

Introduction

The press offers opportunities to investigate and analyze important events as reported by journalists and news agencies. Newspapers see their role as being able to collect, report, and disseminate information for public consumption. It must be emphasized that the press operates within a given political context. The Melbourne publication chosen for our investigation is the *Argus* because of its pre-eminence and political influence in the Colony of Victoria which also continued with the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. It should be noted that the Federal Parliament, the Prime Minister's department and the Governor General's residence were all located in Melbourne before relocating to Canberra in 1927.¹

This book will be structured as follows :- Chapter 1 will provide a historical overview of the Near Eastern Question 1800-1898 by putting the Armenian question into the big picture of Great power rivalries in the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain dominated global affairs in the 19th century. This chapter, also, will provide important details in assisting the reader to understand the background to the *Argus* news articles reproduced in this book. Chapter 2 will contain a selection of 103 news articles, an appendix listing all the news articles 1894-1898 will be provided and a selected bibliography.

1. Definition of the Press and the *Argus* Newspaper

Richard Weiner defines the press as “a publication issued weekly, or at frequent intervals containing views and advertising”.² The *Argus* fits the criteria of a publication issued on a daily basis containing news and views, and carrying advertising. Newspapers buy and sell news like any commodity in the marketplace. However, news or potential news is subject to four principles that set the parameters within which the ‘value’ of a potential

1 C.J. Lloyd, *Parliament and the Press*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 42

2 Richard Weiner, *Webster's New Dictionary of Media and Communication*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1990, p. 315.

news item is determined. Bonney and Wilson quoting the Galtung and Ruge article, 'Structuring and selecting news' outline these four factors. They include:

- “(1) The more the event concerns elite nations, the more probable that it will become a news item.
- (2) The more the event concerns elite people, the more probable it will become a news item.
- (3) The more the event can be seen in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals, the more probable that it will become a news item.
- (4) The more negative the event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item”.³

2. Examples of the Four Factors

There are several important issues that emerge from the list above. The period under investigation 1894-98 involves great European powers-Great Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, Russia, Germany and Italy each seeking to gain political and economic influence in the Ottoman Empire. This was a sensitive region which could have undermined the European balance of power and resulted in a general war. Throughout the 19th century, Great Britain propped up the ailing Ottoman Empire to counter Russian expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf in order to protect her vital imperial and strategic communications.⁴ With Britain ensconced in Egypt in 1882, she controlled the approaches to the Suez Canal through the Red Sea to her Indian Empire and Australian colonies.

3 Bill Bonney and Helen Wilson, *Australia's Commercial Media*, Macmillan & Co, South Melbourne, 1983, p. 301.

4 M S Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, The Macmillan Press, London & Basingstoke, 1983; JAS Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, University of London, The Athlone Press, London, 1964 ; Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe: International Politics 1890-1914*, The Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1981; Robert Jervis, A political science perspective in the balance of power and the concert, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, no. 3 (June, 1992), pp. 716-24; Richard Elrod, The Concert of Europe: a fresh look at an international system, *World Politics*, 28 (1976), pp. 159-74; Paul W. Schroeder, The 19th century system: changes in the structure, *World Politics*, 39 (1986), pp. 1-26.

This maritime route was very important for trade between the Australian colonies and Britain.⁵

The Australian Colonies as an outpost of the British Empire were loyal to the British Crown and depended on the Royal Navy to provide for its defence and security. Some Australian Colonists joined the British army to fight in the Crimean War 1854-56 against the Russians. At the same time, the Colonials felt isolated, vulnerable and defenceless if the Russian navy attacked Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide. The *Argus* newspaper printed stories of the Crimean war, letters to the editor and patriotic funds raised in the Australian colonies to assist the war wounded and their families in Britain. This was the first 'war scare' for the Australian colonies.⁶

The Victorian gold rush of the 1850's attracted many immigrants from Europe, America and Asia who came here seeking to make their fortunes and retire to a comfortable life. This also attracted a large influx of Chinese to the goldfields whose presence created tension and resentment from the European miners. The Victorian Colonial legislature enacted the Victoria Act 39 1855 restricting Chinese immigrants to a ratio of one passenger per ten tons on every ship and plus the payment of a £10 landing fee. As the 19th

5 Earl Granville to the Earl of Dufferin, July 11, 1882 in [C-3258] *Egypt. No. 10 (1882) Copy of a Despatch from the Earl Granville to the Earl of Dufferin Respecting the Affairs of Egypt*, Harrison & Sons, London, p. 1; Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, Abacus, London, 2001 (originally published by Little, Brown and company in 1994), pp. 269-74; A G Hopkins, The Victorians and Africa: a reconsideration of the occupation of Egypt, 1882, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 27, no. 2, special issue in honor of J D Fage (1986), pp. 363-91.

6 *Argus*, 'An Australian Contingent', July 7 & 13, 1855, p. 4; 'An Australian Brigade', July 9, 1855, p. 6; 'The defence of the Colony', August 22, 1855, p. 6; 'The fall of Sebastopol', December, 1855, p. 4; An attack on Melbourne : a case study of Australia's major ports in the early 1890's by Michael Kitson in www.awm.gov.au/journal/j35/kitson.htm ; South Australia-Defence of the Colony (taken from an unpublished manuscript by Geoffrey H. Manning, The Russians are coming-the defence of Colonial South Australia (copy in State Library of South Australia) in www.slsa.sa.gov/manning/sa/defence/defence.htm ; For a scholarly account of the Crimean War, see Trevor Royle, *Crimea: the Great Crimean war 1854-56*, Abacus, 2003; Despatches from the Secretary of State in reply to Communications from Governors of British Colonies, transmitting Addresses and Resolutions on the subject of the war with Russia (presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty on January 25th, 1855, March 8th, 1855, June 7th, 1855), HMSO, London, pp. 18-24, 9-11.

century progressed, the colonies of South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland passed restrictive immigration legislation to stop Chinese, Japanese, Afghans and Indians from settling in the Australian colonies. The Anglo-Australians wanted a white Australia where colored or Asian peoples were barred entry.⁷

Australian perceptions of imagined or real enemies that the yellow hordes of Asia were about to descend and overrun Australia raised concerns about the coastal defences of the Australian colonies. On January 2, 1871 the *Argus* editorial stated Victoria's purchase of the *HMS Cerberus* and a ready volunteer force that were in a position to defend the colony from invasion. The *HMS Cerberus* gave the Colony of Victoria the opportunity to defend the entrance of Port Phillip Bay from a foreign invader. If war broke out between Great Britain and other powers, the editorialist concluded that "the Australian colonies will apply themselves with the utmost alacrity to perform their share in the work of self-defence animated by the conviction that they will be fighting for and when a great empire, under whose protecting shadow they have spent their youth, and by whose side they hope to stand as brethren and equals in their vigorous maturity."⁸ Another article published on January 13, reported on the issue of colonial defence being discussed in the South Australian legislature. It showed South Australia's apathy in defence whereas Victoria took energetic measures in the wake of the Near Eastern Question. Both articles show that the Australian colonies had to do their patriotic duty in defending the British Empire from foreign invaders and also reveal the differences among the Australian Colonies.⁹

The 'war scares' of the late 1870's and 1885 between Russia and Britain greatly troubled the Australian colonists. It revealed that events in the Near East and especially in the Pacific impacted on the colonists' perceptions of world affairs. In 1877, Sir William Drummond Jervois and Sir Peter

7 R.A.Huttenback, "The British Empire as a 'White Man's Country'- racial attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 13, no. 1 (Nov, 1973), pp. 112-121; TH Irving, Ch. 4 1850-70, & G L Buxton, Ch. 5 1870-90 in Frank K.Crowley, (ed), *A new history of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 151-52, 167-68 & 205-08.

8 *Argus*, January 2, 1871, p. 4.

9 *Argus*, January 13, 1871, p. 6; South Australia-Defence of the Colony (taken from an unpublished manuscript by Geoffrey H.Manning, The Russians are coming-the defence of Colonial South Australia (copy in State Library of South Australia) in www.slsa.sa.gov/manning/sa/defence/defence.htm

Scratchley were dispatched by the Colonial Secretary in London at the request of the governors in the Australian eastern colonies to report into improving Australian colonial defences. Their recommendations played an important part in improving and strengthening the coastal defence of the Australian colonies.¹⁰ The *Argus* published news accounts of the possibility of a Russian attack in 1878 emanating “from Russian steamers operating in the Pacific, East Indies and China Seas.”¹¹

Furthermore the *Argus* argued that “...the naval force on the Australasian station ought to be permanently increased, without reference to immediate prospects. Wars are made suddenly now-a-days, and the telegraph conveys the news of a rupture in friendly relations with the speed of lighting.” It showed the telegraph speeding up the flow of news stories of the Near Eastern crisis 1875-8 and Russian machinations in the Pacific to Australian readers within twenty four hours of transmission from London. The telegraph reduced the tyranny of distance between Britain and her Australian colonies.¹²

Another ‘war scare’ occurred in early 1885 during the Pendjeh crisis when war appeared inevitable between Russia and Britain. The British were troubled with Russian expansion into Central Asia thus threatening the latter’s security close to the north western frontier of India. There was talk of increasing the size of the British army in India to meet the Russian menace.¹³ The Australian colonies reacted to this crisis with Victoria increasing its militia, NSW preparing to defend Sydney harbor, South Australia increasing its militia, volunteers and rifle clubs, Queensland and Tasmania adopting similar measures.¹⁴ In its editorial of May 5, 1885, the *Argus* emphasized that it was better for the Australian colonies to defend

10 An attack on Melbourne : a case study of Australia’s major ports in the early 1890’s by Michael Kitson in www.awm.gov.au/journal/j35/kitson.htm; James, *op cit.*, p. 313.

11 *Argus*, ‘The Probability of a Russian attack’, February 18, 1878, p. 5; ‘The Defence of Melbourne by the volunteers’, June 1, 1878, p. 5; ‘The Russians in the Pacific’, June 15, 1878, p. 5.

12 *Argus*, May 17, 1877, p. 4; James, *op cit.*, p. 313.

13 [C-4363] Central Asia. No. 1 (1885) Telegram from Lieutenant-General Sir Peter Lumsden relative to the fight between the Russians and the Afghans at Ak Tepe, Harrison & Sons, London; Brian Robson (ed), *Roberts in India: the military papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893*, published by Alan Sutton for the Army Records Society, 1993, UK, pp. 309-324.

14 *Argus*, May 5 1885, p. 9.

themselves from a Russian naval attack rather than “rushing off for foreign service.” They still would be assisting the British Empire in a war against Russia. The editorialist stressed the importance of Britain to the security of the Australian colonies.¹⁵ To show its loyalty to the Empire, the colony of New South Wales offered to send 700 troops to Sudan to fight in the British Army was greeted with enthusiasm in London. Other offers of assistance came from Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand making Britain realize the importance of its colonies in providing men in some future conflict. The offers of help from Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand were ultimately declined by the British government.¹⁶

Besides the Russian menace, the Australian colonies were suspicious of French designs on the New Hebrides and the German annexation of New Guinea, New Ireland and New Britain in 1885. France had a penal colony in New Caledonia where it transported its criminals with some of them escaping to Australia. Australians were troubled that if the French annexed the New Hebrides, then they might create another penal settlement. The German push into the Pacific was part of its foreign policy to become a global power. Whatever thoughts Australians may have harbored regarding European imperial rivalries in the Pacific, Britain was the sole arbiter of foreign and defence policy for its empire. It is for these reasons the *Argus* covered the events of the Ottoman Empire due to Britain’s dominance in global affairs and also being an elite nation.¹⁷

Factors 2 and 3 above refer to concerns of elite people and the action of particular individuals to events that attract the attention of the press who publish such news stories. In the former case, the elite people that emerged during the time of the Hamidian massacres of 1894–98 are Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; William E. Gladstone, former Liberal British Prime Minister; Lord Rosebery, Liberal British Prime Minister; Lord Brassey, the new Governor of the colony of Victoria, Australia; Turkhan Pasha, Ottoman Foreign Minister; Said Pasha, Ottoman Foreign Minister; Lord Salisbury, British Prime Minister;

15 *Argus*, May 5, 1885, p. 5.

16 *Argus*, ‘The Australian troops in the Soudan. Arrival of the NSW contingent at Suakin’, May 5, 1885, p. 6; Lawrence James, *op cit.*, pp. 313–14; GL Buxton, Ch. 5 1870–90 in Frank K. Crowley, (ed), *A new history of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1977, p. 202.

17 GL Buxton, Ch. 5 1870–90 in Frank K. Crowley, (ed), *A new history of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1977, p. 202.

Rustem Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador in London; the Armenian Patriarch; Kiamil Pasha, the Ottoman Grand Vizier; Sir Philip Currie, the British Ambassador in Constantinople; Duke of Westminster; Crispi, the Italian Premier; Pope Leo X111; Nelidoff, the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople; Queen Victoria; de Staal, the Russian Ambassador in London; Prince Lobanoff, Russian Foreign Minister; GN Curzon, Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Office; and French Foreign Minister, Hanotaux.¹⁸

Three elite individuals will be cited to show their concerns and actions during the time of the Hamidian massacres of 1894-98. Gladstone was a fierce opponent of the Ottoman Empire whose letters to the press, receiving various delegations at his residence or addressing public meetings on the Armenian issue received wide coverage in the *Argus* newspaper. After all, as a former British Prime Minister his opinion on foreign affairs was widely disseminated throughout Europe, United States and the Australian colonies.¹⁹

Another important individual, Lord Salisbury who became Prime Minister in June 1895, even suggested in dismembering the Ottoman Empire, if the Sultan didn't implement the administrative reforms sought by the great European powers. While making such pronouncements, Salisbury had to balance Britain's political, strategic, economic and diplomatic interests against other major powers to ensure that a European war didn't occur over the spoils of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ The final person, Queen Victoria, presided over an empire that was at the height of its power with the British flag planted in Africa, Asia, Australia and the Pacific. As

18 *Argus*, November 19, 1894, p. 5; January 10, 1895, p. 5; May 8, 1895, p. 5; May 10, 1895, p. 5; June 3 & 11, 1895, p. 5; August 8 & 28, 1895, p. 5; September 6, 1895, p. 5; October 5, 1895, p. 5; October 8, 1895, p. 5; November 20, 1895, p. 5; November 22, 1895, p. 5; November 30, 1895, p. 5; December 3, 1895, p. 5; January 20, 1896, p. 5; January 24, 1896, p. 5; September 16, 1896, p. 4; November 11, 1896, p. 5.

19 *Argus*, 'letter by Mr. Gladstone', December 19, 1894, p. 5; 'The Armenian atrocities. Mr Gladstone's denunciations...', & "Armenian welcome to Mr. Gladstone", January 10, 1895, p. 5; 'The Armenian atrocities. Crusade by Mr. Gladstone', April 3, 1895, p. 5; 'The Armenian atrocities. Public meeting at Chester. Great speech by Mr Gladstone', August 8, 1895, p. 5; 'The Armenian question. Meeting in the City Temple. Strong letter by Mr Gladstone', December 19, 1895, p. 6; 'The Eastern Question. Strong letter by Mr Gladstone. "Muderous wickedness of the Sultan"', January 30, 1896, p. 5.

Queen of this huge empire, she was adored, respected and revered by many of her subjects. The *Argus* reported on the letters she wrote to Sultan Abdul Hamid 11 regarding the latter's treatment of his Armenian subjects. She used her position as sovereign to appeal directly to Abdul Hamid 11 on behalf of the Armenians domiciled in the Ottoman Empire. Her action might have influenced the Sultan to modify his attitude towards his Armenian subjects.²¹

Factor 4, the Hamidian massacres, was a tragic event which received extensive coverage in the *Argus* newspaper. The news report of massacres and riots happening at Sassun, Trebizond, Diarbekir, Ourfa, Zeitun and Constantinople created a negative image of Abdul Hamid 11, the Ottoman government and Moslems in the minds of the Colonial Victorians. It showed that the troubles between the Turks and Armenians were happening in many parts of the Ottoman Empire. The news reports are overwhelmingly sympathetic to the plight and suffering of the Armenians.

It is for the reasons described in factors 1-4 that the *Argus* covered the Hamidian massacres because of Britain's interest in Near East affairs and her position as the leading global power of the late 19th century.²²

3. Functions of the Press

The *Argus* had a variety of owners during its first fifty years of operation. These individuals were William Kerr 1846-48, Edward Wilson 1848-78, Lachlan Mackinnon 1852-88, Alan Spowers 1857-76, Gavin Edwards Evans 1867-97, William George Lucas Spowers 1879-1921 and Sir Lachlan Charles Mackinnon 1888-1919, all of whom played their part in developing the journal as a preeminent and influential publication.²³ For example, Wilson attacked the pastoralists' monopoly on land and exposed government inefficiency and corruption. Both Lachlan Mackinnon and his

20 *Argus*, 'The Armenian atrocities. Lord Salisbury warns the Sultan', August 17, 1895, p. 7; 'Turkey and the Powers. A grave situation. Determined attitude of Lord Salisbury. Dismemberment of Turkey contemplated', September 6, 1895, p. 6; 'The crisis in Turkey. Decisive action by France. Attitude of Lord Salisbury', November 12, 1895, p. 5; 'Great Britain's foreign policy. Important speech by Lord Salisbury', February 2, 1896, p. 5

21 *Argus*, 'The Queen and the Sultan', January 17, 1896, p. 5; 'Affairs in Turkey. The Queen warns the Sultan', January 20, 1896, p. 5; 'The Queen and the Sultan. Her Majesty's remonstrance. Abdul Hamid resentful', January 24, 1896, p. 5; 'The Turkish crisis. Queen Victoria's letter. Reply of the Sultan', February 1, 1896, p. 7

cousin Lachlan Charles Mackinnon played an important part in developing and maintaining the financial success of their newspaper.²⁴

During the 1871 election, David Syme, the owner of *the Age*, advocated compulsory and secular education and, as a consequence, the Education Act 1872 established a Department of Education under a responsible Minister. Lachlan Mackinnon had a deep commitment to education and was also a member of the original Council of the University of Melbourne. As a newspaper proprietor he was intelligent enough to see the value of educating Victorian youngsters as a means of developing potential future readers. The

22 *Argus*, 'Fearful massacres in Armenia. Atrocities by Turkish irregular troops. Twenty Five villages pillages....' November 13, 1894, p. 5; 'The Fearful massacres in Armenia. Appalling details. Thousands of Christians slaughtered...', November 19, 1894, p. 5; "The Armenian massacres...", November 20, 1894, p. 5; 'The Armenian Atrocities. Turkish Commission of Enquiry. England to be represented...' December 7, 1894, p. 5; 'A riot at Tarsus', August 13, 1895, p. 5; 'Turks and Armenians. Disturbance at Antioch', September 30, 1895, p. 5; 'Serious riot at Constantinople. Great Armenian demonstration', October 4, 1895, p. 5; 'The situation in Turkey...conflicts in Trezibond.Many Armenians killed', October 11, 1895, p. 5; 'The Turkish atrocities. Appalling cruelties at Trebizond', October 29, 1895, p. 5; 'The situation in Turkey....The Kurdish outrages. Appalling carnage at Diarbekir five thousand Armenians slaughtered', November 11, 1895, p. 5; 'The Crisis in Turkey. Severe fighting at Zeitun, Flight of the Armenians', December 27, 1895, p. 5; 'Capture of Zeitun confirmed.' December 28, 1895, p. 5; 'The Turkish crisis. Capture of Zeitun. Great slaughter of Armenians.' December 30, 1895, p. 4; 'The Turkish crisis...' January 1, 1896, p. 5; 'Affairs in Turkey. The capture of Zeitun.' January 3, 1896, p. 5 & 'Affairs in Turkey. Fighting in Zeitun suspended.' January 6, 1896, p. 5; 'The Eastern Question. The last Blue Book 25,000 Armenians killed', February 19, 1896, p. 5; 'Armenian Horrors. Massacres at Ourfa. A Fearful Holocaust', May 20, 1896, p. 5; 'The Armenian riot. Seizure if the Ottoman Bank. Fearful reprisals. 24,000 Armenians massacred', August 31, 1896, p. 5.

23 *Argus* and Australasian Ltd, *Men Who Made "The Argus" and "The Australasian" 1846-1923 Vol. 1*, Melbourne (1923?). In this publication the names of the owners can be found under the heading 'Proprietors and their Representatives.' No page numbers are listed making it difficult for citing relevant details. Hereafter cited as *Men who made The Argus*.

24 24 Bede Nairn (ed), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 6 1851-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 413- 4 ; Douglas Pike (ed), *Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 5 1851-1890*, Melbourne, 1974, p. 178; Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle, (ed), *Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 10*, Melbourne, 1986, p. 316. Hereafter cited as *Australian Dictionary* with relevant volume number.

