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**Nationalist Movements in the Balkans and  
Ottoman Government**\*

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**Abstract.** The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a century where the Balkans were reshaping by ideological and cultural polarisation. Until this century, the Ottoman Empire have maintained its multireligious, multilingual and multicultural structure without a problem. However in this century, the nationalist uprisings have caused a change in the Empire's borders, leading to a Balkan region where Ottoman Empire has almost no presence. Notions that came with the French revolution such as freedom, motherland, nation and the policies of major European states have also affected the separation process. It would be possible to divide Ottoman foreign policy at the time into three eras. The first era is the time until 1865 was the time where the Empire was no longer unrivalled. The second era until 1878, was the era where the Empire guaranteed its territorial integrity and independence via Paris Peace Treaty in 1856. And finally the third era between 1878 and 1908 mainly focused on the balance policies to preserve its territorial integrity. In this era where the Empire was unsettled and vulnerable against interference the policies were based on integrity of the state. Ottoman state governors have tried to attune to the European system which was formed by 1815 Vienna Congress. They have seen internal and external administration as a whole and sought for a new political culture and identity that can coexist with traditional and western values. They have tried activating the connective power of religion and use religion as a common bonding factor against attacks from Europe. As an external policy, a balance policy that works with the rising powers of the era and makes use of the adverse interests masterfully was being followed. After the 1877-1878 Ottoman Russian War, as a result of the immigration policies, the situation of the Muslim community was a determinant in the formation of new policies. Railways were used both as a tool of development and external policy. While keeping diplomacy in the foreground, blocks, polarisation and wars were avoided. These policies were not enough to save the state, however extended the life of it. This study primarily puts emphasis on notions related to nationalism. Furthermore it aims to explore the Balkan nationalism, which led to the end of the Ottoman Empire and characteristics of the Ottoman state policies at the time.

**Keywords.** Ottoman Empire, Nationalism, Balkan Policies.

## 1. Introduction

The name "Balkan" was given to the Balkan Peninsula by Ottomans and it became permanent since the 16th century (Nasrullah, Rüşdi & Eşref, 2003:28) "Rumelia" was another notion that Muslim-Turkish

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Ottoman society used while describing the Balkan Peninsula; and its name was “Rumeli-i Şahane” or “Avrupa-i Osmani” in Ottoman government correspondence. The Balkan peninsula was a region that had experienced continuous turmoils since the Ancient Ages except the era called "Roman peace". Ottomans established a system which gained public acceptance socially and economically within the conditions of that period in the Balkans where they settled after the Kosovo War in 1389. The reasons as they had not followed a policy of compulsory Islamicizing and Turkification in the conquered lands as well as decreased tax payments led to this conclusion. Turkish population constituted the majority in some regions such as West Thrace, Meriç, Macedonia due to the settlement policy adopted. The main three reasons for the question how Ottomans provided peace environment in the Balkans were “Miri” land system (Feudalism in Ottoman Empire), “Devshirmeh” system (Christians conscripted to brought up for the Janissaries) and “Nation” perception (Ateş, 1989:42). Some reasons environment in the Balkans were “Miri” land system (Feudalism in Ottoman Empire), “Devshirmeh” system (Christians conscripted to brought up for the Janissaries) and “Nation” perception (Ateş, 1989:42). Some reasons as discovering new continents, constitution of nation states, merchantilism, changing commercial patterns, accumulation of capital, scientific developments in the 17th century paved the way for Western Europe for sovereignty of the World.

As from late 16th century, classical period Ottoman structures had started to be dissolved and Ottoman Empire did not provide the structural transformation which was going to keep up with the times (Özyüksel, NA: 142). 1699 Karlowitz Treaty was the first treaty that Ottoman Empire signed in accordance with the European Judicial System after Westphalia Treaty. By this treaty, it left some parts of its lands to Austria, Venetian Republic and Russia, thus, moved away from Europe. In this new period, to maintain its existence, it had to abandon its conquest and war policies, and to follow a balance policy with Europe. Ottoman Empire was using the Capitulations as a weapon in relations with Western countries. The qualifications of the Capitulations changed by means of European merchants’ tendency towards transoceanic colonies in 18th century, and when it came to 19th century, the Capitulations were no longer as a foreign policy tool. Ottoman Empire which was a center of attraction in the previous periods was far apart from adapting itself to the new World order.

## 2. Nation, Nationalism and Ottoman Nationalism

### 2.1. *Notions of State and Statism*

As a description, “Nation” expresses a community whose citizens have similar thoughts concerning a common past and tradition, and constitute a unity of beliefs and consciousness. As a quite new notion both politically and historically, it is used in the meaning of “ political unity” and “ independence” recently (Sönmezoğlu, 1992:658). Although ‘Nation’ states the people from the same race, Romanticists and several state governments defended the opinion that both nation and community expressed the same thing. They attribute it to the view that although each nation accommodates millions of foreigners who are at opposite classes to each other, they constitute the unity in the society (Hobsbawm, 2006:31). As a European origin notion “Statism” bears the traces of Renaissance, Reform and Romanticist periods as a product of

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the Enlightenment Age. (Berkes,1997:179). It is a political legitimacy theory which provides that ethnical borders must not pass beyond political borders and particularly, the ethnical borders within a state must not separate the rulers and the ruled people from each other. This concept which was associated with the statism processes of western empires advanced specifically due to different historical conditions of European nations. The term “statism” which was derived from the root “nation” in Uigur wanted to be used instead of the term ‘statism’ by means of the attempts of the Single-party government in Turkey for a short time after 1933, but it did not take place in Turkish Constitution. Köker (2013).

The movements which directed nationalist acts in the Balkan states developed in the forms of independent church, autonomous government, and eventually, the emergence of independent countries was prepared by means of the conflicts and reconciliations between great powers (Ortaylı,2002:173).

