into Gladstone's tenure as leader—see *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford: OUP, 1973).

intelligence of their policies in a comprehensive sense. In as much as Gladstone and his supporters held a vision of the world in which Britain stood for humanitarian principles, it may prove useful to track the presence of this kind of thinking in matters related to Britain exerting its authority in places, like the East, thought to be in need of Britain's moral support—the “burden” of empire which stood as a major theme of the “new imperialism.” The question, then, is whether the imperial ideals of the Disraelian type and the moralizing project of Gladstone's *combined* in the subsequent formalization of a foreign policy centered on imperial protection and expansion in the 1880s.

The Eastern Question and “the East”:

One of the major discussions that the study of the Eastern Question has missed over the last two generations is the increasing attention in academia during this same period on issues related to Britain and Europe's conceptualization of “the East.” The critical perspective on the East-West connection is closely connected to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a critique of the way the West has used the history, languages, and cultures of Eastern places to support the West's self-affirmation of its inherent superiority and the unique expression of its own history, languages, and cultures.¹²⁵ This view has become essential to any deep understanding of the historical dynamics that have existed between two areas of the world with such clear distinctions yet such a close and historical connection. Considering the kind of language employed in the primary sources (and the bulk of the secondary, as well) that I have examined about the Eastern Question, which time and again refer to a notion of “the East” as a place of disorder in need of Western

¹²⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

(re)ordering and, importantly, to “Easterners” themselves as people nearly incapable of orderly self-rule, the Orientalist critique often rings true.

Nevertheless, much of the recent scholarship that analyzes the Eastern Question has been so closely connected to the theoretical trajectory of Said’s model that it appears to replicate the binaristic division of East from West that has historically been perpetrated by Western political and cultural forces.¹²⁶ Hence, if work has emerged about the Eastern Question, the emphasis has been either on how it fits within the framework of the Saidian Orientalist critique as merely one more example of Western domination over the East, or on how it stands alone, once again, as an historical set of diplomatic episodes.¹²⁷ There are of course exceptions to this rule,¹²⁸ but this constitutes only a small handful of citations considering the substantial role this issue played in the historical context. My dissertation contributes to this dialogue by showing how the Eastern Question produced a complex set of representations of Britain’s relationship to the East, namely in that British society put forth a *variety* of opinions regarding the different Eastern entities involved in

¹²⁶ Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska, “Rethinking the Historical Genealogy of Orientalism,” *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 2 (2007): 135-151; see especially their explanation of this problem in general on p. 136.

¹²⁷ A. L. Macfie’s book on the Eastern Question, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, first published in 1988, probably goes the furthest of any focused study in integrating new works and methods, yet his work is still generally directed at the diplomatic angle.

¹²⁸ The Atlantic Studies on Society in Change (or, the “East European Monographs”) series distributed by Columbia University Press has several titles in which the Eastern Question plays a central, closely-defined role, such as: Jelena Milojković-Djurić, *The Eastern Question and the Voices of Reason: Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Balkan States, 1875-1908* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), and Zdenko Zlater, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent: The Republic of Dubrovnik and the Origins of the Eastern Question* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992); several articles have appeared recently utilizing the Eastern Question either as an explanation or a trope for socio-political developments in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, or the Near and Middle East, such as: Richard N. Schofield, “Old Boundaries for a New State: The Creation of Iraq’s Eastern Question,” *SAIS Review* 26, no. 1 (2006): 27-39; finally, other articles have used it to contextualize some deeper element of the Western imagination, using the Eastern Question as, again, a rubric under which a host of European thought-processes can be placed, such as: Peter Jeffreys, “Cavafy, Forster and the Eastern Question,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19, no. 1 (2001): 61-87; Aida O. Azouqa, “The ‘Eastern Question’ and Disraeli’s Political Imagination in *Tancred*,” *Human & Social Sciences* 26, no. 1 (1999): 225-242; also, see Paul Auchterlonie, “From the Eastern Question to the Death of General Gordon: Representations of the Middle East in the Victorian Periodical Press, 1876-1885,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 1 (2001): 5-24.

the problem, rather than just applying an overarching set of perceptions upon anyone residing within the Eastern expanse. This is nowhere more clearly seen than in the example of the public uproar in Britain surrounding the 1876 Bulgarian Massacres and the runaway success of Gladstone's pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, as mentioned above. On one side of this issue, anti-Turkish, pro-interventionist "Atrocitarians" posited the idea of a battle between a Muslim Turkish "other" and a set of Balkan Christian "brethren,"¹²⁹ while on the other side, an array of pro-status quo conservatives, fearful of the extension of Russian influence in the area, supported—at least outwardly—the Ottomans' right to adjudicate unilaterally the disputes within their Eastern domain.¹³⁰ In other words, Gladstone's taxonomy of Easternness was different from that of his opponents, meaning that there were diverse, often competing strains of Orientalist thought that flowed through the complex public and private dynamics of the Eastern Question. Hence, discourse about the Eastern Question was a *space* wherein Britain engaged the notion of Easternness, occasioning Britons to put forth different beliefs about the East as a concept and a place and about the role Britain should have in overseeing Eastern activity. Furthermore, if we take the Eastern Question—and its important role in Victorian society during the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878—as intimately connected with Britain's rise as an imperial culture, this space was also one that allowed people to form ideas and opinions regarding Britain's general role in the world (as guide, as force, as disinterested party, as enemy) and ponder the possible outcomes of Eastern Question policies and such outcomes' impact on imperial concerns.

¹²⁹ Gladstone, 25.

¹³⁰ Macfie, *The Eastern Question*, 37-40.

Chapter Outline:

My dissertation is organized into four major chapters, each of which analyzes a segment of the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 that displays an accompanying theme or question strongly associated with the history of the Eastern Question and British imperialism.

1. *Balkan national uprisings and the Bulgarian Massacres, 1875-1876*: This chapter looks at the conflict between *humanitarianism and Realpolitik in British politics and society*, and how this might explain the contested identity of “the East” and the Eastern Question in British history. I begin this story by positing a pre-Bulgarian Atrocities narrative on the Eastern Question and the East. After this, I look at how Britain’s complex response to the massacre of 12,000 Bulgarian Christians by Turkish *bashi-bazouks* may help us to identify and explicate a moral and political crossroads in Britain, with outraged, pro-Bulgarian humanitarians agitating against Britain’s Ottoman alliance competing with the sentiment of moral neutrality among the government and among a large section of the populace. I argue that a closer look at this period complicates our understanding of the actual division of British society between humanitarian and *realpolitik* values and impulses, especially when put in relation to how people justified the various ways Britain could intervene in the affairs of other states.

2. *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877-1878*: This chapter investigates *imperial diplomacy and mass politics* as a key component of how British society took part in both the attempts to “make peace” between the Russians and the Turks and the dynamics, after diplomacy had “failed,” of the war itself. I begin by looking at the two major international attempts to

avoid conflict, the Constantinople Conference from December 1876 to January 1877 and the formulation of the London Protocol in March 1877. Thereafter, I focus in on the way the war affected British politics and culture, especially in the epic Siege of Plevna from August to December 1877. I argue that British society, which had so recently seen a rally against the Turks, over the course of the conflict not only came to see the failure of the Ottomans to protect their domain as a tragedy, but began to look at the British Empire's direct participation in the conflict as increasingly preferential to allowing other, less trustworthy powers to oversee Eastern order.

3. *The Cyprus Convention, 1878*: This chapter explores the dynamic between *British "interests" and imperialism in the Eastern Question*, demonstrated in the process by which Britain took over the administration of Cyprus, ostensibly to protect *both* the Ottomans and Britain from Russia's imperial plans in the Balkans and the Near and Middle East. As a debate emerged over *which* piece of Ottoman territory Britain should take over, this discussion offers insight into how British administrators sought to protect their empire from harm and lessen the anxiety Britons felt over the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the expansion of Russia into British Empire's domains. This section provides a deeper discussion about how British policymakers and administrators sought to tie together Britain's interests in the conflict with its longer-term interests as an empire with large Eastern holdings. The discussion over the grounds and reasons that Britain should take over a new territory in the Near East to protect its interests produced some important aspects of the imperial ideology that would later define both the material and cultural elements of the "new imperialism."

4. *The Congress of Berlin, 1878*: This chapter seeks to explain how the British Empire's foreign and imperial policy coalesced around the notion that it should be seen by Europe, in the East, and by the world as *an empire of order*. Understanding the basis for an interventionist and war-making Britain of the last two decades of the nineteenth century requires looking at "peace-making" events like the 1878 Berlin Congress, which was advertised throughout Britain and Europe as evidence that order was possible without war, but which also led British officials to justify with the rhetoric of order and peace their later imperialistic, often violent activity. As recent work has argued that from the middle of the nineteenth century on (and especially from the beginning of the 1880s) the notion of a powerful British Empire ensuring global peace, order, and stability became a major theme in British thought, politics, and culture, it makes sense to question what effect one of the major political and cultural events of this period had on this argument.¹³¹

I argue that the Congress of Berlin was a major step in this process, as the formal acquisition of Cyprus presaged wider territorial expansion, while the prominent role Britain played in the negotiations further cemented their position of power in the international system.

¹³¹ Duncan Bell has recently drawn attention to this theme in his book, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)—see especially the section, "Balances of Power: Global Threats and Imperial Responses," on pp. 35-40, and also, "Remaking the Global Imagination," on pp. 89-91. Also, Daniel Deudney has drawn our attention to the importance of considering the growth of the theme of "Greater Britain" and imperial federation in the 1870s on, *a la* figures like J. R. Seeley and Halford Mackinder, whose proponents argued that a strongly integrated global empire ruled by its white inhabitants, rather than a system of indirect rule based on trade and relationships with native authorities, was necessary both for the protection of the British Empire from decline and the world from unproductive chaos—see his article, "Greater Britain or Greater Synthesis? Seeley, Mackinder, and Wells on Britain in the Global Industrial Era," *Review of International Studies* 27, no. (2001): 187-208.

Sources, Method, Archives:

My dissertation depends on research from a variety of sources, especially five particular “arenas” of British society and culture: Victorian politics, diplomacy, print media, the intellectual community, and personal testimony. Within each of these source areas, there are specific cases I explore that illustrate key connections to the events and themes described in each chapter, e.g. diplomatic correspondence and its correlation with eventual political outcomes; the press and its coverage of Eastern matters; and the role of intellectual societies and political pressure groups and their part in the Eastern Question. Furthermore, it is necessary to “humanize” these broad concerns about Imperial British history. In addition to major figures like Disraeli, Gladstone, and Lord Salisbury, throughout my dissertation I look at several lesser-known contemporary individuals to give a fuller and more nuanced portrait of the intersections and complex identities found in this part of history, including politicians and figures of British society such as Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff and Auberon Herbert (two Victorian “iconoclasts,” the former Conservative and the latter Liberal); diplomats and imperial figures such as Sir Henry Elliot, Sir Austen Henry Layard (the two ambassadors to Constantinople during the Eastern Crisis), and Sir Garnet Wolseley (the first governor of British Cyprus and a noted Victorian war hero); reporters such as W. T. Stead (editor of the *Northern Echo*, a major Liberal organ, and later reformist hero) and Edward Levy-Lawson (owner and editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, which switched from Liberal to Tory during the Crisis); and intellectuals such as E. A. Freeman (a noted historian and rabidly anti-Turk commentator during the Crisis).

More generally, I compare the “public” and “elite” realms of British discourse related to the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis. On the public side, the study of

discussion about the Eastern Question in print media (including daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and books), in public Parliamentary debates, and in influential political pressure groups (like the Eastern Question Association) is essential to establishing the evidence for widespread interest and controversy over the Eastern Question, especially in the imperial center of London. On the private side, the affairs discussed in Cabinet, Foreign Office, and War Office meetings, in diplomatic correspondence, and in the personal letters between people involved in the administration of the British Empire's Eastern Policy give us a view of how the Eastern Question was dealt with according to the political and institutional structures of Britain's foreign and imperial apparatus. In comparing and contrasting these two fundamental categories of data on Britain and the Eastern Question I aim to formulate a more robust theory on the influence of domestic public pressure on the external affairs of the British Empire. That domestic issues certainly affected Britain's Eastern and imperial policies is without a doubt clear, but the manner in which and the extent to which this occurred are less clear, as public agitation *itself* is less indicative of the subsequent enactment of formal policy than it is of a particular emphasis in political and cultural dialogue among the populace. Although the mapping of these political and cultural emphases is a key part of apprehending the importance of the Eastern Question to Victorian society during the Eastern Crisis and thereafter, we must look at the private side to determine if and how political leaders and governmental officials responded to public opinion. Reviewing their private papers, letters, and internal dialogue helps us gauge whether or not they rolled popular views into their official diplomatic and military strategies. Beyond this, an understanding of the reasons and methods by which those directly charged with devising and carrying out these policies employed is essential to understanding the *global* effects

of Britain's experience of the Eastern Question. At this point the answer to this question is unclear, as is the all-important question of if the rapid expansion of the British Empire and imperial ideology proceeded from public opinion, official design, or a combination of the two. A nuanced and up-to-date analysis of "the East" and the Eastern Question in Victorian society and diplomacy provides an opportunity to add an important and understudied issue to this dialogue.

It is important to consider the influence of the press on public opinion, politics, and diplomacy both from the angle of the nature of the coverage itself and with consideration as to the methods and structure of Victorian journalism and print culture.¹³² I particularly focus on three types of newspapers: first, the papers that represented the political opinion of the parties they were associated with, such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* for the Tories and the *Daily News* for the Liberals; second, papers that attempted to appeal to a wider audience, such as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*; third, papers whose primary focus was visual and, often, sensational, like the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, and *The Graphic*. I also often draw on important provincial papers, especially those that had a readership wide enough to have national significance, like the *Northern Echo* and the *Liverpool Mercury*. Parliamentary debate was public and was available in the form of detailed reports reprinted in prominent newspapers. As these reports often differ slightly from one another, in general I use the official reports known as *Hansard*, though at times I refer to specific instances where a Parliamentary correspondent noted some peculiarity of the debate not specified in the official version. Further, my research includes evidence from political journals and literary reviews, many of which were

¹³² Any use of sources from the Victorian press requires this kind of method—see Lyn Pykett, "Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context," on pp. 3-18 of *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

associated with political parties or opinions, such as the Liberal *Fortnightly Review* (edited by John Morley). Pamphlets and books published during the Eastern Crisis also figure in my account, especially when they represent a particular political or cultural theme relevant to the discussion. Finally, certain government documents were offered for sale in the form of diplomatic “Blue Books,” which usually offered a selection of pertinent correspondence between the Foreign Office and its overseas agents. Their intended use was for MPs to consult them in conducting Parliamentary debates, but the public (and, more importantly, newspapermen) could purchase copies for their own use.

We can differentiate this version of the “Blue Books” with another type that I use, here in reference to the “elite” sources of my discussion. Members of Cabinet received their own set of “Blue Books,” which included additional letters deemed too sensitive for public eyes; the vital distinction between these two types of diplomatic correspondence available in the deliberation over external policy accounts for a way in which I distinguish between truly public and truly elite discourse. Likewise, the written reports of Cabinet meetings—generally drawn up by Disraeli and his secretary, Montagu Corry, to be sent to the Queen to keep her apprised of Government policy—offer a perspective into how the top policymakers sought to take control of the matter. These documents show a Cabinet that sought to control public debate, while simultaneously keeping certain pieces of information secret. This dynamic was especially evident in the Cyprus takeover and in the preparation of the Congress of Berlin. For his tenure as Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby’s detailed personal diary of his work at the Foreign Office and in Cabinet meetings forms a core part of the evidence of how actual debates took place at the highest

level.¹³³ Similarly, letters between Gladstone and Lord Granville (Liberal leader the House of Lords and a former, and future, Foreign Secretary) show the way the Liberals sought to use their own channels of power to organize their fight against Disraeli's policy. Finally, Disraeli's letters to his friends Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield, and Salisbury's personal letters as compiled and commented on by his daughter, Lady Gwendolyn Cecil, offer a more "human" view of the leaders involved. As in the case of the press, the correspondence of Foreign and War Offices, Cabinet members, and diplomats in the field must be understood as representative of particular institutional structure *and* of the personal opinions that the individuals espoused.¹³⁴

At the British Library I gathered material from three primary sets of documents, the *Layard Papers*, the *Gladstone Papers*, and the *Carnarvon Papers*. The last of these archives figures the greatest in my discussion. At the National Archives (which contains documents held in the name of the Public Record Office), my work was more extensive and thus includes a greater range of the sources employed in my thesis. These are chiefly under the headings of Cabinet reports (CAB shelfmarks), Foreign Office reports (FO shelfmarks), War Office reports (WO shelfmarks), and various papers of figures who either committed their papers to the National Archives in accordance with the regulations of the offices they served in or did so of their own accord, with a mind toward posterity.

¹³³ Citations for such diaries and collected letters I mention here are listed in the notes corresponding to their first use as direct evidence.

¹³⁴ Raymond Jones finds it necessary to understand the structure of the British diplomatic apparatus and of its relationship to changes and developments within the makeup and procedures of the Foreign Office and the Civil Service—see Jones, 9-10, and Chapter IX, "The New Diplomatic Service," 152-171. For a nice distillation on the important changes in the Foreign Office that affected the Foreign Service during the latter half of the nineteenth century, see Frank R. Ashton-Gwatkin, *The British Foreign Service: A Discussion of the Development and Function of the British Foreign Service* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, c. 1950), especially pp. 10-21. D. C. M. Platt's book, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1971), is the best book to date on the structure and arrangement of the Consulate, while some interesting "Eastern" experiences of the Consulate system appear in the chapter, "The Men Who Went to the East," on pp. 57-80 of John Dickie's book, *The British Consul: Heir to a Great Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

For general reports, the collections most relevant to this study were the CAB documents for the period, FO series of 78 (materials relating to Turkey) and 881 (Turkish affairs correspondence, organized by year), and the WO series of 33 (relating to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Cyprus takeover). For the collections of individual figures, the *Tenterden Papers*, the *Granville Papers*, the *Cairns Papers*, and the *Simmons Papers* are the ones most drawn upon in this study.

In using this combination of public and exclusive material I have attempted to portray British society as grappling with these issues in a state of tension between the knowledge of the issues held by “regular” people and that of the people in charge of policymaking. In many cases, this came down purely to who had access to fields of information that described as well as possible what was “actually” going on, rather than what was assumed from hearsay and conjecture among the body politic (and, indeed, in political circles separated from the highest arenas of power). This complex between knowledge and power is key to my discussion, as it forms the basis for certain suggestions I make regarding the effect of democratization on British society. In both balancing and putting into conflict the various sectors and poles of British society, I intend to offer some insight into the dynamics, forces, and actors which accounted for the rise of an imperial “solution” to the Eastern Question.

Chapter One:
“The Eastern Question cannot settle itself”:¹³⁵
Humanitarianism and *Realpolitik* During the Bulgarian Agitation

Introduction: A Ball in Dublin

On the night of March 13th, 1876 Dublin Castle played host to a fancy dress ball. The theme of the night was the character quadrille, with guests coming dressed in costumes representing cultural or historical figures, characters from drama and literature, or important institutions of the realm. There was a “Shakespearian” quadrille, followed by a “Waverley” group with figures from Sir Walter Scott’s novels, trailed by a “Venetian” quadrille. But it was the last quadrille that captured the greatest attention of the correspondents from *The Times* and the *Illustrated London News* who were in attendance. Led by a Lady Michel, into the jam-packed St. Patrick’s Hall came an “original and peculiar” group of characters under the title of the “Eastern Question,” its members “personifying different nations of the East, together with peace, war, plenty, violence, and other characteristics brought into striking contrast.”¹³⁶ The wood engravings in the *Illustrated London News* tell us much the same: the party-goers dressed in costumes they thought represented “the East,” whether in terms of recognizable characters (e.g. Turks) or an idea connected with the region (e.g. despotism).¹³⁷

In its write-up of the ball the *Penny Illustrated Paper* declared the Eastern Question a “fanciful appellation” for a costume theme.¹³⁸ But perhaps it was less fanciful than the other, more remote and fictionalized quadrilles of the night, given the cultural and political climate in British society at the time. The Eastern Question was lately on

¹³⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 16 September 1876, col. C, p. 258.

¹³⁶ “A Fancy Dress Ball in Dublin,” *The Times*, 14 March 1876, col. A, p. 10.

¹³⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 25 March 1876, p. 292. See Figure 1 for image.

¹³⁸ “Grand Fancy-Dress Ball at Dublin Castle,” *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 18 March 1876, col. C, p. 179.

British minds. Ever since Herzegovinian Christians had risen up in rebellion in June 1875, decrying the imposition of new taxes by the Ottoman government, the newest threat to Ottoman stability had Britain worried. British and European fears that economic strife in the East would combine with the war in Balkans to destabilize the entire region. Ottoman and Egyptian problems had increased the level to which British politicians and the public actively connected their country's interests with Eastern affairs—the “volcano” of the Eastern Question, as former Constantinople ambassador Stratford de Redcliffe put it in January 1876, threatening to “throw all Europe into a state of hurtful agitation, if not into one of general hostilities.”¹³⁹ It is no surprise, then, that the Eastern Question theme was such a hit at the ball: the “striking contrasts” that the audience felt embodied the Eastern existence satisfied a desire to give a tangible image to what was such a critical, yet abstract problem. This is perhaps best illustrated by an American attendee, Mrs. Adair, who came dressed as the Suez Canal, providing to her fellow party-goers a visual depiction of the vital passageway for British ships and goods between India and the metropole.

Within several months, however, the same theme would have been seen as a profane entertainment, so much had Britain's appreciation of the Eastern Question and the British Empire's Eastern responsibilities changed after reports arrived that Turkish irregular troops had massacred thousands of Bulgarian Christians in May and June of 1876. These “Bulgarian Atrocities” gave rise to a movement in Britain advocating a change in British policy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire, something that was resisted by the Conservative Government and its allies.¹⁴⁰ In this chapter I focus on the conflict between

¹³⁹ “The Eastern Question,” *The Times*, 3 January 1876, col. F, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ In discussions of British politics the word “Government,” i.e. in the sense of a proper noun, refers to the current status and policies of the party in the majority in Parliament, led by the Prime Minister's Cabinet.

those Britons who preached humanitarian intervention on behalf of the Bulgarian Christians and those who advocated a strict adherence to the existing policy of support for Ottoman integrity. It is not my intent to “tell the story” of the Bulgarian Agitation, which has been aptly done in the past, but rather to offer a fuller picture of how the themes of empire and imperialism appeared in the debate on British policy regarding the Atrocities and on later events. Scholars have rarely discussed these themes in direct relation to the Bulgarian Agitation, and given imperialism as a conspicuous theme later in the Eastern Crisis this episode helps us establish the source of imperial reasonings for British involvement in the Eastern Question and “the East” at large. Richard Shannon saw the Bulgarian Agitation mainly as an example of Victorian “political theater,” while Ann Pottinger Saab saw it through the prism of Gladstone’s “heroic” personality.¹⁴¹ Neither is appropriately attentive to wider Victorian politics, nor do they offer a nuanced understanding of how British culture drove politics. In this, recent approaches in political history, as from Eugenio Biagini, and from the field of literary scholarship, as from Stoyan Tchapravov and Simon Goldsworthy, might offer a richer view of the impulses and stakes that determined Britons’ response to the Bulgarian Massacres.¹⁴²

My discussion is organized chronologically, in four sections. I begin by examining the “baseline” opinion on the Eastern Question that existed in the months prior to the Agitation, in order to establish how the reports of the massacres shifted dialogue in Britain about the broader issues at play in the Britain’s place in the resolution of the

Hence in my discussion, the phrase, “the Government” refers to Disraeli’s administration and the associated Conservative members of Parliament. Accordingly, in other instances where the British government is more generally discussed, this is denoted by it being kept in the lower case.

¹⁴¹ See Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*; Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes, 1856-1878*.

¹⁴² Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, and *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906*; Tchapravov, “The British Empire Revisited through the Lens of the Eastern Question”; Goldsworthy, “English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign: Including the Strange Case of W. T. Stead and the Bulgarian Horrors.”

Eastern Question as a whole. I then look at how the Agitation changed the emphasis of dialogue on foreign, Eastern, and imperial issues, paying close attention to what (and who) the exact forces of change were. Next, I propose that there were two different Eastern Questions posited by the opposing parties in the debate over how to respond to the Atrocities, and that accordingly there were two different visions of what the British Empire's responsibilities were in European and world affairs. On the Conservative side, the Eastern Question was thought to refer solely to how Ottoman decline would play out, and thus Britain's role was to limit the damage to its own economic and political interests. The competing view of the Eastern Question, represented by the Bulgarian Agitation and its supporting Liberal voices, interpreted it as a moral question regarding Europe's role in the fate of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and for them Britain's duty was to ensure that the protection of Ottoman Christians from the "excesses" of their Muslim rulers. Both sides put pressure on policymakers to conform to their understanding of the problem and their proposed solutions. Accordingly, this leads into concluding discussion of the actual effect of the political pressure the Agitation put on the Government to change its policy.

Before Bulgaria: The Press, Politics, and the Eastern Question

For long before the Bulgarian Atrocities, the Eastern Question had motivated political and public anxiety—a "grim spectre" that raised its head from time to time to challenge British policymakers, as the *Illustrated London News* put it in January 1876.¹⁴³ This specter took on a clearer, if still complex shape as the situation developed. As the rebellion in Herzegovina continued and the financial troubles of Egypt and the Ottomans

¹⁴³ *Illustrated London News*, 1 January 1876, col. C, p. 74.

mounted, the British public became more and more anxious about the state of affairs in the East and among the European Great Powers. In response to the building crisis, the most prominent Liberal paper, the *Daily News*, urged that it was time for a rearticulation of Britain's responsibilities regarding the Eastern Question and those affected by it, claiming in November 1875 that Britain should no longer concern itself with the maintenance of Ottoman integrity and should instead think of Britain's Eastern Question as "simply the keeping open of our highway to the East," which might be made sure by Britain being given control of Crete.¹⁴⁴ And although Disraeli's purchase of the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal that same month was intended to promise a certain kind of protection, sources like the *Northern Echo* took a cautious and anti-unilateral approach to the next phase, urging British policymakers to be careful, given "the present ticklish condition of affairs," about assuming the "thunder-clap" felt in Europe at the purchase would have a positive effect on inter-European relations.¹⁴⁵ Increasingly, Liberals came to believe that the Eastern Question had no firm solution absent a change in British policy regarding the Ottoman Empire, something that required a closer relationship with the other European powers.

Yet to abandon the Ottoman Empire to its fate meant, in the Conservative view, the complicity of Britain in consigning the Ottoman Empire to its destruction at the hands of its neighbors, especially Russia. But a comparable level of Turcophilia did not balance Britain's Russophobia. Those who advocated continued Ottoman support were not pro-Turkish; rather, they advised moderation. As such, news sources associated with those friendly to the peace between Britain and the Ottoman Empire attempted to suppress the

¹⁴⁴ *Daily News*, 22 November 1875, col. G, p. 4. The author uses the old Venetian name for Crete, i.e. "the Island of Candia."

¹⁴⁵ "Nearing the Crisis," *Northern Echo*, 16 December 1875, col. F, p. 2.

public's anxiety by dismissing "speculation," as *The Times* put it in January 1875, by any who saw the reopening of the Eastern Question "in every dispute, great or small, which affects the East."¹⁴⁶ The strongly Tory *Pall Mall Gazette* went a step further, repudiating assertions that the Ottoman Empire was nearing its end, and that the British public should put its trust in the Cabinet to confront the "faint uneasiness" among the body politic regarding threats to Britain's imperial interests.¹⁴⁷ As the author unequivocally stated: "To a great extent [the Cabinet] has a mastery of affairs. The fact that the necessities of the Empire are clear is itself a guarantee of that."¹⁴⁸ Again, this kind of opinion seems to have little to do with affinity to the Turks as a group, but rather reflects a feeling that a change to the status quo would negatively impact British political and economic interests. Indeed, *The Times*' correspondent in Constantinople, Antonio Gallenga,¹⁴⁹ was exceptionally Turcophobic by his own admission, sardonically quipping that of "the Turks" he could "hardly be charged with having ever flattered them."¹⁵⁰ Yet at the same time, *The Times* consistently tried to put a stamp of caution upon debate over the Eastern Question, the same correspondent flatly stating in November 1875 that far from a tangle, the Eastern Question "is, as it ever was, amazingly simple to any one who will look at it by the light of plain, common sense, divesting it of all popular passion, unravelling it from all diplomatic circumlocution and rigmarole."¹⁵¹ But the simplicity of the problem sans the rigmarole did not change the fact that it was fast becoming apparent to the press

¹⁴⁶ *The Times*, 22 January 1875, col. A, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ "The Eastern Question," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 November 1875, col. A, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Antonio Carlo Napoleone Gallenga (1810-1895). Gallenga, born in Italy, was *The Times*' special correspondent in Constantinople between 1875 and 1877 and was a noted essayist and travel writer in Victorian Britain. See "Gallenga, Antonio Carlo Napoleone (1810-1895)," Toni Cerutti in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/view/article/10306> (accessed May 11, 2010).

¹⁵⁰ "Turkey," *The Times*, 28 April 1876, col. A, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ "The Eastern Question," *The Times*, 30 November 1875, col. A, p. 6.

in general that the Eastern Question was now being “raised in a more threatening form than it ever before assumed.”¹⁵²

Public opinion also involved a demonstration of the understandings and values Britons had vis-à-vis the East, its inhabitants, and its cultural and religious identity. Even prior to reports on the Bulgarian Massacres newspapers portrayed the East as a corrupt and backward place, with the Ottoman government (the representative Eastern state) abusive of its Christian inhabitants and unfit for modern rule. The Ottoman Empire was repeatedly compared unfavorably to Europe and was almost invariably seen as not having the ability or inclination to carry out the business of modern governance like the leaders of “civilized States”—that is, European ones.¹⁵³ On the balance, Turcophobia prevailed in a cultural sense, even if in a diplomatic sense it might have appeared the opposite given the traditional support the British government lent to the Ottomans. Gallenga’s acerbic description of the vast packs of semi-wild dogs in Constantinople as “[exhibiting] less variety than is observable in the crowd of beings that here count as men” shows that “moderate” organs like *The Times* could employ negative Orientalist stereotypes without feeling it belied the paper’s sober diplomatic language in other articles.¹⁵⁴

To this particular instance of a negative and racist view of the Ottoman Empire we can add the almost universal description of the Ottoman Empire in the press as a place of Muslim “fanaticism,” “misrule,” and “barbaric,” “uncivilized,” or “stranger” races—favorite terms for supposedly foregone conclusions. That these malefactors persevered in enforcing their will upon the majority-Christian Balkans was viewed as especially profane, an insult to a place the *Illustrated London News* called “some of the fairest

¹⁵² *The Times*, 16 November 1875, col. B, p. 7.

¹⁵³ *The Times*, 6 January 1876, col. A, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ “The Dogs of Constantinople,” *The Times*, 7 January 1876, col. A, p. 7.

regions of the continent.”¹⁵⁵ Although in reality most of the Balkans were “less known than Timbuctu” to Britain, as S. G. B. St. Clair and Charles Brophy had observed several years earlier, the idea that oppressed Eastern Christians were rising up against a tyrannical and fanatical Muslim ruling authority was a legible idea.¹⁵⁶ It played into what Maria Todorova has called the “imputed ambiguity” of the Balkans, wherein Britons could liken the place and its peoples to Europe while at the same time denigrate it as foreign and corrupt.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, for many in Britain such allusions to Balkan Christian heroes evoked the brand of romanticism that had inspired British support for the Greeks in the Greek War of Independence: defiant, noble, freedom-loving Christian peasants against a dark, foreign horde. The well-known historian E. A. Freeman personified this line of rhetoric, writing numerous articles during the Eastern Crisis that denounced the Ottoman Empire and its ruling classes as black marks upon history and expressing his contempt for those who supported it in Britain. Early in the Crisis, Freeman directed his fire at these dual enemies:

We were told one and twenty years back that our interests were so pressing, that the Russian bugbear was so frightful, that we had no time to listen to the claims of oppressed nations, even when we had ourselves doomed them to oppression... [When] a plain duty calls on us to help the cause of our suffering brethren, I at least can find no time for nicely calculated questions of interest.¹⁵⁸

Published in John Morley’s *Fortnightly Review*, Freeman’s article would have appeared to readers as belonging to the brand of righteous indignation figures like Gladstone, and Dickens had made popular. But the notable fact is that Freeman’s “true”

¹⁵⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 8 January 1876, col. C, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ S. G. B. St. Clair and Charles A. Brophy, *Twelve Years’ Study of the Eastern Question in Bulgaria: Being a Revised Edition of “A Residence in Bulgaria”* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), v.

¹⁵⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 17-18.

¹⁵⁸ E. A. Freeman, “The True Eastern Question,” *Fortnightly Review*, 18 (new series), no. 108 (1 December 1875), ed. John Morley (London: Chapman and Hall, 1875), 766.

interpretation of the Eastern Question hinges on the belief in the fundamental and irredeemably inferior nature of the Ottoman Empire's Muslim rulers in relation to their oppressed Christian subjects, with British financiers evilly perpetuating an abominable racial and religious hierarchy:

Happily one sordid form of interest will now be driven to hold its peace. The Turk has, fittingly enough, played the Turk with his creditors as well as with his subjects. Englishmen were not ashamed to lend their money to the barbarian, knowing that every penny which they lent could be used only in propping up the foulest of tyrannies, and in enabling a sensual despot to spend yet more on his luxuries and his vices.¹⁵⁹

Although Freeman occupied the extreme end, even his opponents did not argue much with his view of the Turks. Conceding that "Mr. Freeman would find that ninety-nine out of every hundred of his countrymen agree with him in thinking that the rule of the Turk in Europe is an odious tyranny," the *Pall Mall Gazette* offered that it was not the Ottoman Empire as a ruling authority that was the problem, but rather it was the "disease" of religious fanaticism that infected its Muslim population at the expense of its Christian subjects.¹⁶⁰ The disease needed to be cured with the "medicine" of reform and not territorial "excision" or "surgery," as the author concluded, or else the whole body including its Christians would die.¹⁶¹ The answer to Freeman's hatred of the Ottomans was not to aggrandize the Turk, but to claim the necessity of keeping order in a what was thought of as a preternaturally chaotic and violent part of the world—a case of hating the despotic Turkish sinner, while loving the sin of the state he ruled.

Indeed, Parliament's outlook on the Eastern Question reflects this paradox, and the distance between the parties was not always great. "The East" was ever a place defined by a "vast group of questions," as Conservative MP Sir Matthew Ridley put it as

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "Two Views of the Turkish Question," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 December 1875, col. A, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Parliament began its session on February 8th, 1876, “the extreme importance of which to our Imperial interests it is perhaps impossible to over-estimate.”¹⁶² Ridley urged endorsing a list of Ottoman reforms arranged by Count Gyula Andrassy of Austria, the so-called “Andrassy Note,” which would better acknowledge the social and legal status of Christians in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶³ For Ridley, this “friendly intervention” in Ottoman affairs would ensure both the maintenance of the Crimean system while protecting of British interests.¹⁶⁴ The Liberals did not disagree in principle, but for them those interests included a judgment about which elements of the Eastern Question could be solved and which ones were incapable of resolution if Ottoman policy remained static in spite of reforms. Indeed, the leader of the Opposition, Lord Hartington,¹⁶⁵ responded to Ridley’s claim by stating that, with the increasing animosity between Christians and Muslims and the growing Ottoman bankruptcy, “Turkey has embarked upon a career of maladministration and extravagance which if persisted in, must defy all the efforts of European states to save her.”¹⁶⁶ Yet the Liberals’ heritage in the “Crimean system” (that is, the international support for the basic integrity of the Ottoman Empire) via the Liberal hero of the Crimean War, Lord Palmerston, meant that Hartington was sure to say that Britons must be patient for any Ottoman reforms they desired to have an effect.¹⁶⁷ He understood the public’s impatience, however: not all reform was effective, and not all

¹⁶² *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 54 (8th February 1876). In this era Parliament generally met from early February to the middle of August and then was in recess until the following February. Given this, the first major phase of Parliamentary discussion on the Eastern Crisis did not happen until February of 1876, as the war in Herzegovina was less than two months old when the 1875 session ended on August 13th, 1875.

¹⁶³ *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 57 (8th February 1876).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Spencer Cavendish, Marquess of Hartington, later 8th Duke of Devonshire (1833-1908). After Gladstone’s retirement in 1875, Lord Hartington was the leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons until Gladstone’s return as leader and Prime Minister in 1880.

¹⁶⁶ *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 80 (8th February 1876).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

actions that Britain took vis-à-vis the East might lead to the real protection of British interests as Ridley claimed. Hartington felt that Parliament, as the representative voice of the British electorate, should have been asked if it were wise for Britain to buy out the Suez Canal, as it appeared to “mix us up in an extraordinary manner with the finances of the Khedive.”¹⁶⁸ He further was not convinced by a public statement made by Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary, at the University of Edinburgh in December that no British protectorate of Egypt was in the offing, asking the assembled MPs whether they agreed that the purchase “[looked] something very like a financial Protectorate over Egypt?”¹⁶⁹ This was a prescient comment, not only as regards Britain’s eventual takeover of Egypt in 1882: the next generation would see British policy further blur the line between financial and official “protection” of foreign lands.

Politically, Hartington drew on the idea that the Opposition’s role was to advocate those aspects of public opinion that ran counter to the chosen policy of the sitting Government. In his view, the Conservatives were leading the country into imperial entanglements via *noblesse oblige*, and they risked losing the faith of the electorate and leading to public anxiety. Derby would have disagreed on this matter based on the same recognition of the power of opinion, but on a different guiding principle. The same day he made the public address that Hartington refers to, Derby attended an Edinburgh workingmen’s meeting that, by his count, held over 2000 in the audience, delivering a speech that he wrote “was well received from first to last.”¹⁷⁰ In contrast to Hartington’s thrust, Derby told the audience that calm and confidence in the Government was the

¹⁶⁸ *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 86 (8th February 1876).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, *A Selection of the Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93): Between September 1869 and March 1878*, ed. John Vincent (London: Royal Historical Society, 1994), 17 December 1875, p. 259. Hereafter, references to this source will follow the form, “*Derby Diaries*, date, pg.”

proper response, if not the duty, of the voters at all times, and “that there is no reason why workingmen should not be conservative in regard to politics, since they have...nothing more to get or to expect from agitation.”¹⁷¹ For Derby the business of government rested upon the assent of the people to the authority of those in power—period. Though perhaps informative on a broad level, public excitement should not be the driving force of policy, *even* when it was in support of the Conservatives’ policies. Indeed, having concluded that the Suez Canal transaction was “universally popular” among the public and “a complete political success,” Derby mused that this involvement of the public’s will made him uneasy, saying:

It shows the intense desire for action abroad that pervades the public mind, the impatience created by long diplomatic inactivity, and the strength of a feeling which might...take the form of a cry for war. It shows also what guess-work the management of an English administration is. A few years ago, such a proceeding as the purchase by the State of shares in a foreign company would have been thought absurd, and the minister who proposed it ruined in public opinion.¹⁷²

Derby had a well-earned reputation as reticent and indecisive, commonly ignoring letters when a definitive answer might have closed the door on an avenue of action.¹⁷³ Indeed, this trait went straight to the top: during the height of the Bulgarian Agitation, Queen Victoria complained to the Duke of Richmond that Derby did not write to her often enough to keep her apprised of Eastern affairs.¹⁷⁴ But it is clear he felt strongly that policy was the domain of sitting ministers, not the body politic. Conversely, Disraeli characteristically welcomed surges of public opinion and formulated many of his actions,

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 29 November 1875, 257.

¹⁷³ Marvin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 33-34.

¹⁷⁴ Richmond to Cairns, 22 October 1876, PRO 30/51/3, f. 114. Richmond, who served as Lord President of the Council in Disraeli’s Cabinet, was a close friend of the Queen, having sat on the Privy Council since 1859.

as with the Suez Canal, to fit with his cachet as a well-known and “potent myth-maker” in British political society.¹⁷⁵ Derby would later become very critical of Disraeli for this quality, writing in October 1876 that Disraeli favored “bold strokes and unexpected moves” even if they ran “serious national risks,”¹⁷⁶ an attribute T. A. Jenkins calls a “theatrical urge” to act on the stage of Victorian society.¹⁷⁷ This evidence would appear to be at odds with the idea that Disraeli represented a strictly *Realpolitik* mindset. Rather, he accessed and influenced the *mentalité* of British popular opinion when it served his interests and, as a counter-tactic, ignored popular commotion or purported to stand above it when it did not mesh with his ideas. When in October 1875 Disraeli wrote that “public worries are nothing; they are not the things that do the mischief,” such an opinion is in contrast to his joyful feeling in November that *The Times* was “staggered” by the news of the purchase of the Canal shares, Disraeli triumphantly claiming, “I believe the whole country will be with me. The Faery [Queen Victoria] thinks so.”¹⁷⁸ Disraeli always possessed this schizophrenia and used it effectively. Indeed, *The Times* declared the day after Disraeli wrote this line that managing the Suez was an essential component of any answer to the Eastern Question, effectively supporting the buy-out.¹⁷⁹ These were acts that Disraeli calculated to resonate with a significant portion of Victorian society’s values and worldview. Hence to deny that Disraeli acted according to the morals, ideologies, and values of the time because his actions angered those people associated with the Liberals would be to deny that Conservatives had a moral and ideological vision of their

¹⁷⁵ Blake, 587.

¹⁷⁶ *Derby Diaries*, 24 October 1876, 337.

¹⁷⁷ T. A. Jenkins, *Disraeli and Victorian Conservatism* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 123.

¹⁷⁸ Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield, 16 October 1875, and Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 26 November 1875, in *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Volume One, 1873-1875*, ed. Marquess of Zetland (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), 384 and 402 respectively. Hereafter, references to this source will follow the form, “Correspondence direction, date, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. I*, page.”

¹⁷⁹ *The Times*, 27 November 1875, col. A, p. 9.

world. In fact, Disraeli's political actions (and his successes) were based on espousing one *kind* of British ideology—a fully value-driven alternative to the Liberal worldview. Far from being just about the bare details of power and protection, this ideology emphasized ancestral values, glorified the imperial, and, crucially, played on the desires of any in the middle and working classes who felt they wanted to live in Disraeli's England: the “Imperial country,” the “land of liberty, of prosperity, of power, and of glory,” as he described it at the end of his famous Crystal Palace speech in 1872.¹⁸⁰

On the other side, Liberal leaders strove to find a way to impugn the Government while themselves acceding to public opinion. Hartington and the Liberal leader in the Lords, Lord Granville were notably moderate, as they were worried about creating too much trouble about Eastern issues if the public or the press supported the Conservative position.¹⁸¹ Gladstone, the “retired” leader, did not pursue the issue of the Suez Canal in Parliament very far beyond questioning the original intelligence of the action.¹⁸² He conceded that the country seemed for it, even if his close friend and former Home Secretary, Robert Lowe, indicated in Parliament that the triumphalist message sent by the Government was not the same as saying that the purchase gave Britain a preeminent place in the company that controlled the Suez Canal.¹⁸³ Gladstone agreed with Lowe but was unwilling to say publicly, writing privately to Granville that no matter the conditions of foreign support or involvement the purchase was “an act of folly” and that the promise offered by the Government that the canal might otherwise be closed because of Egypt's

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield*, vol. 2, ed. T. E. Kebbel (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), 534-535.

¹⁸¹ Granville George Levenson-Gower, 2nd Earl of Granville (1815-1891). Granville was leader of the Liberals in the House of Lords at this time, and had previously served twice as Foreign Secretary, from 1851-1852 and from 1870-1874. He would serve again in this role in Gladstone's Second Ministry from 1880-1885.

¹⁸² *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 606-607 (21st February 1876).

¹⁸³ *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 574-577 (21st February 1876).

troubles was as likely as “the closing of the London & North Western” railway.¹⁸⁴ At this point, Gladstone held back from criticizing the Government too directly, and despite his animosity to the Conservatives—and Disraeli in particular—gave a very sober congratulations to the Government for having banded with the other European states to sign on to the Andrassy Note.¹⁸⁵ However, as he would write to Granville later, Gladstone felt the Liberals must continue urging that Britain had a stake in *directly* ensuring that the Ottoman Empire took up the reforms of the Andrassy Note, as this was the original intent of accepting the Ottomans into the Concert of Europe following the Crimean War.¹⁸⁶ Gladstone was not in charge of the party officially, though, and he faithfully acceded to the authority of Hartington and Granville even when he urged them in private that the opposition to the Conservatives over Eastern matters should be firmer.¹⁸⁷ Yet it is significant that prior to the Bulgarian Agitation he kept as quiet as he did. He continued in this vein even after news arrived in May that the French and German consuls were murdered in Salonica (Thessaloniki) by a Muslim mob and Disraeli ordered the British fleet to Besika Bay. Gladstone did not take public action on the matter despite other Liberals’ indignation, nor did he make noise on any diplomatic matter.¹⁸⁸ Gladstone, Hartington, and Granville hesitated to denigrate the Government if doing so would injure the presentation of the party platform or would conflict with public spirit.

¹⁸⁴ Gladstone to Granville, 28 November 1875, in *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1868-1876, Volume II, 1871-1876*, ed. Agatha Ramm (London: Royal Historical Society, 1952), 474. Hereafter, references to this source will follow the form, “Correspondence direction, date, *Gladstone and Granville, 1868-1876, Vol. II, pg.*”

¹⁸⁵ *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 227, col. 105 (8th February 1876).

¹⁸⁶ Gladstone to Granville, 9 June 1876, *Gladstone and Granville, 1868-1876, Vol. II*, 486.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister 1865-1898* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999), 159-164.

¹⁸⁸ A review of *Hansard* from this period reveals no real significant or combative involvement from Gladstone on these issues—see *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 228-230.

There is no way that the Liberal position could exist without attention to the realities of politics. They knew that they relied on a coalition of groups and sub-groups: they had to satisfy everyone from Radicals, to Nonconformists, to provincial manufacturers, to the old Whig elite, to Home Rulers. Its strength-in-numbers identity could be a weakness that, as Hartington wrote in a letter to Sir William Harcourt, a Radical-turned-Whig, could cause “many embarrassments” at the hands of the “mischievous policy” of the Conservatives unless the diversity of the party was acknowledged and managed.¹⁸⁹ Gladstone had by this point had a tumultuous relationship with many of these groups and their leaders. The Nonconformists were notably at odds with Gladstone’s formulation of the Liberal platform, given Gladstone’s staunch support of the Church of England’s integrity.¹⁹⁰ A number of Radicals had felt let down by what they considered imperialistic actions taken when Gladstone was Prime Minister from 1868 to 1874,¹⁹¹ while Liberals from the Whig tradition often thought that Gladstone’s appeals to the working (rather than middle) classes was wrongheaded and his attempts to begin shifting authority to Ireland via the 1870 Irish Land Act and 1873 Irish University Bill even more wrongheaded.¹⁹² Yet enigmatically he was still considered by

¹⁸⁹ Letter from Hartington to Harcourt, 17 January 1875, qtd. in A. G. Gardiner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt, Volume I (1827-1886)* (London: Constable & Company, 1923), 289. During the Eastern Crisis, Harcourt would eventually regard Gladstone with contempt for influencing the party’s direction while out of leadership, although they later reconciled.

¹⁹⁰ Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*, 163.

¹⁹¹ For example, John Bright, a major Radical leader, twice broke with Gladstone over actions he saw as imperialistic (in 1870 over Gladstone actions to block Russia from remilitarizing the Black Sea, and in 1882 over Gladstone ordering the bombardment of Alexandria), leaving his positions in the Cabinets. See “Bright, John (1811–1889),” Miles Taylor in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/view/article/3421> (accessed April 13, 2010).

¹⁹² E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Gladstone* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 166-171. For many Whigs, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Henry Reeve, may have put it best when he wrote to Harcourt in early 1874, right before the end of Gladstone’s First Ministry, that “The Radicals may flounder and bluster as they please, but they will not get very far without [the Whigs]...Gladstone was a Tory, and is a Radical: but he never was a Whig at all,” letter from Reeve to Harcourt, 9 January 1874, qtd. in Gardiner, 265. Famously,

the other Liberal leaders to be the best suited to hold all the factions together, even when out of power and even when he embarrassed the moderates or mortified one fringe of the party by supporting another.¹⁹³

How do we explicate Gladstone's curious ability to both unite and stratify British society? Biographers in the triumphalist tradition, like John Morley, and explicitly Gladstonian historians, like Seton-Watson, have attributed this to Gladstone's unique identity in British politics and society as a moral representative of the British heart and mind. That may be, but it does not explain in substantive terms whether the people responded to Gladstone's particular sensibilities and so emulated them, or if he responded to their concerns and feelings and took them on politically, or if he followed the ebb and flow of political thought and took political opportunities specific to the situation. Colin Matthew is probably right that, given the religious and cultural conviction with which Gladstone ingenuously carried himself, "understanding is probably more fruitful than explaining" how the bonds of his ideals dictated his political involvement.¹⁹⁴ Yet just as Disraeli might not have been so steeped in the Tory *realpolitik* tradition of policymaking as were some of his Conservative colleagues, so Gladstone, like any successful politician, clearly understood the necessity of tempering his idealism for the pursuit of attainable goals within the political power structure of the moment.

The Liberals' own brand of *Realpolitik* appears to have shaped their response to Eastern issues up to the first months of 1876.¹⁹⁵ But as more and more news of uprisings

Hartington, the most prominent Whig in the House of Commons, would eventually split with Gladstone over Irish Home Rule, taking on leadership of the Liberal Unionists with Joseph Chamberlain in 1886.

¹⁹³ Patrick Jackson, *The Last of the Whigs: A Political Biography of Lord Hartington, Later Eighth Duke of Devonshire (1833-1908)* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), 52-54.

¹⁹⁴ H. C. G. Matthew, in his introduction to *The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence. Volume IX: January 1875-December 1880*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), xxv.

¹⁹⁵ Seton-Watson, 29.

and violence in the Balkans and Turkey surfaced in late spring, the impression of what issues and values Britain's foreign policy should be predicated upon began to change significantly. Following news of the Salonica murders, the tone of public opinion began to shift to a more precise confrontation of Ottoman activities and Britain's Eastern policy. When reports appeared in the British and European press in late June saying that Turkish irregular forces had killed more than 12,000 Bulgarian Christian civilians in May and June, the stage was set for a battle that would permanently alter British politics and society.

The Shift in Opinion: Murder, Massacre, and Muslims

Muslim Fanatics:

If the Bulgarian Massacres had never occurred or had never come to light, one wonders how differently history would have played out. Before reports of widespread executions, rape, and pillaging in Bulgaria surfaced in the European press, one might suggest that Britons treated the situation as merely one more example of the growing unreliability of their old ally, the Ottoman Empire. But this is not what happened, and exploring the moment where the Eastern Crisis *truly* turned into a crisis provides some fascinating insights into the political and cultural values that Britons used to confront and respond to the now-irrevocably altered conflict. The rest of the Eastern Crisis bore the stamp of the Massacres' influence, whether in diplomatic negotiation, war, or popular discourse about the problem. Notably, the place the Ottoman Empire, its rulers, and its inhabitants played in the British worldview clearly defined the way in which Britons framed the Massacres, helping determine political debate over the proper official

response. In this sense, negative Orientalist stereotypes and tropes helped define the next phase of the Eastern Crisis, shifting the nature of the Eastern Question in a new direction.

As the opening vignette of this chapter shows, even as late as the spring of 1876 British society felt it appropriate to treat the Eastern Question as merely a matter of interest, even an opportunity for playful commentary. Even when Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed by a group of reformist government ministers in late May, the British press took the deposition as generally positive for the outlook on the Eastern Question despite the uncertainty the coup promised. Indeed, *The Times* acknowledged that the event was “to the great satisfaction of the whole population,” though it wondered whether Abdülaziz’s successor, his nephew Murad V, would be inclined or able to affect reforms promised by the coup’s most notable figure, pro-modernization leader Midhat Pasha.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, it remained to be seen what the change meant in regard to Russia, which was seen in Britain to have a great deal of influence via its ambassador in Constantinople, Count Nicolai Pavlovich Ignatiev. If this “new view of the Oriental question” meant that the Ottoman Empire would “attempt to play a more independent part than hitherto,” the influence Russia had with the old regime would have to be reestablished or, failing that, different measures would have to be taken.¹⁹⁷ Thus, *The Times* concluded, “some anxiety prevails as to the next movements of Russia.”¹⁹⁸ Still, as Murad appeared to be “better informed” and reform-minded than his predecessor, *The Times* hoped that the coup indicated a “cessation of that capricious despotism which has made Turkish Government a thing of intrigue and corruption for so many years.”¹⁹⁹ However, Murad would only rule for three months: deposed himself, he was replaced by his younger brother,

¹⁹⁶ “Deposition of the Sultan,” *The Times*, 31 May 1876, col. B, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *The Times*, 31 May 1876, col. B, p. 11.

Abdühamid, in September.²⁰⁰ At the time, though, on the balance the British public and Parliament appear to have seen the coup as promising new stability.