Argus editorials were very supportive of public education in the Colony of Victoria. An editorial and in-depth article published on February 1 and April 24, 1875 highlights the importance of public education. The former mentioned that “we confidently hope that the more we pay for public instruction the less we shall to disburse thereafter for the prevention and punishment of crime...” and that reasonable level of education would make “a better citizen morally, socially, and industrially, than the boor who can neither read nor write.” On the other hand, the latter stated “so immense is the political importance and value of education that no money or labour should be spared to make Victorian education thorough.” It was hoped that education would contribute to a prosperous society that would help the Colony of Victoria to escape the political and social ills of Europe.²⁵

The main purpose of a newspaper is to maintain and increase its circulation and advertising revenue. Mayer mentions that both prominent and popular journals are dependent on advertising for their survival. The advertising appeal of a newspaper can be seen as dependent on three conditions. These include: 1) the number and kind of readers it attracts; 2) the degree of concentration of readers from particular socio-economic backgrounds; and 3) the demand and supply for advertising space in all existing outlets: press, television and radio. After all a newspaper is business concern seeking to make a profit on its business operations.²⁶

In short, the *Argus* can be viewed as quality newspaper. It was bold, independent, news-views oriented journal published in an open democratic society.²⁷ As a prestigious newspaper it achieved its preeminence in a number of ways. Firstly, it was a journal that had attained a reputation for reliability and for presenting the most convincing image of government thinking. As a newspaper it was renowned for its reliability recording of parliamentary debates and proceedings in colonial and early Federation years. It was regarded as a newspaper of record like *The Times* of London.²⁸ Secondly, it sought to avoid popularizing and sensationalizing the news and

25 C E Sayers, *David Syme: a life*, F.W.Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, p. 108; *Australian Dictionary*, Vol. 5, p. 178; *Argus*, February 1 & April 24, 1875, p. 4; For editorial comment on the Education debates in 1872 see *Argus*, September 17, October 18 & 24, 1872, p. 4

26 H.Mayer, *Press in Australia*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1968, pp. 57-8.

27 Merrill and Fisher, *The World's Great Dailies*, Hastings House, New York, 1980, p. 13.

28 Merrill and Fisher, *op cit.*, p. 10; C. J. Lloyd, *op cit.*, pp. 29-30, 50 and 53.

to give their readers a serious and heavy slice of news and views. They were read by the powerful members of society such as public servants, scholars, politicians, religious and business leaders.²⁹ Finally, a quality journal should be reliable and trustworthy in presenting all the available or known facts of a story to its readers. This would have allowed the reader to reach an informed opinion on the Hamidian massacres of the 1890's the central issue of this book.³⁰

Newspapers must have good business people to run them to ensure their financial soundness, and must also have good editorial staff. The editor played a crucial role in keeping their newspaper in the forefront of Australian journalism.

One of the important editors of the *Argus* was Frederick William Haddon 1867-97 who aimed in placing the *Argus* on the same rank with the great journals of England. As editor, he was given free reign in policy and he directed his energies towards making the paper an ultra- conservative publication. Haddon searched for the best writers available and encouraged new ones to write stories and articles displaying an air of authority.³¹

4. The Newspaper as a Source of Historical Information

Robert W. Desmond says that “the Press not only reports the history of the world day by day but helps to make it. It is the press that keeps us informed and shapes the opinions of people”. There is no doubt that the *Argus* was an invaluable source of information for the period 1894-98. As an Australian newspaper, it recorded the day-by-day events of Australian history covering local and overseas news. Since overseas stories came largely from British news sources, readers in Australia were influenced by these British accounts.³²

In the period under review, the *Argus* printed over 300 news articles including editorials on the Hamidian massacres. The Victorian public read about these horrible events in the columns of the *Argus*, they were largely anti-Turkish in tone. Moreover, the editorial page was highly critical of

29 Merrill and Fisher, *op cit.*, pp. 10 and 19; Mayer, *op cit.*, p. 4.

30 Merrill and Fisher, *op cit.*, pp. 19-20; ‘Action by the Presbyterian Federal Assembly. Memorial to the Queen’ & ‘Vice Regal visit to Wimmera. Speeches at Horsham. British Naval Supremacy’, *Argus*, September 15 & 17, 1896, pp. 5 & 6

31 *Australian Dictionary vol. 4* p. 314 ; *Men who made The Argus*.

32 Robert W.Desmond, *The Press and World affairs*, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 1. Hereafter cited as *The Press and World affairs*.

Sultan Abdul Hamid. The news stories cover eight broad issues which include :-1) the Sassun massacres, the proposed action of the Great European powers, especially, Britain and Russia and the results of the Commission of Inquiry;³³ 2) the anti-Turkish sentiment expressed by former British Prime Minister William E. Gladstone;³⁴ 3) Prime Minister Lord Salisbury's carrot and stick foreign policy approach towards Sultan Abdul Hamid;³⁵ 4) the Constantinople riots of September, 1895;³⁶ 5) the European powers seeking to force Abdul Hamid to introduce administrative reforms in his Empire;³⁷ 6) Queen Victoria's correspondence with Abdul Hamid;³⁸ 7) the Ottoman Bank raid of August 1896 and the massacre of Armenians;³⁹ and finally American-Ottoman relations.⁴⁰

As the events unfolded, the news stories reveal the political, diplomatic, economic and social affairs between the Ottoman Empire and the major European powers during the period 1894-98. The key issues that emerge in the press accounts is the supposed guarantee and protection of Armenian human rights in the Ottoman Empire and Britain protecting its vital interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East regions. Whilst the European powers promised to assist the Armenians, at no stage did they intervene militarily against Abdul Hamid forcing him to introduce administrative reforms. Abdul Hamid exploited the differences among the European powers and played one power off against the other. The news accounts also show the Turks and Kurds as the main perpetrators of the Armenian massacres.⁴¹

33 *Argus*, November 13, 1894, December 5, 7, 15, 17, 1894, April 11 1895, May 11, 14, 1895, June 3, 1895 & August 6, 1895

34 *Argus*, January 10, 11, 1895, April 3, 15, 1895, May 8, 1895, August 1, 8, 1895, October 29, 1895, December 8, 1895, January 20, 30, 1896, March 14, 1896

35 *Argus*, August 17, 1895, November 21, 1895, November 11, 1896

36 *Argus*, October 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 1895

37 *Argus*, October 16, 17, 18, 1895, November 14, 18, 25, 1895, December 6, 30, 1895, January 1, 1896, March 16, 27, 29, 1896, May 20, 1896

38 *Argus*, January 17, 20, 24, 1896

39 *Argus*, August 28, 29, 31, 1896, September 4, 7, 8, 14, 15, 1896.

40 *Argus*, December 10, 1894, January 29, 1896, March 28, 1896, April 9, 1896, October 3, 1896, December 14, 1896, November 22, 1898.

41 *Argus*, passim.

5) The Australian Colonial Press and Nationalism

The Australian Colonial Press was not subject to the rigid censorship controls that existed in European countries during the 19th century.⁴² This section will illustrate the exception whereby government controls and censorship were imposed on the press during the Colonial period. The importance of the press in helping to mould Australian nationalism should not be undervalued.

5a) Some Press Restrictions in Colonial Australia

The only exception was the Sydney *Gazette* 1803-42 published "By Authority". The Colonial Authorities could resort to direct and indirect methods to overcome press opposition. The direct method involved demands for securities, actions of libel, and contempt of court or parliament. With the indirect approach, the government could punish or favor the press by the manipulation of press contracts. It could also withdraw or grant government advertising contracts.

For example, government advertising, had been withdrawn from *The Age* in 1862 and Melbourne's *Daily Telegraph* in 1877-78, and given to the 'patriotic press'.⁴³

In 1824, Governor Arthur of Van Diemens Land advocated that newspapers should be licensed and the Earl of Bathurst, Secretary of State, in July 1825, authorized Governor Darling of New South Wales to integrate the colony to English law on the issue of a stamp tax and registration of newspapers. There was no English authorization allowing the Governor to introduce annual licenses without the recommendation of the Executive Council. Darling refrained from implementing these instructions until he felt that the "licentiousness" of the press warranted restraint. Chief Justice Francis Forbes concluded that Darling's actions were aimed at either reducing or destroying the circulation of newspapers.⁴⁴

42 Vernon Bogdanor, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, pp. 36-7; Marc Ferro, *Nicholas II: the Last of the Tsars*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, trs by Brian Pearce, pp. 73-4; David Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon*, Penguin Books, London, 1990, pp. 130-1 & 145; Brian Chapman, *Police State*, Macmillan & Co, London, 1971, p. 36.

43 Mayer, *op cit.*, pp. 17- 8; Harry Gordon, *An Eyewitness history of Australia*, Currey O'Neil Publishers, Melbourne, 1981pp. 21-3.

44 R. B. Walker, *The Newspaper Press in New South Wales*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, pp. 12-3; Gordon, *op cit.*, pp. 24-5 and 33-4.

The arrival of Governor Burke to the Colony of New South Wales on December 3, 1831, ushered in a new period of liberalization with the introduction of trial by jury, representative government and full civil rights for the emancipists. The 1830's were a period in which newspapers increased in number and competed vigorously, which resulted in lower prices.⁴⁵ Walker concluded that the Australian press was "unburdened by newspaper and advertisement taxes, colonial newspapers started off with advantages denied to their British counterparts". It is in the context of these conditions that the operations of the *Argus* newspaper can be understood.⁴⁶

Overall, the Australian press operated in an open and free democratic system, where it could publish and criticize the actions of politicians and the decisions of government without any interference. It also played an important part in developing and shaping Australian nationalism.

5b) Australian Nationalism

This section will focus on how newspapers played an important role in developing Australian nationalism and in assisting in the shaping of public opinion. Defining nationalism is not an easy task. An Australian definition specifies nationalism as:⁴⁷

"The complex sentiment or ideology of belonging to and identifying with a nation, usually based on an awareness of some common racial, territorial, cultural, linguistic, and historical experiences, and often developed against other cultures or nations.... Australian nationalism has taken two main forms, in some ways contradictory. A pride in being British and part of the British Empire was a widely held sentiment among white Australians until the post World War 11 period".⁴⁸

The Australian colonies shared common racial, territorial, cultural, and linguistic experiences, but not the same historical background. New South Wales and Tasmania shared a convict past, unlike South Australia, which attracted free settlers. In the 1830's and 1840's, anti-transportation leagues were established in New South Wales and Tasmania to petition the Imperial

45 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 20.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

47 The definition on nationalism shown above, is the one which the authors find the most suitable for use in this book.

authorities to stop the transportation of convicts. They wanted to attract free settlers to their colonies.

The Port Philip district which became the Colony of Victoria was separated from New South Wales by the Australian Colonies Government Act 1850 that gave the colonies some measure of local autonomy in enacting laws for local government, the judiciary, customs duties and, the electoral system, also gave them the authority to change their constitutions, which had previously been the responsibility of the British parliament. The discovery of gold in Victoria in the 1850's, did not mark the beginning of Australian nationhood, but the Eureka incident of 1854 was important in highlighting the importance of political freedoms. For a generation or so, Victoria was the leading Australian colony in terms of population and wealth.⁴⁹

It was later in the 19th century that an Australian identity began to emerge, with some people espousing Republicanism and others such as Sir Henry Parkes and Alfred Deakin, considering themselves Australian-Britons: that is Deakin and Parkes considered themselves Australian as well as having loyalty to the British Empire.⁵⁰

There are certain preconditions for nationalism to take root. For Benedict Anderson the cardinal requirement is print-capitalism- that is, the establishment of commercial printing (newspapers) on a large scale where "nations are 'imagined' by many people and linguistic nationalism takes

48 *The Penguin Macquarie Dictionary of Australian Politics*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1988, p. 235; The literature on Nationalism is a huge and ever-growing area of academic research. For a brief discussion on Nationalism, the reader should consult the following works: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London and New York, 1990; Anthony D. Smith [ed], *Nationalist Movements*, Macmillan press, Basingstoke, 1976; and James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Macmillan Education, London, 1991. For a discussion on Australian nationalism the following books should be consulted: John Eddy and Deryck [ed], *The rise of Colonial Nationalism*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988; Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last? The Changing character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1988; and Noel MacLachlan, *Waiting for the Revolution: A History of Australian Nationalism*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1989.

49 Michael Roe, 'Ch. 3 1830-50' and T.H. Irving, 'Ch. 4 1850-70' in F. K. Crowley [ed], *A New History of Australia*, William Heineman, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 86, 90, 94-6, 120-1, 124, 127 and 142.

50 C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia, Vol. V*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, pp. 32 and 34. Hereafter cited as *Australia vol. v*.

root”.⁵¹ MacLachlan, on the other hand, indicates that “...New World ‘democracy’ produced virtually universal literacy, served by a cheap predominantly liberal/radical press - crucible of nationalism everywhere”.⁵² The ideas of Anderson and MacLachlan show very clearly that a combination of commercial printing and universal literacy was important in developing nationalism. Language became the main channel of communication between newspapers and their readers and Australia was imagined through the use of English.⁵³ Anderson mentions that one vital element regarding language is that it has the power to generate imagined communities, building, in effect, a particular cohesiveness. This is where Australian newspaper editors used English, the official language of the British Empire, as an agent of communication in shaping public opinion within an Australian and Imperial framework.⁵⁴

The role of the editors in moulding public opinion will be examined by using two examples. Roger C. Thompson explains quite rightly that editorial opinion should not be bracketed with all public opinions. The editors were a favored group of individuals who continually expressed opinions on external matters much more than anybody else. Government policy makers took notice of editorial comment because it was a good barometer of public opinion.⁵⁵

The first example of an editor’s role in moulding public opinion was the attitude shown towards the annexationist theme which was strongly taken up by the *Argus* which advocated the annexation of Fiji in 1875, New Hebrides and New Guinea in the 1880’s. It is worth noting that Frederick Haddon, the editor of the *Argus*, encouraged a united Australian policy towards the Pacific in order to reduce inter-colonial rivalries. Both the

51 James G.Kellas, *op cit.*, p. 45; Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 48.

52 MacLachlan, *op cit.*, p. 9.

53 Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 122. Anderson mentions that “English and Scottish schoolmasters ... swarmed the [white colonies] of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Anglicization was also cultural policy... Anglicized Australians did not serve in Dublin, or Manchester, and not even in Ottawa or Capetown. Nor until quite late on, could they become Governors-General in Canberra”. See Anderson, p. 89.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

55 Roger C.Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981 p. 4; A sample of these articles were published in the *Argus* on October 29, November 9, 1874, January 12, 1875, July 26 & 30, August 3, 1883 & June 7, 1886.

Argus expressed concern at the spread of European colonial rivalries near Australian shores and urged the Imperial government to annex these islands. The 1880's were a period in which patriotic Australian sentiments were developing, just as Australia had a predisposition towards the Empire in the scramble for colonies by other European powers. The Australian colonists saw that their destiny lay in the South Pacific under the umbrella of the British Empire.⁵⁶

The second example of the role newspaper editors played in moulding public opinion can be seen in the way they roused up Australian patriotic fervor in defending the 'mother' country and Empire from its enemies. Many ordinary citizens considered it their patriotic duty as Australian-Britons to volunteer their services to defend the Empire. Colonial and Commonwealth politicians expressed their allegiance to King and Empire by dispatching Australian contingents to fight alongside their British cousins. Such sentiments were not better expressed than in the Sudan expedition 1885 and Boer War 1899-1902.⁵⁷

When the news of General Gordon's death in Khartoum was received in Australia, the press played an important part in inciting patriotism for British imperialism and the colony of New South Wales sent a contingent to aid the 'beleaguered mother country'.⁵⁸ During the Boer War, Australian colonial contingents fought in South Africa, showing solidarity with the Empire, doing their patriotic duty and expressing their loyalty to Britain. When Australian colonial troops left for South Africa, the *Argus* expressed pride in Australia defending its "racial kinship and heritage".⁵⁹

6) The Role of the News Agencies

The news agencies play an important role in collecting news and selling it for a fee to newspapers. There were four main news agencies that emerged in the mid-19th century: Havas (France) in 1835, Wolff (Prussia and later Imperial Germany) in 1849, Reuters (Great Britain) in 1851 and New York Associated Press (A. P.) in 1848, which provided the vast majority of international news to newspapers. They formed an association of news

56 Roger C. Thompson, *op cit.*, pp. 25, 36-7, 76, 78-9, 113, and 236 fn. 16.

57 *Argus*, March 13, 14, 21, 23, 24 April 6, 13, 20, 1885; September 28, 30, October 12, 14, 30, 1899.

58 Stephen Alomes, *op cit.*, p. 20; G.L. Buxton, 'ch 5 1870-90' in F.K. Crowley, [ed] *op cit.*, p. 200; Gordon, *op cit.*, pp. 115-7.

59 *Australia vol. v*, pp. 169, 172; Gordon, *op cit.*, pp. 152-4.

agencies (also known as a 'Ring Combination') whereby its members were bound by agreements or 'treaties', renewed at periodic intervals.⁶⁰ Around 1870 these four agencies had carved up the world into zones becoming a cartel, with each agency having the right to collect and transmit news exclusively. For example, Reuters had the monopoly for the British Empire, Turkey, India and Far East; Havas controlled the news distribution in France, Switzerland, Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, Central and South America and, in association with Reuters, in Egypt; Wolff handled the news for Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, Russia, the Balkans and the Netherlands; and finally, New York A.P. was limited to the U.S.A as well as its affiliated regional network.⁶¹

From an Australian perspective, Reuters had the monopoly in providing news services and information for the entire British Empire and this showed the dependence of the Australian press on British news sources.⁶² The submarine cable in 1872 linked Australia to the outside world, when the proprietors of the *Argus* and *Sydney Morning Herald* attended a Reuters Board conference in London in December 1872. They stated that they wanted to receive British news direct from London and not from the Reuters agent in Sydney. They paid a high price for Reuters telegrams supplied in London and went on to appoint their own correspondents.⁶³ From this emerged the Australian Associated Press (AAP), the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Argus* and *Adelaide Register* being its founding members. Sir Lachlan Charles Mackinnon of the *Argus* returned from London in May 1877 having failed to convince the Times management to have its news cabled to Australia. This failure, however, gave Reuters through AAP the means of supplying world news to the entire Australian press and thus helped to reduce the isolation of the Australian colonies.⁶⁴

60 Robert W. Desmond, *Windows on the World*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1980, p. 61. Hereafter cited as *Windows on the World*. It should be noted that after 1870 the Havas and Wolff news agencies received financial support from their respective governments. Reuters never received financial assistance from the British government.

61 John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1965, p. 32; Graham Storey, *Reuters*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1970, p. 53. It should be noted that many foreign news items appearing in the *New York Times* came from Associated Press.

62 Storey, *op cit.*, p. 53. The Reuters monopoly in the British Empire was based on Agency Agreements concluded by the four news agencies.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Storey makes the interesting observation that the Australian press failed to develop its own domestic news agency. They organised themselves in groups on the basis of procuring “the Reuters service in London for selecting and cabling to Australia at the discretion of their London representatives.” Clearly this deprived Reuters of the benefit of a news-distribution operation in Australia and prevented it from having intimate relations with its customers. It can be seen that the news sent by Australian representatives in London back to Australia served three purposes: (1) the representatives reported on news affecting the British Empire; (2) they sent news items which were important for each colony and later the Australian federation which portrayed British decision-making in a favorable light; and 3) they sent reports expressing loyalty towards and sympathy for the British point of view in world affairs. There was an ambiguity in the position of the Australian press that on the other hand showed independence in the selecting and cabling of news, and yet at the same time depended on buying their news from Reuters. It can be further argued that the failure to develop an Australian domestic news agency was attributable to Australia’s colonial settlement, whereby each colony fiercely protecting its own sovereignty and links with the Empire.⁶⁵

In order to overcome their differences, the members of the AAP in 1895 concluded an agreement with a rival syndicate comprising *The Age*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Adelaide Advertiser*, which established the United Cable Association (U.C.A., also called Australian Press Association). This agreement banned the participation of other metropolitan newspapers without the unanimous consent of all members and also prohibited the use of other foreign cable services.⁶⁶

7) The Role of Foreign Correspondents Reporting the News

Foreign correspondents come into contact with the individuals who make the news through their exploits, reflections, and words. They determine what is newsworthy by making his reports of those contacts available to many individuals both at home and overseas. This section will deal with the importance of the foreign correspondents’ roles by focusing on

64 Mayer, *op cit.*, pp. 27-8; *Men who made The Argus*, “Proprietors and their Representatives.”; Storey, *op cit.*, pp. 70-1.

65 Storey, *op cit.*, p. 119.

66 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 205; Mayer, *op cit.*, p. 28; Gavin Souter, *Company of Heralds*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981, p. 116.

three points: (a) The emergence of the modern war correspondent; (b) the importance of London as a news centre in the period under review; and (c) the appearance of Australian foreign correspondents.⁶⁷

7a) The Emergence of the Modern War Correspondent

Peter Knightley tells us that “[William Harvard] Russell’s coverage of the Crimean war [1854-56] marked the beginning of an organised effort to report a war to the civilian population at home using the services of a civilian reporter”.⁶⁸ J. T. Delane, the editor of *the Times* (London) sent out Russell, to report on this conflict. His reports from the Crimea disclosed the horrible conditions of the British army who were dying of disease and suffering neglect and hunger. He was highly critical of the British Army Command, which led to the recall of Lord Raglan, an individual who had not fought since the Napoleonic wars. Russell sent his dispatches in the form of letters, some of which did not appear in *the Times* but were circulated among Cabinet Ministers. This led finally to the resignation of Lord Aberdeen’s government.⁶⁹

Sir William Codrington, the new Commander-in-Chief, who was infuriated with the press, was able, with the support of Lord Panmure, the Secretary of War, to issue a general order on February 26, 1856, which imposed for the first time, military censorship. This directive arrived too late to have any effect; but it was to be utilized in the Boer War and in the reporting in World War 1. It led to the silencing of journalists.⁷⁰

There are two other examples of late- 19th century by reporting of foreign journalists who dispatched news to their home offices with the intention of either influencing government thinking or arousing public hostility. J.A. MacGahan, an American reporter working for the *London Daily News*, revealed to a startled Great Britain and Europe the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria in 1876. While W.E. Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, was disturbed by these accounts, Lord Beaconsfield considered them as mere “coffee house babble”. When these stories were later

67 *The Press and World Affairs*, pp. 2-3.

68 Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1975, p. 4.

69 Hohenberg, *op cit.*, pp. 47-54; Knightley, *op cit.*, pp. 5-14; For a diplomatic account of this conflict see J.A.S. Grenville, *Europe Reshaped 1848-1878*, Fontana, London, 1981, chs. 10-11.