### 2.2. *Notions of Nation and Nationalism*

“Nation” and “Nationalism” were the most controversial notions in 19th century. There are many effects which constitute the Nation. Nation is an objective formation which originated from history, geography. It is generally formed around language. Religion has either a connective or a separative effect (Ortaylı, 2008:123). Sieyès, one of the theorists of 1789, described nation: “The partners committee which exists subject to Common Law and is represented by the same legislation power. (Türköne, 1991:251). Nationalism is a modern phenomenon which emerged and rose in Europe. The word “nationality” which comes from “natio” in Latin refers a common racial origin (Carlton, 1995:13). The transitional period to industrialization has great importance on shaping the contemporary definition of Nationalism. As a political ideology, “nationalism” refers the unity of “nation” as a cultural phenomenon and “state” as a political phenomenon (Gellner, 1992:80). National identity and Nationalism emerge both from the identity rose up from one or more sources, and subjective perception of that identity’s sole and unique nature, and collective consciousness (Karpas, 2009:597). This notion has different equivalents in Turkish because it took on various functions during Western Empires, Ottoman Empire and also throughout transition period to Turkish Republic. When the word Statism is used, it emphasizes the content of modernisation and secularisation more whereas the notion of Nation puts great emphasis on the content determining the religious community at Ottomans (Tanlı, 1995:101).

### 2.3. *Nation System at Ottomans*

Nation system means the administration system of Ottoman Empire which organizes and administrates the communities under its sovereignty on the basis of religions or sectarians (Eryılmaz, 1996:171). Ottoman Nation System had some distinctive properties and this word was not the equivalent of the terms “nation” and “nationalism” It emerged as an institution arranging political, administrative, judicial relations of the citizens on various religions and sectarians at Nation system at Ottomans based largely on Islamic Law (Sadoğlu, 2003:54).

Within the context of Ottoman Empire, “nation” means “religious congregation” having some sort of autonomy in some matters concerning private law. “Ottoman peace” was based on intransitivity and closeness between nations. Congregations could protect and develop their own cultures

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without interfering each other, people could rise from the bottom to the top on their religious compartments. If they made “Conversion”, they would rise to the top of the state (Kutlu, 2007:9). In Ottoman society, “nation” did not mean state. It is a kind of usage that the Ottoman centuries, particularly the last century provided for the Oriental nations. However, this compartmentation towards religious and sectarian discrimination determined the identities of the individuals for a long time, and groups and individuals chose ethnical compartments as to this religious sense of belonging during statism period, too (Ortaylı, 2006:17). Religious classes of Empire do not correspond to today’s term ‘state’. It refers to the group that believe in a religion. It has been seen that the notions “nation” and “nationalism” were used for referring nationalism in Western style at first (Kara, 2008:284).

Owing to a nation system extending over the period of Fatih the Conqueror, Ottoman Empire protected the religious sensitivities in the society by means of both showing great tolerance on religious and private law matters and providing their separation from Muslims. Thus, by means of nation system, Muslims and Non-Muslims lived with different religions and judicial arrangements under the administration of the same state in Ottoman society (Bozkurt, 1989:10). According to the nation system that constituted one of the reference points of Ottoman order; Ottoman society comprised of Muslim, Rum, Armenian and Jewish nations. The others except these four nations were added to one of them. Main purpose of the Nation system was not to allow possible conflicts among Ottoman citizens due to religious, ethnic, economical, etc. differences, and to provide them for living together in harmony and confidence. Thus, an unproblematic process had been lived under the Ottoman identity until 19th century. In this period, the theorists of Western nationalism had started to attract supporters by means of the opinion that each nation must have its own state. Due to the separation winds in the Balkans triggered the dispersion process, the necessity of stressing on the notion of Ottoman identity was required. The purpose was to stop dispersion of various ethnic groups. Therefore, firstly with the Imperial Edict of Gülhane (1839), it was tried to be provided an Empire order in which Non-Muslims and Muslims would live together in harmony and it was also stressed that everybody under the administration of Ottoman Empire was called “Ottoman” without discrimination of either religion or sectarian. The Imperial Edict of Gülhane basically includes arrangements concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, and usage of power. 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th articles of the Edict include the arrangements concerning the equality of Muslims and Non-Muslims (Gözler, 2004:16). The enforcement of the Reforms was objected both from Muslims who had benefits on protection of status quo and Non-Muslims. It was suspected that Rum nation’s traditional first rank place among dependent communities in the Empire might be under threat by means of equality doctrine (Davison, 1997:52).

“Royal Edict of Reform” (1856), a single-sided process as the Imperial Edict of Gülhane, was declared by the influences of external pressures in order to remove the differences between Non-Muslims and Muslim Ottoman citizens existing that date mainly on religion, tax, military service, judgement, education and representation. It had been prepared in order to protect the rights of Christian minority as a result of the political pressure of the Western states. It had not pleased the Muslim community due to the provisions inserted in favour of the Non-Muslim citizens and was called “the edict of privileges” by them (Eroğlu, 2010:55). The Edict provided new applications for the Non-Muslims in terms of Constitution: it was accepted

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that Non-Muslims will be represented at Province and Municipal councils by proper rates, Non-Muslims will be able to be enrolled to Meclis-i Ahkâm-ı Adliye (Ottoman Courthouse Office), too, nation organizations of Non-Muslims will be rearranged so as to allow participation of also community representatives to their assemblies apart from the clergymen (Küçük, 1994:19).

