5 Ottoman Reform and Decline (c. 1800–1908)

This chapter charts Ottoman reform and catastrophic decline in the nineteenth century, improvements in Macedonians' lives up to mid-century and troubles thereafter, and Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia's fierce competition for their loyalty in the Balkan vacuum that began to emerge following the Congress and Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

In 1800, all of geographic Macedonia formed an integral part of the large Ottoman eyalet of Rumelia, with its administrative center in Sofia. For political and strategic reasons, Istanbul later in the century moved its capital to Bitola (Monastir), and this former seat of a kaza began to emerge as a major Ottoman administrative and military center.

Until the 1830s, individual Turkish *pashas* (governors) usurped power and transformed their *pashaliks* virtually into semi-independent private possessions. Such was the case with the pashas of Salonika, Bitola, Skopje, Seres, and Tetovo. The best known, the most powerful and wealthy, in the European part of the empire was Ismail Bey of Seres. His authority extended all the way to Sofia in the north, Štip in the west, and the Salonika area in the south. He maintained a regular force of two thousand armed men and, if necessary, could raise the number to fifteen thousand or twenty thousand.

By the early 1840s, the sultan was able to destroy the pashas' power and bring the pashaliks back under central officials. From then on, Macedonia consisted of six legal-administrative units, the sanjaks of Salonika, Bitola, Skopje, Seres, Ohrid, and Kiustendil. The Ohrid sanjak embraced some Albanian lands, and the Kiustendil, some Bulgarian.

There are no reliable statistics on Macedonia's ethnic composition between 1800 and 1850. According to one French source of 1807, all of Macedonia but the most northerly districts had 968,500 inhabitants. Three-quarters, or 724,000, of them were Orthodox Christians, and one-quarter, or 204,000, Muslims.[1]

Serbian revolts in 1804 and 1815 and creation of the autonomous principality of Serbia in 1815, and particularly the inability of the Ottoman military to crush the rebellious Greeks and the establishment of the small independent kingdom of Greece in 1830, forced the Ottoman empire on the path of reform. The first Western-influenced, reforming sultan, Selim III (1789–1808), lost his throne in May 1808, and he died three months later at the hands of traditionalist opponents of reform, the janissaries and their patrons and allies. Mahmud II (1808–39), his nephew and a pupil, who soon took the throne with help from Selim's friends, became the first successful Ottoman reformer. "He stands out as one of the great reforming sultans of his dynasty. Mahmud was convinced that his empire must reform or perish, and he was aware that the Janissaries were the principal obstacle to reform."[2]

Mahmud turned his attention to imperial disintegration and used all means at his disposal. Before any meaningful reform could occur, he had to deal with the janissaries, by then a useless fighting force but an adamantine defender of the untenable status quo. Mahmud carefully prepared for the decisive confrontation. He surrounded himself with trusted and dependable ministers, advisers, and officials; won the support of the ulema with promotions, bribes, and favors; and when the time came acted with great dispatch and determination.

After Mahmud presented his plan for western European–style military modernization, on the night of 14 June 1826 the janissaries in Istanbul were ready to revolt. However, Mahmud was ready. Reliable troops and artillerymen crossed the Bosphorus to Istanbul, and within a matter of hours, after an intense bombardment of their barracks, the once-feared janissaries were no more. Those who survived went into exile in outlying provinces in Asia.

Mahmud could now focus on reform. He introduced western European dress and styles at court and appeared in public frequently; sent young men to study abroad, in western Europe and North America; and saw increasing political and economic contacts steadily increase the numbers of Europeans in the Ottoman capital. He built roads and bridges, opened the Danube to steamer navigation, and introduced a new tariff system in order to stimulate trade and commerce. He sought to recruit more capable officials, emphasized merit, raised salaries, and so forth.