70 Knightley, *op cit.*, pp. 15-6.

authenticated, however, the revelations they contained led to a diminution of Turkish rule in Europe at the time of the Treaty of Berlin. Henri De Blowitz of *the Times* (London), while attending the Congress of Berlin in 1878, gained a scoop over his fellow journalists by obtaining a copy of the treaty which ended the Russo-Turkish conflict and “[having] it published in the Times even before it was signed in Berlin”. It should be noted that the *Argus* covered the Near Eastern crisis of 1875-78 in some depth.⁷¹

7b) The Importance of London as a News Centre in the Period under investigation

From 1800 to 1900, London achieved its preeminence in several ways: 1) It was regarded as the financial centre of the world; 2) It was the main communication centre of the globe; and finally, it was the chief trading centre, setting prices for commodities and products everywhere. Point 2 is the most relevant for this book. The importance of London as a news centre in the period 1800-1900 is unquestioned. It was the administrative seat of the British Empire, where the Houses of Parliament, Government Ministries, the Royal Family, and Law Courts were located. The Foreign Embassies, Consulates and legations were another source of information. The British Foreign Office, the Prime Minister’s and the Colonial Offices provided information on matters pertaining to foreign affairs.⁷²

Any newspaper wishing to claim leadership in its home nation would locate journalistic staff in London. There was the added advantage of having Reuters close by to provide information for foreign newspapers, since many reporters took their news indirect from Reuters or some other agency or through the exchange dealings with some of the London papers. From an Australian viewpoint, the accounts of the Hamidian massacres and Turkey’s relations with the major European powers emanated from Athens, Constantinople (Istanbul), Berlin, Paris, Vienna, St Petersburg, Rome, and London were picked up by the Australian Press Association in London who then cabled these to the Melbourne offices of the *Argus*.⁷³

7c) The Appearance of the Australian Foreign Correspondent

For a young press, Australian journalists were very active on the international stage in reporting conflict to their home audiences. This trend

71 *The Press and World Affairs*, pp. 28-9.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 171 and 174-5.

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 171 and 176.

became pronounced from 1900 onwards. The *Argus* was the most enterprising newspaper of its era in sending its journalists overseas. Howard Willoughby of the *Argus* is given the honor of being Australia's first war correspondent. He accompanied an Australian contingent to New Zealand to report on the Maori war in December 1863.

Henry Britton was sent by the *Argus* in 1873 to investigate the slave trade in the Pacific and in 1874 went to cover the annexation of Fiji. He had become an authority on Pacific island issues.⁷⁴ Joe Melvin covered the Australian expedition to Sudan in 1885 for the *Argus*, whereas William J. Lambie was accredited as a reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Some 15 years later, Labia, writing for both *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* from South Africa, would earn the unfortunate distinction of being Australia's first journalist killed in reporting war action. No Australian journalists were sent to report on the events in the Ottoman Empire during the 1890's.⁷⁵

8. Review of the sources

There is an extensive amount of United States, Great British, Austrian, Italian, Russian, German, Turkish, Armenian, and French literature on the Hamidian massacres 1894-1898 covered in official documents: unpublished and published, memoirs and eyewitness accounts, general books and articles from the era of the massacres and general modern studies and academic articles.⁷⁶

Some of the official documents:unpublished and published are reproduced below as follows:

1. Documents: Unpublished and Published Sources

Austria

12 volume facsimile diplomatic series Osterreich-Armenien 1872-1936 ed by Artem Ohandjanian.⁷⁷

74 Gordon, *op cit.*, pp. 82-4 and 92-4; Pat Burgess, *Warco: Australian Reporters at War*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 14-5.

75 Burgess, *op cit.*, pp. 17-8; Souter, *op cit.*, pp. 91-3.

76 Armenian sources are too numerous to be cited in this work. The focus in this book will be on non-Armenian sources. George Shirian provides an excellent bibliography for both Armenian and non-Armenian sources in George N. Shirinian, "The Armenian Massacres of 1894-1897: A Bibliography", *Armenian Review*, Vol. 47, no. 1-2, Spring-Summer 2001, pp. 113-164

Alfred F. Pribham, *The Secret Treaties of the Austro-Hungary 1879-1914*, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1920

France

Claire Mouradian & Michael Durand-Meyrier (ed), *Gustave Meyrier, Les Massacres de Diarbekir Correspondence diplomatique du Vice Consul de France 1894-1896*, Editions L'Inventaire, Paris, 2000.⁷⁸

Livres Jaunes publiés par le Government français.

1. *Documents diplomatiques Affaires Armeniennes- Projets de reformes dans L'Empire Ottoman (1893-1897)*, Imprimerie, Paris, 1897.

2. *Documents diplomatiques Affaires Armeniennes* (Suppl. 1895-1896), Imprimerie, Paris, 1897.

3. *Documents diplomatiques Affaires d'Orient-Affaire de Crete Conflit greco-turc-Situation de L'Empire Ottoman, (Fevrier-mai 1897)*, Imprimerie, Paris, 1897.

4. *Documents diplomatiques Affaires d'Orient-Negociations pour la paix- Traite greco-turc(mai-decembre 1897)*, Imprimerie, Paris, 1898.

Ministere Des Affaires Etrangeres, *Documents diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 1st Serie (1871-1900) Tome X111 (16 Octobre 1896-31 Decembre 1897)*, Imprimerie, Paris, MCML111.

Germany

a. Unpublished Sources

A catalogue of files and microfilm of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867-1920 published by American Historical Association for the study of war documents.⁷⁹

German Microfiche from Bonn:
Turkei 183/8-24 Armenien.⁸⁰

German microfilm from Bonn:

77 Special Collections of the John Vigen Der Manuelian Research Library, Genocide Oral History and Photo Archive and Digital Collections of the Center for Armenian Research and Publication, The University of Michigan-Dearborn (accessed through the internet).

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

80 Microfilm and microfiche of the Armenian Research Center (accessed through the internet).

Inhalt Auftr 2-4 Turkei 166 (no band listed).

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b. Printed Sources

E.T.S Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914: Vol. 2*, Barnes & Noble, New York & Methuen Co, London, 1969 (This translation first published in 1969).

Johannes Lepsius et al., *Die Grosse Politik der Europaischen Kabinette 1871-1914, 40 vols*, Berlin, 1922-27.

Great Britain

a. Unpublished Sources

Cab37/38/8 Armenian reforms January 1895.

Cab41/23/4 India: unification of London Bill; the Dardanelles; Armenian massacres at Bitlis November 28, 1894.

FO78/4863 outrages on Armenian Christians (Zeitun and Marash) 1891-1895.

FO78/5054 Murder of Yusuf Yanan Armenian relief agent at Sairt, 1897-1898.

FO881/6645 Turkey: memo summary of correspondence to the Armenian question (Hon. E Barrington) June 29, 1895.⁸²

Windsor Castle, Royal Archives, *The Oriental Question 1840-1900*, Frederick, MD, University Publications of America, c1984, (microfilm) 38 reels (held at the Baillie Library, University of Melbourne Mic/o5107) There is a published guide to help locate documents on the microfilm.

The papers of Queen Victoria on foreign affairs (ed by Kenneth Bourne) Bethesda, MD, University Publications of America, 1990 pt. 1 Russia 1846-1900, pt. 2 Germany, pt. 6 Greece (microfilm) 80 reels (held at the Baillie Library, University of Melbourne Mic/o5592) There is a published guide to help locate documents on the microfilm.

b. Printed Sources

Bilal N. Simsir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians 4 vols*, Turkish Historical Society, Ankara, 1982-1985.⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/searchresults.asp? (accessed through the National Archives of United Kingdom website).

⁸³ Volumes 3 and 4 are the most pertinent for the events of 1894-1895. It should be noted that Vol. 4 finishes at the end of 1895.

c. British Blue Books

- C7894 Sassoun Events and Mush Inquiry Commission 1895 Pt. 1, H.M.S.O, London.
- C7894 Mush Inquiry Commission Proceedings Part 11, H.M.S.O, London
- C-7923 Turkey No. 1(1896) Correspondence respecting the introduction of reforms ion the Armenian Provinces of Asiatic Turkey, London.
- C-7927 Turkey No. 2 (1896) Correspondence relative to the Armenian Question and reports from Her Majesty's Consular Officers in Asiatic Turkey, London.
- C-8015 Turkey No,3 (1896) Correspondence relating to the Asiatic provinces of Turkey 1892-1893, London.
- C8100 Turkey No. 5 (1896) Correspondence relating to the Asiatic provinces of Turkey. Reports by Vice Consul Fitzmaurice from Birejik, Ourfa, Adiaman and Behesni, London.
- C8108 Turkey No. 6 (1896) correspondence relating to the Asiatic provinces of Turkey 1894-95 (in continuation of Turkey No. 3 (1896) C-8015).
- C-8303 Turkey No. 1 (1897) Correspondence respecting the disturbance at Constantinople in August 1896, H.M.S.O, London .
- C-8304 Turkey No. 2 (1897) Correspondence respecting the introduction of reforms in the administration of the Ottoman Empire H.M.S.O, London.
- C-8305 Turkey No. 3 (1897) Further correspondence respecting the Asiatic provinces of Turkey and events in Constantinople H.M.S.O, London.
- C-8333 Turkey No. 4 (1897) Notes addressed by the Representatives of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Russia to the Turkish and Greek Governments in regards to Crete, H.M.S.O, London.
- C-8334 Turkey No. 5 (1897) Replies of the Turkish and Greek Governments to the notes addressed to them on March 2, 1897 by the Representatives of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Russia in regards to Crete, H.M.S.O, London.
- C-8335 Turkey No. 6 (1897) Reply of the Turkish Government to the note presented on March 5, 1897 by of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Russia in regards to Crete, H.M.S.O, London.
- C-8395 Turkey No. 7 (1897) Further correspondence respecting the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey and events in Constantinople, H.M.S.O, London.

C-8398 Turkey No. 8 (1897) Further correspondence respecting the affairs of Crete, H.M.S.O, London.

C-8429 Turkey No. 9 (1897) Reports on the situation in Crete, H.M.S.O, London.

C-8347 Turkey No. 10 (1897) Further Correspondence respecting the affairs of Crete., H.M.S.O, London.

C-8664 Turkey No. 11 (1897) Correspondence respecting the affairs of Crete and the war between Turkey and Greece, H.M.S.O, London.

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Maurizio Russo (ed) *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Sull'Armenia :seconda serie: 1891-1916 Volume 1 (1 Gennaio 1891- 31Dicembre 1895)* Firenze, 1999.

Laura Lumanari (ed) *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Sull'Armenia :seconda serie: 1891-1916 Volume 2 (1 gennaio – 31 Agosto 1895)*, Firenze, 1999.

Lorenzo Mechi (ed) *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Sull'Armenia :seconda serie: 1891-1916 Volume 3 (1 settembre- 31Dicembre 1895)*, Firenze, 2000.

Russia

George A Bournoutian, *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia 1797-1889: A Documentary Record*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, California, 1998 (trans from the Russian by author).

Proceedings of the Caucasian Archaeological Commission, 1866-1904 (Archive Editions, 1990).⁸⁴

Turkey

a. Unpublished Sources

Ottoman Archives Yildiz Collection : The Armenian Question.⁸⁵

Huseyin Nazim Pasha, *Ermeni Olaylari Tarihi* (History of Armenian Events) 2 volume report to the Sultan, 1897.⁸⁶

84 Special Collections of the John Vigen Der Manuelian Research Library, Genocide Oral History and Photo Archive and Digital Collections of the Center for Armenian Research and Publication, The University of Michigan-Dearborn (accessed through the internet)

85 *Ibid.*

b. Printed Sources

Bilal N.Simsir (ed), *Documents diplomatiques Ottomans Affaires Armeniennes-Osmanli Diplomatik Belgerinde Ermeni Sorunu*, 4 vols, Turkish Historical Society, Ankara, 1983-1999.

United States

a. Unpublished Sources

1.M46 Despatches from U.S Ministers to Turkey 1818-1906.

T815 Notes from the Turkish Legation in the United States to the Department of State 1867-1909 vol. 8/9.⁸⁷

2.Despatches from U.S Consuls in Turkey:

T504 Alexandretta 1896-1906; T711 Brusa (Brousa) 1837-1840;T194 Constantinople 1820-1906; T568 Erzeroum 1895-1904;T579 Harput 1895-1906;T681 Sivas 1886-1906;T238 Smyrna 1802-1906;T700 Trebizond 1904-06.⁸⁸

3. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Affairs (microfilm).⁸⁹

b. Printed Sources

4.US Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States 1894-1898*, United State Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1894-1898 (various volumes).

2. Memoirs and Eyewitness Accounts⁹⁰

Again the literature in this category is voluminous and only a sample will be offered for illustration purposes. The British viewpoint is covered in Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East: Personal Memories, 1879-1929* who also involved in the Sassoun Commission of Inquiry. However the French perspective is offered by Paul Cambon in his memoir titled *Correspondance 1870-1924 3 vols* who was the French Ambassador in Constantinople

86 *Ibid.*

87 These microfilms are part of the US Department of State collections (Available on microfilm at the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia).

88 Information accessed through www.nara.gov (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC).

89 Microfilm and microfiche of the Armenian Research Center (accessed through the Internet).

90 The book titles cited below are taken from The Armenian Massacres of 1894-1897: a bibliography in www.hyeetch.nareg.com.au/genocide/oppres_p4.html accessed on 7/27/2005.

during the Hamidian massacres. He was an experienced French diplomat who served his nation over many years.⁹¹

Some eyewitness accounts include James Wilson Pierce's (ed) *The story of Turkey and Armenia with a full and accurate account of the recent massacres written by an Eye Witness*, F. D Shepard, *Personal Experiences in Turkish Massacres and Relief Work*, and William Willard Howard, *Horrors of Armenia: The Story of an Eye-Witness*. All these individuals had seen first hand the horrors suffered by the Armenians at the hands of the Turks.⁹²

3. General Books and Articles from the Era of the Massacres

This is another huge collection of materials which overwhelmingly tend to be sympathetic to the Armenians. There are some items written by Turks and Indian Moslems who supported the position of the Ottoman Empire and Abdul Hamid. Rafiuddin Ahmad was an Indian Moslem who defended the actions of Sultan Adbul Hamid from criticism of the European Powers. Safir Effendi, Khalid Khalil Effendi and an unnamed Turkish author blamed the Armenians for the recent outbreaks of violence that occurred in the Ottoman Empire. Armenian revolutionaries are seen as the culprits for stirring up trouble by the Turks.⁹³

4. Modern Studies and Academic Articles.

The modern studies and academic articles on the Hamidian massacres are growing but is nowhere as extensive as the literature on the Armenian

91 Sir Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East: Personal Memories, 1879-1929*, Hutchinson, London, 1933. See especially Chapter 8, "Armenia, 1893-1894. Sassun Massacre and Commission of Inquiry," pp. 140-152 and Chapter 9, "Armenia, 1895-1898. Armenian Massacres," pp. 153-65; Paul Cambon, *Correspondance 1870-1924 3 Vols*, Bernard Grasset, 1940-1946, Paris (See "La Turquie d'Abd Ul Hamid" in Volume1, pp. 385-398 and 411-420).

92 James Wilson Pierce's (ed) *The story of Turkey and Armenia with a full and accurate account of the recent massacres written by an Eye Witness*, R.H, Woodward, Baltimore, 1896; F.D Shepard, *Personal Experiences in Turkish Massacres and Relief Work*, (No Publisher given) Worcester, 1911 and William Willard Howard, *Horrors of Armenia: The Story of an Eye-Witness*, Armenian Relief Association, New York, 1896

93 Rafiuddin Ahmad, "A Moslem view of Adbul Hamid and the Powers", *Nineteenth Century*, 38, (July 1895), pp. 156-64; "A Moslem's view of the Pan-Islamic Revival", *Nineteenth Century*, 42, (Oct 1897), pp. 517-26; Safir Effendi, "The Armenian Agitation", *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 9, (1895), pp. 48-52; Khalid Khalil Effendi, "The Armenian Question", *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 10, (July 1895) pp. 469-72;

Genocide of the First World War. A sample of these works are included for illustrative purposes. These is JK Hassiotis, *The Greeks and the Armenian Massacres (1890-1896)*, Robert F.Melson, *Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896*, Manoug J.Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers 1895-1920* along with Christopher J Walker's two works titled *Armenia : the survival of a nation* and *From Sasun to the Ottoman Bank*. All these studies are based on the extensive use of official archival sources.⁹⁴

Turkish academic books and articles have been written on the Armenian massacres which include some of the following : Kamuran Gurun, *The Armenian File*, Mim Kemal Oke, *Professor A.Vambery and Anglo-Ottoman Relations (1889-1907)*, Roderic H.Davison, *Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response* and Sonyel's, *The Ottoman Armenians*. These books are largely based on the extensive use of official Turkish and British sources which present the Turkish view of events during the 1890's.⁹⁵

The literature review presented above in no way constitutes an exhaustive list and is offered as a starting point for the reader to undertake his own research. Whilst there is a plethora of American, British, Austrian, Italian, Russian, German, Turkish, Armenian and French sources but the authors have been unable able to trace Australian Colonial primary sources on the Hamidian massacres. However the author's located *The Church of England Messenger* which printed items on the Hamidian massacres sometimes

94 J K Hassiotis, "The Greeks and the Armenian Massacres (1890-1896), *Neo-Hellenika*, 4 (1981), pp. 69-109; Robert F.Melson, "Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24, 3, (July 1982), pp. 481-509; Manoug J.Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers 1895-1920*, I.B.Tauris, London, 1995; Christopher J.Walker, *Armenia: the survival of a nation*, 2nd edition, St Martin's Press, New York, 1990, pp. 85-176; & "From Sasun to the Ottoman Bank", *Armenian Review*, 31, no. 3-123, (March 1979), pp. 227-264

95 Kamuran Gurun, *The Armenian File: the myth of innocence exposed*, K.Rustem & Bros and Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Nicosia and London, 1985; Mim. Kemal Oke, "Professor A. Vambery and Anglo-Ottoman Relations (1889-1907)", *Turkish Studies Association*, Bulletin 9, no. 2 (Sept. 1985), pp. 15-28; Roderic H.Davison, "Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and Ottoman Response", in William W.Haddad and William Ochsenwald, (eds), *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1977; Salahi R Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy*, K. Rustem & Brother, London, 1987

quoting *the Argus* newspaper as its principal source of information. This book will fill a gap in our knowledge by providing an Australian Colonial perspective through the pages of the *Argus* newspaper.⁹⁶

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the theoretical framework for studying the press. The success of a newspaper is attributed to strong leadership, good editorial and journalistic staff and a large amount of advertising revenue. The lack of these characteristics will ultimately lead to a newspaper's demise. There is no doubt that the newspaper is a valuable historical resource for studying past events and that it can serve as a useful tool for authenticating information when it is compared to official documents. In the period under review, the press provided ordinary citizens with much of their daily information.

Newspapers played an important part in fostering and developing a peculiar Australian nationalism within a British Imperial framework. Overall, the Australian press showed a spirit of enterprise by taking advantage of the cable service in 1872 and setting up an Australian Press Association in London to receive and cable news to Melbourne. Even with such 'independence', the great majority of news came from British sources. Therefore, the operations of the Australian press during the Hamidian massacres are best understood within an Imperial framework.

96 "Persecution of early Christians-Political or Religious (letter the to editor)", "Exchanges", June 7, 1895, pp. 111-12 & 114; March 1, 1896, p. 33 ; "The expansion of England", April 1, 1896, pp. 43-4; "Notes of the month", June 1, 1896, pp. 73-4; "The Armenian Question", December 1, 1896, p. 6 in *The Church of England Messenger*, (Ecclesiastical Gazette for the Diocese of Melbourne), Copies of this publication are held at Trinity College Library, University of Melbourne.

The Near East Question: an Overview 1800-1898

This section is composed of nineteen sections which provides an overview of the Near Eastern Question from the beginning of the 19th century to 1898. It allows the reader to follow the major events chronologically that shaped the history of the Ottoman Empire during the course of the 19th century. The Near East was a region of great power rivalry with the European powers: Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Germany, France and Italy propping up the 'sick man of Europe' at different times for their own political, economic, financial and diplomatic ends. Throughout the 19th century, Great Britain sought to maintain the balance of power in its international dealings with the other European powers. She didn't want a combination of powers threatening her hegemony in the Near East.

The Armenian question will be placed within the framework of Great European rivalries and influence in the Ottoman Empire. Whilst the major European powers showed concern for the plight of the Armenians after the Treaty of Berlin 1878, they did nothing to assist them during the time of the Sassoun and Constantinople massacres in 1894 and 1896. Sultan Abdul Hamid II exploited the differences among the European powers and never implemented the administrative reforms sought by them. The Armenians were left to fend for themselves.

The Australian Colonies had shown a lot of interest in the discussions that took place in Berlin in June 1878. Moreover the Constantinople massacre in August 1896 attracted the concern of the Australian Churches. The Australian Colonists' sent congratulatory telegrams to British Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli) thanking him for establishing peace in the Near East. There was always the question of a potential Russo-British conflict during the 1870's and 1880's which worried the Australian colonies from a defence and security viewpoint.

The occupation of the Ottoman Bank in August 1896 was carried out by Armenian revolutionaries to draw the attention of the European powers to the plight of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Once these revolutionaries

were given safe passage out of Constantinople, what followed was a bloodbath resulting in the death of thousands of Armenians. The Presbyterian Church passed a resolution condemning the action of the Ottoman Government for the events that occurred in Constantinople. Their resolution was forwarded to Queen Victoria.

This overview is also intended to help the reader understand the context of the *Argus* news articles within a British Imperial and Australian Colonial context. The major events unfolding in the Ottoman Empire had an impact in the Australian Colonies.