However, Murad came to the throne right as the tone of British public opinion was beginning to change: the press began to focus more closely on the actions of the Ottoman Empire and its leaders, while finding a “lasting solution” to the Eastern Question became a more critical concern. At this point, it was the formulation of the Berlin Memorandum that fell into the latter category. The Berlin Memorandum was ostensibly a proposal by the *Dreikeiserbund* (the alliance of Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary) to end the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Herzegovinian insurgents, yet for those in Britain it appeared to be about much more than that. The *Daily News* wrote that there were rumors that Germany and Russia might use the negotiations as a pretense for making Herzegovina into a Russian vassal state at the expense of Austria, the other regional leader, and that such a scheme was plausible given the “usual behavior” of Russia in the Balkans.²⁰¹ The *Pall Mall Gazette* went further, connecting Queen Victoria’s recent acquisition of the title of “Empress of India” with Russia’s recent advances in Central Asia and the responsibility of the British government and diplomatic apparatus to be more attuned to the influence of Russia in matters related to the Eastern Question and Britain’s possible weakness in confronting this influence.²⁰² One expected the *Pall Mall Gazette* to be hawkish: Russophobia was a feeling that was effectively used by the Conservatives to gain support for hawkish policies. Yet given that the *Daily News* was so opposed in every other way, it is significant that at this point

²⁰⁰ As the summer progressed, it became clear that Murad had problems of his own. An alcoholic who drank to calm his anxiety, it quickly became known that despite his positive qualities Murad was almost a complete physical and mental wreck, leading the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Tenterden, to write that “the Sultan’s health seems a very bad job. What with drink and madness these Sultans are a poor lot”—see Tenterden to Russell, 26 July 1876, FO 918/64, f. 77-78.

²⁰¹ *Daily News*, 9 May 1876, col. B, p. 5.

²⁰² “Audacity and Inactivity,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 May 1876, col. A, p. 1.

fears over the threat Russia posed to the Ottoman Empire and the East as a whole were more or less cross-political. The *Daily News*, however, did not see the debate going on in Berlin as likely to stop Ottoman decay: it was rather evidence of “another step towards the end,” an eventuality of which Liberal elements in Britain were more and more certain.²⁰³

One “step” toward Ottoman chaos increasingly commented on in Britain was the matter of Muslim-Christian conflict within the Ottoman domain. The fact that the Salonica murders in May had been perpetrated by a Muslim mob appears to have set the stage for the massacres in Bulgaria to produce such an explosively passionate response in British in June. The perception that the perpetrators in the Salonica case were motivated primarily by “Muslim fanaticism” could be used by advocates of a change in British policy regarding the Ottoman Empire to argue that the Ottoman government was unable or unwilling to keep their Muslim population in check. Certainly there were exceptions: *The Times* offered that the Turks felt that their “race and creed” were subject to special “indignities” in international negotiation, and for this reason the Ottoman government understood the necessity of punishing their Muslim subjects if that was necessary to secure diplomatic closure.²⁰⁴ Yet it was the inversion of this view that began to play an increasingly prevalent role, as when Stead’s *Northern Echo* stated that while Salonica was a diverse city religiously and ethnically, “the Mussulmans, although in the minority, [possess] the upper hand and as usual [make] up in bigotry what they want in numbers.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, for the *Echo* the Ottoman government was not in a position to stop the “blind, unreasoning, and sanguinary” fanaticism of Islam, and its identity made it

²⁰³ *Daily News*, 9 May 1876, col. B, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ *The Times*, 9 May 1876, col. B, p. 9.

²⁰⁵ “Some Foreign Troubles,” *Northern Echo*, 10 May 1876, col. F, p. 2.

an abettor and encourager of the crime.²⁰⁶ In other words, it was the unnatural, oppressive status of Turks ruling over majority Christian territories in the Balkans that was the source of the murders, and only the immediate intervention of the European Powers would avert their prophecy that “Europe may become too hot to hold the Turk much longer.”²⁰⁷ The *Daily News* concurred, wondering if army conscripts, “full of fanaticism” and ruled by the Muslim religious establishment, might not even attack the large communities of Western Christians living in Constantinople—the long-established “Frank colonies”—if conditions of unrest continued.²⁰⁸

Yet it was not just the Liberal papers that took up the subject of Muslim fanaticism. The *Pall Mall Gazette* killed two domestic political birds with one stone: it accused Liberal papers of irresponsible sensationalism while at the same time naming Islamic fanaticism as one of the most important issues facing Britain’s foreign and imperial policy.²⁰⁹ And although *The Times* claimed “the days are past for a *jihād*,” it acknowledged the gravity of the consequences of Muslim-Christian hatred to European interests in the East.²¹⁰ Hence it seems that the issue hinged less on the significance of Eastern affairs as such, but rather in the sense of how Europe’s *popular* reaction to inter-religious conflict in the East might affect the status of the British-Ottoman relationship. For the Liberal organs, a strong, even disruptive effect on the Crimean policy was preferable, while for the Tory mouthpieces the question was how to turn the problems into an opportunity to advance (or at least protect) the British position in global affairs. Both of these goals hinged upon gaining support among prominent politicians and the

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., col. A, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ “The Panic at Constantinople,” *Daily News*, 18 May 1876, col. B, p. 6.

²⁰⁹ “Mussulman Fanaticism,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 May 1876, col. A, p. 1.

²¹⁰ *The Times*, 13 May 1876, col. C, p. 11.

body politic, but in both cases “Muslim fanaticism” was the commodity that was fought over. The translation of external affairs into the cultural and intellectual language of domestic politics and public opinion illuminates how the widely-held negative opinion of Islam was actualized within the construct of party politics and foreign affairs.

In fact, this might also help explain the curiously sedate response to the overthrow of Sultan Abdülaziz at the end of May and the Government’s rejection of the Berlin Memorandum shortly thereafter: the replacement of Abdülaziz—the personification of the “opulent pasha” Orientalist trope—and the firm, independent appearance that Disraeli intended to present by refusing to sign on to the Memorandum (which he reported to the Queen as the *Dreikeiserbund*’s “mockery” of the Concert,²¹¹ and which he called the “obnoxious Note” in private²¹²) was seen by most politicians and news media as satisfying general public opinion within the context of Britain’s domestic politics.²¹³ Indeed, Disraeli wrote with satisfaction to his friend and confidante, Lady Chesterfield, simply that Abdülaziz’s fall was “in favor of English influence and interests.”²¹⁴ Likewise, the press’ reaction to Abdülaziz’s deposition was relatively placid, with the normally mordant Gallenga of *The Times* immediately assuring his readers that Constantinople was in “perfect tranquility” over the change.²¹⁵ *The Illustrated London News* called the fall of Abdülaziz an opportunity for a “wise and peaceful settlement of the Eastern Question,” and published flattering front-page engravings of Murad V and the

²¹¹ Cabinet Report to the Queen, “Disraeli’s Memo on His Eastern Policy,” 16 May 1876, enclosure to CAB 41/7/10.

²¹² Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield, 11 June 1876, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 63.

²¹³ See Swartz, 35.

²¹⁴ Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield, 30 May 1876, in *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Volume Two, 1876-1881*, ed. Marquess of Zetland (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), 59. Hereafter, references to this source will follow the form, “Correspondence direction, date, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, page.”

²¹⁵ “Deposition of the Sultan,” *The Times*, 31 May 1876, col. B, p. 7.

principal coup leaders.²¹⁶ Likewise, the public appears to have bought the line that the rejection of the Berlin Memorandum was good for British interests and that the ordering of the fleet to Besika Bay was done for the protection of the Christian population in Constantinople from Muslim mobs, a *specifically* Liberal goal espoused by its leaders and rank alike.²¹⁷ The agreement of diplomatic reports with popular opinion thus could be looked at to make Disraeli's unilateral, hawkish acts appear as those of an internationalist, even humanitarian leader—acts that the body politic ate up, not despite but because of their fears over the Ottomans' inability or disinclination to keep their fierce Muslim subjects in order.

Yet when reports began to appear at the end of June that portrayed a picture of a vast and brutal suppression of Christian Bulgarians who had risen up in solidarity with Herzegovina, these issues matched well with those raised by the murders. The crucial twist was that it suddenly inverted the previously favorable view the public had taken of Disraeli and his policy. This was due in part to the news reports' effect in dramatically bringing to light a fundamental disconnect between official policy and a large segment of the public's opinion on the Eastern Question that had previously not been considered very important by the political establishment, namely those that held deeply anti-Muslim and pro-Christian sentiments. For them, the official British policy of protecting Ottoman integrity had always been an abomination, and the reports of the Bulgarian Massacres

²¹⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 3 June 1876, col. C, p. 530; portraits on covers of *Illustrated London News*, 10 June 1876, p. 560, and *Illustrated London News*, 24 June 1876, p. 601.

²¹⁷ See Granville to Gladstone, 20 June 1876, *Gladstone and Granville, 1868-1876, Vol. II*, 487. Also, on May 9th Sir Henry Elliot wrote to Derby that, "My colleagues believe that the presence of ships of war at Besika Bay might be a protection to the Christians here, and would give them confidence."—see Elliot to Derby, 9 May 1876, FO 881/2903, no. 1. Disraeli reported to the Queen that the Cabinet had decided that the move was not in conflict with the 1841 London Straits Convention or the 1856 Treaty of Paris, which prohibited any non-Ottoman naval force in the Dardanelles Straits. The Cabinet felt that making a "friendly representation" to the other Powers to take part in the assembly of ships in Besika Bay would be enough to ensure that Britain's actions were "beneficial" to the international situation—see Cabinet Report to the Queen, 2 June 1876, CAB 41/7/12.

gave wider public and political credence to values that were formerly subordinate to the values of those who advocated a firm adherence to the status quo.

This shift was problematic for the powers that be, given the actual diplomatic tactics by which Britain protected Ottoman integrity, which involved advice, pressure, and demands for the Ottomans to keep their populace docile, regardless of religion. Since the start of the insurrection in Bulgaria had begun in April the pressure that Britain's Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Henry Elliot, put on the Ottomans was in line with this official policy and was carried out according to the tactics that had been considered successful for the last generation. In other words, Elliot had been tasked with urging the Ottomans to put down the revolt as soon as possible with as little destruction as possible, which was considered an appropriate response given that the initial reports from British agents had been solely concerned with the violence perpetrated by the Bulgarian Christian insurrectionists.²¹⁸ Yet when the first feature articles began to appear on the actual *effects* of the particular way the response demanded of the Ottomans was carried out, the reaction among the public threw into question the very morality of Britain's Eastern policy. Even more, it made the Government and its foreign agents, especially Elliot, appear to be complicit in the Ottomans' brutal tactics, especially their decision in May to deploy the *bashi-bazouks*, who ended up committing the greatest acts of violence, and whose image became intimately and infamously connected to the Bulgarian Massacres. Up until then, the popularity of the Government's Eastern policy had rested on the notion that it was being carried out to keep British interests safe. Now it seemed that such a value conflicted with another British concern that was popular, yet

²¹⁸ See for example Elliot to Derby, 9 May 1876, plus enclosed report from Vice-Consul Depuis, *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey, and the Insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Turkey, no. 3), 1876 (1531) LXXXIV.255, no. 255; also, Elliot to Derby, 15 May 1876, plus enclosed report from Vice-Consul Depuis, *ibid.*, no. 289

not to that point publicly preeminent: namely that of protecting the Christian populace from Muslim fanatics. True, the public had by and large not objected to similar acts of suppression in the past; massacres of Ottoman Christians in Syria and Lebanon in 1860 and the Ottomans' suppression of the 1866-1869 Cretan Revolt may have made many Britons angry, but such events produced relatively equivocal suggestions on policy.²¹⁹ Yet in 1876, the reports of violence against the Bulgarians were so provocative and horrifying as to shift the emphasis away from Britain's role in protecting Ottoman stability toward the question of formulating a direct response and resolution to Muslim-Christian hatreds in the East.

The first article to give a full report of the Bulgarian Atrocities, written by the *Daily News*' Constantinople correspondent, Edwin Pears, appeared on June 23rd and immediately set the tone for the ensuing news coverage and, indirectly, for the later Agitation movement.²²⁰ His described gruesome reprisal killings, blaming the *bashi-bazouks* and the ineffectual Ottoman establishment that had sent them forth.²²¹ Moreover, Pears felt that a misguided British diplomats had led the Turks to believe that "England has determined to help the [Ottoman] Government to put down the various insurrections," or, as one Turkish paper promised its readers, "England... will defend us against Russia while we look after our rebels."²²² In consequence Pears believed that by not acting against "these barbarities" in league with the other Powers, the British Empire would betray its duties "to an oppressed people and humanity" and lose "credit" in the

²¹⁹ For details on Britain's reaction to the Syrian/Lebanese massacres, see Bass, 184-186 and David Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 116-117; for that on Crete, see Rodogno, 122-126.

²²⁰ There had been several short reports mentioning reprisals in Bulgaria that appeared before this, but no full reports—see Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*, 38-39.

²²¹ "The Assassinations at Constantinople: Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria," *Daily News*, 23 June 1876, col. F, p. 5.

²²² *Ibid.*

international sphere, something he noted as a clear risk to British interests.²²³ The *Northern Echo* immediately took up the story, focusing more attention on the horrific descriptions of the violence than on the international repercussions, leaving its readers with the troubling report that great numbers of Bulgarian Christian women had been “carried off as legitimate prizes by the Bashi-Bazouks.”²²⁴ Further, the *Echo*, following the *Daily News*’ line, extended its critique of the Government to the Opposition, implying that Disraeli’s ease at instituting his policy in the East was partly due to the “extreme moderation of the Liberal leaders.”²²⁵ Perhaps epitomizing the rapid shift toward public indignation was the high-circulation Liberal weekly, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*,²²⁶ which in a front page article condemned the Turks as a sensuous, plundering, “effete” race of “squatters in Europe,” who had proved with utter finality that they deserved “execution” at the hands of the Christians.²²⁷ Indeed, rather than insurrectionists, the Balkan Christians should be viewed as exercising their “sacred right of rebellion,” and Britain should support with all its possible power the Ottoman Christians’ right to take the region from the Turkish “idler” and apply their innate “energy and enterprise” to make the Balkans the “garden of the world.”²²⁸ Later, Eugene Schuyler, the American Consul-

²²³ Ibid. The latter quote is Pears’ version of the opinion of an article in unnamed “Turkish journal.”

²²⁴ “Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876, col. B, p. 3.

²²⁵ “Our Policy in the East,” *Northern Echo*, 24 June 1876, col. E, p. 2.

²²⁶ The Chartist and Radical journalist, G. W. M. Reynolds, founded *Reynolds’s Newspaper* in 1850, and it generally followed the line of other Radical journals and was especially popular with manufacturing workers. Its weekly circulation had reached 350,000 by 1860 and in 1876 was somewhere between 350,000 and 500,000. See Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 23-24; also, W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition: Volume One: The Rise of Collectivism* (London: Routledge, 1983), 169.

²²⁷ “The Last Kick of the Sick Man,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 2 July 1876, col. A, p. 1.

²²⁸ Ibid.

General in Constantinople, claimed the *bashi-bazouks* had committed sodomy during the massacres, further magnifying the imagery of effete Easterners gone fanatical.²²⁹

Sensing their complicity in the events that led up to the massacres, Conservative politicians and the Tory press immediately attempted to calm the debate. After the matter of the massacres was brought up by Liberal MP E. W. Forster in Parliament, who referred directly to the *Daily News* reports,²³⁰ the *Pall Mall Gazette* was so conspicuously sober about the issue as to be nonchalant, declaring that it “would be a weakness of a fatal kind” to swerve from Britain’s established Eastern policy over the matter as it would unnecessarily quicken the calamity of the Ottoman collapse.²³¹ Indeed, the paper had declared just a few days earlier that those immoderate Liberal forces arrayed against the Government’s policy in the Crisis were dangerously mistaking “emotions for principles,” and placing the British Empire in a place of peril should it abandon its independent, self-concerned, and preeminent role of the Eastern Question to band with Russia against the Ottomans.²³² *The Era* defended the Government’s policy as dynamic and masterful, claiming no one could say Britain had been “irritatingly diplomatic” in its protection of the Ottomans’ borders from “thieves” who would take advantage of the insurrections.²³³ For *The Era*, it was Russia that everyone should look to as the aggressor and encourager of the bloody conflicts, as it was “oiling the guns of the Devastation” and waiting to claim the remains of the destruction.²³⁴ *The Times*, however, began to deviate from its traditional role in supporting the ruling Government, and Gallenga’s coverage from

²²⁹ “The Bulgarian Atrocities – Mr. Schuyler’s Preliminary Report,” *Northern Echo*, 30 August 1876, col. C, p. 3; “The War in the East,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 August 1876, col. D, p. 7; “Mr. Schuyler’s Preliminary Report on the Moslem Atrocities,” *Leeds Mercury*, 2 September 1876, col. B, p. 4.

²³⁰ See *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 230, col. 424-426 (26th June 1876).

²³¹ “The Alleged Massacres in Bulgaria,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 June 1876, col. A, p. 5.

²³² “The Policy of the Government in the East,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 June 1876, col. A, p. 1.

²³³ “Topics of the Week,” *The Era*, 2 July 1876, col. C, p. 9. *The Era* was a popular Conservative weekly noted for its coverage of racing, theater, and other interests of the London elite.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

Constantinople effectively reiterated the *Daily News*' reports and bolstered their hold on the British public mind.²³⁵ Undoubtedly the involvement of *The Times*, Britain's most widely respected newspaper, as a voice that was sympathetic to the burgeoning Atrocities campaign went a long way in making the campaign considered relevant for the average news consumer.

The anger of the public increased as they perceived that the Government, especially Disraeli, did not appear to be very concerned with the reports. There does not appear to have been any significant discussion of the massacres in the three Cabinet meetings, on June 26th, July 24th, and August 7th, that met in the remainder of the summer following the first public reports in the *Daily News*, despite the fact that the press and public grew more and more concerned about the Government's role in responding to the issue over this period.²³⁶ Indeed, while the first meeting was too early for the reports to have had much salience in public discourse, certainly by the July 24th, let alone August 7th, it should have resonated if Disraeli and his Cabinet ministers found it important to discuss. Yet the July 24th meeting dealt almost exclusively with domestic issues,²³⁷ while the bulk of Disraeli's report of the August 7th Cabinet meeting was concerned with Disraeli's elevation to the peerage as the Earl of Beaconsfield.²³⁸ For Derby's part, there

²³⁵ See Gallenga's appended section of the article, "The War" in *The Times*, 8 July 1876, col. A, p. 12. On p. 53 of *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question* Seton-Watson claims that *The Times* had originally put an article on the massacres forth for publication on June 23rd, the same day Pears had. Seton-Watson says that the article was "for some reason withheld from publication."

²³⁶ A review of Disraeli's Cabinet reports to Queen Victoria from this time reveal no direct mention of the Bulgarian Atrocities until the Fall. See CAB 41/7/14-15.

²³⁷ For reasons unknown, Disraeli did not write his customary letter to the Queen on the subject of the July 24th Cabinet meeting, although he noted to Lady Bradford that the meeting was "stormy" but "halcyon" in the end—see Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 25 July 1876, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 70. Derby makes no mention of foreign affairs, let alone anything about Bulgaria, claiming that the meeting was "chiefly on the state of public business," especially the Education Bill being debated in Parliament at the time—see *Derby Diaries*, 24 July 1876, 312.

²³⁸ For Disraeli's discussion of issues related to his (and others') peerage, see Cabinet Report to the Queen, 7 August 1876, CAB 41/7/15. As a operational note related to this, I do not refer to Disraeli as "the Earl of Beaconsfield," or "Beaconsfield," in mentioning him after the date of his elevation (as is the common

is no comment in his diaries on any discussion of the massacres in these meetings.²³⁹ Given Derby's otherwise assiduous recording of Cabinet proceedings and his detailed reflections about Bulgaria elsewhere, he undoubtedly would have noted it if the subject been discussed in any significant way. Of course, Queen Victoria (to whom Disraeli's reports were directed) did not need to know all things that went on in the Cabinet, but Disraeli's and Derby's silence is nonetheless evidence that Disraeli did not feel that the fast-growing public outcry was the most pressing issue facing the Cabinet—the elite decision-makers—at the moment.²⁴⁰

There is perhaps another explanation, however, which might offer a better insight into the growing influence of the public voice in political matters. Much has been made by scholars of Disraeli's dismissal of the reports as “imaginary atrocities,”²⁴¹ “coffee-house babble,”²⁴² and of his offhanded rejection of evidence for the torture of Bulgarian Christians by saying the Turks “generally terminate their connection with culprits in a more expeditious manner.”²⁴³ However, it appears Disraeli was less concerned about whether or not the reports were true, but instead whether it mattered to the public. In this, Disraeli miscalculated by thinking his influence with the public was greater than it actually was, and it seems possible that his casual way of confronting the situation was a calculated move designed to diminish the importance of the massacres in the public

convention for other figures). He remains referred to by his regular name for clarity and consistency with recent convention in discussions of Disraeli, although direct quotes that name him as “Beaconsfield” are left unchanged as his name and title are otherwise interchangeable.

²³⁹ See *Derby Diaries*, 26 June 1876, 24 July 1876, and 7 August 1876, 305, 312, and 316 respectively.

²⁴⁰ In fact, Disraeli even wrote that Victoria had indeed been asking him for information regarding the massacres, with her questions based specifically upon her reading of the *Daily News*' reports—see Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 13 July 1876, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 69-70.

²⁴¹ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3), vol.231, col.215 (31st July 1876).

²⁴² *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3), vol.231, col.203 (31st July 1876).

²⁴³ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3), vol.230, col.1182 (10th July 1876). For example, Bass focuses on the “too-pithy” nature of Disraeli's responses and how this angered the Opposition—see pp. 262-263 of *Freedom's Battle*. Likewise, Seton-Watson calls attention to Disraeli's “flippant tone” and how the Opposition made use of it—see pp. 54-55 of *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*.

eye—using the power of his personality in hope that the issue would drift away. Derby reported that by early August, when it became clear that the issue was not going to blow over, Disraeli began to blame the Foreign Office and Sir Henry Elliot “for *misleading* him about the massacre,” as if he would have been just as indignant as the public was had he been given a corresponding official report that confirmed those of the principal eye witnesses to the destruction and killings.²⁴⁴ Derby blamed Disraeli’s anger on the fact that the latter had “got into some trouble with the House by making too light of the affair in the first instance, and lays on his informants, the blame of his own careless way of talking.”²⁴⁵

It is clearly more likely that it was not that Disraeli felt it unnecessary to listen to the public, but rather he thought that he could manage public opinion as he had in the past. When the tail began to wag the dog, he blamed his own agents as a distraction from the failed oversight of the Government and tried to draw on his public cachet as a strong, independent administrator. Clearly, though, one could no longer call the reports Liberal “inventions” for the purpose of inter-party intrigue, as he had throughout July, if the public and the press as a whole had by August accepted similar reports and similar commentary as realistic.²⁴⁶ By the same token, it also made sense that the Liberals were emboldened by public pressure on Disraeli for a response, and they used the opportunity to put their own pressure on the Government in a general sense.

²⁴⁴ *Derby Diaries*, 8 August 1876, 316. Emphasis added.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁴⁶ For Disraeli’s early skepticism and suspicion see, for example, Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 13 July 1876, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 69-70.

Mythic Massacres:

An intriguing insight into our understanding of the ideas behind Britain's response to the Bulgarian Atrocities appears in how pro-Bulgarian Britons sought to compare the events in Bulgaria with the 1857 Indian Mutiny, specifically the destruction of the Bulgarian town of Batak and the massacre of the British at Cawnpore. The Mutiny and the massacre at Cawnpore were vital symbols in subsequent Victorian mythology, imperial or otherwise—a “torrent of blood and tears...matched, we may say, by the torrent of representations of it,” as Christopher Herbert has put it.²⁴⁷ In these post-1857 representations the Mutiny was made out to be a major chapter in the longer history of “unspeakable,” “most terrible” acts suffered by the blameless at the hands of the savage.²⁴⁸ This was a way that Victorian society dealt with a traumatic and unprecedented event, but it also had powerful and long-lasting discursive effects.²⁴⁹ I would argue that this trait appears in the Batak-Cawnpore connection: it followed an established model of those from the East posing a danger to those from the West, and in this case the Christian identity of the Bulgarian peasants led Britons to satisfy the provisions of the discursive model by symbolically embracing the Bulgarian Christian into the Western bosom as full members.²⁵⁰ The *bashi-bazouks* then are the Easterners, bent on violence toward their natural opposites.

Given the hold of the Mutiny on the Victorian mind, it would be surprising if it did *not* surface in relation to another, newer episode in the anthology of Eastern

²⁴⁷ Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 226-227.

²⁵⁰ Moreover, Bulgaria's proximity in location and its Orthodox identity might also be connected with Greece and its rebellion against the Ottomans in the 1820s; Britain's role in this dispute and the romance of Lord Byron's death for the Greek cause were not easily forgotten, nor were the romantic descriptions of Ottoman savagery against the noble Greek freedom fighter.

fanaticism and violence versus Western Christian moderation and peace. And, the metaphor followed, British had to care: they had intimate experience with Muslims and knew the horrible consequences of mishandling Easterners' innate fanaticism. Indeed, Pears alluded to an Indian connection in his very first report, saying of the *bashi-bazouks* that during the Crimean War "the reputation of more than one Indian officer was destroyed because it was found impossible by men even with Indian experience to keep order among these irregular troops."²⁵¹ The crucial word here is "even," as Pears invoked Britain's imperial connection with the disorderly and violence-prone Easterner to make sense of the type of people the *bashi-bazouks* were. Namely, they were *worse* than their Eastern brethren in India who, given the reference to the Crimean War, the reader knew had been at that time just a year away from transforming from British soldiers to murderous Mutineers. Hence the Turks' use of the *bashi-bazouks*—made up of "gipsies," "gaolbirds," and the "dregs of the Turkish and Circassian population"²⁵²—in Bulgaria offered a sort of depraved and sinister mirror of Britain's involvement with the peoples of India: if the reader thought the future Mutineers fighting in the Crimean War were bad, the *bashi-bazouks* were even worse and less controllable.

Liberal papers and politicians led the way in invoking the memory of Cawnpore, with Stead's incendiary *Northern Echo* at the forefront.²⁵³ The *Echo* took a dramatic tack, saying "Never since the days of the Mutiny, when the massacre of Cawnpore startled our people into a frenzy of indignation and grief, have Englishmen had such good cause for intense emotion."²⁵⁴ Significantly, searching the past for other barbaric events

²⁵¹ "The Assassinations at Constantinople: Moslem Atrocities in Bulgaria," *Daily News*, 23 June 1876, col. F, p. 5.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ See ; "The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria," *Daily News*, 24 August 1876, col. C, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ "England and the Bulgarian Atrocities," *Northern Echo*, 11 August 1876, col. F, p. 2.

the *Echo* offered a further Indian example, citing Edmund Burke’s description of Hyder Ali’s Descent upon the Carnatic during the Second Anglo-Mysore War as one of the few apt comparisons to the Bulgarian Atrocities.²⁵⁵ The *Examiner*, a weekly edited by William Minto—known as a staunch critic of Disraeli’s imperial policy²⁵⁶—also searched for comparisons, calling the Atrocities “one of the bloodiest chapters in the book of Time.”²⁵⁷ In addition to Cawnpore the *Examiner* offered the Reign of Terror, Jean-Baptiste Carrier’s famous *Noyades* (drownings) at Nantes in 1793, and the “Iron Duke” of Alba’s “Council of Blood” against Dutch Calvinists, curiously adding “such atrocities are never committed save in the name of religion or liberty.”²⁵⁸ In Parliament, Liberal MP Sir George Anderson, one of the presidents of 1876 Co-Operative Congress, observed that though Cawnpore had provoked an immediate “call of vengeance” in Britain, when similar acts were committed in Bulgaria at the rate of “10 or 20 times over in one town alone,” the same Britons “stood by, and did nothing.”²⁵⁹ Henry Fell Pease, a prominent member of the great Quaker Pease family, similarly claimed that the Cawnpore analogy was apt but insufficient in magnitude of the crime, declaring at a public meeting in Darlington in late August that such “unprecedented barbarities, in comparison with which what we have heard of Cawnpore and the incidents of the Indian Mutiny” required an official policy of restricting Ottoman behavior using, in a telling phrase, the “strongest moral force available.”²⁶⁰ Another writer went even further, saying that even though Cawnpore served as a “byword among us for all that is cruel,” it was

²⁵⁵ Ibid. Minto was also a leader-writer for both the *Daily News* and, paradoxically, the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

²⁵⁶ Alexander Mackie, “Minto, William (1845-1893),” rev. Sayoni Basu, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/view/article/18815>.

²⁵⁷ “The Bulgarian Atrocities,” *Examiner*, 12 August 1876, col. B, p. 901.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.231, col.727 (7th August 1876).

²⁶⁰ “The North Country and the Atrocities – Great Indignation Meeting at Darlington – Recall of Sir Henry Elliot Demanded – Speech of Mr Backhouse, M.P.,” *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, col. A, p. 4.

nothing in comparison to the “bestial fury” wrought upon the people of “an industrious, orderly town” like Batak—the same barbaric East vs. civilized Europe device that, despite clear evidence of the *bashi-bazouks*’ needless killing of Bulgarian Christians, served as a standard, catch-all refrain both for the nature of “the Turks” and for defining Britain’s role in the management of the East.²⁶¹

The venerable totem of Cawnpore was thus deployed as a call for *action*, for doing something, for intervening in a moral or physical way, for using Britain’s power to stop something Britons found (or should find) abhorrent. Disraeli’s “supineness” on the Atrocities, as Pease called it, was then patently un-English, un-British, un-European, and uncivilized.²⁶² Of course, all of these “alien” identities conveniently fit with those which Disraeli’s more vocal critics often ascribed to him because of his Jewish background and his Eastern-themed novels.²⁶³ Indeed, Disraeli’s leading role in declaring the Queen “Empress of India” earlier that year had served to emphasize his Eastern deviance and un-Englishness, with the *Echo* calling it at the time the plan of a scrounging, “obsequious courtier” rather than a “plain dealing” servant of the Crown.²⁶⁴ This line was taken also in a more direct form in a famous *Punch* cartoon that depicted Disraeli as the Eastern villain Abanazer exchanging an Indian crown for Victoria’s British one.²⁶⁵ Thus after the Atrocities became known the idea that Disraeli’s motives regarding Turkey and Bulgaria were “true to his creed of Asian mysteries,” as E. A. Freeman put it during the Agitation,

²⁶¹ S. E. D., letter to the editor, *Daily News*, 24 August 1876, col. D, p. 2.

²⁶² “The North Country and the Atrocities,” *Northern Echo*, 26 August 1876, col. A, p. 4.

²⁶³ Anthony S. Wohl, “‘Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi’: Disraeli as Alien,” *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995): 375-411.

²⁶⁴ “Mr Disraeli and the Royal Titles Bill,” *Northern Echo*, 22 March 1876, col. F, p. 2. The “plain dealing” servant of the Crown was in this case Joseph Whitwell Pease, Liberal MP for S. Durham and cousin of Henry Fell Pease.

²⁶⁵ “New Crowns for Old Ones!,” *Punch*, 15 April 1876. See Figure 2 for image. For a discussion of this image, see Anthony S. Wohl, “‘Ben JuJu’: Representations of Disraeli’s Jewishness in the Victorian Political Cartoon,” *Jewish History* 10, no 2 (1996): 102-103.

were sure to have some bearing on those who felt this way in the first place.²⁶⁶ In this case, it made complete sense that Disraeli's opponents would call for intervention on the side of the Bulgarians, as in their mind an innately Eastern-sympathetic Disraeli and his party proxies insisted on the opposite allegiance for ulterior, mysterious motives rather than plain ones. By the time the Atrocities had gathered the attention of the great Liberal leaders (chief among them Gladstone, who blamed "Judaic sympathies" for the Government's actions²⁶⁷), the Cawnpore rhetoric served to reflect the next logical step, amplifying the imperial connection with a veiled threat of action with regard to Bulgaria. Hugh Childers, who had been Gladstone's First Lord of the Admiralty and would be appointed his War Minister when the Liberals returned to power, evoked the memory of Cawnpore in a speech to the Wesleyan Missionary Society on September 26th, reviewing the kinds of events that had motivated the use of Britain's might in the past:

And what roused the country to a man to put down the great Indian Mutiny? Not the great political questions connected with the rebellion of the native troops, but such atrocities as culminated at Cawnpore... Let it be well remembered that England abhorred and would not allow cruelty, and it was cruelty, and that that alone, which had led the English people to adopt such a determined tone with respect to the atrocities committed on the Christians in the East of Europe.²⁶⁸

In other words, it was shameful actions committed against white civilians in India that motivated a *general* concerted response, not the partisan quibbling over the nature of the British-Indian relationship. In Bulgaria's case it was Britain's general outrage over Christian deaths at the hands of the Ottomans' *bashi-bazouks* that should force British

²⁶⁶ See p. 415 of E. A. Freeman, "Present Aspects of the Eastern Question," *Fortnightly Review* 20 (new series), no. 118 (1 October 1876), 409-423.

²⁶⁷ Letter from Gladstone to L. Glückstein, printed as "The Eastern Question," *The Times*, 13 October 1876, p. 7, col. F. Derby called this a "strange letter, which nobody understands," commenting that it was not clear if Gladstone meant Disraeli, the Rothschilds, or the "Telegraph people," meaning Joseph Moses Levy and his son Edward Levy-Lawson, who owned the *Daily Telegraph*—see *Derby Diaries*, 13 October 1876, 333.

²⁶⁸ Contents of speech reported in "The Eastern Question," *The Times*, 27 September 1876, col. A, p. 6.

policy to shift from supporting the Ottoman Empire, not some equation in the cold, cynical calculation of the British Empire's material interests. The only differences between the two was first that the Bulgarian Atrocities—where no British subjects were involved—was *worse* than the quintessential massacre in the Victorian mind, and second that in 1857 the British government had done something and in 1876 it had not. In this sense, the Cawnpore metaphor shows that what was being fought over was what sociopolitical grouping had the right to determine how Britain would go about managing Eastern affairs. The question of whether or not Britain *had* a place in that role was not up for discussion. When the old Radical John Bright met the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, in a railway carriage in the fall of 1876 and told Northcote that Britain should let “natural forces” prevail, Bright employed a type of anti-imperialism that was an anachronistic contrast to the new idea of Britain's “moral force” in the world, as Pease had neatly put it.²⁶⁹ It was clear to most Britons that they had earned their Eastern stripes at Cawnpore and in the Mutiny, and that it was thus appropriate to use this experience and Britain's international rights to construct a policy that was good for all Britons, their imperial subjects, and any external group they deemed worthy of protection. What was unclear was how to reconcile the conflicting views Britons held regarding what the solution to the Eastern Question exactly entailed and what kind of role Britain's empire should take in the resolution of the problem.

²⁶⁹ Qtd. in Andrew Lang, *Life, Letters, and Diaries of Sir Stafford Northcote, First Earl of Iddesleigh*, new edition (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1891), 288. This quote is from a memorandum Northcote wrote in September 1880, several months after the Liberals took over, called “Some Notes on the Foreign Policy of the Late Government.”

Two Eastern Questions, Two Empires

The 1876 Parliamentary session was due to end on August 15th and as the month wore on it soon it became clear that there was no chance that Disraeli and the Tories could stabilize the political situation in Britain without shifting the Government's policy. As Derby wrote, "the events in Bulgaria have destroyed entirely the sympathy felt in England for Turkey."²⁷⁰ The Government's problems were compounded by the fact that not only were the Liberals unified against the Conservatives' management of the country's Eastern policy, but much of the populace in general had begun to express publicly their outrage over the Bulgarian Atrocities and advocated some kind of official action specifically in support of the Bulgarians' cause. The tone set in the news media by the *Daily News* and the *Northern Echo* also began to spread: by mid-August *The Times* had followed the trend, to the point of suggesting the Cabinet and Sir Henry Elliot were engaged in a cover-up of the massacres rather than, as the Government claimed, a search for more information.²⁷¹ The public's growing distrust meant that eventually the Government would have to formulate an official response to the Atrocities, which conceivably implied a policy shift regarding the Eastern Question.

However, what Britain's policy shift would be and to what degree Britain should officially acknowledge a switch toward sympathy with the Bulgarians was in question. Only the most politically marginal of the Liberals (or iconoclasts, like Lord Stratford de Redcliffe²⁷²) were willing to advocate outright support of the Bulgarian insurrection against Ottoman authorities, as to do so was in direct defiance of the Crimean system and

²⁷⁰ *Derby Diaries*, 29 August 1876, 321.

²⁷¹ *The Times*, 8 August 1876, col. B, p. 7.

²⁷² Lord Stratford did not affiliate officially with any party in his capacity in the House of Lords—see Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe: From His Memoirs and Private and Official Papers*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), 455-456.

implied support for Russia's calls to intervene and drive the Turks from Europe. Liberal leaders saw no future, internal or external, in following Russia's lead. Neither Hartington nor Granville would countenance the idea of allying with Russia against the Ottoman Empire directly; both inherited the legacy of Russophobia engendered by the horrors of the Crimea, especially Hartington.²⁷³ Despite the growing market for anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim sentiment in the Liberal and moderate press and political organizations, the leadership could not afford to venture down such a path unless absolutely politically viable, lest it backfire and end up giving more power to the Conservatives. It was not just cynicism that made the Liberals cautious, however, but basic reality: any major external policy change had to be pass the tests of both the domestic *and* the international political environments, something that the Liberal leadership were neither able nor necessarily inclined to do. Public pressure was one thing, but official political action quite another.

Gladstone, though, had a well-known ability to mate internationalist action with domestic sentiment, even if this quality at times ran counter to Britain's official obligations in the international sphere. This was not a trait wholly derived from Gladstone's personal sense of global political ethics, but rather was the result of his strong ability to judge what the most important members of the body politic—whether in terms of the Parliamentary/Cabinet elite or the so-called “upper ten thousand” of British society—would support or, at least, allow.²⁷⁴ Indeed, his support as Prime Minister for Russia's remilitarization of the Black Sea in 1870 was just such a move: he calculated that it would have benefits for Britain's role in international affairs while not directly threatening the British Empire's Eastern interests nor the Liberals' position in domestic politics. Two weeks after the end of the session, he noted to Granville his feeling that

²⁷³ For Hartington's feelings on Russia, see Jackson, 76-77.

²⁷⁴ See Kennedy, 39.

Parliament had not appropriately discussed the problem or decided on a course of action.²⁷⁵ Hartington chafed at this implication, complaining to Granville that it was Gladstone's own decision to stand back from the debates in Parliament on the massacres.²⁷⁶ But while Parliament had been in session the time had not yet been appropriate to call for a reckoning, and an experienced politician like Gladstone knew that the Opposition had a better chance of affecting radical change if it were done *outside* the official debate in Parliament. In that vacuum between sessions he and the rest of the party could mobilize the growing call for change into a more effective political tool, effectively employing populist political tactics that bypassed Parliamentary protocol. Of course Hartington, a Whig, would be upset at this, but for the "People's William" a large print-run pamphlet was in no way out of line. On September 6th, within a week of writing to Granville with his plan—much of which was spent propped up in bed due to his regular complaint, lumbago²⁷⁷—Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* had been written, printed, and distributed for sale to the general public.

The original 2,000 copies of the pamphlet sold out immediately; within a month it would sell over 200,000 copies.²⁷⁸ Despite its popularity, however, there were those who expressed disappointment or confusion with *Bulgarian Horrors*: Gladstone merely reiterated the Liberal position that the Bulgarian Atrocities exposed the Ottomans' lack of ability to control their fanatical elements and that Britain's role in the protection of the Ottoman Empire's integrity had to be reassessed to address this weakness, especially in

²⁷⁵ Gladstone to Granville, 29 August 1876, *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886, Volume I, 1876-1882*, ed. Agatha Ramm (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 3. Hereafter, references to this source will follow the form, "Correspondence direction, date, *Gladstone and Granville, 1876-1886, Vol. I*, pg."

²⁷⁶ Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister 1865-1898*, 171. Shannon cites here Hartington's letter to Granville from September 3rd, 1876, in which Hartington claimed Gladstone misrepresented the opportunity for discussion as less than it actually was (for this letter, see Granville Papers, 30, 29/26).

²⁷⁷ Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 399.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 400.

the sense of supporting autonomy for Bulgaria and other Ottoman provinces in the Balkans.²⁷⁹ What he contributed was the expression of these issues using a characteristically Gladstonian voice of “righteous indignation,” where the drama of the massacres and his anger over them were articulated as having inspiring a sincere outpouring of emotion and outrage at the crime. Venues like Stead’s *Northern Echo* were already doing this, but they lacked the widespread credibility that Gladstone had among the populace at large. Yet the violence of the pamphlet’s language, especially that leveled against the Turks as a people and a “race” (the “advancing curse” and “the one great anti-human specimen of humanity,” as he called them²⁸⁰), was not balanced by a comparably violent foreign policy recommendation. As Derby wrote, the idea of autonomy was not revolutionary even if the language Gladstone used was: “a tame conclusion for so vehement an invective.”²⁸¹

Richard Shannon has said that *Bulgarian Horrors* “contained no revelations,” yet was “supremely representative” of popular feeling in its very lack of ingenuity.²⁸² Gladstone, in Shannon’s opinion, was not “exciting popular passion,” but rather “popular passion [excited] Gladstone.”²⁸³ There is indeed evidence that Gladstone was personally moved; this was not just a cynical political act. I would however add that viewing *Bulgarian Horrors* as derivative rather than innovative only makes sense if viewed first from the perspective of those for whom the Atrocities had been mapped out with the fullest knowledge available at the time (i.e. MPs, peers, and other members of the political elite). It is not precisely accurate with regard to the awareness of the problem

²⁷⁹ See Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 26.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁸¹ *Derby Diaries*, 7 September 1876, 324.

²⁸² Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*, 110.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

and the proposed solutions among public at large. In a sense the pamphlet need not have included any revelations, as it was a vehicle for bringing the issue to a wider audience and putting the stamp of the Liberal Party upon the growing political pressure movement. Its appeal also had a cultural facet, in that reading and discussing it in the context of popular society meant accessing and exploiting the popular British mentality related to the topic, hence the emphasis it placed on painting the Turks as a violent, irreligious, foreign horde on European soil. These themes appealed to a large portion of Victorian society; negative Orientalist images, as the Batak-Cawnpore metaphor exhibits, were very much in vogue. It is therefore not really that important what Gladstone's motive was, as the result was an expectation that decisive political action would follow his charismatic call for it. Writing something turns significance over to the reader, and British readers sympathetic to the feeling in *Bulgarian Horrors* immediately thought the pamphlet (and its quotable phrases) inspired rapid and revolutionary change even if such proposals went beyond or contradicted the author's original intent.

After *Bulgarian Horrors* was published, hundreds of public meetings were held across Britain, all of which included speeches modeled on the vigor of Gladstone's pamphlet or, conversely, preached adherence to whatever the Conservative Government decided was the best course of action. In both cases, these meetings drew up, voted on, and sent petitions to the Queen and to the Foreign Office. These speeches and petitions portray what might be called a "second" Eastern Question. If the prevailing definition of the Eastern Question—now connected explicitly with the Conservative Government—referred to the problems surrounding the fate of the Ottoman Empire and the manner in which Britain should engage the issue in order to protect its interests, the second Eastern Question held that Britain had a role in making sure Christians in the East were liberated

from the rule of non-Christians or by some other foreign, despotic force.²⁸⁴ And while the former Eastern Question was managed via diplomatic channels, the solution to this new version of the Eastern Question required direct involvement of Britain and the other Great Powers, given the revolutionary nature of an action that would divest the Ottoman Empire of most of its population and the bulk of its economy. Accordingly, the second Eastern Question implied a new interpretation of the British Empire's role in the world that was neither the typical Disraelian "glorious empire" type nor the existing "empire of free trade" espoused previously by the bulk of the Liberals. This was a moral vision of empire, and the East was a place deemed in need of Britain's moralizing powers.

Early on, petitioners calling for action on behalf of the Bulgarian Christians had established a general format for public meetings, first stressing that the meeting was intended to, as in one example, "give expression to the sympathy felt for the people of Bulgaria in the shameful atrocities which they are suffering at the hands of their inhuman enemies the Turks and to press upon the Government of this country the duty of doing everything in its power to put a stop to such horrid cruelties."²⁸⁵ Henry Fell Pease's term "unprecedented barbarities" often replaced "cruelties," while the phrase "horror and indignation" was a nearly ubiquitous inclusion in the petitioners' premise. Nearly all demanded that Sir Henry Elliot be removed and replaced. It was also common for the petitioners to raise the issue of British Christians' solidarity with Bulgarian Christians and other Ottoman Christians, linking Christian religious and political freedom with the Eastern Question: "civil and religious liberty to the inhabitants of the provinces of

²⁸⁴ A debate over this same issue occurred at the beginning of the Crimean War, in which critics of siding with the Turks voiced as one of their reasons that it was not right to champion Muslim rulers of Christian subjects as this was, ipso facto, despotic. Anti-Russian Britons answered that Russia was more substantively despotic than the Ottomans were—see Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 149-151.

²⁸⁵ Petition from public meeting at Middlesbrough, 31 August 1876, FO 78/2551, f. 15.

Turkey” was vital to any final “solution to the Eastern difficulty.”²⁸⁶ As Gladstone’s pamphlet gave political credence to popular activity, the issue of the Eastern Question’s solution became more prominent, turning an elite activity into what the petitioners assumed to be the interest and responsibility of the average Briton. This led to the rendering of the Eastern Question and the British policy according to what petitioners cared about, regardless of whether it was congruent with the realities of policymaking. Indeed, a number of petitions prominently stated that the “practical independence” of Bulgaria and the other Balkan provinces was essential for any “firm and lasting settlement to the Eastern Question,” a goal much more drastic than autonomy and in contrast to the policy held by all Governments (including Gladstone’s) since the Crimean War, which stressed protection of the essential integrity of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸⁷ To say that *any* solution to the Eastern Question, which as a policy issue had always dealt with the potential effect of Ottoman disintegration, had to come with the precondition that the Ottoman Empire be divested, by coercion if necessary, of its Balkan territories exhibits the fact that for the Agitation the Eastern Question referred to a very different set of issues than for the political authorities. For the Agitation, the plight of Ottoman Christians *was* the Eastern Question, and the protection of them from Turkish abuse and the support of their independence *was* the solution.

Britons’ cultural fascination with the perceived negative qualities of the Turks and, conversely, the perception of Christian righteousness, were vital components in determining what petitioners felt were the relevant facts. Notably, the petitions contrasted the idea of Christian liberty with the religious and political environment engendered by the Turks and the Ottoman Empire, a “corrupt and moribund State which

²⁸⁶ Petition from public meeting at Exeter, 4 September 1876, FO 78/2551, f. 45.

²⁸⁷ See, for example, petition from public meeting at Balcombe, 13 September, FO 78/2551, f. 373.

is a disgrace to Europe and to Civilisation,” as one petition put it.²⁸⁸ Another petition was more blunt, calling the Atrocities “the inevitable consequences of Mahometan rule over a Christian people, which is at all times a dire oppression.”²⁸⁹ This view was shared by the “Women of Coventry,” who drew attention in their petition to the “women, maidens, and infants” who were raped, abducted, and killed, urging the Government to find some way of stopping these acts “not only in Bulgaria, but in all other places within the Turkish Empire.”²⁹⁰ That the East was, categorically, a place defined by abuse of women—especially white, Christian women—is reminiscent of what Jenny Sharpe has called the “racial memory” of the Indian Mutiny, after which Britons interchanged racial and gender categories to make sense of difficulties in administering Eastern populations.²⁹¹ In this sense, the petitioners’ purpose was to call attention not just to the Atrocities but to the status of Christians in the Ottoman Empire in general, which was an issue whose resolution was “the cause of Christianity and humanity itself.”²⁹² Intriguingly, some petitions evoked not just general values, but specifically *English* values and history in their rhetoric supporting Bulgarian autonomy. At Weston-super-Mare, the petitioners elegantly connected the lessons of Britain’s past with the Balkan Christian present:

Valuing the blessings of liberty and remembering the conflicts and sacrifices by which the freedom of our country has been achieved, this Meeting expresses its sympathy with the Principalities now so severely suffering in their patriotic efforts to free themselves from the oppression which for so many centuries has made the security of life and property well-nigh impossible, and [impresses] upon the Government of the Country the necessity of taking such a decided but pacific course of action

²⁸⁸ Petition from public meeting at Birkenhead, 4 September 1876, FO 78/2551, f. 23.

²⁸⁹ Petition from public meeting at Warminster, 26 September 1876, FO 78/2554, f. 12.

²⁹⁰ “Memorial from the Women of Coventry,” 26 September 1876, FO 78/2554, f. 92.

²⁹¹ See Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Context* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 2-3.

²⁹² Petition from public meeting at Theydon Bois, 26 September 1876, FO 78/2554, f. 27.

as may assist the oppressed peoples to attain the advantages of self-government and the priceless boon of national and personal freedom.²⁹³

We see here that the Agitation saw the role of Britain in the response to the Bulgarian Atrocities and in the Eastern Question as a whole as the first among equals of the European states and the Christian world. And certainly, in keeping with this position Britain's alliance with the Ottoman Empire was "unworthy of a civilized people" and should be dissolved.²⁹⁴ Later in September a common refrain would emerge in the petitions, speaking of "uniting with the other great powers" to find lasting peace.²⁹⁵ But there was no doubt who should lead this union of like-minded, civilized nations, as Britain alone possessed both the democratic political climate and the unimpeachable international respect to offer, as one petition put it, "the voice of the people...spoken by its representatives in the Nation's Council and before the World."²⁹⁶ British thinking was civilized, moral thinking, and as such it would of course be of the unified-front type; it would not make sense to turn away powers who felt similarly about the Ottomans' crimes. Yet the great enemy of the Turks, Russia, was well-known for its censorship of public dialogue, just one component of the widely-felt suspicion of Russia. And of the other Great Powers only one, France, could claim provision for the "voice of the people" to be heard. Yet France was an unknown quantity just six years out from its declaration of a republic; a British-French alliance was never a prominent part of the Agitation's tone. Britain, as both a nation and an international entity, was therefore best situated to do for unfree people what free people knew was right and good. The Government was

²⁹³ Petition from public meeting at Weston-super-Mare, 6 September 1876, FO 78/2551, f. 287.

²⁹⁴ Petition from public meeting at Swaffham, 15 September 1876, FO 78/2553, f. 17.

²⁹⁵ This phrase appears in some form in the majority of anti-Government petitions from meetings held from the middle of September and into October—see FO 78/2552-2555.

²⁹⁶ Petition from public meeting at Peterborough, undated (based on preceding/succeeding petitions, held likely around September 15th), FO 78/2552, f. 173.

deemed out of step with the standards of this role, instead pursuing a line that was “weak, vacillating, and unworthy of a Christian Country.”²⁹⁷

None of this, however, was explicitly imperialistic, nor is there any reason to construct a vision of the situation that includes a hidden imperial agenda on the part of the Agitation. It should be clear that its adherents were earnest in their desires for justice in Bulgaria, and that their call for a “*pacifist*” solution was genuinely felt. But they used the language available to them at the time to explain why Britain should act, how it should do so, and to what extent it should go to affect the changes that the Agitation felt were necessary for Britain to live with itself in the future. In doing so a subtext of Britain’s external moral authority appears in their arguments, a language all the more pronounced as it came from those who traditionally considered themselves within the anti-imperial camp. This forced them to fashion an explicit and defensible logic for why morally-driven acts might be necessary and just—even if such acts were (or perhaps *because* they were) contrary to the cold logic of Britain’s imperial interests. Instead, as Stoyan Tchapravov has argued, the Agitation seems to have displayed a “*compassionate colonialism*,” which proceeded from the deeper context of Victorian politics and culture.²⁹⁸ In this view Britain held a responsibility to oversee the well-being of less fortunate peoples, but, crucially, felt no responsibility to support specific nationalist movements like in Bulgaria.²⁹⁹ Likewise, people like W. T. Stead saw the Bulgarian Massacres as a venue primarily for commenting on its relationship to general ills in

²⁹⁷ Petition from the Durham County Franchise Association, 16 September 1876, f. 224-225.

²⁹⁸ Tchapravov, 22 (paragraph).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 (paragraph).

British society, especially provincial Britain's unjust subservience to London.³⁰⁰ Thus the friendship that papers like the *Northern Echo* professed for Bulgaria and its cause may have been mostly symbolic, the Eastern Question serving as a code for other concerns in no way related to Eastern matters. As for the Agitation's unofficial leader, Gladstone, the Eastern Question came to represent, in Biagini's phrase, the "moral discernment" of the masses, who had shown a "virtuous passion" in rising up against the Government's craven and selfish policy.³⁰¹ This was an opportunity to use a usually abstract problem for "practical politics."³⁰²

On the other side, just as the Conservatives saw the Eastern Question as an issue of the security, diplomatic position, and material interests of the British Empire, they broadcast their own vision of the idea and role of the Empire in their petitions. Pro-Government petitions pepper the piles of the pro-Bulgaria ones from the beginning of the Agitation, but by late September they began to appear with more frequency. From the middle of October to December pro-Government petitions were almost the only ones received by the Foreign Office, even though in the final total they never equaled the magnitude of those from the pro-Bulgaria campaign.³⁰³ Just as the pro-Bulgaria petitions repeated the refrain of "horror and indignation," petitions in support of the Government had many standard elements. Mostly from Conservative associations and working men's

³⁰⁰ Goldsworthy, 395.