However, as Stavrianos writes: "So far as the Balkan people were concerned, Mahmud's reforms were less significant than might be expected. His great success was in asserting imperial authority by destroying the Janissaries and such semi-independent local potentates as Ali Pasha of Albania. But this did not appreciably alter everyday life in the Balkans. The Ottoman officials remained, and they were inefficient and corrupt as before. Appointments to prominent posts still were dependent on favoritism and bribery, and salaries still were discouragingly low. Nevertheless, Mahmud's assertion of central authority made possible further reforms in the following decades."[3]

During the 1830s, Mahmud's attention turned to the Near Eastern crisis, which the expansionist ambitions of his vassal Pasha Mehmet Ali of Egypt provoked. After Mahmud's death in 1839, further and more far-reaching changes continued under Sultan Abdul Mejid (1839–61). The new ruler was only sixteen but from the outset embraced reform. On 8 November 1839, he issued a decree—the Hatti Sherif of Gulhané. It launched the reform movement Tanzimat,[4] which continued until Sultan Abdul Hamid took power in 1880.

The architect of and driving force behind the Gulhané decree and reform was Reshid Mustafa Pasha, the greatest enlightened Ottoman statesman and bureaucrat. The decree proclaimed certain basic aims: security of life, honor, and material possessions; a modern system of assessing and levying taxes; and up-to-date methods of military recruitment and service. The changes were to institutionalize the rule of law and ensure equal rights to all Ottoman subjects regardless of religious affiliation.

Throughout the 1840s, Reshid Mustafa Pasha formulated and issued complementary edicts that set up fixed salaries for governors of provinces, cities, and towns and merit-based promotions; a new penal code that assumed equality for all citizens; educational reforms, with minimum salaries, better schoolbooks, and European-style colleges to train civil servants and military officers; and a commercial code, which included mixed tribunals of Turkish and European representatives to decide commercial cases involving Ottoman subjects and foreigners.

These measures changed the empire's atmosphere. Most remained on paper only; the rest underwent only partial implementation because of determined opposition from traditionalists. Nonetheless, life and property became more secure, and officials who committed gross criminal offenses faced trial and punishment. Arbitrary confiscation of property was still taking place, but it was no longer the rule or common practice. Equality before the law gained acceptance at least in theory.

Simultaneous steps to improve provincial administration and ease Christians' plight, which attracted Europe's attention, proved even less effectual. Sending commissioners to inspect provinces and calling delegates thence to report to imperial representatives did not produce any useful results. The setting up of subjects' advisory councils, or *mejliss*, for each provincial governor produced little. Most of the Christian representatives were wealthy and defended local vested interests, as did their Muslim counterparts. The councils tended to be more conservative than the governors.[5]

The intensive reform halted with the Crimean War of 1854–56, which pitted Russia against the Ottoman empire, Britain, France, Sardinia, and Russia's traditional ally Austria. Russia's defeat at Sebastopol and Austria's threat to intervene convinced Russia to accept a ceasefire and eventually the humiliating Treaty of Paris of 30 March 1856. Reforming activities resumed, along with efforts to improve the conditions of Balkan Christians.

In order to satisfy his partners, especially Britain, the sultan on 18 February 1856, before conclusion of the Treaty of Paris, issued the Hatti-Humayun, the second Tanzimat, or reform decree. It made far-reaching promises to non-Muslims: equality in taxation, justice, military service, education, and the public service, as well as social respect and freedom of thought and religion. It seemed to anticipate reorganization of the administration, the judiciary, and the tax system.

However, very little happened. Failure resulted from inefficiency and corruption, but also from flaws in the millet system, with its virtually autonomous, largely self-governing religious communities under their respective ecclesiastical leaders. Most Balkan Christians belonged to the Orthodox millet, and, according to most accounts, their own corrupt leaders misruled and exploited them as much as the Ottoman ruling elite did. Consequently, even imperial reform would not have aided them, except with overhaul of the millet system. In fact, "reform decrees in Constantinople would have meant little for the Christian peoples as long as their relations with their own ruling class remained unchanged."[6] The Hatti-Humayun had anticipated this obstacle and called for reorganization of the millets.