1. Troubles in the Balkans 1800-1830

During the course of the 19th century the Ottoman Empire faced a series of internal revolts in the Balkans and war with Russia that led to a gradual diminution of its power and territory. She fought the Greeks who were influenced by French revolutionary ideas whereas the Serbs achieved some measure of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. Concepts like freedom and independence as desired by the Greeks would have been anathema to an autocratic state. The Serbian revolts, the Greek War of Independence 1821-1830 and Russo-Turkish conflict 1828-29 saw the Ottoman Empire losing territory to its former Christian subjects and her Russian neighbor.⁹⁷

On July 6, 1827 the Treaty of London was signed by Britain, France and Russia to affect an armistice between the Greeks and Ottoman Empire. The great European powers possessed the authority to cut off supplies from Egypt and to blockade the Dardanelles, if the Porte refused to do so. Some two months later the Egyptian fleet joined the Turkish naval fleet at Navarino. The British, French and Russian naval fleets arrived over the next few weeks. They pressed the Egyptians to return home but the Turks fired on a British flag of truce and within a few short hours the entire Turco-Egyptian fleets had been destroyed.

This news spread like wildfire in Europe and the Porte continued to ignore Allied mediation efforts. According to the Porte the Greeks were considered rebels. Russia was prepared to force the issue with the Turks. The Russian Foreign Minister, Nesselrode, suggested that the Allies force the Straits and dictate peace terms to the Sublime Porte.⁹⁸ Britain and Austria were worried at the proposed Russian action. Nesselrode feared an

97 Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770-1923*, St Martin's Press, New York, pp. 26 33-58 & 60-1; MS Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, The Macmillan Press, London & Basingstoke, 1983, pp. 48-50.

Anglo-Russian naval clash in the Mediterranean and it was important from the Russian point of view to strike the Ottoman Empire before the other European powers could respond.

In June 1828 Russians attacked the Turks and the remainder of that year was purely a military stalemate. By the middle of 1829, the war turned in Russia's favor with successes in the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, Erzeroum in Turkish Armenia was occupied on June 27 and Adrianople. Tsar Nicholas 1 did not wish to prolong the war anymore and was important to draw up a peace treaty that preserved the Ottoman Empire.

A partition of the Ottoman Empire could have resulted in a European war. This would be a recurring theme throughout the course of the 19th century.

The British and French Governments were worried that a Russian advance on Constantinople might result in a revolution leading to the slaughter of Christians. The French and British Ambassadors in Constantinople appealed directly to the Russian commander that he not impose exacting peace terms on the Turks.

This had very little effect on the events that followed and on September 14, 1829 the Treaty of Adrianople was signed. Russian gains in Europe were small whereas in Asia she annexed Georgia and Eastern Armenia. In article 7 of the aforementioned treaty "provided for free passage for the merchantmen of all powers at peace with the Porte."⁹⁹

For the Armenians the Treaty of Adrianople was "a great disappointment" for them. The Armenians believed that even if they remained under Ottoman rule that they could easily be rescued by the Russians. It is estimated that between 60,000 to 90,000 Armenians withdrew with the Russian army something that had been organized by an emigration committee. The Armenians might have seen the Russians as liberators.¹⁰⁰

98 The Sublime Porte refers to the palace of the Grand Vizier, the Sultan's chief minister, and from the 18th century onwards was referred as the Turkish central government. See MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p.xii.

99 M S Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 66-73; Dakin, *op cit.*, pp. 54-61; ME Yapp, *The Making of the Near East 1792-1923*, Longman, London, pp. 69-70; The text of the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) appeared in both the French and English languages in *British Command Paper Treaties (Political and Territorial) Between Russia 1774-1849*, [1854] pp. 49-60.

2. Tanzimat Era: rebellion, reform and survival

Sultans Mahmud 11 (1808-1839), Abdul Mejid (1839-1861) and Abdul Aziz (1861-1876) understood clearly that unless the Ottoman Empire modernized its bureaucracy, army and education systems, then it faced a rather bleak future. Many western Europeans believed that the Ottoman Empire was nearing collapse.¹⁰¹

Muhammad Ali of Egypt had been promised Syria by Sultan Mahmud 11 as his reward for suppressing the Greek rebellion. The Egyptian vassal invaded Syria in November 1831 and by late 1832 had defeated the Ottoman Empire around Konya. Sultan Mahmud 11 appealed to the European powers for assistance and Russia answered the call by dispatching its naval fleet to the Bosphorus resulting in a defence alliance of Unkiar Skelessi of July 8, 1833. Britain considered the Ottoman Empire an important part of the balance of power in Europe. She wanted to undo the 1833 agreement.

In April 1839 the Ottoman Army attacked Muhammad Ali in Syria and by June 24, the Egyptians defeated the Turkish army once again. Sultan Mejid was in a hopeless position and his empire was tottering on the verge of dissolution. The European powers intervened to get Mejid and Muhammad Ali to resolve their differences but the powers could not agree on proposed terms to be offered to the combatants. In the end Muhammad Ali was forced out of Syria and thus leaving him as hereditary ruler of Egypt within the confines of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰²

Britain achieved her objective in 1841 that no foreign warships would be allowed to enter the Straits in peace time thus effectively bottling up the Russian fleet in the Black Sea. This diplomatic success was embodied in a Convention signed between Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia and Ottoman Empire on July 10, 1841.

Article 1 stated “His Highness the Sultan, on the one part, declares that he is firmly resolved to maintain for the future the principle invariably established as the ancient rule of his Empire, and in virtue of which it has at

100 Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: the Survival of a Nation*, Croom Helm, London, 1980, p. 54

101 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 88,107-08 & 147.

102 ME Yapp, *op cit.*, pp. 88-109; Rene Albrecht-Carrie, *The Concert of Europe 1815-1914*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, nd, pp. 129-51.

all times been prohibited for the Ships of War of Foreign Powers to enter the Straits of the Dardanelles and of the Bosphorus; and that, so long as the Porte is at peace, His Highness will admit no foreign ship of war into the said Straits...

[the Great European Powers] on the other part, engage to respect this determination of the Sultan, and to conform themselves to the principle above declared.”¹⁰³ France was also reintegrated into the Concert of Europe.¹⁰⁴

In order to preserve his Empire, Sultan Mejid issued two very important edicts - the Khatti-I Sherif of Gulkhane (1839) and Khatti-1 Humayun (1856). The first decree outlined equality and security for all citizens – Muslim and non-Muslim and reforming the taxation system whereas the second one was based on the notion of administrative and economic development.¹⁰⁵

The issue of apostasy tested the legality and creditability of the Khatti-I Sherif of Gulkhane decree. Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, worked tirelessly to get the Porte to abolish the death penalty for religious conversion.

The execution of apostate Avakim, a young Armenian, resulted in a diplomatic row between the Porte and British and French governments. In early 1842 Avakim got into a drunken altercation with neighbors where he “was sentenced at the War Office to receive 500 bastinadoes.” He became intoxicated and ended up converting to Islam and was given the new name of Mehemet. He deeply regretted his decision and escaped to the island of Syra for three months and on his return to Constantinople ended up being identified by a local Hodja. Avakim was branded at the War Office “of having renegaded from Islam.”¹⁰⁶

103 Albrecht-Carrie, *op cit.*, p. 150

104 *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9

105 ME Yapp, *op cit.*, pp. 108-109& 113-15; MS Anderson, *op cit.*, 108-09; Roderic H. Davison, Turkish attitudes concerning Christian-Muslim equality in the nineteenth century, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 59, no. 4, July 1954, pp. 847-8

106 No. 1 Sir Stratford Canning to Earl of Aberdeen, Buyukdere, August 27, 1843 & Inclosure 1-Case of the Armenian Avakim in *British and Foreign State Papers 1843-44 Vol. XXXII*, James Ridgway & Sons, London, 1859, pp. 899-900 ; Arman J. Kirakossian, *British diplomacy and the Armenian question from the 1830's to 1914*, Gomidas Institute Books, Princeton and London, 2003, p. 11

When Canning learnt of Avakim's arrest, he tried to influence the Porte to stop Avakim's execution. While the Ottoman Ministers were sympathetic to Canning's wishes but "regrett[ed] the inexorable necessity of the law." Avakim was threatened by the Ottoman authorities to recant his Christian faith but refused to do so. He was "finally decapitated in the most frequented parts of ... [Constantinople] with circumstances of great barbarity." Canning consulted with his Austrian, French, Russian and Prussian colleagues that this issue should be raised with their governments.¹⁰⁷

On October 4, 1843 the British Foreign Secretary Earl of Aberdeen praised Canning's line of action and thought that execution for apostasy had fallen into disuse. Aberdeen thought that every Christian government should "raise their voices against such proceedings, whether the law be executed to the prejudice of their own subjects." Canning was instructed to inform the Sultan to take heed of Britain's advice "which is given with the most friendly feeling." The French and Prussian ambassadors in Constantinople were instructed by their respective governments to deliver protest notes along with the British over Avakim's execution. Russia and Austria remained silent.¹⁰⁸

The pressure of Britain and France finally paid dividends. Canning and de Bourqueney met Rifaat Pasha, the Grand Vizier, on March 6, 1844 that both of them had come in a friendly spirit to find a solution regarding religious conversion. They were not seeking a "formal repeal of the law" but an official assurance from the Ottoman government that future executions for apostasy would not re-occur. This explanation produced a beneficial effect in Rifaat's mind.¹⁰⁹

Rifaat Pasha informed Sultan Mejid of his conversation with Canning and de Bourqueney in seeking to find a suitable compromise over the apostasy issue. Canning advised Lord Aberdeen on March 23, 1844 that the concession had been extracted with great difficulty. The Sultan "gave [his] royal word "renouncing the practice of executions for apostasy and expressing his desire of maintaining friendly relations with Great Britain.

107 No. 1 Sir Stratford Canning (Buyukdere) to Earl of Aberdeen, August 27, 1843 in *British and Foreign State Papers 1843-44 Vol.XXX11*, pp. 898-99.

108 No. 4 Earl of Aberdeen (Foreign Office) to Sir Stratford Canning October 4, 1843 in *British and Foreign State Papers 1843-44 Vol.XXX11*, pp. 905-08.

109 No. 33 Sir Stratford Canning to Earl of Aberdeen March 6, 1844 in *British and Foreign State Papers 1843-44 Vol.XXX11*, pp. 930-1.

Moreover Abdul Mejid asked Canning to convey to Queen Victoria of his happiness at the treatment of Indian Muslims under British rule.¹¹⁰

It must be stressed that the Tanzimat reforms were introduced out of necessity to preserve the Ottoman Empire. Moreover it also advocated a new ideology “Ottomanism” that was motivated in uniting both Muslim and non-Muslim elements into Ottoman citizens and achieving a common identity. The Tanzimat reforms never really achieved their stated objectives. There was interference in the internal affairs and economic domination of the Ottoman Empire by the great European powers. The modernization of the Ottoman Army required massive foreign loans.¹¹¹

3. The State of Ottoman Finances: a Stormy Journey

From the Crimean war 1853-56 onwards, the Ottoman State borrowed capital from European money markets. From 1854-1874 it raised a total of £190 million and only £10 million was used for economic purposes, with the remainder being squandered on the construction of palaces for Sultan Abdul Mejid. The Ottoman Empire became dependent on European financiers for its political and economic survival.

In 1875 Turkey defaulted on its interest payment which caused an outcry in London and Paris. The European powers were only interested in investing their surplus capital in Turkey as way of keeping them in servitude and dependence. It was in October 1881 that the European powers created the “Public Debt Administration” (Decree of Muharram) where taxes collected were designated in paying off the State Debt.¹¹²

110 No. 36 Sir Stratford to Earl of Aberdeen, March 23, 1844 with enclosure 1 Official declaration of the Sublime Porte, relinquishing the practice of executions for apostasy, March 21, 1844 in *British and Foreign State Papers 1843-44 Vol. XXXI*, pp. 934-8.

111 Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, Brill, Leiden, New York & Koln, 1997, p. 31; Davison, *op cit.*, p. 852.

112 Walker, *op cit.*, pp. 92-4; Michelle Raccagni, The French economic interests in the Ottoman Empire, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (May 1980), pp. 358- ; The text of Decree of Muharram is in British Command Paper C-5736, *Turkey No. 1 Imperial Ottoman Debt, Decree of 28 Muharram, 1299 (December 8 (20), 1881)*, 40ff; For the contemporary newspaper accounts on the Turkish financial default, interested readers should consult the following articles ‘The Turkish repudiation’, October 22, 1875, p. 6, ‘The Turkish repudiation’, October 28, 1875, p. 6, ‘The Turkish loans’, October 29, 1875, p. 4 and ‘The Turkish loans’, October 30, 1875, p. 7 published in *The Times* of London.

After 1881, Ottoman finances came under the control of the Public Debt Administration. The Europeans wanted to ensure that the Turkish Empire met its financial obligations to the European bondholders. On November 8, 1892

The Times reported that Vincent Caillard, the British delegate and President of the Council of Administration of the Ottoman Debt revealed in the annual report for 1891-92 (March 13th-March 13th) that the financial position of the Ottoman empire was improving. The principal revenues from the silk tithe, tobacco and stamp duty levied on documents had increased over previous years but salt revenue proved disappointing. Smuggling was identified as a major concern in the loss of revenue from this commodity. Efforts were also being made to reform the currency issue.

Calliard stated “that ten years ago the Ottoman State had no credit...[which] would...have been impossible for it to raise a loan” in 1890. He was sanguine about the future development of railways in Turkey and encouraged “English capitalists...to turn their eyes once more to a country so interesting as Turkey.”¹¹³

The annual reports for 1893-94, 1894-95, 1895-96 and 1896-97 showed the Ottoman finances to be satisfactory state despite internal political problems and low grain prices. For e.g. in 1893-94 an increase in expenditure to cover salary increases was a measure designed to improve the efficiency of administration and to reduce corruption. In 1895-96 and 1896-97 cereal output expanded due to an increase in grain prices on world markets coupled with railway expansion that greatly assisted the export trade. Agricultural production was the lifeblood of the Ottoman Empire. Calliard was praiseworthy of the employees working in the Debt Administration for their honesty, hardwork and dedication. There is no doubt that the Ottoman Public Debt Administration achieved some improvement in Ottoman finances.¹¹⁴

4. The Crimean War 1853-56 : the Treaty of Paris and Ottoman Empire in the Concert of Europe.

The Crimean War of 1853-56 is an interesting development in the history of the Near East. Britain, France and Austria were interested in preserving

113 ‘The Finances of the Ottoman Empire’, *The Times*, November 8, 1892 p. 3.

114 The Ottoman Public Debt, October 9, 1894, p. 9; Mr.Caillard on the Ottoman debt, October 26, 1895, p. 11; Ottoman Public Debt, November 26, 1896, p. 8 & The Ottoman Public Debt, May 5, 1897 p. 14 in *The Times*.

the Ottoman Empire. Russia had the great desire to occupy Constantinople since the time of Empress Catherine. France had her own interests too in the Ottoman Empire. Russia and France were rivals over the Holy Places in Turkey with each power claiming to represent the interests of Orthodox and Catholic Christians. Britain wished to preserve the peace in the Near East.

On February 25, 1853 Lord Stratford de Redcliffe (Stratford Canning) was instructed to stop off in Paris and Vienna on his way to Constantinople. In Paris he was trying to convince the French Foreign Minister that Anglo-French interests were identical in the Near East, Vienna's attitude towards the Ottoman Empire remaining unchanged. When de Redcliffe arrived in Constantinople, he told the Porte that the Ottoman Empire was "in a position of peculiar danger." This meant that the allies of the Porte were concerned, that if Turkey failed to change its administration, then this could "lead to a general revolt among the Christian subjects of the Porte, and prove fatal to the independence and integrity of the Empire, a catastrophe that would be deplored by Her Majesty's Government."¹¹⁵

Russian Tsar Nicholas 1 dispatched Prince Menshikov to Constantinople to lay down a set of demands on the Sultan who rejected them. These demands centered in obtaining a signature for a Russo-Turkish convention that would have effectively granted Russia exclusive control over the Orthodox Christians and to be able to intervene in the Ottoman Empire at time she desired.

Concurrently the Tsar sent orders on May 27, 1853 to his forces to cross the Turkish frontier and to occupy the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia thus creating a tense situation. A conference of Ambassadors met in Vienna on July 31 aiming to satisfy Russian and Turkish interests. The former accepted the Vienna decision with the latter refusing. In September 1853 Lord Clarendon, British Foreign Secretary received an official interpretation of the "Vienna Note" by Nesselrode, the Russian Chancellor, which would have given Russia a superiority over the other powers.

The British Government informed the French ambassador that "sedition had broken out in Constantinople endangering the lives of the Europeans and of the Sultan." Without consulting the Cabinet, Clarendon instructed de Redcliffe to call up the British fleet outside the Straits to Constantinople thereby violating the 1841 Straits Convention. Clarendon justified the

115 Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)*, Frank Cass & Co Ltd, p. 143.

British decision on the grounds of accusing Russia of “seeking to obtain a virtual protectorate over the Christian subjects of the Porte.” Britain believed that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was at stake. On October 4, 1853 Turkey declared war on Russia and on November 30 the Russian fleet defeated the Ottoman navy off Sinope, a town situated along the shores of the Black Sea. When British and French learnt of the Russian victory, their fleets passed through the Dardanelles and entered the Black Sea on December 24 and thus turning back the Russian fleet.¹¹⁶

It is interesting that the Crimean War promoted anti-Turkish liberation movements in the Christian populated regions of the Empire. In 1853-54, there was discontent in Bulgaria and Kurdistan and Greek uprisings in Epirus, Thessaly and Aegean regions in January 1854. Britain was worried with these revolts that “observers and garrisons [were dispatched] to these regions as well as to the islands of Chios, Rhodes and Samos to repel the insurgents and prevent possible risings.”¹¹⁷ In Europe the Russians withdrew from the Principalities but in Asia they captured Kars and other Armenian populated areas. Under the Treaty of Paris of 1856, Russian troops were withdrawn and Turkish troops re-occupied it. There was no reference to Armenia in this treaty.¹¹⁸

Sultan Abdul Mejid introduced the Khatti-1 Humayun ahead of the Paris Conference. The Porte saw this edict as a way of satisfying the great powers meeting in Paris of its good intentions and its worthiness of western respect as a civilized power of its reaffirmation and extension of the Tanzimat reforms.¹¹⁹

The Treaty of Paris concluded on March 30, 1856 recognized the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire and finally admitted Turkey into the Concert of Europe. Article 9 outlined that the edict issued by the Sultan would “guarantee the position of his Christian subjects” and

116 Temperley and Penson, *op cit.*, pp. 146-52; Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 18-9; MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 120.

117 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, 20

118 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, 28; For an overview of the Battle of Kars, see Trevor Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War 1854-56*, Abacus, London, 2003, pp. 416-32.

119 Kirakossian *op cit.*, 27; Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire*, Morrow Quill Paperbacks, New York, 1977, pp. 501-02; The text of the Khatti-1 Humayun is in British Command Paper *Part XV11 Eastern Papers. Firman and Hatti-Sheriff by the Sultan, relative to Privileges and reforms in Turkey* [1856], pp. 4-7.

that great powers would not interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey. Articles 11-14 resulted in the neutralization of the Black Sea and the Hatti Humayun was also embodied in this treaty.¹²⁰

British diplomacy succeeded in curbing Russian influence in the Principalities and ensuring the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. It meant that the Black Sea was open to merchantmen of all nations and closed to all warships.¹²¹

5. Ottoman Reformers and Rivals

As previously stated the Tanzimat reforms fell short of their stated objectives, as persecution and massacres continued to take place in the Ottoman Empire. In June 1860 the Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, informed Sir Henry Bulwer, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, of discussions that had taken place in St Petersburg regarding the issue of massacres and persecutions of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. The powers required that the Sultan appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the massacres, punish the culprits, improve the governance of the provinces and implement new administrative reforms.

Britain's foreign policy was dichotomous in that she expressed concern for the welfare of the Christians whilst at the same time she supported the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. She continued with the political and financial aid to the Porte to suppress revolts in Herzegovina and Zeitoun in 1862. The British were concerned that Russia would support nationalist revolts in the Ottoman Empire.¹²² Whilst the status of Christians improved gradually over the course of the 1860's, there were Turks, however, who had a jaundiced view of Christians and considered them unequal to a Muslim. It is interesting that British Consul J.C Taylor stated that the Armenian population around Erzeroum preferred to be under Russian rule to that of the Sultan. They would be prepared to fight for the Russians against the Turks. Taylor continues to point out that the Armenians were the largest population element; they dominated commerce and agriculture and capital resources in the eastern provinces.¹²³ The deaths of Fuad Pasha in 1869 and Ali Pasha in 1871 ended whatever real hopes

120 Albrecht-Carrier, *op cit.*, pp. 186-8

121 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 141-4.

122 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 33-5

123 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

there may have been under the Tanzimat reforms, thus giving way to the grow of conservative policies that would not be too favorable towards the Christian minorities.¹²⁴

During the late 1860's emerged a small group of educated Turks (also known as the Young Ottomans) who came from the bureaucracy possessing some knowledge of European languages actually were opposing the Tanzimat reforms. It will be remarked that Reshid Pasha, Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha were genuinely interested in the rejuvenating the Empire and believed that the Tanzimat reforms offered the opportunity of creating a modern centralized state. The 1870's saw a period of political instability and concessions made to Christians that in reality were resented by the Muslims. The revolt of June 1875 in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the spark leading to an international crisis over the next 3 years with the major European powers who clearly understood the implications that this would have on the balance of power. This would lead to the rise of Pan-Islamic sentiments throughout the Ottoman Empire that was directed against the Christians.¹²⁵

6. Abdul Hamid 11 and the Near Eastern Crisis 1876-78

Within a short time of his accession as Sultan in 1876, Abdul Hamid 11 (1876-1909) suspended the Constitution and prorogued Parliament and ruled his domain as an autocrat for the next thirty years. It will be stressed that the 1876 Constitution was introduced in forestalling an intervention of the European powers. The European powers met in Constantinople in early December 1876 to discuss the situation in the Near East. Lord Salisbury, the British delegate, had been instructed by Prime Minister Disraeli to thwart any attempts by the other powers to impose peace terms on Turkey. The great powers peace proposals for the Balkans-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria- were rejected by the Porte. On January 20, 1877 the conference had failed as the Porte proved intransigent to the

124 Kirakossian., pp. 40-1; Davison, *op cit.*, pp. 849-53; The deaths of Fuad and Ali Pashas was reported in *The Times* on February 16, 1869 p. 5 & September 12, 1871, p. 3.