Owing to the continuous confusion in the Balkans, Britain and France had offered to hold a conference in İstanbul to preserve a particular status quo in the region. This offer was so significant in terms of Ottoman administrators. This conference could be a definite remedy for the interferences of the Western states to protect the rights of Non-Muslims in Ottoman Empire. İstanbul Conference or in other words, Tersane Conference was opened by the participation of British, French, Italian, German, Russian, Hungarian representatives on 23 December 1876; meanwhile, the Ottoman Basic Law was declared (Karal, 2000:22). The Ottoman Basic Law in 1876 was often criticised because it did not represent a real wish to reform and change the Imperial government, merely, being a maneuver, a non-functional system aiming to deceive the Western states and ruin their interference plans in favor of the Non-muslims. Suppressing the riots in the Balkan provinces; defeat of Serbians in the war broke out in June against Ottoman Empire had caused an international crisis. Russia was preparing for the war in November. Disraeli had stated that the British Government would not consent the Ottoman Empire to be shared. In December, as a last effort to prevent the war to break out, a conference was made in İstanbul by participation of great states to meet rearrangement of the Balkan provinces as well as peace conditions between Turkey and Serbia, and the reforms to be carried out under the audit and guarantee of the great states, however, the New Constitution had been declared just on time the Western states were required (Lewis, 2008:163). Basically, Hatt-ı Hümayun (Manuscript of the Sultan) had actualized just on time when the support of Western countries were required to constitute a favorable peace agreement just after the Crimean War. For declaration of a Liberal Constitution, a suitable date had been determined to prevent the intervention and patronage plans and to provide the support of Western countries on an imminent war with Russia. According to the 'Equality' principle of the Ottoman Basic Law, "Without discrimination, everybody is equal under the law in terms of their languages, races, colours, genders, political views, philosophical beliefs, religions, sectarians and so on." On 20 March 1877, at the opening speech of Meclis-i Mebusan (Assembly of Representatives in Ottomans), Sultan Abdülhamid II stated that; "Apart from its main benefits, the Ottoman Basic Law has another aim as arranging the basis of unity and brotherhood between tribes and providing a happy and ethical life for people" (Efendi, 2004:326). Even though the Constitution and Parliament of 1876-1878 arose from power struggle between the Sultan and the bureaucracy, they were also parts of creating Ottomanism (thought). Between 1864-68, Danube province was chosen as pilot area for reforms, and Mithad Pasha, the governor of Danube, provided the participation of local people, many of whom were Bulgarian ethnically and accomplished successful results on reform works and administration of the province. He believed that such a participation would appease the freedom demands of the public. The Constitutionals believed that multi-religion Ottoman Empire might be converted to a consistent political unit in case the benefits of Ottomanism were told its public properly (Karpat,2009:584).

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By taking the new conditions into consideration, the specifications which rearrange the nation system were prepared. The first of these specifications were “Rum Nation Regulations” which was published in 1862. The regulations included the election and authorities of the patriarch, various provisions concerning councils, metropolitan bishops, courts, schools and financial management (Bozkurt, 1989:170). The second specification was “Armenian Gregoryen Community Regulations ” dated 1863. According to this regulation, the council of “Secular Administration for Jewish Community” will be constituted and they will only have a voice in religious matters, and the power of rabbis will be restricted (Shaw, 2008:319). In the third specification dated 1870, “Bulgarian Exarchy” and Bulgarians were allowed for establishing a separate church (İnalçık, 1992:19). The fourth specification was “ Protestant Community Regulations” put into force in 1878. In the regulations, it was stated that the religions existing in Ottoman Empire must function freely and the sectarian privileges which were given to various congregations must continue same as before and they will be under the protection of Devlet-i Aliye (Supreme State of Ottomans) (Eryılmaz,1996:124). Meanwhile, great Western powers were taking advantage of Ottoman social structure by means of supporting the differences of Non-Muslim communities. Arbitrary treatments of local authorities and opting the remote regions of the Empire out of Ottoman audit exposed these regions to external interventions. According to the view of Berkes: The economic, political and cultural results of reviving in Mediterranean trade around late 18th century took the Balkan communities into the Western culture, and French-origin freedom and equality ideals caused national independence searches in the region (Berkes, 1978:153). The alterations based Western Europe affected the Ottoman society, and made the nation system nonfunctional.

### 2.4. Balkan Nationalism

In 19th century, nationalism movements developed as a new diplomacy instrument synchronously with Colonialism activities. In this period, Colonist Europe adopted a seditive and incentive policy concerning ethnical and religious elements on the target country. Nationalism movements formed a cultural basis of expanding colonialism. And Ottoman Empire was to take its share from this new policy of Europe exceedingly (Öztürk, 2008:353). It is impossible to mention about an ethnical separation and nationality in the Balkans until this century. The concept of nationality perceived as “Building their origins on a nation they can feel the sense of belonging either spiritually or biologically” was developed by external support in this period (Mc Carthy, 2006:82). The Balkans appears like a mosaic by its ethnographic structure comprising of various religions and races and the Christian population it contains, so it indicates that it is the most exposed region of the Empire to external effects. Therefore, political and economic conflicts of interest among European countries turned onto mid-Europe and the Balkans. On the face of this development, Ottoman Empire strengthened loyalties of the people who were in different ethnical groups in the Balkans to congregations by means of the nation system. They provided all communities for revealing their own cultures and identities by means of forming their own churches. Ottoman Empire gave the control of all Orthodox churches to İstanbul Fener Rum Patriarchate, thus, it gathered the Christians under a single roof due to the nation system. It eased determination of ethnical identities as a part of religious identities, and turned into a “universal congregation” (Karpát, 2004:58).

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The Balkan nationality differed from European one due to different geographical, economic and socio-cultural properties of the region (Brown, 200:350). When the Balkans were compared with European countries, they had fallen behind in Ottoman economic structure, and started to be dependent on external financial sources gradually (Pamuk, 1994:84). Primarily, Ottoman Empire was one of the most affected states from the Industrial Revolution and its effects were felt extremely in all the regions under the Ottoman administration. During this period; the industry was not developed, the industrial plants which would be competitive to Western countries', consumer goods were not produced, and raw materials were imported. Raw materials trade and processing operations of the industrial goods were in Non-Muslims' power (Aksoy, 1999:66). In the same period, a big capital surplus which would be invested to the bonds of the states which asked to borrow money occurred in Britain. The debt amount of Ottoman Empire borrowed from Europe had exceeded one billion dollars. This situation caused formation of Public Debts 'Dûyûn-ı Umumiyye' administration in 1882 and also interventions of European countries. (Blaisdell, 2008:29). European countries had started to capture the control of the region gradually by using their economic relations and after 1878, the nationalism movements had come to a point of no return. Another reason for the difference of nationalism in the region than Europe was the influence of the religion. The equality was provided by means of the Constitution in Europe, and the independence principal was taken from the influence of religion. Besides; another important reason for improving 19th century Balkan nationalism was unity of language and national consciousness. Balkan nations wanted to leave Ottoman Empire because of the ruined socio-economic system particularly at the last period, discontent created by the balance policy which was applied on nation system based on the foundation of strong Empire, the effects of European colonial powers, and losing its power in this region. On the face of losing validity of this social structure as in the form of Nations, Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism became apparent as new social integration programs. The belief that Ottoman Empire could keep hold of all Islamic elements by means of Islamic nationality became the official policy of the state during Abdülhamid II period.