Calls for reform of the millets, and specifically the Orthodox one, came both from the central government and from lay elements in the millet itself. However, reforming or reorganizing the Orthodox millet was not a simple matter. For all practical purposes, five metropolitans, who elected the patriarch of Constantinople, controlled it. Between 1860 and 1862, changes called for lay participation in election of the patriarch and in millet affairs. They did not improve the situation; the lay representatives were influential Greeks who wanted to preserve the status quo, as did the ecclesiastical dignitaries. If anything, relations between the church and millet's Greek ruling elite and the Slavic-speaking majority worsened.

The Hatti-Humayun also proposed reorganization of provincial administration, and the *vilayet* law of 1864 divided the empire into new vilayets, or provinces, and set up six in the empire's European part. The vilayets consisted of *sanjaks* containing smaller administrative units. Parts of geographic Macedonia lay in three vilayets, which also comprised some non-Macedonian areas. Northern Macedonia was part of the Kosovo vilayet and later of the Skopje; the south was in the Salonika vilayet. Further reorganization created the Bitola (Monastir) vilayet for central Macedonia. This administrative division lasted until the Balkan Wars of 1912–13.

The new system was to decentralize the empire and make local self-administration more representative. Provincial governors took on greater powers, as did officials in the lower administrative units. Partly appointed, partly elected councils, or *mejlisses*, were to represent the local population and interests.

Provincial reform proved no more effective than changes to millets. They created the semblance of a European-style administration but failed because the Ottoman empire lacked a modern public service: enlightened, educated, dedicated, patriotic, and honest. And the advisory bodies came under the thumb of wealthy notables who had no interest in or conception of progress or the larger public good.[7]

In any event, by 1871, when instigator Ali Pasha died, reform activities had ended. The unbalanced Sultan Abdul Aziz (1861–76) could finally establish his own personal regime and misrule until he lost the throne in late May 1876, in a coup under Midhat Pasha, another statesman. The mentally unstable Murad V ruled until Midhat Pasha replaced him three months later with a younger brother, Abdul Hamid II (1876–1908). On 23 December, Midhat forced Abdul Hamid to promulgate a rather liberal constitution, which promised a constitutional monarchy. The sultan soon dismissed Midhat Pasha but allowed the elected parliament to meet on 9 March 1877 and to deliberate until the start of war with Russia in late April provided him with a pretext to adjourn that body, which sat next after the revolution of 1908.[8]

Throughout the 1870s, serious problems pushed reform into the background. Devastating drought and famine hit Asia Minor, and financial difficulties and deficits pushed the state to the brink of bankruptcy. Furthermore, the eventful Balkan crisis of 1875–78 shook the empire. It included a revolt by Christian peasants in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1875, a Bulgarian revolt in May 1876, Serbia and then Montenegro's declaration of war and invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina in late June 1876, the great powers' unsuccessful diplomatic intervention and mediation, and war with Russia in 1877–78. The Ottoman empire had to accept the humiliating Treaty of San Stefano of 3 March 1878, but Britain and Austria-Hungary insisted on the document's revision. The more palatable Treaty of Berlin of 13 July 1878 ended this latest Balkan crisis.[9]

The accession of Abdul Hamid II and his indefinite adjournment of the first Ottoman parliament—in effect, the defeat of the constitutional experiment—launched the "Hamidian" reaction and autocracy. Most important, they terminated the era of Tanzimat reform and its failure to improve the circumstances of Balkan Christians and to inspire in them loyalty and allegiance to the empire. As L. S. Stavrianos observes: "The essential failure of Ottoman reform efforts in the Balkans meant that the imperial *status quo* could have no attraction to counteract the centrifugal force of Balkan nationalism. Neither millet reform nor vilayet reorganization had succeeded in inducing among the subject Balkan peoples a sense of loyalty to Constantinople strong enough to neutralize their growing feeling of national consciousness."[10]

Macedonian Growth and Decline (1800–1870)

Imperial weakness and anarchy in the provinces speeded up the transformation prior to 1850 of the timar-ziam into the chiflik system of landholding. Individual spahis and other people in positions of authority turned land from peasants, communes, and the state into privately owned chifliks, which they could expand through additional purchases or put up for sale. The largest owners were the semi-independent potentates, most infamously the ruthless and wealthy Ali Pasha of Yanina. At his death, he owned about thirty-five sizeable properties in Macedonia and about nine hundred throughout the area that he ruled.

