



GEORGE JOACHIM GOSCHEN AND HIS MISSION TO CONSTANTINOPLE AS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR (1880-1881)

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Abstract

After a Whig victory in the elections of 1880, the political and social juncture reached a certain degree of stability and the Eastern Crisis became a formal question for British society and parliament. Without question, the general expectation as to the tasks of the Liberal Government was to criticise the legacy of Disraeli's foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire and taking new diplomatic steps. As British ambassador at Constantinople Austen Henry Layard, continuing the legacy of Stratford Canning had been the British Ambassador in Constantinople since the Ministry of Lord Palmerston and was considered as pro-Turkish policies. However, as one of the leading Liberal Unionists George Joachim Goschen's special ambassadorship meant a turning point in British policies towards the Ottoman Porte. This study will identify the events of the period that had meaningful effects on Anglo-Ottoman relations.

Key Words: British naval demonstration at Smyrna, George J. Goschen, the Concert of Europe, the Berlin Treaty, British mediation

GEORGE JOACHIM GOSCHEN VE İSTANBUL'DAKİ ÖZEL BÜYÜKELÇİLİĞİ (1880-1881)

Özet

1880 seçimlerindeki Whig zaferinden sonra, siyasi ve sosyal dönüm noktası belirli bir istikrar derecesine ulaşmış ve Doğu Krizi İngiliz toplumu ve parlamentosu için resmi bir sorun haline gelmiştir. Şüphesiz ki Liberal Hükümetin görevlerine ilişkin genel beklenti, Disraeli'nin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na yönelik dış politikasının mirasını eleştirmek ve yeni diplomatik adımlar atmaktır. İngiltere'nin İstanbul Büyükelçisi Austen Henry Layard, Lord Palmerston Bakanlığı'ndan itibaren Stratford Canning'in mirasını sürdürmekte ve Türk yanlısı politikalarıyla bilinmekteydi. Ancak önde gelen Liberal İttihatçılardan biri olan George Joachim Goschen'in İstanbul'daki özel büyükelçilik dönemi, İngilizlerin Babıâli'ye yönelik politikalarında bir dönüm noktası anlamına geliyordu. Bu çalışma, Osmanlı-İngiliz ilişkilerinin geleceği için anlamlı etkiler yaratabilecek bu dönemin olaylarını analiz edecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İzmir'de İngiliz donanma gösterisi, George J. Goschen, Avrupa Uyumu, Berlin Antlaşması, İngiliz arabuluculuğu

Introduction

In 1793, the approval of the first Ottoman ambassador to London, Yusuf Agah Efendi, two centuries after William Harborne's arrival in Constantinople as the first British Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte in 1583, leads us to the conclusion that mutual diplomatic

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Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

relations began in the late eighteenth century. Woodhead argues that the stability of the relationship with England was largely due to the geographical distance from Constantinople, and also ‘there were no common borders or areas of major contention. Most aspects of Anglo-Ottoman relations tended to coincide rather than to conflict.’² Along with the changing circumstances and the declining power of the Ottoman Empire, it was the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 which brought British aid to the Porte which can be seen as the foundation of the friendly but also occasionally preservationist Anglo-Ottoman relationship. Nonetheless, it is fair to state that nineteenth century Anglo-Ottoman relations became thoroughly concentrated on Ottoman domestic politics and the shortcomings of the Turkish rule of her Christian subjects. This issue was named by Metternich at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, ‘the Eastern Question’. This eventually turned out to be an international question, including the Great Powers: Austria, Russia, France and particularly Britain.

The main solution to the Eastern Question can simply be defined as keeping ‘the sick man of Europe’ alive with the reforms of the Ottoman governance system. From the British perspective, this was realised by the ambassadors who had a voice on the consideration of the Ottoman Sultans and protecting Ottoman territorial integrity against the Russian threat. Therefore, it is also fair to state that an alliance based on economies and trade was replaced by the British consummation of the Ottoman against Pan-Slavism, the question of the partition of the Ottoman Empire, and eventually the uprisings of Ottoman Christian subjects. The scholarship seems to show a consensus that George Canning’s cousin Stratford Canning’s ambassadorship at Constantinople reinforced the Anglo-Ottoman alliance, particularly during the Crimean War. Besides, Stratford Canning was connected to Ottoman affairs substantially and even put forward a British mediation between Greece and the Ottoman Empire which was rejected by Lord Strangford on 27 April 1826.³ Ultimately, however, it would be fair to state that Canning was substantially engaged with the Ottoman Empire and became an authority not only in terms of diplomacy but also on Ottoman internal affairs. From the Ottoman point of view, Stratford Canning was styled as the ‘Great Elchi (ambassador)’ in order to emphasise his diplomatic role. This naming can be considered as a sign of Turkish trustfulness.⁴ There is little doubt that Canning’s first principle in Ottoman diplomacy was to engage with Ottoman internal affairs and to establish a strong relationship with the Pashas and ultimately with the

² Christine Woodhead, “England, the Ottomans and the Barbary Coast in the late sixteenth century”, State Papers Online, The Government of Britain 1509-1714, University of Durham, p. 5.