### 3. 19th Century Ottoman Empire Foreign Policy

The first part of 19th century was a period that Ottoman Empire was no longer an unrivalled power in the World stage. Britain, France, Austria and Prussia were accepted as the great states of this period. As for Ottoman Empire, it was accepted to this union of states by giving guarantee to its territorial integrity by Paris Peace Conference and the treaty signed following it on 15 April 1856. However, in a period that the foreign relations changed continually, this positive balance did not last long. When it came to the second part of 19th century, the effects of the Industrial Revolution had started to be seen more, democratization demands had increased, nationalism and national independence movements had turned to riots. Some incidents such as riots in Syria, union of Moldavia and Wallachia, Serbian events, riots in Montenegro had left Ottoman Empire in a difficult situation (Sagay, 1972:83). The developments revealed that the principle of solving the problems of great states by means of consensus constituted by Paris system remained incapable.

### 3.1. Relations with Britain

Britain had founded a large colonial empire out of Europe as well as followed a balance policy in Europe in 19th century. Capturing the transportation ways opening into India was its first priority in foreign policy. Ottoman Empire was situated on a place as a bridge opening to Asia; therefore, Britain cooperated with Ottoman Empire to protect it from Russian attacks, and maintained this attitude until Berlin Agreement in 1878 (Soy, 2004:17).

As of 1791, Britain had started to follow a policy which sided with territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire in order to prevent Russia from reaching to Mediterranean Sea. On the face of Egypt's occupation by France in 1798, Ottoman Empire started to follow a "balance" policy, and a strategy maintaining its existence based on a great state. By Balta Limanı Agreement signed in 1838, Ottoman Empire opened its economy to Britain on condition that it searched the political and military support of Britain; however, Ottoman bureaucracy approved this agreement irrevocably in terms of customs walls. Ottoman economy had to be opened to European Money markets after Crimean War because it was deprived of customs duties. Furthermore, Britain obtained a profitable raw materials market by means of this agreement.

After the second part of 19th century that European countries put new policies in the World scene into practice, all the balances in Europe were upset because Germany and Italy secured their uniformity. Britain abandoned its policy which protect territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire in consideration of it will not protect so weak Ottoman Empire against its new enemies, particularly Germany. In the same period, Sultan II. Abdülmamid intended to resist Russian threat by means of directing towards Germany (Kent, 1999:13). The principle of protecting territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire in practice from 1856 to 1877 lost its validity fully between 1878 and 1882, following the defeat of Ottomans against Russia in Ottoman-Russian War between 1877 and 1878. As long as the Great Powers which had borders with Ottoman Empire maintained these borders they were going to get new shares in case a new overbalance. Whereas the states which are founded based on the nationalism movements in these border regions will constitute buffer zones which prevent these great powers expanding. Therefore, each of these states founded around Ottoman Empire will be protected by another power (Tekeli, 2007:84). The riots which started against Ottoman Empire between the Balkan nations turned into rebellions and revolutions in a short time. And they were concluded by foundation of independent countries as Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Greece, and other Balkan countries at the beginning of 20th century (Öztuna, 2006:21).

Opening Suez Channel was an important factor for Britain to leave the protection policy of territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire (Pamuk, 1984:76). During this process starting with Bosnia-Herzegovina riot in 1876, Britain tried to benefit in favor of itself at leaving of Serbia, Romania and Montenegro from Ottoman Empire (Karal, 2007:14). By 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War and 1878 Berlin Agreement, it was seen that foreign policy of Britain changed. By Berlin Agreement, Ottoman lands were shared, then administration of Cyprus was taken over by Britain by means of Cyprus Convention signed on 4 June 1878 (Sander, 2006:56). Policy change of Britain ended up the riots in the Balkans by autonomy and independence of the rioter countries, and led the Ottoman Empire to withdraw from Europe to Asia. On the face of this situation, Ottoman Empire gave some troubles to



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Britain and tried to convince that “London is a power which is still in need of cooperation of Devlet-i Aliyye (Supreme State of Ottomans)” (Öke,1982:271).

### 3.2. Relations with Germany

Germany, which was late for 19th century colonial activities, completed its political unity in 1871 and took part among industrial powers of Europe, and this condition became a development which ruined the international balance. Shortly after, the new Empire came into expansionism activities as Britain, France and Russia (Armaoğlu, 1993:20). 1876 was the year that the centre of gravity of European policy turned onto the Balkans. To prevent France from forming alliance with Austria and Russia in the Balkans and maintaining an attitude against itself, Germany avoided from preventing the conflicts in this region (Karal, 2005:15). Berlin Agreement which was signed after 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War was effective on changing Germany's attitude concerning Eastern Question. As of this date, its direction ambition against Ottoman Empire turned onto protection policy of Ottoman Empire. Because the richest regions of the World in the colonialism race were captured by Britain and France, the competition over the Balkans and Ottoman Empire provided opportunities for Germany in terms of large business benefits (Pamuk, 1984:76). The biggest potential was in this region to reply seeking for new markets, wide and cheap resources of raw materials. On one hand they were sending soldiers to reorganise Ottoman army, on the other hand they were settling German businessmen and bankers to Ottoman lands. Another field it could penetrate was to build railways.

1878 Berlin Agreement caused a loss of land to a large extent in terms of Ottoman Empire; Britain, Russia, France, Austria-Hungaria went into action for splitting the Empire. This situation caused significant developments and changes in interior and foreign policy of Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Empire which was at a crossroad to constitute a new way in foreign policy adopted a convergence policy with Germany against British and Russian threats this time. During this period, the Empire tried to play a role in the leadership of Islamic countries in the world, but it did not have realistic instruments and power to follow this policy. However, Germany had remained as the Ottoman Empire's sole partner that would play a coherent role on following a policy against Britain, Russia, and France concerning colonies (Ortaylı, 2002:42).