By mid-century, the transformation of landholding was complete. After 1834, the Ottoman state was calling for liquidation of the timars. The spahis, long useless militarily, had to turn over their timars to a state land bank. Those who could prove rightful possession obtained financial compensation; those who could not received none. In any case, 30 percent of the spahis escaped the process and changed their timars into chifliks before the reform. The state turned some of the lands that it expropriated over to village tenants and sold the rest at low prices to well-to-do individuals or local notables.

The triumph and legalization of chiflik landholding imposed on peasants higher payments in cash or in kind and in obligatory services and labor, as well as restricting their freedom of movement. It also brought growing insecurity for the now-captive rural population in the form of constant warfare among the semi-independent pashas. The central government and its local representatives lacked means to curb the growing anarchy and insecurity. The situation only worsened with uprisings in Serbia, in 1804 and 1815, and the Greek revolution and war of independence, 1821–30.

As in the past, many peasants fled to more secure regions or into mountainous areas, where they founded new settlements. Many others, however, found greater security in urban centers and, with expanding trade and commerce, better opportunities to make a living. The urban migration, which began before 1800, continued throughout the century and helped expand the Orthodox Macedonian population in towns and cities. According to a French source from 1807, Salonika had 60,000 inhabitants, one-third of them Muslim and two-thirds Christian and Jewish; Seres, 25,000, one-third Muslim and two-thirds Orthodox;

Kastoria (Kostur), 6,000, 500 Muslim, 500 Jewish, and the rest Orthodox; Melnik, 6,000 Orthodox and 100 Muslim; Edessa (Voden), 3,000 Orthodox; and Ohrid, 3,000, half of them Muslim.

Three decades later, according to Ami Bue, who traveled in Macedonia three times between 1836 and 1838, the population of Salonika and Seres remained the same. However, that of Bitola (Monastir) and Štip increased more than three times to 40,000 and 15,000–20,000, respectively; that of Ohrid doubled to 6,000, and that of Edessa (Voden) more than doubled to 7,000–8,000. He also noted other towns with 3,000–10,000 inhabitants: Skopje (10,000), Prilep (6,000–7,000), Kratavo (5,000–6,000), Tetovo (4,000–5,000), Debar (4,200), Dzhumaia (3,000–4,000), and Kavardarci (2,000–3,000).[11]

The migration of Macedonians into towns, which had been predominantly Turkish, or rather Muslim, altered their ethnic composition. It also made Macedonians increasingly important in urban economic life. The newcomers worked in the craft industries and in commerce or established their own operations, which expanded throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Some of these industries—fur, leather, textiles—were producing to supply growing demand in the rest of the empire and beyond. According to Ami Bue, in 1827 Bitola had 1,380 shops, the majority of which were handicraft workshops; a decade later, he reported 2,150 shops. In the first half of the century, Skopje was a manufacturing center, with sixty craft industries. Salonika attracted artisans and craftspeople from all over Macedonia, and many other artisans and craftspeople sought employment in Istanbul, Smyrna, Sofia, and the autonomous principality of Serbia.[12]

The handicraft industries grew as trade and commerce expanded in Macedonia, with neighboring lands, and even with central Europe and Russia. The focal points of increasing economic activity were annual fairs *(panagjuri)* throughout Macedonia, especially in Seres, Prilep, Struga, Ohrid, Dojran, Giannitsa (Enidže Vardar), Petrich, and Nevrokop. The number of Macedonian merchants grew as well; some established good contacts with Serbia and Bosnia as well as with Albanian, Bulgarian, and Greek towns and cities. A few carried trading activities to Austria, Germany, France, and Russia. Among the most notable, Giorgi Drandar of Veles in 1836 received a special *berat* from the sultan for unhindered travel abroad. The Robev brothers of Ohrid had business establishments in Bitola, Vienna, and Leipzig and offices in Belgrade and Trieste; merchant families in Bansko exported large quantities of cotton from the Seres region to central and western Europe and brought back luxury goods and industrial products. All in all, however, while Macedonian artisans and craftsmen were gaining urban dominance, Vlach, Jewish, and Greek merchants still controlled trade and commerce.[13]