125 Amzi Ozcan, *op cit.*, p. 35; ME Yapp, *op cit.*, pp. 77-8; MS Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 167-8 & 185; Erik Jan Zürcher, (Leiden University), *The Ottoman Empire 1850-1922-Unavoidable Failure*, Turkology, Update Leiden Project Working papers Archive, Dept of Turkish Studies, Leiden University, October 2004, p. 9 accessed thru www.tulp.leidenuniv.nl/contact_docs/wap/ejz20.pdf

European proposals. Britain sought to have Russia clarify its position in the Near East.

Russia proposed that the powers work collectively to ameliorate the condition of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, then Russia would not have to work independently. Count Shuvalov proposed that Britain and Russia should come to an understanding in the advent of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In early March, Ambassador Ignatiev toured European capitals to present the Russian peace offering for the Near East. Germany, France, Austria-Hungary and Italy accepted the Russian proposal.

Finally Britain acceded to the Russian proposal on March 31, 1877 and concluded a memorandum that was to be presented to the Porte. The memorandum aimed at a peaceful resolution to the Eastern question, declaring their general interest in the condition of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, and appealing to the Porte to carry out the necessary reforms.

This meant that the diplomatic representatives of the great powers at Constantinople would have the ability to force the Porte to implement these reforms.

In April 1877, the Porte presented a note to the European Powers dissatisfied with their interference in the internal affairs of Turkey and thus rejecting their demands. After all the European powers had recognised the independence and territorial sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Paris 1856.

Abdul Hamid also dismissed the liberal-minded Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha from office. Abdul Hamid would use Pan-Islam and the Caliphate as an Imperial policy measure to unite his Muslim subjects behind his throne and to stop the encroachment of the European powers. It should also be noted that Abdul Hamid was concerned about Christian missionaries operating in Eastern Anatolia and Arab provinces.¹²⁶

126 Azmi Ozcan, *op cit.*, pp. 35-63; ME Yapp, *op cit.*, pp. 117&119, MS Anderson, *op cit.*, pp.167-68,185 & 190-2; Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 46, 51-55; Selim Deringil, The invention of tradition as public image in the late Ottoman Empire, 1808-1908, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 35, no. 1 January 1993, pp. 12-6 & 21-2; *Turkey No. 2 (1877) Correspondence respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-877*, pp. 83-5, 90-3, 165-6 & 280-86

7. Origins of Armenian National Consciousness to the Russo-Turkish War 1877-78: the Treaty of San Stefano

Around c. 1850 Armenians lived predominantly quiet lives but this would change as the remainder of the 19th century unfolded. There was a time when the Armenians are referred too in Turkish sources as the ‘most loyal subjects.’ Some of these changes had been influenced by external factors. The educational work of American missionaries in Armenian areas coupled with Armenians studying abroad in Western Europe was the first signs of raising an Armenian national consciousness.¹²⁷

It is important to outline briefly the composition of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Christopher J. Walker divides the Armenians into four groups. Firstly the Amiras class representing the rich Armenians residing in Constantinople and Smyrna had close ties with the Porte. They had very little contact with their fellow compatriots in the Eastern Vilayets. It was in Constantinople that the Armenians were involved in manufacturing, financial and organized trade guilds in the Empire. The second group included traders and artisans living in the towns and interior. The largest group was the peasants who lived off the land, tended their flocks and usually owed money to Turkish or Kurdish Beys.

The last group were the mountaineers who were bold, lived a semi-independent existence remaining untouched by Ottoman Empire, its tax-collectors and lived in Zeitoun (Cilicia) and Sassun Caza (sub-district).¹²⁸ In the last mentioned place though paying tribute to Kurdish beys “ [they] were able to live without the insidious humiliations of the plainsmen.” It will be pointed out that “in both places they were armed, manufacturing the weapons themselves. They were un-Ottomanised, and virtually untouched by the central government and its functionaries.”¹²⁹

During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 Armenians suffered at the hands of Kurdish irregulars in Van, Bitlis, Mosul and by Turkish forces in

127 ME Yapp, *op cit.*, p. 197; Manoug J Somakian, *Empires in Conflict*, IB Tauris, London & New York, 1995, p. 15.

128 Walker *op cit.*, pp. 94-7; For a discussion of the Armenian amira class in the Ottoman Empire see Hagop Barsoumian’s article published in *Armenian Review*, Vol. 31, no. 3, March 1979, pp. 310-6.

129 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 95.

Diyarbakir province.¹³⁰ Armenian Patriarch Nerses kept in close touch with the British Embassy on events unfolding in Western Armenia.¹³¹

In July-August 1877 Zohrab, a British Consular official in Erzeroum, wrote to Lord Derby on August 21 that Kurdish irregulars had massacred Armenians in Bayazid. Ambassador Layard sent an embassy official Mr. Ressay to Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis and Mush to investigate these reports of alleged massacres.

Ressay's report confirmed that the Kurds were the culprits of the massacres and that these regions had a poor administration. The Kurds had also kidnapped Armenian women and children. Ressay also stated that local Turkish Governors Abder Rahman in Diyarbakir and Hassan Pasha in Van had done everything in their power to stop the massacres.¹³² Some Armenian families migrated to Russia and Persia and these refugees would return to these regions, if occupied by Russian troops. With the Armenians gone, the Porte took the opportunity to resettle Circassians, Turks and Lezgins in the Eastern Vilayets. This would greatly alter the population numbers in favor of the Muslims at the expense of the Christian elements.¹³³

The Russians and Turks decided to halt their conflict. At the armistice agreed at Adrianople (Edirne) on January 27, 1878 between Russia and Turkey, it was envisaged that Bulgaria would become autonomous; Montenegro, Romania and Serbia were to be granted their independence. The poor Armenians were not even mentioned. The Armenian National Assembly authorized Patriarch Nerses to send a delegation to Grand Duke Nicholas at the Russian Headquarters in Adrianople.¹³⁴ The Ottoman Government was not interested in granting any self government to the Armenians and Russia was not prepared to push matters along either.

Finally the Russo-Turkish peace settlement was embodied in the Treaty of San Stefano signed on March 3, 1878. Article 16 reads as follows:

130 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 59; *Turkey No. 2 (1877) Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey 1876-877*, pp. 3,8,24 & 146-7
131 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 60; *Turkey No. 1 (1878) Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey* p. 101.

132 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 61; *Turkey No. 1 (1878) Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, pp. 43, 64-5, 72, 96-7, 117, 149, 248-9, 251, 287 & Mr. Ressay's reports pp. 398-400 & 490-93.

133 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 62.

134 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 110.

“As the evacuation by the Russians of the territory which they occupy in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications detrimental to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the Sublime Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians.”¹³⁵

When Britain received a copy of the text of this treaty, she was horrified and raised objections to it. Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, issued a circular on April 1, 1878 opposing the Russian gains in Armenia on two grounds:

“The acquisition of the strongholds of Armenia will place the population of that province under the immediate influence of the Power which holds them; while the extensive European trade will, in consequence of the concessions in Kurdistan will be able to be arrested at the pleasure of the Russian Government by the prohibitory barriers of their commercial system.”¹³⁶ To solve these differences a conference was convoked in Berlin under the chairmanship of German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck playing the role of the “honest broker.”¹³⁷

Salisbury was unhappy with the provisions in the Treaty of San Stefano in that Russian evacuation would be conditional on the introduction of reforms.¹³⁸ The Russian Foreign Minister Gorchakov pointed out on April 13 that the treaty in Armenia was purely a defensive measure whereby she had the right to look after its own security and was surprised at the British suggestion that its trade and commercial interests would be imperiled with Erzeroum and Trebizond (Trabzon) in Russian hands. Gorchakov announced that he would be prepared to further discuss with the British on any points of disagreement at the conference of all the great powers.¹³⁹

135 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 110; The text of the Treaty of San Stefano is *Turkey No. 22 (1878) Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey signed at San Stefano 19 February/3 March 1878* (communicated to the Earl of Derby by Count Shuvaloff, March 23, 1878).

136 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 112.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

138 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

In mid-April 1878 the British Government desired to enter into separate negotiations with the Russians ahead of the Berlin Congress. The British Government offered that “(1) the territory of an independent Bulgaria should not extend south of the Balkan mountain chain, (2) If Russia were to keep its Asiatic conquest, Britain must receive equivalent compensation to safeguard its interests in Asia.”¹⁴⁰

The Russian Ambassador would approach his government regarding the British proposals. In the meantime the international climate was unfavorable to Russia, as Austria-Hungary and Britain kept up the pressure on Russia to make concessions. On May 24 Russian Ambassador Shuvalov returned to London to discuss the British proposal with Salisbury signing a secret Russo-British protocol which amended the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano. What did this mean?

Russia promised not to create a large Bulgaria and to withdraw some of its troops from Western Armenia.¹⁴¹ Article 7 of the protocol altered the requirements of San Stefano whereby Russia and Britain would be jointly responsible in Western Armenia. Article 10 mentioned that the Alashkert Valley and Bayazid would be returned to Turkey as this was important transit point for commerce with Persia and “because of their significance to Turkey.”¹⁴²

After the signing of the protocol Britain was still concerned with the political situation in Asiatic Turkey. Britain was not prepared to go to war with Russia but Salisbury instructed Ambassador Layard in Constantinople to impress on the Sultan that Britain could not guarantee the security of the Ottoman Empire, if she did not receive solid guarantees of reforms for Christians and other subjects of the Empire.¹⁴³ Britain was attempting to control the Ottoman government by placing some of its troops near Asia Minor and Syria with Cyprus being an indispensable part of its strategy. The British Ambassador was instructed to tell the Sultan that British control of Cyprus would ensure the territorial sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Layard sent a draft of an Anglo-Turkish agreement on Cyprus for

139 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 71; *Turkey no. 27 (1878) Further Correspondence Respecting the Preliminary Treaty of Peace Between Russia and Turkey Signed at San Stefano (C-1995)*, pp. 9-10.

140 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 71.

141 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

143 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

discussion with the Turkish Government. After discussion between Layard and Abdul Hamid the agreement was signed on June 4 1878. It is worth noting that the Grand Vizier opposed this agreement.¹⁴⁴

The Cyprus convention stated:

“If Batum, Ardahan, Kars or any of them shall be retained by Russia, and if any attempt shall be made at any time by Russia to take possession of any further territories of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan in Asia, as fixed by the definitive treaty of peace, England engages to join his Imperial Majesty the Sultan in defending them by the force of arms. In return, his Imperial Majesty the Sultan promises to England to introduce necessary reforms, to be agreed upon the later between the two powers, into the government, and for the protection of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in these territories.”¹⁴⁵

Article 1 of the Cyprus convention stated Britain would come to the assistance of the Sultan. “ If Russia were to occupy Batum, Ardahan, Kars or any of the Sultans possessions in Asiatic Turkey that were kept under the Sultan’s domination according to the final peace treaty.”¹⁴⁶

In return Turkey would carry out administrative reforms as agreed between the two governments to protect and guarantee the lives of the Christian population; it also assumed that Sultan would offer better government. The Sultan agreed to a British occupation of Cyprus.¹⁴⁷

General Simmons prepared a memorandum on July 26, 1878 outlining the British War Office views on the object of the Cyprus convention. In his communication, he raises some serious concerns about the projection of Russian power and influence in Asia Minor and neighboring regions. If Russia got a foothold in Asia Minor, Syria and Persia by direct or indirect means, she would be in a strong military position to project her power down

144 C J Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists: British foreign policy 1878-1902 Vol. 2*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967, pp. 4-5; Kirakossian., *op cit.*, p. 73; The text of the Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey (Russian aggressions in Asia; reforms and protection of Christians in Turkey in Asia; occupation and administration of Cyprus by England) was signed in Constantinople on June 4, 1878 is in *British and Foreign State Papers, Vol. 69 (1877-78)*, pp. 744-6.

145 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 114.

146 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 74.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

to the Gulf of Alexandretta and Eastern Mediterranean, thus threatening British interests in Egypt, Suez Canal and India.

Once consolidating her power, Russia would then become the mistress of the Straits and Bosphorus by closing “the Black Sea ...[to]...ships of other powers” and thus threatening British commercial interests in the regions “lying between the Black and Mediterranean Seas.”

If a Russo-Turkish conflict occurred in Asia Minor, Britain would likely be drawn into the fray. Control of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus would be crucial for the operation of the British Royal Navy in the Black Sea, thus giving it the ability to interdict and destroy vital Russian military communications in Asia Minor.

Other measures considered were the construction of roads and railways in Asia Minor that would greatly facilitate speedy troop movements and military supplies close to the theatre of war. It was also proposed to train “the native population organized in sufficient strength to oppose the progress of Russian arms in the elevated region of Armenia.”

The tone of Simmon’s memorandum shows that Britain was prepared to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire against a Russian attack. No mention is made requiring Abdul Hamid to introduce administrative reforms in the Armenian provinces.¹⁴⁸

8. The Treaty of Berlin and Armenian Question 1878-1881

An Armenian national awakening and political ambitions can be evidenced when an Armenian delegation attended the Berlin Congress of 1878 requesting the appointment of a Christian Governor-General for the Armenian areas in Asia Minor. Their request was ignored by the major European powers, as they had their own interests and ambitions in the Near East.

The Berlin Congress and its resultant peace agreement was a victory for British diplomacy. Article 16 in the treaty of San Stefano was replaced by Article 61 in the Treaty of Berlin.¹⁴⁹

However Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878 required that:

“The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the ameliorations and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to

148 C J Lowe, *op cit.*, pp. 5-7.

149 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 79.

guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintended their application.”¹⁵⁰

This article gave the European powers at the least on paper the right to intervene on behalf of the Armenians in the Turkish Empire. In reality this article proved to be ineffectual.

The unheard Armenian delegation sent a dissenting note to the Berlin Congress on July 13 1878 expressing their unease over Article 61. The note stated:

“The Armenian delegation expresses its regrets that its legitimate demands, so moderate at the time, have not been agreed upon by the congress, We had not believed that a nation like ours, composed of several million souls, which has not so far been the instrument of any foreign power, which, although much more oppressed than the other Christian populations has caused no trouble to the Ottoman government (and, although our nation has no tie of religion or origin to any of the great powers, yet being a Christian nation it had hoped to find in our century the same protection afforded to the other Christian nations)—we had not believed that such a nation, devoid of all political ambition, would have to acquire the right of living its life and of being governed on its ancestral land by Armenian officials.

The Armenians have just realised that they have been deceived, that their rights have not been recognised, because they have been pacific; that the maintenance of the independence of their ancient church and nationality have advanced them nothing. The Armenian delegation is going to return to the east, taking this lesson with it. It declares nevertheless that the Armenian people will never cease from crying out until Europe gives its legitimate demands satisfaction.”¹⁵¹

The Armenians felt betrayed by the European powers that materially did nothing to assist them and had every right to complain when the Serbs, Bulgarians and Montenegrins had received their rewards in the Treaty of Berlin.¹⁵²

150 Cited in Somakian, p. 10; Walker, *op cit.*, p. 115

151 Quoted in Walker p. 117.

In the post-1878 period Sultan Abdul Hamid was required to implement reforms in the Armenian populated areas as stipulated under Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin. British Consuls were posted to the Eastern regions to report on the condition of the Armenians and the activities of the local administration. This last point became a continual problem for the British government in its dealings with the Porte.¹⁵³

On September 14, 1878 British Vice Consul Biliotti reported to Layard that the Armenians in Erzeroum region were in a state of panic hearing rumors of imminent massacres, once the Russian forces were withdrawn. The impending massacres proved to be an exaggeration as this rumor had been spread by Russian agents. In the meantime the Russian Embassy in London assured the British that active steps were being taken to stop Armenian immigration to Turkey. The issue of appointing an ethnic Armenian Governor in the Eastern Vilayets was something that the Armenians desired but Abdul Hamid dismissed such an idea out of hand. The Sultan was interested in appointing a Kurdish Governor.¹⁵⁴

On October 11, 1878 Consul Henderson in Aleppo told Layard that 70 Armenians had been murdered. Again on January 6, 1879 Henderson reported on the terrible condition of Armenians in Zeitoun and Marash regions. Captain Harry Trotter was appointed British Consul in Erzeroum and proposed the appointment of Vice Consuls for Diyarbakir, Erzeroum, Kharput, Van, Bitlis and Mush. In January 1879 Trotter reported on the terrible plight of the Armenians and Kurdish gangs continued to terrorise the local Christian population.¹⁵⁵

Kirakossian details many British Consular reports that mention the deteriorating condition of the Armenians in the Eastern Vilayets. Abdul Hamid sent commissions of inquiry to the Eastern Vilayets to investigate the claims made by the Armenians. There is also a record of Armenian communities presenting petitions to the Commissions of Inquiry and also to the British Embassy in Constantinople. In the period 1878-1890 the

152 Walker, *op cit.*, p. 117.

153 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 83-4.

154 *Turkey No. 53 (1878) Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, pp. 165, 190-1, 193, 198-201, 201-2 ; *Turkey No. 54 (1879) Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, pp. 13-4, 64-7, 187-90; Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 86-7

155 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 88-91.

reforms promised by the Porte were never implemented and the Armenians had every right to feel abandoned by the European powers.¹⁵⁶

Possibly the most ambitious program for reform was a memorandum prepared by British Consuls Colonel Wilson and Major Trotter on August 23, 1881 which was submitted for Lord Dufferin's consideration in Constantinople.¹⁵⁷

Once informed of this reform program, the British Government instructed Dufferin in Constantinople that priority should be given to the appointment of a trustworthy and competent High Commissioner or Governor ; and secondly to improve the tax collection system. Dufferin wanted to ensure that both Christian and Muslim were treated equally. As usual the Sultan gave his word to introduce reforms and end the chaotic situation existing in the Eastern Vilayets. If these proposed reforms were given a chance to work; it may have made the situation a lot better for the Armenians and Muslims alike. Abdul Hamid never fulfilled his promise to appoint a High Commissioner to oversee the reforms desired by Britain under Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin.

One could argue that the Sultan may have been thinking that Britain was meddling too much in the internal affairs of his Empire. The other powers—France, Russia and Germany had their own interests to protect and therefore a good opportunity for genuine reform was lost. In particular German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck counseled the British that pressure should not be applied on the Sultan, as this might lead to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. At this time Germany had no direct interest in the Near Eastern question. Russia saw Article 61 was aimed against her and could not really assist the Armenians. Britain tried to elicit the support of Austro-Hungary but Foreign Minister Count Gustav Kalnoky was not really interested in the Armenian issue and backed the German proposition of not pressuring the Sultan.¹⁵⁸

9. Australian Colonial reactions: Russo-Turkish conflict to the Berlin Congress 1877-78

The Australian colonists followed the Near East crisis with keen interest. As part of the British Empire they depended on the Royal Navy for their

156 Kirakossian ch 3 passim.

157 The text of this proposed memorandum is in Bilal Simsir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians Vol. 2 (1880-1890)*, Turkish Historical Society, Ankara, 1983, pp. 298-302.

protection and security from real or imagined enemies like France and Russia. The possibility of war existed between Great Britain and Russia during the 1870's -1880's which was something that would have been concerned the Australian colonies from a security point of view. There is no doubt that if an Anglo-Russian conflict occurred, the Australian colonials would have volunteered to fight in the British imperial army. Australians volunteered during the Khartoum crisis in 1885.¹⁵⁹

On December 18, 1877 Professor Pearson presented a fascinating lecture at Kew Town Hall (Melbourne) on the Russo-Turkish war. Pearson claimed that he visited the Balkans, northern Turkey and Russia sometime during the late 1850's.¹⁶⁰

158 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 131-7; After the signing of the Treaty of Berlin 1878 Sultan Abdul Hamid II became very suspicious of British intentions in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. For a discussion of this issue see Gokham Cetinsaya, The Ottoman View of British presence in Iraq and Gulf: The era of Abdulhamid II, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 39, no. 2, April 2003, pp. 194-203. After the Berlin Congress of 1878, Bismarck was interested in establishing German diplomatic relations with the Porte. A German military mission was dispatched to Constantinople in 1880. In economic matters Bismarck kept a low profile and did not approve German economic investments in the Ottoman Empire. As the 1880's progressed German financial and business groups clamored for an expansion of German trade and investments opportunities abroad. The Deutsche Bank was granted in 1888 "the concession to expand the Anatolian railroad system." Moreover Abdul Hamid awarded more railway concessions during the period 1893-1900 to German interests. Wrigley argues that the Kaisers visits to Constantinople in 1889 and 1898 "were designed to assure a successful future for these investments which would, by 1911, amount to T£30 million." See W.David Wrigley, Germany and Turco-Italian war, 1911-12, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 3, (May 1980) pp. 314-6.

159 Lawrence James, *The rise and fall of the British Empire*, Abacus, London, pp. 313-4; 1870-1890, GL Buxton in Frank Crowley [ed] *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 199-200.

160 Charles Henry Pearson (1830-1894) was born on September 7, 1830 in Islington, London. During his life, he worked as a historian, educator, politician and journalist. He was appointed Professor of modern history at Kings College, London 1855-64 and travelled widely in Europe. Arriving in Melbourne in the early 1870's, he taught at the University of Melbourne 1873-4 and was allied with *the Age* newspaper. Pearson was a great believer in promoting secondary and tertiary education. See Bede Nairn, Geoffrey Serle, Russel Ward, *Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol. 5 1851-90 K-Q*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 420-6.