### 3.3. Relations with Russia

Russia, which was the biggest threat for Ottoman Empire during 19th century, provoked the Balkans against Ottoman Empire as part of the policy of reaching the Mediterranean Sea by means of religion and sectarian unity claims, and tried to constitute small countries under the zone of its influence in this region pursuant to Pan Slavism. Training and assistance activities became the most effective way they used for expanding Pan Slavism (Aydn, 2005:3). Main purpose of Russia was to invade Ottoman lands or if required, to share them with European countries or to provide foundation of autonomous or independent countries under its own protection (Karal, 2005: 5). This century, in other words, the century of Nationalism gave its expected opportunities to Russia and it worked up nationalism senses and separatist ideas of Christian elements. To achieve its own purposes, it declared war against Ottoman Empire by various pretexts and it led up to privilege, autonomy and independence to Balkan nations due to the agreements signed. Nationalism movements in Moldavia and Wallachia

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prepared Crimean War, and Paris Agreement was signed in 1856 with Russia, the loser of the war. Based upon 9th article of the Agreement, they maintained their works for Christian community under the cover of 'reform'. Together with these effects, the second part of 19th century was a period that Russia implemented a severe Panslavism policy in the Balkans. The propagandas made for Orthodoxy and defamation campaigns against Turks caused crisis in the region. At the international meeting held in London on 31 March 1877, great powers of Europe were on Russia's side, and caused Ottoman Empire become isolated. Russia was going to reach the Balkans and the Mediterranean Sea, and this thought made Britain and Austria-Hungary Empire come closer to each other. Britain, which did not want Russia to be the single actor at Eastern Question, led to hold Tophane Conference in İstanbul in 1876. Ottoman Empire refused the proposal due to the terms that ruin territorial integrity of the Empire. In consequence of the second conference held in London, London Protocol was signed on 31 March 1877. In consequence of some developments such as demands putting the articles in Russian declaration into practice prepared separately from London Protocol, and their refusal by Ottoman state, Russia declared a war against Ottoman state on 24 April 1877. This war ended up with a big destruction in terms of Ottoman Empire.

Sultan II. Abdülhamid searched remedy to rescue Ottoman Empire from the war with the least harm, but it was realised that in case of accepting the wishes of Russia, the Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans was going to end (Kurat, 2010:92). Panslavism policy of Russia yielded results, and Russia settled in the Balkans enabling Ottoman Empire to be broken up. Ayestafanos Agreement which was signed on 3 March 1878 meant the existence of Ottoman Empire in European lands almost ended. Thus, "Eastern Question", a common problem for the Balkan states, was being solved by Russia on its own (Ateş, 1989:395). Germany, Austria and Britain which were in a difficult position provided holding Berlin Congress on 13 July 1878 in consequence of their pressures against Russia (Gencer, 1992:517). According to this agreement, the borders of autonomous Bulgarian principality were going to be limited and the lands of Greece were going to be enlarged, the autonomy of Crete island was going to be improved, Bosnia-Herzegovina was going to be governed by Austria, Kars, Ardahan and Batumi were going to be left to Russia, and Katur to Iran, Danube river was going to be closed to warships, a commission was going to be constituted concerning international trade and Ottoman Empire was going to condemn for paying war compensation amounted 802.500. 000 francs determined at the conference held in İstanbul on 8 February 1879. After Berlin Conference, Ottoman Empire was going to have severe difficulties to provide its existence and territorial integrity.

### *3.4. Relations with France*

19th century was a period that World politics and ideology were formed by French. Modern World ideology firstly went in the old civilizations that resisted European thoughts until then by French influence. It was the consequence of the French Revolution. Fundamentally, nationalism in the East also was the consequence of Western effect and invasion ultimately (Hobsbawm, 2000:16). The nationalism thought which started to spread quickly as of early this century started to be instilled over Christian communities within Ottoman Empire by means of political purposes. The significance of the principle of "nations' determining their own fates" of

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French Revolution arose with being seized of Seven islands (Yediadalar) by the French by provocation of the Greek.

The balances in Europe had changed by defeat of France against Germany and foundation of a powerful German state in the east of France in 1871. Following this date, France accelerated colonial activities and tried to be influential on European policy. It was a period that France started benefit race with other great states by political games on the Balkans. France took sides with Greece throughout Mora riots, it was also influential on giving independence to Greece and making London Agreement signed to Ottoman Empire. France maintained its colonial policy in the last quarter of 19th century, and it bereaved firstly Algeria and then Tunisia from Ottoman Empire (Soysal, 1992:184). It was influential on the case that Moldavia and Wallachia left from Ottoman Empire, and then it took sides with Russia on the balance of powers together with “French-Russian Alliance“ (1891-1893) by an agreement (Shaw & Shaw, 1994:240).

### 3.5. Balance Policy

During this period, the policy followed by Ottoman Empire was to maintain the current situation. The purpose was to prevent the state having been splitted due to the actions of nations under its administration by means of the influence of “self determination” principle of nationalism movements. In 1878, as the most powerful actor of the system, Britain abandoned the policy of supporting territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire because Ottoman state had lost its power, thus a new period had been started. Sultan Abdülhamid II tried to maintain the integrity of the Empire, too by means of increasing the audit in the Empire. Ottoman Empire inclined Germany largely in the race arose between imperialist powers during this period, and had the opportunity to constitute and maintain this balance policy. However, while protecting this integrity, it tried to constitute a self-enclosed, passive and stable balance policy all the war (Tekeli & İlkin, 2007:89). The policy adopted during this period lasting until 1908 was a balance policy based on protecting territorial integrity.

Following Berlin Congress, Sultan II. Abdülhamid adopted the principle of avoiding from wars on the contrary the warrior and expansionist attitude dominating the Balkan states, and tried to solve the problems in foreign affairs by means of diplomacy instead of wars. He directed for creating new fields for himself as part of the balance policy he followed. Ottoman Empire came closer with Germany, developed friendship relations with Japan. The main principle of his policy was to keep alive competitions and contrasts in order to prevent Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks and Montenegrins from forming alliance with each other in the Balkans (Karal, 2007:189).