After the Crimean War (1854–56), the European powers involved themselves more in Ottoman economic life. They financed improvement of the empire's communication and transportation to further their economic domination and their exploitation of its natural resources. In the 1860s, a new road system connected major towns and cities in Macedonia. At the same time, the first telegraph lines connected Skopje with Priština and, through Belgrade, with Europe and, through Bitola, with Elbasan in Albania. In 1869, foreign companies began tracing the first railway lines in Macedonia; the track, from Salonika to Skopje and on to Kosovska Mitrovica, went into operation in 1873. It connected Salonika with its natural Macedonian and Balkan hinterland and with central Europe and helped make it Macedonia's political and economic center.

Modest improvements in Balkan communication and transportation continued until the end of Ottoman rule. However, in the short run, after 1850 European commercial interests benefited from the changes much more than the Ottoman lands themselves did. The empire could not compete economically with the rest of Europe, on which it depended financially, and it became a virtual economic colony, a source of raw materials, and a dumping ground for agricultural surpluses and cheaper manufactured goods. In Macedonia, evidence suggests that economic growth slowed, stagnated, even declined.

Macedonia's agrarian sector was too backward and inefficient to withstand the foreign challenge. After the American Civil War ended in 1865, Macedonia could not compete with cheaper and better U.S. and Indian cotton and grain. The Ottoman state did nothing either to improve crops or to stimulate production. Indeed, burdensome, unfair, and arbitrary taxation and corrupt "farming" of tax collection held the sector back. Peasants had no incentives to produce more: they were turning to subsistence farming and worked only enough land to feed their own families. There was no tax on uncultivated lands, and so only one-fifth of Macedonia's arable land was under cultivation—the rest was pasture.

Small-scale manufacturing, crafts, and trades, which grew rapidly before 1850, suffered even more. After the 1860s, Europe and even the United States sent large quantities of factory-made finished and semi-finished goods, which were cheaper and better than local products.

Small-scale domestic manufacturing, particularly in towns and villages, could not compete, and it stagnated and in some instances declined. [14]

Growing political insecurity and instability hurt the economy too. Organized armed bands continued widespread pillaging, and after 1870 the emergence of the so-called Macedonian question—a struggle by Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia for control and possession of Macedonia—made instability chronic.[15]

Propaganda War for Macedonia (1870–1900)

The history of Macedonia and the Macedonians, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, responded to political and socioeconomic developments in the Ottoman empire and particularly to Balkan nationalism. For various geographical, historical, and contemporary reasons, which we examine in the next chapter, the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian national awakenings developed earlier and more rapidly than the Macedonian.

A small, autonomous Serbian state emerged after the second Serbian uprising in 1815, and by the 1860s it was virtually independent. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 recognized it as an independent kingdom. The Greeks rebelled against their Ottoman rulers in 1821, and, after a nine-year struggle that involved all the great powers, a small kingdom of Greece came into being in 1830. By the 1840s, the Bulgarian national movement could challenge Greek domination of religious and cultural life. With the aid of Russian diplomacy, the Bulgarians triumphed and in 1870 secured their own national church, the exarchate.

The Treaty of San Stefano of 1878 proposed a large, autonomous principality, a Great Bulgaria, with an elected prince. This land was to stretch from the Black Sea almost to the Adriatic and from the Danube to the Aegean and to include virtually all of Macedonia. The treaty, which Russia imposed on the defeated Ottoman empire, met with determined opposition from the great powers, especially Britain and Austria-Hungary, as well as from Serbia and Greece.