³ ‘A letter Lord Strangford to Charles Bagot’, Josceline Bagot, *George Canning and his friends*, Vol. II, (London: John Murray, 1909), p. 348.

⁴ Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of Right Honourable, Viscount Stratford De Redcliffe*, Vol. II, (London: Longmans & Green and co., 1888), p. 54.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

Sultan. With regards to the Greek question, in a letter to Lord Aberdeen on 3 March 1829, he stated ‘my first duty on pursuing the Pashas’ communication was to consider whether it offered a satisfactory fulfilment of the condition prescribed in your Lordship’s dispatch.’⁵

In addition to Canning’s legacy to British diplomacy on the Ottoman Empire, Palmerston was the main representative of this ‘alliance relationship’ which would be referred as ‘Palmerston’s traditionalist Ottoman foreign policy.’ During his premierships, Palmerston had implemented a reform policy towards the Ottoman Empire to protect against the threat of a Russian protectorate over the Ottoman Christian subjects. From the Crimean War onwards, the traditional Palmerstonian policy towards the Ottoman Empire was followed by subsequent governments. In fact, the Palmerstonian doctrines contained protection for the integrity of Ottoman territories and reforms to be implemented mainly for the Christian minorities inside the Empire. The Crimean War had proved to be vital in terms of showing how the press influenced public opinion, addressing the question of English protection of the Ottoman Empire. Palmerston encouraged the Protestant Victorian public to unite against Orthodox Russia during the Crimean war while awakening nationalist feelings amongst the citizenry.

In 1875, the insurrections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, inside the Ottoman Empire in 1875, were at their peak, which revived the Eastern Question. There is little doubt that Disraeli’s ministry pursued Palmerston’s protective policy towards the Ottoman Empire as well as pursuing the diplomatic tradition since Canning. By so doing, Schumacher further argues the diplomatic strategies based on British protection of Ottoman integrity which contained ‘advice, pressure, and demands for the Ottomans’ was to conciliate the Ottoman society regardless of their religion.⁶ As the height of the crisis in Bulgaria approached, Serb insurrections in Herzegovina and Bosnia in 1875 ‘had already aroused sympathetic interest in England within the general question of the position of Christians under Turkish rule.’⁷ Furthermore, it can be argued that these events inspired some Bulgarian groups to move towards the idea of freedom and an independent Bulgaria which can also be seen as a late repercussion of the French revolution amongst the Ottoman nations. For that reason the Bulgarian uprising can also be considered an extension of the Herzegovinian uprising which had begun in April 1876 and continued until the end of the year. While the Ottoman suppression of the Bulgarian insurrections proceeded, the debates in British Parliament were

⁵ The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Foreign Office (hereafter FO) TNA: FO 78/178 to and from Mr S. Canning, January to August 1829, “Stratford Canning to Lord Aberdeen, 3 March 1829”.

⁶ Leslie R. Schumacher, “A “Lasting Solution”: The Eastern Question and British Imperialism, 1875-1878”, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, July 2012), p. 81.

⁷ Richard T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876*, (Great Britain: Robert Cunningham and Sons Ltd., Longbank Works, Alva, 1963), p. 36.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

focused on the dethronement of the late Sultan Abdulaziz by his nephew Sultan Murad V in May 1876.⁸ Eventually, on 26 June 1876 it was the Liberal William E. Forster who first brought the question of Bulgarian atrocities to the Commons by referring to a *Daily News* report on the 23 June.⁹ Disraeli's response to Forster's question can be considered as apparently well-informed and coordinated with Henry Elliot, the British ambassador to the Porte.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the debates gradually increased complaining about the lack of information on the Bulgarian insurrections and seeking to blame the Disraeli ministry. Beyond any doubt, the involvement of Gladstone with respect to the Bulgarian uprising of 1876, with his eloquence in pamphlets, speeches and public meetings, was a milestone in the course of British party politics and foreign affairs in connection with the Ottoman Empire. The stage which Anglo-Ottoman relations had reached prior to the Russo-Ottoman war was peculiar in comparison to the alliance during the Crimean War. Along with the rebellions and insurrections in Bulgaria, the majority of public opinion believed that the correspondence was inconsiderable and behind time to make English people comprehend the reality of events. Also, it should also be noted that diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire was of secondary importance. When Gladstone got involved to the scene, he succeeded in unifying British people for one purpose: to stop Turkish barbarity against her Christian subjects. That simply meant humanity, bringing justice back and helping the Christians against the Muslim Turks. These messages turned into slogans especially by the working classes. The Anglo-

⁸ Hansard Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords (HL) HL Deb 30 May 1876 Vol. 229 c1416 'Turkey-Reported Deposition of the Late Sultan-Question'

⁹ House of Commons (HC) HC Deb 26 June 1876 Vol. 230 cc424-6 'Turkey-Alleged Massacre of Bulgaria in Bulgaria-Question', On 23 June 1876 *Daily News* reported that, 'Our Constantinople Correspondent sends us a list of villages in Bulgaria which have, it is stated, been ravaged by the Turks. One of the most fertile and productive provinces of the Empire has been so completely devastated that, instead of yielding, as hitherto, an annual revenue of about eight hundred thousand pounds to the government, it is not thought likely to yields, perhaps for years to come, more than a fourth of that sum. One estimate puts the number of the persons killed at 18.000, but Bulgarians speak of 30.000. Authentic information on the subject is very difficult to obtain. The perpetrators of these outrages were bashi-bozouks... and their cruelties have made a deep impression at Constantinople, and it was believed that our ambassador there had used his influence with the government in order to put an end to them.'