Sultan Abdülhamid II promoted his idea that Ottoman Empire would not resist against the great European states which entered into the process of sharing the World among themselves, the sole remedy was to set at odds countries by means of using international competition, and he was conscious of his caliphate was a big threat for Russia and Britain. Because both states had a great number of Muslim citizens. Above all, in the eyes of Muslims who were captured and whose efforts were imposed on, the Caliphate was the symbol of escaping from captivity. While Abdülhamid II was taking care of tying Muslims, he never considered entering to a venture too soon. Sultan Abdülhamid developed a dual policy in this period: reinforcing the identity senses of Muslim elements loyal to the state in order to guarantee interior integrity, and enabling a balanced real diplomacy consistent with the balances in Europe against Britain that converted to a threat instead of a

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balance element with its colonial policy it maintained in Islam world. Islamism policy of Abdülhamid II was the principal axis on which this search based [Davutoğlu \(1999\)](#). Thus, the general policy of Sultan Abdülhamid II period focussed on three points: a- a balance policy against great European powers, mainly Britain and Russia, b- providing peace and development by means of combining Ottoman community around religion element, c- using the 'Caliphate' as a threat instrument against the colonial states which had Muslim colonies. The policy which was based on these principles was implemented generally, however, some changes were required on balance elements in some cases. At a time when the military balances changed in favor of European states, the main policy of Ottoman Empire for Western states was to use the interior balances and conflicting interests between European states as a part of its own defence strategy ([Davutoğlu, 2009:66](#)). During this unsteady period of Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdülhamid constituted a foreign policy by means of his unique parameters. Among the priorities; he regarded diplomacy as the first priority, he also adopted the following principles: staying out of polarization and forming blocs and stabilizing the relations with great states and avoiding from wars as much as possible ([Deringil, 1985:306](#)). Together with his own life experiences; 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the deductions made from Ayestefanos and Berlin Agreements guided him. Accordingly, he aimed at a status quoist and peaceful policy based on protection of territorial integrity of Ottoman Empire. To protect its own benefits, Ottoman Empire had position as to the existing situation, adopted independence, taking advantage from conflicts and friendships, peace, concession and threat policies from time to time ([Kocabaş, 1995:203](#)). Considering that the conflict between Sublime porte and the Palace put the state into trouble, he monopolized the administration in order to take decisions easily ([Akyıldız, 2000:286](#)). He inactivated Sublime porte gradually and Yıldız Palace became single decision maker. It has been seen that he adopted his unique policy on military matters after Berlin Agreement. However, some troubles occurred in practice. For instance, he invited German, French, British committees to his state in order to train the army. Throughout purchasing military equipments from these countries, he overlooked all kinds of abuses to enchain the decision maker commanders. Principally, his primary objective on these purchases was to threaten the enemy states in such a way that would be useful in foreign policy by its appearance as if it had a strong army ([Kutlu, 2007:136](#)). On one hand he tried to correct the negative atmosphere in Europe by means of gifts and state medals (decorations) he gave high level foreign state visitors thereby exhibiting a good public relations example in the Balkans and Europe, on the other hand he used several methods to constitute a new and positive Ottoman scenery ([Deringil, 2002:142](#)).

As of early 19th century, Ottoman politicians tried to resist the increasing superiorities of European powers they recognized more and more by means of Westernization policy. On one hand external factors which provided activations in the Balkans, on the other hand nationalist purposes of Christian citizens within the Empire forced Ottoman administrators on making reforms. During the second term that influence of Sultan Abdülhamid II decreased and then lost control, the policy of Ottoman Empire concerning the Balkans followed a different course and the balances were ruined. The policy of Sultan II. Abdülhamid as in the form of taking advantage of a nation against the other was criticized by Young Turks and they opposed the single-power administration. When it came to 1908, Young Turks who were not pleased

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with the administration of Sultan II. Abdülhamid demanded declaration of II. Constitutionalism. Because of the disorders in the Balkans, Sultan II. Abdülhamid had to carry out these demands of Young Turks, and the Ottoman Basic Law came into force again together with the declaration of II. Constitutionalism (Kili, 1982:34). Young Turks did not analyse the developments and balances in the World conjuncture, and II. Constitutionalism that they saw as the remedy in the Eastern Question did not meet their expectations. The reality that neither the declaration of Constitutionalism nor the reforms could satisfy the nations under the power of Ottoman Empire whose sole demands were independence (Öke, 1982:275). By declaration of II. Constitutionalism, 'nation' system aiming at Ottoman peace ruined, the state tried to be rescued from difficult condition by means of wrong diagnoses and policies (Ortaylı, 2003:12). Following decreasing the authorities of II. Abdülhamid, guidance and initiative passed to the government, too. The Committee of Union and Progress that grabbed the power took controversial decisions, and the balance policy which was constituted in the Balkans by Sultan II. Abdülhamid was ruined (Özçelik, 2006:12).

### 3.6. Migration Policy

The migrations after 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War constitute one of the most important milestones in Turkish Migration History. Losing the Balkans following the war increased Muslim – Non-Muslim rate in Ottoman Empire in favor of Muslims, The number of migrators change between 1.250.000 and 1.253.000 approximately in European and Ottoman sources (Mc Carthy1995:104)

After Berlin Agreement, Bosnia-Herzegovina was left occupant Austria-Hungary, and the Muslim Bosnians emigrated to Ottoman Empire due to various cruelties. During 1882- 1900, approximately 120.000 Bosnians had emigrated to Ottoman Empire which was seen as homeland. Some others had also emigrated from Serbia before Balkan War. A great number of migrations before Balkan War had been implemented from the Crete island. Crete started an autonomous administration period by the pressure of Western states on 21 November 1898. The people did not have security any more, thus, they started to emigrate from the island. Approximately 20.000 emigrees had settled in İzmir until 1913 (Ayanoglu, 2012:37). To be able to found a National Slavian state in Bulgaria, both Rums and Bulgarians tried to expatriate Turkish citizens and they used 1877-78 War as a good opportunity to realise this aim. During this short period, they carried out massacres against Turkish population, and volunteer Bulgarians pioneered Russian soldiers and particularly, Kazakstani regiments for these massacres (Aydm, 1999:43). During the implementation of this extermination policy, approximately 1.500.000 Bulgarian Turks replaced and about 5.000 of them died. On the face of these difficult conditions, the survivors had to emigrate to İstanbul, the capital city was full of Bulgarian emigrees, then they started to be settled in several provinces of the country from Bursa to Aleppo where were not influenced by the war (İpek, 2000:165). While Ottoman Empire was trying to solve the settlement problems of the emigrees, "the attitudes adopted by the Muslim public against the Christians who caused their religious fellows fell into miserable situation were always taken into consideration during the determination of the new policy" (Eraslan, 1992:178). Aim of the war was to end the Ottoman existence in the Balkans, and to gather the Slavians in the Ottoman Empire together under the domination of Russia (Şimsir, 1989:30).