He outlined the history of the Ottoman Empire from the time of the Crimean war till the present conflict. Turkey's access to the European money market was a retrograde step resulting in a national debt of £200 million from 1854-1874. Moreover the Sultan's profligacy on new palaces and purchasing an ironclad naval fleet contributed to Turkey defaulting on its loan obligations.

During the summer of 1875, Turkish authorities in Bosnia used force to collect taxes from the peasants. They resisted and commenced a war.¹⁶¹

Pearson believed that "Russia's statemen liked to see Turkey bankrupt and misgoverned ... [and] they would liked to postpone the collapse for 10 years." On the other hand, a victorious Turkey would become emboldened to demand peace terms that would place the Christian populations of the Balkans in an awkward position. He mentions that the Indian Moslems might be pleased to see the Sultan defeating the Russian Czar.

Even if Russia achieved a decisive victory over Turkey, Pearson did not believe that Russia would annex Constantinople. Russia might gain in Europe with Bulgaria being freed from Ottoman rule and demand compensation in Asia. Britain was the only power standing in the way of a Russian occupation of Constantinople. No one really wanted another European war.

Pearson concluded that "one result of the war would be the amelioration of the condition of the Christian subjects of the Porte and that the martyred thousands of Bulgarians would prove not to have died in vain."¹⁶²

Another interesting Australian colonial perspective is the involvement and participation of Melbourne-born surgeon Dr Charles Ryan who served as a medical officer in Osman Pasha's army during the Russian siege of Plevna in 1877. Dr Ryan accounts of the Plevna siege appeared in the columns of the *Argus* newspaper in January 1878. He studied medicine in England, Germany and Vienna before going to practice medicine in Servia.¹⁶³

According to Dr Ryan, the battle at Plevna was fierce and bloody with both Russian and Turkish sides sustaining huge troop losses. He recounts the mounting wounded, the insufficient food and medical supplies to assist

161 Some of the issues raised by Professor Pearson in his lecture have been covered earlier in the introduction.

162 'The war in Europe', *Argus*, December 18, 1877, p. 6.

the wounded soldiers. Ryan mentions that he was involved in firing at the Russians and in one combat situation fatally wounded one of them.

In one battle where Russian forces approached a Turkish fortification Bashi-Bazouks (Turkish irregulars), Circassians and Arabs deserted in great numbers. Ryan got really angry with them and summoned them to return to battle. He stated:-

“I was on horseback, with my whip in my hands, sending all the soldiers who had run away back into action. Later, I got so enraged that I drew my sword and threatened to kill them did they disobey me, I slapped in the face a Turkish officer of the same rank as myself. Never in all my life was I in such a rage, for I have thrown so much enthusiasm into all my action since I joined the Turkish service...”

His action worked wonders for the troops under his command who ended up fighting with great skill and determination against the Russians.

Before departing Plevna for Erzeroum, Ryan offered some kind words for the Turks. He described Osman Pasha, the Turkish Commander, as a popular figure among the soldiers, who was an independent minded and capable leader who lived a simple life. Osman Pasha did not like Europeans but Ryan stated that he got on very well with him. He praised the Turkish soldier as a very brave and excellent fighter who “is half-fed, half-clothed,

163 Charles Snodgrass Ryan (1853-1926) was born at Killeen Station, Longwood, Victoria on September 20, 1853 and was educated at Melbourne Church of England Grammar School. He commended his medical course at the University of Melbourne 1870-72 and completed his studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1875. He furthered his medical studies in Bonn and Vienna. Whilst in Rome, he saw an advertisement in the *Times* where the Ottoman Government required 20 military surgeons. He saw this as an opportunity to have some adventure and gain medical experience as a surgeon. Returning to London, he was interviewed by the Ottoman Embassy and two days later departed for Constantinople. Ryan served in the last stages of the Turco-Serbian war in the middle of 1876 and spent 4 months at the siege of Plevna in 1877-78. In early 1878, he became a Russian prisoner of war after of the fall of Erzeroum and was decorated by the Sultan for his services as a soldier and surgeon. Ryan returned to Melbourne in June 1878 and was a practising surgeon at the Royal Melbourne Hospital till 1913. He maintained close relations with Turkey and served some years as its Consul in Melbourne. As fate would have it, he served in Gallipoli in 1915. see Geoffrey Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 11 1891-1939 Nes-Smi*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 491.

knocked about, and yet he says nothing, except that he does all and risks all for his “Padishah” (Sultan).”¹⁶⁴

Dr Ryan arrived in Erzeroum sometime in January 1878 taking charge of a hospital for wounded Turkish soldiers. On February 28, *the Argus* described the siege in Erzeroum without mentioning Dr Ryan’s name. It was the *The Times* article of January 23 that revealed Ryan’s name running an English hospital in Erzeroum. On August 15 *the Argus* reported that Dr Ryan was decorated by the Turkish government for his services as a surgeon and combat during the siege in Plevna. He received three decorations the Fourth Orders of Osmanlie and Medjidie and an ordinary war medal. The Osmanlie decoration was rarely given and awarded only to those of high rank in the Ottoman army. A Turkish document which appears to bear the signature of Sultan Abdul Hamid gave permission for Ryan to wear these orders.¹⁶⁵

Once the Treaty of Berlin was signed, Australians sent resolutions and congratulatory telegrams to the British Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli), complimenting him on the success of British diplomacy in Berlin. A meeting convened by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne at the Town Hall on July 29, 1878, with the attendees lavishing praise on the achievements of Lord Beaconsfield.

JG Francis, Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Victorian Colonial Parliament, moved a motion which read “that this meeting hereby expresses its profound appreciation of the ability and patriotism of the Earl of Beaconsfield and his colleagues in the settlement of the Eastern Question.”

This resolution had overwhelming support from the attendees but there was one dissenting voice. Mr. Service believed that British diplomacy had spared the Australian colonies from a war. He stated that:

164 January 9, 1878, p. 5; ‘The wounded in Plevna’, January 4, 1878, p. 7; ‘With the Turks at Plevna’, January 12, 1878, p. 4 & ‘From Plevna to Stamboul’, January 19, 1878, *Argus*. For a discussion of the battle of Plevna in 1877. see Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770-1923*, St Martin’s Press, New York, 1972, pp. 128-30; MS Anderson, *op.cit.*, pp. 195, 197-98.

165 ‘The siege of Erzeroum’, *Argus*, February 28, 1878, p. 9; ‘Erzeroum’, *The Times*, January 23, 1878, p. 4; *Argus*, August 15, 1878, p. 5; For an account of Ryan’s experiences at Plevna and Erzeroum see Charles S. Ryan, *Adventures of an English Surgeon with the Turkish army at Plevna and Erzeroum 1877-78*, John Murray, 1897.

“...Perhaps these colonies were more interested than any other portion of her Majesty’s dominions in the maintenance of peace...if there was any part of her Majesty’s dominions likely to be pounced upon by the Russians in case of an outbreak of hostilities, we knew that our shores were the first that would be visited; therefore these colonies should be very grateful indeed that they had escaped the danger and humiliation to which they have [might] have been subjected.”

There maybe some truth in the assertion above that the Russians directly threatened the security of the Australian colonies. The Australian colonies felt isolated and vulnerable as a white British outpost located in the South West Pacific.¹⁶⁶

During the meeting Rev. Potter dissented and proposed his own amendment to Francis’s resolution. He was jeered by the audience. Potter thought that an objective opinion could not be expressed so long as the Eastern question remained unresolved over Constantinople. He believed that Turkey was incapable of holding onto Constantinople, so therefore, it was imperative that some power should control this city with its military forces “or else [be] able to secure a European alliance that would enable it to maintain possession of the place.”

Potter’s remark over Cyprus wasn’t appreciated by the audience. Before England could be congratulated upon any settlement including the possession of Cyprus, the people of the island hadn’t been consulted in this matter. Nevertheless he was grateful that Britain had prevented a war. His amendment lapsed and the original resolution was unanimously adopted. The Governor of Victoria was requested to forward the motion to Lord Beaconsfield in London.¹⁶⁷

166 ‘Congratulatory Address to Earl Beaconsfield’, *Argus*, July 30, 1878, p. 6.

167 ‘Congratulatory Address to Earl Beaconsfield’, *Argus*, July 30, 1878, p. 6. It should be noted that similar resolutions and congratulatory telegrams were passed in Sydney (New South Wales) and Ballarat, Stawell and Geelong in Victoria. See following articles ‘Sydney and the policy of Lord Beaconsfield’, July 30, 1878, p. 5; ‘Victorian Telegrams’, July 30, 1878; August 7, 1878, p. 7; ‘Geelong’, August 12, 1878 ‘Congratulatory Address to Earl Beaconsfield’, *Argus*, July 30, 1878, p. 6 published in *Argus*.

10. Armenian Nationalism: A Revival

Armenian nationalism was assuming a political character which aimed at a program of action against the Ottoman State. In 1887 and 1890 two expatriate Armenian political organizations were established in Geneva, Switzerland and Tiflis in Russia Armenia. The former group the Hunchaks was imbued with Marxist ideology which did not receive a lot of support from Armenians. They wanted “total emancipation and separation from Ottoman dominion.” The second entity was the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks) also known as the Dashnaks who “advocated more or less a system of administrative autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty.” Both parties could not agree on a common program of action and had different views of achieving their political objectives.¹⁶⁸

The Hunchaks started to create trouble in the Ottoman Empire in 1889 by encouraging the Armenians to revolt against the Sultan during the time of the Moussa Bey trial, the infamous Kurdish chieftain, held in Constantinople. They infiltrated Armenian schools and church which gave them an opportunity to spread their message to their Armenian brethren and their children. Furthermore illegal weapons were procured, subservice literature was disseminated and stories of Armenian atrocities were circulated to win the sympathy of the European powers, especially Great Britain.

When Moussa Bey was acquitted in June 1890, Armenian activists confronted the Patriarch demanding that he immediately proceed to the palace to present their grievances to the Sultan. He tried reasoning with the activists to no avail who viciously attacked him. The Ottoman police intervened and arrested those responsible for attacking the Patriarch and causing trouble in Constantinople.

Speedy trials were held with many of the defendants found guilty being pardoned and released by the Ottoman Government.

168 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 291; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (USA) & London (UK), 1995, pp. 69 & 136; Walker *op cit.*, pp. 129-31.

For a detailed account of the Armenian revolutionary organisations-Hunchaks and Dashnaks see Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967 chs. 5 & 7; For a brief review of the activities of the Hunchaks in Turkey in 1889-1890 see Robert F. Zeidner, “Britain and the Launching of the Armenian Question,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 7, 1976, pp. 481-3.

Sir W.White, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, stated that “the remarkable thing about it is, that this appears to be the first occasion since the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks on which Christians dared to resist soldiers in Stamboul.” Such action on the part of the Armenians would have created a sense of disloyalty in Abdul Hamid’s mind.¹⁶⁹

11. The Sassun Massacre 1894

In 1891 Sultan Abdul Hamid 11 created the Hamidiyeh regiments largely composed of Kurds who as irregular troops were to be unleashed on the discontented Armenians.

In August 1894, Armenians in Sassun refused to pay an additional tax levied on them by the Kurds. They were simply sick and tired of Kurdish attacks on their villages. The Ottoman Government took a rather dim view of the Armenian action and dispatched Turkish regular troops and Kurdish irregulars under the command of Tahsin Pasha, the Governor of Bitlis, to the beleaguered Sassun. The Turks were repulsed by the Armenian peasants. The Sultan became enraged at this Armenian uprising and “ordered the brutal suppression of the Armenians.”¹⁷⁰

Abdul Hamid tried very hard to prevent the news of the Sassun massacre reaching the outside world as foreign travelers and Consuls were prevented from entering the region to investigate as to what actually took place.¹⁷¹

The British Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Philip Currie informed the Ottoman authorities on November 2, 1894 that he received credible reports from British consuls of the Sassun massacre. Obviously the Turks did not like hearing such information.

Abdul Hamid dismissed the British consular report out of hand. It is interesting that Abdul Hamid informed Currie that he was going to hold an inquiry into the massacres and should the British reports prove correct, then he promised to hold the Governor of Bitlis accountable.¹⁷²

The former British Prime Minister William E.Gladstone criticised the Ottoman Empire in very savage terms and calling for its expulsion from Europe. Abdul Hamid was absolutely annoyed with such comments and “demanding an official explanation from the British Government.”

169 *Turkey No. 1 (1890) Correspondence Respecting the Condition of the Populations of Asiatic Turkey and the Trial of Moussa Bey*, pp. 1 & 20; *Turkey No. 1 (1890-1) Correspondence Respecting the Condition of the Populations of Asiatic Turkey and the Trial of Moussa Bey*, pp. 62-4; Zeidner, *op cit.*, pp. 482-3.

Lord Kimberely, the British Foreign Secretary, instructed Currie on January 8, 1895 to tell the Sultan that Gladstone was a private citizen and no longer held government office. He was free to make comments and could not be censured by the British Government.¹⁷³

As public opinion in Britain became alarmed at the terrible treatment meted out to the Armenians, the British Government thought that it would be wise to act in concert with the other European powers notably France and

170 Kirakossian *op cit.*, p. 191. For a scholarly treatment of the Sassun massacres, see *Armenian Review*, Vol. 47, no. 1-2, Spring-Winter, 2001, 170ff.

There is a report prepared by William Everett, CMG, Assistant Adjutant-General, Intelligence Division, War Office, formerly Her Majesty's Consul for Kurdistan on May 11, 1895 outlining the population of Asia Minor. Everett's report is divided into three sections with the first part showing the division of the country, government administration and Moslem and Christian races who live in the Ottoman Empire. The Moslems are represented by Turks, Circassians, Kurds, Arabs whereas the Christians include the Armenians, Greeks, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Jacobites and Catholic Syrians, Jews and Gypsies. The second part of the report contains population statistics of the different provinces in Biga, Smyrna, Ismid, Kastamuni, Angora, Konia, Adana, Sivas, Aleppo, Erzeroum, Kharpout (Mamouret-ul-Aziz), Diarbekir, Bitlis and Van, general remarks and also lists the natural resources found in each province. Part three outlines the areas which would make it easy to undertake reforms. The report also includes a map of Asia Minor showing the boundaries of each province with its various population breakdown and a general population table showing the breakdown of the Christian and Moslem populations. The total Armenian population is shown at 1,167,734 for all religious sects and composed 9.35% of the total population in the Ottoman Empire. See Doc. 28 in David Gillard (ed), *British documents on Foreign Affairs: Series B The Near and Middle East 1856-1914, Vol. 19*, University Publications of America, 1985, pp. 80-116; Roy Douglas, Britain and Armenian question, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (March 1976), pp. 113-5.

There are two contemporary accounts written by a Chaldean Christian named Hormuzd Rassam after the Sassun massacres who tried to present both sides to the Armenian issue. He sympathised with the plight of the Armenians and also mentioned that the Moslems suffered too. Rassam mentions that he was sent on official political missions in 1877 and 1880 to investigate the conditions of the Armenians, Assyrians, (also known as Jacobites, Chaldeans and Nestorians) and Kurds in the Eastern Provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The author appears rather sympathetic to the position of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. See Hormuzd Rassam, The Armenian difficulty: results of a local inquiry, *Imperial & Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9 (1895), pp. 42-7 & The Armenian question, *Imperial & Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Vol. 10 (1895) 49-57.

171 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 192.

172 *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

Russia. Finally the Sultan consented to a special commission of inquiry proceeding to investigate the Sassun massacres.¹⁷⁴

Currie was instructed to seek the cooperation of his Russian and French colleagues. What emerged was that Currie suggested that the British, Russian and French Consuls in Erzeroum should conduct the inquiry into the Sassun massacres. After some discussion between the parties, it was agreed between the Sultan and British, Russian and French representatives to conduct the inquiry by obtaining documents, interview witnesses, and report regularly to Erzeroum and finally “present a joint report on the activities and findings of the commission.”¹⁷⁵

In the meantime the Sultan tried to stall the Sassun commission by inviting the US Minister in Constantinople to become involved in the inquiry. On December 3, 1894 the US Senate’s resolution authorized an American participation in the Sassun investigation along with the European powers. US President Grover Cleveland declined the Senate’s request for US involvement in the proposed Sassun inquiry and instructed Mr. Jewett, the US Consul in Sivas, not to accompany the Turkish and European Commissioners. However Jewett would send his own individual reports on the facts to his government.¹⁷⁶

12. Press Reactions to the Sassun Massacre

There was strong anti-Turkish reaction in the British, American and Australian Colonial press over the Armenian massacres.

The main Australian newspaper on the news articles for this book will be the *Argus* of Melbourne. There reports carried some of the following headlines “Fearful massacres in Armenia. Atrocities by Turkish irregular

173 Kirakossian., p. 199; The reported news of the Sassun massacre divided Liberal Cabinet. It was Harcourt, Bryce and Foreign Secretary Lord Kimberley who wanted action to be taken against Turkey. However Prime Minister Lord Rosebery cooled things down. See Peter Marsh, Lord Salisbury and Ottoman massacres, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 2 May 1972, p. 74; “The Armenian Atrocities. Mr. Gladstone’s Denunciation. The Sultan Infuriated...” and “Mr Gladstone’s Speech. The Turkish Demand,” *Argus*, January 10 & 11, 1895, p. 5.

174 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 196-97.

175 *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

176 Kirakossian p. 198; Maurizio Russo (ed), *Italian Diplomatic Documents on Armenia, second series, Vol. 1 (January 1 1891- December 31 1894)*, Committee for the Publication of Armenian Documents, Firenze, 1999, pp. 194-6.

troops. Twenty Five villages pillaged....” November 13, 1894; “The Fearful massacres in Armenia. Appalling details. Thousands of Christians slaughtered...”, November 19, 1894; “The Armenian massacres...”, November 20, 1894; and “The Armenian Atrocities. Turkish Commission of Enquiry. England to be represented...’, December 7, 1894.¹⁷⁷

The British press through the columns of *the Times* (London) carried some of the following headlines “ Reported Atrocities in Armenia”, November 17, 1894; “The reported atrocities in Armenia”, November 19, 1894; and “ Mr. Gladstone. The Armenian question”, December 31, 1894. The American press through the columns of the *New York Times* published some of the following headlines;” Massacre of Armenians....” November 17, 1894; “The Armenian massacres. Compared with shocking Bulgarian atrocities in 1876...”, December 16, 1894; “ Armenia and the Sultan. Rewards to the leaders in the terrible massacre. Turkey will never punish them.... “, December 17, 1894.¹⁷⁸

According to Somakian the Ottoman Government tried to conceal the massacres by either censoring telegrams or preventing individuals from observing from what had happened in the Sassun region.¹⁷⁹ Two journalists Dr E J Dillon, the *Daily Telegraph*, arriving from the Caucasus and F I Scudamore from Constantinople via Trebizond for the *Daily News* evaded the Turkish blockade. They were under secret police surveillance and wrote long and graphic reports. They had to use ingenious methods of collecting the information and then sending it to London in order to avoid Turkish censorship. They provided their readers in England with what was happening in the Asiatic Turkey.¹⁸⁰

Ozcan mentions that Abdul Hamid was referred too as the “Red Sultan” in Europe. He mentions that on February 24, 1895, Indian Moslems in India had passed a resolution in reaction to the intervention by the European powers on behalf of the Armenians. They:- “ protest against the false and groundless allegations of the Armenian agitators and their supporters...They give expression to their sense of detestation of those

177 I would like to thank my co-author Vahe Kateb who prepared a detailed list of all the news reports and editorials published in the *Argus* and other Australian Colonial newspapers that greatly assisted our research.

178 *The Argus* (Melbourne) *The Times* of London *New York Times* articles quoted in the text are held on microfilm at the University of Melbourne Baillieu Library, newspaper microform collection.

179 Somakian, *op cit.*, p. 18.

Christian busy bodies who are prejudiced against Turkey and who try to alienate the Christians from Mussulman.”¹⁸¹

On the other hand Kirakossian states that in January 1895, the London based National Islamic Society appealed to Lord Kimberely for the anti-Ottoman agitation taking place in England.

They were offended in the way Islam was being characterised “causing the indignation of the Muslim population.” It was wrong to blame the Armenian massacres on the Sultan. They highlighted that Great Britain as a Moslem power had the responsibility to ensure the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims.¹⁸²

Gulham-us-Saqlain, an Indian Moslem, remarked that Britain as the world’s leading Muslim power had the responsibility of displaying fairness and impartiality in its dealings with both Christians and Muslims. He mentions that Indian Moslems were loyal subjects of Queen Victoria but could not ignore the fact that Sultan Abdul Hamid was their Caliph and protector of the holy shrines of Islam. According to the author, the Turks were viewed by Europeans as a corrupt, degenerate and depraved people who lacked any sense of morality.

He thought that such a depiction of the Turks was unfair and prejudicial and argued that the Europeans could not claim any moral superiority either. The Europeans suffered from the same human vices as the Turks and were also ruled by despotic regimes. Saqlain downplays the Armenians issue throughout his article.¹⁸³

M.E Yapp states that “One well-known incident in 1894, which led to Muslim retaliation on the local Armenian population, was found to be the

180 Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East : Personal memories 1879-1929*, Hutchinson & co (Publishers) Ltd, London, pp. 145-6; Dr Dillon was also a regular contributor to the *Contemporary Review* writing about international affairs see Keith Neilson, *Britain and the last Tsar: British policy and Russia 1894-1917*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 45; For a discussion on the press affecting Anglo-Turkish relations in the late 19th century. See Azmi Ozcan, The press and Anglo-Ottoman relations, 1876-1909, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 29, no. 1, January 1993 accessed through o-infotrac.galegroup.com.alpha2.latrobe.edu.au ; “The Armenian atrocities. Full confirmation. A special correspondents report. Hideous Revelations,” *Argus*, February 28, 1895, p. 5.

181 Azmi Ozan, *op cit.*, pp. 99-100.

182 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 200.