The powers met in Berlin in July and revised and replaced the document with the historic Treaty of Berlin. The new agreement divided San Stefano's Bulgaria into three parts: an autonomous Bulgaria, north of the Balkan Mountains, with its own elected prince, but under Ottoman sovereignty; Eastern Rumelia, south of the Balkan Mountains, an Ottoman province, under a Christian governor whom the High Porte appointed and the powers approved; and, Macedonia, under direct Ottoman administration.[16]

In 1885, Bulgaria annexed Eastern Rumelia; in 1908, during the European crisis that followed Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared its complete independence and received recognition as a kingdom.

Already by the 1840s, a struggle for Macedonia between Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia was clearly in the offing, and it divided them through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The main cause "is the strategic and economic value of the area." As we saw at the start of the book, Macedonia "commands the great corridor route that leads from central Europe to the Mediterranean along the Morava and Vardar valleys . . . Macedonia is also desirable because it includes the great port of Salonika as well as the fertile plains much coveted in the mountainous Balkan Peninsula."[17] Indeed, whoever would acquire Macedonia would dominate the Balkans.

Consequently, all three nationalisms and states created complex justifications—historical, ethnic-religious, and ethno-linguistic—for their imperial ambitions toward Macedonia and its people. They claimed both land and people on historic grounds. At one time or another, long before the age of nationalism, and before the Ottoman conquest, in the distant medieval Balkans, Macedonia was part of various dynastic or territorial empires in several centuries: Tsar Simeon's Bulgarian empire in the tenth, Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth, and Stefan Dušan's Serbian empire in the fourteenth. Modern nationalist leaders conveniently overlooked the fact that these were territorial states that at times controlled each other's lands as well.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the three competing states also claimed the Macedonians on ethnic grounds, purposely confusing church affiliation with ethno-linguistic belonging. All three had recognized "national" Orthodox churches and hence millets in the theocratic Ottoman state. These national churches could operate freely in Ottoman Macedonia: establish parishes and schools and, especially after 1870, serve as instruments of their respective nationalist drives and propaganda there. The Macedonians did not and could not set up their own church and therefore could not organize and conduct legally any religious and educational activities under their national name.

The Greeks claimed as "Greek" all Macedonians who attended Patriarchist (Greek) churches and schools; the Bulgarians, as "Bulgarian" all those who belonged to Exarchist (Bulgarian) churches and schools; and Serbians, as "Serbian" all who went to "their" churches and schools. In towns and in larger villages where two or all three churches operated, many families would divide or split in religion. For various reasons—social prestige and particularly economic or financial motives or inducements—three brothers could end up at three churches; each nationalist movement would claim one for its own "nation."

Finally, all three neighboring states claimed Macedonia and Macedonians or justified these assertions on ethnic-linguistic grounds. "The Serbians pointed to certain characteristics of their grammar and to their 'slava' festival as proof of their Serbian origin. The Bulgarians argued that physiologically the Macedonians were closer to them than to the Serbs and that the Macedonian language was in reality a Bulgarian dialect. And the Greeks claimed that many Macedonians considered themselves to be Greeks and therefore they referred to them as Slavophone Greeks."[18]

The Crimean War, which pushed the Eastern Question to the fore, also renewed interest in the future of the "sick man of Europe." The great powers paid close attention, and the Balkan national states and movements began to organize and work more systematically in the empire's Orthodox areas, which centered on Macedonia—the ultimate spoil of unavoidable partition.

The Greek presence and influence in Macedonia had been solid for a long time. Greek or Hellenized clerics occupied the higher ecclesiastical posts. They controlled churches and schools, and the language of both—liturgy and education—was Greek. With the spread of Serbian and Bulgarian influence in Macedonia, especially after the establishment of the Bulgarian exarchate in 1870, Greek propaganda became much better organized and more systematic. And, after the Russo–Ottoman War in 1877–78 and the emergence of the autonomous Bulgarian principality, the Greek state, through its consulates in Macedonia, took over direction of the Greek campaign for Macedonia from the prelates of the Constantinople patriarchate.