³⁰¹ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 388. The second quote is from Gladstone, which Biagini cites Shannon as having provided in *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*, 106-107.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ By my count, out of a total of about 500 petitions sent from the end of August to late December around 150 were from pro-Government sources with the remainder from the opposite. The bulk of the pro-Bulgaria petitions were sent to the Foreign Office in September, while the pro-Government ones arrived from October on. These figures apply to all material in the FO 78/2551-2556 shelfmarks, which appears to be the main body of petitions sent to the Foreign Office during this period that had to do specifically with the Bulgarian Atrocities and Britain's response to it. This collection also contains numerous personal letters (over 100) sent to the Foreign Office on the Atrocities and on Eastern affairs, which when considered together do not show any particular tone holding a clear majority.

clubs, they almost invariably expressed “unabated” or “implicit” confidence in the Government, praising its conduct as “able,” “patriotic,” and “honourable.” Others referred to Derby’s “masterly policy” and their “sympathy” with him and his colleagues for their troubles.³⁰⁴ As the weeks progressed, petitioners increasingly referred negatively to the Agitation and the politicians who supported it, such as one which said “crafty and subtle Politicians” were using the plight of the Bulgarians for political gain.³⁰⁵ Another called the Agitation “unjust and factitious,”³⁰⁶ while another went as far as saying it meant to “subvert the Constitution.”³⁰⁷ A worse insult perhaps was the claim that the Agitation’s actions were “inconsistent with their position as Englishmen.”³⁰⁸ The Liberals were seen as the true instigators of the “grave crisis” affecting the country, as they manipulatively sapped the public support to which the Government was “entitled.”³⁰⁹ The Agitation was thus portrayed not as a popular groundswell but a partisan sham, with the Liberals “wantonly” promoting their party agenda at the “sacrifice of the best interests of this country.”³¹⁰

The Tory petitioners’ invocation of the rhetorical power of “British interests” displays the discursive slippage between British interests and imperial interests, allowing for the advocating of external policy based on internal political rules. In pro-Government

³⁰⁴ See, for example, petition from Barton-upon-Irwell Constitutional Club, 17 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 70.

³⁰⁵ Petition from “the Conservatives of this City” (city not specified on document), included in a letter from D. McCay, 21 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 77-79.

³⁰⁶ Petition from Finsbury Conservative Association, Upper Holloway District, 12 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 98-99.

³⁰⁷ Petition from Newington Conservative Association, 4 November 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 165-169.

³⁰⁸ Petition from North Staffordshire Union of Conservative Clubs, 20 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 60-61.

³⁰⁹ Petition from Edinburgh Conservative Working Men’s Association, 1 November 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 143-144.

³¹⁰ Petition from Finsbury Conservative Association, Stoke Newington District, 30 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 140. Some petitions baldly insisted, contrary to all other evidence, that the Agitation’s feelings were those of just a small part of the public—see, for example, petition from Southwark Conservative Registration Association and Council, 20 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 58-59.

petitions the interests of England, Britain, the country, or the nation are fluidly interchanged with the interests of the British *Empire*. There is little distinction between how the petitioners used these terms, just that pro-Government petitioners believed *only* the Conservatives could properly “maintain the honour, interests, and integrity of the British Empire.”³¹¹ War with Russia was another fear they broadcast, with Russia’s containment in the East portrayed as imperative to the survival of the British Empire. The Foreign Affairs Committees (the descendents of the “Urquhartites,” so named for their famously pro-Ottoman founder, David Urquhart) wrote at length on the matter: “[Alexander II said] ‘Constantinople is the key of my house,’ but that key is in the hands of the Turk, and with it also the security of the British Empire...Oh! that Englishmen would dare to look their *real* enemy in the face before it be too late.”³¹² In a dramatic turn Major Frederick de Dohsé, a self-proclaimed authority on “Oriental life,” offered his opinion as a Russophobic poem, closing with an evocation of the tragedy that awaited the British Empire: “O, hasten then your time is short / Prepare and hurry on / Ere [Russia] has reached the port / And England’s hope is gone.”³¹³ In such circumstances only clear, universal support of the Government could protect the British Empire and world from the “horrors of war.”³¹⁴ At the same time, however, the protection of the “National Interests

³¹¹ Petition from Barnard Castle Conservative Association, 26 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 142. See also, in a similar manner, petition from Ryde Conservative Club, 10 November 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 183-185.

³¹² Petition from Conference of the Foreign Affairs Committees, 2 October 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 74-75. Emphasis is in original. For information on David Urquhart and the Foreign Affairs Committees, see John Salt, “Local Manifestations of the Urquhartite Movement,” *International Review of Social History* 13 (1968): 350-365.

³¹³ De Dohsé, then a Captain, claimed his knowledge of “Oriental life” in an offer to the Foreign Office to go to Abyssinia in 1867 to secure the release of several British subjects from captivity, a situation which later led to the Abyssinian Campaign to free them. His offer was turned down—see “Further Correspondence respecting the British Captives in Abyssinia,” No. 88-89, *State Papers: Abyssinia*, Parl.Pap. (“Blue Books”) C.3918 (1867), p. 96. De Dohsé would also offer his services in 1877 to the War Office but the War Secretary, Gathorne Hardy, declined—see *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol. 235, col. 822 (6th July 1877). Letter and poem from Frederick de Dohsé, 7 October 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 194-195. See Figure 3 for full poem.

³¹⁴ Petition from West Ham Conservative Association, 18 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 85-86.

of England” was more important than mere avoidance of conflict with Russia: the Government should see to the interests first and then “if possible preserve peace.”³¹⁵ The conflict between the Russian and British Empires was a zero-sum game in Russophobes’ minds; the eventuality of renewed conflict was now “almost inevitable” in their calculations.³¹⁶ In consequence of this worldview the “real interest of the Empire” was in the maintenance, at all costs, of the British Empire’s place in the international order during the Crisis, while the moral or human interests espoused by the Agitation merely false piety that “a portion of the Liberal Party” sold for political gain.³¹⁷ Britain’s empire protected the British people and therefore it needed protection itself. This was what mattered, not the plight of Ottoman Christians, whose lives and livelihood were not “real interests” of the British Empire.

Some of the strongest imperial language comes from petitions from Orange Order organizations. This helps prove the primacy of existing political dynamics in determining one’s position on the matter. The Orangemen were some of the most vociferously anti-Liberal due to their central motivation as unionists, a principle to which only the Tories were unanimously sympathetic.³¹⁸ This appears to have inflated their rhetoric about the negative nature of the Agitation and the risk it posed to Britain’s international position and to the British Empire. In the mind of the Lisburn Orangemen, the Agitation had “misled the Insurgents as to the true state of feeling in the United

³¹⁵ Petition from Grantham Working Men’s Conservative Club, 25 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 112.

³¹⁶ Petition from Devizes Conservative Association, 20 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 62-64.

³¹⁷ Petition from “a number of the residents” of South Shields, 25 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 110-111. Notably, in the petition the phrase “a portion of” has been inserted, via a caret, to mitigate the meeting’s original claim that the Liberal Party as a whole has organized the Agitation.

³¹⁸ Of course, Orangemen were not universally pleased with Conservative policy, being “Protestant first and Conservative second,” nor were English Conservatives necessarily Orange, but there was no support for the Liberal Party from the Orange Order—see Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 182.

Kingdom,”³¹⁹ and thus, as another group put it, should a war break out the blame would rest on the shoulders of “a portion of the Opposition (led by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe)... who – we firmly believe – would not hesitate to sacrifice the honor and dignity of the Empire to the exigencies of party.”³²⁰ The Ballymine Orangemen agreed that the Agitation was “misleading to foreign minds in regard to the feelings of the British Empire on the subject” and thus was not only an “unpatriotic” movement but an “unconstitutional” one.³²¹ But perhaps the most extreme take on the matter came from the Liverpool Orangemen, who declared that “if the schemes of these Liberal leaders were at any time to prove successful and they were again to come into power, the Throne and Constitution would be imperrilled [*sic*] and irreparable injury done to the best interests of the British Empire.”³²² Britain’s empire here serves as a totem for all things that either support or threaten the Orangemen’s particular values. Consequently, it could be inverted: a risk to the Orangemen’s interests was a risk to imperial ones.

Of course, the Orangemen’s fears stemmed from their stakes in the Irish Question. For them, the specter of Irish nationalism was preeminent, with Fenian terrorists lurking behind the screen of the generally anti-Unionist Home Rule League (which had 60 MPs in Parliament) and Irish-friendly Liberals.³²³ But what is remarkable about the Orangemen’s amplification of the Conservative position is not that people prioritized their particular domestic political positions, but rather that these same people do not appear to have been moved by something that really *should* have moved them more substantially. After all, there *had* been a huge, terrible massacre and it would not until

³¹⁹ Petition from Lisborn District Orangemen, 21 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 109.

³²⁰ Petition from Armagh District Orangemen, 24 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 102-103. Along with Gladstone’s pamphlet, Lowe’s speeches helped set the Agitation’s tone—see Seton-Watson, 87, 104.

³²¹ Petition from 2nd Ballymine District Orange Lodge, 1 November 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 148-149.

³²² Petition from Liverpool Loyal Orange Lodge, 13 November 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 187-188.

³²³ See Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond* (London: Blackwell, 2010), 106-108.

much later become clear that the killings had in fact stopped months before the Agitation began. From this perspective, the strength of the Agitation was remarkably weak and transient, even if it is clear that its adherents were sincere. The hold of existing political divisions on the British public's mind was very strong, and savvy Conservative politicians could do much to subvert and reverse what counted as "popular feeling." The later co-founder of the Primrose League, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, wrote that he overruled a public meeting called by the Agitation by carting in Government supporters in wagons to the meeting hall, using the Tory "electioneering organisation, which was then in a most perfect condition."³²⁴ In another, odder case the mayor of Stalybridge, Robert Stanley, would not allow a public meeting in support of the Bulgarians to take place because he insisted that the insurrections were all a plot by Russian agents.³²⁵ He then contrived a meeting in support of the Government, which produced one of the few petitions which did not come from a specific organization affiliated with the Conservative Party.³²⁶ Significantly, Stanley later converted to Islam, changed his name to Reschid, and became a noted figure in the British Muslim community.³²⁷

Stanley's activities are a rare example of a truly pro-Turkish stance put up against the pro-Bulgaria position. This instance and the petition from the Foreign Affairs Committees are about as close as we get to anything resembling Turcophilia, which was shown once again to not be the necessary correlate of Russophobia. One man even wrote to Derby to express sympathy with the latter's treatment at the hands of the Agitation,

³²⁴ Henry Drummond Wolff, *Rambling Recollections*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1908), 140. Ironically, Wolff would later protest that another public meeting held in his constituency, Christchurch, that supported the Agitation was the work of Liberal electioneers, who had packed the hall with people from outside the borough, also carted in by wagon—see *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol. 234, col. 403 (7th May 1877).

³²⁵ "A Mayor Refusing to Call a Bulgarian Indignation Meeting," *The Preston Guardian*, 16 September 1876, p. 3, col. G.

³²⁶ See petition from meeting at Stalybridge, 26 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 115.

³²⁷ See "A Distinguished British Musselman," *The Crescent*, 3 April 1907.

then added that if the Government sanctioned the Ottoman's policy regarding the insurrection (which it essentially had done all through the summer) it would "constitute one of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of England."³²⁸ Nor did there need to be much evidence of a true countermovement. Pro-Government public meetings were rare: one petition is signed by almost 200 people, named as "burgesses and inhabitants" of the town.³²⁹ Another has about 75 signatures from "a number of residents."³³⁰ And of course the readers of Tory newspapers at least implicitly supported the Government. But unlike the Agitation, the pro-Government forces were ultimately Conservative party proxies, their foot-soldiers, and the politicians themselves. It was not a groundswell like the Agitation, and that suited the Conservative leaders just fine. What they wanted were assurances of support from those who already supported them and would reinforce the Government's position—that is, the people who mattered.

Conclusion: Pressure and Response

As the fall wore on and the petitions from Conservative groups strengthened an alternate position to that of the Agitation, the Conservatives took heart that they could gain control of the discourse by staying on message and waiting out the storm. Disraeli and other Conservative leaders relied on the idea that the Agitation was quickly fading and that a sizable, though not very well-defined portion of the public supported the Government absolutely. Indeed, they almost seem to have begun dismissing the Agitation while it was still by all other accounts in full force. Already by the middle of

³²⁸ Letter from William Price, 30 September 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 38-39.

³²⁹ Petition from meeting at South (Lincoln), 3 October 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 81-85

³³⁰ Petition from "a number of the residents" of South Shields, 25 October 1876, FO 78/2556, f. 110-111.

September Derby noted that the “agitation...has begun to subside,”³³¹ while Disraeli had already written to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Cairns, prior to this to claim rather preemptively that “Derby has quenched the agitation.”³³² By the end of the month Derby felt comfortable to comment: “Resolutions denouncing Turkey continue to pour in, but they are now mostly from small meetings, & at least half are got up by dissenting preachers.”³³³ By the middle of October, Derby deemed “public feeling” to have “changed in a singular way,” implying that sympathy with the Government’s position was on the rise.³³⁴ Participants in the Agitation do not appear to have felt this way: many years later, W. T. Stead would chafe at Wolff’s claim of having witnessed the turning point of the Agitation at a meeting the latter doctored into a taking a pro-Government position.³³⁵ Stead declared Wolff guilty of a “flattering delusion,” insisting instead that the “agitation did not reach its high water-mark” until December, when the Constantinople Conference was arranged.³³⁶ The Conservatives do not appear to have been very worried about the Agitation after September, feeling they had it in hand with their strong, integrated network of political organizations. Long before December the Queen, who held a publicly (but not privately) muted suspicion of the Agitation and adherents, said that she felt less worried about Eastern affairs than she had been at the height of the Agitation, as she thought the Government had secured a path to order despite challenges from the Agitation.³³⁷ The Queen’s interest in the East was palpable

³³¹ *Derby Diaries*, 14 September 1876, 326.

³³² Disraeli to Cairns, 12 September 1876, PRO 30/51/1, f. 142.

³³³ *Derby Diaries*, 27 September 1876, 330.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1876, 332.

³³⁵ W. T. Stead, “The Book of the Month: The Tory Labouchere,” *Review of Reviews* 37, no. 218 (1908), 209. This article is not signed by Stead but J. O. Baylen claims that Stead generally wrote the “Book of the Month” article personally—see p. 76 of “W. T. Stead as Publisher and Editor of the ‘Review of Reviews,’” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 12, no. 2 (1979): 70-84.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Richmond to Cairns, 30 October 1876, PRO 30/51/3, f. 121.

in this period, and it was clear which side she fell on—a place surely not unaided by her well-known friendship with Disraeli, which was equaled by her disdain for Gladstone.³³⁸ Visiting the Queen at Balmoral in November, Richmond wrote that she so liked an anti-Atrocitarian, explicitly anti-Gladstonian pamphlet, *Tory Horrors* by Alfred Austin (Britain’s Poet Laureate, from 1896 to 1913), that she ordered two extra copies to distribute herself!³³⁹

The Government’s response to popular pressure was not very robust, even if it is clear that they were alive to the issue. Gathorne Hardy, the War Secretary, wrote that the Cabinet, especially Disraeli, was misguided on the issue of public outrage, telling Cairns that “the stir about the atrocities is I think real.”³⁴⁰ Derby, who of the Cabinet fielded the greatest mass of the Agitation and the pro-Government petitions and letters, similarly noted his wonder at the rapid shift in public opinion:

The change is certainly remarkable: meetings are being held daily in the provinces...the hope is expressed that we will have nothing more to do with the Turks, except to help in turning them out of Europe. To a considerable extent, these meetings are got up for party purposes, being generally attended by Liberal M.P.s and nonconformist preachers: but undoubtedly represent also a large amount of genuine popular feeling. The outcry is so far inconvenient that it weakens our hands abroad, & strengthens those of Russian statesmen, but it is not unnatural, and at this time of year can do little harm.³⁴¹

Derby does not appear to have changed this opinion much as time went on—in fact, a month later he would reflect that it was “odd that in what is considered to be, & really is, a diplomatic crisis, I have not personally as hard work to do as often in more

³³⁸ Earlier in October, Richmond commented that the Queen was “very much perturbed” and “anxious” about the Crisis, and she urged the Cabinet to “advise Turkey to appeal to the Great Powers in the event of a threatened invasion of by Russia”—see Richmond to Cairns, 22 October 1876, PRO 30/51/3, f. 113-114.

³³⁹ Richmond to Cairns, 14 November 1876, PRO 30/51/3, f. 130. Richmond supposed that the Queen wanted to use one of the copies “for the purpose ‘educating’ Ponsonby,” her private secretary.

³⁴⁰ Hardy to Cairns, 29 August 1876, PRO 30/51/7, f. 97.

³⁴¹ *Derby Diaries*, 2 September 1876, 323.

quiet times I have had.”³⁴² Yet there is evidence that he was at least well aware of the scope and depth of the effect of the Agitation. Throughout the petition campaign, Derby and T. V. Lister, the Permanent Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, noted their receipt and basic apprehension of the petitions in each case: all the petitions bear both Lister’s and Derby’s signatures evidencing their personal handling of the material. How deep they went in reading each one cannot be clear, especially since many of the petitions are cast in identical terms, just issuing from different towns and groups. At times, though, Lister and Derby added additional comments to each another, with some telling results. The petitions and letters were, as a rule, acknowledged in a return letter, while on several pro-Government petitions Derby wrote the phrase, “They should be thanked.”³⁴³ They even appear to have read the dozens of letters, some very long, promoting each writer’s own solution to the Crisis and the Eastern Question in general. As is the nature of political letters outlining personal policy solutions, these are at times strange and muddled, such as one that insisted at length that the British had to abandon the Suez Canal, blast a channel from Aqaba to the Dead Sea, and then another from there to the Mediterranean through Palestine, a plan which the writer insisted was in keeping with the prophecies of Ezekiel.³⁴⁴ This is far from the most peculiar letter that appears

³⁴² Ibid., 11 October 1876, 333.

³⁴³ See, for example, petition from Finsbury Conservative Association, Highbury District, 6 October 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 163-165; petition from Norwich Conservatives Central Club, 6 October 1876, FO 78/2555, 166.

³⁴⁴ Letter from G. Pearce Pocock, 7 October 1876, FO 78/2555, f. 184-190. Pocock claimed that this plan would allow Jews to return to the area, aided by their influence in the “money markets” and in keeping with other aspects of Biblical prophecy. Britain would then be “marked” as the “approved Agents of the Almighty,” and benefit as a country and an empire. Pocock, whose words portray him as possibly sympathetic to the millennialist “Irvingites” (named for their leader, Edward Irving, who in the early nineteenth century preached of Jesus’ imminent Second Coming—see “Irving, Edward (1792–1834),” Stewart J. Brown in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/view/article/14473>), kept on this tack: in 1883 he wrote to *The Builder* (an architectural trade paper), of his plan, using almost the exact same words and arrangement of his 1876 letter to the Foreign Office. Although in this instance he omitted his belief that Britain would

alongside the petitions, an honor held by another one which offers a cryptic disquisition on both the writer's proposed solution to the Eastern Question in tandem with his take on the methods by which astronomers calculated the distance to the moon.³⁴⁵ On the back, Lister noted, "Mad - programme for the Congress is extensive," to which Derby replied, "He is as sane as a good many men."³⁴⁶ This curious example in fact helps establish the level of their scrutiny of the material, as even such confused ramblings were read and communicated. Policy authorities "listened" to pressure insofar that the petitions and letters that poured in were not merely rubber-stamped. Although we cannot say how *closely* each petition and letter was read and with what level of seriousness they approached each one, it seems that they were not pushed aside or discarded by the men in power.

However, we should in any case guard against conflating the effect of the Bulgarian Agitation on Conservative leaders with a shift in Britain toward the Government's support for the Agitation's causes. The Conservatives' opponents often accused them of not listening to what the populace thought. They did listen, but they did not agree with the idea that what the populace thought should translate directly into policy. So as in other cases they sought to understand the pressure campaign in order to defeat it, either by contesting, ignoring, or absorbing its goals and principles. By combating or co-opting the Agitation, the Conservatives used the meetings, the petitions, the speeches, and its friends and opponents in the press to gauge what avenues of action were open to them and which ones were not. They used the pressure campaign as

be divinely favored by undertaking his plan, he still thought it necessary to mention that Ezekiel's prophecy drove his zeal for the project—see "Red Sea and Mediterranean Junction and Valley of the Jordan," *The Builder*, 9 June 1883, col. C, p. 794.

³⁴⁵ Letter to Derby (unsigned), 14 September 1876, 78/2552, f. 76.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“strategic intelligence” for combating the effects of the Agitation and the resurgence of a revitalized Liberal Party led by Gladstone. Conservative figures always sought to place the level of public outrage in the context of its relation to the domestic political climate, rather than consider it on its merits. As Derby wrote, the sheer height of indignation was the result of the people having no “other subjects of public interest...I have never known in England so absolute an absence of internal agitation – I mean on any internal question.”³⁴⁷ Although one cannot totally agree with Derby’s assessment (there were plenty of other internal affairs to deal with, such as Fenianism, the stagnant economy, and a mounting agricultural crisis³⁴⁸), this remark, along with Disraeli’s early dismissal of the strength of the movement, shows us that the foreign policy leaders understood it as a disturbance of a domestic nature in lieu of other domestic concerns about which to agitate.

Moreover, the theme of imperialism neatly dovetails with the dispute over Britain’s role in the Bulgarian Atrocities and the East in general. Although the Agitation was careful to speak of a “peaceful” solution to the Eastern Question, it saw the answer as lying in vigorous European intervention. And despite the fact that the Agitation made clear that they did not condone any initiative involving venal territorial motives, it still was unable to get away from the fact that both the principles and the justification for intervening rested upon the knowledge that Britain was a significant Eastern power and had an investment in overseeing order in the area. For the Conservatives, of course, the matter of British imperialism in the Eastern Question was much easier to reconcile with their existing ideology. They clearly believed that Britain should protect and extend its economic, political, and military power in the East. But for them, the path to power was

³⁴⁷ *Derby Diaries*, 10 September 1876, 325.

³⁴⁸ See Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 697-698.

not paved with flagstones bearing Britain's moral achievements but rather the bargains it made to secure existing interests. Still, the Government, which was so hesitant to intervene until the Agitation was in full swing, appears to have been able to turn the principle of intervention promoted by the Agitation to its favor, promoting Britain as a strong, decisive force in Europe and the region in the next phase of the Eastern Crisis—the diplomatic attempts to avert a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

**Chapter Two:
The Failure of Peace, the Triumph of War:
Diplomacy, Public Politics, and Imperialism during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-
1878**

Introduction: An Imperial Future

Europe was not prepared for the vast physical carnage of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. Blood was of course expected, but most were much more concerned with the international effects of the conflict; they presumed that, in military terms, it would a quick, relatively painless war settled in Russia's favor.³⁴⁹ That is not what happened. Instead, after the Ottomans rejected Russia's conditions for peace in late April 1877 and the Russians, already on the move, crossed into Ottoman territory, the door was opened to the most deadly war Europe would see until the First World War. Over the next year, around 250,000 soldiers would die,³⁵⁰ split about equally between the two sides, while anywhere between the tens of thousands to over 200,000 Balkan Muslims were killed and over 50,000 to upwards of 500,000 made permanent refugees as a result of the war.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83.

³⁵⁰ Michael Clodfelter gives a figure of 215,000 combined dead—see entry in *Warfare and Armed Conflict: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991* (New York: McFarland & Co., 1992), 483, while the Correlates of War Project (ed. by J. David Singer) calculates the combined death toll at 285,000—see Meredith Reid Sarkees, “The Correlates of War Date on War: An Update to 1997,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 18, no. 1 (2000): 123-144. Given the lack of accuracy of the records available, especially on the Ottoman side, the actual number is most likely somewhere between these two figures.

³⁵¹ These numbers are not only much more difficult to calculate than the military dead but they are also much more contentious both in scholarly and political terms, especially in relation to Bulgaria, the region where the bulk of the fighting took place. Mark Levene's *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State: The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005) puts the number of Bulgarian Muslim civilian dead at “many more tens of thousands” than the estimated 12,000 Bulgarian Christians killed in the Atrocities (see p. 225), while Katherine McCarthy computes the death toll at 216,000 dead of “disease, starvation, or murder” out of a population of 1.4 million Bulgarian Muslims prior to the war, although many of these deaths are to be considered the *effects* of the war and actually occurred in the years following the war itself—see p. 641 of “Bosnia-Herzegovina” in *Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the People, Lands, and Culture*, vol. 3, *Southeastern Europe*, ed. Richard C. Frucht (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 621-694. Although derived from similar data, this higher end figure appears to be a slightly more reliable number than that put forward by Justin C. McCarthy, a well-known Armenian Genocide

Tens of thousands Christians also fled into Russian-held territory, with thousands killed before the end of the war.³⁵² It is a grim and forgotten episode in European history.³⁵³

skeptic, who puts the Bulgarian Muslim civilian death toll at 262,000 and the number of refugees at “perhaps a million”—see *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton: Darwin, 1995), 64, 90. On the number of refugees, Katherine McCarthy again offers somewhat more sober numbers, finding that by 1890 484,000 Bulgarian Muslims had emigrated, mostly to Ottoman territory, compared to the 1.4 million pre-war population listed above, whereas the noted scholar of Bulgarian history, R. J. Crampton, gives a more conservative figure of 130,000-150,000 Bulgarian Muslim refugees and says that 75,000-80,000 returned after the war ended—see *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 426. Dirk Hoerder’s figure of 177,000 Muslim refugees Balkans-wide offers a middle point between the two extremes—see *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 448. Outside of Bulgaria, Justin McCarthy’s figures are easier to verify and thus more worthy of note: he computes the number of Bosnian Muslims as having dropped from 695,000 in the 1870 Ottoman census to 449,000 in the 1879 Austrian one, a change of 246,000 either dead or having fled. However, while he has taken into account the change in size and shape of Bosnia between its status as an Ottoman province and its formulation as an Austrian protectorate after 1878 (it was slightly smaller post-1878), but he does not appear to have considered the relative accuracy of Ottoman vs. Austrian census techniques and standards. A similar criticism can be made of his accompanying claim that Serbia lost a third of its Muslim population to death or emigration in roughly the same period—see pp. 80-81 in “Ottoman Bosnia, 1800-1878,” in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, 2nd ed., ed. Mark Pinson (Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1996), 54-83.

³⁵² These numbers are even more difficult to compute than those related to the Balkan Muslims, and they are also just as contentious. Francis Vinton Greene, a US military attaché with the Russian Army during the war, said in 1879 that by the summer of 1877 “the Bulgarians [i.e. the Christian ones], to the number of nearly 100,000 souls, were fleeing north over the Balkans,” yet he provides no evidence for this claim other than to state that people were responding to a plenary Ottoman Army directive mandating “a wholesale system of hanging at the street corners” of collaborators—see *Report on the Russian Army and Its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877-1878* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1879), 204. The basis of Greene’s claim appears to be from testimony from those fleeing, giving the impression of a rumor, although such a punishment is in no way beyond the realm of the imagination in terms of the era’s military protocol regarding what would have been considered aiding the enemy. James J. Reid says that because the Ottoman defensive network in the Balkans was made up of many small groups of semi-autonomous units, soldiers were fearful at the prospect of being cut off from other units and “if subjects near their camp appeared to side with the enemy, then this paranoia could provoke aggressive intimidation, assault, and even massacre to prevent overwhelming attacks by both the enemy army and rebellious subjects”—see *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse 1839-1878* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 41. Bulgarian scholars have stated that perhaps more than 30,000 Bulgarian Christians were killed during the war, a figure based mostly on the destruction of the city of Stara Zagora at the end of July 1877. The accuracy of these claims is suspect given the lack of hard evidence, but most scholars believe it is fair to assume that a figure well into the thousands, if not as high as 30,000, is appropriate—for a discussion on Stara Zagora and other Christian civilian deaths in the war, see Dimitur Konstantinov Kosev, *Bulgaria Past & Present: Studies on History, Literature, Economics, Sociology, Folklore, Music & Linguistics: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Bulgarian Studies Held at Druzhba, Varna, June 13-17, 1978, Volume 1978* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1982), 40-43.

³⁵³ There has been some recent work looking at the memory of the war from the Russian and Balkan perspective. For example, an article by Nadieszda Kizenko looks at Russia’s memorialization of the war in the shape of a Russian church built to commemorate the battles for the Shipka Pass, which the author argues effectively gives Russian imperial policies regional immortality—see “The Church-War Memorial at the Shipka Pass, 1880-1903,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16/17 (2000-2001): 243-254

On the matter of the war's international implications, the onlookers were closer to the mark. In fact, it could easily be argued that the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 stands as one of the key unheralded foundations of many of the political and cultural mechanisms that underpinned the following imperial epoch of the 1880s to the First World War. Indeed, *The Times* presciently commented:

In all the wars that have raged in the revolutionary period which extends from 1848 to the present time there has been no movement more colossal, more dramatic, and at the same time more closely affecting the interests of Europe and the future course of history. We have now before us a catastrophe which every politician of foresight has known must one day come, and which the populations of South-Eastern Europe have dimly discerned before them as something terrible and mysterious behind the veil of the future.³⁵⁴

The editors of *The Times* were precisely correct in their feeling that this war would have vast political consequences—for the region in which it was fought, for the broader expanse of the East, and for Europe as a whole. By the war's end, Britons not only saw themselves as paving a moral path in global politics, as in the Bulgarian Agitation, but they also began to see Britain as representing, both in war and peace, a stabilizing influence in global affairs. This effect was not only international in character, but by necessity fit within the existing constructs of British domestic society as well. In this sense, the war played an important role in fueling the growing link between the management of Britain's foreign policy and its imperial policy. The cultural and political experience of the war inscribed into the British mind a sense that Britain could not rely on the international arena to produce order and security; its empire could only be protected through independent action. As diplomatic attempts to stave off conflict came to nothing and the subsequent war progressed, it became increasingly evident to the

³⁵⁴ *The Times*, 30 June 1877, p. 11, col. A.

British public that if Eastern disorder threatened British interests the might of the British Empire should be employed to provide a solution.

In this chapter I explore two primary themes: first, the competition between the elite sector of policymaking (confidential diplomacy, backroom politicking, and Cabinet-level discussion) and public discourse on policy (published diplomatic correspondence, Parliamentary debate, and the press); second, the influence of a concurrent and ongoing democratizing trend in British politics and civil society. My discussion is organized into three sections, matching the progression of the conflict and Britain's role in it. First, I look at the sense that international diplomacy had "failed" to avert the opening of the conflict. Second, I look at the close attention paid by the British public to the conduct of the participants in the war, especially at the disastrous five-month Siege of Plevna. Finally, I examine the vigorous—at times violent—debate in Britain over how policymakers should respond to the fact that Russia was likely to deal a crushing defeat to the Turks.

As we learned in the first chapter, one cannot simply claim that there were competing interventionist and isolationist camps which corresponded to the parties respectively associated with such positions, i.e. the Conservatives in the former case and the Liberals in the latter. Rather, what the Bulgarian Agitation showed was that the Liberals were fully capable of supplying British debate with interventionist beliefs tailored to their party's particular positions and proclivities. If in that episode it was the Conservatives who used the rhetoric of isolation and independence to resist the Liberals' calls for intervention on the side of Russians, it was now the Tories' turn to push for intervention in the conflict on the side of the Ottoman Empire and thus, at the same time,

to fend off calls for standing back from those whom opposed that position. This dynamic, I argue, had a *cumulative* effect in motivating imperial ideology and rhetoric: the beliefs in the fundamental preeminence of the British Empire, its right to intervene physically, and the intelligence of a territorial solution to global disorder were the sum total of this competition over the grounds, ethics, and methods of intervention. If the Bulgarian Agitation had inscribed into British discourse the Liberals' case for intervention to protect Britain's (and Europe's) moral interests in the East, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 provided an indelible mark in the shape of Britain's economic, international, and imperial interests in the East.

The "Failure" of Diplomacy

The conditions of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878's origins have to be understood in relation to the allegation made, at the time and since, that the Constantinople Conference and other attempts at diplomacy prior to the war had "failed."³⁵⁵ The Conference had been convened ostensibly to discuss the issue of reform of Ottoman territorial policies, particularly in Bulgaria and Bosnia.³⁵⁶ However, the Great Powers came to the table with specific demands of the Ottomans, while the Ottomans felt that the Ottoman Constitution (signed the day the conference began) should suffice as evidence of their commitment to reform. Moreover, the discussion was colored by two unspoken factors of conflict: first, the *general* treatment of Christians in Ottoman lands; second, the growing threat of war with Russia, which treated the first

³⁵⁵ Indeed, Wirthwein named the chapter of his book on this phase of the Eastern Crisis the same title as this section, a form that I am commenting on here—see Chapter VI, "The Failure of Diplomacy," on pp. 177-216.

³⁵⁶ For their discussion, the Bosnian entity included part of Herzegovina.

factor as a *casus belli*. The idea of getting the Ottomans to “induce reform” was therefore often used as code to gauge their willingness to concede to the Great Powers’ conditions for peace.

These problems showed themselves immediately. In the preliminary meetings, the five Great Powers and Italy³⁵⁷ had agreed amongst themselves to call for the establishment of an autonomous Bosnian province and the separation of Bulgaria into two autonomous provinces (West and East Bulgaria). In return, the Porte’s representatives offered its reforms in the shape of the Ottoman Constitution.³⁵⁸ The Constitution not only enumerated a number of liberal principles,³⁵⁹ but was also intended by its authors to represent the Ottoman Empire as a modern state—in a sense, the final phase of the Ottomans’ period of modernization known as the “Tanzimat” that had begun in 1839.³⁶⁰ The Ottomans hence felt the provincial arrangements agreed on by the Powers were evidence of the imperial ambitions of the Powers, as they saw no need for territorial changes if the Constitution was supposed to fix the problems in those territories that had been the source of the Conference’s convening in the first place. But because the Powers had come to the table wanting particular *things*, they did not accept the

³⁵⁷ As the official successor state to the Kingdom of Sardinia, which had been a victor of the Crimean War and a signatory to the Treaty of Paris, Italy had the right to be a direct part of discussions that involved revisions to the Crimean system. In addition, Italy of course had its own strategic concerns in the dispute.

³⁵⁸ See Ottoman Constitution (*Kanûn-ı Esâsî*), 23 December 1876. A translation prepared by Bogazici University can be found at the following hyperlink: <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1876constitution.htm>.

³⁵⁹ Such as decentralization of power away from the Sultan (Article 108), freedom of the press (Article 12), freedom of religion (Article 11), the establishment of a bicameral General Assembly with an elected Chamber of Deputies and an appointed Senate (Articles 42, 60, and 65-66), equality before the law (Article 17), public tribunals (Article 82), free education (Article 15), and state-mandated primary school (Article 114). See above reference for details.

³⁶⁰ See Resat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), 59.

Constitution as offering any path toward the territorial resolution they asked for. Thus the delegates reached an unbreakable impasse.

The Constantinople Conference ended inconclusively, with no party coming away with exactly what they wanted. In what way is it appropriate to think of this as a “failure” and in what way is it not? In some ways, the failure is simply that despite the institution of preliminary reforms in the Ottoman Empire, such as the Ottoman Constitution, a war ended up happening. Yet I contend that it is not convincing or useful to think of this as marking a failure of the diplomatic event or instance. Rather, the Conference, and the subsequent war, stand as a failure of two key components of diplomacy *itself*: on the one hand, the failure to properly apply the principle of collective intervention in the internal affairs of one of the members deemed a part of that collective; and, on the other, the failure of individual diplomats to understand the issues involved. The first of these principles is a central part of diplomacy—the link, as Clausewitz said, between the realm of politics and that of war.³⁶¹ If the political phase is misunderstood or mishandled, then the war phase becomes inevitable, which benefits certain parties even if their representatives pay lip service to the maintenance of peace. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878: the voices for war successfully manipulated this aspect of diplomacy to create a diplomatic case that war was the only avenue to the redress of grievances. The second principle is a simple reality: diplomats are *people*, and people can be fallible or incompetent. Such was the case with one of Britain’s two representatives, Lord Salisbury, as I will demonstrate

³⁶¹ That is, Carl von Clausewitz’s philosophical proof that “War is a mere continuation of policy by other means”—see *On War: A Modern Classic*, ed. F. N. Maude and J. J. Graham (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1911), 42.

below. Nevertheless, rather than think of this as somehow the failure of individuals like Salisbury to be up to the task, it is more illuminating (and troubling) to think of it as inevitable failing built into diplomacy as an institution and a set of practices.

It is clear that diplomatic episodes serve not only to seek a way toward peace, but also serve as a venue for war-minded diplomats to “exhaust” diplomatic avenues. Skilled diplomats can deploy this aspect of diplomacy to benefit an aim that is achieved by military action. The object then is to get the opposition to resist diplomatic intervention to the point that war can be put forth as the “only” option. It has been suggested that this was the express purpose of Russia’s Ambassador in Constantinople, Count N. P. Ignatiev, a noted advocate of Russian influence in the Balkans.³⁶² This may be an overly crude interpretation. It is more convincing to think of Ignatiev as goal-directed rather than warmongering: if the Balkans could be freed of Ottoman control and put under Russia’s wing by peaceful means, then all the better; but if it took war, then that was a necessary consequence of the overarching goal.³⁶³ Yet there was very little doubt among the other powers on this issue in general, even if this was partly based on the traditional Russophobia that had been influential in international circles since the Crimean War. For this reason, we can see that in the lead-up period to the war the Ottoman Empire became more and more hardened against external pressure, relying alternately on its previous promises of reform and its status as an sovereign state to resist being compelled by the other Powers. Those other than Russia and the Ottoman Empire could have better

³⁶² See for example, Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 283.

³⁶³ The noted scholar of Russian history, Sidney H. Harkness, may have termed it best when he said that Ignatiev and the other pan-Slavists were publicly working for the official policy of collective pressure and intervention while privately promoting not international, but “unilateral Russian action”—see *Russia, A History*, 6th ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 362.

confronted this challenge. Indeed, Stratford de Redcliffe, no Turcophile, may have said it best when he recommended that Europe wait for a while after the Ottomans declared their reforms, and then use official declarations rather than ultimatums to put pressure on the Ottomans if they proved to not be serious about enforcing the reforms and the Constitution they had promised they would follow.³⁶⁴ As de Redcliffe stated, “[the reforms] were adopted with strong pressure from without. Give them a fair trial and they may turn out to be a reality, and in that case perhaps the better for wearing the semblance of a voluntary act. Should they prove a failure, the pressure might surely be renewed with a better show of reason, and a better prospect of success.”³⁶⁵ In other words, it made little sense for the Great Powers to demand reforms from the Ottomans, only to charge the Ottomans with being insincere the moment they agreed to such reforms. From this vantage point, it appears that the very call for reform *itself* served a rhetorical purpose in justifying a conflict. As this relied upon continued resistance from the Ottomans, it is clear that the “failure” of the Constantinople Conference was useful to those calling for war rather than peace.

Indeed, securing peace was in no way a single-minded pursuit for either Russia or the Ottomans, no matter how loudly and often their leaders and representatives said it was. To delay war would not only jeopardize Russia’s claim that its intervention was to protect the Ottoman Christians from harm, but it would also equally take away the Ottomans’ justification for contending they were being pressured to the point of conflict. Of course, both sides had forces that wanted peace, but the calls for war were more powerful. In the case of Russia, the pressure for war came from the liberal class of

³⁶⁴ Stratford de Redcliffe, “The Eastern Question,” *The Times*, 2 February 1877, p. 6, col. A.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Panslavists who saw a war with the Ottoman Empire as a divine task in the process of bringing about a transnational Slavic, Orthodox federation; the aristocratic elite were much less interested in a fight that everyone knew would be costly in men, money, and international credibility.³⁶⁶ Yet to resist this sentiment risked a domestic disturbance directed against the government, so Russia's leaders could not appear to fold.³⁶⁷ In Turkey very few major politicians thought that the Ottoman Empire could withstand a Russian invasion unaided. Notably, Sultan Abdühamid II, who had replaced his brother Murad in September, was anxious about the prospect of war, especially so soon after beginning his rule.³⁶⁸ But just as in Russia, the sentiments of certain important factions could not be ignored. Midhat Pasha, the Grand Vizier, notably resisted calls to limit the power of the Ottoman central government, leading Salisbury to tell Derby that Midhat Pasha "would rather risk a war than the chance of assassination & the prospect of losing the Sultan's favour."³⁶⁹ Midhat Pasha, a proponent of modernization and a reform-minded former governor of Bulgaria, represented the cadre in Constantinople that perceived Westernization as a double-edged sword. He saw decentralization and provincial administration reforms as the only path forward, but he did not want to Westernize at the cost of the Ottoman Empire's loss of sovereignty.³⁷⁰ Certainly, the fact

³⁶⁶ See Bass, 243-247. Also, see Marlène Laruelle, "The Orient in Russian Thought at the Turn of the Century," in *Russia Between East and West: Scholarly Debates on Eurasianism*, ed. Dmitry Shlapentokh (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 9-38, especially pp. 21-25.

³⁶⁷ Bass, 297.

³⁶⁸ Derby noted that Salisbury wrote to tell him that the Sultan was "disposed to yield, but afraid of his ministers"—see *Derby Diaries*, 16 January 1877, 367.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 26 January 1877, 372. Ironically, Midhat Pasha was removed from office and exiled following the unsatisfactory end of the Conference. He was brought back into the government in 1878, as the governor of Syria, but was soon exiled again and died, most likely by assassination, in 1884—see Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 88.

³⁷⁰ Seton-Watson, 122-123.

that the opening article of the Ottoman Constitution stated that the Ottoman Empire “forms an indivisible whole, from which no portion can be detached under any pretext whatsoever” did not mesh at all with the specific territorial demands made by the Powers at the Conference, and the Powers’ lack of open appreciation of this problem limited the chances of agreement.³⁷¹

As was suggested above, Salisbury does not seem to have been really aware of the dynamics of the region. Whereas the other representative, Sir Henry Elliot, has been criticized for acting in an explicitly pro-Turk fashion (then³⁷² and since³⁷³), Salisbury has mostly escaped criticism, even though he deserves some. First, he seems to have been unable to understand the conditions of Midhat Pasha’s domestic pressures, preferring instead to deride the Ottoman representatives as “idiotic Turks” for their unwillingness to accept the terms of the Conference proposals or, as he complained to Lord Carnarvon, his efforts to “squeeze the Turk” to Britain’s ends proving unsuccessful.³⁷⁴ Additionally, he blamed a pro-Turkish caste in Constantinople, especially Conservative MP and noted Turcophile Henry Munro-Butler-Johnstone, for formulating “intrigues” to “persuade Turkey to resist us [i.e. Britain’s representatives] by saying that we must fight for them at last.”³⁷⁵ Salisbury typified the detached position of the diplomat so maligned by the critics of the *realpolitik* school of diplomacy—not just from those of the Gladstonian, anti-Turk view at home. Even other, more neutral members of the government felt this way. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Home, attached to a mission charged with surveying the

³⁷¹ Ottoman Constitution, 23 December 1876, Article 1.

³⁷² Recall, for example, the nearly ubiquitous calls for Elliot’s dismissal in the petition campaign during the Bulgarian Agitation, based specifically on the petitioners’ belief that he was criminally pro-Turkish.

³⁷³ Bass, 261-262.

³⁷⁴ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 22 December 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60758, f. 185-186.

³⁷⁵ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 25 December 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60758, f. 192.

Ottoman Empire's defensive capabilities, told his superior at the War Office, the Head of Fortifications General Sir Lintorn Simmons, that Salisbury's repeated claim in private at the Conference that Britain was "fighting for Turkey, not the Turks" might sound good as a talking point but did not make any actual sense.³⁷⁶ Home thought it irresponsible of Salisbury to hang his argument on this sophistic hook, as there was no way for the Ottomans *themselves* to distinguish between fighting for the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and fighting for the Turks as a people, especially when so much lip service was paid to the historical friendship between the two empires and their peoples.³⁷⁷

Thus the failure here is not only that the principle of collective pressure was not suited to the task yet was still applied, but also that Salisbury appears to have been completely uninterested in accepting the validity of the qualities and pressures of Ottoman politics and society. Those who did take these concerns into account, as Elliot was known to do in his time as Ambassador, were in Salisbury's estimation "stupid" and "capricious."³⁷⁸ Salisbury would certainly have agreed with another attendee, H. S. Northcote, when the Northcote rather artlessly deemed Elliot chief among the "dummies" at the Conference.³⁷⁹ This antagonism should arouse a certain degree of scholarly suspicion of Salisbury's alleged handle on Britain's Eastern policy. That so much of the strength of Britain's relationship with the Ottomans resulted from Elliot's success at preaching the close ties between Englishman and Turk does not seem to have entered into Salisbury's mind. Instead, Salisbury could both hold that "the Turk's teeth must be

³⁷⁶ Letter from Home to Simmons, 16 January 1877, *Simmons Papers*, FO 358/1, f. 614-617.

³⁷⁷ See letter from Home to Simmons, 8 February 1877, *Simmons Papers*, FO 358/1, f. 624-629.

³⁷⁸ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 13 September 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60758, f. 179-182.

³⁷⁹ Qtd. in Millman, 210—from a letter from H. S. Northcote to S. H. Northcote, 7 December 1876, *Northcote Papers*, BL Add. MS 50032, f. xx. H. S. Northcote was also the son of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, the recipient of this letter.

drawn: even if he be allowed to live”³⁸⁰ and wonder how Britain’s influence with the Porte came to be “at a very low ebb,”³⁸¹ without noticing any substantive link between the two propositions. It is not entirely clear why Salisbury felt an Ottoman diplomat could more easily ignore domestic interests and pressures than a British or a French or a Russian diplomat could. Perhaps due to his class and position Salisbury subordinated popular dynamics in the consideration of macro-level issues no matter the country in question, let alone the prototypical despotic society. This would help explain the sense one gets from the evidence that he seems to have been totally unaware that the Ottomans possessed a political elite or a civil society of any kind—forces that Ottoman diplomats might need to heed. In this instance, Elliot ends up the “dummy” because he tried to make policy mesh with Ottoman politics and the relationship he had built up with the Porte over the previous decade.³⁸² For that, Elliot’s efforts and character earned reproach in similar terms as had his Ottoman counterparts.

Finally, and the worst of his failures, Salisbury did not understand the consequences of a duplicitous diplomatic attitude toward British-Ottoman relations, especially the fact that many Ottoman Muslims appear to have believed in the official platitudes of friendship issued by British representatives. For example, shortly after the

³⁸⁰ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 13 September 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60758, f. 179-182.

³⁸¹ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 11 January 1877, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60759, f. 11-12.

³⁸² For example, Kemal Karpat says on p. 147 of his book (see above note for citation) that a prominent Istanbul paper, *Besiret*, prior to the war “pointedly stressed that many European newspapers sided with Russia and looked forward to an Ottoman defeat.” This would seem to mesh with the idea that Elliot’s pro-Turk reputation could be useful in improving negotiations with the Porte, but Salisbury appears to have rejected directly exploiting Elliot’s characterization diplomatically. Indeed, Derby wrote that Salisbury touched on this topic in a letter in late December, summing up the letter as follows: “The Turks are not easily made to believe that we are in earnest: Elliot himself is loyal, but all about him are not so, and they persuade the natives that Salisbury’s mission & his language are only a feint to deceive the Powers – which is an idea so consonant to Eastern ideas as to find ready acceptance”—see *Derby Diaries*, 1 January 1877, 362.

war began, a cohort of Colonel Home, Lieutenant-Colonel W. O. Lennox, wrote to General Simmons that all the Turks he met said they had no doubt the British would eventually join them against the Russians.³⁸³ Lennox added that there were rumors everywhere in the Ottoman Army that a British force had already landed and was rushing to join them at the front.³⁸⁴ Moreover, Salisbury himself encouraged the Ottomans' belief that there was a bond beyond diplomatic pretext, assuring Sultan Abdülhamid II during the Constantinople Conference that the "Queen and English People were earnestly desirous of helping him."³⁸⁵ Salisbury has a reputation as a shrewd diplomat, but here it appears that his most remarkable quality was an aloof ignorance of the deeper effects and implications of Britain's Eastern policy. Failing to appreciate the Ottoman government's position, he operated with the belief that a person must be stupid if he thought the friendship between Englishmen and the Turks were anything other than a lie that had lost its convenience. We must understand this viewpoint as a far-from-useful contribution to the resolution of the matter and the avoidance of war, the very mission with which he had been charged.

What Salisbury's conduct at the Constantinople Conference *was* useful for was the development of the notion that Britain needed to sever its ties with the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian empire-building and trust in the British Empire's ability to meet this challenge on its own. Indeed, he was relatively nonplussed at the Conference's result, writing to Carnarvon: "Apart from the question of immediate success, I think the Conference has done good. It has I hope made it impossible that we

³⁸³ Letter from Lennox to Simmons, 15 May 1877, *Simmons Papers*, FO 358/3, f. 386-387.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ Telegram from Salisbury to Derby, 15 January 1877, FO 881/3049.

should spend any more English blood in sustaining the Turkish Empire. And I hope it will make English statesmen buckle to the task of devising some other means of securing the road to India.”³⁸⁶ This echoed the beliefs of Carnarvon, who was a great proponent of Britain’s “splendid isolation,” or what might be better described as “independent imperialism”—the idea that the aims of the British Empire should be achieved by independent action and policy, avoiding any move that would tie Britain to another power formally.³⁸⁷ As Colonial Secretary, Carnarvon clearly brought this idea to the management of his portfolio in general and his response to the Eastern Crisis in particular. As he explained to Derby during the Bulgarian Agitation:

You know also—though I am afraid you’d not agree with it—my preference for acting more of and by ourselves and less in conjunction with others. The former seems to me to be the bolder and really the safer line: but circumstances have materially changed during the last few weeks: an action has become one of concert and combination and it is impossible to constantly shift the lines of policy. At the same time a moment may occur when you may be able to take the initiative without much risk and I would ask you to weigh the advantages of such a course which gives us greater independence of action and (as I believe) greater power of influencing results.³⁸⁸

From this perspective, we see that Salisbury’s participation in the destruction of Britain’s policy of Ottoman integrity fell in line with the camp in the Conservative Party that took Disraeli’s imperial ambitions to the next level. If the British Empire were to be as powerful and glorious as Disraeli’s rhetoric would have it, then the “old” methods of protectionism would have to be abandoned for newer, more independent, and stronger ones. Emphasizing the Ottoman Empire’s integrity, a key part of Disraeli’s worldview,

³⁸⁶ Letter from Salisbury to Carnarvon, 11 January 1877, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60759, f. 11-12.

³⁸⁷ The term “splendid isolation” does not quite get at the essence of that which it implies, as it identifies neither the nature nor the purpose of this isolation. I have substituted what I feel is a more useful term.

³⁸⁸ Letter from Carnarvon to Derby, 24 September 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60765, f. 104-107.

proved retrograde and senseless to this group, as Elliot had seemed to Salisbury; a policy based on Imperial Britain's exceptionalism was the way forward. This reorientation omitted the need to act in a certain way purely for diplomatic consistency or heritage, except when absolutely bound by formal agreement.³⁸⁹ Thus in involving itself in international affairs—no matter the subject—Britain should make sure to operate with the overarching goal of increasing the British Empire's latitude of movement, as when Carnarvon suggested that the logic behind any intervention in Ottoman affairs over the Bulgarian Atrocities should be to make Britain "somewhat more free to act in the East."³⁹⁰ In this way, the new ideology would present Britain in the international sphere as unapologetically driven by its own imperial interests. To be sure, after the war began "Salisbury & Co." (as Derby termed it in his diary³⁹¹) pushed against Disraeli's impulse to support the Ottoman Empire against Russia, unless it could be absolutely proven that there was a direct threat to British interests. If this threat materialized, intervention would be taken—but only then and only if it were feasible politically. And, like Carnarvon, Salisbury clearly thought if intervention should prove necessary, it should take a more "direct" and "territorial" form, a "*pied à terre*," rather than the easily subverted tactic of diplomatic discourse and arrangements, which Salisbury compared to "[floating] lazily down a stream."³⁹² This is an important development: it illustrates the

³⁸⁹ The appearance of following formal agreement was still all-important, however, as attested to by the sheer number of memos on Britain's treaty obligations that were prepared by Edward Hertslet, the Foreign Office's head librarian, during the Eastern Crisis. Hertslet wrote up around two dozen of these, the details of which can be found in the FO 881 series of the PRO, with the specific shelfmark range of FO 881/2763 (7 June 1875) and FO 881/3885 (22 July 1878).