183 Gulham-us-Saqlain, “The Mussulmans of India and the Armenian Question,” *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 37, June 1895, pp. 926-39.

work of an Armenian returned from Italy who appears to have adopted the Bulgarian technique of attempting to provoke reprisals which lead to European intervention.”¹⁸⁴ In the cases cited by Ozcan and Yapp above, Armenian agent provocateurs incited the Turks to attack the Armenians at Sassun.

13. The Sassun Report and Reaction of the European Powers

Dadrian mentions that the British, French and Russian Consular officials of the Sassun Commission of Inquiry issued a 60 page report rejecting Ottoman claims of an open revolt by the Armenians.¹⁸⁵

In a separate report attached to the combined British, French and Russian Consular findings, the British delegate Mr. Shipley concluded that “...it is not too much to say that the Armenians were absolutely hunted like wild beasts, being killed wherever they were met.” Once the findings of this report became known, European diplomats reacted with horror as to how the Armenians had been brutalised by the Turks. Obviously the Europeans would formulate their own judgments regarding the Sassun findings.¹⁸⁶

The French Ambassador Cambon in Constantinople reported on November 22, 1895 that the Armenian massacres had been “organized.” The Sultan’s palace was mentioned as the likely place of the issue of these “terrible orders.”¹⁸⁷

The British Vice Consuls Hampton in Mush, Fontana in Harput, and Bulman in Sivas make it abundantly clear in their reports that the massacres were ordered by central authorities at the palace.

In November 1895 on his return to Constantinople, Currie informed Lord Salisbury singling out the Minister for Interior Memduh as an “unscrupulous man” and “the obedient instrument of the Sultan’s ill-will against his Armenian subjects.”¹⁸⁸

The German Ambassador Von Saurma in Constantinople believed that the massacres had been instigated by low-level officials. He told the German Foreign Office that “the most diverse sources assure us that the Armenian massacres were enacted mostly as a result of secret orders (*geheime Befehle*)

184 Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2003, pp. 8, 10-ME Yapp, *op cit.*, p. 197.

185 Dadrian, *op cit.*, p. 86; Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 216.

186 Dadrian, *op cit.*, p. 86.

187 *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

188 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.

“coming from the Palace. Saurma relied on non-German source citing the British ambassador that around 100,000 had been slaughtered. A German source estimated 80,000 had been killed until the December 31, 1895. A source close to the Kaiser and General Von Goltz who was stationed in Turkey 1893-95 described the situation as “frightful.” The French Ambassador Loze at Vienna estimated a combined figure of 200,000 Armenians had been massacred.¹⁸⁹

14. The promise of Reform and Possible Collapse of the Ottoman Empire: the Balkans and Armenians

While the European powers tried to devise a scheme of administrative reforms to present to the Porte, there also loomed the serious prospect of a collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This raised the question of partitioning the Ottoman Empire among the European powers. They all had different interests and motives in maintaining the Ottoman Empire from collapsing. At the same time, keeping the peace and avoiding war over the Armenian question was the dominant foreign policy objective of the foreign chancelleries of the major European powers.

By early May 1895, after long negotiations France, Britain and Russia presented the Porte with a scheme of administrative reform in the Eastern Vilayets to protect the Armenians. Some of the reform measures included:

“(1) the number of provinces was to be reduced; (2) the Governors had to be selected and appointed with official approval of the Powers; (3) a general amnesty had to be proclaimed releasing Armenian prisoners from custody and allowing exiled and displaced Armenians to return; (4) the judicial and penal systems had to be reformed; (5) a High Commissioner had to be appointed to oversee the reforms process with the approval of the Powers; (6) a permanent commission of control to be established comprised of three Christian and three Muslim government officials; (7) the Armenian victims in Sassun, Talvorik, and other regions where massacres had been carried out had to be compensated;....”¹⁹⁰

189 Dadrian pp. 89-90 and pp. 91-2 fns. 19-24 quoting German Foreign Ministry Archives Vol. 10 *Das Türkische Problem 1895* : report nos 162/2444 October 26, 1895; 165/2448 November 1, 1895; 165/2456,2463; 233/2463 November 21, 1895; 233/2479 December 16, 1895; 233/2572.

This, however, did not really assist the Armenians because of a disagreement between Britain and Russia. The Russians had its own Armenian population on its territory and did not contemplate creating an autonomous Armenian region. Russia viewed Armenian nationalism with its political and social radicalism as a source of danger. Austria-Hungary had left the Armenian question alone.¹⁹¹ Vienna's foreign policy interests lay in the Balkans.¹⁹²

During 1894 Austria tried to establish better relations with Russia. In May there were problems in Serbia and the Russian Foreign Minister Giers had asked his Austrian counterpart Kalnoky that both powers agree to a policy of non-intervention. The Russians thought Vienna might intervene in Serbia and Vienna assured the Russians that they would not interfere in Bulgaria.

Aehrenthal commented in 1895 that Austria and Russia had "found their way back to an agreement in principle to treat the maintenance of peace, a vital interest, as more important than the rivalries or the teething troubles [kinderkrankheiten] of the Balkan peoples."¹⁹³

Austria tried to maintain good relations with all the powers but there were other problems that needed attention. Italy was seeking to get the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austro-Hungary including Italy) to commit themselves in supporting Italian designs in Tunis. Austria refrained from such a commitment as this might drag it into a war with France. Germany too expressed the same concerns.¹⁹⁴

In July 1895 Hatzfeldt, the German Ambassador in London, suggested a partition of Turkey along the following lines where Italy would possibly receive Tripoli and Albania. Obviously Austria would strongly oppose an Italian foray into the Balkans. Hatzfeld also favored an Anglo-German

190 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 209; 'The Armenian Atrocities. Joint Note by the Powers. Important Proposals. Evidence of the Massacres', & 'The Armenia atrocities. Reforms Proposed by the Powers. Expected Acceptance by the Sultan.', *Argus*, May 16 and May 17, 1895., pp. 5&7

191 Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 254-55; FR Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Boston, 1972, p. 205.

192 This will be further elaborated below.

193 FR Bridge, *The Habsburg Monarchy Among the Great Powers 1815-1918*, Berg Publishers Ltd, New York, Oxford, Munich, 1990, p. 200 Hereafter cited as *The Habsburg*.

194 *The Habsburg*., p. 203.

understanding be considered on the Near East and believing that if Britain reached an understanding with Russia, then Germany would become politically and diplomatically isolated.

Baron Von Holstein, a German Foreign Office official, rejected this idea and believed that Britain would collide with France and Russia in Africa and the Far East. Holstein thought that British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury was trying to create a diversion in the Near East by involving Germany and her allies Austria-Hungary and Italy to fight Britain's battles in the Near East. Germany was interested in keeping Russia pre-occupied in the Far East and being on bad terms with both Britain and Japan. She wanted Russia away from Europe in partitioning the Ottoman Empire.

Hatzfeldt had earlier stated in August that Lord Salisbury would allow Russia to take Constantinople and the Straits in any future partition of the Ottoman Empire. Kaiser William 11, the German Emperor, visiting England met with Salisbury and discussed the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹⁵

In their ensuing conversation, the Kaiser was bullish on the improvement in Turkey's internal affairs and urged Salisbury to advocate to Abdul Hamid that he dismiss corrupt officials in his administration. Salisbury wasn't interested in recommending such a course of action.

On his return to Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm told the new British military attaché, Swaine of his plan to partition the Ottoman Empire, provided the Triple Alliance was compensated. The Kaiser believed that the political situation in Turkey was becoming worse by the day and that position of the Sultan was so tenuous that he might be overthrown by a palace coup. He proposed that Britain should cede Syria to Russia so as to cause friction in Russo-French relations. Furthermore Britain should acquire Egypt, Constantinople, Asia Minor and Eastern Balkans going to Russia, Salonica coming under Austrian control and the Mediterranean islands and Sudan being ceded to Italy. When Salisbury was informed of the Kaiser's proposed territorial arrangements, he rejected it out of hand.¹⁹⁶

Salisbury met De Coursel, the French Ambassador in London, on August 13, 1895 stating that the 3 powers had to take an aggressive stance

195 JAS Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy the close of the Nineteenth Century*, University of London, The Athlone Press, 1964, pp. 33, 39-40; MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 255-56.

196 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 225-26.

on Armenian reforms and had the right of supervision under Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin.

It was difficult to implement reforms from Constantinople but a Commission composed of 4 Turks and 3 Europeans would be based in the Armenian provinces to conduct investigations and present its conclusions to the embassies in Constantinople. The French were prepared to support any proposal put forward by Britain and Russia. Kroupensky, the Russian Chargé in London met Salisbury telling him that the Russian Government favored a supervising mechanism but never endorsed the May memorandum as an ultimatum and “therefore [did not] consent to forcing the Sultan to [implement the reforms].” Lobanov had no objections to the creation of joint commission. In the meantime, Abdul Hamid reacted with disapproval of the application of any further reform measures and considered it an affront to Islam.¹⁹⁷

On September 11 Salisbury met the Turkish Ambassador in London, Rustem Pasha pointing out that Britain wanted a speedy settlement of the Armenian question and provided that the Sultan gave guarantees to protect the lives and property of his Armenian subjects.

It was important to involve the Christians proportionally in the administration of the Eastern Vilayets and that European commissioners would be granted powers “to report possible abuses to the European Ambassadors in Constantinople.”

The Porte rejected these as interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and pointed out that Christians had already been appointed on a proportional basis in the local administration. However the British Foreign Office was dissatisfied with the response of the Porte.¹⁹⁸

Kalnoky resigned and was replaced by Goluchowski as Austrian Foreign Minister. Goluchowski was opposed to close friendship with Russia, if Russia was at Constantinople, this would give the Russians the irresistible urge over the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans.¹⁹⁹ In his first two years as foreign Minister Goluchowski clung to the policy of deterrence “based on the Mediterranean Entente.” Lord Salisbury’s remarks in partitioning the Ottoman Empire caused “consternation in Austrian circles in Vienna.”²⁰⁰

197 *Ibid.*, pp. 218-9; ‘The Armenian atrocities. Lord Salisbury warns the Sultan. France and Russia support England.’, *Argus*, August 17, 1895, p. 7.

198 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 222-23.

199 *The Habsburg.*, p. 208.

Calice, the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople “questioned the value of a simple renewal of the Mediterranean Agreements now that Russian pressure had shifted from Bulgaria to Constantinople and the Straits, areas of greater importance to Great Britain than to Austria-Hungary. All this made no impression in the Ballhausplatz.”²⁰¹ With a Russia established at Constantinople, Austria favored a binding agreement with Britain. Barring this, the 1887 Agreements were still fine at any rate. Salisbury assured Goluchowski in November 1895 that London still regarded the 1887 agreements as still in force.²⁰²

15. Armenian Massacres, Turkish Straits and the European Powers.

From July-November 1895 the Armenian massacres caused serious problems for the European powers. The Hunchak Armenian political party notified the Ambassadors of Britain, France and Russia in Constantinople and the Turkish Government of their intention to stage a peaceful demonstration in the Ottoman capital to demand reforms in the Armenian areas. The organisers were hoping that the Porte would not utilise police and troops to stop the peaceful demonstration.²⁰³

In their letter dated September 16, 1895 it stated:

“The Armenians of Constantinople have decided to make shortly a demonstration, of a strictly peaceful character, in order to give expression of their wishes with regards to the reforms to be introduced in the Armenian provinces. As it is not intended that this demonstration shall be in any way aggressive the intervention of the police and military for the purpose of preventing it may have regrettable consequences, for which we disclaim beforehand all responsibility. Organising Committee (Seal of the Hintchak Society).”²⁰⁴

200 *The Habsburg*, p. 209; ‘Turkey and the Powers. A Grave situation. Determined attitude of Lord Salisbury. Dismemberment of Turkey contemplated.’, *Argus*, September 6, 1895, p. 5.

201 *The Habsburg*., p. 209.

202 *The Habsburg*., pp. 209-10; A documentary discussion on the negotiation of the first Mediterranean Agreement and Salisbury’s rejection of Russian overtures and reluctance to extend the Mediterranean Agreements. See CJ Lowe, *op cit.*, pp. 54-62

203 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 227.

204 Nalbandian, *op cit.*, pp. 123-24.

Two days later, some 2000 Armenians proceeded to the Sultan's place demanding immediate execution of reform measures and also prepared a petition on administrative, economic and judicial reforms.²⁰⁵ Their demands included :- “ (1) equality before the law; freedom of the press; freedom of speech; and freedom of assembly ;(2) that all persons under arrest be given the right of habeas corpus, and that the Armenians be granted permission to bear arms if the Kurds could not be disarmed; (3) a new political delineation of the six Armenian provinces; (4) a European governor for the six Armenian provinces; and (5) financial and land reforms.”²⁰⁶

The Ottoman police ordered the crowd to disperse but the Armenians defied the ban which resulted in the deaths of both Armenians and Turks. In the final analysis the Turkish police arrested many Armenians who were thrown into prison.²⁰⁷

On October 2 the Ambassadors of the 6 European powers met in the Austrian chancery to prepare a joint statement on the events that occurred in Constantinople. They demanded that regular Turkish troops be employed to restore law and order in the city. The Turkish Foreign Minister told Currie and the other European ambassadors that claims of massacre are merely hearsay and the Armenian patriarch was accused of fomenting an anti-government demonstration.²⁰⁸

The insistence of the European powers had compelled Sultan Abdul Hamid to sign the Armenian reform program on October 17, 1895. It is interesting that *Hunchak*, the mouthpiece of the Hunchakian revolutionary party, saw this as a triumph over its action in staging the September demonstration. The article stated:

“A telegram received today, the 18th communicates the news that at last the Sultan by signing an official *irade*, has accepted the recently revised Armenian Reform Program presented to him by the three Great Powers in May.

205 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 227-28.

206 Nalbandian, *op cit.*, p. 124.

207 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 228; Nalbandian, *op cit.*, 125; Joan George, *Merchants in Exile*, Gomidas Institute Books, Princeton and London, 2002, pp. 103-4; ‘Serious riot at Constantinople. Great Armenian demonstration 20,000 march through city...’, & ‘The Armenian outbreak. Believed to have been planned...’, *Argus*, October 4&5, 1895, pp. 5 &7.

208 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, pp. 228-9; ‘The Armenian riot. Perilous situation of the Patriarch...’, *Argus*, October 7, 1895, p. 5.

Thus, at last, we have forced our ferocious executioner to recognize the rights of the Armenian people, to listen to their voice, and to bow before their aspirations and moral strength.

Thus, at last, today all the Armenians and the whole world are witnesses to the Party's great victory, which we won by the expenditure of so much blood and zeal.

Thus, this work of ours has been great and triumphant."²⁰⁹

Though the Hunchak party felt vindicated by the receipt of such good news but this did not stop the massacres continuing on.

Austrian diplomacy sought a united European front to the Armenian crisis, as Vienna did not wish the Mediterranean bloc embroiled in a conflict with the Franco-Russian bloc. It was important to avoid a European war over the Armenians. Austria believed that fighting a European war over the Armenians was not worth it.²¹⁰

As the Armenian massacres continued from late 1895 into early 1896, the Austrians, British and Russians offered their own solutions to pressure Sultan Abdul Hamid. Salisbury considered occupying Jeddah, the Turkish Red Sea port, as a way of pressuring the Sultan to stop the atrocities. Austria and Italy were supportive of the British initiative.

On November 12 1895, Count Goluchowski, the Austrian Foreign Minister, proposed the dispatch of an international naval force through the Dardanelles as a naval demonstration by the European powers to force the Sultan to halt the massacres. Russia was opposed to such a course of action.

The Russian Ambassador Nelidov at Constantinople proposed the seizure of the Bosphorus in 1882, 1892 and 1895. In the autumn of 1895, the Russian naval fleet was not in a strong position to bring this about. France backed Russia's position in not putting pressure on the Sultan.

On December 20, 1895 France changed its position of supporting the forcible seizure of Constantinople by the Russians. Salisbury wanted to authorize the British Ambassador Sir Phillip Currie at Constantinople to use the British fleet to attack the Russians if they would have entered the Straits. Salisbury's proposition met with strong opposition from his cabinet colleagues.

209 Nalbandian, *op cit.*, p. 126.

210 *The Habsburg*, p. 210.

The Cabinet and Admiralty believed that if a British fleet entered the Straits to stop the Russians, then there was the fear of being cut off by the French fleet from Toulon. There is no doubt that the occupation of Egypt was an important factor in British imperial communications and strategic thinking. The Franco-Russian alliance was a powerful factor in British thinking at this time.²¹¹

However Salisbury told his cabinet colleagues in February 1896 that Britain might assist Turkey if attacked by Russia. Salisbury told the Austrian Ambassador in London that Britain would only consider renewing the 1887 agreements. Obviously Goluchowski was still not prepared to abandon Britain and seek an agreement with Russia. He knew from a political standpoint that Britain would shrink into her island and leave Austria to face the consequences on her own.²¹²

Goluchowski had doubts of Britain's devotion to the status quo; considered British proposals on the Armenian reforms as too cavalier. In January 1896 Goluchowski approached London seeking assurances from Britain that the 1887 agreements were not sufficient for Vienna, she desired a new binding treaty with the definite commitment to fight. His doubts evaporated, after Salisbury had no idea of 'abandoning Turkey, let alone making a deal with Russia.'²¹³

On October 10, 1895 the British, French and Russians were preparing a programme of reform that was designed to protect the lives and property of the Armenians and to present it to the Porte for approval. The programme envisaged some of the following provisions. "1. a Christian assistant to Shakir Pasha, whose name should be unofficially submitted to the Powers for their approval; 2. the participation of Christians in the administration, and posts of Governors and Deputy Governors to be open to Christians; 3 the Dragomans having the right of addressing to the Commission of Control any complaint, communication or information; 6 the Ambassadors reserving the right to remonstrate against the appointment of incapable, dishonest or fanatical governors; and 9 a stipulation that the principles of the reform scheme would be applied to all sanjaks and cazas of Asia Minor where the Christians form a palpable part of the population."²¹⁴

211 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, pp. 256-57; MM Jefferson, Lord Salisbury and the Eastern Question, *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 39, 1960-1961, p. 5; Peter Marsh, *op cit.*, pp. 78-9.

212 *The Habsburg.*, p. 213.

213 *The Habsburg.*, p. 212.

Obviously the Sultan was not enthusiastic over this reform program, as he considered this as an external interference in his imperial domain but nevertheless promised to introduce these changes. It is interesting that Goluchowski supported the British initiative. Salisbury asked the British Ambassador in Vienna, Edmund Monson to request that Goluchowski instruct Baron Calice in Constantinople to join in with the British, French and Russian reform program. Goluchowski's hands were tied as Germany decided to remain neutral. However Goluchowski did instruct Baron Calice to urge the Porte to accept the three Ambassadors plan.²¹⁵

There were disturbances in Zeitoun and other parts of the Ottoman Empire where the Turks and Armenians accused each other of having committed massacres. Such disturbances were reported in official British Consular reports sent by Herbert and Hampson. Massacres had taken place in Mush, Erzeroum, Trebizond, Urfa, Erzinjan, Diyarbekir, Bitlis in October-November where Armenians were killed, businesses had been looted. Herbert reported to Salisbury that some 8000 Armenian paramilitary units had repulsed the Turkish military at Zeitoun and Marash against an Army corps of 25,000 men. Further Turkish forces were dispatched to Zeitoun making the total force number to 60,000 troops.²¹⁶

On October 23, 1895 Salisbury instructed the British Ambassadors' in Paris, St Petersburg, Vienna and Rome to consult with the host governments to prepare the ground for pressing the Porte and local Turkish officials in Zeitoun to stop further massacres from taking place.²¹⁷ Finally the European powers accepted Salisbury's proposal and informed their Ambassadors in Constantinople to work in a united fashion to prevent further Armenian massacres.²¹⁸

214 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 232.

215 *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

216 Kirakossian, p. 241; The crisis in the Ottoman Empire, *Cyclopedic Review of Current History*, Vol. 5 no. 4, October-December 1895, pp. 810-24; *Argus*, 'The Crisis in Turkey. Severe fighting at Zeitun, Flight of the Armenians', December 27, 1895, p. 5; 'Capture of Zeitun confirmed.', December 28, 1895, p. 5; 'The Turkish crisis. Capture of Zeitun. Great slaughter of Armenians.', December 30, 1895, p. 4; 'The Turkish crisis...', January 1, 1896, p. 5; 'Affairs in Turkey. The capture of Zeitun.', January 3, 1896, p. 5 & 'Affairs in Turkey. Fighting in Zeitun suspended.', January 6, 1896, p. 5; ETS Dugdale (ed), *German diplomatic documents 1871-1914: Vol. 2 From Bismarck's fall to 1898*, Barnes & Noble, New York & Methuen, London, 1969, pp. 350-1& 357-60.

217 Kirakossian, *op cit.*, p. 235.

While the British-French and Russian governments could not agree on a common program to present to the Porte, consular reports continued to be received into the British Embassy in Constantinople detailing of massacres in the Eastern Vilayets. The Sultan continued his customary promises to introduce the necessary reforms and to punish the culprits responsible for these outrages. Nothing ever came of this. There was even talk of removing the Sultan but the Russians in particular objected to such action. Even the German Ambassador warned Abdul Hamid of the consequences that might follow, if he did not immediately introduce reforms.