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In this period, a political formula which could provide the unity of public in the Empire and keep up with the European nation states age in foreign policy was tried to be formed. The formulas formed were the ideas of Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism or İslam Union (İttihad-ı İslam).

### 3.7. Ottomanism

Another instrument on which the great powers used to expand their influential area and to provide audit over small nations formed around the Empire was to spread some ideologies such as Panslavism, Pangermanism. On the face of political results of nationalism movements in Europe, Ottoman Empire adopted 'Ottomanism' idea as an answer to the question of how it could hold its elements together. Ottomanism is an ideology defending that all the tribes, sectarians, and nations which constitute Ottoman Empire should live together in an atmosphere of justice, freedom and equity indiscriminately (Akçura, 1976:73). This trend defending giving rights and authorities all the communities was influential on the declaration of I. Constitutionalism, but it started to lose its influence because Ottoman Empire lost most of Slavian citizens throughout Balkan Wars, and ethnical groups in Macedonia came to a point of conflict. After 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, Ottoman lands in Rumelia decreased so much that firstly, Arabic and Muslim elements gained weight as compared to the past. The idea that the Islam tie might take the place of Nationalism tie started to gain strength at that time (Mardin, 1995:95). On the other hand, the most important point in terms of nationalism or Ottoman patriotism in Rescript of Gülhane was the principle of the equality of all the Ottoman citizens under the law regardless of their religions. This situation prepared emergence of Ottomanism principle together with French origin 'nation' concept. Naturally, national unity was going to be searched (Arai, 1994:17).

Ottomanism is an imperial ideology. On the face of minority riots during Tanzimat reform era, a unity thought which exceeded Islam-Christianity dichotomy arose. Although New Ottomans based on Islam spirit in principle, they found the liberation of the Empire on "Ottomanism" idea which gave the same freedom to all the Muslim and Christian citizens. (Ülken, 1994:76). They regarded it as a required strategy to hold together the structure of Ottoman Empire which started to be splitted. As of Tanzimat reform, Non-Muslims became equal citizens, and a new policy was adopted to meet the new requirements. Ottomanism was a necessity to hold various ethnical geography of the Empire together (Türköne, 1991:238). II. Abdülhamid tried to keep hold the public by Ottomanism idea. He employed the Non-Muslim citizens both at official posts and at the palace. During 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, the attitudes of these citizens changed and they went after 'independence' idea. Intellectual base of II. Abdülhamid could not be Ottomanism any longer. (Kodaman, 1983:81).

According to Karpat's analysis, during a period, Ottomanism "created a nation concept based on land and that caused a new solidarity, commitment and loyalty sense constituted around motherland." (Karpat, 2013:597). According to Akçura; adoption and applying Ottomanism policy was able to be considered valid in terms of stating acception of the principles which arose after French Revolution in Europe at that time conscientiously. However, the policy of constituting Ottoman nation lost its intellectual base largely by giving the meaning of nationalism principle on racial base (Akçura, 1976:17). It could not resist strong separatist movements because it did not create a solid unity. It was the deficiency of both rulers and ruled people that they did not constitute the required mental change to make

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Ottomanism ideology successful. They saw Ottomanism ideology as a means which was applied in order to extend and strengthen Islam power. Non-Muslim elements regarded Ottomanism ideology as the precautions the state consented due to the conditions arose from weakness of the state rather than an effort to meet the expectations of themselves. Rum congregation perceived the equality principle as an obligation for themselves to abandon their autonomy and gained privileges. They completely opposed social integration search applied by Devlet-i Aliyye (Supreme State of Ottomans). A considerable part of Muslim citizens regarded the secular core which had to contain compulsorily as a threat for their traditions and cultures (Kutlu, 2007:127).

### 3.8. *İslam Unity (İttihad-ı İslam)*

The second part of 19th century was a period that some nationalism movements as Pan-slavizm, Pan-Germanism converted to racial, aggressive movements. Panslavism which aimed at integrity of the societies and arose being influenced by Pangermanism constituted sphere of influence between Slovenians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Serbians, and Montenegrins by means of these works carried out on literature, ethnography, history and other cultural branches. As for Russians, they made this movement a political doctrine (Kohn, 1991:103). On the other hand, at an earlier date, Muslims thought over the idea of Islam solidarity called “Panislamizm” by the Western states, discussed and matured and transmitted it to the mass by means of newspapers. The word that Turks found to express the modern thought of Islamic solidarity was İslam Unity (İttihad-ı İslam) (Türköne, 1993:11). İslam Unity (İttihad-ı İslam) which was used to mean an Islamic solidarity converted to an ideology in a period the intellectuals searched for the synthesis to rescue the state. When it came to 1870s, İslam societies were still colonies of European states.

On 31 August 1876, a time that the Balkans were unsteady and a huge change had for Ottomans, II. Abdülhamid was enthroned as 34th Otoman sultan promising Mithad Pasha to support the reforms and to declare constitutionalism (Lewis, 2008:162). Sultan came to power in such an environment that there were reactions against Europe and colonialism in Muslim societies. The colonialists searched for a remedy against these reactions, and found it on deactivating Ottoman Empire over Islam geography. For this purpose, they started the game of Arabic Caliphate. At a time that he did not find time to apply a policy for Islamic World and throughout the beginning of the war with Russia, and after the Christian elements splitted, Sultan Abdülhamid met a new conspiracy directed for splitting Islamic elements (Koloğlu, 1987:179).

Alongside foreign attacks, Ottoman state had to struggle with a bankrupt economic structure and minority riots inside the state. The Empire was threatened by its own citizens, and the Muslims in far countries provided the vital support. On the face of all these developments, Panislamism was the only effective weapon in Sultan II. Abdülhamid’s hands. The only remedy to maintain the Empire was to hold all the Muslims around ‘Caliphate’ together. He wanted to preserve integrity of the Empire by means of strengthening unity of Islamic elements, and to make many Muslim countries under its administration gain the resistance power and to strengthen its dominance at Islamic world by means of prompting these countries (Özcan, 1992:35). Besides, the reality that no other state except Ottoman Empire was available increased Islamic support (Bradford, 1988:18). Saying “Unity is the only hope for the future, so we must increase

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our communication with other Muslim states and come much closer to each other” Sultan Abdülhamid II hoped that a favour Muslim public opinion might strengthen the situation of the state in foreign affairs.