³⁹⁰ Letter from Carnarvon to Salisbury, 9 September 1876, *Carnarvon Papers*, BL Add. MS 60758, f. 175-178.

³⁹¹ *Derby Diaries*, 21 April 1877, 392.

³⁹² Qtd. in Millman, 255—from a letter from Salisbury to Lord Lytton (the Viceroy of India), 9 March 1877, *Salisbury Papers*, D/xi/337.

tying together of a new idea and shape of the British Empire, the place of international diplomacy in promoting a clearly independent line of policy, and the role of Britain's political dynamics in the prosecution of the former two goals. Further, it shows an important foundation for the emerging recursive justification of the "new imperialism," with the defense of Britain's imperial interests being accomplished by expanding the empire territorially, leading to an expanded responsibility for imperial defense.

The unsatisfactory results of the Constantinople Conference led to stepped-up mobilization by Russia and the Ottoman Empire, further charging the international atmosphere. After the Conference all subsequent attempts to avoid war seem to have increased the chance of it happening. This trend is epitomized by the formulation and promulgation of the London Protocol of March 31st, 1877, which listed the provisions required from the Porte for Russia to stand its army down. The problem with the development of this protocol was two-fold. First, the whole affair was predicated on the notion that, as Russia's Foreign Minister, Prince A. M. Gorchakov, put it in a remarkable letter to Count Shuvalov (the ambassador in London) at the close of the Constantinople Conference, the Ottomans' "refusal...to the wishes of Europe" at the Conference had been intended purely for the purpose of avoiding reform; the question of Ottoman sovereignty did not enter into this equation.³⁹³ This was a convenient way to at once absolve all other players of any blame and to reiterate Russia's *casus belli*, allowing Russia to lay the blame squarely at the feet of the Ottoman Empire for the problem. Second, the Ottoman Empire was depicted as having European responsibilities but was

³⁹³ Gorchakov to Shuvalov (and communicated to Derby), 19 January 1877, "Circular of Prince Gortchakow, and Correspondence Respecting the Protocol on the Affairs of Turkey," No. 1, *Turkey, No. 8 (1877)*, Parl.Pap. ("Blue Books") C.1713 (1877), p. 2.

clearly excluded symbolically from the Concert of Europe, both on the grounds of lacking a clear claim to being “Great Power” and on its identity as a Muslim state. As Gorchakov termed it, the question was a “European one, which should not and cannot be solved but by the unanimous agreement of the Great Powers,” meaning that the Christian powers had to collaborate in devising a way of “inducing the Government of Turkey to govern Christian subjects of the Sultan in a just and humane manner.”³⁹⁴ The Ottoman Empire was seen through the stereotypical vision of the Turks as the untrustworthy, anti-Christian “inhuman menace” who never should have been allowed to participate in European affairs in the first place—a symbolic allusion to Russia’s indignation at the clearer inclusion of the Ottoman Empire in the Concert of Europe after the Crimean War.

As Gorchakov put it:

The Porte makes light of her former engagements, of her duty as a member of the European system, and of the unanimous wishes of the Great Powers. Far from having advanced one step towards a satisfactory solution, the Eastern question has become aggravated, and is at the present moment a standing menace to the peace of Europe, the sentiments of humanity, and the conscience of Christian nations.³⁹⁵

A meeting was called in London to put together the protocol that would enumerate the details of Great Powers’ demands. This meeting took place over the second half of March, as both the Ottoman and Russian Armies continued to move troops to the frontier. One would expect the Great Powers, if they were serious about the absolute avoidance of war, to ask for the Ottoman Empire’s presence at this meeting, but this is not what happened. Instead, the agreement was written up and signed by the five Great Powers plus Italy, and then forwarded to the Porte. Although it arrived in the form

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

of a diplomatic protocol (that is, an agreement supplementing official treaties), its effective shape was that of an ultimatum. To be sure, this is the only rational way that this document could have been written to represent the interests of those opposed to the Ottoman Empire's conduct, given that the document had to reflect Christian indignation at Muslim crimes—how could this statement be signed by the embodiment of the Islamic state? Logically, this requirement precluded the participation of the Ottomans in its formulation, but that did not mean that the Porte would accept it. It did not matter that Russia's demands—which made up the bulk of the Protocol—were “mildly & cleverly worded,” as Derby put it,³⁹⁶ or “extremely moderate,” as Millman characterizes Salisbury's opinion.³⁹⁷ The document made clear that the Ottoman Empire was not to be party to the document but rather subject to it. It stated that if the signatories' representatives in Constantinople discovered that the Ottoman government was not following the provisions of the Protocol, “they reserve to themselves to consider in common as to the means which they may deem best fitted to secure the well-being of the Christian populations, and the interests of the general peace.”³⁹⁸ This statement absolutely ensured that the Porte was to understand the Protocol as a directive from the group of states it was considered to be in congress with diplomatically. And yet the tactics of the Protocol's formulation and the form it took underlined the fact that the Ottoman Empire was regarded as not quite on the same level if it came to matters

³⁹⁶ *Derby Diaries*, 11 March 1877, 382.

³⁹⁷ Millman, 255.

³⁹⁸ “Protocol Relative to the Affairs of Turkey: Signed at London, March 31, 1877,” No. 1, 31 March 1877, *Turkey, No. 9 (1877)*, Parl.Pap. (“Blue Books”) C.1714 (1877), p. 2. The signers were the powers' representatives in London, plus Derby: Count G. H. zu Münster (Germany), Count F. F. von Beust (Austria-Hungary), Marquis G. D'Harcourt-Olonde (France), Derby (Britain), Count L. F. Menabrea (Italy), and Count P. A. Shuvalov (Russia).

regarding religion, democracy, and even a general European peace. On such issues, the Ottoman Empire was to be excluded from negotiations but subjected to any agreement.

The form and execution of the London Protocol of March 31st, 1877 seems to have been devised to deepen the conflict rather than alleviate it. It is difficult to apprehend exactly how it was supposed to receive anything other than an indignant response from the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the Protocol itself is less remarkable than the Porte's response to it, sent to the Ottoman Ambassador in London, Musurus Pasha, on April 9th, who gave it to Derby three days later.³⁹⁹ It is nearly a manifesto on reform, sovereignty, and the principles of international law, summing up with the dramatic statement: "Turkey feels that she struggles at the present moment for her very existence."⁴⁰⁰ The recipients of the dispatch could only see this comment as hyperbole, but its apparent desperation makes a certain degree of sense given the circumstances the Porte found itself in. As was stated above, the Protocol had not accepted the issue of Ottoman sovereignty as an important subject in discussions of how the Ottoman government could be "induced" to permit reforms in the form of territorial and administrative changes in the Balkans. Thus the Porte zeroed in on this disconnect and exploited it to justify its objection that the Protocol ultimately had "no legal validity in [the Porte's] eyes."⁴⁰¹ If the Ottomans were to have responsibilities to the Great Powers based on international laws (especially the 1856 Treaty of Paris), then it could not be bound to any agreement among the Concert of Europe that concerned Ottoman policies

³⁹⁹ The foreign ministries of the other five signatories received the same document at roughly the same time.

⁴⁰⁰ Telegram from Safvet Pasha (Ottoman Foreign Minister) to Musurus Pasha (Ottoman Ambassador at London), 9 April 1877 (communicated to Derby on April 12th), "Despatch from the Turkish Government on the Protocol of March 31, 1877," *Turkey, No. 12 (1877)*, Parl.Pap. ("Blue Books") C.1719, p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

unless it had been party to the agreement.⁴⁰² On this point, the notion that Ottoman reform should be watched over by the Protocol's signatories' representatives in Constantinople was a direct affront to Ottoman sovereignty, requiring the Porte's "formal opposition" on the grounds that "Turkey, as an independent State, cannot submit to be placed under any surveillance, whether collective or not."⁴⁰³

Moreover, the Porte protested that the Great Powers, regardless of the instance or evidence, seemed to imply that *any* reform the Ottoman government proposed was a premature, insufficient, or insincere solution to the problem. The writers hence deemed an "injustice" any agreement that "under the appearance of reform" required the Ottoman Empire to create divisions between religions, classes, and territories in contradiction to the Ottoman Constitution, or to admit direct and conspicuous foreign influence in Ottoman affairs via a formal system of intervention operated by the Powers' ambassadors in Constantinople.⁴⁰⁴ In a neat, yet somewhat specious and incomplete phrasing, the idea that the Constitution was not an appropriate or efficacious path toward reform was brushed aside:

If the objection be made that this system of reforms is too new to bear fruit immediately, it may be remarked in reply that that is an objection which could just as well have been made to the reforms recommended by the foreign Plenipotentiaries, and in general against every reform which, from the very fact that it is an innovation, cannot possess at its birth the efficacy that time alone can impart.⁴⁰⁵

No doubt the Porte was right about the logic behind the London Protocol's slighting of the Ottoman Constitution as an appropriate measure of reform, but the

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

authors completely miss—undoubtedly purposely—the point that the Constitution had not been considered an acceptable plenary reform because it explicitly forbade any territorial changes or special treatment of religious groups, which were the very things that the other Powers had called for and which Russia based its right of intervention on. Hence the dispatch’s authors defended their policy of non-action in regard to the Protocol based on items that they felt had been unrightfully discredited as a solution to the Crisis at the Constantinople Conference. This meant that they responded to pressure with counter-pressure, rejecting in order every demand the Protocol made and concluding that “immediate and simultaneous disarmament will be the only efficacious means of obviating the dangers with which the general peace is menaced.”⁴⁰⁶ Of course, on the contrary this blink-first attitude was bound to lead to nothing other than further deadlock in diplomatic negotiation and further troop mobilization. Indeed, as Derby said on receiving it from the Porte’s British Ambassador, Musurus Pasha, it was written with a “tone rather of defiance than on conciliation: evidently showing that war is thought inevitable at Constantinople.”⁴⁰⁷ Yet at the same time, Derby himself had commented earlier that the Protocol was dangerous because of the “vagueness of the language,”⁴⁰⁸ and he therefore must have agreed in some ways with the Porte that the Protocol’s provisions for the oversight of Ottoman affairs by the signatories’ were vaguely designed and potentially “a source of grave complication for the present as well as for the future.”⁴⁰⁹ Despite Derby’s private insights, however, neither the London Protocol nor the Porte’s response offered much hope of lessening the calls for war. Instead, all

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁰⁷ *Derby Diaries*, 12 April 1877, 389.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 11 March 1877, 382.

⁴⁰⁹ *Turkey, No. 12 (1877)*, Parl.Pap. (“Blue Books”) C.1719, p. 7.

diplomatic responses seem only to have solidified the impression of observers that the only recourse for both sides was to meet on the battlefield. The calls for war were soon answered. The Russian Army, already on the move, received word from St. Petersburg that the Emperor had declared war on the Ottoman Empire on April 24th. Just the day before, the Russians had crossed into Romania via the new Eiffel Bridge on the Prut River and were moving toward the Danube, the border of Ottoman territory.

The Siege of Plevna, the Victorian Public, and the British Empire

Despite vigorous activity on the diplomatic side, Wirthwein notes that the British public “greeted the failure of the [Constantinople] conference with a considerable degree of apathy.”⁴¹⁰ The same, oddly, seems to have gone for the London Protocol and the eventual declaration of war. It seemed that the cohorts of the Agitation now waited for some decisive action on the part of the Government, a reaction that had the effect of taking the steam out of the movement. Further, the need for pressure from the anti-Turkish camp was lessened by the fact that the Constantinople Conference and the London Protocol had bred a distinct feeling even among members of the Government, such as Salisbury and Carnarvon, that the Crimean system had to be reassessed and Britain’s strict insistence on Ottoman integrity abandoned.⁴¹¹ At the same time, the small amount of sympathy with Russia in the spirit of Christian brotherhood seen in the petition campaign during the Agitation was soon exhausted.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Wirthwein, 174.

⁴¹¹ Millman, 273. Millman notes that even Disraeli considered Ottoman partition imminent, and thus protecting its integrity would be to miss an opportunity to “anticipate such partition, or, at least, to prepare militarily to take part in it and to defend her interests.”

⁴¹² Bass, 297-299.

This allowed for a return to the default feeling in Britain of guarded animosity toward Russia—an “ineradicable antipathy” that was not neatly counterbalanced by unmitigated Ottoman sympathy.⁴¹³ In consequence, a deep suspicion of Russia’s goals developed concomitantly with the opinion that the British-Ottoman relationship should be reformulated. The movement of the conflict from diplomacy to open war changed the game even more. As the whole apparatus of diplomacy was designed to limit public opinion’s role as a mover of policy, the walls of confidential privilege had obscured the diplomatic process. Indeed, Gladstone seems to have complained during the winter and spring of 1876-1877 that he was unable to influence Parliament as regards diplomatic issues, saying that it should dissolved because the London press and club society supported diplomatic issues that “the real opinion of the people” did not reflect.⁴¹⁴ Elite-level diplomatic tactics having “failed” to protect British interests in the East and the spectacle of war now displayed for witness and commentary, public debate over how Britain should respond to the war, and what that response should mean in terms of Britain’s wider foreign and imperial policy, built to a fever pitch over the next year.

In contrast to their “apathetic” response to the diplomatic proceedings, Britons watched the war’s fast progress with rapt attention, especially when the serious fighting began in the summer of 1877. There were two fronts in the war: the primary one in the Balkans, mostly in Bulgaria; and a secondary one in the Caucasus. The Russian force was at first modest (around 200,000 men were in the first army that crossed into Ottoman

⁴¹³ Wirthwein, 174.

⁴¹⁴ *Derby Diaries*, 17 February 1877, 377. The phrase in quotation marks is Derby’s summary of Gladstone’s language.

territory⁴¹⁵), but eventually massive with nearly 750,000 battlefront troops, the bulk of whom were engaged on the Balkan front.⁴¹⁶ The Russians were assisted by a Romanian army of about 35,000 men,⁴¹⁷ led by Prince Carol I, who took the opportunity on May 22nd to declare Romania's formal independence from the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹⁸ After crossing the Danube in late June, there was the addition of around 10,000 Bulgarian Christian volunteers, dubbed the "Bulgarian Contingent," and similarly sized forces from Serbia and Montenegro.⁴¹⁹ Opposing them, the Ottomans were able to field only about 250,000 men in the Balkans and another 100,000 in the Caucasus.⁴²⁰ If the war stayed limited solely to Russia and its allies vs. the Ottomans, the outcome was not in question: Russia would win. Austria-Hungary had declared its neutrality, taking out the direct involvement of the other competing power in the Balkans. The question was whether any other power would come to the aid of the Ottoman Empire and so balance the conflict. As we have seen, the Ottomans believed that at least Britain's involvement

⁴¹⁵ Lionel W. Lyde and A. F. Mockler-Ferryman, *A Military Geography of the Balkans* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905), 149.

⁴¹⁶ Samuel Dumas, Knud Otto Vedel-Petersen, and Harald Westergaard list the number of Russian troops engaged in the campaign as 933,726, with a combined 737,355 as an "effective strength" figure for the two fronts of the war—see *Losses of Life Caused by War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 55.

⁴¹⁷ Lyde and Mockler-Ferryman, 151.

⁴¹⁸ Romania was an autonomous principality and, as an internationally-recognized constitutional monarchy, a *de facto* independent state, but it was legally dependent on the Ottoman Empire. This effectively had meant that Romania paid a yearly tribute to the Ottoman Empire and had certain legal responsibilities, similar to Egypt's relationship to the Ottoman Empire at this time. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin recognized Romania's formal independence, paving the way for the declaration of the Kingdom of Romania in 1881 with Carol I as king.

⁴¹⁹ David Stevenson, ed., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, Series F (Europe, 1848-1914), Volume 15 (Bulgaria, 1907-1914; Montenegro, 1895-1913)* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1989), 37. The Bulgarian Contingent is listed as being composed of 10,000 troops organized into three brigades, forming the core of the post-1878 Bulgarian Army.

⁴²⁰ Sir Frederick Maurice computes the Ottoman forces at 170,000 in Bulgaria and about 95,000 elsewhere in the Balkans—see *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877: A Strategical Sketch* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1905), 37-38. In the Caucasus the Ottomans had 100,000 troops split into one force of 60,000 manning a series of fortresses and another of 40,000 in an army group near Erzerum in eastern Anatolia—see Neville G. Panthaki, *Ground Warfare: An International Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. Stanley Sandler (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002), s.v. "Battle of Kars (16 November 1877)," 453.

would eventually become necessary. Otherwise the only possible outcome was the end of the Ottoman Empire.

This possibility worried Britons, given the fact that the Ottoman Empire would then cease to offer any protection against threats/competition along the route to India or, even more, serve as a buffer against a common border with the Russian Empire in the East. In retrospect, the former fear makes sense; Russia's prospective naval access to the Mediterranean would upset the economic and political status quo. The latter impression, a part of the broader "Great Game," lacks objective credibility, given the distance that Russia would actually need to cover to reach British territory in India. Furthermore, it imputed to Russia an unswerving devotion to a zero-sum fight with Britain over Eastern preeminence. In reality, Russia's anti-British, "Eastern empire" camp was not without competing and moderating factions.⁴²¹ However, what matters is what Britons *thought* was the reality of the situation, and it is clear from a review of their experience of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 that Russian imperial aspirations and Ottoman weakness in the face of it were considered by most Britons to be the twin threats facing the British Empire. As Queen Victoria said to the Cabinet, just prior to the declaration of war: "It is not the question of upholding Turkey; it is the question of British or Russian supremacy in the world!"⁴²² The response to the war was thus a mix of representations of both the threat of Ottoman dissolution and of Russian imperialism, while the protection

⁴²¹ See the section "Expansion in Asia" on pp. 82-89 of Hugh Seton-Watson's *The Decline of Imperial Russia 1855-1914* (New York: Praeger, 1952), especially pp. 87-89; also, Peter Hopkirk refers to Alexander II's reluctance to expand the empire at the expense of diplomatic relations in Europe or merely to satisfy pro-war factions, see pp. 380-386 of *The Great Game*.

⁴²² Qtd. in Bass, 298. This is from a letter from the Queen to the Cabinet on April 19th, 1877.

of the British Empire and the extension of its power became a more and more central concern.

Key battles in the war provided a venue for a discussion of the conflict's relationship to British interests and values, with an appreciable effect on how Britons decided the method and justification of their country's response. Nowhere do we see this dynamic more than during the centerpiece battle of the war, the famous Siege of Plevna, which lasted from July 20th – December 10th and cost nearly 100,000 total casualties.⁴²³ Frederick William von Herbert, a German soldier of British descent who fought on the Ottoman side at Plevna, wrote in 1895 that the preceding two decades had “rendered the name of Plevna famous for all times; have made it as dear to the Turk as Waterloo is to the Briton, as Thermopylae was to the ancient Greek; have constituted it the Ottoman national symbol of heroism, endurance, and sacrifice.”⁴²⁴ Undoubtedly this takes some artistic license, but the Siege of Plevna surely occupies a special place in the mythology of the entire Balkan region, especially in modern-day Bulgaria and Turkey. It also had this effect outside of the area. Von Herbert hit upon a pair of examples, the costly success of Waterloo and the tragic defense of Thermopylae, which neatly sum up the myth's resonance with British culture: an Ottoman defense that appeared so dramatic and heroic that it threatened to outshine the perseverance (and eventual success) of the Russian besiegers. Not just for the Ottomans and Bulgarians, but for the observer, the Siege of Plevna came to be the embodiment of the war, grinding forward day after day

⁴²³ 40,000 Russians and 25,000 Turks were killed or wounded in the siege, with 40,000 Ottoman soldiers captured. Of these 40,000 only 15,000 survived their period of captivity. See Byron Farwell, *The Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Land Warfare: An Illustrated World View* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), 653-654.

⁴²⁴ Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877: Written by One Who Took Part in It* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1895), vii.

for nearly the entire span of major combat operations. For Britain, the Siege of Plevna, in league with other major battles of the war such as the back-and-forth struggle for Shipka Pass in the Balkan Mountains, influenced the logic behind the growing calls for direct British involvement on the Ottoman side.

The shift toward widespread support of the Turks does not appear at first glance to be in consonance with the popular upheaval of the Bulgarian Agitation. Indeed, it appears to be exactly the other way around. But as we saw in Chapter One, the Agitation was not really a movement centered on the old anti-imperial liberal class *à la* John Bright and Richard Cobden, but rather was made up of those who believed in Britain's religious and moral supremacy in guiding world affairs—a pattern of thought that, I argue, directly contributed to the shape of Britain's later imperial attitude. Thus the siege and the wider war provided a key foundation for another (even a complementary) component of Britain's imperial development: a chaotic East desiring British strength and order. The remainder of this section takes a deeper look at the British public's response to the Siege of Plevna, its actors, and its consequences to provide an insight into how Britain came to treat its role in the East as simultaneously strong, martial, and material and moral, enlightened, and selfless.

The Siege of Plevna was the single greatest reason the course of the war did not go as was expected, a turn of events which contributed greatly to the startling casualty and refugee figures listed in the introduction. The siege's prolonged, bloody nature was the result of two factors: first, Russia had dawdled on its way south into Ottoman Bulgaria, which had allowed the Ottoman Army to move troops to Plevna and fortify it

strongly and comprehensively⁴²⁵; and second, Plevna occupied a physical and strategic location which Russia had to take to make any further advance toward Constantinople.⁴²⁶ Further, the Ottoman force at Plevna had been put under the command of Osman Nuri Pasha, a general who would prove himself during the siege to be a more gifted and dynamic military leader than any of his fellow Ottoman commanders.⁴²⁷ The Ottoman troops were also better outfitted than the Russian ones: the former carried modern breech-loading Martini-Peabody rifles and the latter Krnka rifle muskets converted to breech-loaders, while the defenders at Plevna had new Krupp steel breech-loading artillery and the attackers had old bronze guns.⁴²⁸ This gap in the quality of matériel deployed by each side during the siege went far to offset the disparity in numbers. The Russians eventually moved over 110,000 troops plus smaller forces from their allies in position to attack Plevna, while the Ottomans only had 40,000 at the highest point.⁴²⁹ Militarily, the Siege of Plevna was not a continuous, day-in-day-out struggle, but rather consisted of four major battles, the first and fourth marking the beginning and end of the siege. The second and third battles occurred on July 31st and September 11th, the latter marking the high point in terms of action and casualties. At the end of October the

⁴²⁵ Uyar and Erickson, 188.

⁴²⁶ If the Russians had gone around Plevna and continued their advance, their lines of communication would have been disrupted and harassed by the Ottoman force at Plevna. See Chapter IX, “Plevna—The supremacy of the rifle established—Earthworks,” of Henry Fleetwood Thuillier’s *The Principles of Land Defence and Their Application to the Conditions of To-day* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 145-166.

⁴²⁷ Reid, 325.

⁴²⁸ Thuillier, 145; Uyar and Erickson, 188. Martini-Peabody rifles were an American-made model of the famous Martini-Henry rifle, a single-shot breech-loading (as opposed to muzzle-loading) rifle, produced specifically for the Ottoman Army. They were extremely modern guns, having only been put into production in 1871. Their primary user was in fact the British Army, which carried the Martini-Henry from 1871-1888. Some of the more elite regiments of the Russian Army, such as the Guards and Grenadiers, were equipped with Berdan rifles, a better weapon than the Krnka, but almost all of the regular troops engaged at Plevna and in the wider war still carried the much less accurate, poorly-made Krnka—see Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877* (London: Osprey, 1994), 18.

⁴²⁹ Thuillier, 163. This figure is for October 24th, 1877, three months into the siege.

Russians found they could not sustain any more casualties, and so they decided to encircle the city and achieve victory by means of attrition.⁴³⁰ This strategy took an additional month and a half, but it did prove successful; Osman Pasha, wounded in the final battle on December 9th, surrendered the following day and went into captivity with the rest of his remaining troops.

The Siege of Plevna made the war accessible and understandable to the British observers. Whereas the Eastern Question and all its diplomatic interactions were complex, opaque, and fraught with intellectual angst, the siege provided a portrait of the situation that had clear-cut boundaries and offered provocative scenery. The first battle, on July 20th, was little more than a skirmish that preceded the realization that a more dramatic situation was to arise. It was after the second battle ended with a decisive Russian defeat that Britain sat up and took notice. On August 4th, the *Northern Echo* led with the headline, “The Russian Defeat at Plevna—Graphic Description of the Fighting—Whole Regiments Annihilated—Massacre of the Russian Wounded.”⁴³¹ The *Echo* then quoted a dispatch from Archibald Forbes, one of the *Daily News*’ correspondents attached to the Russian Army, which called upon the established tropes of savage, animal-like *bashi-bazouks* “swarming” (a favorite term in the article) down upon the fleeing Russian with “yells of bloodthirsty fanatical triumph,” hitting all the Orientalist hooks in a single phrase.⁴³² The imagery is further pro-Russian according to the proclivities of the author: earlier in the battle, *bashi-bazouks* are efficiently and “promptly bayoneted” by “muscular Russian arms,” a simple, brave, and cool-headed

⁴³⁰ The total encirclement was complete by October 24th, after which the Ottoman troops and the remaining inhabitants received no resupply or relief—see Thuillier, 163.

⁴³¹ “The Russian Defeat at Plevna,” *Northern Echo*, 4 August 1877.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

response to the animals who would later “[butcher] them without mercy” when night came.⁴³³ A later article from the *Echo* contains a similar allusion to the contrasting personalities of the opponents, the author saying the Russians “drove the Turks out of the shelter trenches at the foot of the mamelon, and pressed on vivaciously up its southern slope.”⁴³⁴ Even in this innocuous phrasing, it is the *spirit* of the Russians that is given credit for forcing the cunning Turk out of his hiding place.

Yet the siege produced too much evidence of Russian brutality toward Ottoman troops and Muslim civilians for this portrayal to hold up for very long. Indeed, even traditionally Turcophobic sources, like the extremely popular Liberal weekly, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*,⁴³⁵ by the middle of September had to acknowledge the actions of Russian troops, even if they maintained the attitude that the Turks were worse: “[The war] has been marked already by more foul deeds than any campaign of the present century—we had almost said, of modern times. The infamous Turk is the greater ruffian, the more inhuman monster; but Russia’s account is a dark one.”⁴³⁶ The Turk may remain “incorrigible” in refusing to alter his treatment of Christians, but if the Russians had the object of emancipating the Balkan provinces, *Lloyd’s* thought that “if the provinces to be emancipated are much longer the battle-fields of two semi-barbarous armies, there will

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ “The Siege of Plevna—Tuesday’s Fighting—Storming the Redoubts,” *Northern Echo*, 15 September 1877. A mamelon (French for “nipple”) is a breast-shaped hill with a fort at the top, forming the “nipple” to the observer from below.

⁴³⁵ The circulation of *Lloyd’s* at this time was at best estimate something over 500,000; in 1879 it averaged 612,902 copies sold a week—see Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspaper* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 52. This was almost twice the figures of the other two high-selling weeklies, *Reynolds’s Newspaper* and the *Weekly Times*, which sold 350,000 and 300,000 respectively per week—see Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 21.

⁴³⁶ “The Siege of Plevna,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 16 September 1877.

be no Christians to emancipate.”⁴³⁷ The Russians were thus ruled out as the appropriate party to bring about Christian relief in the Balkans. Furthermore, they seemed to lack the ability necessary to take care of their own troops. As *Lloyd's* said in the aftermath of the disastrous third battle of the siege, in a twist on the earlier image of the strong, brave Russian soldier, Russia's “leonine troops have been led to destruction by asinine commanders. In this mismanaged war it would seem that the killed lie unburied, and the wounded unattended.”⁴³⁸ For Britain, this scene would have been a cruel facsimile of the tragic experience of the Crimean War, where the fight against disease had inspired the mythology of the Victorian heroine, Florence Nightingale.⁴³⁹ We might juxtapose this fact with *Lloyd's* call for medical intervention, with Britain leading the way with a “battalion of medical volunteers, by way of example to the continental nations.”⁴⁴⁰ This hints at the answer to the obvious question hanging in the air of who should replace the Russians as bringing peace, protection, and stability in the East.

The role of the press in determining the war's effect on Britain cannot be overemphasized. The effect of correspondence from the war zone was further enhanced by the use of telegraphic cables for transmitting copy, a practice that had begun during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) and that gave readers a sense of immersion in the

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ “The Disaster at Plevna,” *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 September 1877.

⁴³⁹ Like in the Crimea, in the Russo-Turkish War deaths due to disease were three or four times in excess of those due directly to combat. Based on Russian military records, Friedrich Prinzling calculated 23,752 Russian deaths due to four major fevers (typhoid, gastric, typhus, and relapsing) for just the march from Russia to the Danube, prior to any actual fighting! See p. 288 of Friedrich Prizing's *Epidemics Resulting from Wars*, ed. Harald Westergaard (Oxford: Clarendon, 1916). He further says that even though Ottoman troops also suffered from disease, it was not as bad as they “were better nourished and their camps were kept clean,” the latter a major prerequisite for reducing the spread of disease—see p. 290.

⁴⁴⁰ “The Disaster at Plevna,” *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 September 1877.

news as they were provided with not just recent, but even *current* information.⁴⁴¹ Britons thus bore witness to the siege's progress from an active, ongoing perspective, rather than with the dispassion of hindsight. In a sense, readers *had* to consider themselves concerned, as the efficiency of the press in providing up-to-date information precluded the excuse of not having learned of an affair until after it was too late. The quality of concern and involvement provided (or mandated) by the British press is embodied in the visual medium provided by illustrated papers, which during 1877 came to regard the war as their paramount object. A common format for war coverage in illustrated papers of this time was to place a number of contiguous images on a two-page spread, with captions for description; a more detailed write-up on what the images depicted would follow on subsequent pages.⁴⁴² The effect was to immerse the audience in the conflict, much in the same way as one is now exposed to war footage in film or television.⁴⁴³ The two major illustrated weeklies, the *Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic*, both used this style. For example, on September 1st *The Graphic* published a spread of eight wood engravings titled "With the Russians—The Fighting in the Shipka Pass."⁴⁴⁴ The juxtaposition of images of military locations (such as "The Heights of Shipka"), with

⁴⁴¹ See pp. 141-142 of Roger T. Stearn's "War Correspondents and Colonial War, c. 1870-1900," in MacKenzie, 139-161.

⁴⁴² This form was also used for other topics, but it is most commonly seen in the illustration of complex and acute affairs, of which war is a primary example. The next most common example that exhibits this format is probably the depiction of a royal ball or procession.

⁴⁴³ An interesting insight on this topic is provided by Rudolf G. Wagner, who, in his examination of the history of Chinese illustrated newspapers, refers to the global significance of the fact that during the Crimean War illustrated papers tied their news narrative directly to the images (he says the "Russian-Ottoman War on the Crimea (1876-1878)," which is surely a garbled reference to the Crimean War, as it was during the Crimean War that the *Illustrated London News* first employed this practice), thereby acting as a foundation for "the universal grammar of the moving image" further developed into film, and then by logical extension into television—see p. 106 of his chapter, "Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*," in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 105-174.

⁴⁴⁴ "With the Russians—The Fighting in the Shipka Pass," *The Graphic*, 1 September 1877, col. A, p. 201. See Figure 4 for image.

those of quiet scenes (“Russian Officers in a Mill Stream at Hainkoi”), and of battle (“Cossacks Saving Wounded Bulgarian Volunteers During the Battle of Yeni Sagra”) offered a kaleidoscope vision of the war, its participants, and its effects. The contrast between the bemused scene in the image titled “In a Turkish Bath at Kezanlik—Cossacks Transformed into Turks” and that in the grotesque engraving, “Heads of the Russian Wounded Decapitated by the Turks after the Battle on the Heights,” is especially striking. The former is intended obviously to elicit a smile and the latter a feeling of disgust; the reader is left to ponder the meaning of this emotional contrast. Britons in the mold of Archibald Forbes may have taken it as evidence of Russian gallantry in the face of the “unspeakable Turk,” while others might see it as evidence of the consequences of the foolhardy encouragement of Russia’s *casus belli* by British “Atrocitarians,” as the notably anti-Russian Queen Victoria did.⁴⁴⁵

The Siege of Plevna was of particular interest to the illustrated papers because so many themes could be contained in one story. Some of these themes were intentionally political and some merely reflected general cultural values. Often, it is difficult to distinguish between the two. For example, Orientalist images abound, but are not always visibly negative. More than anything, the primary motive was to depict (and sell) the spectacle of combat. In this sense, the illustrations and other graphic descriptions in print were clearly designed to resonate with Victorian attitudes toward war and heroism, but the harder question is how to tease out the variety of ways that Britons responded to these themes. Certainly, the illustration of the conflict in at-the-scene detail imparted to the papers’ British audience that an affair of great gravity was taking place. The impression

⁴⁴⁵ Bass, 298.

one gets, then, is that the papers attempted to connect such remote events with British values and the British experience. Readers could get involved in the war themselves, merely by spending a few pennies. By the same token, illustrations made it difficult to leave the problem in the abstract: other people's death and tragedy sucks one in.

Indeed, the human elements of the siege were a quotidian British presence. Some papers put out special issues on the war, such as the *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, which devoted the entire September 22nd edition to documenting the height of the siege, beginning with a full-page image titled, "Gallant Defence of the Grivica Redoubt by the Turks: Victory and Death of the Russian Colonel," following up with several more engravings and a description of the action.⁴⁴⁶ The front-page image depicts the heroic charge of Russian troops into Turkish fire, the former gazing upward at the "Russian Colonel" who is arranged in the classic trope of the mortally-wounded leader: sword out, holding a tattered Russian standard atop the scarp before the redoubt itself,⁴⁴⁷ his cap falling off his head as his body is thrown back by a bullet that killed him at the precise moment of triumph. Opposing the Russians, half the Turks are arranged in a firing line, while the other half hustle to the rear to continue the fight. Their short vests and baggy "Zouave" pants are clearly visible, an easily recognizable Oriental image,

⁴⁴⁶ *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 22 September 1877, p. 179.

⁴⁴⁷ A redoubt is a fortification built outside a main fort that provides a strong, enclosed, partially self-sufficient defensive structure, complete with its own artillery and a body of troops. In combination with other redoubts and the firepower of the artillery in the main fort, a redoubt hinders the advance of an attacker across otherwise clear ground in front of the main fort. If constructed properly, a set of redoubts requires attackers to focus first on taking all the redoubts in a wide area before they can attack the main fort directly, with the object being that an attacker will be exhausted by the effort and have to withdraw or circumvent the area, disrupting and weakening their line. A scarp is the side of a defensive ditch in front of a fort or redoubt which is closest to the interior of the fort or redoubt.

though no longer a standard uniform.⁴⁴⁸ Inset into the picture are two small images: to the left, a sketch of Alexander II on a viewing platform titled, “The Czar’s Grand Stand”; to the right, an image of a Russian artillery observer on a 60-foot ladder titled “A Perilous Perch.”⁴⁴⁹ In an era before the advent of photography in newspapers, fixing the reality of a scene in stark detail, this kind of image must have evoked a different, perhaps unique response: in its composition, the drama of the scene can be played out in one’s mind according to one’s own imagination of the possibilities. When one turns the page, one is presented with a quiet scene: a local Muslim soldier bidding farewell to his child, “Good-by, Papa!,” his rifle on his shoulder and his be-turbaned neighbors in witness of the touching exchange.⁴⁵⁰ Turn the page again, and one is transported “Inside a Turkish Redoubt,” reversing the vantage point established in the front page; the reader now joins the Turks in defense against the Russians with whom he had so recently charged the redoubt.⁴⁵¹

Given the various ways one could respond to these images, we are left with the difficult task of gauging how the British public came to regard the conflict as an occasion for flexing British might on the side of the Ottomans, who so recently had inspired such popular indignation. Clearly one of the main considerations is that papers written for a Liberal audience tended to depict the Russians as being in the right and the Ottomans as in the wrong, while Conservative papers presented the reverse. These biases were based

⁴⁴⁸ This image may have been accurate if the defenders of the redoubt were rural troops from the Balkans, many of whom were outfitted in this type of uniform. On the other hand it may have been merely an Orientalist take on the scene, as the regular Ottoman Army’s uniforms were much like those of the other European armies, with the notable exception of the use of the fez as headwear. For images of the standard-issue uniform of this time, see Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 175.

⁴⁴⁹ See Figure 5 for image.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180. See Figure 6 for image.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181. See Figure 7 for image.

on broader fault lines in British society: a Liberal paper would also tend to support Gladstone's rhetoric on any topic and decry Disraeli's, and vice versa for a Tory paper. Yet the Russo-Turkish War blurred these lines in significant ways, with the result that several significant Liberal papers began to sway toward the anti-Russian side. We have already seen a suggestion of this change with *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, but a vastly more significant example is the *Daily Telegraph*, the largest-circulation daily in London at 200,000-250,000 copies a day.⁴⁵² The *Daily Telegraph* was famous for coining and popularizing the phrase "the People's William" as a handle for Gladstone,⁴⁵³ and its principal manager, Edward Levy-Lawson, made sure that its commentary always proceeded from a Gladstonian angle.⁴⁵⁴ This was part of the paper's cachet with its readers and, thanks to Gladstone's broad popularity, a component of its own rapid success.⁴⁵⁵ After Gladstone lost the election of 1874 and entered his "retirement" phase, the relationship between him and the *Daily Telegraph* began to weaken; it worsened further after the paper supported the Suez Canal shares purchase at the end of 1875.⁴⁵⁶ It was during the war, however, that the *Daily Telegraph* went in a totally opposite direction, becoming one of the most vocal anti-Russian, pro-Ottoman integrity voices there was.⁴⁵⁷ For this end, the paper tied itself more firmly to the Conservatives and,

⁴⁵² Andrew Milner, *Literature, Culture and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: UCL Press, 2005), 105. Milner lists the figures as 200,000 per day in 1870 and 250,000 per day in 1880.

⁴⁵³ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 136.

⁴⁵⁴ Matthew, 230-231; Koss, 200. The owner was his father, Joseph Moses Levy (1812-1888), but most control had by this time been delegated to Levy-Lawson.

⁴⁵⁵ As Ian St. John notes, it was the *Daily Telegraph* that led the other papers who supported Gladstone in gratitude for his work to repeal the stamp duty in 1855 and the duty on paper in 1861, which made newspaper production further profitable—see *Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem, 2010), 141.

⁴⁵⁶ Koss, 201.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 201-203.

more precisely, to Disraeli's call for a serious consideration of direct intervention on the side of the Ottomans—not for the Turks' sake, of course, but for the British Empire's.

During the course of the war, the *Daily Telegraph* became the popular press's representative for imperial defense, appropriating the familiar phrase “British interests” and replacing it again and again in its columns with a theretofore less familiar maxim, “imperial interests.”⁴⁵⁸ This modification was not done over-subtly, as the paper took a boldly Russophobic, imperialist line on almost every issue. This tactic was by its leaders' design. As Levy-Lawson told Disraeli's private secretary, Montagu Corry, a month after the war started, “I am in a big fight and I know how to use my guns... The country will defend its interests. But these interests must have champions with courage in their hearts and bold and national utterances on their lips.”⁴⁵⁹ These were rallying cries for direct British action to protect its empire, to be incited by tapping into and exploiting the totem of “the British nation” and thus, as Richard Koebner and Helmut Schmidt put it, “they were ‘imperial’ utterances.”⁴⁶⁰ The *Daily Telegraph*'s chief editor, Edwin Arnold (who had replaced the staunch Gladstonian Thornton Leigh Hunt in 1873 and was a well-known Orientalist scholar, poet, and strong supporter of the Ottoman Empire), helped Levy-Lawson in this task.⁴⁶¹ During the war, Levy-Lawson and Arnold worked to make sure that the *Daily Telegraph* preached the Ottoman cause in a suitably dramatic fashion, which included healthy doses of Russophobia and scare tactics over

⁴⁵⁸ Richard Koebner and Helmut D. Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word 1840-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 127.

⁴⁵⁹ Qtd. in Koss, 202. This is from a letter from Levy-Lawson to Corry from May 17th, 1877.

⁴⁶⁰ Koebner and Schmidt, 127.

⁴⁶¹ Arnold published a famous poetic account of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, *The Light of Asia*, in 1879. It went through 60 editions in Britain—see “Arnold, Sir Edwin (1832-1904),” J. P. Phelan in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/view/article/30455>.

presumed Russian designs on the British Empire's territory. It was not a slow development: already in June, the *Daily Telegraph* was stirring up fears among its readers that Russia's object was to "hoist the Imperial standard of Holy Russia on the Mosque of St. Sophia";⁴⁶² in July it recommended Britain's "immediate occupation" of Gallipoli to protect its interests from being threatened by Russia;⁴⁶³ and in late October it called upon the powerful mythology of the Great Game (of which we saw the Queen was an adherent), saying that with the war going badly for the Ottomans, soon "the Russian ought to prove master" over Asia Minor "if, indeed, these limits can now be said to content him."⁴⁶⁴ Of course, the insinuation was that the "Russian bear" would never be content until the British Empire fell and India echoed with the hoots of Cossacks dancing the *Hopak*.

This marked a point of departure for the *Daily Telegraph* and the dynamic of British news. Indeed, by the 1880s the *Daily Telegraph* was fully a Conservative paper.⁴⁶⁵ In fact, it might even be thought of as *the* paper of the "new imperialism" (continuing to lead in circulation until it was overtaken in 1900 by the *Daily Mail*), its popularity due in no small part to the exciting, pro-imperial reportage provided by war correspondents like Bennet Burleigh.⁴⁶⁶ For the *Daily Telegraph* to go Tory in 1877, then, was a major event, as for up to this point almost all of the high-circulation papers were Liberal, making British "public opinion" effectively Liberal opinion.⁴⁶⁷ Suddenly, the most popular Liberal daily took a Tory line. The *Daily News* and the *Northern Echo*

⁴⁶² *Daily Telegraph*, 9 June 1877.

⁴⁶³ *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1877.

⁴⁶⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 18 October 1877.

⁴⁶⁵ It is still the most significant Conservative daily in Britain, plus the highest-selling newspaper (excluding tabloids).

⁴⁶⁶ Stearn, 149-150.

⁴⁶⁷ St. John, 141.

could not take up the slack nor could any of the Liberal penny weeklies, like *Lloyd's* or *Reynolds's*. Meanwhile, *The Times*, generally known as a centrist, moderately Liberal organ, vacillated on the issue of British intervention in the war, offering no clear voice on the matter.

The British public therefore received a message skewed in favor of intervention, using the logic of the protection of Britain's cherished route to India and its territories in the East, and bolstered by an evocation of the robust Russophobia present in British society. To those who opposed this viewpoint, the eventual, somewhat unspectacular triumph of the Russians at Plevna in December 1877 was dampened by how long it took, by the reports of Russian atrocities, and by the growth of the hero cult of Osman Pasha—the noble barbarian redeemed by chivalric, “European” acts such as his famously dignified meeting with the Czar after the battle ended, the Russian officers yelling “Bravo! Bravo! Osman!”⁴⁶⁸ Even the deeply anti-Turk *Reynolds's Newspaper* had to admit that “no soldiers could have fought better, and no general could have done more than Osman Pasha. His courage and resource were conspicuous, and could only be exceeded by the unspeakable baseness of the cause which claimed him as a soldier.”⁴⁶⁹ The expectation of praise for Osman Pasha and the men under his command, whether as a Russophobe's ally or a kind of Liberal's anti-Oriental Oriental, made anti-Turk and thus anti-intervention commentary somewhat like yelling against the wind. Even the *Daily News*' rejoicing at the final “impotence” of the “wild beasts” at Plevna,⁴⁷⁰ or *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper's* view of the siege as evidence that the Turk had “lost none

⁴⁶⁸ “Osman Pasha Brought before the Czar at Plevna,” *The Graphic*, 5 Jan 1878, col. A, p. 9. See Figure 8 for image and caption.

⁴⁶⁹ “The Fall of Plevna,” *Reynold's Newspaper*, 16 December 1877.

⁴⁷⁰ “The Operations against Plevna,” *Daily News*, 3 December 1877.

of his old warlike brutalities,”⁴⁷¹ seemed weak and retrograde after all the praise heaped upon Osman Pasha and his cohorts.

Regarding the question of whether a British invasion force should land in the Balkans to protect Constantinople from falling, the belief that, as *Lloyd's* put it, “the Government should adopt a masterly inactivity” could not possibly mesh with the increasingly violent mood of the populace.⁴⁷² Under such circumstances, the rapid popularity of the pro-intervention music hall song “By Jingo!” makes complete sense. Its lyrics, written in early 1878 by G. W. Hunt and performed by the music hall grandee billed as “The Great MacDermott,” perfectly summed up the amalgamated viewpoint of the broad Conservative constituency—for the conservative workingman in the shipyard, the clerk in the City of London, and the Tory peer alike:

The “Dogs of War” are loose and the rugged Russian Bear,
All bent on blood and robbery has crawled out of his lair.
It seems a thrashing now and then, will never help to tame,
That brute, and so he’s out upon the “same old game.”
The Lion did his best to find him some excuse,
To crawl back to his den again. All efforts were no use.
He hunger’d for his victim. He’s pleased when blood is shed.
But let us hope his crimes may all recoil on his own head.

Chorus:

We don’t want to fight but by jingo if we do,
We’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, and got the money too!
We’ve fought the Bear before and while we’re Britons true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.

The misdeeds of the Turks have been “spouted” through all lands,
But how about the Russians, can they show spotless hands?
They slaughtered well at Khiva, in Siberia icy cold.
How many subjects done to death we’ll ne’er perhaps be told.
They butchered the Circassians, man, woman yes and child.
With cruelties their Generals their murderous hours beguiled,
And poor unhappy Poland their cruel yoke must bear,
While prayers for “Freedom and Revenge” go up into the air.

⁴⁷¹ “The Fall of Plevna,” *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 16 December 1877.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

May he who 'gan the quarrel soon have to bite the dust.
The Turk should be thrice armed for "he hath his quarrel just."
'Tis said that countless thousands should die through cruel war,
But let us hope most fervently ere long it shall be o'er.
Let them be warned: Old England is brave Old England still.
We've proved our might, we've claimed our right, and ever, ever will.
Should we have to draw the sword our way to victory we'll forge,
With the Battle cry of Britons, "Old England and St George!"

Normally, scholars cite only the chorus of "By Jingo!" But the verses' impeachment of Russia's claim to the moral high ground in their conflict with the Turks is much more illuminating of the vital shifts in public opinion that took place during the war. The lyrics explicitly cite the trifecta of Russia's massacre of Circassian Muslims, its sacking of the Khiva Khanate in 1873, and the plight of Russian Poland against the Ottoman crimes that had gripped British society for the preceding two years. Ironically, it is from the cult of Osman Pasha and this chauvinistic, nationalistic song that we get some of the clearest and most unmitigated pro-Turkish sentiment—an opinion we might even characterize as contrary to the Orientalist refrain that would place the Ottoman Empire in every negative position vis-à-vis the West. Just as it could be popular to denigrate Turkish rapacity, it was popular to speak of a just conflict with a rapacious Russia. Such a discourse of a corrupt Russia of course had its legacy in "patriotic" public outrage during Crimean War (and perhaps even before⁴⁷³), but Jingo Russophobia amplified such views and gave Russian imperialism new, more "criminal" texture in the British mind.

Indeed, during the war a spate of anti-Russian books, pamphlets, and speeches in Parliament on the Eastern Question attempted to combat Liberal accusations of Ottoman

⁴⁷³ John Howes Gleason traces the foundations of British Russophobia to the first decade after the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, focusing on the Near Eastern Crisis of 1839-1841 as where it began to be an acute aspect of British thought—see *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain: A Study in the Interaction of Policy and Opinion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 16.

misrule in just this manner, fighting fire with fire by exposing Russia's transgressions. In March 1877 Lord Dorchester asked Parliament why the reports of the Bulgarian Atrocities in the diplomatic Blue Books were not read "side by side" with the "list of horrors that occurred in Poland in 1863, and the like of which [Dorchester] believed had also occurred in Circassia."⁴⁷⁴ Likewise, even the Liberal Lord Campbell claimed that "the influence of Russia is wrapt up in the corrupt administration of European Turkey" and thus crimes like the "annihilation" of Poland were indicative of how Russia sought to take over management of the Balkans from the Turks.⁴⁷⁵ Tory Lord Dunraven went further, saying Europe owed the "best part of our boasted civilization" to Moorish writers and scientists and that "however black the pages of Turkish history might be, one could find something tangible to set up against it. But...what had we but empty protestations and high-sounding Christian professions with which to balance the long list of items under such headings as Poland, the Caucasus, and Khiva?"⁴⁷⁶

Turcophiles in the tradition of David Urquhart also showed themselves.⁴⁷⁷

William Wight, a retired vicar and Orientalist who wrote from a Chislehurst house he called the "Arab's Tent," wrote that if Russia demanded constitutions for the Ottoman Christian principalities, it was hypocritical not to grant a constitution to its own people and its subsidiary Catholic and Muslim states.⁴⁷⁸ In the 1877 revised version of their book *Twelve Years' Study of the Eastern Question in Bulgaria* S. G. B. St. Clair and

⁴⁷⁴ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.232, col.1745 (12th March 1877).

⁴⁷⁵ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.238, col.278 (25th February 1878).

⁴⁷⁶ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.238, col.281 (25th February 1878).

⁴⁷⁷ See discussion of Urquhart and the Foreign Affairs Committees in Chapter One.

⁴⁷⁸ William Wight, *Cross and Crescent: A Word for the Mohammedan in the Present War* (London: Shaw & Sons, 1877), 9. A description of Wight and his proclivities is found in John Ross Macduff, *The Author of "Morning and Night Watches": Reminiscences of a Long Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1896), 230-231.

Charles Brophy called the “true Bulgarian” a “lazy drunkard and a fanatical fetishist,” deeming the Bulgarian Orthodox faith a “secret society” allied with the Russian state that was “not less dangerous, and but little more scrupulous, than Fenianism.”⁴⁷⁹ The explorer, Tory MP, and naval officer Captain (later Admiral) Bedford Pim thought that the Turks were “more sinned against than sinning,” and that the Bulgarian Atrocities were surpassed not only by Russia’s actions in Poland and Central Asia but by Prussian soldiers in France and, significantly, by “England in India and Jamaica!”⁴⁸⁰ An annotated 1875 letter in a book published by Major-General Henry Hope Crealock in 1878 concurred, saying that Britons who were upset over Turkish massacres should keep things in perspective:

These gentlemen, who have such sensitive feelings, and who are so easily moved by the accounts of the sufferings of their Christian brethren in Turkey, would do well to remember all that took place in Poland, in India, in the West Indies, in America during the war, and elsewhere, during rebellions which have taken place in our day. Every one deplored them. Nothing could be more terrible than the events which occurred in America and India on both sides.⁴⁸¹

Writing in 1878, Crealock felt no need, in light of the Bulgarian Atrocities, to amend his view on the tactics Ottomans used to suppress insurrection, commenting in the retrospective on his 1875 letter merely that the Bulgarian Agitation allowed Russia to attempt to “induce Europe to *coerce* Turkey to accept Russian aggression” after Russia’s case for war began to whither.⁴⁸² The idea of a high-ranking British officer (a veteran of

⁴⁷⁹ S. G. B. St. Clair and Charles A. Brophy, vi and 222 respectively.

⁴⁸⁰ Bedford Pim, *The Eastern Question, Past, Present and Future*, 2nd ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1877), 43 and 14 respectively.

⁴⁸¹ Henry Hope Crealock, *The Eastern Question, and the Foreign Policy of Great Britain: A Series of Papers from 1870-1878* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1878), 115.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 117-118. Emphasis original.

the Indian Mutiny, no less⁴⁸³) impugning, even rhetorically, the conduct of the British army in India and in Jamaica offers a compelling contrast to the typical “East/Muslim = bad, West/Christian = good” logic so closely associated with European thought. The fact that the pro-Turk claims made are just as vigorously and categorically made as those proceeding from hyperbole making out the Ottoman Empire to be the greatest evil entity in human history shows us that the nature of British thought on Eastern matters was far more contested than has been appreciated fully. The British mind on these matters was plastic, even changeable, and often less determined by the dominant categories we ascribe to the era than by situations that elicited an intellectual or political response. British popular opinion adapted to what mattered at the moment, and usually what most closely affected Britain’s place in the world. This meant that the British public felt no cognitive dissonance in overriding negative conceptions about the Ottoman Empire, the East, and Easterners if the consequences of carrying such ideas to their logical conclusions threatened to damage Britain’s position (or just make Britain “look bad”) on the global stage. As Jimmie Cain has shown, British Russophobia could be linked to a host of other imperial and domestic issues and, if Russian imperialism had hurt the Turks, then for many Britons this was cause enough to offer support to the Ottoman Empire, if only temporarily.⁴⁸⁴ If British interests or prestige were on the line, most Britons almost immediately avowed that the East was not such a bad place after all.

⁴⁸³ See E. I. Carlyle, “Crealock, Henry Hope (1831-1891),” rev. M. G. M. Jones, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/view/article/6659>.

⁴⁸⁴ Jimmie Cain, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia: Evidence of the British Fear of Russia in Dracula and The Lady of the Shroud* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006), 4-5.