Salisbury hoped that the 6 powers would cooperate to force the Porte to stop the violence in the provinces and implement the reforms. For eg Goluchowski intimated to Monson that it was better if the powers gave the Sultan some breathing space so that he could re-establish law and order in his empire. Whenever the European powers intervened on behalf of the Armenians, this did not really assist them, as the Anglo-French-Russian attempts did not change the position of Abdul Hamid.²¹⁹

In the light of the recent events at Marash and Zeitoun, British Consular official Eliot was asked to persuade the Armenian patriarch to have him stop the Armenian revolutionary organisations from creating further troubles. The Patriarch responded that he lacked any control over these Armenian revolutionary organisations which were being financed and organised by Russian agents in Tiflis. Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were not interested in raising arms or attacking their Turkish neighbors. Patriarch was critical of Russia who actually encouraged the massacres so that it could occupy Armenia.²²⁰

The Patriarch thought that the Russians were tyrannical and had stamped out the Armenian language and religion. As the massacres continued, "he [the Patriarch] would implore the Russians to work to save the Armenians from slaughter."²²¹

While Salisbury was advocating for reforms in the Ottoman Empire and that the powers should pressure the Sultan to introduce them. Lobanov urged the powers to give the Sultan more time to restore law and order without damaging his moral authority. Otherwise European intervention

218 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

219 *Kirakossian.*, pp. 237-53; ETS Dugdale, *op cit.*, p. 358.

220 *Kirakossian, op cit.*, 240.

221 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

might result in events spinning out of control and resulting in terrible scenes. Lobanov suspected that Britain might be behind the Armenian revolutionary movement.²²²

The major problem with the recent massacres at Marash and Zeitoun was absence of accurate statistics to quantify the actual loss of life. Therefore any figures would be an estimate at best. In early 1896 the Sultan's Government published inaccurate statistics on the casualties of 1895 in Asia Minor. There were 10,135 people composed of 1828 Muslims, 7863 Apostolic Armenians, 152 Armenian Catholics and 292 Armenian Protestants. Obviously the Turkish Government would want to understate Armenian losses for political reasons.

The Russian Komarovski estimated that 20,000 Armenians were killed in October/November alone and the American press estimated nearly 50,000 deaths.²²³ Kirakossian produced a table showing the number of victims of the massacres based on European and US sources amounting to 41, 930 in October/November period.²²⁴

In April 1896 Goluchowski told a conference of Ministers in Vienna that he had achieved his main aim of keeping the powers together. Russians resented Austrian collaboration with Britain and Goluchowski's actions were not appreciated by St Petersburg or Berlin.²²⁵ Goluchowski and Emperor Franz Joseph believed that war was inevitable with Russia, though Berlin had given assurances of assistance would be forthcoming in the eventuality of a conflict.²²⁶

Tsar Nicholas II had an official state visit to Vienna in August 1896 with Lobanov. Goluchowski was skeptical of Russian comments in preserving the status quo, since Lobanov had rejected Goluchowski's suggestion that an international control of the Ottoman finances might restore Turkey once again. Lobanov was not really interested in any of this, and really wanted to leave Turkey drag along for a few more years until the Trans-Siberian railway had been completed. Austria refrained and wanted to ensure that Russia did not raise a whole series of questions over Constantinople, the Straits and Suez. Goluchowski believed that no accommodation was possible with Russia so long as Lobanov was in charge of Russian foreign

222 *Ibid.*, pp. 242-46.

223 *Ibid.*, p. 260.

224 *Ibid.*, pp. 260-1.

225 *The Habsburg.*, p. 211.

226 *The Habsburg.*, p. 211.

policy. The main emphasis with the Austrians was to keep Russians quiet.²²⁷

16. Contemporary Views of Sultan Abdul Hamid

Overall Abdul Hamid was regarded as an abominable ruler by his contemporaries. He did have some admirers who were small in number. Some examples will be used below to highlight the contemporary differences of opinion regarding Abdul Hamid.

In his memoirs Ismail Kemal Bey, the Governor-General of Tripoli, admired the Armenians as an industrious and clever people who contributed a lot to the economic prosperity of the Ottoman Empire. They also had achieved ministerial positions in the Sultan's government. He acknowledges that the Armenians had always been "persecuted and massacred" by other races. Ismail Kemal Bey was certainly very sympathetic towards the Armenians.²²⁸

He describes Abdul Hamid as a cunning individual who saw "only enemies and conspirators" around him. As a despot Abdul Hamid was prepared to use violence to protect his throne and even dismissed those who helped him get into power. He was a suspicious individual who did not wish his subjects becoming exposed to liberal ideas. Abdul Hamid began to distrust the Armenians who had educational and business contacts outside the Empire. These Armenians might help to spread liberal ideas and considered them dangerous.²²⁹

The author poses the question "how he [Abdul Hamid] obtained the courage necessary to carry out what he did?"

The support of the Russian Tsar and Foreign Minister Lobanov were important to Abdul Hamid, as he felt a sense of reassurance knowing full well that the Russians would not intervene to assist the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Russia had her own Armenian subjects to deal with. After all both the Ottoman and Tsarist empires were absolutist monarchies who would not tolerate dissent.²³⁰ Ismail Kemal stated that "the Sultan's palace,...was justifiably considered to be the heart of the evil genius of the Empire."²³¹

227 *The Habsburg*, p. 217.

228 Ismail Kemal Bey, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, trs by Somerville Story, Constable, London, 1920., pp. 252-71.

229 *Ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

230 *Ibid.*, pp. 256-60.

US Congressman Elijah A. Morse representing Massachusetts made an impassioned speech to the Congress on January 27, 1896 denouncing the Turkish Sultan in the strongest condemnatory terms possible. He stated:-

“The rule of the Turkish Sultans for centuries has been marked by duplicity, treachery, lying, murder, lust and every known crime. These crimes have well earned for the present ruler the appellation of “The Unspeakable Truth”, for the reason that the present language is inadequate to record these awful butcheries and crimes.

The refusal of the Sultan of Turkey to allow the Red Cross Society to enter his dominions and feed the starving and succor the dead and wounded and dying victims of the atrocities if persisted in all earn for him the execration of the civilized world.

It ought to ring the death knell of his Empire. There is abundant evidence that these massacres are not only condoned by him but are openly encouraged. Certain it is that they are the most mournful event in the nineteenth century.”

Morse characterised Abdul Hamid as “a bloodthirsty prince so unworthy to be a ruler.”²³²

A sympathetic view of Abdul Hamid is an interview conducted by former US Minister in Constantinople A.W Terrell that was published in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* in 1897. The Sultan is described as a fine host towards his guests invited to dine at the palace. Abdul Hamid mentioned that the Armenians held very important positions in his Empire. For e.g. the Dadians controlled the Imperial powder factory, Agop Effendi was in charge of the Imperial Mint; and Michael Protocal Effendi was responsible for all public lands and the Sultan’s real estate. Many Armenians had become very wealthy in the employ of the Ottoman Empire.

Abdul Hamid stated that the Armenians had shown ingratitude and “ [were] plotting and organizing to destroy the Ottoman Empire. The revolutionary movement has been sustained by wealthy Armenians.” He declared “that no Christians had ever been persecuted by his government or people for their religious faith.”

231 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

232 The text of the speech of Hon. Elijah A Morse before US House of Representative on January 27, 1896 is in *Armenian Review* Vol. 30, no. 4 Winter, 1977-78, p. 417.

Terrell remarked that the US believed that both Christians and Muslims had committed atrocities in Asia Minor and that the US had never involved itself in the Eastern Question. In fact Terrell never raised the issue of the Armenian massacres with Abdul Hamid “but I feel sure that their repetition would prove most unfortunate for the Ottoman Empire.”²³³

Rafiuddin Ahmad, an Indian Moslem, defended Abdul Hamid from his critics. He recognised that there was mis-government in Turkey that was “injurious alike to the Christians and to the Turks, and all reforms must benefit the two races equally.” Abdul Hamid is described as “extremely kind-hearted man, when an appeal is made to his friendship or to his generosity...”²³⁴

The author communicated the grievances of Indian Moslem pilgrims in Mecca to Turkish authorities who failed to take any action. Rafiuddin Ahmad decided to take matter directly up with the Sultan in Constantinople. He was warmly received by Abdul Hamid who assured him “that he [the Sultan] would do everything in his power to get all the reasonable grievances of the pilgrims removed; that he thought it his duty to listen to complaints from all persons, irrespectively of their nationality and religion.” Furthermore the Sultan sent doctors and financial assistance “to Arabia to carry out the necessary reforms.”²³⁵

There is official correspondence in the Holstein papers showing the differences of opinion over Abdul Hamid by German diplomats. The German Ambassador Anton Von Saurma in Constantinople wrote a private letter to Holstein on November 10, 1895 expressing his personal view regarding Abdul Hamid. He described Abdul Hamid as “half insane at the moment” and considered “him to be thoroughly evil and dangerous person.” Furthermore the Sultan surrounded himself with “a low riff-raff of advisers who are also up to no good.” Von Saurma believed that the Sultan was responsible for the Armenian massacres.²³⁶

233 An interview with Sultan Abdul Hamid by Honorable A.W. Terrell, Ex-US Minister at Constantinople, *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, vol. 55, 1897 pp. 133-38.

234 Rafiuddin Ahmad, A Moslem view of Abdul Hamid and the powers, *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 38, July 1895, pp. 162 & 163.

235 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

236 Norman Rich & MH Fisher (ed), *The Holstein Papers: Vol. 3 Correspondence 1861-1896*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961, p. 558.

Hugo Von Radolin, the German Ambassador in St Petersburg, dismissed Von Saurma's letter as "irresponsible nonsense" and was very empathetic towards Abdul Hamid. He stated that Abdul Hamid "is neither an evil or a dangerous person." Von Radolin remarked that even if the Sultan introduced the necessary reforms, the Armenians would still demand their independence. Consequently Abdul Hamid was entitled to apply force against the rebels.

Disclosing his antipathy for the Armenians, Von Radolin remarks that "here [i.e. in St Petersburg] everyone is agreed that the Armenians are to blame for everything and that for two years they have put the patience of the Turks to the most severest test. I cannot blame the Moslems for having at least hurled themselves on these horrible Armenians and committed a few excesses."²³⁷

17. Constantinople massacre August 26-27, 1896

On August 26, 1896 Armenian Dashnaks seized the Imperial Ottoman Bank (a Franco-British establishment) in Constantinople threatening to blow it up, if reforms were not implemented.

The Dashnaks were unhappy with the resignation of Patriarch Matteos Ismirlian claiming that he was forced to resign and the Sultan appointed locum tenens Bartolomeos whom the revolutionaries considered a stooge of the Court. In fact the selection of a Patriarch was based on a mixed Council composed of lay and clerical members who belonged to the Armenian National Assembly. This election process was recognised by the Porte. It appears that Sultan Abdul Hamid bypassed this Armenian political institution.²³⁸

The Dashnaks accused the Turkish Government of having committed a series of unpunished crimes and equally the inaction of the European powers made them accomplices of the Porte. They cited that "In Crete, as in Armenia, they receive the demands of the Christians with the same disdain of our executioners. But the patience of down-trodden nations has its limits."²³⁹

237 *Ibid.*, pp. 562-5.

238 *Turkey No. 1 Correspondence respecting the disturbance in Constantinople in August 1896 [C 8303]*, HMSO, London, p. 13.

239 *Turkey No. 1 Correspondence respecting the disturbance in Constantinople in August 1896 [C 8303]*, HMSO, London, p. 13.

Their aim was to draw the attention of the European powers to take action on behalf of the suffering Armenian people. Some of their demands included:-

- “1. The nomination for Armenia of a High Commissioner, of European origin and nationality, elected by the six Great Powers.
2. The Valis, Mutessarits, and the Kaimakans shall be appointed by the High Commissioner, and sanctioned by the Sultan.
4. Judicial reforms according to the European system.
5. Absolute freedom of worship, education and the press.
9. The immediate restoration of usurped real property.
10. The free return of Armenian emigrants.

Signed by Central Committee of Society of Armenian Revolutionists called Dashnaks.”²⁴⁰

The European powers entrusted the first dragoman of the Russian Embassy, Maximov to bargain with the Dashnaks. They left Constantinople by French steamer for Marseilles. After their departure from Constantinople, a horrible massacre was carried out on the Armenian population in that city by mobs of ruffians, police and soldiers with the connivance of the Ottoman Government.

Baron Calice, the Austro Hungarian Ambassador in Constantinople, was appalled by the bloodshed and “even warned the Sultan the he would be deposed by the Powers, if he failed to provide Good Government.” Even Sir Henry Bulwer, the British Vice Consul, Colonel A Peshkov, the Russian military agent in Constantinople, and German General von der Goltz who had served as an honorary aide-de-camp to Sultan Abdul Hamid II stated that there was “no doubt” that the Constantinople massacre had been “pre-arranged” and “had taken place with the Sultan’s knowledge.”²⁴¹ Herbert believed that “the intention of the Turkish authorities [was] to exterminate the Armenians wherever found.”²⁴²

240 *Turkey No. 1 Correspondence respecting the disturbance in Constantinople in August 1896 [C 8303]*, HMSO, London, p. 15.

241 M S Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 257; Somakian, *op cit.*, p. 20-1; FR Bridge, *op cit.*, p. 225; Grenville, *op cit.*, pp. 74-6; Yvan Troshine, A bystanders notes of massacre: the slaughter of Armenians in Constantinople, *Scibners Magazine*, Vol. 21, no. 2, January 1897, p. 57.

Somakian states that the Turkish Liberal Party (Sabah-el-Din) maintained that “it is notoriously evident at Constantinople that Abdul Hamid was the main organizer of these crimes.” They also blamed the Russians for “secretly” and “energetically” encouraging the Sultan to take repressive measures against the Armenians.²⁴³

18. The Churches and Politicians in Colonial Victoria : the Ottoman Bank Issue

The Churches in Victoria reacted with horror to the slaughter of Armenians in Constantinople in the aftermath of the Ottoman Bank crisis. On September 15, 1896 the Presbyterian Church at its Federal Assembly held in Melbourne sent a memorial to Queen Victoria expressing its indignation over the recent massacre that occurred in Constantinople. The Rev. P.J Murdoch (Victoria) told the assembly that he was horrified at the persecution and massacre of Armenians in Constantinople and understood the difficulty of the British government in seeking a diplomatic solution to the Armenian issue. He described Abdul Hamid as an “assassin” who permitted such slaughter of Christians to take place in his empire.

It was important for the Presbyterian churches in the Australian colonies to unite and speak with one voice on this very important matter.

Murdoch advocated that a memorial be forwarded to Queen Victoria through the office of the Governor of Victoria. The memorial is reproduced below in full. It stated:-

“To Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen- May it please Your Majesty, -The Federal Assembly, whose members represent the Presbyterian Churches of all Australia and Tasmania, desire most respectfully to acquaint your Majesty with the profound horror and indignation they feel in connection with the massacres and unspeakable enormities to which the Christian Armenian people within the Ottoman Empire have been repeatedly subject by their Turkish masters; and to assure your Majesty that the Christian people of this continent have observed with great satisfaction the strong protests made by your Majesty’s Government.

242 *Turkey No. 1 Correspondence respecting the disturbance in Constantinople in August 1896 [C 8303]*, HMSO, London, p. 5; Roy Douglas, *op cit.*, p. 127.

243 Somakian, *op cit.*, pp. 22-3.

In view of the fresh outburst of murder and oppression in Constantinople, the Federal Assembly beg very urgently to represent to your Majesty that your Majesty's Government standing, as they do, for a great, free and Christian people should not be content without absolutely securing such changes in the Ottoman Empire as will be a guarantee for the freedom and safety of the subject peoples.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

The motion was approved by the Federal Council and great care had been exercised with the choice of words sent to Queen Victoria.²⁴⁴

On a Vice Regal visit to Wimmera, a country town in Victoria, Governor Lord Brassey mentioned that on the previous day the Federal Presbyterian Church had presented him with a resolution "demanding that the Imperial Government should do all in its power, and exercise all authority at its command, for the protection of the unfortunate Christians of the Turkish empire."

He sympathised with the position of the Presbyterian Church and believed that the Ottoman Empire was on verge of dissolution. However the "unfortunate jealousies of the European Powers" had saved it from crumbling.

Brassey pointed out the importance of Great Britain and the other European powers to find a solution regarding the Near East issue and that the Australian Colonies supported the actions of the Imperial Government in its diplomatic endeavors.²⁴⁵

19. Exit the Armenian Issue: Austria, Britain and Russia

On August 26, 1896 Goluchowski told the Council of Ministers that the demise of the Ottoman Empire was gathering momentum and could no longer save herself. Vienna had to be ready for its disintegration in Europe. It would incorporate Bosnia and Herzegovina and had vital interests in Albania. It was important that Italy did not gain a foothold in Albania as it would give her control of the Adriatic coastline and narrow straits of Otranto. In December 1896 at a conference of experts held at the

²⁴⁴'Action by the Presbyterian Federal Assembly. Memorial to the Queen', *Argus*, September 15, 1896, p. 5.

²⁴⁵'Vice Regal visit to Wimmera. Speeches at Horsham. British Naval Supremacy', *Argus*, September 17, 1896, p. 6.

Ballhausplatz it decided that neither Serbia nor Bulgaria should be permitted to get a foothold on the Adriatic. Austrian foreign policy aim was to avoid being encircled by Russia in the Balkans.²⁴⁶

Meanwhile Salisbury and Kaiser Wilhelm II thought that the Sultan should be deposed and the former tried to elicit the support of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II who was visiting Balmoral in September 1896. The Tsar disagreed with such a policy measure. It was important to maintain a compliant Sultan who would be dependent on Russian goodwill.

Salisbury's policy in 1896 was to maintain good relations with the Austrian Empire. He abandoned his earlier policy of opposition to a Russian occupation of Constantinople which is something that displeased the Austrians. Vienna felt it would be encircled by a Russian occupation of Constantinople in the Balkans.²⁴⁷

Russia was worried that Britain might take action against the Sultan. On September 18, 1896 Elide informed Shishkin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in St Petersburg, demanding a forcible intervention by Russia. Arriving in St Petersburg on November 30, 1896 Elide proposed the seizure of the Bosphorus. Salisbury's proposals were tantamount to an international control of Turkey something Russia considered inimical to her interests.

The replacement of Abdul Hamid by another administration was opposed by Russia. On December 5, the Russian Crown Council accepted the essential features of Elide's scheme. Russian Finance Minister Count Witte opposed it and considered dangerous that it could lead to a general war.²⁴⁸

The Elide scheme was dependent on French support for its success. French money was important for the development of the Russian army who had their sights on the Far East. France had huge investments in the Ottoman Empire and could not afford to jeopardize them. Elide's plan came to nothing in the end. However Russia accepted 3 points by French Foreign Minister Hanotaux. These involved in preserving the Ottoman Empire, opposition to any international condominium and the renunciation of the idea of separate action by any power against it.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ *The Habsburgs*, pp. 218-9.

²⁴⁷ Anderson, p. 257; G. Papadopoulos, *England and the Near East 1896-1898*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki, 1969 pp. 91-2; Margaret M. Jefferson, Lord Salisbury and the Eastern Question 1890-1898, *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 39, 1960-61, pp. 53-4.

²⁴⁸ MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 258; Papadopoulos, *op cit.*, pp. 93-5.

On January 20, 1897 Salisbury declined to renew the Mediterranean Pact of 1887 with Italy and Austria. Salisbury was hoping for some accommodation with Russia in January 1898 by offering her North China, the Straits and Euphrates Valley north of Baghdad with Britain having Yangtze Valley, Arabia, Egypt and lower Euphrates area. Britain's abandoned its interest of Constantinople and concentrated its defence in Egypt. Therefore Egypt became the lynchpin in British Imperial defence and communication policy linking the Suez Canal and Red Sea with its Indian Empire.²⁵⁰

20. Austro-Russian Rapprochement 1897

Throughout 1895-96 Emperor Francis Joseph and Goluchowski were worried about clashing with Russia. Faced with mounting internal problems, it was important to stabilize the political situation in the Balkans. In April 1897 Austrian and Russian Empires reached an agreement in preserving the status quo in the Near East. Constantinople and Straits was considered 'a European question' and "could not be the subject of a separate agreement between them."

In the meantime the Armenian issue receded into the background due to the Greco-Turkish war in March/April 1897.²⁵¹ Turkey's military success over Greece revealed that the Ottoman Empire was far from dead. It showed that the sick man of Europe still had some life left in him.²⁵²

In early 1897 Russo-Austrian relations were not on cordial terms. The breakthrough happened in April 1897 after Franz Joseph's visit to St Petersburg with Goluchowski. Salisbury had excluded the central powers in the trying to solve the Greco-Turkish war which shattered Austria's belief in a Mediterranean agreement. Turkey's victory over Greece paved the way for a rapprochement with Russia. A broad agreement was reached between Austrian and Russian Empires resting on four principles. These involved :- (1) to preserve the status quo in the Ottoman Empire as long as possible; (2) "the strict observance of the principle of non-interference with the independent development of the Balkan States"; (3) cooperation between the two powers in the Balkans "to show that Balkan states that they

249 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 259; Papadopoulos, *op cit.*, p. 97.

250 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 259; C J Lowe, *op cit.*, pp. 120-1; Temperley & Penson, *op cit.*, pp. 499-501.

251 MS Anderson, *op cit.*, p. 261; Jefferson, *op cit.*, pp. 56-9

252 *The Habsburg*, pp. 221-23.

had nothing to gain by playing off the two Great Powers off against each other” ; and finally if the status could not be maintained “ the two Powers while renouncing all designs of conquest for themselves, would come to a direct agreement as to future territorial configuration of the Balkans and would, moreover, impose this agreement on the other powers.”²⁵³

On May 4, 1897 Goluchowski summarized these four principles of the Balkans. The Straits was excluded as this was ‘a European concern.’ Russia accepted the status quo for the time being, and if the situation in the Balkans could not be sustained, Austria would insist in possessing Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novibazar, thus keeping Serbia and Montenegro apart at all costs.

The creation of large Albania would be insisted. At a later stage Austria and Russia would arrive at an understanding to ensure that no Balkan state became too big. This Austro-Russian understanding helped to clear the air between these two great powers and also helped to remove some of the suspicions between them.²⁵⁴

253 *The Habsburg*, p. 225.

254 *The Habsburg.*, pp. 227-8