Seeing Ottomans as the only state that could cope with European states caused the Muslim societies demand help from them. Ottoman Sultan was the Caliphate at the same time, and this situation constituted primary basis of the demands from the Muslims out of the Empire. Although Ottoman sultans did not use the title ‘Caliphate’ before 1774, they applied an intensive Islamist and Caliphatist propaganda as long as loses increased and the methods and administrations that did not suit Islamist tradition were taken not to break off the base of the society. However, it is so clear that it was a highly passive, directed for only defence, and had no activist side as holding all the Islamists together (Koloğlu, 1987: 93). To save Ottoman Empire from the imperialist powers and to preserve the integrity of the state, Abdülhamid II applied on Caliphate feature, and focussed on directing senses and thoughts of the Muslims out of the Empire towards the ideal of Islam Unity (Hülagu, 1994:13).

### 3.9. Railway Policy

It can be said that the railway policy of Ottoman Empire was mainly political, military and strategical. Railways were used as a tool in terms of maintaining the state authority by Ottoman administrators. If the railways to be built reached across the state, the army could be carried quickly the destinations both in Europe and Asia, or the riots broke out in the Balkans, Eastern Anatolia and Arabic peninsula could quell easily (Kurmuş, 2008:48). Another reason for adopting Ottoman railway policy was foreign debts. Ottoman government either gave privileges in return for a foreign debt or met a new privilege demand when it applied for a new debt. In this period, building railways was a field that foreign investors preferred. The two third of the invested capital in Ottoman Empire before the First World War was on this field (Mantran,1999:167).

A decision was taken in Tanzimat Assembly in 1854 to build the first railway in Ottoman state (Çabuk, NA:165). The first railway was built between İzmir and Aydın by the British in 1856 (Eldem, 1994:96). Fundamentally, building many railways in Ottoman state started by means of the foundation of Public Debts administration (Duyun-u Umumiye) during II. Abdülhamit period. Throughout this period, Anatolian railways (1888), Bağdat railway (1889), Jaffa-Jerusalem railway (1889), Thessaloniki-Manastır (Monastery) railway (1890), Beirut-Damascus railway (1890), Thessaloniki-İstanbul railway (1892) were built. Building railways started to be considered as a policy instrument within defense policy by means of giving its privileges to foreigners (Rothmann, 2001:75). When it came to 1898, the British built 440 km railways, the French 16266 km, and the German 1020 km. (Ortaylı, 006:143). Total length of railways reached 5883 km until 1908. At railway investments, the share of the German was %57, the French %23, the British %20. Total length of the railways built until 1914 reached 6309 km. (Yerasimos, 1987:396). The most important one within these railway projects was Baghdad Railway. It was going to reach the Persian Gulf through Mosul and Baghdad passing from the middle parts of Anatolia, a strategical land, so it was so significant in terms of the state having the privilege of building this railway. Baghdad railway line both founded a basis for foreign capital competition and subjected to countries as Britain and France. In addition to political and economic reasons which



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played a role at building railways, railway industry was also a profitable investment area in this period on its own (Kurmuş, 2008:52).

The railways to be built in Ottoman state had a highly significant meaning beyond being a profitable investment. Great European states were trying political, economic and financial pressures to get railway privileges. The purpose of the European countries was to constitute dominance areas by means of building railways. Thus, in a future share, it was going to get easier to add these areas to their colonies. This situation developed in favor of French and British before, however in favor of Germany as of 1889 (Rothmann, 2001: 35). Berlin-Baghdad railway project had provided several benefits to Germany from mining industry to oil reservoir industry (Öke, 1982:68). Railway areas started to be left as German, French and British dominance areas gradually. For instance, İzmir- Aydın and İzmir- Kasaba railways in Western Anatolian region were under the British dominance, and considerable increases were observed at British trade in the region (Özyüksel, 1988:112). On one hand Sultan Abdülhamid's railway policy served for the benefits of great European states, on the other hand it contributed to the economic progress of the country.

Hijaz railway that started to be built during the reign of Sultan II. Abdülhamid to hold the Islamist lands of the Empire together, was going to be both effective in this region where Muslim citizens populated densely, and useful in some matters as military transportation, etc. Besides, Hijaz railway that Sultan II. Abdülhamit built by the title of 'Caliphate' was going to get Holy Pilgrimage journey easier and be used as an effective means to strengthen the ties between the Muslims (Özyüksel, 2000:65).

### 4. Conclusion

The Balkans is a region that preserved its strategical importance at each period of history. From the point of Ottoman Empire; it is highly significant because on one hand it is a region opening and extending to the West, on the other hand as the starting point both for collapse and destruction. As of early 19th century the whole world was under the influence of Western-centered colonialism, the Balkans became the center of riots by means of the nationalism trends; Balkan geography was broken up by means of various strategies by the support of European countries such as Britain, Russia, Germany, France. Independence movements which started by privilege and autonomy demands became an international problem in consequence of the interventions of great European states and also their power struggles amongst each other. The effect of Industrial Revolution was observed as the densest in Ottoman state; the Ottoman administration which lasted about five hundred years in the Balkans ended by means of the economic and political effects, mainly economy as an open market. After Ottoman-Russian War, Ottoman Empire withdrew from Danube and Adriatic, and lost Rumelia, and it constituted the first phase of withdrawing from the Balkans.

During this period, the policies that could provide integrity and continuation of the state, and correspond to international conditions formed the basis of Ottoman state policy. The Ottoman administration at that time used the conflicts between European powerful states as a balance policy strategy together with the modernisation efforts, and could implement a highly flexible foreign policy. During this process; the World balance was followed and interpreted well, however, some activities which were put into practice as to the conditions of that day prolonged life of the state, but did

not prevent it from passing away. It changed etnical, social, cultural structure in the Balkans, and one of the largest migration movements in European history was experienced. Developments and polarization in international conjuncture pushed Ottoman state to the war on Germany's side.

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