Indeed, when it came to matters of empire, authority, and historical stereotypes, even a vigorous Turcophobe like Archibald Forbes had to admit that the implications of advocating Balkan Christian nationalism went beyond what Britain and the rest of Europe were willing to stomach.⁴⁸⁵ Forbes wrote in November 1877 that to base one's support of Bulgarian independence on the idea that the Ottomans were artificial rulers in Europe meant one must also accept that "there logically follows a revolution in the face of the world, and all but universal chaos."⁴⁸⁶ He dramatically laid out the next steps for the British Empire should Britons accede to the idea that a national group had a fundamental right to kick out its most recent overlords:

We must quit India, and bid an apologetic adieu to the Maori, the Kaffir, and the Hottentot, the Spaniard from whom we wrested Gibraltar, the Dutchman from whom we masterfully took the Cape. We are to take ship from the jetties over which frown the Heights of Abraham [i.e. Quebec City], and leave the French *habitants* and the remnant of red men at Cacknawaga to settle between them the ownership of Canada.⁴⁸⁷

Forbes leaves the reader to ponder the hypocrisy of advocating nation-building by proxy while maintaining an empire based upon constructed (or even fictional) claims of exclusive territorial right, with most places incorporated by force of arms even as the Ottoman Balkans had been hundreds of years prior. Meanwhile, the redemptive spectacle of Ottoman fighting at the defense of Plevna made opinions reminiscent of the Bulgarian Agitation seem anachronistic and blind to the implications to the British Empire of supporting Russia in the war. When in December 1877, just as Plevna was falling, Reverend Malcolm MacColl responded to Forbes' claims by arguing that

⁴⁸⁵ Archibald Forbes, "Russians, Turks, and Bulgarians—At the Theatre of War," *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, November 1877, 561-582.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 575.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Russia's fight against the Turks was "one of the most righteous wars recorded in history," this opinion resonated little with a country that had made it clear by this point that the plight of the Bulgarians was not on a par with protecting against an increase in Russian influence.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed, the *Pall Mall Gazette* took MacColl's article (though it admitted it had not read the article, nor planned to!) along with two other responses from Gladstone and E. A. Freeman as evidence that these men "have been for eighteen months the victims of a political delusion."⁴⁸⁹ The tide had changed so radically that support for Russia's cause now looked like a betrayal of the well-being of Britain's Eastern interests and imperial possessions. With Plevna taken, the road open to Istanbul, and the war drawing to a close in January 1878, the conflict between Christian internationalism and Russophobic patriotism reached a violent level of division.

Conclusion: Mob Politics

G. W. Hunt's "By Jingo!" was first performed at the end of December 1877, and already by the New Year it was "the song which every street Arab is whistling today and all the gods are applauding at the Theatres and Music Halls."⁴⁹⁰ Yet the story of the Jingo movement in early 1878 goes far beyond the mere popularity of the song. After an armistice between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was signed on January 31st, 1878 British society became obsessed with the issue of intervention, given that the Russians continued moving toward Constantinople during February and early March. Rallies were

⁴⁸⁸ See p. 832 of Malcolm MacColl, "Some Current Fallacies about Turks, Bulgarians, and Russians," *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, December 1877, 831-842.

⁴⁸⁹ "Mr. Forbes's Offences," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 December 1877, col. A, p. 10.

⁴⁹⁰ "London Gossip – London, December 31st, 1877," *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 2 January 1878, col. A, p. 8. A "street Arab" is synonymous with street urchin—in the context of this study, an interesting coincidence.

held on both sides of the issue, and on a number of occasions protesters and counter-protesters clashed violently over the issue. Newspaper reports provide us with some remarkable detail on the nature of these political street battles, which were unmatched since the Reform League riots of 1866, a movement that one of the leaders of the anti-interventionist movement, Charles Bradlaugh, ironically was also involved.⁴⁹¹

All through January and February there were small but increasingly violent rallies both for and against intervention. An anti-war meeting at the Thirsk Liberal Club on January 9th expressed its hope that people like Derby and Carnarvon would fight in the Cabinet against a policy of intervention.⁴⁹² One man professed to the assembly that he “could not understand Russophobia,” while another received laughter by characterizing the “war party” into three segments: “aristocratic rowdies,” “democratic rowdies who spent their time supporting lamp-posts,” and “fanatical people.”⁴⁹³ An attendee to a meeting at Brotton stated that the fear of Russian designs on British interests was a “scarecrow, raised for a purpose” that was opposite to what the bulk of Britons wanted.⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, the *Northern Echo* attempted to paint pro-war groups holding meetings as contrary to true public opinion, reporting that one meeting at St. James’ Hall was “by ticket only—a significant fact.”⁴⁹⁵ Similarly, the *Daily News* reported that on January 31st an anti-war meeting at the Cannon Street Hotel in London was crashed by a crowd

⁴⁹¹ See Chapter 7, “Bradlaugh and National Unity,” on pp. 275-286 of Edward Royle’s *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

⁴⁹² “England and the War – Opposition to a War Policy – Meeting at Thirsk,” *Northern Echo*, 10 January 1878, col. E, p. 3.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ “Enthusiastic Meeting at Brotton,” *Northern Echo*, 10 January 1878, col. E, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ “The War Party,” *Northern Echo*, 10 January 1878, col. F, p. 3.

chanting “Down with Russia” and singing “By Jingo!” loudly.⁴⁹⁶ Later, another larger mob occupied the whole of the hotel and “amused themselves by the execution in various keys of ‘Rule Britannia’ and other ditties,” before bursting through and destroying the glass doors of the conference room to more cheers of “Down with Russia!” and “Three cheers for Turkey!”⁴⁹⁷ When they had driven the anti-war meeting from the room the mob “hoisted a fez and a Turkish flag” and brought their own speakers forward, later moving on to Guildhall to have another meeting which they closed by giving “three cheers for the *Daily Telegraph*.”⁴⁹⁸ It would seem Levy-Lawson’s “guns” had been used effectively, ironically making his paper *itself* into one of the “national utterances on their lips.” In response to the anti-intervention groups’ quite understandable outrage, the *Pall Mall Gazette* cynically responded that “the last few days has taught the *anti-British* agitators that agitation is game which two can play at.”⁴⁹⁹ It judged the anti-war party hypocrites on popular politics, saying “our Radicals were wont to extol the many moral virtues and the high political aptitude of the ‘toiling masses;’ but it seems that they only meant the ‘toiling masses’ who agree with them. The ‘toiling masses’ who do not are ‘roughs,’ ‘rowdies,’ ‘the mob.’”⁵⁰⁰

Given the depth to which these issues cut into and separated British society, this set the stage for a violent confrontation when the Hyde Park Association, which was led by two controversial figures in British society, atheist Charles Bradlaugh and neo-anarchist Auberon Herbert (who was also Lord Carnarvon’s brother), began holding

⁴⁹⁶ “The Country and the War Vote,” *Daily News*, 1 February 1878, col. E, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ “Political and Social – Notes and Comments,” *The Examiner*, 2 February 1878, col. A, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁹ “Agitators on Agitation,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 February 1878, col. A, p. 10. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

meetings in late February and the inevitable counter-protests emerged.⁵⁰¹ In the larger context of Victorian politics the Hyde Park Association appears to have taken pages out of both the Cobdenite anti-imperial, internationalist book and the radical labor movement book, with its leaders adding their own iconoclastic twists to the motive behind their protest of a warlike policy.⁵⁰² Bradlaugh and Herbert both represented the segment of British society that took a republican line on matters of governance, seeing Parliamentary decisions (even many Liberal ones) as hopelessly guided by elite motives and prejudices.⁵⁰³ Their calls for peace, therefore, proceeded more from their opposition to the identity of the forces calling for war rather than from general pacifist beliefs. Hence, although the Hyde Park Association and the pro-war counter-protesters arranged against it were in dispute over the use of force internationally, this did not imply that Bradlaugh and Herbert were against the use of force in domestic political confrontations. They not only were prepared for a physical confrontation in the promotion of both their specific and larger cause, they appear to have welcomed it. Indeed, the first major peace demonstration was held on February 24th, 1878 in Hyde Park, with Bradlaugh bringing

⁵⁰¹ Although there are many ways to characterize Herbert's (and his mentor Herbert Spencer's) views, such as anarcho-capitalist, proto-libertarian, etc., I have borrowed Miles Taylor's chosen term—see "Herbert, Auberon Edward William Molyneux (1838-1906)," M. W. Taylor in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/33828>).

⁵⁰² Biagini notes that Bradlaugh's support came largely from labor organizations that admired his speaking skills and commitment to the labor reform cause—see *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 220-221. Also, the *ODNB* describes him as "a symbol of people against parliament"—see "Bradlaugh, Charles (1833–1891)," Edward Royle in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/3183>.

⁵⁰³ Jon Lawrence describes the dissatisfaction of radicals with the Liberals' populist response to the Eastern Question, which they saw as masking the fact that the Liberal Party, when in power, avoided undertaking actual reforms that would benefit workers—see *Speaking for the People*, 170-171.

50 “marshals” and 500 “deputy marshals” to keep counter-protesters at bay.⁵⁰⁴ Along with Herbert’s own contingent, all the marshals were clothed in uniforms and wielded “wands of office” that Bradlaugh’s daughter later mildly described as “short staves similar to the constables’ truncheons,” though they were told that the weapons should be “[kept] concealed unless they were required for purposes of defence.”⁵⁰⁵ The first meeting was therefore carried out “without grave results,” as the marshals were able to repel “rush after rush” of their “muscular opponents.”⁵⁰⁶

Many of these attackers came from across Hyde Park, where about 10,000 gathered to hear speakers from the pro-war “National and Patriotic League,” led by a naval officer, Lieutenant R. H. Armit.⁵⁰⁷ This group was dwarfed by the 50,000 to 90,000 in Bradlaugh’s and Herbert’s group and was by the *Daily News*’ account much more disorganized, with a “brass band of itinerant description” milling about while an argument emerged over whether a Turkish flag someone had brought should be raised alongside a British one held by a teenage boy, which led one man to worry that the British flag would be attacked and lost given that, as he unwittingly told the *Daily News*’ reporter, “there were many of the ‘Gladstone roughs’ and ‘*Daily News* scum about.”⁵⁰⁸ Eventually the Turkish flag was raised alongside the British one, only for the confusion to recommence as another flag came waving into the pro-war camp bearing the phrase “Polish Society of the White Eagle – We Poles do protest against the Russian barbarities perpetrated upon our countrymen in Turkey”—a baffling statement that came with fliers

⁵⁰⁴ Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, *Charles Bradlaugh: A Record of His Life and Work by His Daughter Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner*, vol. 2 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), 82.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ *Daily News*, 25 February 1878, col. B, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁷ *Daily News*, 25 February 1878, col. E, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁸ “The Hyde-Park Meetings,” *Daily News*, 25 February 1878, col. A, p. 1.

explaining that a number of Poles had been executed by Russian troops in the Russian occupation zone of European Turkey.⁵⁰⁹ After the meeting finally got started there were diverse speeches of an anti-Russian and anti-Liberal nature. The most intriguing was that of Ellis Bartlett, who indicted the *Daily News* for its lack of patriotism to the audience's cries of "Down with the *Daily News*" and "Three Cheers for the *Daily Telegraph*."⁵¹⁰ Significantly, Bartlett had been an enthusiastic leader of the Bulgarian Agitation but had experienced a dramatic conversion to Russophobia after traveling to the Balkans during the Russo-Turkish War, and he would later become such a strident Conservative firebrand that his entry in the *ODNB* goes so far as to dub him "something of a caricature of a tory imperialist."⁵¹¹

Despite the marshals' defense the battle was fierce at times. Bradlaugh himself was almost trampled in the fray and at one point was attacked by a pro-war protester armed with an improvised pike, who sliced Bradlaugh's hat in half but luckily left his head unscathed.⁵¹² Yet subsequent meetings saw greater organization of the pro-war contingent, with an accompanying greater ability at getting past the anti-war marshals' "wands of office." Papers sympathetic to the anti-war party immediately criticized the violent nature of both the tactics of the pro-war mobs and the words of the Tory organs. The *Liverpool Mercury* found it ironic that the "party of order" sanctioned newsmen who delighted in the abuse of anti-war protesters and denigrated them as "rads and roughs and Gladstonian infidels," concluding that it showed "your true Tory is a real rowdy at the

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ J. P. Anderson, "Bartlett, Sir Ellis Ashmead (1849-1902)," rev. H. C. G. Matthew, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/view/article/30627>.

⁵¹² Bonner, 85.

bottom...a terribly brute-force fellow when his passions are excited by successful opposition.”⁵¹³ Herbert contended that a “certain amount of beer and a certain amount of money” had been handed out by Tory agents to pay these rowdies to disrupt the peace movement’s “right of free meeting.”⁵¹⁴ In much the same way Armit, the leader of a failed private colonization company called the “New Guinea Colonising Association,”⁵¹⁵ responded that the Bradlaugh’s and Herbert’s group was a “mechanical demonstration” organized by Liberal activists that “did not represent English opinion.”⁵¹⁶ Yet both sides exhibited a confusion over what the appropriate level of organization was and what should be considered a spontaneous outpouring of public feeling. Both wanted their groups to represent “true” public opinion, but anything more energetic than a placid oration was depicted as a street battle designed by shadowy political forces on either side. Neither group seemed willing to admit that the conflict was a mix of both deliberate and spontaneous influences, and that the level of chaos and acrimony indicated powerful feelings on both sides far more than mere bribery.

Another meeting in Hyde Park on March 10th drew 70,000 people, with a higher proportion of pro-war demonstrators than before. Wearing fezzes and singing “Rule Britannia,”⁵¹⁷ the crowd marched into the park under Turkish and British flags and a banner reading “Anti-Russian Patriotic League, Marylebone” to await the beginning of

⁵¹³ “The Rowdy Side of Toryism,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 March 1878, col. B, p. 6.

⁵¹⁴ Qtd. in George Carslake Thompson, *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield 1875-1880*, vol. II (London: Macmillan & Co., 1886), 367.

⁵¹⁵ “Annexation by Private Adventure,” *The Economist*, 27 November 1875, col. B, p. 1392. *The Examiner* reported by the time of the Hyde Park meetings, Armit’s “scheme for an amateur occupation...came to nothing, and Lieutenant Armit was left to do patriotic work of a different kind at home”—see “Variorum Notes,” *The Examiner*, 2 March 1878, col. A, p. 283.

⁵¹⁶ “The Hyde-Park Meeting,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 3 March 1878, col. E, p. 7.

⁵¹⁷ “The ‘Peace Meeting’ in Hyde Park,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 March 1878, col. B, p. 8.

the peace meeting.⁵¹⁸ After the Hyde Park Association showed up, the Jingoers were better prepared to fight and in “an ugly rush, almost swept [Bradlaugh and Herbert] away.”⁵¹⁹ The *Echo* reported that a “pretty lively exchange of blows followed,” as the marshals took out their wands and beat back the attackers until Bradlaugh and Herbert could leave, following which “one gang of roughs” led 5000 pro-interventionists to the Ottoman embassy and proceeded to cheer and sing “By Jingo!” under placards that read “Englishmen, beware of Russian Christianity!” and “Remember Poland!”⁵²⁰ Back in the park, the remaining pro-war demonstrators “amused themselves by throwing about dead cats, &c., and making raids on the pockets of respectable people.”⁵²¹ The *Pall Mall Gazette* dubbed the attempt at a peaceful meeting a “total failure,” and wrote with distaste that Gladstone’s house had been targeted and he and his wife driven into hiding at a friend’s house, while the Duke of Teck was attacked by a Jingo mob as “he was mistaken for Count Schouvaloff.”⁵²² Ironically, Teck’s wife, Princess Mary, was so pro-war that the *News of the World* called her the “Queen of the Jingoers.”⁵²³ Yet there was no one there who was in a position to make such a distinction. Despite there being more pro-war demonstrators in attendance there was less pro-war leadership presence than before, with *The Derby Mercury* noting that one of the only evident pro-war speakers was an old militiaman in a patchwork coat who demanded that Mr. Bradlaugh be targeted

⁵¹⁸ “Peace and War Demonstrations in London – Mr. Bradlaugh Roughly Handled – Attempt to Mob Mr. Gladstone’s House,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 March 1878, col. E, p. 7.

⁵¹⁹ “Another Hyde Park Demonstration,” *Northern Echo*, 11 March 1878, col. D, p. 3.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

⁵²² “The ‘Peace Meeting’ in Hyde Park,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 March 1878, col. B, p. 8.

⁵²³ Reprinted from the *World* in “London Gossip,” *The Newcastle Courant*, 5 April 1878, col. D, p. 5. Princess Mary (Adelaide) was George III’s granddaughter.

by the Society for the Suppression of Vice, crying “I am the voice of the people” just before a dead cat landed in front of him.⁵²⁴

Giving the growing level of violence, following meetings were vigilantly overseen by the police. A rumored meeting on April 6th saw 500 policeman mobilized in reserve, and when it turned out the Hyde Park Association would hold no meeting the police had only Armit’s National League to watch.⁵²⁵ The size of Armit’s group barely equaled the police force in number, and they marched from the Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park to pass a resolution that Britain must enter into an alliance with the Ottoman Empire to protect “the future safety of National Freedom, now threatened by armed despotism,” before breaking up without a fight.⁵²⁶ The conflict began to die down after this, with fewer instances of violent interference with anti-war meetings. A meeting of 462 representatives of Liberal workingmen’s associations held a large meeting in London on April 10th that saw no rioting, prompting one of the speakers to say that the claims of the “Rule Britannias” to speak for the working class was a “delusion.”⁵²⁷ The *Northern Echo* called the meeting evidence of the “real voice” of the country, offering the argument that the war craze was a myth propagated by “swashbucklers” like Captain Bedford Pim, who, they charged, “openly admits that he hopes to get employment by a war.”⁵²⁸ Although such conspiracy theories invariably went too far, it was true that the intense zeal for war had reached its zenith, especially outside of London where Jingo fever had been more subdued. Organizers of a meeting in Birmingham in early April were worried

⁵²⁴ “A Bradlaugh-Herbert Riot in Hyde Park – Disorderly Proceedings,” *The Derby Mercury*, 13 March 1878, col. E, p. 8.

⁵²⁵ “The Opinion of the Country – Demonstration in Hyde Park,” *Western Mail*, 8 April 1878, col. D, p. 3.

⁵²⁶ “Demonstration in Hyde Park,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 April 1878, col. H, p. 5.

⁵²⁷ “Opposition to a War Policy – Great Workmen’s Conference in London,” *Northern Echo*, 12 April 1878, col. E, p. 3.

⁵²⁸ “Working Men and the War,” *Northern Echo*, 12 April 1878, col. E, p. 2.

that it would be crashed by a pro-war mob as those in London had, but in the event “the ‘jingo’ were in such a hopeless minority” that their attempts to drown out the proceedings by singing “Rule Britannia” and “By Jingo!” devolved into “braying, hooting, whistling, and yelling.”⁵²⁹ Indeed, the *Echo* deduced that the belief in the country’s war spirit was all was part of the thin, artificial hold Disraeli and the Conservatives had on Britain, especially outside of London, where the Tories had lost 12 seats in by-elections to Liberal candidates who advocated a policy of non-intervention.⁵³⁰

Still, even if on a more cool-headed level, a war feeling charged British society all the way up to the Berlin Congress in June. Once activated, the drive to go to war was difficult to put aside. People like Armit, Pim, Princess Mary, and the man in the patchwork coat did not discontinue their advocacy for war just because the papers had less titillating news to report or fewer dead cats sailed through the air. On the contrary, the patriotic drive to protect and increase the prestige of the British Empire—and the hatred of those who were thought opposed to such a feeling—was now a *stable* part of popular opinion. The Queen even went as far as to make her opinion publicly known, if in only in a backhanded way. When an advertisement for a new pro-war song appeared that included a personal letter of approval from Victoria herself, the *Manchester Examiner* marveled at her support for a song that spoke of supporting Turkey (“the plucky little bird”) against “Roumania’s dirty slurs,” “Servian whelps and curs,” and “Russian lies” that inspired the British “Lion’s grand impatience” for a fight.⁵³¹ The

⁵²⁹ “The War Crisis – Great Town’s Meeting in Birmingham,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 April 1878, col. A, p. 5.

⁵³⁰ “The Constitutencies and the Eastern Question,” *Northern Echo*, 26 April 1878, col. A, p. 3.

⁵³¹ Reprinted from the *Manchester Examiner* in “Her Majesty and the Jingo,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 April 1878, col. H, p. 6.

Manchester Examiner was worried that if “the Queen gives her sanction to songs which directly accuse Russia of lying” it meant that “unless her Majesty’s influence with our Ministers is much smaller than is supposed, no hopes of peace can safely be based upon the action of the Government of the country.”⁵³² Meanwhile, with their thought patterns and mode of action in place the Jingoists could from time to time rise up again, as on April 30th in Manchester when the Working Men’s Conservative Association held a meeting where 2000 unruly pro-war attendees threatened to disrupt their own meeting with shouts and the “greatest disorder.”⁵³³ Even the pro-war party’s affinities to the Tories in general and to Disraeli specifically were themselves indicative of the deeper effect of the tumult—a fact commented on dramatically by an anti-war meeting in Glasgow on May 3rd at which a Liberal MP and newspaper owner, Charles Cameron, called Disraeli “the great arch-Jingo.”⁵³⁴ In the end, the peace movement was mostly posturing. There was little chance that Britain’s characteristic Russophobia and its growing imperial angst could possibly have been overruled by the anti-war movement’s indifferent testimonies about Russian honor, much less the notion that the British Empire was safer with Russia as a neighbor.

The fight between the Jingoists and the peace movement over who spoke for “real” Britons is a fitting end for the story of Britain’s experience of the Russo-Turkish War, which began with the “failure” of the diplomatic process to maintain peace and ended with violent conflict over the question of whether to enter the war. Moreover, the question of Britain’s imperial future was tied up deeply in the conflict, as diplomacy had

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ “Open Air Meeting of the ‘Jingoists’ in Manchester,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 May 1878, col. H, p. 7.

⁵³⁴ “The Eastern Crisis and Public Opinion,” *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 8 May 1878, col. F, p. 3.

earlier proved ill-suited for accomplishing Britain-centric goals while the prospect of war proved useful in rallying Britons behind policies of imperial security. However, we should not treat Britain's experience merely as a step in an inevitable progress from a less imperial to a more imperial Britain. Rather, it provided a specific vector for imperial thinking to present itself to the British populace as the proper mindset in confronting Eastern—and therefore global—disorder. This distinction is easy to miss, yet such a response would not have been appropriate had not Britons experienced the drama of the preceding war. The conflict and all its charisma produced the referent necessary for the obscurity of the Eastern Question to become accessible to the masses and applicable to Britons' notion of their identity and their place in the world. As the famous critic of imperialism, J. A. Hobson, said in *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901):

How many audiences who cheered ["By Jingo!"] to the echo, and were heated by it almost to enlisting point had, or even desired to have, the faintest notion of the Eastern Question, or even of the grounds of our immediate quarrel with Russia? A suggestion of national animus, with a vague assertion attached to it, is quite sufficient at this stage in the manufacture of Jingo spirit.⁵³⁵

In other words, Britons who cheered again and again for "The Great MacDermott" to sing "By Jingo!" had no reason in, say, 1873 to join the army in a nationalistic pique over events that would occur five years later. Nor by the same token was there any specific reason to activate latent imperialist values and ideals. Of course, the capacity for accessing the "national animus" in group behavior—the manifest soul of Britannia—existed prior to G. W. Hunt putting pen to paper or a be-fezzed Jingo "rowdy" swung a homemade pike at someone's head. But the feverish excitement that

⁵³⁵ J. A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 4-5. Hobson's more famous work, *Imperialism: A Study* (which influenced Lenin's 1916 work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*) was published a year later, in 1902.

made the song a hit and motivated such fervor have their basis in the precise events that inspired such influential, creative, or peculiar actions. Jingoist thinking was the result of Britons' response to the Russo-Turkish War and the wider Eastern Crisis; it did not pre-exist in any coherent form. Certainly, other conflicts had seen the British public rally around divisive friendships and hatreds to fit the moment, as in the Crimean War, but the answer to such troubles had never before been so clearly and publicly defined around Britons asserting vis-à-vis Russia or any other power their right to virtual supremacy in the East and, possibly, the wider world.

In the same way, it is compelling (and almost troubling) to muse that maybe the “new imperialism” did not *need* to happen. Victorian Britons had not always been predominantly imperialistic. They were made so by interceding events which allowed imperial categories to become preeminent. The political, cultural, and intellectual forces that built an imperial identity were provided a vital asset in the form of the war's implications for the British Empire's interests, while the Siege of Plevna provided a bounded, accessible setting for the drama, romance, and tragedy necessary to affect people on an emotional level. From this perspective, the Jingo movement may also illustrate Britons' profound yearning to take part in the epic scenes they had viewed for the last three years. In entering the war themselves they could finally be a part of such momentous events. They could stand beside the noble Osman Pasha as a confederate in gloriously doomed circumstances, or perhaps even offer a last salute to the patriotic “Russian Colonel” as he bled out in the ditch of the Grivica redoubt.

Chapter Three: Territorial Solutions to Eastern Problems: Cyprus and British Imperialism

Introduction: The Journey to British Cyprus

In mid-July 1878, while sailing aboard the HMS *Himalaya*, Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley began a journal intended to be read by his wife, describing to her his time as Britain's first High Commissioner in Cyprus. His appointment had been speedy and unexpected. Having recently returned from a stint as governor of Natal he thought he would next be sent to Bombay, an assignment perhaps meant to distance him from the Commander-in-Chief, Prince George, Duke of Cambridge, a notorious traditionalist with whom the reform-minded Wolseley shared a mutual dislike.⁵³⁶ But after Cyprus' administration passed to Britain as a result of the 1878 Berlin Treaty, Wolseley instead found himself reassigned as Britain's chief administrator to the new possession. Despite the fact that this was to his personal and professional advantage, Wolseley reflected on his private doubts about Britain's investment in Cyprus. He wondered that Egypt had not been the choice, the place in which his exploits would make him a household name in Britain as commander of the British forces during the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian War:

To have occupied Egypt would have been a grand measure: to have founded a new Empire where abundance of soldiers could have been obtained to help us in India...The move taken...whether viewed in conjunction with our Eastern Empire, or whether looked upon as laying the foundation of another – our African Empire of immense magnitude, would have been a great one worthy of a nation that had already an Eastern Empire, but this annexation of Cyprus is a half & half measure that will certainly entail great outlay upon us to secure us – what?⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ Garnet Wolseley, *Cyprus Journal*, 19 July 1878, WO 147/6 (*Wolseley Papers*), 3-4.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 12-13.

Wolseley marveled that “Dizzy never liked the idea of Egypt,” blaming Disraeli’s predilection as an author (and, the assumption follows, as a politician) for “dreamy Judaism” that “turned his attention to the Holy Land in preference to the land of Egypt.”⁵³⁸ Yet Wolseley did not understand the central premise to the choice of Cyprus, nor could he have had much apprehension as to the background of its choice—very few could, given that the whole thing had been arranged secretly over the preceding year and a half. And although Disraeli’s personal preferences made some difference, they were neither the predominant nor the most important aspect of how Cyprus came to be British. Instead we must look deeper inside the institutional and political mechanisms by which the British government made Cyprus into the prime candidate for its newest imperial expansion, comparing this with the public dialogue about the intelligence and morality of territorial solutions to the disorder promised by the Eastern Crisis and the Russo-Turkish War. Cyprus may have proved to be an “inconsequential possession,” as Andrekos Varnava has recently put it, but the dynamics that led to Britain’s decision to occupy Cyprus are of vital consequence to any understanding of British imperialism.⁵³⁹

Cyprus has rarely loomed large in discussions of the British Empire. While the other places in the Eastern Mediterranean with a British connection, Egypt and Palestine, have received enormous attention from scholars of British imperialism, Cyprus has been little more than a footnote. This is a problematic omission given that Britain occupied Cyprus at the very cusp of the explosion of Britain’s imperial expansion from the 1880s to the First World War—the era of the “new imperialism.” Many scholars have chalked

⁵³⁸ Ibid., f. 13.

⁵³⁹ See Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878-1915: The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

this oversight up to Cyprus' supersession as a strategic possession with Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1881.⁵⁴⁰ Others have cited the fact that Britain was never successful in implementing its administrative reforms in Cyprus—an imperial embarrassment whose residue has seeped into scholarly inquiry.⁵⁴¹ And there is no doubt that the recent tumultuous history of Cyprus has overshadowed all other angles of investigation into the island's past. Yet one might even suggest that Cyprus was the first possession of Britain's "new imperial" era to fully display the connection between Britain's democratic society and the principles of its governing imperial ideal.

This chapter investigates the rationale and manner in which the British government came to feel that imperial tactics were necessary to protect Britain interests and how this compares with the opinions of the rest of British society. First, I explore the secret nature of the process and the debate between a policy of military intervention versus imperial action. Second, I look at the connection between the idea that Britain needed a possession in the Near East for strategic purposes and the argument that such a possession would benefit the inhabitants of anywhere that was chosen. The influence of this aspect on the future shape of British imperialism forms an additional component of this section. Finally, I conclude by offering some suggestions about the nature and significance of British public dialogue about intervention, imperialism, and the revelation of the Cyprus project.

⁵⁴⁰ See C. W. J. Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule* (London: Zeno Publishers, 1972), 44.

⁵⁴¹ See Dwight E. Lee, *Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention Policy of 1878* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 159-165.

General Simmons' Secret Task Force: Information, Intervention, Imperialism

While Cyprus did not enter into the British fold until after the Berlin Treaty was signed in July 1878, the circumstances of its eventual inclusion began, in secret, almost two years earlier. When it became clear in the fall of 1876 that war was most likely imminent, Disraeli, Derby, and the War Secretary, Gathorne Hardy, met on October 23rd and decided to order a survey of the Ottoman Empire's defenses, especially those of Constantinople, which Russia would have to take to gain entry into the Mediterranean.⁵⁴² This mission was to be carried out covertly by the War Office under the oversight of the Inspector-General of Fortifications, Sir John Lintorn Arabin Simmons. Simmons, a future Field Marshal, had had a long career already in the Corps of Royal Engineers, having served as their Colonel-Commandant prior to his appointment as the head of Fortifications, the latter of which was at this time the Royal Engineers' top position.⁵⁴³ In addition, Simmons had extensive experience in the Balkans during and after the Crimean War, where he had acted as Britain's military attaché to the Ottoman commander in Bulgaria, Omar Pasha.⁵⁴⁴ After serving in several key engagements, Omar Pasha sent Simmons to London and Paris to act as the former's voice on the next steps in the war, however by the time Simmons arrived the war had ended.⁵⁴⁵ He was therefore appointed to chart out the precise borders in Anatolia and the Caucasus that were set out by the Treaty of Paris; under his command was a young Charles George Gordon, then a 22 year-

⁵⁴² For a description of the decision, see *Derby Diaries*, 23 October 1876, 337.

⁵⁴³ See R. H. Vetch, "Simmons, Sir John Lintorn Arabin (1821–1903)," rev. James Lunt, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/36094>.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.* See also, Whitworth Porter and Charles Moore Watson, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889), 415, 417.

⁵⁴⁵ Whitworth Porter and Charles Moore Watson, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889), 302.

old lieutenant fresh from his first fight at the Siege of Sevastopol.⁵⁴⁶ Simmons' work led indirectly to his appointment as British Consul at Warsaw until 1860, after which he returned to service with the Royal Engineers in Britain. As a result of this experience in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Asia Minor, Simmons was considered a voice not only of authority on technical matters of defense but on the political and sociocultural details of Britain's Eastern policy.

On October 26th Simmons' primary data collectors, Royal Engineers Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Home and his assistant Captain Thomas Fraser, received their orders to go to Constantinople to meet with the British ambassador, Sir Henry Elliot, and from there range out into the critical strategic areas of the potential battle zone to prepare detailed reports of their condition.⁵⁴⁷ Their subsidiary task was to gauge the number of troops Britain would need to field in the key locations in order to halt a Russian advance on Constantinople itself.⁵⁴⁸ At first, there was no direct mention of seizing any area for Britain, let alone Cyprus.⁵⁴⁹ This is not to say that an occupation of Ottoman territory was not the indirect consequence of this work, though: on the very same day Home and Fraser were given their orders, Lord Richmond noted that Hardy claimed that a defense of Gallipoli would "require a much larger force than the Prime Minister seemed to imagine."⁵⁵⁰ Gallipoli was then considered, as it would be in 1915, to be not only the key

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Simmons to Home, 26 October 1876, Reports and Memoranda Relative to Defence of Constantinople and Other Positions in Turkey, also on Routes in Roumelia (London: Harrison & Sons for the War Office, 1877), 3-6 (FO 358/1, f. 4-6).

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 4 (f. 4).

⁵⁴⁹ Although, Varnava shrewdly notes that even before Home received his orders, the War Office ordered a map of Cyprus—see pp. 74-75. The map in question (MFQ 1/724) was stamped as received on October 23rd, the same day that Disraeli, Derby, and Hardy decided to order the Ottoman defenses mission.

⁵⁵⁰ Richmond to Cairns, 26 October 1876, PRO 30/51/3, f. 120.

area for control of the Dardanelles Straits but an advantageous staging zone in general.⁵⁵¹ A strategic invasion thus almost immediately begat an imperial solution to the risk to British interests in the Near East at large. Already by October 30th Simmons had drafted a memo proposing that perhaps the only way Britain could secure the route to India if Russia took Constantinople would be if a special fleet were assembled at immense cost, complete with a “naval arsenal for repairs somewhere at the Eastern End of the Mediterranean.”⁵⁵² Given the strategic and economic importance of a suitably deep harbor that contained enough space for a large fleet, there is little doubt of the implication regarding the type of relationship Britain would have to forge with any place that would house this hypothetical naval arsenal.

The scale of Simmons’ survey was immense. Over the next two years Home, Fraser, and a number of other officers, mostly drawn from the Intelligence Branch of the Quartermaster-General’s office, would be employed in a vast swath of Ottoman territory. The maps and fortification sketches that were amended and produced numbered in the hundreds, with all places surveyed in minute detail regarding the quality of their defenses.⁵⁵³ Telegraph maps of the Balkans attested to the possibility of carrying out a defense of Constantinople should Turkish lines be cut in the Balkans and new lines be

⁵⁵¹ Varnava notes on p. 74 of his book that the anonymous author of the pamphlet *The Dardanelles for England: The True Solution to the Eastern Question* (London, 1876) spoke of the importance for Britain to control the Dardanelles even prior to the Ottoman defenses survey; the pamphlet was published on October 20th.

⁵⁵² Memorandum by Simmons, 30 October 1876, FO 358/3, f. 54.

⁵⁵³ Special attention was paid to the approach to Constantinople on the western side of the Bosphorus, such as Fort Sultan and the Boulair Lines, a major defensive installation built by an Anglo-French force during the Crimean War (MPK 1/434, f. 4, 145, 156; MPK 1/481, f. 363, 365; MPK 1/482, f. 722), Adrianople, i.e. present-day Edirne (MPK 1/434, f. 61; MPK 1/481, f. 312; MPK 1/483, f. 432), and the coastal forts surrounding the Sea of Marmara south of Constantinople (MPK 1/485). Other key places surveyed were Batoum (present-day Batumi), a critical port on the eastern shore of the Black Sea (MPK 1/482, f. 727), the Danube port of Silistria (MPK 1/434, f. 544), and Bulgarian port city Varna (MPK 1/481, f. 366-369, 926).

needed, given that “Turkish lines are notoriously bad.”⁵⁵⁴ Thousands of pages of detailed description accompany these maps and sketches, all of which was distilled by Home and Simmons into a concise view of the potential military situation if and when the Russians declared war. Additionally, this information attested to the details of Britain’s potential involvement in a wider war, ostensibly in defense of the Ottoman Empire but actually with wider and more critical implications for Britain’s international and imperial status. Home also served as the Assistant Quartermaster-General of the Intelligence Branch, a body expressly charged with gathering not only military but political information, ensuring that both aspects were deeply intertwined from the beginning.⁵⁵⁵

Indeed, even before the Constantinople Conference met, Simmons noted on December 4th that Britain might even consider landing a force at Varna—a place where Simmons had spent time during the Crimean War,⁵⁵⁶ and an ideal staging area for a defense of the Danubian Plain and the Balkans in general.⁵⁵⁷ However, Simmons cautioned that this move would mean Britain would have to “at once make up her mind” to intervene and immediately decide whether Britain wanted a direct war with Russia rather than a defensive one.⁵⁵⁸ Although at this point the question on the table was primarily one regarding intervention and not permanent occupation, Simmons felt that the prospect of intervention was actually more risky. He artfully invoked a lesson from the Bible on the cost of true commitment to a cause, warning the Cabinet of taking any action

⁵⁵⁴ Map with description, 13 December 1876, FO 358/1, f. 745-746.

⁵⁵⁵ Home had been made A.Q.M.G. on April 1st, 1876—see R. H. Vetch, “Home, Robert (1837-1879),” rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/view/article/13648>.

⁵⁵⁶ Porter and Watson, 412.

⁵⁵⁷ Memorandum by Simmons, 4 December 1876, *Defence of Constantinople*, 20-21 (f. 13-14).

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21 (f. 14).

that would result in a lopsided, costly, and embarrassing Russian victory at the expense not only of the Ottomans but of the British Empire:

The struggle will be one of life and death...By carrying on such a war [Britain] would descend from her position as a first-class power, and lose her prestige in the East...There never was a time when it was more necessary “to sit down and consult whether, with” the force at the disposal of England, “she is able to meet the power that is against” her. And, if she decide in the affirmative, then that the *modus operandi* should be most carefully considered.⁵⁵⁹

From this perspective, the idea of direct military intervention promised much more of a risk than, as Hardy had earlier warned, Disraeli was willing to admit. The idea of a strategic possession in the Near East to guard against the possibility of Russia exploiting its gains too far became, in light of Simmons’ analysis, much more appealing, with few of the risks and many potential benefits vis-à-vis Britain’s ongoing competition with Russia over their Eastern spheres of influence. By the end of December 1876 the language used had hence began to be more explicitly imperial, with Home commenting that if a successful Russian invasion were to lead to the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire then “England will want a slice.”⁵⁶⁰ Home suggested that this “slice” should not be Constantinople itself, even considering its vaunted control over the Dardanelles Straits, as this would be immensely costly and would open up Britain to problems from the often-riotous Christians in the city, whom he called “some the greatest scoundrels on earth.”⁵⁶¹ Instead, he thought that Crete, Rhodes, or Egypt offered the best strategic location minus the risks; he considered Rhodes the best, but left the idea of taking *all* of

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 22 (f. 14). Quotes original. Though he does not mention it explicitly, the quotes Simmons incorporates are from Luke 14:31, a lesson on the costs of discipleship that reads in full: “Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?”

⁵⁶⁰ Home to Simmons, 20 December 1876, FO 358/1, f. 576.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., f. 577.

these places open to discussion!⁵⁶² Less than a month later Home devised the rhetorical premise upon which the later final choice of Cyprus would be based, beginning a memo on the idea of occupying the Gallipoli peninsula with the following clause: “Should circumstances occur to induce the British Government to seek a material guarantee in the East or should on the breaking up of the Turkish Empire it become requisite to seek compensation in the Levant...”⁵⁶³ No matter the location eventually chosen, Home does not construe Britain’s imperial goals as rapacious or greedy but the sad consequence of events outside Britain’s control that contrived to overwhelm her natural forbearance. Britain is “induced” to expand, her hand forced toward a territorial compensation as a “requisite,” not an optional, action—a passive statement for so active a potential role.

Exactly how Britain was “induced” to expand had much to do with the presumption that Russia had an unquenchable urge to supplant Britain’s power in the East, either by direct conflict or indirect strategic pressure. Robinson and Gallagher, though they make little mention of the Cyprus project in their work,⁵⁶⁴ might have seen this as a matter of Britain choosing “formal” imperialism when “informal methods had failed to give security.”⁵⁶⁵ But this presupposes that the process was by design and decision rather than what it really was: a measured, organic plod toward an imperial solution. The method British officials used to confront the specter of Russian imperialism thus falls somewhere outside the informal vs. formal rubric, and the route to Cyprus is further muddied by the secret nature of the process. Indeed, in spite of the

⁵⁶² Ibid., f. 578.

⁵⁶³ Memorandum by Home, 12 January 1877, FO 358/2, f. 30.

⁵⁶⁴ Robinson and Gallagher’s “The Imperialism of Free Trade” (discussed in the Introduction) does not see Cyprus as a significant case in establishing their theory (though, to be fair, their focus was on the mid-Victorian period), while their book *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1967) only mentions the takeover in passing on p. 83.

⁵⁶⁵ See Gallagher and Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” 12.

British public's calls for war, rather than producing a like-minded warlike spirit, the fear of Russia instead drove Simmons' task force toward mitigating Russia's subversive effect on the British Empire by some other means. In February 1877 Home wrote that if Batoum were taken by the Russians it could be used as a staging ground to move into Armenia and thereafter move southeastward, "occupying Mesopotamia and establishing themselves on the Persian Gulf," thereby posing a direct threat to British India.⁵⁶⁶ Layard agreed, commenting that if holding Batumi led to both the Black Sea becoming a "Russian lake" and Russia gaining access to the Persian Gulf, it would be "to England a second secession of the United States of America; she will then find herself forced to bow before the irrevocable."⁵⁶⁷ Likewise, in April Northcote wrote that the Russian consul at Alexandria promised that if Khedive Ismail provided any aid to the Sultan, Egypt's official suzerain, then Ismail would "subject himself to reprisals."⁵⁶⁸ However, Home had already estimated that making adequate arrangements for the defense of, merely, Constantinople would cost at a minimum over £2,600,000, amounting to ten percent in excess of the existing military budget.⁵⁶⁹ Simmons thought that occupying Gallipoli alone would take at least three months.⁵⁷⁰ Yet this was nothing compared to the cost and time needed to actually field a complete British force, which the War Office estimated would cost over £12,000,000 to equip and maintain the necessary number of

⁵⁶⁶ Home to Simmons, 10 February 1877, *Defence of Constantinople*, 174-175, FO 358/1, f. 140-141.

⁵⁶⁷ Layard to Derby, 29 December 1877, FO 881/3410.

⁵⁶⁸ Northcote to Cairns, 24 April 1877, PRO 30/51/5, f. 78.

⁵⁶⁹ Home listed figures of £1,672,000 and £960,000 to defend the western and eastern sides of the Bosphorus respectively, for a total of £2,632,000—see Memorandum by Home, 12 January 1877, FO 358/2, f. 32. The military budget for 1877 was £26,200,000—see "Public Spending Details for 1877," UK Public Spending, http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/UK_year1877_0.html.

⁵⁷⁰ Simmons to Hardy, 19 April 1877, FO 358/3, f. 288.

men for six months and a further six months and another £9,000,000 to mobilize them.⁵⁷¹ In short, there was no way that Britain could effectively double its military budget when it would not even have any larger effect on the problem of Russia taking over places like Batoum and Armenia, to say nothing of the fact that the Army thought it would not be able to arrange the logistics in time to avert Russia's gains anyway.⁵⁷² With this information in mind, the War Office deemed any kind of direct intervention to be a potentially disastrous proposition.

The possibility of Britain intervening remained useful, however, as a political weapon that could be wielded by the Government so as to appear strong in the eyes of Europe and, indeed, in those of the British public. This was not a value shared by everyone in the Conservative Party or even the Cabinet, especially the closer the Russians got to Constantinople. When Disraeli ordered the fleet to Besika Bay in January 1878 the strictest neutralists, Carnarvon and Derby, immediately resigned.⁵⁷³ Only Derby agreed to return when the order was canceled.⁵⁷⁴ It is unclear how this act could have been anything more than a political feint, given that all the available data said military intervention was insane. Granted, Disraeli and Salisbury may have been seriously hawkish,⁵⁷⁵ but there was no way the Cabinet would ever be totally unanimous in endorsing an initiative that would cost so much for so little chance of a positive outcome.

⁵⁷¹ "Memorandum of Proposed Arrangements in Case of War, with Approximate Estimate of the Cost," *Proceedings of Confidential Committee*, 14 – 19 June 1877, WO 33/32. The committee estimated £12,213,300 for six months and £21,114,960 for the year.

⁵⁷² Richmond to Cairns, 26 May 1877, PRO 30/51/4, f. 7. In this letter Richmond describes a number of conversations he had with the Duke of Cambridge to this effect.

⁵⁷³ See Derby's entries on this matter, *Derby Diaries*, 23 – 26 January 1878, 489-493.

⁵⁷⁴ Carnarvon was replaced by Sir Michael Hicks Beach.

⁵⁷⁵ Derby wrote that of sending the fleet both Disraeli and Salisbury seemed honestly "warlike," while Salisbury's "natural tendency to pugnacity [was] thoroughly aroused"—see *Derby Diaries*, 23 January 1878, 490.

The intelligence from the War Office, and Simmons' task force specifically, had made that impossible. Instead, the arrangement of a strategic possession in the Near East carved from Ottoman territory had much earlier become the dominant motive of British policy. Indeed, even while participating in peace talks at the Constantinople Conference in January 1877, Salisbury had given Home instructions to scope out the primary military positions in the Ottoman Empire, "particularly the islands of Rhodes & Cyprus" and Egypt if Home thought it necessary.⁵⁷⁶ Seemingly redundant, this set of orders subtly refocused the utility of subsequent intelligence gathered from informing acts that would aid in Ottoman defense to one that would protect the British Empire by territorial expansion. Nonetheless, exactly what that expansion would look like, what its extent would be, and what such a move entailed were not clear. Upon learning of it Simmons called the project "very vague" and thought it must be a fact-finding mission to "enable H.M.'s Government to seek for and select suitable compensation, should extensive territorial changes take place in the East."⁵⁷⁷

Yet if Simmons found this task problematic in February, following Russia's declaration of war in April 1877 he did not take long to adapt to the new thrust of policy. While Simmons saw the "*permanent* possession" of a place along the Dardanelles as being as risk-ridden as "resuming possession of Calais," he reiterated his earlier argument that protecting against any potential conflict with Russia would require a coaling station in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁷⁸ And though he (and Home) thought highly of the

⁵⁷⁶ Salisbury to Simmons, 15 January 1877, FO 358/2, f. 41. For details of the interaction between Salisbury and Home that led to this subsidiary mission, see Home to Simmons, 15 January 1877, FO 358/2, f. 37-40.

⁵⁷⁷ Memorandum by Simmons, 2 February 1877, FO 358/2, f. 14-15.

⁵⁷⁸ Simmons to Hardy, 19 April 1877, FO 358/3, f. 288. Emphasis original.

quality of the common Turkish soldier, Simmons saw the Ottoman state as no longer able to provide a strategic buffer.⁵⁷⁹ In May he drafted a remarkable memo on the state of the Ottoman Empire and Britain's role in protecting and extending its own empire's influence in light of the former's inevitable fall. No longer would the Crimean system serve as the referent for Britain's Eastern policy. As he put it: "The present Government of Turkey is effete, corrupt, unstable, established by one resolution it may be overthrown by another at any moment and is therefore not to be depended on. Hence if it is to be maintained, it must be in a state of tutelage."⁵⁸⁰ In this formulation the Turk's most apt tutor is implicitly an Englishman, whose empire could be portrayed as the reverse of his pupil's: a manifestly vigorous, honest, and stable Western influence on the hapless Easterner. Britain's actions vis-à-vis the Turks are thus presented as a kind of firm education in civilized behavior, with the idea of taking over Ottoman territory presented very much in the same manner as the idea that an adult might deprive a child of something "for his own good."

Although the mode of action was now in order, the list of possible places to occupy still took a number of months to settle. The chief candidates were Gallipoli, Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, Egypt, Alexandretta (Iskanderun, on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean), and Stampalia (Astypalaia, a tiny island in the Dodecanese). Discussion over the relative merits and defects of these places took up the summer and fall of 1877, throughout the intense fighting at Plevna, Shipka, and Kars. Gallipoli was soon ruled out

⁵⁷⁹ Home and Simmons commented on the positive attributes of Turkish soldiers—see Simmons to Home, 25 December 1876, *Defence of Constantinople*, 97-99 (FO 358/1, f. 75-76); Memorandum by Simmons, 9 January 1876, *Defence of Constantinople*, 99-100 (FO 358/1, f. 76).

⁵⁸⁰ Memorandum by Simmons, 11 May 1877, FO 358/2, f. 93. A note to Simmons from Disraeli's personal secretary, Montagu Corry, says that Disraeli was made intimately aware of the contents of this memo—see Corry to Simmons, 16 May 1877, FO 358/2, f. 516.

for the reasons Simmons had stated, Rhodes had no good harbor, and both Crete and Egypt were thought too large and too complex politically.⁵⁸¹ Stampalia was carefully considered, with a series of detailed surveys made by both the War Office and the Admiralty attesting to its positive qualities.⁵⁸² Simmons especially considered it a good location, but those looking for a place that could also raise significant revenue overruled him.⁵⁸³ Disraeli and Salisbury were enthusiastic about Cyprus and Alexandretta, the former singing Cyprus' praises as the "key of Western Asia,"⁵⁸⁴ and the latter seeing a land presence in Asia Minor as a way to halt a Russian advance on Armenia.⁵⁸⁵ Layard was also attracted to the idea of a continental British possession.⁵⁸⁶ Yet Cyprus, as an island, was easier to defend, and Salisbury decided that it was close enough to the mainland to mount a defense of Asia Minor.⁵⁸⁷ Varnava sees the specific choice of Cyprus as deeply impacted by Disraeli's "romantic imagination" in his novels that featured the place, chief among them *Tancred*, and his "desire for Britain to establish a multi-religious empire under Queen Victoria."⁵⁸⁸ But this may be going a bit far. Disraeli was not the only one to favor the choice, and the final decision to take Cyprus—and *only* Cyprus—probably has more to do with political expediency than anything else.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸¹ For a good summary of these points, see Dwight E. Lee, 59-60.

⁵⁸² "Papers Relative to a Proposed Coaling Station for Her Majesty's Fleet at the Eastern End of the Mediterranean," 27 April – 2 August 1877, inclusion in WO 33/31.

⁵⁸³ Memorandum by Simmons, 26 June 1877, pp. 3-5 of "Proposed Coaling Station" (WO 33/31); Varnava, 81.

⁵⁸⁴ Disraeli to Victoria, 5 May 1878, qtd. in W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1920), 291.

⁵⁸⁵ Varnava, 82.

⁵⁸⁶ Layard to Salisbury, 15 May 1878, *Layard Papers*, BL Add. MS 39131, f. 90-93.

⁵⁸⁷ Varnava., 85.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵⁸⁹ Northcote's biographer and well-known Scottish writer, Andrew Lang, notes that in a reflection on the Eastern Crisis Northcote wrote in 1880 he "hints at a pet plan of his own for buying an island dear to

What Varnava is right to focus on, however, is that any advance on Ottoman territory with the explicit purpose of permanent occupation required unity in the Cabinet.⁵⁹⁰ Derby was opposed to this plan, thinking it would be taken as a breach of Britain's neutrality and thus open up the British Empire to even more insecurity. On March 27th, when Disraeli floated the idea of taking over Cyprus and Alexandretta (and perhaps the island of Lemnos, in addition), Derby immediately resigned.⁵⁹¹ This time it was for good, and Salisbury—the natural choice—replaced him at the Foreign Office, while Hardy took over for Salisbury at the India Office. Derby's brother, Frederick Stanley, took over the War portfolio. Once again, the notion of intervention appeared, as Disraeli ordered a military expedition from India to be arranged and called up the reserves. Derby commented that Shuvalov thought the former's resignation would "be treated in Russia as the definitive triumph of the war-party."⁵⁹² Yet except in terms of costing money, neither the Indian expedition nor the reserves' mobilization ever came to anything, and I would argue that there is no practical way they ever could have, either from a domestic or international perspective.⁵⁹³ As before, it was political posturing—dangerous brinksmanship based on the Government's idea that a war could not *actually* happen. Instead, the supposedly pro-war leaders banked on the belief that Britain's territorial acquisition from the Ottomans would offset Russia's gains, which would thus

archaeologists," "desires" which Lang thinks "led to the purpose of acquiring Cyprus"—see *Life, Letters, and Diaries of Sir Stafford Northcote, First Earl Iddesleigh* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1891), 289. Also, Derby says that Cairns and Salisbury showed in Cabinet that they were wholeheartedly for Cyprus (*Derby Diaries*, 27 March 1878, 532), and on p. 82 of his book Varnava cites Lord Sandon, newly-appointed in April as the President of the Board of Trade, who wrote in his journal on May 27th that he had set his "heart on that island for England."

⁵⁹⁰ Varnava, 81.

⁵⁹¹ See *Derby Diaries*, 27 March 1878, 532-533.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 533.

⁵⁹³ The 7000-strong Indian contingent was dispatched to Malta and was eventually returned to India, while the reserves never even left Britain.

lead to an agreement between the antagonists long before an actual, costly, unwanted fight occurred. Whether or not playing a game of saber-rattling was an ethical act was of no matter, of course, when the protection and extension of the British Empire's (and the Tories') power was at stake.