With the support of the Greek state and under its direction, Greek propaganda intensified and scored notable success. Greece opened numerous new schools and founded cultural organizations to spread Greek national consciousness among Macedonians and some other ethnic groups. It was very successful among the Vlachs, who tended to educate their children in Greek schools.

From Athens, the Society for the Propagation of Greek Literacy directed the nationalist effort, with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its diplomatic representation and its consulates in Salonika, Bitola (Monastir), Seres, and Skopje. In 1879, the organization was allocating 189,000 drachmas per year for schools and the Hellenization of the Macedonians; by 1885, the sum rose to 536,000 drachmas. Its aim was always the same: propagation of the Greek language, culture, and national consciousness. By 1886, Greek propaganda organs and institutions maintained and controlled 836 schools in Macedonia. The institutions included three teacher-training colleges, two middle schools in the south, a boys and girls gymnasium (high school) in Bitola, and theological seminaries. They enrolled 45,000 students. In addition, the society had organized and was running various cultural, gymnastic, musical, and theatrical societies and a printing press.[19]

Serbian propaganda in Macedonia began later. Its ideological foundations appear in a memorandum of 1844 by the Serbian statesman Ilija Garašanin. In this illuminating document on foreign policy, Garašanin argues that the small principality could not survive within its existing borders and should aim and strive to annex all the surrounding Serbian-inhabited lands, including Macedonia. In 1868, Serbian "outreach" began when Belgrade created the Educational Council (Prosvetni odbor) to set up schools in Old Serbia and Macedonia and to provide them with Serbian teachers and schoolbooks. The Eastern Crisis of the 1870s interrupted the council's work, but it resumed its activities with greater determination after the Congress of Berlin and the secret Serbian-Austro-Hungarian Convention of 1881.

Until Austria's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878, Serbia sought primarily northward expansion. The Dual Monarchy later encouraged the Serbs to look south and promised to help them expand into Old Serbia and Macedonia. However, Bulgaria's military defeat of the Serbs and its annexation of Eastern Rumelia raised the ghost of San Stefano Bulgaria and provoked the Serbians into a more systematic and aggressive campaign for Macedonia. Belgrade set up the Society of Saint Sava (Društvo Sveti Sava), under first the Ministry of Education, and later Foreign Affairs, to set up schools, train teachers, print books, and organize propaganda in Macedonia. A new convention with the High

Porte permitted it to establish consulates in Macedonia, which it did, in Salonika and Skopje in 1887 and in Bitola in 1888.[20]

Because the Serbians lagged behind the Greeks, and fell behind the Bulgarians in propaganda, they devised a novel approach—collaboration with Macedonian patriots. In 1888, Stojan Novaković, the Serbian envoy in Constantinople, went to members of the Secret Macedonian Committee in Sofia with a proposal for cooperation. In Belgrade, the two sides agreed on a four-point program: to seek reestablishment of the Ohrid archbishopric, under the Constantinople patriarchate, and thus win the right to organize Macedonian church-school communities; to strive for publication in Constantinople of a newspaper titled *Makedinski glas* (Macedonian Voice) in Macedonian; to open schools in Macedonia and to appoint teachers who would teach in Macedonian; and to print schoolbooks and other publications in Macedonian.

This strange and short-lived experiment assumed what we call "mutual exploitation." Novaković and the Serbs had three goals: to make the Macedonians dependent on Serbia, to draw them over to its cause, and to use them to further its influence and interests in Macedonia. The plan could not reconcile the two parties' conflicting interests. It benefited Macedonianism more than Serbianism, and the Serbs soon abandoned it in favor of more traditional tactics.[21]