An "Experiment in Good Government," or Life after Cyprus

With the decision now made, the Sultan could do little but agree to it. Britain was, after all, the only country that had made any kind of sincere promise to keep the Ottoman Empire from disintegrating totally. After the Cyprus Convention was signed on June 4th, 1878 it was Home who four days later drew up the summary document that would establish Britain's official—and finally public—logic for the act, to be promulgated first at the Berlin Congress in June and July and thereafter to the British public as a whole. This memo traveled with Simmons to the Berlin Congress, where he, Disraeli, Salisbury, and Lord Odo Russell would use it to underline Britain's claims to Cyprus during the negotiations.⁵⁹⁴ Significantly, Home's memo laid out a policy that went much further than the earlier argument of mere strategic necessity. Instead, he argued that the basis for expansion should be one that provided an effective solution to the Eastern Question as a whole, both in the sense of it as a problem of protecting British interests and in the sense of bringing order and civilization to the people of the East—the very substance of the “two Eastern Questions” that had been wrangled over from the Bulgarian Agitation on. As Home said:

⁵⁹⁴ Simmons wrote a note on Home's memo stating, “It was upon this paper that the convention, then secret, had been agreed upon with Turkey for ceding Cyprus to G. Britain.” Memorandum by Home, 8 June 1878, FO 358/1, f. 632 (additional note by Simmons).

The kernel of the Eastern question undoubtedly lies in the difficulty that exists of getting races of different origin, religion and language to live harmoniously together and give time and scope for the action of Civilization to remove hatred and soften the memories of old wrongs committed one on the other. No one who knows the East will deny that none of the races in the East are sufficiently advanced to take the leading position.⁵⁹⁵

Using the familiar device of “knowing the East” Home deploys the classic Orientalist hierarchy of societies, building to the obvious conclusion of who exactly should take this “leading position” in the advancement of the sad inhabitants of the East, locked as they were in a cycle of racial animus and fanatical religious acrimony. The choice of head-civilizer was clear: “Various denominations of Christians and Moslems, various races to be found in the East all look to England as the country which alone can assume such a position,” given “the well known integrity of her officials, and the success that has always attended her efforts at administrating Eastern nations.”⁵⁹⁶ In other words Britain not only was the most civilized country in the West, it was the best at civilizing the East. Therefore, Home argued, the place taken should be “sufficiently large, possessed of sufficient material resources and inhabited by such races of people, as shall allow the *experiment of what good government will do being fairly tried.*”⁵⁹⁷ And if this was the “experiment,” the hypothesis was of a rosy success for British interests:

The political effect produced by observing the rapid development of a country under English rule – the peace and prosperity that would reign in it and the satisfaction of the inhabitants at the change from Turkish to British government would be incalculable and would do more to maintain English prestige than half a dozen campaigns.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 632-633.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., f. 633.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

For Home, it was not just strategic expediency that was needed but a kind of Eastern “Petri dish” large enough, rich enough, and diverse enough to make the civilizing experiment worth conducting. Indeed, he deemed the Cretan population’s “remarkable homogeneity” and its penchant for Greek unionism as facts against taking Crete, while Stampalia’s problem was that it was “nothing more” than a harbor and coaling station and would not “give the country what it requires in the East.”⁵⁹⁹ Alexandretta, as a continental possession, would not allow Britain to control the space and the variables of the experiment: it would “compel” Britain “to move too fast.”⁶⁰⁰ Conversely, Cyprus had the advantage of being an island that was large and resource-rich enough that “good government will quickly produce results.”⁶⁰¹ Moreover, it offered a convenient stopping place along the route to India and was “admirably adapted for becoming a *dépôt* for English manufacturers” that allowed them to “make their way into the East”—a captive market that, as an official possession, would be much like Alexandria in commercial value “but in English not foreign hands.”⁶⁰² Taken along with its “very mixed race” Home felt Cyprus alone was the clear choice:

As an experiment in treating the Eastern question fairly, there could be no better place. What is done in Cyprus will be known all through Syria and Asia Minor. The progress that undoubtedly would follow were this island a British possession would do more to convince Eastern nations of the value of civilization, and the benefits of good government than anything else. The result would extend British prestige far and wide in the Levant.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., f. 637.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., f. 639.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., f. 640.

⁶⁰² Ibid., f. 634, 642.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., f. 640-641.

The whole shift from a rendering of the problem as an unfortunate strategic necessity to an opportunity for a civilizing mission seems to have been emblematic of the Simmons' task force. Indeed, Home's language was not just a consequence of intervening events or pressures from pro-imperial figures like Disraeli, but rather is a more complete demonstration of his earlier ideas about extra-strategic advantages of British imperialism. In January 1877, while discussing the idea of a British-controlled Gallipoli, he optimistically cited the "moral & political advantages" that would accompany any acquisition of Ottoman territory, namely the fostering of a "mixed population of varied creed & race well governed & in a happy flourishing condition" that would show the difference between the lives of those "under British rule and those outside its pale."⁶⁰⁴ One can draw an almost direct line from this statement to his memo from June 1878. Taken alongside Simmons' discussion of Turkish "tutelage," this tells us that the Cyprus decision was made according to principles already established in the British mind, now actualized via the process of elite-level policymaking. The positive consequences of British imperialism Home cites complemented those that are presented merely unintended necessities of maintaining global peace and order—a maxim of Victorian restraint and morality that went: "We never wanted to expand, but now that we have the world is a better place." What makes this example of cultural imperialism even more striking is that it was an initiative of the War Office—the paramount military body of the British state—that articulated the specific non-military elements of this imperial project. Throughout the Eastern Crisis, Simmons' task force was again and again used not just to compile military data, but also to provide political and cultural information on

⁶⁰⁴ Memorandum by Home, 12 January 1877, FO 358/2, f. 34.

the Eastern place, its peoples, and whether and where British influence could be effectively implemented.

This complicates our view of the public nature of the imperial program, as the War Office, while of course made up of Britons subject to the same cultural and intellectual forces as the body politic, operated according to principles that do not neatly fit into our understanding of Victorian political thought. In this sense, Bernard Porter's description imperial officials as a "caste within a class" may be useful.⁶⁰⁵ Just as colonial officials lived and worked in a context defined by the combination of cultural values and institutional functions, Simmons' taskforce was made up of men who could hardly separate their work from their livelihoods. And as in any other case of groupthink, these men do not appear to have been fully mindful that their shift from experts on strategic, material to cultural, intellectual matters may not have been politically appropriate, given that the new form of their task tied them to policies that clearly were controversial in British politics. Perhaps, as John Springhall has written, this conceit proceeded from a more general trend in British society that progressively elevated military men to position of "prestige" because of, by the time of the Eastern Crisis, two decades of largely successful (and always glorious) "little wars."⁶⁰⁶ They felt they had the right to make such decisions because Victorian society increasingly considered military officers, especially the Royal Engineers, to have innate credibility.

Whatever the mental hooks upon which Simmons' task force hung its understanding of the issue, it produced other evidence of this subtle transformation in

⁶⁰⁵ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 41.

⁶⁰⁶ John O. Springhall, "'Up Guards and At Them!': British Imperialism and Popular Art, 1880-1914," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 49-50.

purpose, especially the clearer it became that an imperial move rather than an intervention would be taken. In August 1877 the War Office commissioned a study of the Caucasus that included detailed information about its inhabitants.⁶⁰⁷ Couched within the ethnographical language of the document is an emphasis on which groups were most orderly (the “slow, thick-headed” Turkish pastoralists), the “most unruly” (presciently, the Chechens), and the most violent (the Kurds).⁶⁰⁸ The tone of this document is significant given that the intelligence was intended not only to gauge what kind of relationship the invading Russians would have with the local populace, but what Britain could expect should it intervene and occupy these areas, whether temporarily or permanently. The racial hierarchy the report describes essentially outlines the allies and enemies Britain could expect in a larger war with Russia over Asia Minor and its environs.

The cultural benefits of British imperialism became more explicit as the locations under consideration went from being assessed in terms of an invasion to being thought of as new possessions. In March 1878 one of Home’s subordinates, Captain John Maurice, reported that Russia could be prevented from establishing a commanding presence in the Black Sea if Britain took control of the coalfields of Northern Anatolia and the coastline from the ports of Erekli to Amaserah, which would easily provide Britain with sufficient harbors and fuel for their ships “even if the Turkish government were actively opposed to

⁶⁰⁷ The Theatre of War in Asiatic Turkey and Transcaucasia – Part II: Papers Compiled in the Intelligence Branch of the Quartermaster-General’s Department, August 1877 (London: Harrison & Sons for the War Office, 1877), 139-180 (WO 33/32, f. 853-878).

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 153, 152, and 152-153 (f. 860, 859, 859-860) respectively. Significantly, the Abkhazians were considered the most suited to peace and, significantly, anti-Russian feeling—see pp. 151-152 (f. 859). These peoples would have been recent immigrants to Ottoman territory, with their hatred of Russians a consequence of having fought against Russia’s conquest of Circassia in the preceding decades.

us.”⁶⁰⁹ Maurice saw British control as easily upheld by support from the local population, claiming on authority that “the traditions of the Crimean War live in their memories.”⁶¹⁰ He defended his rather radical recommendation:

They remember that time as the one period to which they could look back when wages were regularly paid, and when justice was fairly administered. It is strongly asserted that an English agent has only to appear on the spot to secure services of indefinite numbers, and that, if it were necessary, a force to defend the mines could be easily organized by English officers, quite independent of any permission from the Turkish government, to which the tendency of the people is now to attribute all of their misfortunes.⁶¹¹

The idea that Easterners innately trusted British authority is fundamental to Home’s June 1878 memo, showing that it was underlying theme in the Government’s deliberation over the means by which British control would be exerted. Again, this idea was not new, but Simmons’ task force now “actuated” it in the preparation of their reports on Eastern intelligence. Indeed, as early as January 1877 Simmons spoke of the defensive advantages of fielding Turkish soldiers under British, rather than Ottoman, control. He referred to a similar arrangement during the Crimean War, wherein “the Turkish soldiers liked their [British] officers, and their treatment was such that the service became popular amongst them, the men and officers (Turks)...carrying away with them most pleasing recollections of their association with British officers.”⁶¹² He made sure to note that the Turkish veterans thus held pro-British feelings based on their memory of

⁶⁰⁹ Maurice to Simmons, “Memorandum on the Erekli Mines,” 20 March 1878, WO 33/32, f. 459-461. These ports, which are on the northwestern coast of the Anatolian peninsula, are now called Karadeniz Ereğli and Amasra, in the Zonguldak Province and Bartın Province respectively. See Figure 9 for a map of the location.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., f. 460-461.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., f. 461.

⁶¹² Memorandum by Simmons, 9 January 1877, *Defence of Constantinople*, 100 (FO 358/1, f. 76).

“the just and considerate treatment they had received from the British Government.”⁶¹³

The subsequent period up to Home’s June 1878 report only deepened and solidified this notion.

In consequence, during the course of the Eastern Crisis it eventually became almost obligatory that any imperial move should include an expressly cultural component. A curious illustration of this shift in policy appears in a report on Alexandretta, which some in the Cabinet supported taking, in *addition* to Cyprus, all the way until May 1878. In the final review, Alexandretta was ruled out, but the way the discussion went is key to showing how much the motives for British expansion had changed by this point. A late-May report by Lieutenant William Hare claimed that Alexandretta’s advantage as a place to stage a land defense of Asia Minor was outweighed by the fact that Britain, unlike Russia, would have to rely on naval supply routes to keep its soldiers equipped.⁶¹⁴ To Home, Hare’s report showed that “that no opportunity for bringing *good administration to bear on the peoples of the East* is afforded at [Alexandretta],” and Home reiterated that Cyprus was a much better candidate for such a project.⁶¹⁵ Yet if one examines Hare’s report closely, it largely discussed Alexandretta’s *strategic* attributes, while in response Home argued in *cultural* terms. The slippage between the strategic and the ideological present in Home’s analysis shows that the matter had been already been brought to its conclusion: Cyprus was big, diverse, harbor-ready, and resource-rich—the components Simmons’ task force had judged necessary for a successful imperial experiment. Strangely, this also apparently

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Hare to Simmons, “Report on Alexandretta (*Turk.—Iskanderun.*)” 23 May 1878, WO 33/32, f. 797-814.

⁶¹⁵ Memorandum by Home, 11 June 1878, WO 33/32, f. 796. Emphasis added.

meant that if a place was better suited for a civilizing project then it was also more strategically sound. If Simmons had stressed that Britain must decide its Eastern “*modus operandi*,” it is clear that in the preceding year and a half Britain’s Eastern policy had developed into a strategy that mated material concerns with the relative level of opportunities for the application of cultural, “civilizing” values in the East.

Moreover, not only did such overseers of this policy as Salisbury and Hardy continue their influence in subsequent years, but so did the agents and authors of imperialism from Simmons’ task force. Home provided a hint of the future goals of the British Empire in his June 8th memo, in which he claimed “English interests are to be found in Asiatic rather than in European Turkey.”⁶¹⁶ Indeed, Britain’s eastward turn was set in motion almost immediately following the close of the Congress of Berlin. In late July the Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General for Section D (which oversaw Russia, India, and Central Asia) of the Intelligence Branch,⁶¹⁷ Captain F. C. H. Clarke, wrote a memo on the preparations of Russia in Central Asia, recommending that “the decisive policy which we have recently taken with regard to Asia Minor should find its complement in similar determined action with regard to Afghanistan. One is just as much a necessity as the other.”⁶¹⁸ Two weeks later Home wrote a memo recommending that Britain “carefully and quietly” conduct a three-year mission to gather information on Asia Minor, which would be performed by “those who do the work as a duty, and who

⁶¹⁶ Memorandum by Home, 8 June 1878, FO 358/1, f. 634.

⁶¹⁷ The full list of places Section D oversaw is: Russia, Spain and Portugal (and their colonies), India, Persia, Japan, Central Asia, New Guinea and Polynesia, Artillery issues—see E. H. H. Collen, *Report on the Intelligence Branch, Quarter-Master-General’s Department, Horse Guards* (London: Harrison & Sons for Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, October 1878), 15.

⁶¹⁸ Memorandum by Clarke, 26 July 1878, WO 33/32, f. 898.

view the question as a whole.”⁶¹⁹ In language reminiscent of his earlier Gallipoli and Cyprus memos, Home argued that “clear, distinct, and full information” should be collected “such as would warrant action being taken, if *requisite*.”⁶²⁰ As before, Home depicts Britain’s hand as being forced toward potential territorial expansion and management; the same beneficent promises for an “experiment in good government” that had gone along with the Cyprus decision lurk not far below the surface.

Thus Simmons’ task force’s methods and logic patterns formed important bases for the next step in Britain’s imperial program. Having found that territorial expansion in the East could be considered an apt solution to the Eastern Question, those who had worked on the Cyprus project focused their gaze on the next regions that Britain needed to protect and were themselves in need of Britain’s guiding hand, namely the Levant, Asia Minor, and Central Asia, notably Afghanistan. Home and his fellow Intelligence Branch members were given the task, because they had proved themselves as “experts” on Eastern affairs. In light of the inauspicious experience Britain had had with Afghanistan, the War Office ordered the Intelligence Branch to draw up a detailed report on the First Afghan War.⁶²¹ Another followed on the Indian frontier, written by Major Cecil J. East, who served in Home’s place as Acting A.Q.M.G. after Home became sick with typhoid in the fall of 1878 while working as a part of the Boundary Commission set up to mark the lines drawn by the Treaty of Berlin.⁶²² In the style of Simmons and Home, East chose to look at the matter “both from a political and military point of view,”

⁶¹⁹ Memorandum by Home, 12 August 1878, WO 33/32, f. 1078.

⁶²⁰ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁶²¹ H. Cooper, “Afghanistan. – A Slight Sketch of the Two Afghan Campaigns of 1839-1842, Not Entering into Any Detail, but Showing in a General Way the Movements of the Troops, &c.,” 10 October 1878, WO 33/32, f. 1080-1090.

⁶²² Vetch, “Home, Robert (1837-1879),” *ODNB*.

deducing from this method that Afghanistan “must inevitably fall under the political control of England or Russia.”⁶²³

Where Home had taken up the cause of Cyprus, East took up that of Afghanistan, arguing that a “purely defensive policy is not understood by Asiatics” and that thus “it would be rash to state that future events may not compel our annexation of Afghanistan” even if such actions were not presently necessary to meet the current challenge.⁶²⁴ Other Cyprus rhetoric appeared: for Home (and Disraeli) Cyprus was the “key of Asia Minor” for Britain,⁶²⁵ while for East Kabul was “*the* key of India” for Russia.⁶²⁶ Like Cyprus, Kabul was played up as a strategic, political, and commercial catch for British interests and imperial defense: it was the “political centre of Afghanistan,” “the focus of all power and wealth” in the country, and the city “to which great prestige attaches.”⁶²⁷ For this reason East recommended that the town of Kushi, 44 miles south of Kabul, should be furnished with a British garrison permanently, so as to control Kabul while at the same time offering a respite for Britain’s “chief political agent” to “escape from the inevitable intrigues and petty quarrels of an Oriental Court.”⁶²⁸ Like Home’s Cyprus, then, Major East’s Kushi would serve as a place from which to survey and control the wily Eastern expanse, without the necessity to get one’s hands too dirty or expand too quickly. It is also interesting that, as with Cyprus, theories of future conflict put fears of Russia as a prime mover in British imperialism but took specific regional considerations as more

⁶²³ C. J. East, “Memorandum on the North-Western Frontier of India,” 25 November 1878, WO 33/32, f. 1134.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 1136.

⁶²⁵ Memorandum by Home, 8 June 1878, FO 358/1, f. 634.

⁶²⁶ C. J. East, “Memorandum on the North-Western Frontier of India,” 25 November 1878, WO 33/32, f. 1135. Emphasis in original.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 1136.

acutely important. The attention that East pays to indigenous power structures and strategy shines light on British officials' appreciation of the stakes in the Great Game, which Robert Irwin and B. D. Hopkins have argued had as much, if not more, relation with regional considerations of Britain's Indian possessions as with the broader virtual war between Britain's and Russia's Eastern designs.⁶²⁹ Unfortunately, Home himself cannot offer us any insight into the connection between Cyprus and any of East's Afghan ideas: Home died of his illness in January 1879, cutting short a career which had promised to play a major role in Britain's future Eastern involvements.⁶³⁰

Yet Home was only one of a number of men involved in the Cyprus project who became influential military minds of the age of the "new imperialism." Many of them had first cut their teeth in Simmons' task force or in the Intelligence Branch during the Eastern Crisis and immediately thereafter in places like Africa, Afghanistan, India, and, indeed, Cyprus. The most notable figure related to Cyprus, Sir Garnet Wolseley, came late to the party but had a tremendous effect later as a military commander and imperial administrator in South Africa and Egypt. Wolseley was a key figure of the modern British Army and of imperial governance, the "Modern Major-General" as Gilbert and Sullivan parodied him in *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1879.⁶³¹ Wolseley's ideas for reform proceeded from the principle that the British armed forces should promote excellence and effectiveness rather than the dogged traditionalism and nepotism

⁶²⁹ See Robert Irwin, "An Endless Progression of Whirlwinds," *London Review of Books*, June 21, 2001; Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 35-46.

⁶³⁰ Vetch, "Home, Robert (1837-1879)," *ODNB*.

⁶³¹ See "Wolseley, Garnet Joseph, first Viscount Wolseley (1833-1913)," Ian F. W. Beckett in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/36995>.

represented by his enemy, Cambridge.⁶³² This meant changes in everything from adopting new military techniques and equipment, to procedures for the promotion of officers, to an organization of military units that reflected their tactical utility rather than their heritage in British society.⁶³³ This forward-thinking view combined with Wolseley's adherence to another kind of "progress," namely the advance of a global imperialist worldview. Indeed, Wolseley was an advocate of what Ian F. W. Beckett terms the "imperial school" of defense, meaning that he believed that a war with Russia would take place on the "peripheries" of either empire rather than across the Continent or via Afghanistan to India.⁶³⁴ In Cyprus Wolseley, who would go on to replace Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief in 1895, saw service as an administrator in one of the key "peripheries" from which he imagined a future Anglo-Russian clash would proceed.

Wolseley organized his life and his ambitions around a close group of trusted military colleagues, known as the "Wolseley ring," whom he used to support and promote his reforming efforts.⁶³⁵ Several of these men also served with him in Cyprus and had wider connections to the Intelligence Branch and Britain's imperial affairs. Captain Maurice, who had written the radical memo suggesting the seizure of the northwestern Anatolian coast, went to Cyprus with Wolseley as a "specially employed" officer.⁶³⁶ "Dear Maurice," as Wolseley refers to him in his Cyprus journal, was a major

⁶³² See Edwin M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army: 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 39-40.

⁶³³ See Beckett, "Wolseley, Garnet Joseph, first Viscount Wolseley (1833-1913)," *OBNB*.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁵ For more information, see "Wolseley ring (act. 1873-1890)," Halik Kochanski in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/69913>.

⁶³⁶ Anne Cavendish, ed., *Cyprus 1878: The Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley* (Nicosia: Cyprus Popular Bank Cultural Centre, 1991), 1, n. 1.

member and theorist of the ring.⁶³⁷ Wolseley had with him in Cyprus another member of the ring, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Brackenbury, who had served in the Intelligence Branch as D.A.Q.M.G. of Section B, in charge of colonial defense, from 1873-1875.⁶³⁸ Another of the “specially employed” officers in Cyprus, Colonel Robert Biddulph, replaced Wolseley as High Commissioner in 1879.⁶³⁹ Biddulph was a reformist in a similar vein as Wolseley (though not a member of the ring), who had served from 1872 to 1878 as Assistant Adjutant-General, having been marked out for support by an old champion and collaborator of Wolseley, Gladstone’s War Secretary, Lord Cardwell.⁶⁴⁰ Not so coincidentally, Cardwell had been one of the main driving forces behind the official establishment of the Intelligence Branch in 1873.⁶⁴¹

Others who were considered “Eastern experts” in the Intelligence Branch also made their mark. The affiliate with the greatest Eastern influence was Evelyn Baring, the later Lord Cromer, who aided in the formation of the Intelligence Branch from 1870 to 1871 before leaving to serve in India, a decade before he would take up the position he is most known for, that of Consul-General of British Egypt.⁶⁴² At the end of the Eastern

⁶³⁷ *Cyprus Journal*, 12 October 1878, 128. For more information Maurice’s role in the Ring, see Jay Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 174.

⁶³⁸ Collen, 7-8.

⁶³⁹ Cavendish, 1, n. 1.

⁶⁴⁰ C. V. Owen, “Biddulph, Sir Robert (1835-1918),” rev. James Lunt, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/31879>.

⁶⁴¹ Collen, 6.

⁶⁴² Collen, 4-6. Collen says that in 1870, Cromer was one of only two officers engaged in work in the Topographical and Statistical Department of the War Office, the predecessor of the Intelligence Branch, the other being Captain Charles Wilson, who Home replaced as A.Q.M.G. in April 1876. For more information on this transition, see Thomas G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1984), 69. Cromer’s younger brother Walter also had Eastern connections: he was the “Mr Baring” attached to the British Embassy in Constantinople in 1876 who provided a report to Parliament on the Bulgarian Atrocities. Walter Baring also proceeded to Cyprus after the Berlin Treaty was signed to prepare

Crisis he had just retired from the army and was serving as the British Controller-General of Egypt, effectively in charge of the debt and public finance alongside a French counterpart.⁶⁴³ Cromer's Egyptian policies are closely associated with the reformulation of British imperialism for new economic and strategic ends in the late Victorian period.⁶⁴⁴ Indeed, Edward Said in part based the section of *Orientalism* that deals with Eastern experts, "Knowing the Oriental," on Cromer's ideology.⁶⁴⁵ Other figures from the Intelligence Branch and Cyprus project had Egyptian and Indian connections. Alison and Hamley both served during the Anglo-Egyptian War, the former with a marked degree of success.⁶⁴⁶ Later, from 1889 to 1899, Alison would serve on the Council of India.⁶⁴⁷ Hamley became notable figure in the widening political culture of the Great Game, serving as a Conservative MP in the 1880s and lecturing on Eastern defense, including one in 1884 in which he reiterated his fears of Russian designs on India and hoped to "succeed in arousing...public opinion" on the topic.⁶⁴⁸ Finally, the D.A.Q.M.G. of Section E, which was largely concerned with Near Eastern affairs, Captain John C. Ardagh, was deeply influential in providing the information and logic upon which

the way for Wolseley to take over officially—see "Transfer of the Government of the Island of Cyprus to the British Crown," *London Gazette*, 30 July 1878, col. A, p. 1. He continued to serve there under Wolseley, "on loan" from Constantinople—Cavendish, 9, n. 1.

⁶⁴³ Cromer would serve in this position until 1879, when he was replaced as Controller-General by Sir Edward Malet. Malet then was appointed Consul-General, whereupon Cromer would ironically replace him in this position in 1883.

⁶⁴⁴ See Roger Owen, *Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 394-397.

⁶⁴⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 38-49.

⁶⁴⁶ E. M. Lloyd, "Alison, Sir Archibald, second baronet (1826-1907)," rev. James Lunt, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/30380>.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁸ Edward Bruce Hamley, "Russia's Approaches to India," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall Yard* 28 (1885): 395-425. The lecture was given on May 16th, 1884.

Britain's Eastern policy was based.⁶⁴⁹ Ardagh, who was assisted in Section E by Captain Maurice, had been active in Simmons' task force as one of Home's chief surveyors and served on the Boundary Commission mission that cost Home his life.⁶⁵⁰ He also accompanied Disraeli, Salisbury, and Simmons to Berlin for the Congress, after which Salisbury personally thanked him for his service and he was rewarded with a CB.⁶⁵¹ Ardagh would serve in Egypt as well as the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General of the occupation, later in India as the private secretary of two Viceroys, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Elgin—experiences providing him with many political allies who he remained involved with upon returning to take over the Intelligence Branch in 1896.⁶⁵²

The Cyprus project thus fundamentally reshaped how and with what logic Britain determined the solution to problems in the international realm, especially in the Eastern expanse. Simmons' task force and its affiliates in the Intelligence Branch acted as “agents” of imperialism in a groundbreaking and lasting way. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Simmons, Home, East, Maurice, and Ardagh were merely the latest in a long, unbroken line of British imperialists, bent on bringing to fruition their dreams of world domination. It is more helpful—and provocative—to think of Cyprus as a point of departure. Indeed, as Varnava has pointed out, Cyprus was the first place in the Mediterranean that Britain occupied in peacetime.⁶⁵³ Other possessions in which British rule was secured usually involved at least some legacy of direct conflict, as with

⁶⁴⁹ Collen, 15. Section E oversaw work on the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Africa, Austria, Sweden, and Norway.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12. Home and Ardagh were joined by Section D's head, F. C. H. Clarke, and another of Section E's officers, Lieutenant John Ross of Bladensburg.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² “Ardagh, Sir John Charles (1840-1907),” Edward M. Spiers in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/view/article/30437>.

⁶⁵³ Varnava, 24.

India, Burma, and South Africa. Other areas came into the British fold because of well-known global or regional initiatives, like West Africa and Belize in the case of the suppression of the slave trade or Hong Kong in the conflict over the opium trade. Cyprus, on the other hand, had no preexisting relationship with Britain, and it had been ceded not because of war but as a symbol of *peace* between Britain and an ally, the Ottoman Empire.

This is not to say that Britain did not use war as a justification for expansion in the future; Britain in Afghanistan and Egypt bore that principle out immediately following the Eastern Crisis. But Britain's African adventures and its solidification of control in Southeast Asia certainly show the stamp of the Cyprus project in that many new territories entered the British Empire in similarly measured, negotiated, and peaceful ways. Given the formative nature of a "Cyprus moment," from a strict viewpoint few of these men were even *capable* of being agents of imperialism prior to their part in the Cyprus project. Such an assessment would be first simply a referendum on the "kind of people" British military officers were, but worse it would woefully overestimate the power these men had before they had been expressly given it during the Eastern Crisis. Instead, they *became* agents of empire by being ordered to investigate areas within their purview as military experts on foreign lands. In carrying out this task they offered imperial solutions, which were then actively followed by elite political forces. This increased the chance that these officers and their units would be asked for their opinions in the future (or British policymakers would revisit their prior conclusions), given their role as experts and contributors to the new imperial project they helped develop.

Thus the importance of the method in which the Cyprus project was conducted cannot be overestimated in offering insights into the changing methods of British imperialism. Indeed, the fact that the Intelligence Branch and the wider military, like the Crown, lacked an official political affiliation helped them to come by other means to imperial conclusions theretofore associated with politicians and parties. That the information and logic salient to imperial actions could be upheld by men of reason and science rather than men of politics meant that the political influences on and implications of their work allowed actual policymakers to bypass the old imperial conundrum of “Is this right?” with a much, much easier question, “Is this possible?” Divested of the stamp of pro-imperial or anti-imperial, such “rational” ideas were then portrayed to be sound and defensible from all angles other than the most opposed ideology. The political details of imperial initiatives were then closely interwoven with the strategic data relevant to such potential moves—an efficient and, indeed, easier approach to making imperial visions into realities.

Conclusion, Public Opinion(s)

In late July 1877 the Royal School of Military Engineering at Chatham played host to a military exercise simulating the process and outcomes of a large-scale siege operation.⁶⁵⁴ With the Duke of Cambridge and other assorted high-ranking officers watching, the exercise’s participants—100 soldiers on each side—concluded a month-long project by blowing a mine in side of the fortress, while the attacking troops moved in under live-ammunition fire from those appointed in defense. At the end of the mock

⁶⁵⁴ “Siege Operations at Chatham,” *The Times*, 30 July 1877, col. D, p. 4.

battle both sides assembled for review in front of Brompton Barracks. Alongside the men themselves the artillery and equipment used in the siege were presented for witness, including two supply wagons that rolled into the parade square with the word “Gallipoli” chalked on their sides, a display which *The Times* could only conclude “must have been a joke.”⁶⁵⁵

Much like the modern habit of aerial bomb-naming, though, the thrust of this “joke” is quite clear. No one knew yet about Cyprus or any of the other secretly-discussed possibilities for British expansion, but *Gallipoli* had lately been discussed in the papers as a potential staging zone of a British intervention in the Russo-Turkish War.⁶⁵⁶ It would not have been surprising if a year later the same display would have had a wagon with “Cyprus” on its side. That is, these Gallipoli-emblazoned wagons served as an invitation by the men to consider the exercise proof of their zeal and willingness to work against Russian expansion if called upon to do so. It did not matter *what* Eastern place acted as the staging point, just that Britons were ready. Yet the distinction between secret and public dialogue about this issue is significant. Indeed, while the “menacing rumours” of a Gallipoli occupation might have been recent news in July 1877,⁶⁵⁷ as we have seen the details of such an intervention had long before this been laid out and had, by this point, been almost totally discounted by Simmons’ task force and the Cabinet as the preferable course of action. This evident, yet imprecise tracking of the more detailed confidential actions undertaken by the Cabinet and the War Office during the Eastern Crisis characterizes the range of connections and disconnections between the elite

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ See “An Expedition to the East,” *The Times*, 23 July 1877, col. A, p. 8.

⁶⁵⁷ *The Times*, 23 July 1877, col. A, p. 9.

policymaking apparatus of the British government and the realm of public discourse. For it is clear that while both spheres debated the matters of intervention and empire-building, the details, methods, and means those conversations depended on differed widely.

The Cyprus story, however secretly the acquisition of the island was arranged, would not be complete without the inclusion of distinct public factors. One might even say that a British Cyprus *depended* on the expectation of broad public approval upon the project's eventual revelation—a kind of pro-imperial groundwork constructed concurrently with the deliberations over intervention and expansion that took place on the internal, institutional level. This groundwork was laid both by the design of principal pro-imperial agents and via an “organic” popularization of an imperialistic vision of Britain's role in the East. Simply put, the Cyprus component of Disraeli's “peace with honour” was popular not only because Disraeli and his cohorts had attempted to make such an action palatable, but because the British populace *themselves* had decided to reward imperial language and ideology in popular dialogue. This created a situation in which physical, territorial actions were taken to be part-and-parcel to Britain's participation in the international theater. If, as Jeremy Black has recently argued, the ties between the public's expectation of pro-imperial policies and the actual political, non-military methods by which imperial projects were pursued became evident in the 1880s, it makes sense to conclude by gauging the Cyprus case's role in this vital shift.⁶⁵⁸

Despite the secrecy of Simmons' task force's specific objectives and activities, in the interwoven nature of Britain's social and political world the news inevitably filtered down from “those who knew” to those who read. As early as November 1876

⁶⁵⁸ Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 168.

newspapers reported that the Cabinet was debating an occupation of the Dardanelles and, significantly, “British engineer officers are already engaged in making the surveys requisite for a thorough defence of the Turkish capital.”⁶⁵⁹ That this was exactly what Home and his cohorts were doing at this time is evidence of the permeation of officially confidential information past the walls of secrecy and into the public realm.⁶⁶⁰ Later, in May 1877 *The Times* addressed rumors that an expeditionary force was being arranged shortly after the start of the Russo-Turkish War, stating without any context that there was “no foundation” to claims that “Sir L. Simmons or any other General” had been chosen to lead such a unit.⁶⁶¹ The fact that it was specifically Simmons, an engineering and not a combat general, who surfaced in these rumors further indicates that the public had at least some accurate information of events going on out of their sight. Yet as we have seen in the matter of intervention vs. occupation, without an *exact* knowledge of the secret deliberations the public’s engagement of the issue was effectively independent. However, the holders of exact information—and thus the power—were quite aware of this fact and attempted to use it to their advantage in mobilizing support for their position. Perhaps predictably this meant that an aggressive position on Britain’s relationship with Russia was closely tied to the broader domestic power of the party and people who supported such a policy, as when Richmond wrote in August 1877 of a conversation he had with the Duke of Cambridge and the Prince of Wales (future King Edward VII) that fascinatingly demonstrates the dynamics of this equation:

⁶⁵⁹ “England and the Dardanelles,” *The Times*, 18 November 1876, col. E, p. 5. *The Times* reported that it received this story from the *Financier* paper, which had printed it the day before.

⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, the very name of the report the engineers produced from this period, *Defence of Constantinople* (FO 358/1, f. 1-246), matched this statement almost exactly.

⁶⁶¹ *The Times*, 10 May 1877, col. E, p. 9.

I have had conversation with P. of W. and D. of C. about affairs in the East both very keen that we shd. have done more than we have done. I pointed out [how] very awkward was our position. The former energetic in his belief said we ought to have occupied Gallipoli with fifteen thousand men [and] that it was no use having a majority if we did not use it: and the usual arguments we have heard so often. Most of which I have seen in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I assured him we were fully alive to the situation and then when the Country was able to see what we had done and all the difficulties we have had to contend with, I was sure the verdict would be in our favour.⁶⁶²

Edward's baldly-stated certainty that the Crown (of whom Cambridge, a prince and grandson of George III, was also an affiliate) was on the side of the Conservatives and that the premier Tory newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, echoed these values tells us something about the web of power in political matters of this level of importance. Of course the Conservatives and their Tory social auxiliaries were aware of the power of public politics, and they thus depended on the presumption that Parliament was there to make Tory beliefs public policy. With the Conservatives in power, then, they felt absolutely no need to confirm any of the rumors of the dealings of the War Office and the Cabinet. No one simply needed to know. Yet Liberal forces fought back against this impulse to mate majority rule with policy by fiat, as when the Southampton Liberal Association met on August 2nd to petition the Government to adopt a policy of non-aggression and non-occupation. Gladstone and John Bright sent their regrets, but such dignitaries as Sir George Campbell,⁶⁶³ Auberon Herbert, and E. A. Freeman led the proceedings. Campbell and Freeman championed a resolution protesting "any military occupation by England of Gallipoli, Crete, or Egypt," while Herbert seconded a further

⁶⁶² Richmond to Cairns, 1 August 1877, PRO 30/51/4, f. 20-21. Richmond often wrote carelessly with run-on sentences and missed linking words. I have added the two words in brackets to the prose simply for clarity; if removed the passage is the precise original.

⁶⁶³ Campbell was the Liberal M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs. He is not to be confused with George Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, who was also a prominent Liberal politician and "expert" on the Eastern Question.

resolution that claimed “England has no interests in opposing the opening of the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Black Sea, to the free navigation of the fleets of all nations.”⁶⁶⁴ A final resolution reiterated the Bulgarian Agitation’s “solution” to the Eastern Question, namely that Britain should work in “friendly concert with Russia and the other Powers of Europe to place the Provinces of European Turkey on the footing of States enjoying administrative independence.”⁶⁶⁵ Of course, as all three made up the general shape of the Liberal position on Britain’s Eastern policy, this type of display had little chance of affecting the actions of the Liberals’ political enemies in the Government.

The public was gripped, moreover, primarily in a debate over *intervention* and not imperialism, a tactic that as we have seen was both politically useful for co-opting the Jingos’ influence and lacked the recommendation of Simmons’ task force, the primary body charged with researching the possibility of intervention. Given that occupation was at least temporarily the necessary consequence of intervention, the subject of a specifically *imperial* relationship with the occupied place is somewhat more difficult to detach from wider popular discourse on Britain’s role in and response to the Crisis. But while bellicose behavior may be a part of the history of imperialism, a zeal for military intervention is not the same thing as imperialism.⁶⁶⁶ Aggressive behavior often was in contrast to the kind of cold mechanics required for empire-building in the Simmons vein. In fact, in the Cyprus case the imperialists took territory to *avoid* a military confrontation, which satisfied the warmongers only insofar as imperial glory served as a sufficient

⁶⁶⁴ “The Eastern Question,” *The Times*, 3 August 1877, col. F, p. 10.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁶ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 12 and 137. The distinction between militarism and imperialism is one of Porter’s stronger points in his critique of imperial culture in Victorian Britain.

substitute for the martial kind.⁶⁶⁷ Their calls for war were easily transformed into songs of praise for the expansion of the British Empire, whose condition of power offered a similar opportunity for chauvinism. This provides a possible insight into the political and economic aspects of Britain's later imperial ventures. Indeed, a tension between intervention and imperialism would prove to be characteristic of the "new imperialism," with Britain's invasion of Egypt resulting from fears of economic and political chaos over the prospect of a threat to the Suez Canal, while in Sudan the motivation for direct control was an outgrowth of Britain's new Egyptian responsibilities and proceeded along a much more measured line.⁶⁶⁸

As regards the intelligence and rightness of the Cyprus takeover, the British press largely remained closely harnessed to the sides with which they affiliated. Liberal newspapers preached an internationalist vision wherein the Great Powers got together to push the Turks out of Europe, while the Conservative papers vacillated between supporting adherence to the diplomatic status quo and saber-rattling Russophobia. Apart from the *Daily Telegraph's* defection from the Liberals to the Tories, there was little deviation from the established affiliations of the other papers. The complexity of the positions, though, matched those of politics, leading to some enigmatic results. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, at first hoped the war would go quickly in favor of Russia and not the Ottomans, so as to allow a general intervention of the other Powers to sort out the

⁶⁶⁷ Black, 169. Black speaks here of the influence of nationalism on European imperial policies, namely in the sense that nationalism and military capability might drive the move to expand but that diplomatic methods had a "striking...ability to manage change" and thus satisfy in another way those who otherwise advocated war.

⁶⁶⁸ As Eve Troutt Powell discusses, a major aspect of Britain's goals in Sudan came from having taken over the reigns of Egyptian government policy in 1882, thus giving Britain responsibility over Egyptians' own ongoing imperial projects in their country's western and southern regions—see *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 38-41.

situation.⁶⁶⁹ Its cynicism concerning British interests far outweighed any remnant of the superficial sympathy with the Ottomans it may have employed before the war began.

The *Northern Echo* was particularly confused, as it had for so long advocated the goal of dismembering the Ottoman Empire that it struggled with the fact that this issue had lost some of the relevance it had held earlier in the Eastern Crisis. Indeed, in late March 1878 it even went as far as to criticize the Government for not accepting Austria's attempts at peace (such as the Berlin Note), asserting that the consequence was that "the Ottoman Empire has been destroyed."⁶⁷⁰ This was of course *exactly* what the *Echo* had always wanted, but now that it looked like Disraeli's inaction had helped bring this about there emerged the problem of the Liberal paper supporting the policies of its hated political enemies.

However, when it came to branding itself as a standard-bearer of anti-imperialism the *Northern Echo* was much more clear, calling the Government's policy "a bastard imperialism" whose leader's personal ambition and "notorious sympathies" with the Turks led him to appeal to the warlike and imperialist side of the English populace.⁶⁷¹ This was particularly repugnant to the *Echo*, as Disraeli purported to speak for all of Britain "even though he is not of the English race."⁶⁷² Later, after Disraeli had ordered the Indian expedition to Malta, the *Echo* reiterated the device that a devious, Oriental Disraeli used imperial power to bypass his weaknesses in Britain, claiming "we are being Imperialised daily."⁶⁷³ It predicted that "the Empress of India and her Grand Vizier"

⁶⁶⁹ "Affairs in Constantinople," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 May 1877, col. A, p. 1.

⁶⁷⁰ "The Hitch in the Negotiations," *Northern Echo*, 21 March 1878, col. F, p. 2.

⁶⁷¹ "Why Should We Go to War for Lord Beaconsfield?," *Northern Echo*, 14 January 1878, col. E, p. 2.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ "Sepoys for Europe," *Northern Echo*, 23 April 1878, col. E, p. 2.

would bring “a million men from Asia” to Europe and asked, “What will it be like when the Grand Vizier can garrison London with Sikhs and send sepoy to maintain order in the North?”⁶⁷⁴ In other words, if Disraeli championed “India and Imperialism at the cost of England and Constitutionalism,” what was to stop him from creating not just an Oriental empire in the East but an Oriental empire at home?⁶⁷⁵ Of course, for the *Pall Mall Gazette* such talk was not only inflammatory but unpatriotic and narrowly self-serving according to party interests. It called the Eastern Crisis a “test question” for determining whether those who contrasted their preference for “humanity” over Britain’s imperial interests in truth actually held “inner [thoughts]...that the Empire is a burden too heavy to be borne.”⁶⁷⁶ In other words, if someone sought to “cheapen Imperial interests” the *Pall Mall Gazette* felt it should be considered a sign that that person followed a “general, though unavowed, principle that the Empire is a bad thing and ought to be demolished.”⁶⁷⁷ These thinly-veiled smears of Liberal humanitarianism and self-congratulatory statements of Tory patriotism underpinned the paper’s division of British society into two competing camps: “We are all either Imperialists or anti-Imperialists.”⁶⁷⁸

Yet clearly the popularity of Disraeli’s slogan “peace with honour” rested upon *some* broadly-felt aspect of the British mind. And in this a closer look at the public’s response to the revelation of the Cyprus Convention offers some closing insights into how pro-imperialism ended up becoming much more powerful. To be sure, the crowds that met Disraeli on his return from Berlin provide *prima facie* evidence of widespread

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ “The Enemies of the Empire,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 September 1877, col. A, p. 1.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

support, but the issue of the nature of this support and the opposition to the Cyprus Convention is less clear. Certainly the Tory organs with more casual attentiveness to politics, such as *The Era*, rejoiced that Disraeli had checkmated the “the Bulgarian howlers...the carpers, the sneerers, the agitators, and the peace-at-any-price party” by keeping the move secret.⁶⁷⁹ It offered glowing praise for the wisdom of Disraeli’s decision “to protect our path to India” with such a “beautiful island, so rich in biblical, historical, and poetical associations, so fertile and convenient.”⁶⁸⁰ But the more serious papers were not so sanguine. Given that the acquisition of Cyprus seemed to confirm the desires of the Jingos, which smacked of the chaos of the pro-intervention movement, the *Pall Mall Gazette* dismissed any connection between the Cyprus Convention and the thrust of Conservative policy: “As a glory; as a triumph; as a splendid success for English statesmanship, only the most noisy and foolish partisanship will speak of this treaty. But as a necessary piece of work, forced on the country...it will be welcomed and defended by every man of common-sense in the empire.”⁶⁸¹ The centrist *Economist* was even more dour on the prospects, saying that though it “began by hoping that a great undertaking, burdensome but necessary, splendid though formidable, and beneficent to the world if full of cares for England, had been seriously accepted and was intended to be seriously executed,” it now perceived the Convention as having a “less and less satisfying aspect.”⁶⁸²

The Liberal press was predictably critical, with the *Daily News* lamenting acerbically that Britain was “to be responsible to the world for the deeds of the Pachas in

⁶⁷⁹ *The Era*, 14 July 1878, col. C, p. 11.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸¹ “The English Compact with Turkey,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 July 1878, col. A, p. 1.

⁶⁸² “Turkey and the Convention,” *The Economist*, 24 August 1878,” col. A, p. 998.

Asiatic Turkey. We are to defend Asiatic Turkey against Russians and against Turks... We will live in an atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue.”⁶⁸³ Evoking the *Northern Echo*’s earlier language—and, strangely, Colonel Home’s thoughts on the future of the British Empire as well—the *Daily News* focused on Disraeli’s racial personality and imperial impulses, saying he used “the craft of the Semitic, to the perfidy of the English, character” to construct “European policy which suddenly proves to be less European than Asiatic.”⁶⁸⁴ Yet Liberal criticism was not wholly negative. While *Reynolds’s Newspaper* worried that when the “penalty of the obligation comes to be paid” it would cause more damage than good for British interests, at the same time it also echoed Home’s feelings by hoping that Britain might prove “how easy it is to allow a people to flourish under conditions of equality and justice.”⁶⁸⁵ And the *Northern Echo*, generally the most radical Liberal paper, offered guarded support for the measure, feeling the policy resembled Gladstone’s suggestions in *Bulgarian Horrors*, namely the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the exertion of European influence in Eastern matters.⁶⁸⁶ For a British Cyprus to mean the obviation of Ottoman control of the island was “an unmixed good,” while the only worry was what the move meant in terms of Britain’s larger responsibilities as a protector in the region.⁶⁸⁷ Of course, much of this statement can only be taken as a rhetorical ploy to detach Disraeli’s actions from Tory policy and his party’s aims—a redirection of the intent of the measure and of the issue of who could claim the genesis of the move away from support for Ottoman integrity.

⁶⁸³ *Daily News*, 16 July 1878, col. E, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁴ *Daily News*, 12 July 1878, col. E, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁵ “A Bold Stroke,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 14 July 1878, col. A, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁶ “The British Protectorate of Asia Minor,” *Northern Echo*, 11 July 1878, col. E, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

But at the same time we are left to wonder, how much did the Cyprus Convention symbolize the consolidation of British political aims, or the mating of two previously divergent sides of British society? A British Cyprus represented the strong, glorious, imperial posturing Disraeli felt was necessary to uphold his vision for Britain's external policy. Nearly all of those who supported the Conservatives held some romantic beliefs about imperial expansion and the evidence of military and political might that imperialism represented. Those who did not share this belief, like Derby and Carnarvon, were easily discarded in favor of the majority. Likewise, the peaceful division of Ottoman territory, a move tactically designed to symbolize to the British populace and to Europe the deliberate obfuscation of the principle of Ottoman independence, was (whether anyone liked it or not) a move in concordance with Liberal demands. Indeed, they had agitated and called for precisely this kind of radical shift in Britain's Eastern policy. Liberals might chafe at the fact that acquiring Cyprus meant an increase in Britain's imperial responsibilities and might create problems in its relationship with the other European powers in the region, but it could not be exactly seen as a mindlessly partisan decision. Furthermore, not all Liberals were wholly averse to direct British control if the ideas behind such a policy were couched in the appropriate terms of the morality and liberty that such administration was thought to offer—in essence, *exactly* what Home and all the others promised in the place. The acquisition of Cyprus, then, offered an innovation in imperial reasoning: the knitting together of previously pro- and anti-imperial forces into one that satisfied the pro-imperials by symbolizing British power and placated the anti-imperials by framing a peaceful arrangement that prioritized “good government” over selfishly British ends.

**Chapter Four:
“Peace with Honour” or Imperialism by Negotiation?:
Britain at the 1878 Congress of Berlin**

Introduction: The Heroes Return

In the late afternoon of July 16th, 1878, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury rolled into London on a special train from Dover. As the two men emerged from the carriage, weary but self-satisfied, they were met by a neatly choreographed display of thanks from the London Tory establishment for the men’s “triumph” at the Berlin Congress. On the arrival platform at Charing Cross a well-dressed crowd awaited them, surrounded by an incongruous, yet potent display of crimson fabric, palm trees, and a “profusion of roses” laid on and across the platform structure, as up above flapped the flags of Europe.⁶⁸⁸ The initial shaking of hands aside, the men were conferred to a carriage that led them through cheering crowds who stood amidst more crimson drapery, while bouquets of flowers rained down on them from the open windows above.⁶⁸⁹ It was “like attending the most triumphant Royal progress,” as the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* provocatively termed it, “one of the grandest, partly because [it was] one of the most spontaneous, expressions of public feeling that the British Metropolis has ever witnessed.”⁶⁹⁰

Actually, it was a testament to the Conservative authorities’ care in having orchestrated the event that the paper could claim there was no party flavor to the proceedings.⁶⁹¹ On the contrary however, as Salisbury’s daughter and biographer, Lady Cecil, later stated, the outpouring of public feeling *needed* to be arranged by the Tory

⁶⁸⁸ “Lord Beaconsfield’s Return,” *Illustrated London News*, 27 July 1878, col. C, p. 79. See Figure 10 for image.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, col. C., p. 79.

⁶⁹⁰ “The Reason Why,” *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 17 July 1878, col. C, p. 4.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

“party machine,” as British society only responded to “combatively inspired” events.⁶⁹² Indeed, the *Daily News* reported that London’s Central Conservative Committee stated prior to Disraeli’s return they had “no organized plan of reception,” allowing their ample background preparations to unfold in a way that was “enhanced by its spontaneity.”⁶⁹³ There is no doubt that as the crowds thronged the streets in anticipation of the passage of the heroes’ carriage there was a flavor of triumph in the public spirit of London, which the conveniently laid-out celebration offered a venue for expressing. The rapt attention that greeted Disraeli as he addressed the crowd through the window of his house in Downing Street was therefore genuine, as was the response to his claim that he had brought “peace with honour” to Europe and to the Eastern Question. The British public thirsted for a neat solution to the Eastern Crisis, now over three years old. Britain’s conduct at the Berlin Congress provided that neat solution, even if Salisbury could presciently claim that Tory politicians would “find it out at the polls” that the manufactured public spectacle would eventually backfire on the party.⁶⁹⁴ Less than two years later Gladstone would hone in on Disraelian foreign policy in his famous Midlothian campaign, with Gladstone seizing upon Disraeli’s smug affirmation of his success at Berlin in a drive to defeat Disraeli in a general election.

This chapter examines Britain’s conduct at the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Britain’s representatives wanted to accomplish two major goals at the Congress: first, ensure that Russia would not use its gains from the Russo-Turkish War to threaten Britain’s political and imperial interests; second, secure international witness, but *not* official sanction, to

⁶⁹² Lady Gwendolyn Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol. II 1868-1880 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921), 296.

⁶⁹³ “The Return of Lord Beaconsfield,” *Daily News*, 16 July 1878, col. B, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁴ Qtd. in Cecil, 296.

Britain's takeover of Cyprus. Overlaying these goals was a subtler, long-term object, namely the expression of British power in European politics and the British Empire in ensuring global stability. For as much as the Congress was intended as a peacemaking conference for the European powers, I contend that it functioned as a venue for the British Empire to promote itself as the premier overseer of Eastern order. No longer did the Crimean system, which explicitly depended on the Great Powers' mediation of Eastern disputes, act as the governing principle of Britain's Eastern policy. Rather, the expectation of international conflict in and around the Ottoman Empire was to be confronted by universal recognition of a calm, yet muscular British Empire acting as Europe's impartial adjudicator, even (or especially) in affairs that involved Britain itself. Beyond Britain's representatives at the Congress there were members of other powers' delegations who were for one reason or another friendly to such a policy, while Britain enjoyed political affiliates back home who built support for the idea that British imperial aspirations should be woven into the proceedings of the conference and its result, the Treaty of Berlin. This interventionist mindset helped define the next generation of British external and domestic politics—a vital step in the development of the political reasoning which underpinned the “new imperialism” that extended across party lines and sociocultural barriers. It would be useful to look for the legacy of the 1878 Congress of Berlin in the later, more famous Congress of Berlin, which was held from 1884 to 1885 to discuss the partition of Africa. A suggestion as to how Europe's competing empires and imperial policies issues came to be a key issue of international negotiation—for maintaining “European peace”—is set out below.

First, I look at how Britain's representatives at the Berlin Congress situated Britain and its empire within the negotiations over the resolution of the Eastern Crisis. I raise the question: how did Britain, which had played only a diplomatic role in the conflicts over the previous three years, come to dominate the proceedings so successfully? Notably, Britain's physical acquisition of Cyprus and its symbolic acquisition of authority in the elastic "Eastern" part of the world contributed to the sense that success at Berlin meant that success could be had in the future using the same tactics. Second, I explore how the public responded to the imperial solution that British representatives forged at the Congress. As is suggested by the vignette above, the popularity of the "peace with honour" concept as a cultural shibboleth of British discourse at that moment deserves to be deconstructed to determine the actual extent to which the public "bought" the idea that their delegates had taken the right tack. Most of this conversation took place upon Disraeli's and Salisbury's return to London—in Parliament, in the papers, and on the street. Hence, the effect of their conduct in the international sphere, away from prying eyes, can be reevaluated in the domestic space—where public scrutiny naturally followed the development of government policy. I end with some suggestions as to the deeper impact of the Berlin Congress on Britain's external policy.

"Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann"?

In contrast to the feeling implied by London's cheering crowds and Disraeli's self-congratulatory comments, the Berlin Congress was not defined primarily by individual actions, "triumphant" or otherwise. Although the British delegation had

indeed succeeded in gaining advantages for Britain and the Empire at the conference, such successes were in largest part the result of careful preparation of Britain's position in the spring of 1878 and the explicit avoidance of bombastic or provocative language by the British delegation once the official negotiations began in June. Despite the charm of Otto von Bismarck's famous *bon mot* about Disraeli's performance at the Congress, "The old Jew, this is the man,"⁶⁹⁵ such personality-driven ways of viewing this event are not very helpful in providing an insight into the structure of the British position, how it was made palatable to both a British and an international audience, and how Britain's future external policy was affected by the conference's outcome. In this, tying together the shrewd calculations that went on behind the scenes in the months leading up to the Congress with the way Britain publicly promoted its position in the international arena provides a way to frame the genesis of the diplomatic practices of the "new imperialism" of the 1880s and 1890s. Moreover, Britain's successful use of its status as a leading European state to promote the British Empire as a bulwark against global disorder shows us how British policymakers were able to get international sanction for British imperialism.

In framing our view of the Congress of Berlin we must be careful not to employ a vision of it that takes at face value the kind of assessments that fall around the fault lines of the politics and culture of the time. To be sure, Disraeli's and Bismarck's relationship was a notable human element of the Congress. Disraeli admiringly called Bismarck "a complete despot" of the German delegation and fancied his own leaderly qualities of a

⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, Otto von Bismarck's and Disraeli's cozy relationship at the Berlin Congress has held a particular fascination for scholars since 1878, much of which proceeds from the quote from Bismarck about Disraeli that forms the title for this section. For a discussion of this matter, see Stephen J. Lee, 94-98.

similar stripe.⁶⁹⁶ Disraeli gave Bismarck a portrait of himself, which the latter hung in his private study in Berlin as one of the three people most important to him: “my Sovereign, my wife, and my friend,” as Bismarck explained to inquiring visitors.⁶⁹⁷ Salisbury was less impressed with Disraeli, noting that Russia’s chief representative, Foreign Minister and Chancellor Prince A. M. Gorchakov (whom Salisbury, ever acerbic, deemed the “old wretch”), took advantage of the fact that Disraeli was “short-sighted and ignorant of detail” to alter the proceedings in small ways that favored Russia’s position.⁶⁹⁸ Still, there is no doubt that Disraeli played a prominent role in the Congress, but one must “decenter” him from the proceedings to keep from inadvertently acceding to the promotion of Disraeli’s “manly” role in the Congress.

More important is the fact that “professional” diplomats and foreign policy specialists aided the British delegation’s negotiating abilities, such as Lord Odo Russell, who was also in attendance, and Sir Austen Henry Layard working from Constantinople. Both men were incidentally (and significantly) members of the Liberal Party.⁶⁹⁹ Both also received rewards for their performance in preparation for and at the Congress: the former, the offer of a peerage (which he turned down when Gladstone saw Russell’s acceptance as an endorsement of Tory policy⁷⁰⁰); and the latter, a GCB.⁷⁰¹ Back at the Foreign Office in London, Lord Tenterden helped from a position conveniently out of

⁶⁹⁶ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 26 June 1878, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 228.

⁶⁹⁷ Qtd. in Monypenny and Buckle, 342.

⁶⁹⁸ Salisbury to Cross, 10 July 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 293.

⁶⁹⁹ Russell was the nephew of Whig/Liberal Prime Minister, the 1st Earl Russell, and Layard had served in Parliament as a Liberal MP for Aylesbury from 1852-1857 and for Southwark from 1860-1870.

⁷⁰⁰ Russell to Granville, 8 October 1878, PRO 30/29/22A/8. Russell, distressed with the situation, wrote fretfully to Lord Granville explaining the situation, telling him to burn the letter after he had read it. Granville, thankfully, did not oblige Russell this request.

⁷⁰¹ Layard’s GCB was officially for his role in the Cyprus Convention, which signed over the administration of Cyprus to Britain and provided a key aspect of the negotiations at the Congress—see Millman, 441.

view. It is thus clear that no matter the fact of whether Disraeli deserved the praise that he accepted, the British delegation was strongly positioned to gain at the Congress. And, given the circumstances regarding Britain's limited *official* role in the Eastern Crisis, there can be no doubt that they did gain. Yet I would argue that it was the vital preparation of the British position preceding the Congress that probably did the most to make the British delegation seem the most in-command upon arriving at Radziwill Palace on the Wilhelmstrasse.⁷⁰²

In this regard, the importance of Tenterden's role in this process cannot be overstated. The memoranda he wrote during the spring of 1878 concerning Britain's course of action helped set the tone for the summer's official proceedings. As the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Tenterden had some flexibility in his relationship with the Government as he was not appointed as an affiliate of Disraeli's Cabinet but rather was the head of the permanent Foreign Office staff. It is significant that as the political situation during the Eastern Crisis heated up Tenterden subtly adapted his duties to "extend his advisory function" to a policymaking role.⁷⁰³ This shift was in part motivated by the Government's growing frustration with the dogged moderation of the official head of foreign affairs, Lord Derby, who as Keith Neilson and T. G. Otte neatly put it, "had no difficulty in finding reasons for doing nothing."⁷⁰⁴ Just as General Simmons, Colonel Home, and the rest of the Intelligence Branch worked behind the veil of institutional secrecy to search for a "material

⁷⁰² Indeed, Karina Urbach notes that Russell, a veteran diplomat, was "degraded to the position of messenger" during the Congress, so much had the British position been prearranged—see *Bismarck's Favourite Englishmen: Lord Odo Russell's Mission to Berlin* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 193.

⁷⁰³ Keith Neilson and T. G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009), 47.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

guarantee” in the resolution of the Eastern Question, so too did Tenterden use his behind-the-scenes function to affect a policy solution that would protect and extend Britain’s international position. As he lacked an explicitly partisan motivation, Tenterden’s technically “advisory” role to the Government gave him leeway to posit courses of action that swerved from both Tory or Liberal policy, which lent his ideas a sense of impartial, “expert” intelligence. By the same token, as Tenterden’s influence grew the Government was better able to bypass and, eventually, overrule Derby’s moderate sensibilities, preparing the way for Salisbury to take over the Foreign Office when Derby resigned in late March 1878.

Tenterden’s role in the Eastern Crisis is often overlooked, probably in part because he died of a stroke in 1882 at the relatively early age of 48 and thus never produced or inspired any retrospective accounts of his career. He was often sick before this and he even thought about retiring in early 1876, just as his influence on the Eastern Question was beginning to take shape.⁷⁰⁵ Nor was he an imposing or impressive figure: Sir Charles Dilke, commenting on the contradiction between Tenterden’s giant beard and unpretentious manner, called him “a little graminivorous European bear.”⁷⁰⁶ In fact, in many ways Tenterden was just as cautious as Derby was, and he was certainly more bookishly professional. Just before Salisbury left for the Constantinople Conference in the fall of 1876, Disraeli told him to avoid “Tenterdenism—which is a dusty affair and not suited to the times and things we have to grapple with.”⁷⁰⁷ Yet such qualities became

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁰⁶ Qtd. in “Abbot, Charles Stuart Aubrey, third Baron Tenterden (1834-1882),” R. A. Jones in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn/view/article/13>.

⁷⁰⁷ Disraeli to Salisbury, 10 November 1876, qtd. in Cecil, 95.

strengths when applied to the essential skill of the high-level civil servant, namely the memo-writing that forms the logic and reasoning—beyond the crudely political—for constructing policy. In this capacity, Tenterden can rightly be called a master.⁷⁰⁸

Tenterden's memos carefully laid out Britain's position in relation to Russia's gains from the Russo-Turkish War as detailed in the Treaty of San Stefano, signed on March 3rd, 1878, which stipulated a vast reduction in Ottoman territory in Bulgaria and in the Caucasus.⁷⁰⁹ This later allowed the British delegation to portray Britain's position as practical rather than simply avaricious—a “tactical tone” employed to make Britain seem the most reasonable party at the table. In this sense, Tenterden brought useful skills to the Cabinet's deliberations, as he was better versed in the restrained language of diplomacy than Salisbury and Disraeli, yet more willing to posit significant changes to policy than Derby was. Such a tone was key to preparing to meet Russia's territorial demands spelled out by San Stefano. Indeed, Tenterden, Layard, and Britain's Ambassador to Russia, Lord Loftus, were immediately suspicious of Russia's intentions beyond San Stefano, especially regarding the specter of a Russian occupation of Constantinople.⁷¹⁰ With the same concerns echoed by Austria-Hungary, which also saw Russia as antagonistic to their position in the Balkans, Russia soon acceded to the rest of Europe's consideration of San Stefano as a “preliminary peace” until a general European

⁷⁰⁸ Millman agrees that Tenterden was an “able and perceptive individual,” yet he feels that Tenterden's influence might be exaggerated as he spent most of his energy working at the direct behest (and thus along the same lines of) Derby's existing policies—see p. 508-509, n. 1. But in carrying out this function it was often Tenterden's words and Tenterden's analysis that influenced Derby's and the Cabinet's actions, not the other way around. This was a dynamic, moreover, that became more pronounced as Derby became more and more estranged from the rest of the Cabinet. Tenterden's influence, though of a generally hidden manner, was therefore evident in the formulation of the actual policies with which more public individuals are credited.

⁷⁰⁹ See Figures 11-12 for maps of proposed borders according to San Stefano Treaty.

⁷¹⁰ Millman, 397-398.

congress could be convened.⁷¹¹ As the pro-war, pro-imperial party in the Cabinet (and in the country at large) grew in influence and Derby's influence waned, Tenterden worked to formulate a response that not only would equip Britain to enter an international conference with a sound platform but would aid stability in the British political establishment, led as it was by a Government that was still "groping for a policy" despite its growing popularity with the public.⁷¹² Two weeks after the Treaty of San Stefano was signed, Tenterden submitted a memo on Britain's conditions for accepting a conference, claiming that, first, all questions the other powers had regarding the treaty would be discussed and, second, no alteration of the treaty would be final until all powers consented to it at the actual congress.⁷¹³ This allowed Britain to claim at once that the treaty needed to be altered *and* that any changes to it were unacceptable until a plenary meeting of all the powers was convened, which would give Britain the opportunity to be involved in all negotiations.

With this accomplished Tenterden could turn to the actual objections Britain had to San Stefano, which was a subject that concerned the Cabinet throughout March and April. In early May Tenterden produced a memo that neatly encapsulated three "evils" that San Stefano promised: first, "it admits a new naval power" access to the Aegean Sea; second, "it threatens with extinction the non-Slav populations of the Balkan peninsula"; and third, "it places the Porte so much at the mercy of Russia, that it is no longer able to

⁷¹¹ Heinhard Steiger notes that the language of San Stefano's legal existence is not clear, as it was only when the Berlin Treaty was signed did it officially become referred to as a "preliminary treaty"—see n. 28 on p. 73 of "Peace Treaties from Paris to Versailles," in *Peace Treaties and International Law in European History: From the Late Middle Ages to World War One*, ed. Randall Lesaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59-102.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 405.

⁷¹³ Memorandum by Tenterden, "Observations as to Conditional Acceptance of Congress," 16 March 1878, FO 881/3526.

discharge with independence political functions which are still assigned to it, and which deeply interest other nations.”⁷¹⁴ As San Stefano called for the creation of a large, independent Bulgaria (what Tenterden refers to as the “Slav State”) and further limited the Ottoman Empire’s territory in the Caucasus in ways that would damage the Ottomans’ ability to trade in the Black Sea or oversee their affairs in Mesopotamia, Tenterden insisted that such territorial changes were abbreviated or reversed for the reason of international balance.⁷¹⁵ In other words, Britain was to be the reasonable one in the dispute. Yet this otherwise sober depiction of Britain’s goals for order and practicality offers a glimpse of the ideas and worldview underpinning British policy, namely in Tenterden’s focus on the *Slavic* character of the problem. A memo Tenterden wrote two months earlier, at the end of January, might be a better example of the feelings that were later molded into “reasonable” language:

No one can doubt that the circumstances which have led to the Turkish war were brought about by Slav intrigues, to which Turkish mismanagement had laid the Ottoman Empire open...[The intrigues] were commenced or incited in Dalmatia, and may have been a part of a scheme which the Austrian Slav politicians entertained, under Prince Bismarck’s inspiration, for compensating themselves, by the acquisition of influence through the Slavs over European Turkey, for the loss sustained by Austria after Sadowa of her position in Germany.⁷¹⁶

Tenterden went on to describe the chain reaction of intrigues that derived from Slavic affinities:

The natural consequence was to arouse the rivalry of the Russian Slav party...the threads of intrigue passed into the hands of Russia; the Bulgarian atrocity agitation paralysed England; the obstinacy and miscalculation of the Turks led them to risk the hazard of war; the

⁷¹⁴ Memorandum by Tenterden, 3 May 1878, FO 881/3596.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Memorandum by Tenterden, “Observations by Lord Tenterden of Russian Conditions of Peace,” 29 January 1878, FO 881/3469, p. 1.

Russians pressed on the opportunity, and the result...is the destruction of the Ottoman Empire as a European governing power.⁷¹⁷

For Tenterden, the anti-Turkish movement proceeded first from Slavic agents from Austria (with aid from a Machiavellian Bismarck), was taken up by Russian pan-Slavs and championed by pro-Bulgarian Britons in the fall of 1876, and wheeled away from Austrian control as soon as the war began. No mention is made of the motives of the actual Balkan Christians who rose up, nor are non-Slavic forces of any issue—such as from within the Ottomans’ apparatus of control in the Balkans or from within Austria-Hungary itself, a state that had many non-Slavic forces. For him, it was all “Slav ambitions,” about which the British public was “imperfectly informed.”⁷¹⁸ That this Slavophobic attitude follows the rhetorical convention of claiming to expose the “truth” should only heighten one’s sense of suspicion as to how clear-eyed it actually is. In a sense, then, Tenterden’s analysis of the situation is not very reasonable, nor does it appear to be driven by hopes for the reestablishment of an orderly international situation. Rather, he leverages questionable beliefs about the region, outright conjecture about the motivations of the other Great Powers, and the usual platitudes about a “lasting peace” in the Eastern Question in order to posit as necessary that the Government work to “secure for England a powerful voice in the deliberations of Europe.”⁷¹⁹ By this logic, one might also consider the “material guarantees” being deliberated throughout the spring of 1878 as necessary to the goal of increasing the power of Britain as an international voice. Yet with such beliefs carefully hidden, a veneer of temperance could later be applied even to this radical policy.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

Tenterden's discussion therefore displays a tension between the ideological motives driving certain policy suggestions and the careful, "reasonable" representation of the British position in general. This is a telling dynamic, given that his memos were central to the preparation of Britain against the provisions of San Stefano in anticipation of the Congress. Thus the establishment of Britain as the most reliable manager of the international space—the one least driven by ulterior or toxic goals—was the result of such shrewd political language. Such a line of argument not only masked Tenterden's personal views on the problems of the Eastern Question, but also the fact that he, Salisbury, and Layard had been hard at work behind the scenes in May, stacking the deck in such a way that the negotiations recapitulated arrangements Britain had made separately.

Chief among these private pacts were the Cyprus Convention (also known as the Anglo-Turkish Convention), which formalized the transfer of Cyprus to Britain, and the Anglo-Russian Agreement, which stipulated that Britain would tolerate Russia's possession of Kars, Batumi, and southern Bessarabia.⁷²⁰ The first was signed in secret on June 4th, while the second, signed on May 30th, was also intended to be secret but was unexpectedly made public by a Foreign Office clerk named Charles Marvin, who leaked it to the press.⁷²¹ Salisbury and Disraeli brushed off this revelation and seemed unconcerned that such non-plenary agreements were in direct defiance of the conditions

⁷²⁰ It is worth noting that Russia's takeover of southern Bessarabia was a bone of contention with its ally in the war, Romania, and would not be totally resolved for several years.

⁷²¹ See David Vincent, "The Origins of Public Secrecy in Britain," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991): 229-248. Marvin later published a book on the affair, *Our Public Offices, Embodying an Account of the Disclosure of the Anglo-Russian Agreement and the Unrevealed Secret Treaty of May 31st, 1878* (London: Samuel Tinsely & Co., 1879).

for Britain's acceptance of the Congress,⁷²² giving the impression that British policymakers felt the very rules they had insisted everyone stick to did not apply to them. This presented the image of a Britain that transcended the rules—simultaneously of the Concert and above it. Furthermore, this issue shows the tension between how Britain represented itself as a central player in the Balance of Powers, i.e. Great Britain, and how it represented itself as a global imperial power, i.e. the British Empire.

We can see this approach in the way the British delegation comported itself when the Congress began on June 13th. In comparison to all the bellicose rumblings of the home island, Disraeli and Salisbury were positively restrained in their line of argument, while all of Britain's goals with a warlike or imperial character were meticulously presented as justified according to the old diplomatic standbys of British interests and international peace. For his part as host, Bismarck went along with this tactic, because it upheld his vision of how international relations should be done, namely with material concerns in mind and with an eye toward how to reconcile places where such concerns overlapped.⁷²³ Indeed, Salisbury wrote that shortly after the conference began Bismarck took him and Disraeli aside and reproached Gorchakov for his "vanity" and posturing, perhaps in an attempt to build a coalition of *realpolitik* thinkers against the supposedly retrograde types, like Gorchakov, who were present.⁷²⁴ And though Salisbury's assessment of Bismarck's motives was typically acerbic, he himself deemed Gorchakov

⁷²² For example, Salisbury attempted to portray the leak as a fake (even though it was almost completely accurate), saying to Tenterden that it was "imperfect and misleading"—see Salisbury to Tenterden (to be sent on to Captain Hamber), 14 June 1878, FO 363/4.

⁷²³ See Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 472-473.

⁷²⁴ Salisbury to Lady Salisbury, 17 June 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 282-283.

an “insignificant man...having evidently lost his head,”⁷²⁵ and complained to Cross of “unprofitable conversations with shifty plenipotentiaries.”⁷²⁶ Disraeli, for his part, balanced his affinity for Bismarck with a feeling that the German Chancellor was “recklessly frank” about his opinions of the other powers’ goals.⁷²⁷ Of course, Disraeli’s own goals included a domestic element, and it would not serve party purposes for him to embarrass the Tories with frank comments of his own that would filter back to Britain. Yet he still felt confident to write that the British delegation had essentially overwhelmed or converted the other delegates—even Shuvalov, who had “marvelous talent,” fought a losing, “lone battle” against Britain’s position.⁷²⁸

Much of Britain’s challenge at the Congress had to do with securing sanction for already-defined—and indeed in motion—initiatives, chief among these the takeover of Cyprus. Such concerns were not necessarily limited to the conference itself: there was of course angst over how best to make the secret Cyprus Convention known, not least in Britain itself. Even before the Congress began, Salisbury joked to Sir Stafford Northcote that if the Cyprus transfer became known on, say, June 25th then it would only take until the 29th for the *Daily News* to “conclusively [prove] that the idea of taking Cyprus could only have occurred to the Semetic instincts of the Prime Minister.”⁷²⁹ In the event, Salisbury was off by a week: Salisbury told the French delegation about Cyprus on July 7th and the *Daily Telegraph* published the news the next day.⁷³⁰ Significantly, though, Russia’s quid pro quo for British Cyprus was secured by their *own* secret treaty with

⁷²⁵ Salisbury to Lady Salisbury, 12 June 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 280.

⁷²⁶ Salisbury to Cross, 14 June 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 281.

⁷²⁷ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 23 June 1878, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 227.

⁷²⁸ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 26 June 1878, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 228.

⁷²⁹ Salisbury to Northcote, 6 June 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 276-277.

⁷³⁰ Cecil, 294.

Britain, the Anglo-Russian Agreement, which satisfied Russia insofar as it confirmed British support for key territorial provisions of San Stefano. Thus despite there being no plenary agreement on a British Cyprus, the way had already been mostly paved; it was not really the result of eloquent diplomatic oration. Its revelation was, on the contrary, a clever and effective way to make Britain out to be the central player around which the rest of the Concert's concerns turned. Russia was at once satisfied and contained, Britain looked to the rest of the assembled delegates like quite the organizer of sticky problems—a quality that no doubt contributed to Bismarck's peculiar admiration of Disraeli, seeing as the former wanted to use his hosting of the Congress to make himself out as similarly adroit problem-solver.

Yet gaining international approval of the acquisition of Cyprus and containment of Russia constituted an expansion not only of Britain's role in European politics but also of its *imperial* role in global affairs. As the act was considered, *a priori*, to strengthen Britain's imperial position,⁷³¹ one must consider how the British delegation wove into their argument the notion that a stronger British Empire was somehow good for the other powers and their respective empires. Certainly, the language of the Cyprus Convention itself made it out as if the benefit of the action went all to the defense of the Ottoman Empire—a “material guarantee” for the Ottomans rather than for Britain. In Layard's language it was a “defensive alliance” and thus a theoretically equal one, which required Cyprus solely as a way to give British troops “necessary provision” for “the object of

⁷³¹ That is, the initial outlook on Cyprus' value to the British Empire cannot be considered as impacted by the fact that Cyprus arguably proved later to be either “inconsequential,” as Andrekos Varnava puts it in his book, or actually detrimental to Britain's imperial and international power.

securing for the future the territories in Asia of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.”⁷³²

Later during the Congress the “defensive alliance” was further defined, with Layard and the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Safvet Pasha, stipulating that it would become null if Russia ever gave back to Turkey “Kars and the other conquests made by her in Armenia during the last war.”⁷³³ But the existence of the Anglo-Russian Agreement had made sure that the possession of Batumi, Kars, and the adjoining regions was acceptable to Britain so long as Russia did not challenge Britain’s right to uphold its interests in Western Asia, which of course was manifest in the adding of Cyprus to Britain’s domain. So, such agreements were offsetting: Cyprus would forever remain British, just as northern Armenia would forever remain Russian. The idea of Britain’s and the Ottomans’ alliance as being equal is therefore absurd; it merely served to first placate and then blunt the imperial aspirations of a mutual regional competitor, Russia.

The matter of Russia’s gains in the Black Sea also included the symbolic recentering of power in the East around the British Empire. Since 1841 the Dardanelles Straits had been closed to all warships, except in times of war when Ottoman allies were allowed to use it. As Britain was the Ottoman Empire’s closest ally, its navy had a flexibility unshared by the other Great Powers. In what might stand as his most interesting idea on Eastern policy, Salisbury suggested at the Congress that if Russia were to strengthen her naval position in the Black Sea (especially from the newly-acquired port of Batumi), then perhaps the delegates should agree to open the Dardanelles to all. This

⁷³² “Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey, signed June 4, 1878,” 4 June 1878, inclosure in *Turkey. No. 36 (1878)*. — *Correspondence respecting the Convention between Great Britain and Turkey of June 4, 1878* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1878), p. 3-4.

⁷³³ “Annex to Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey, signed June 4, 1878,” 1 July 1878, inclosure in *Turkey. No. 36 (1878)*. — *Correspondence respecting the Convention between Great Britain and Turkey of June 4, 1878* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1878), p. 5.

would lessen the need to treat warships in the Bosphorus *always* as an act of war, and it would moreover allow the British navy to enter the Black Sea, in “peacetime,” to monitor Russia’s expansion of its navy there. As Salisbury explained it to Cross: “The exclusion of Russia from the Mediterranean is not so great a gain to us as the loss resulting from our exclusion from the Black Sea; because we are much the strongest as a naval Power.”⁷³⁴ Even though Disraeli agreed with him, the Cabinet, save for Postmaster-General Lord John Manners, were totally against it and the matter fell.⁷³⁵ Yet the logic behind this idea still colored the negotiations over Russia’s motives at Batumi, where the question was whether it would be used as a naval installation and therefore a base for another attack on Ottoman territory. Although Salisbury had wanted Batumi to be made a free port that was “exclusively commercial” and “disarmed,” he settled for it being described in the treaty as an “essentially commercial” port, consented to in the understanding that Batumi could not be used as “a menace for the Bosphorus.”⁷³⁶ Despite his disappointment, however, the message was clear: Russia was not to use the port to establish itself as a competing Eastern sea power. We can contrast this with the fact that Cyprus could be considered as an implicit Eastern military installation with no international say-so at all. Via its control of the Eastern Mediterranean, Britain was able to monitor the approach to Western Asia in a way unmatched by Russia’s control of the Black Sea. This was an ironic conclusion to a conflict that had involved a victorious Russian military and an officially uninvolved British one.

⁷³⁴ Salisbury to Cross, 20 June 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 291.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Salisbury to Cross, 10 July 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 292.

From this point of view, it is remarkable that British delegation succeeded so completely in directing its counterparts at the Congress along the model of Britain's imperial role in the East. Even though news of the Cyprus Convention came out earlier than Salisbury had wanted, he still could claim that its revelation had in general been a great success for the British Empire's position both at the Congress and in general. On July 12th Salisbury wrote to Cross on the matter—the day after the British flag had been raised over a confused crowd of Cypriots at Nicosia, Cyprus's capital:⁷³⁷

I do not think either Frenchmen or Russians are much disturbed; Austrians and Germans are evidently glad. The Italians are unhappy—not because we have got Cyprus—but because they have got nothing. I fear poor Corti⁷³⁸ will lose his place for his moderation. I was sorry [news of the Convention] came out on Monday as I had just had the copies made out to send to him—when I heard of the *Daily Telegraph's* indiscretion. Fortunately—very fortunately—Waddington had been squared the day before.⁷³⁹

Salisbury had assured Waddington, France's Foreign Minister and chief delegate to the Congress, that Britain would not interfere with France's interests in Syria, nor would it be acceptable to “leave Carthage in the hands of the barbarians,” saying of Tunis: “Do what you like...it is not our affair.”⁷⁴⁰ As for Egypt, where France and Britain shared influence, Salisbury rather dishonestly assured Waddington that a British takeover of Egypt had “never been entertained by Her Majesty's Government.”⁷⁴¹ Of

⁷³⁷ “Hoisting the British Flag at Nicosia, the Capital of Cyprus,” *Illustrated London News*, 10 August 1878, col. A, p. 121. See Figure 13 for image. Nicosia was the capital of Cyprus in the sense that both the Ottoman administration and Cyprus' Orthodox establishment were centered there.

⁷³⁸ Count Corti Lodovico was the Italian Foreign Minister and Italy's chief delegate at the Congress. He had previously been Italy's ambassador to Constantinople and had been at the Constantinople Conference in 1876, where he had experience in negotiating with Salisbury. Corti was indeed kicked out of the government after the Congress for his lack of gain for Italy's position—see Wirthwein, 412.

⁷³⁹ Salisbury to Cross, 12 July 1878, qtd. in Cecil, 295.

⁷⁴⁰ Qtd. in Seton-Watson, 457.

⁷⁴¹ Salisbury to Waddington, 7 July 1878, inclosure in *Turkey. No. 48 (1878)*. — *Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Turkey* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1878), p. 2.

course, it would not have been prudent to mention the secret discussions over a British “material guarantee” that had taken place over the previous year, in which Egypt had in fact been seriously “entertained” as a possible option.

These imperial bargains, with Britain acting as representative and proxy to the Ottoman Empire’s subsidiaries, marked out Britain as the primary manager and adjudicator of Europe’s “ordering” of the East. This radical shift from the cooperation-focused Crimean system also helps explain why Britain worked so assiduously to set up diplomatic barriers against Russia’s competing claim to command the direction of Eastern order. Claims by the British delegation—such as Salisbury’s that Russia’s garrisoning of the fortress at Kars “announced [Russia] to the Mesopotamian and other Asiatic populations as the coming Power”—had to be met with a coded message that only British “prestige” in Asia was good for Europe (and Asia, for that matter) while Russian “prestige” was not.⁷⁴² To disseminate and promote this new rendering of political language, Britain had to place itself at the *center* of the peacemaking process for the gamble to pay off; it had to be seen as acting “for the greater good.” And apparently it was: through Britain’s actions, France and Germany were made happy, the Ottomans were relieved, while Italy’s unhappiness was more at its delegation’s ineffectiveness than at Britain’s success.⁷⁴³ Russia’s goals were effectively discredited by a healthy dose of the same brand of Russophobia that coursed throughout British society (though more politely-worded), while Austria-Hungary’s chief delegate, Count Andrassy, appears to have been completely satisfied as long as his empire got control of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, a strip of land bordering the Ottoman Empire

⁷⁴² Ibid., p. 1.

⁷⁴³ Wirthwein, 412.

(now Kosovo) and splitting Serbia and Montenegro apart.⁷⁴⁴ To be sure, other actors, like Waddington, were involved in this method of diplomacy-by-dissection, but it was Britain who had set this in motion with its explicitly imperial solution to the dispute. As Lady Cecil later reverently put it, “England, alone among the great Powers concerned, had safeguarded her interests without raising a ripple of disturbance in Europe.”⁷⁴⁵

The actual Treaty of Berlin bore out Britain’s success in preaching such political innovations while maintaining a symbolically critical distance.⁷⁴⁶ Indeed, in its 64 articles Britain is only explicitly mentioned once, and then only in regard to the signatories’ right to mediate in a dispute between the Ottoman Empire and Greece over a border dispute.⁷⁴⁷ Even France, similarly positioned as Britain was to claim an impartial interest in the treaty’s contents, worked in a mention of the reaffirmation of France’s right to protection of the Holy Land.⁷⁴⁸ Germany and Italy also are scarcely mentioned, but in the former case this was by Bismarck’s design and in the latter by Corti either not having the basis or the wherewithal to make Italy’s desires known.⁷⁴⁹ The affinity shown

⁷⁴⁴ Andrassy wanted the Sanjak of Novi Pazar as a strategic possession to both monitor the Ottoman border and to keep Serbia from expanding its power by allying with Montenegro—see László Bencze and Frank N. Schubert, *The Occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878* (Boulder: Social Sciences Monographs, 2005), 23.

⁷⁴⁵ Cecil, 294.

⁷⁴⁶ See Figures 11-12 for border changes according to the Berlin Treaty.

⁷⁴⁷ See Article XXIV in *Turkey. No. 44 (1878). — Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East. Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1878), p. 21.

⁷⁴⁸ See Article LXII in the above document, p. 27. It is possible that the French delegation felt that such rights (given to France in the 1856 Treaty of Paris) needed to be reaffirmed in the treaty if Britain were to occupy a place so close to the Holy Land. The *Pall Mall Gazette* reported that the *République Française* thought that their delegation should “[refuse] to sanction by their signatures” a treaty that threatened French interests in the Near East—see “The Congress.—The Anglo-Turkish Convention,” 10 July 1878, col. A, p. 8. In essence, because of Cyprus the French *had* to give up their diplomatic pretense of impartiality, while Britain could stay out of the treaty itself, having protected its own interests by external means.

⁷⁴⁹ In fact, though, Corti considered himself to have accomplished his main goal, which was keeping Austria from annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. rather than just occupying it, but this did not go over well with those who wanted Italy to have a greater, more public role in European politics—see C. J. Lowe and F. Marzari, *Italian Foreign Policy, 1870-1940* (New York: Routledge, 1975), 20.

by Bismarck toward Disraeli must have had something to do with the success of the British delegation in placing Britain and its empire's interests at the center of the negotiations, succeeding in almost every dispute it entered, and still locating its gains underneath the radar of official record. It is further illuminating that Gorchakov considered the Congress to be the "darkest page" in his long career; the method of balancing power was changing in the Concert.⁷⁵⁰

Despite the treaty's claim to a basis in the Crimean system,⁷⁵¹ the shift away from the principles that had upheld that system for the preceding generation led toward a new, more imperial way of understanding international politics. If the assembled delegates were "desirous to regulate, with a view to European order" how individual powers followed plenary agreements, the centrality of the British delegation at the Congress shows how Britain used the international realm to make its interests known.⁷⁵² This tactic offered a way to solve the tension between Britain's role in the Balance of Powers and its role as leader of a powerful global empire. By staging European peace and harmony as the primary motive for all British actions in the international arena, the British delegation could present the protection and extension of Britain's imperial interests as a substantive part of its image in European politics. This was a subtle and more sophisticated reframing of the same kind of "independent imperialism" that Carnarvon and Salisbury had advocated all throughout the Eastern Crisis, which called for Britain to present its imperial concerns openly and mindfully in the international

⁷⁵⁰ Qtd. in David MacKenzie, "Russia's Balkan Policies under Alexander II, 1855-1881," in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Hugh Ragsdale, 244.

⁷⁵¹ See *Turkey. No. 44 (1878)*, p. 14. The treaty's preamble declares that the Congress took the relationship of San Stefano to the "stipulations of the Treaty of Paris of 30th March, 1856" as its basis for intervening.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

sphere without making any specific, limiting liaisons with any power or bloc of powers. This tactic thus affected the language with which British policymakers presented the country's position, both in Berlin, at home, and in the future. Imperial interests, like that of Cyprus, the route to India, and the British Empire's larger "prestige" in Asia, were hence naturally woven into how Britain went about ensuring that "European order" was "regulated."

In these ways, the 1878 Congress of Berlin formed an important foundation of Europe's diplomatic space as it existed in the "new imperialism" of the 1880s, in which competing and overlapping imperial interests of European states were more and more directly of issue. As noted above, such an imperial dynamic is often associated with the more well-known and remarked-upon 1884-1885 Congress of Berlin, which dealt with officially outlining European spheres of influence in Africa. Imperial issues had obviously appeared in international conferences before, but there had never been one so closely associated with finding solutions to the problems associated with managing growing empires.⁷⁵³ Both the impetus and the outcomes of the 1884-1885 conference depended, in part, on the reformatting of diplomatic representation around imperial entities rather than merely crowns or states. With the opportunity for massive expansions of land in Africa and elsewhere (the realization of which threatened to bring chaos to Europe's existing power relationships), the system could no longer be run by the organic deliberations of diplomats across Europe's various chanceries and state houses. Instead, only a more clearly empire-centered approach would serve to bring order to international

⁷⁵³ That is, it was unprecedented in the sense that it was a plenary meeting regarding *specifically* imperial issues, which was a distinction from previous conferences that included imperial elements as extensions of its purpose.

politics and stave off the threat of potentially global wars. Accordingly, new techniques were required to meet this new emphasis in global politics, many of which were first forged in June and July 1878 by such figures as Disraeli, Salisbury, and Bismarck. Other economic, military, and political factors certainly contributed to Britain's later success at expanding its empire, but we must also take into account how the British Empire got to a place where Europe not only accepted its power but came to depend upon it as a force of order in the Concert and in the world. As Disraeli and Salisbury boarded the boat for Dover, they left behind a Continent that had experienced the dawn of a new era in British diplomacy—one that promised “peace with honour” by promoting a powerful British Empire.

“Others will grumble more Britannico”

Although the British delegation's conduct in Berlin had squared the Government both with the warmongering and more temperate parts of the populace, the former with a promise of a Cypriot garrison and the latter with assurances of a peace favorable to British interests, the Tories steeled themselves for pressure from the Liberals. In general, the reaction was as they expected, with the Liberals objecting to, first, the revelation of Britain's new imperial responsibilities in Cyprus and, second, the secretive and high-handed manner in which Disraeli had represented Britain at Berlin. Although flowers had rained down in Downing Street, the Parliamentary debates were expected to be more skeptical. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* preemptively put it on July 17th:

To-morrow Lord Beaconsfield will make a statement in the House of Lords. Some few who think opposition a duty will cavil and find fault. Others will grumble *more Britannico* [i.e. in the British fashion]...But the

general opinion of his countrymen and the strong approval of Parliament will ratify the acts of Lord Beaconsfield, and place it upon record that he has rendered great service to his country, to Europe, to peace, and to the future prospects of the Empire.⁷⁵⁴

The *Pall Mall Gazette* was not far off, as was shown by the dour tone struck by *Reynolds's Newspaper* regarding how the Treaty of Berlin's affected British domestic politics, its editors claiming immediately after Disraeli's and Salisbury's return that "the present parliament is moribund, and will, in all probability, be dissolved at the end of the present session."⁷⁵⁵ The question of the intelligence of the Cyprus takeover in relation to the Conservatives' position was of primary concern. Though it did not doubt the service Disraeli had done for the Tory cause, the paper shuddered to think that the Eastern Question had been transformed into an "Anglo-Russian question" in which the Turks would "sell their country" to Britain as much as they would to Russia if the price was right.⁷⁵⁶ A thinly-coded allusion to *Othello* further warned of the dangers of allowing Disraeli (motivated, we may assume the paper implied, by his old "Semetic instincts," as Salisbury had put it) to take Cyprus, the "warlike island": "This is the 'witchcraft we have used'—that we have sought to forestall the aggression of one tyrant by buying the connivance of another."⁷⁵⁷ In other words, Disraeli's great victory not only hastened his inevitable fall in Britain, but it put global order at risk by entering into a game of empire with a group of unscrupulous players.

The question of whether it was apt to rely on imperialism to ensure order cut to the core of British political culture, as it came up against a competing anti-imperial

⁷⁵⁴ "The Return of the English Plenipotentiaries," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 July 1878, col. A, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁵ "The Coming Dissolution," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 21 July 1878, col. A, p. 1.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.* For the play's quotes, see *Othello*, 2.3.55-57 and 1.3.169 respectively.

legacy in British foreign policy.⁷⁵⁸ But perhaps the response to the outcome of the Congress of Berlin was not so divisive as it looks, especially since the way had been paved by two years of discourse about the possibility of a wide-scale war. When a replay of the Crimean War and all its carnage loomed ever and ever closer, most felt that the troubles of administering a new territory were considered by most to be a fair price to pay for general European peace. Indeed, to some degree the complaints from the Liberals as to the imperial nature of the Government's solution seem a bit disjointed and cynical. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* said, the policy taken was "one at which the Opposition in England have no right to grumble, for it is clearly the fruit of their doings. They clamoured for peace and for the coercion of Turkey, and they are going to have both, with attendant responsibilities."⁷⁵⁹ But, *more Britannico*, one could always find reasons to critique a political opponent for a public success that threatened one's position in domestic politics. Of course, the intelligence of Cyprus was immediately questioned, especially in regard to the placement of its deep-water harbor and to the health concerns of the island.⁷⁶⁰ When the Irish peer, Lord Oranmore and Browne, said that he had read that Larnaca (the major port and proposed center of British administration) "was the Turkish for 'coffin,' so deadly had the place proved" for the Ottomans, he set off a debate in the House of Lords about the rightness of this assessment.⁷⁶¹ Lord Granville agreed with Oranmore, saying that he had heard there was no harbor to speak of and that "both air and water are

⁷⁵⁸ See Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 94-96.

⁷⁵⁹ "Continental Views of the Protectorate over Asia Minor," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 July 1878, col. B, p. 10.

⁷⁶⁰ Wirthwein, 411.

⁷⁶¹ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.241, col.1433 (15th July 1878). The word that Oranmore was looking for was "larnax," which is a Greek, not Turkish, word and probably refers to not to contemporary Turkish plagues but to the large amount of ancient sarcophagi found in the area—see Clyde E. Fant and Mitchell G. Reddish, *A Guide to Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 348.

exceedingly bad.”⁷⁶² Lord Richmond, speaking for the Government, responded that disease in Cyprus “does not amount to three-fifths of the disease in Europe,” quoting “one of the most eminent journals of the day” as saying that the island might act as a “sanatorium for the invalids of Europe.”⁷⁶³ When pressed on the name of this “eminent journal,” a sheepish Richmond admitted it was *The Spectator*, a paper well-known for its unswerving loyalty to the Conservative Party.⁷⁶⁴ The Liberal *Liverpool Mercury* scoffed at this, saying Richmond’s evidence was “utterly vague and unsatisfactory” and that experts on medicine denied the optimism of the “Conservative apologists” in support of Cyprus as the best possible location for a British military installation.⁷⁶⁵

Yet the question of imperial location is not the same as a question of imperial principle—a distinction even more prevalent in the debate over how Britain, given its conduct at the Congress, now “looked” to the rest of Europe. On this concern, it was hard for the Liberals to argue, especially to the British public, that Britain’s leadership in the Concert was bad for business. Gladstone, understandably, did try, saying in Parliament that Disraeli and Salisbury (he excepted his Liberal cohort, Russell⁷⁶⁶) had not presented the British position “in unison with the institutions, the history, and the character of England,” as they “took the side of servitude” wherever it was inconvenient to call for liberty.⁷⁶⁷ He moreover chafed at the idea that the British delegation had “[behaved] in a manner worthy of England to...all the Mediterranean Powers,” saying

⁷⁶² *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.241, col.1435-1436 (15th July 1878).

⁷⁶³ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.241, col.1435 (15th July 1878).

⁷⁶⁴ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.241, col.1436 (15th July 1878).

⁷⁶⁵ “The Health of Cyprus,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 July 1878, col. C, p. 6.

⁷⁶⁶ On speaking of the conduct of the British delegation, Gladstone said: “I do not now speak of Lord Odo Russell, who discharged, as he was sure to discharge, his duties with great ability; but whose labours were chiefly in a province different from that of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury”—see *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.677 (30th July 1878).

⁷⁶⁷ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.683 (30th July 1878).

that it was wrong to cite French sources, like later French Prime Minister Léon Gambetta's *La République Française*, that did not present the British Opposition's position fairly.⁷⁶⁸ Yet as Tory MP Tom Sidebottom responded, if people were to hold to Gladstone's claim that "we have given great umbrage to foreign Powers," one had to ask "where is the evidence of its truth?"⁷⁶⁹ That is, who of any import was actually truly angry at the result?

There was some truth to what Sidebottom said: just as there was a difference between the sides in the British debate and the country's official position, so too a line separating opinion from authority had to be drawn for the other powers involved. Although French and Italian papers could find something of their own to grumble about—especially in regard to Cyprus—the fact remained that, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* put it, "Continental statesmen are less surprised at the turn of matters than the journalists appear to be."⁷⁷⁰ In other words, to side with a contested, amorphous "European opinion" over the official opinion of European states made the Opposition look like it was transposing its angst about its lack of domestic power (and thus control over British policy) onto the rest of Europe—as if *all* the other statesmen were somehow complicit in vast conspiracy to subvert the "real" opinion of their respective countries.

The fact remained, however, that Parliament (let alone the British public) had not been consulted about the radical measures taken by the British delegation at the Congress. As these had been sprung on everyone outside Disraeli's inner circle, Lord Hartington presented several resolutions that questioned the Government's anti-

⁷⁶⁸ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.707 (30th July 1878).

⁷⁶⁹ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.721 (30th July 1878).

⁷⁷⁰ "Continental Views of the Protectorate over Asia Minor," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 July 1878, col. B, p. 10.

democratic tactics and other issues he felt would have been considered had Disraeli played fair, especially in regard to giving greater voice to Greek interests in the negotiations.⁷⁷¹ However, given the “existing mood of euphoria,” as Patrick Jackson puts it, Hartington had taken on a “hopeless task” and his resolutions failed by a count of 338 to 195.⁷⁷² Notably, Isaac Butt, the Irish MP and leader of the Home Rule League, took his supporters over to the Government’s side for the vote.⁷⁷³ The points raised by the Opposition are nonetheless telling as to the nexus between democratic principles and the Eastern, imperial resolution to the Eastern Question. In presenting his complaints to Parliament Hartington wove the matter of the “honour” with which the British delegation conducted itself at the Congress into the question of the realities of the “peace” formed by the Treaty of Berlin:

I believe, as I have said, that the Treaty of Berlin will not prove a final settlement. I believe that the future of the inhabitants of what remains of the Dominions of Turkey will ultimately be determined by internal and natural causes, rather than causes which are external and artificial; and I rejoice that a temporary solution, temporary though it may be, has been arrived at, which will leave scope for those natural causes to work, and which will not replace the military domination of Turkey by the military domination of Russia or the Slav over unwilling races.⁷⁷⁴

For Hartington, the Christian uprisings were natural outpourings of national, religious feeling, destined for the eventual goal of self-determination unless harnessed to the yoke of a cynical interloper, whose ambitions used local causes merely as a convenient hook. In this formulation Turks and Russians were two sides of the same coin; neither would help achieve the laudable goals of the Bulgarian, Bosnian, or Serb.

⁷⁷¹ Wirthwein, 407-409; Seton-Watson, 499-502.

⁷⁷² Jackson, 89.

⁷⁷³ Wirthwein, 410.

⁷⁷⁴ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.534 (29th July 1878).

The treaty, despite its strengths, just tied the Eastern Question loosely to European power politics; it did not tie up the actual problem at all. To Hartington, this aspect not only showed that the Crimean system needed replacement but that, no matter what the Tory Government said, any future that held an assurance of peace—Eastern *or* European—had to treat the Treaty of Berlin as inspired by this natural direction:

We have always looked at the Treaty of Paris as an experiment. It was based on the idea that the institutions of Turkey might be reformed, and that with the chances there given her, she might ultimately take her place among the nations of Europe. We have come to the conclusion, sooner than hon. Gentlemen opposite, that the experiment has failed, and that some policy must be substituted for that which was the dominant policy in 1856. We believed that the only substitute for that policy lay in the gradual development of the Christian races of the Porte. You may disguise it if you choose, you may use what phrases you please about the independence and power and direct authority which are left to Turkey; but...that is the principle which is at the bottom of the Treaty of Berlin.⁷⁷⁵

In the Opposition's view there would be no lasting peace to the Eastern Question because, as we have seen, for them the Eastern Question included a distinct component of resolving Ottoman Christian demands for self-determination. As the Government had shown itself indifferent to this problem, the fact that so much of Britain's official representation to the Congress had been done in the vacuum of the conference room meant that this part of the equation had not been taken into consideration. Without the breath of democracy keeping alive the Liberal view in official negotiations, how could the Opposition sign on to a contract that bound them to legally uphold the decisions made by two men representing only a slim, perhaps dying majority in the same body? As Sir Charles Dilke said, the secrecy with which the preparation had been made and the surprises that affected Parliament as much as the Congress' participants did not hold with

⁷⁷⁵ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.535 (29th July 1878).

the fact that Britain's democratic *Zeitgeist* must extend to foreign policy: "It is not in these days that Governments can make Conventions, that will bind free peoples to engage in bloody wars, without the previous consent of Parliament."⁷⁷⁶ From this perspective, even the Tory politicians who upheld the Government's power should have felt hoodwinked by their leaders' conduct at the Congress, as very few of those outside the Cabinet had heard anything of the actual course of action. This should, in Dilke's opinion, startle the entirety of the British political establishment, as it placed upon Britain and its empire certain troubling responsibilities that would undoubtedly be untoward in many Britons' minds.⁷⁷⁷ Chief among these fears was for the balance of Britain's energy shifting away from its islands and Europe to the East, even if the East contained the British Empire's most dear possessions: "I believe that we have displaced the centre of gravity of the British Empire towards the East, and entered upon a course which, if persevered in, must lead to England becoming a sort of rich dependency upon the Indian Imperial Crown."⁷⁷⁸

Here again lay the fear that Britain itself would become subject to its own Easterners, with Disraeli having contrived to elevate the British Crown to an overarching, imperial level and thus subvert the indigenous power to which it had been formerly responsible. To Disraeli's most vociferous detractors, the Government's whole response to the Eastern Crisis seemed like an evil plan forged by an Oriental Disraeli: first, as a confidante of the moneyed Jews of London, buy the "key" to the Suez; then, in the garb

⁷⁷⁶ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.559 (29th July 1878).

⁷⁷⁷ The problems found in imperial responsibility formed a core part of Dilke's vision of the British Empire, a subject he engaged in his book *Problems of Greater Britain* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890). As David Nicholls puts it, Dilke was "contemptuous of the argument that an empire conferred prestige on a nation. On the contrary, history taught that extended empires were a source of weakness"—see *The Lost Prime Minister: A Life of Sir Charles Dilke* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1995), 25.

⁷⁷⁸ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.569 (29th July 1878).

of the villain Abanazar, exchange Victoria's British crown for an Indian one; then, as a Christian-hating Turcophile, dismiss the Bulgarian Atrocities and threaten war with Russia to disrupt the Eastern status quo; finally, "triumph" at a European conference and thus tie Britain to a new, imperial, and Eastern-centric external policy.⁷⁷⁹ Considering Britain's highly-charged political atmosphere at the time, one might easily argue that such a conspiracy theory would have been totally convincing to a large portion of the British polity, such as those of the E. A. Freeman brand. In actuality, however, there is little evidence that Disraeli saw his goal at the Congress as the final link in the chain that would bind Britain to some Eastern-led regime. Indeed, his passion for the East had always been casual, even banal.⁷⁸⁰ A better estimation of Disraeli's affinity for the East is his remark that the Ottoman ambassador's reception was both appropriate to European custom and charming in that it "had some features of its own in the shape of real pilaws."⁷⁸¹ Disraeli's Orientalism was about amusement much more than it was a compulsion.⁷⁸² We may grant that, on a personal level, the East was for Disraeli an "all-consuming passion," as Edward Said thought it was.⁷⁸³ But unlike his character in *Tancred*, Coningsby, for whom "the East is a career," Disraeli's devotion to the East was

⁷⁷⁹ See Figures 14-15, 2, 16, and 17 respectively. *Punch* tended to be Tory in some ways and Whiggishly Liberal in others, but it always made particular fun of Disraeli—see M. H. Spielmann, *The History of "Punch"* (London: Cassell & Company, 1895), 197.

⁷⁸⁰ Here I would have to agree with William Kuhn, the author of a rather carefree political biography of Disraeli, that his subject took a "Byronic tone of mock heroism" on imperial policy and on the Eastern Question, and that "it could well be that the Conservative party and Gladstone took him much more seriously than he took himself"—see *The Politics of Pleasure: A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 315-319.

⁷⁸¹ Disraeli to Lady Bradford, 6 July 1878, *Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, Vol. II*, 231. That is, rice pilafs.

⁷⁸² Disraeli's comment was little different than when the Duchess of Teck said at a dinner in April 1878, "you have...the Queen with you, Parliament, and the country, what more do you want?" and Disraeli, looking at his plate, replied, "Potatoes, ma'am"—see "London Gossip," *The Newcastle Courant*, 5 April 1878, col. D, p. 5.

⁷⁸³ Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

a *pastime*, and it was subservient to his larger goals as a Conservative leader in domestic British society.⁷⁸⁴ But his Grand Tour as an impressionable youth, which included all sorts of deliciously Oriental travails and intrigues, did not offer Disraeli much insight into, say, the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Merchant Shipping Acts, or perhaps even another all-consuming problem of the era, the Irish Question.⁷⁸⁵

Instead, Disraeli's Eastern affectations express more about what ideas interested those segments of British society from which Disraeli derived his support and power (and thus meant to master) than they do about any motive to tear Britain's government away from its English moorings and steam it by warship to the Suez and the Subcontinent. "The East," as a "created consistency,"⁷⁸⁶ was fascinating and important to a significant portion of the ruling class in Britain, and Disraeli's mastery of an Oriental vocabulary and lexicon of ideas at once ingratiated him to such people and marked him out as a particular personality in British society and politics.⁷⁸⁷ To be sure, Gladstone did the same for another portion of the populace, meaning that one could "match" each figure's voice to a respective, attendant subgroup, segregating society into competing factions that fit the general dynamics of the political and cultural realm. Disraeli worked for pro-Turks like Henry Munro-Butler-Johnstone and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, while Gladstone did for anti-Turks like E. A. Freeman and Henry Fell Pease. As every person

⁷⁸⁴ See Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred*, ed. Bernard N. Langdon-Davies (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1904), 167. *Tancred* was originally published in 1847, while Coningsby formed the titular character of a preceding volume of Disraeli's "Young England" trilogy.