After persistent efforts, in the early 1890s the Serbs won the consent of the patriarch of Constantinople, who feared growing Bulgarian influence in Macedonia, to appoint a bishop in Skopje and to organize church-school communities in Macedonia. The headquarters and leadership of Serbian propaganda in Macedonia moved from Constantinople to Skopje, the supporting budget rose from 200,000 dinars in 1890 to 300,000 in 1891, and Serbian consular officials participated in church-school communities. As a result, Serbian propaganda scored some successes: church-school communities in Bitola, Prilep, and Poreče in 1890, in Kičevo in 1891, and in Galičnik, Debar, and Kruševo in 1892. Between 1890 and 1892, many such communities emerged in the Skopje vilajet in Kumanovo, Kočani, Kratovo, Gostivar, Kriva Palanko, Štip, and so on. By 1900, there were 217 such schools, with 9,179 students.[22]

The Bulgarians, however, raised the first successful challenge to Greek hegemony in Macedonia. Unlike the Serbs, the Macedonians and the Bulgarians shared experiences of foreign domination. Until 1878, both peoples were subjects of the sultan and oppressed Christians in a Muslim empire; until 1870, the Greek-dominated Patriarchist church sought to exploit and Hellenize them. Moreover, as fellow Slavs, going through an initial, very similar Slav phase in their national awakening, they both opposed the empire politically and the Greeks culturally. The Bulgarian national movement was more mature and stronger and led this common struggle. Thus, even before the exarchate became a Bulgarian national church in the empire, Bulgaria's nationalism and its national movement had made inroads in Macedonia.

The exarchate (1870), however, was the most notable Bulgarian national achievement until then. It not only furthered Bulgarian nationalism, but also spread Bulgarian influence and Bulgarianism in Macedonia. Its founding Ottoman *firman* ended the patriarchate of Constantinople's jurisdiction over the eparchies in the Bulgarian lands between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains, as well as those of Niš and Pirot (Serbia) and Veles (Macedonia), and placed religious-educational affairs there under control of the exarchate and a synod.

The firman's article 10 stipulated that other eparchies might join the Exarchist church if two-thirds of the inhabitants voted in favor.[23] The eparchies of Skopje and Ohrid soon did just that. By 1912, seven bishoprics in Macedonia were under the exarchate's control. Macedonians opted for the exarchate not because they felt themselves Bulgarian, but rather because they were Slavs who opposed Greek domination. Nonetheless, "the fact remains that the expanding Exarchate provided an instrument for Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia just as the Patriarchate earlier had served as a means for Greek propaganda."[24]

After creation of the autonomous principality of Bulgaria in 1878, its propaganda became the most powerful and best organized in Macedonia. The new state and the exarchate worked as one in Macedonia. The government determined the aims and strategies of national propaganda and provided the resources, and the exarchate, with headquarters in Constantinople, dutifully carried them out in Macedonia. Financial support increased from 100,000 levas in 1881 to 574,874 in 1885 and, according to one Serbian report, to 5.5 million French francs in 1890.

With such generous backing, the exarchate was able to reopen many church-school communities whose work had ceased during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–78 and to establish more elsewhere in Macedonia. Most notable were the new boys and girls boarding gymnasia in Salonika and teacher-training colleges in Skopje and Seres and attached to the Salonika and Bitola gymnasia. In 1886, the exarchate operated

306 schools in Macedonia; by 1888/89, over 800, with 25,000–30,000 students.[25]

In addition to Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian propaganda, which aimed to proselytize Macedonians, there was other, sectarian propaganda in Macedonia. It operated on a smaller scale and dealt mainly with religious conversion. The Catholic activities were the purview of emissaries of the Vatican. In 1886, 3,950 households, or about 20,000 inhabitants of Macedonia, recognized the pope's authority. British and American Protestant missionaries' activities took hold in eastern Macedonia, in Razlog and Nevrokop districts, and in the Struma valley. Both nationalities established and maintained schools and published mostly Bulgarian-language schoolbooks and religious pamphlets.[26]

Needless to say, the constant interference of outsiders, particularly the institutionalized nationalist interventions by Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, was destabilizing Macedonia and damaging its interests. It divided the small educated elite as well as the population at large into opposing camps. And this more than any other factor weakened the Macedonian movement. That movement rejected foreign propaganda and nationalist ideologies, sought Macedonian national consciousness and national identity, and called for unity behind a domestic national program defending Macedonia and its people.