⁷⁸⁵ For an account of Disraeli's journey in the Near East, see Robert Blake, *Disraeli's Grand Tour: Benjamin Disraeli and the Holy Land, 1830-31* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁷⁸⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

⁷⁸⁷ A compelling look (more so than Said's, that is) at how Disraeli employed Orientalist beliefs and passions to "fashion" himself in British society comes from Patrick Brantlinger's chapter, "Disraeli and Orientalism," on pp. 90-105 of Charles Richmond's and Paul Smith's *The Self-Fashioning of Disraeli, 1818-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

had other things they cared about, the ideological frame contained other forces and their organs: Disraeli for the Orangemen, Gladstone for the Nonconformists; Disraeli for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Gladstone for the *Northern Echo*. The connection Disraeli's opponents drew between his Jewishness (and the fondness Jews were thought to have for Muslims) and his external policy was therefore poetic as much as factual, just as Disraeli's fiction-as-fact arrangement for a British Cyprus—something he had dreamed of in *Tancred*—evoked the importance of the island in Near Eastern history and strategy as much as it did the realization of personal ambition.⁷⁸⁸

Most often, “the East” and its inhabitants acted as referents for the pursuit of other matters. Yet this dynamic is exactly why it is important to think about the debate regarding the Congress and Treaty of Berlin in a way that takes the “Eastern” issues and Orientalist opinions it contained seriously, placing them in relationship to the idea that European, Eastern, and global order would be maintained by the “honourable peace” designed by an imperialist British political faction. It therefore makes complete sense that the idea of a British Empire that was centered on Eastern protectorates chafed at the sensibilities of those who thought the empire was not a worldly project but a British one. To be an imperialist meant thinking globally, not locally. Thus when Gladstone called the Cyprus Convention “an insane covenant,” part of its insanity came from the implication that, in the future, Britain's external policy would proceed from the periphery and not the center.⁷⁸⁹ By the same token, if the treaty was supposed to protect India—which as a “source of grave anxiety” had, as Disraeli stated, been of paramount

⁷⁸⁸ Although, Varnava makes a spirited defense of the idea that Cyprus was the direct fruition of Disraeli's earlier dreams—see pp. 58-60 of his book.

⁷⁸⁹ From a speech at Southwark on July 20th—qtd. in Wirthwein, 409.

concern—then it had to conform to the principles by which Britain was thought to have constructed its Indian policy.⁷⁹⁰ Any new shape of policy that had the protection of India as central could not fall below the standards of transparency and decency Britain had set in cementing its power in India.⁷⁹¹ As then radical Liberal and later Tory imperialist Joseph Chamberlain put it, if the imperial strategy taken at the Congress were to be “a great work of civilization,” it had to be understood as involving the taking up of “new responsibilities.”⁷⁹² And whereas it had taken the “care, prudence, foresight, and skill of our ablest statesmen” to harness India to the British yoke, in the case of Cyprus it was thought that the “stroke of a harlequin’s wand” sufficed, as it would in pantomime, to transform a new territory magically into a competently-administered addition to the empire.⁷⁹³ In other words, empire-building was only appropriate if done from Britain’s moral center, and crowd-pleasing, imperialist glory did not fit the model of moral, workable policy.

This was all fine and good as a Parliamentary argument, but the reality of the matter was that a significant portion—in that heady moment, arguably the majority—of the electorate *preferred* a glorious, imperial solution, and it was clear that this segment of

⁷⁹⁰ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.241, col.1769 (18th July 1878).

⁷⁹¹ Cleverly, in late July Gladstone evoked this theme in relation to the matter of the Indian Vernacular Press Act, which treated works with an anti-British (or anti-Christian) character as seditious. In objecting to the act (which did in fact pass) Gladstone juxtaposed the principle that British policy in India was for the “good of those in India” alongside the fact that a popular topic of interest to Indian vernacular writers was, just like in Britain, the Eastern Question and that many Indian writers, especially Muslim ones, took a pro-Turkish view on the matter. This meant that if an Indian writer were to support the Government’s pro-Turkish policy, it could be taken as an anti-Christian (and thus seditious) tract according to the law, even if such an opinion stood out as the accepted policy of the Britain state. See *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.52-61 (23rd July 1878).

⁷⁹² *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.914 (1st August 1878).

⁷⁹³ *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.242, col.913 (1st August 1878). In one variety of pantomime, the “harlequin” serves as the male lead and carries a “batte,” which is either has a comedic function or can be used to change the scene as if by magic. This type of pantomime, known as “Harlequinade,” was very popular at the time.

the populace felt few moral qualms about their imperial predilections. As the Parliamentary session ended in mid-August, and the public zeal for the Government largely maintained its momentum, it became clear that it was somewhat disingenuous to pass off the pro-imperial turn as a trick by Tory agents. In response to a speech in late September given by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach,⁷⁹⁴ who spoke on the importance of a close connection between imperial possessions and the imperial center, even the generally sober *Times* felt the Opposition had overstated their case:

No doubt many qualifications must be admitted in measuring the value of the Imperialist policy, as presented in the whole course of conduct of the Government during the past four years. The criticisms, however, of many prominent Liberals strike at the root of the Empire as well as Imperialism, and would paralyze not only the activity of this country in foreign affairs, but the energy that has conquered the Eastern, Western, and Southern Continents. The mass of the English people are not willing to look upon India and the Colonies as a burden, necessary, perhaps, but inconvenient and irksome.⁷⁹⁵

The day before, *The Times* had printed a letter Gladstone had sent to an Australian legislator friendly to the Opposition, in which Gladstone said that it was likely that Britain's colonial population relied on "the London newspapers" for information on what the metropole felt were the "facts" of the Eastern Question and "the disposition of the people of the country."⁷⁹⁶ On the contrary, Gladstone argued, the "Australian public is neither aware of the testimony of the national Press at large" nor did it know that in by-elections, where "the question has been tried," voters had "returned in large majority those who disapprove the conduct of the Ministry."⁷⁹⁷ *The Times*, one of these "London

⁷⁹⁴ Hicks-Beach had replaced Lord Carnarvon as Colonial Secretary upon the latter's resignation in February 1878.

⁷⁹⁵ *The Times*, 27 September 1878, col. B, p. 9.

⁷⁹⁶ "Mr. Gladstone," *The Times*, 26 September 1878, col. F, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

newspapers,” took umbrage at such a claim, charging Gladstone himself with misrepresenting the British public spirit based upon “the provincial newspapers attached to one section of the Liberal party” and two recent by-elections in which the Liberals had been successful, one because of “a compact with the Home Rulers” and the other because “the power of beer was once more made manifest.”⁷⁹⁸ To *The Times*, it made sense that colonial peoples would support the party that took “a decided Imperialist line,” as the Liberals had for both principled and cynical reasons become “prone to depreciate the central strength of the Empire and have exhibited a restless anxiety to curtail its responsibilities.”⁷⁹⁹ In other words, to the charge by the Liberals that the Government had used their base and its press organs to score political points, one could answer that the Opposition had done just the same by using its resources to represent a competing, but equally incomplete view of public opinion.

But if both sides represented a divided Britain as essentially of one opinion over the other, which one’s view was closer to the truth? Beyond the fact that the Tories strengthened their position in London and the Liberals ate away at the Conservative majority by taking provincial by-elections, it is hard to sustain any sweeping claims as to who was “winning” at this point.⁸⁰⁰ Nevertheless, I would argue that over the course of the Eastern Crisis Britain had not become so much divided into particular political subgroups as it had in the expression of political opinion. Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were the same parties they had been in 1875 because, of course, significant

⁷⁹⁸ *The Times*, 27 September 1878, col. B, p. 9. The by-elections were for Newcastle-under-Lyme and Tamworth respectively.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ In fact, by my count the two sides were almost even in winning by-elections during the Eastern Crisis, with only a slight edge to the Liberals. In May 1875, just prior to the Eastern Crisis beginning, the Conservatives had 353 seats and the Liberals had 239. Between then and August 1878, the count changed to 347-245.

intervening events had produced significant political change. As the British public traded sides over the Bulgarian Atrocities, the war scare, and the results of the Congress, they coalesced around new ideas and new values. In attempting to gather supporters to a single banner, both sides attempted to appeal to some common, unifying aspect of British political and cultural thought: the Tories leveraged the public's appetite for British power and imperial glory, while Liberals leveraged the values of democracy and Christian humanitarianism. Yet public opinion never gravitates wholly around one pole or another, nor is the "public voice" ever a total facsimile of any political platform. Under the complex, often chaotic conditions of the Crisis a space for a new political language appeared, which gave rise to a discourse that favored imperialist ideals packaged in the shape of democratically approved, morally conscientious policy. The fact that the British delegation, in contrast to the violent tenor of the Government's supporters in London, had not barnstormed their way through the negotiations at the Congress implies that Tory leaders were fully aware that their party's behavior was being monitored not just by its most ardent followers but by the whole British populace. A new, consolidated demographic friendly to the preeminence of Britain both at the European bargaining table and in Eastern lands expected British imperialism to appear useful to European and global order, not merely acquisitive—strong and direct, yet peaceful and honorable.

Conclusion: A New British Order

Britain's participation in the Congress of Berlin served an important purpose in the development of a British society that was more comfortable giving primacy to Britain's identity as a globally-recognized imperial entity. More than anything, the

public approval that met the British delegation's achievements at the Congress—and the unsuccessful attempts by the Opposition to divert this approval—speaks to the public's yearning to think about Britain's place in the world in a new and innovative way. In exploiting this discursive opening the Tories had been more successful than the Liberals. As the moderately Conservative⁸⁰¹ *Ipswich Journal* said of the 1878 Session of Parliament: "The events of the past few months have shown that we are all Conservatives so far as to wish for the preservation of the British Empire, and that a faint-hearted policy which quails before the responsibilities connected with the maintenance of our *prestige* amongst the nations will not find supporters amongst the people of England."⁸⁰² This shift toward universal agreement on the idea that Britain should promote its empire as a force of global order did not appear to follow the mere ebb and flow of public politics. The public's response to the Congress and Treaty of Berlin showed that certain imperial ideals had been inscribed into Britain's standard political language. Anti-imperialists in the tradition of Richard Cobden and John Bright may have been, in their time of prominence, able to maintain their credibility while calling for the substantive end of the empire, but the time for such opinions had long passed its apex. Some of their cohorts remained, such as Sir Robert Lowe, who in late September complained that the Government had "[abused] the prerogative of making treaties," employing in its defense

⁸⁰¹ The British Library states that the *Ipswich Journal* was primarily known from the 1840s to have been an anti-Chartist paper and, as the representative paper to an agricultural region and market town, was "opposed to the repeal of protective duties," but it was also known to advocate for traditionally Liberal issues like labor reform—see "Ipswich Journal," *British Newspapers 1800-1900*, British Library, accessed March 18, 2012, <http://newspapers11.bl.uk/blcs/IpswichJournal.htm>.

⁸⁰² "The Session of 1878," *Ipswich Journal*, 20 August 1878, col. A, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

to the British public “odious sophisms which, under vulgar mask of Imperialism, conceal the substitution of might for right.”⁸⁰³

Yet even the *Northern Echo*, which provided its readers a summary of Lowe’s article with the paper’s implicit support,⁸⁰⁴ drew a line of distinction between “the true Imperialism and its bastard counterfeit.”⁸⁰⁵ Despite the fact that the *Echo* had earlier dissembled on the acceptability of a British Cyprus,⁸⁰⁶ it saw the Cyprus Convention as a “false” imperialism in that the island had been “seized with the exultation with which a freebooter wrests the purse from the pocket of a victim.”⁸⁰⁷ This could be contrasted with a “true” example of imperialism like Britain’s takeover of Fiji in 1874, which was “reluctantly annexed as an addition to the responsibilities and burdens of the Empire.”⁸⁰⁸ Having had the way prepared by colonists “of the English race,” a British Fiji existed “due to the natural growth of the Empire,” while Cyprus had no English colony and therefore was British only due to the “vanity and...greed of Lord Beaconsfield’s supporters.”⁸⁰⁹ In other words, imperialism was fine as long as it was “natural” and was motivated by selflessly taking up the “burden” of spreading civilization to the uncivilized world. Not only does this approach resonate with the very logic that had been employed by Colonel Home and General Simmons in regard to Cyprus (i.e. the “good government” principle), but it also shows that a hands-on approach to global affairs was in no way out of the question for those who represented what remained of the anti-imperial position.

⁸⁰³ See p. 465 of Lowe’s essay “Imperialism” in the *Fortnightly Review* 24 (new series), no. 142 (1 October 1878), ed. John Morley (London: Chapman and Hall, 1878), 453-465.

⁸⁰⁴ See “Mr Lowe on Imperialism,” *Northern Echo*, 30 September 1878.

⁸⁰⁵ “Imperialism: True and False,” *Northern Echo*, 12 October 1878.

⁸⁰⁶ See the conclusion of Chapter Three for this instance.

⁸⁰⁷ “Imperialism: True and False,” *Northern Echo*, 12 October 1878.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The very choice of the word “burden” underscores the fact that the cultural imperialism of the 1880s and 1890s owed its heritage in part to this faction. Indeed, this brand of “reluctant imperialism” more or less sums up the views of another remnant of a more concerted anti-imperial era, Gladstone, who for all his blustering had always held fairly flexible values in relation to the principle of territorial authority.⁸¹⁰ The contradictory calls for intervention in the Eastern Crisis over the previous three years—first against the Turks, then against the Russians—had led to a situation where everyone left the door open for direct extensions of British control. And after the results of the Congress had been so well-received by such a sizable portion of the British populace, it seemed truly anachronistic to characterize the shape of “British opinion” as somehow silently opposed to strengthening the position of the British Empire in world affairs.

The great irony of Disraeli’s “triumph” was that even if Cyprus was taken under Disraeli’s watch, the first major stage of the “new imperialism” took place in the early 1880s under Gladstone, who set himself up in direct opposition to Disraeli’s glorified, militaristic adventures. Given that the promulgation of a Gladstonian empire looms in the narrative of the “new imperialism,” one wonders how truly anti-imperial Gladstone was. Indeed, the “old” anti-imperialism of the Cobdenite variety, represented by aging politicians like John Bright and Robert Lowe, was by this point a remnant of a time in which part of the British population saw Britain’s role in the world as not defined

⁸¹⁰ In point of fact, though, Gladstone had been opposed to the annexation of Fiji when it had been brought up in 1873, while he was still Prime Minister. He commented in Parliament that the “chill of old age” kept him from being excited about a tactic that, if taken by a competing power in its own sphere of influence, would be criticized by the same people who supported it in the British case—see J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Real Gladstone: An Anecdotal Biography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), 118-119. The speech in Parliament, including Gladstone’s direct quote, can be found in *Hansard*, Parl.Debs. (series 3) vol.216, col.943-949 (13th June 1873). Gladstone had, however, accepted the necessity of intervention in the Gold Coast in 1873, as he had accepted the Cape Colony’s annexation of Kimberley in 1871—see St. John, 228-229.

primarily in terms of its empire. To the Cobdenites, Britain's identity was either a prosperous trading nation, or a "first state" of Europe, or a bastion of temperate democracy protected by the sea from the assault of chaotic European politics. Its greatness derived not from its imperial jewels, but from the enlightenment of the home island. This is not the same as saying that the "old" anti-imperialists hated the empire; they just did not see it as Britain's best side, whether in terms of its effect on the economy (*à la* Cobden) or Britain's reputation as a democratic nation (*à la* Lowe).⁸¹¹ Gladstone undoubtedly held some sympathies with this view, but we must guard against equating this with his having held a generally *anti*-imperial stance.⁸¹² Rather, he posited a particular *kind* of imperialism that was considered more sober than Disraeli's, while he took care not to totally alienate the people who were inspired by Disraeli's imperial spectacle. Indeed, even so skeptical an assessor of British imperialism as Bernard Porter notes that it was Gladstone's "view of [empire] that went down best" with the voters in 1880, when the Grand Old Man retook the reins of power.⁸¹³ This was a vision of empire based on building imperial cohesion through "decentralization," and Gladstone believed that "cultivating the colonists' affections" strengthened the empire more than Disraeli's flamboyant territorial whims.⁸¹⁴

The fact that Gladstone held a different view on empire than Disraeli's is not the same as saying he did not hold imperial values. Given his role in the expansion of the British Empire in the 1880s and 1890s it would be naïve to assume his actions were

⁸¹¹ That is, Cobden's anti-imperialism was mostly based on the cost of empire, although it had other philosophical components, while Lowe's, and one might argue Bright's, was largely concerned with the morality of imperialism—see Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 14.

⁸¹² For example, in the case of debates in 1873 over taking control of Fiji, as mentioned above.

⁸¹³ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 111.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*

somehow organized in all ways in contrast to this movement. Instead, he sought to manage the growth of the empire along his established vision, that of gathering colonial “Hearts and Minds” over the Tories’ flaunting of Britain’s military and political might wherever it suited them.⁸¹⁵ We might accept this vision as having a reality that stands, as an ideal, separate from events. Certainly, Gladstonians like John Morley have promoted a version of history in which Gladstone struggled mightily—often alone and in vain—against shady imperial forces, as in the case of Africa, which Morley said stood in Gladstone’s mind as an “uncoveted destination” that received British rule by force of his “fate,” not his choice.⁸¹⁶ But the problem with this view is that despite the fall of the Conservatives the material and political side of empire continued to move forward. And, indeed, Gladstone took imperial actions when he deemed it necessary or advantageous to British interests, as in Egypt or South Africa. We might even question, as A. G. Hopkins has, whether Gladstone’s cultural and philosophical problems with “Eastern” forms of government might not have made a takeover of an Eastern country from an Muslim despot, like the Egyptian Khedive, less dissonant to his values than imperial grandstanding and jockeying in the mold of Disraeli were.⁸¹⁷ Gladstone appears to have been fully willing to ride the wave of imperial moments: at first hesitant to intervene in Egypt as intervention in an internal struggle smacked of imperialism, within a few months he was declaring Britain’s involvement as “an upright war, a Christian war” and

⁸¹⁵ St. John, 229-230.

⁸¹⁶ John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol. II (1872-1898)* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), 312.

⁸¹⁷ Hopkins, “The Victorians and Africa,” 384.

used imperial resources (especially Indian troops) to stabilize Eastern disorder, ostensibly for the good of all involved.⁸¹⁸

One must be careful how far one takes this line of argument. I do not intend to argue that Gladstone is to be *blamed* for the “new imperialism,” nor was he a Liberal imperialist of the stripe of Joseph Chamberlain, who championed an ideology that mated populist radicalism with pro-imperialism.⁸¹⁹ Instead, if, as Gladstone believed, the voice of the British people deserved to be heeded, for his confidence in their enlightenment he received what was perhaps a surprise: they largely wanted a pro-imperial policy and most felt completely comfortable enjoying a pro-imperial culture. Ironically, Gladstone, who thought Disraelian imperialism to be counter to the natural progress of Britain as a liberal people, oversaw a significant portion of the progress of an imperialism that bore the stamp of his hated enemies. In this sense, perhaps the moral, humanitarian ideals he used to combat Disraeli during the Eastern Crisis made him an unwitting abettor to the crime of imperialism, as all expansion thereafter was predicated on Britain acting as a moral—even “good”—force of order in the world.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 382 and 384.

⁸¹⁹ See “Chamberlain, Joseph (1836-1914),” Peter T. Marsh in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/view/article/32350>.

Epilogue: The Eastern Question's Future

In Southwark, just east of the Imperial War Museum and underneath what is now London South Bank University, lie the foundations of one of the great music halls of Victorian London. At its zenith in the 1870s and 1880s the South London Palace had hosted music hall heroes like the Great MacDermott, who had stomped its stage singing “By Jingo!” and other favorites to the crowd’s roar.⁸²⁰ In late September 1878 the “South” saw the production of a new comic ballet called *Cyprus*, a work whose topical nature led *The Era* to offer a bemused remark that the hall’s owners “are evidently in league with the members of her Majesty’s Government in their determination to make us believe that their newly-acquired island in the East...is of all places under the sun the most beautiful, and nearly all its inhabitants are only just a little lower than the angels.”⁸²¹ Under the direction of a “Madame Collier,” on the curtain’s rise the audience was treated to a sumptuous, sensual Oriental display:

We find ourselves given a peep into an Eastern harem, where beauties recline and other beauties waft them cool breezes with ostrich feather fans, we know that there is a treat in store. We do not care much for the dusky-skinned Pasha who owns all these beauties without deserving half of one; but our attention is very quickly arrested by the dancers, who use their veils, not to hide their loveliness, but to assist in forming with banners borne by other beauties a bower for the gyrations of other dancers, and for the marches of gorgeously clad Amazons. The eye is fairly dazzled by so much beauty, and we are sure that many in gazing upon it if they could persuade themselves that it was a truthful picture would be off to Cyprus to-morrow.⁸²²

⁸²⁰ Matthew Lloyd, “The South London Palace,” <http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/SouthLonPalace.htm>. This website is edited and maintained by the great-grandson of music hall legend Arthur Lloyd, and it is archived by the British Library as a leading source on the history of London music halls. See also, Ken Roe, “South London Palace,” *Cinema Treasures*, <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/31542>.

⁸²¹ “The London Music Halls – South London Palace,” *The Era*, 29 September 1878, col. A, p. 4.

⁸²² *Ibid.*

Here we are offered a cultural snapshot of the many ways in which British society accessed and considered the Eastern Question and the Eastern Crisis, which was only then just coming off a three-year boil. This is no mere extrapolation from the scenery, as the ballet's plot is thoroughly intertwined with Britain's role in the Eastern Crisis and the takeover of Cyprus. In it, English sailors ("tars") sit imprisoned, evidently by the Pasha or the regime he represents. Two of these tars sing songs while awaiting rescue, with a "Miss Anderson" first singing "the song of 'Young England,' [introducing] a little toddler," who then sings of his belief that "British boys will stick together in fine and rough weather." Chaotic, Eastern-themed hilarity ensues: some "black slaves" do acrobatics, actors mounted on a "wonderful elephant" and a "pair of donkeys" tilt at one another, while throughout "we get a pretty view of Cyprus, and are permitted to see the iron-clads making stately progress through the waves."⁸²³

There is even evidence of the Orientalist belief that the higher castes of Eastern society approached European standards of grace and nobility, so that *The Era* states that "the humbler natives are pleasant enough to look upon, but when the *elite* are forthcoming we get more beautiful faces, more comely figures, and more elegant dresses."⁸²⁴ Also present, though, is the theme of the eventual triumph of the West, with Britain injecting itself into the Eastern scene to start a new narrative of protection, order, and restraint. In other words, the East is a nice thing to look at on its own, but it is much better when harnessed to the powerful, yet kind British yoke:

We make acquaintance with the "Marines;" we enjoy a naval hornpipe, and then, as the iron-clads boom and the "jolly tars" cheer, a handsome damsel, in the character of Sir Garnet Wolseley, arrives, flags are waved

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

and amid general rejoicing we find a very high personage and another very high personage kneeling at her feet and receiving at her hands the rewards of his endeavors on behalf of his country.⁸²⁵

The ballet thus ends with the arrival of the illustrious hero Wolseley, who directly rescues the “tars” and indirectly rescues Cyprus from its continued fate of existing under a regime of gorgeous, yet directionless Eastern culture led by retrograde overlords. Though the pronoun-use in the report of the scene is a bit vague, rewards change hands to signify the cementing of an auspicious East-West contract, and both Britain and Cyprus are shown to be all the better for their new union. The Eastern Crisis is over and, in the shape of a British Cyprus, the old quandary of finding a “lasting answer” to the Eastern Question is at long last solved. Britain’s Eastern future (and the East’s British future) commences with an optimistic imperial act.

This remarkable ballet could not have been produced without the experience of the previous three years. The Eastern Crisis, with its almost constant vicissitudes and catastrophes, had irrevocably changed British society. Just as future British culture contained the stamp of this tumultuous period, Britain’s future external policy was by necessity shaped by the various tactics its policymakers adopted in their attempts to respond to the Crisis in a way that fit with domestic British social and political values. Inevitably in an era of growing literacy and political involvement, this led to the realignment of Britain’s political forces around the public’s new beliefs and interests, producing significant shifts in the way politicians arranged themselves around future foreign, imperial, and domestic issues. A fuller and more comprehensive study than is possible to do here would take the story forward: first to the Second Anglo-Afghan War,

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

then to the Midlothian campaign and Gladstone's return to power, then to the Anglo-Egyptian war and occupation, and finally to the political crisis of Home Rule. All of these important events owed their dynamics in part to the experience of the Eastern Crisis and the way the British sought to "solve" the Eastern Question. This is admittedly a simple claim to make; it is harder to go beyond generalizations based on the trajectory I have here presented. And indeed, just as policies can be promulgated, they can be reversed. Yet it is much more difficult to erase ideas and values once they have gained currency, and in this sense there is clear evidence that the ways of thinking that came to dominate British politics and society during the Eastern Crisis influenced the next stages of British history.

Some of the effects of the Eastern Crisis were felt almost immediately. Just as Britain's eyes were moving away from Turkey and the Balkans, they were diverted even farther eastward to Afghanistan. The Second Afghan War saw the carrying-out of the policy set forth by the Government, namely that Russia's gains during the Russo-Turkish War posited a direct threat to the safety of the Britain's Eastern territories.⁸²⁶ Based on the belief that Russia intended to influence the foreign policy of Afghanistan with malicious intent toward India, Britain invaded Afghanistan and, after two years of fighting, forced Afghanistan to concede that it would follow British foreign policy.⁸²⁷ The Afghan War also offered Britain, after three years of indecision and anxiety, the opportunity to be involved directly in a fight over some aspect of the Eastern Question.

⁸²⁶ For a summary of these conditions, see Meyer and Brysac, 184-186.

⁸²⁷ See Thomas J. Barfield, "Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan," *Persian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 277-279. The official result of the conflict was the Treaty of Gandamak, signed on May 26th, 1879, in which Afghanistan ceded authority of foreign affairs to Britain and allowed a permanent British residency in Kabul. However, the conflict continued on a lesser level for two more years—see Hopkirk, 387-401.

The fact that the war went far better than the disastrous First Afghan War (where famously only one man out of Britain's entire expedition to Afghanistan escaped capture or death) was heartening as a symbol that strong, decisive responses to imperial boundary disputes worked. For the first time, Anglo-Afghan relations were, in the words of Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, "routinized" under a new, British-supported Emir, Abdur Rahman Khan, who reigned for the next generation.⁸²⁸ Still, the Second Afghan War entered the British consciousness in a way that was troubling in its scenes reminiscent of the First Afghan War and the Indian Mutiny, given that nearly 10,000 men died in the war and Britain's performance in key battles had been uneven.⁸²⁹ As Shafquat Towheed notes, it is "more than merely a trivial anecdote" that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle portrayed his Doctor Watson as having received his army career-ending wound in the Second Afghan War, as it represents the concern that people in the 1880s felt over Britain's "unresolved Imperial policy" in Indian and Afghanistan (shown in stories like *The Sign of Four* and "The Adventure of the Crooked Man").⁸³⁰ In other words, it was all fine and good to speak of glorious, honorable fighting in the abstract, but the reality of imperialism was much dirtier and uncertain.

Accordingly, the new, more imperial shape of Britain's Eastern policy inspired a greater interest of the public in imperial matters. The public's oscillation between euphoria and anxiety over the vagaries of imperial activity had long been an aspect of the

⁸²⁸ Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, "Impoverishing a Colonial Frontier: Cash, Credit, and Debt in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 201.

⁸²⁹ Although there is no completely accurate count of British casualties, Martin Ewans cites around 10,000 dead and 30,000 wounded or sick, concluding that the war "achieved little" in strategic terms and there was criticism from the Viceroy's Council at the time regarding the long-term effects of the war—see *Conflict in Afghanistan: Studies in Asymmetric Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2005), 69-70.

⁸³⁰ See pp. 186-187 of "Appendix C: Colonial Contexts: The First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars," in Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, ed. Shafquat Towheed (London: Broadview, 2010).

British milieu, but in the 1880s this dynamic reached new heights.⁸³¹ Papers like the *Daily Telegraph*, which as we have seen made a dramatic turn from Liberal to Conservative during the Eastern Crisis, came to define a new kind of sensationalist, war-obsessed, and pro-imperial reportage. Moreover, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* was sold in 1880 and turned into a Liberal paper (with arch-Gladstonian John Morley at the helm), the *Daily Telegraph* took its place alongside the *Evening Standard* as the voice of the Conservative Party.⁸³² But whereas the *Pall Mall Gazette* had taken something of an “elitist” line and had a small, mostly London-based circulation, the *Daily Telegraph* was a large-run, national paper. Moreover, the previous provincial-London split that was much made of by the Liberals in disputing the broadness of support for the Government during the Eastern Crisis began to break down. For example, W. T. Stead left the *Northern Echo* in 1880 to serve as Morley’s assistant, and took over for the latter in 1883. So too did the *Manchester Guardian* begin to expand from its base to take more responsibility for “serious” national commentary on the Liberal side, which to that point had been occupied by the *Daily News*.⁸³³ For its part, *The Times* continued to pace the center, but as other papers grew in influence nationally it began to lose the hold on the political narrative it had so long enjoyed in British society.⁸³⁴ In such ways,

⁸³¹ Though he would dispute Britons’ pre-1880 concern for empire, Bernard Porter concedes that there was shift in the 1880s toward a more imperial culture—see pp. 138 and 164-169 of *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 139-140.

⁸³³ Onetime Chief Reporter for the *Guardian*, William Haslam Mills, wrote that the paper began to make a name for itself nationally during Gladstone’s Second Ministry to the Home Rule Crisis, taking a Whiggish, Unionist line throughout the conflict, increasing its influence over Liberal opinion and among Liberal Unionist leaders like Hartington and George Goschen—see *The Manchester Guardian: A Century of History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 113-118.

⁸³⁴ As Mark Hampton shows, *The Times* responded to the rise of cheap dailies by “[imitating] their methods” of covering (and staging) political controversy, in so doing it removed itself and its readers from the position of controlling the direction of political discourse in London and nationally—see p. 85 of “Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830-

newspapermen allied with the Liberals attempted to subvert the supposed Tory iniquity of the imperial center. The simultaneous nationalization of the Tory position and centralization of the Liberal one meant that the both parties had to base their policies more squarely on widely-held values rather than ones associated with either's regional strongholds. As a result, this altered the texture of political discourse by allowing greater involvement of the public in British policymaking, something that amplified the democratization of British society.

Democracy did not, however, necessarily produce less imperialist policies, as we cannot assume that just because imperialism is *fundamentally* an undemocratic policy that it would not be supported by a more democratic British society. Even in the case of the 1880 Midlothian campaign, which saw Gladstone retake control of the Government by deploying his remarkable oratorical abilities to indict Disraeli over his foreign policy decisions, the Liberals' overall win was arguably less tied to Disraeli's foreign policy than one might think. As Richard Shannon puts it, Disraeli's defeat in 1880 is "accounted for less by the iniquities of [his] foreign policy than by [his] helplessness in face of the distresses of the depression of trade."⁸³⁵ Indeed, though the Liberals won big in terms of taking constituencies, their majority was much less resounding in terms of the actual percentage of the vote and the Tories continued to cement their hold in large urban centers.⁸³⁶ Further, the Midlothian campaign, long viewed as the quashing of Disraeli's imperial moment,⁸³⁷ makes no sense when viewed in relation to the fact that the 1880s

1914," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37, no. 1 (2004): 72-92.

⁸³⁵ Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister: 1865-1898*, 245.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁷ From Morley to Bass, the Midlothian campaign has often been portrayed as the end of "Beaconsfieldism," and the affirmation of moderate, Gladstonian external policy—see Morley, *The Life of*

and 1890s saw Britain take a clearly more imperial line on its external policies. Although Gladstone wrote of his win that “the downfall of Beaconsfieldism is like the vanishing of some vast magnificent castle in an Italian romance,” what strikes one about the subsequent period is that the castle either never disappeared or was built up again whenever it suited the public spirit.⁸³⁸ Ironically, it had been Gladstone who was convinced that the “real opinion of the people,” as Lord Derby had put it,⁸³⁹ was concealed by shady Tory interests, and if ever this “real” people were allowed to speak it would see the vindication of his policies. The reality was much more complicated, as there is little evidence that British society was any *less* susceptible to the romance of imperialism after Gladstone returned. Even Seton-Watson, no friend of the Tories, had to agree that there was some truth to the claim that Gladstone’s Second Ministry was “one of the least successful examples of Liberal foreign policy,” and that there is a difference between “exalted theory and meagre fulfillment.”⁸⁴⁰

What Seton-Watson missed, though, is that after the fall of the Conservatives in 1880 the Liberals and their press affiliates almost immediately turned the public’s more imperial tastes to their own ends. The difference was that if an imperial act was done by the Liberals it could merely be portrayed as undertaken with more *reluctance* than the Tories, and thus it was “less” imperialistic given that the Conservatives were considered the party of empire. As J. A. Hobson noted in 1902, the Liberals “[dallied] with an Imperialism which they have foolishly and futilely striven to distinguish from the firmer

William Ewart Gladstone, Vol. II (1872-1898), 202-203; Bass, 310-312.

⁸³⁸ Gladstone to the Duke of Argyll, 12 April 1880, qtd. in Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol. II (1872-1898)*, 223.

⁸³⁹ *Derby Diaries*, 17 February 1877, 377.

⁸⁴⁰ Seton-Watson, 550. He makes sure to note that it is “unfair” to lay the “entire blame upon the shoulders of Mr. Gladstone himself.”

brand of their political opponents.”⁸⁴¹ Hobson’s doubts came from a generation’s experience of anti-imperialists’ disappointment with the Liberals. At the time, it was easy to cast the Midlothian campaign as a groundswell of public opposition to imperial adventurism—as if, in the symbol of the popular vote and the change of ruling party, Disraeli’s *whole* platform had been rejected in favor of Gladstone’s. In fact, it is not clear that the public rejected Disraeli’s vision of a more imperial Britain because, within a year, Britons were rallying for an intervention in Egypt over a new perceived threat to Britain’s Eastern interests, and, a year after that, Britain had folded Egypt into its empire as another “material guarantee.” Would the public have been more subdued under a Disraelian Egyptian adventure? This is a sticky counterfactual, but it is clear the return of the Liberals did not quench Britain’s developing imperialist culture, no matter how much the victor of Midlothian wanted it to.

Gladstone himself appears to have been subject to the imperialist whims of the public—perhaps much more than he would have been in his First Ministry from 1868 to 1874. In this sense, we see what might be the clearest influence of the spirit of the Eastern Crisis on later events. Although Gladstone liked to believe that it was only external exigencies and not domestic foment that led to his taking military action, A. G. Hopkins has argued that it was a passion for intervention whipped up in the public in 1881-1882 that led to one of Britain’s most patently imperialistic actions, namely the bombardment of Alexandria, the subsequent invasion of Egypt, and the permanent occupation of the country as a British protectorate.⁸⁴² Since 1879 Egypt had been in a state of unrest over economic and social issues, and in 1881 an army colonel named

⁸⁴¹ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1902), 151.

⁸⁴² See A. G. Hopkins, “The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882.”

Ahmed Urabi took control of the Egyptian government.⁸⁴³ France and Britain sought to restore the authority of the Khedive, but the situation continued to devolve toward a wholesale change of power and all the chaos that was thought to have promised. In such circumstances, Britain's ability to bring "good government" to the East in the shape of Cyprus appears to have proved that Egypt was an apt candidate as the next place in need of Britain's reforming influence. The fact that Britain's efforts for direct control in Egypt began under Disraeli is another instance of how there was a residual effect of his policy on Gladstone's.⁸⁴⁴

Indeed, the notion that Gladstone's actions in Egypt were somehow less imperial than Disraeli's in Cyprus is at best dissimulation and at worst dishonest: the fact was that Britain's political establishment had decided that an area outside the borders of the empire would do better within it. The 1882 occupation of Egypt embodies the "new imperialism," especially when considering the shape of policy immediately instituted there and as later formulated by a chief imperial figure, Lord Cromer.⁸⁴⁵ That Cyprus formed a precedent for, at least at this point, the notion that such boldly imperial moves were workable from an operational and diplomatic perspective also cannot be dismissed.⁸⁴⁶ The expected objections from the other major shareholder in the Suez

⁸⁴³ For a larger discussion of the political and social background to the revolt, see Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1999).

⁸⁴⁴ Here one must dismiss the idea that Gladstone's hands were tied by international agreements that Disraeli had made to which Britain was bound. Britain was under no specific international obligation to intervene in Egypt militarily, much less on its own. In any case, the question of whether the new government would honor commitments made by the Khedive was never really given a chance to be considered, as its discussion was largely precluded, conveniently, by the British invasion.

⁸⁴⁵ See Chapter 12, "Asserting British Control, 1887-1891," on pp. 236-260 of Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*; also, see Said, *Orientalism*, 35-41.

⁸⁴⁶ Later, especially after Egypt took the place of Cyprus as Britain's primary strategic position in the Near East, the integration of Cyprus into the British Empire progressively came to be seen as unwise. But this was a slow process and not fully realized until decades after 1878—see Varnava, 12-15.

Canal Company, France, were under the circumstances easily managed, and Egypt's transition to British control was more or less smooth.⁸⁴⁷ If Disraeli had promoted the idea that imperial tactics could be used to resolve international instability, Gladstone appears to have been fully willing to leverage this same belief when it served his purposes. Perhaps he was not so averse to "Beaconsfieldism" after all.

The effect of Egypt on the Liberals' imperialist credentials was more than abstract: British anti-imperialists, both the old Cobdenites and the new international socialist types, were highly displeased with Gladstone's performance on the matter of empire. John Bright resigned from the Cabinet over Egypt,⁸⁴⁸ while others chafed at the fact that Gladstone's bold words against Disraeli's reckless and vain posturing were not borne out by his policy of continuing British encroachment in South Africa and his avoidance of weighing in on French imperialism in Tunisia and Madagascar.⁸⁴⁹ Britain's more radical Liberals began to feel that Gladstone had betrayed them, notably on the issue of Ireland, and the most ardent Home Rulers became suspicious that Gladstone was not their man after all.⁸⁵⁰ In this, we might allow that Gladstone *wanted* to do more on these issues, and he certainly hoped that the 1884 Representation of the People Act (which extended the vote to rural men) would allow his vision to become reality by distancing politics from vested party interests—the power of the "great mass" over the

⁸⁴⁷ That is, in terms of dissent from Egyptian society; the matter of stabilizing Egypt's finances and keeping other countries' influence, especially France's, at bay took almost a decade to solve—see Chapter 11, "Surviving the Drummond Wolff Mission and the 'Race Against Bankruptcy', 1885-1887," on pp. 215-235 of Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*.

⁸⁴⁸ Bright was also unhappy with Gladstone's handling of Irish affairs, but it was the bombardment of Alexandria that was the final straw—see Taylor, "Bright, John (1811-1889)," in *ODNB*.

⁸⁴⁹ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906*, 57.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

venal few.⁸⁵¹ This was a quest to reshape British society driven by, as Biagini puts it, “humanitarian causes ‘above’ party politics” that Gladstone commenced in 1876 during the Bulgarian Agitation.⁸⁵² He had thought that such a move would help him with Ireland, because as ever he believed that once the British people could finally speak they would line up behind the “People’s William” once and for all. Gladstone’s unswerving confidence in a Britain that, on the balance, was worldly, humanitarian, and unselfish certainly does the British people credit, but he rivaled his old enemy Disraeli in closing off his mind to any information that spoke to the contrary. In fact, his post-Bulgarian turn not only did not convince any on the other side of the aisle (or the more vocal anti-imperialists), but it made him unpalatable to all sorts of Whigs, Unionists, High Churchers—anyone who believed that such humanitarian policies went against the nebulous value of protecting the “national interest.”⁸⁵³

Thus when the Home Rule debate began in earnest in 1885, we see some of the political dynamics and factions that had begun to separate during the Eastern Crisis become more brittle and finally break, with influential Liberals ranging from Whigs like Hartington to radicals like Joseph Chamberlain splitting off to form the Liberal Unionists. Biagini convincingly argues that it was Gladstone’s miscalculation on the strength of the connection Britons felt existed between foreign issues and the issue of Ireland that spelled the destruction of the Liberals, as even if Irish nationalists—who certainly felt they were at least partly in the “foreign” camp—went for it the British public as a whole

⁸⁵¹ Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister: 1865-1898*, 322.

⁸⁵² Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876-1906*, 353.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*, 353-354.

saw Home Rule as danger to national integrity.⁸⁵⁴ This portended a major shift in the politics of imperialism, as the Liberal Unionists were, at least in part, defined by their support of a “national integrity” that discursively bled over into “imperial integrity,” with Ireland embodying this liminal space. This placed them in line with a region of public opinion long associated with the Conservatives. Yet the Eastern Crisis had shown there was compatibility between certain liberal and imperial ideals, most notably the belief that Britain had a unique capacity to bring its admirable institutions of governance and its spirit of progress to new lands either devoid of such beliefs culturally or under the yoke of illiberal, backward powers.⁸⁵⁵ This logic had been applied in India, Cyprus, Egypt, and South Africa, and the Liberal Unionists believed it had relevance to the Irish Question. The significant difference was that in the case of Ireland, those who felt that Britain’s civilizing power rested upon keeping Ireland firmly in the British fold were placed on the side of those who wished to uphold the union mainly as an element of the political status quo.

Although seemingly uncomfortable, the fact that this alliance worked was not necessarily due to chance. It may have had something to do with how many Liberals had come to see the role of the British state in providing a certain kind of society—one that looked out for the welfare of its peoples in a more direct and comprehensive manner. Here I would offer a subtle reframing of Biagini’s emphasis on humanitarianism in late Victorian politics by questioning, as Bernard Porter has, how imperialism was “grafted” onto liberal values in the era of the “new imperialism.” Indeed, that such a hugely

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., 163-168, 355.

⁸⁵⁵ Of course, the irony in the Indian case was that the illiberal, backward yoke Britain had removed had been, in some senses, British itself, namely in the shape of the East India Company—a fact that uncomfortably colored discussions of the basis for the Raj.

popular⁸⁵⁶ advocate of imperialism as Chamberlain could support plebian democracy on one hand and imperialism on the other stands as hugely important innovation in British politics—a powerful, new political ideology made available to Britons in the last generation of the Victorian period.⁸⁵⁷ The fact that British imperialism in the 1880s and 1890s was based on territorial expansion and direct control does not mean that it was justified at the time by a basic greed for power and wealth. On the contrary, Chamberlain’s brand of imperialism was not merely about power politics; it was a vision of Britain bringing order, progress, and prosperity to new lands as an affirmation of Britain’s innate national virtues.⁸⁵⁸ The popularization of this rendition of imperialism had a deep impact on the political makeup of Britain. Indeed, that the pro-imperial Chamberlain went from reluctant ally with his old Tory foes to willing participant is particularly notable: in the early 1880s Chamberlain had been one of Salisbury’s most vociferous Parliamentary opponents, in 1895 he sat in Salisbury’s Cabinet as Colonial Secretary.⁸⁵⁹ The late 1870s had seen the promotion of a belief that a strong, decisive British Empire should intervene in the East to bring order and peace there. The reformulation of British politics in the 1880s and 1890s did more to reinforce this ideology than tear it down. As a result, within a decade of the end of the Eastern Crisis issues of empire had become so closely tied to those of “national” concern, as in the case

⁸⁵⁶ Chamberlain had long been noted for his devoted following before *The Times* dubbed him in 1902 as “the most popular and trusted man in England”—see Marsh, “Chamberlain, Joseph (1836-1914),” *ODNB*.

⁸⁵⁷ Peter T. Marsh notes that J. R. Seeley’s 1883 book, *The Expansion of England*, which spoke to this mating of democracy at home and an imperialist policy abroad, had a great effect on Chamberlain—see *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 176-178.

⁸⁵⁸ Travis L. Crosby, *Joseph Chamberlain: A Most Radical Imperialist* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 43-44.

⁸⁵⁹ For a discussion of Chamberlain’s animosity to Salisbury in the early 1880s, see Crosby, 30-34.

of Ireland, that that where one stood on the matter of Britain's imperial integrity served as a general referendum on where one fell on the political spectrum.

The Eastern Question has another kind of future, one to which I hope this brief study has contributed. Given the legacy of British imperialism in "Eastern" places, it is vitally important that we continue to look more deeply at the Eastern Question as a political, cultural, and intellectual category. It should never again be limited to one field or one perspective, much less should it be considered "answered" as an historical question as much as it was a political one. I once had a conversation involving the "Polish Question" and the "Jewish Question" with one of the most talented and proficient historians I have ever met. I mentioned that I was interested such issues because I did work on the Eastern Question and I wondered if, in historical discourse, there was some overlap on such age-old "questions." He responded, "Oh! Well, that's different. That's a *diplomatic* question," with an air of good-natured dismissal. In some ways, of course, he was right: the placement of the issue traditionally within the confines of one sub-discipline only fits the historiographical situation. But what I hope my project has shown is that the Eastern Question was by no means "merely" a diplomatic question, nor is it proper to denigrate the complex of sociopolitical, economic, and intellectual values and interests that combine to engender diplomatic decision-making and produce diplomatic results.⁸⁶⁰ In this, my project has sought to "rescue" the field, putting it in relationship to other areas of European and British history to produce some kind of compelling insight into larger questions with which the scholarly community is concerned.

⁸⁶⁰ See Tusan, 218 for a discussion of this matter.

Since I began my work there have been a number of interesting contributions to this goal, which is a heartening sign that this old, venerable institution of historical inquiry will be revitalized with by the energy that comes from saying something new and interesting in an established conversation. Works from people like Andrekos Varnava and Michelle Tusan have been encouraging as indications of a vigorous future of the field.⁸⁶¹ This is good, as the Eastern Question is a topic that holds great opportunities in relation to the ideas and themes that are important to this generation of scholars. Still, I feel it necessary to close with an observation on the legacy to which those of us going forward belong. In the last four years of work I have again and again been impressed (even intimidated) by the careful and erudite writing of those scholars of the Eastern Question who populate the last century. At the same time as I have criticized their views and methods by the criteria of today's standards, I have admired both their enthusiasm for the subject that permeates their work and their goal of illuminating an area of history defined by a narrative of byzantine diplomatic and political complexity. Thus my object here has not been to close the door completely on an "old" way of thinking about the Eastern Question, but rather to take the zeal of those who have written before me on this subject and relate it to those areas which excite scholars today. There is a passion for this topic that unites scholars across time and culture—a passion that proceeds from a fascination with the myriad forms and significances the Eastern Question has taken and

⁸⁶¹ That is, Varnava's *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878-1915* and Tusan's article, "Britain and the Middle East," the former discussed in Chapter Three and the latter in the Introduction. A recent book by Milos Kovic, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), is another promising sign of life in the field. Although Kovic's narrative is slanted almost totally toward the biographical and has little on British public opinion or the broader concerns of Britain's external policy, it is an indication of renewed scholarly interest in the Eastern Question.

can take. At least for the sake of this legacy, then, I sincerely hope that the future will never hold a “lasting solution” to the Eastern Question.

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Appendices:

Figure 1:



Citation: "Notes at the Fancy-Dress Ball, Dublin Castle," *Illustrated London News*, 25 March 1878, col. A, p. 293.

Figure 2:



Citation: "New Crowns for Old Ones!," *Punch*, 15 April 1876.

Figure 3:

The Calling
by Major de Dohsé

In arms! ye warriors true and brave,
Britannia's shield and pride!
On Turkish soil there stands the Slav,
Backed by a mighty guide.

Be on your guard, and cast on him
An eager, watchful eye,
To mark in time his secret scheme,
So vast and bold and sly.

He is Britannia's bitterest foe,
Just working in disguise,
To strike at once a heavy blow
At her, to gain the prize.

O warriors! hear my warning voice,
Distrust the lurking bear,
Who long has brooded on the ice,
To take his final share.

There never was so good a chance
For him to take his prey,
Enough the danger to enhance
Of his enormous sway.

Hasten then, your time is short,
Prepare and hurry on,
Ere he has safely reached the port,
And England's hope is gone.

Citation: Dohsé, Frederick de, "The Calling," enclosure to FO 78/2555, f. 194-195.

Figure 4:



Citation: "With the Russians—The Fighting in the Shipka Pass," *The Graphic*, 1 September 1877, col. A, p. 201

Figure 5:



Citation: "A Large Bird's-Eye View of the Siege of Plevna," *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 22 September 1877, col. A, p. 179.

Figure 6:



"GOOD-BY, PAPA!"

Citation: "Good-By, Papa!," *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 22 September 1878, col. B, p. 180.

Figure 7:



INSIDE A TURKISH REDOUBT.

Citation: "Inside a Turkish Redoubt," *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 22 September 1878, col. A, p. 181.

Figure 8:



OSMAN PASHA BROUGHT BEFORE THE CZAR AT PLEVNA
—On passing through the part of the scene in which the Czar was looking to Plevna, one of the Staff, who was
—The Pasha had taken and retained the town general, saying, "Allah! Allah!" —Extract from Our Artist's Letter

Citation: "Osman Pasha Brought before the Czar at Plevna," *The Graphic*, 5 Jan 1878, col. A, p. 9.

Figure 9:



Citation: Screenshot of area from Google Maps (region is in upper, near-right position on map, from Karadeniz Ereğli to Amasra)

Figure 10:



Citation: "Reception of Lord Beaconsfield at Charing-Cross Station on His Return from Berlin," *Illustrated London News*, 27 July 1878, col. A, p. 80.

Figures 11-12:



European Borders:

Pre-war (farthest north), San Stefano Treaty (farthest south), and Berlin Treaty (middle)

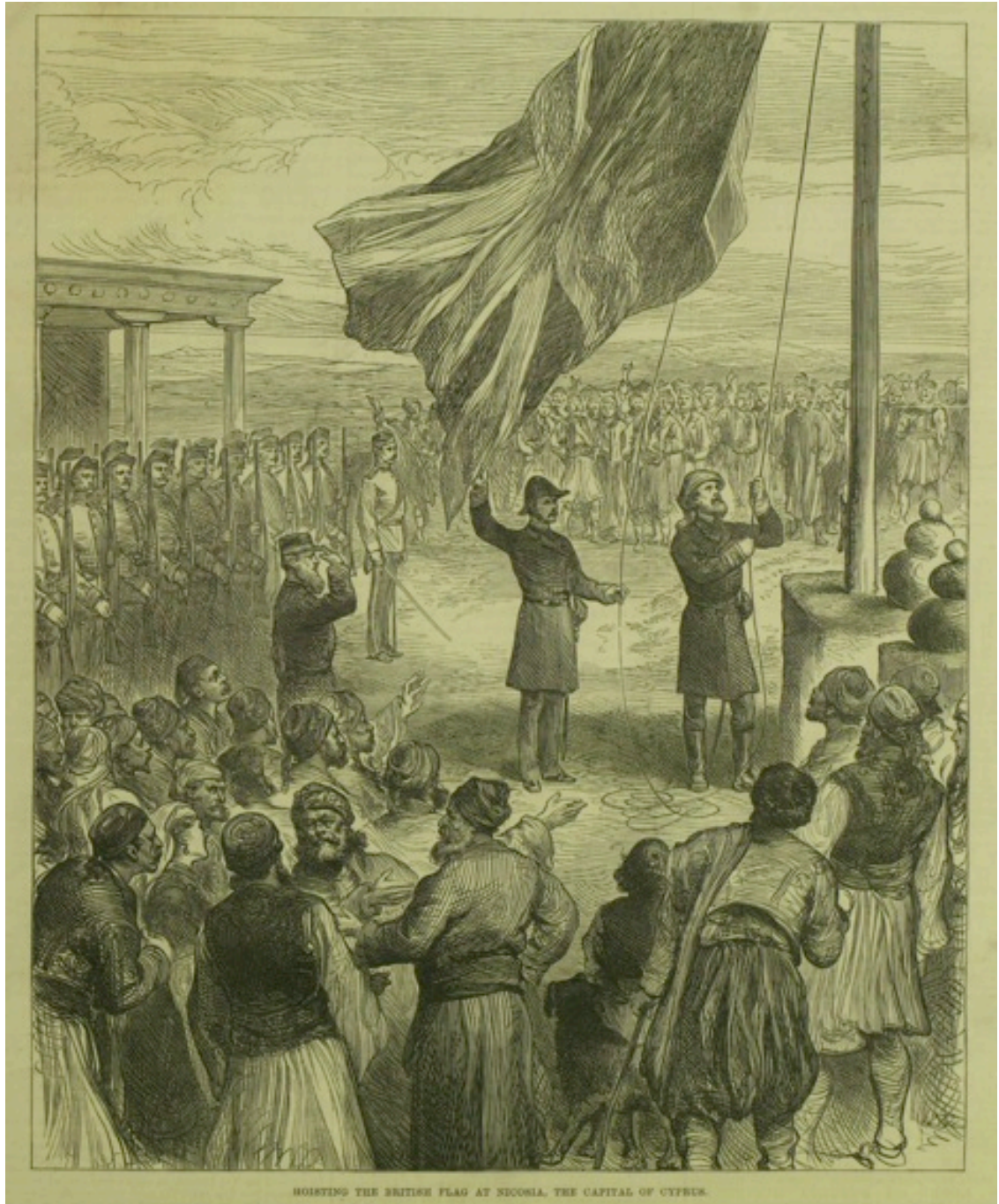


Asian Borders:

Pre-war (farthest north), San Stefano Treaty (farthest south), and Berlin Treaty (middle)

Citation: Enclosures in MFQ 1/255

Figure 13:



Citation: "Hoisting the British Flag at Nicosia, the Capital of Cyprus," *Illustrated London News*, 10 August 1878, col. A, p. 1.

Figures 14-15:



Citation: "Mosé in Egitto!!!," *Punch*, 11 December 1875.



Citation: "The Lion's Share," *Punch*, 26 February 1876.

Figure 16:



NEUTRALITY UNDER DIFFICULTIES.
DIZZY: "Bulgarian Atrocities! I can't find them in the 'Official Reports'!!!"

Citation: "Neutrality under Difficulties," *Punch*, 5 August 1876.

Figure 17:



Citation: "A Blaze of Triumph!," *Punch*, 27 July 1878.