¹⁰ HC Deb 26 June 1876 Vol. 230 cc424-6 'Turkey-Alleged Massacre of Bulgaria in Bulgaria-Question', 'Some time ago, when troubles first commenced in Bulgaria, they appear to have begun by strangers entering the country and burning the villages without reference to religion or race. The Turkish Government at that time had no Regular troops in Bulgaria, and the inhabitants, of course, were obliged to defend themselves...But in the month of May the attention of Sir Henry Elliot was called to this state of things from some information which reached him, and he immediately communicated with the Porte, who at once ordered some Regular troops to repair to Bulgaria, and steps to be taken by which the action of the Bashi-Bazouks and Circassians might be arrested... Gentleman on the subject, and I will merely repeat that the information which we have at various times received does not justify the statements made in the journal which he has named.'



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

Turkish Convention of 4 June, also known as the Cyprus Convention, also meant more than a British safeguard to the Ottomans with the annexation of Cyprus by the British Empire. While both George Earl Buckle and Lady Gwendolen Cecil treated the convention as ‘the keystone of the diplomatic structure’, Kovic refers to Disraeli’s assurance of British interests in the territory for the Queen. Kovic further portrays the course of Anglo-Turkish relations prior to the annexation of Cyprus to the British Empire, ‘when the news regarding the British takeover of Cyprus was finally made public, ironic comments regarding the strange nature of the Anglo-Turkish friendship were not rare.’¹¹

After a Whig victory in the elections of 1880, the political and social juncture reached a certain degree of stability and the Eastern Crisis became a question for society and parliament. In addition to this, a new tradition was consolidated inside British parliament in terms of foreign politics. It can be argued that the rights of Eastern Christians used to be Gladstone’s personal affair and struggle but now it was turned into an official parliamentary issue. By referring to Disraeli’s principality on the East, Matthew states that the results of the four year period were a sacrifice of Bulgarians and Armenians, a gain of imperialism with the annexation of Cyprus as a result of Gladstone’s personalisation of foreign policies during the Eastern Question.¹² The historiography as to the nature of Gladstone’s second ministry seems largely convinced that everything had changed since the 1868-74 Liberal Government and most again highlight the influence of the Eastern Question. While Parry assesses the 1880-5 ministry as ‘remarkably free from internal Commons dissension’ and defined it ‘as the last of the old-style Liberal Ministries’,¹³ Matthew suggests that Gladstone was assigned to Prime Ministership as ‘Liberal (in 1868 he had still been a ‘Liberal Conservative)’ argues that this can be considered as a reflection of his altering during his political career in spite of his ‘careful distancing from the party hierarchy.’¹⁴

On the other hand, on 6 May, the first task of Gladstone’s ministry was to recall Henry Austen Layard who had been the British Ambassador in Constantinople since the Ministry of Palmerston. Further, Salt stated that it was Gladstone’s own decision that used to describe him as a ‘pure Turkish jackal’.¹⁵ Thus, there is a clear sense that Layard was pro-Turkish and had

¹¹ Milos Ković, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 280.

¹² Colin H. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1875-1898*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 54-55.

¹³ Jonathan Parry, *Democracy and Religion Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 280.

¹⁴ Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 101.

¹⁵ Jeremy Salt, “Britain, the Armenian Question and the Cause of Ottoman Reform: 1894-96”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26, No. 3 (July, 1990): 308-328, 310, Agatha Ramm, *The political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876-1880*, Vol. I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 7 August 1877.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

been carrying on the policies of Disraeli's ministry since 1877. In this vein, Karpat states Layard 'believed in maintaining the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state and had very positive views about the Turks as well as the dedication to modernization and progress.'¹⁶ Salt also argues that for his part Salisbury regarded Layard as being 'in the front of the battle for the interest of both England and humanity in the East.'¹⁷ Bayraktar goes so far as to argue that 'Layard had already become a part of the Turcophile community under the influence of and leadership of David Urquhart in the 1850's'¹⁸ who was the British inspiration and chief case officer of the Young Ottoman movement that determined the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire particularly in the twentieth century. It could be argued that Layard represented the old Ottoman tradition of policies and his recall can be considered as an official step for a new foreign policy. The decision as to the new ambassador to Constantinople was already made and in a telegram on 6 May 1880, Layard was asked to inform the Porte that George Goschen would be the special ambassador and inquired about the Sultan's consent on this decision.¹⁹

George Joachim Goschen's mission to Constantinople (1880-1881)

George Joachim Goschen as a leading financier and liberal politician was born in London as the son of a German immigrant in 1831 and held various ministerial posts during his political career. In Gladstone's first ministry of 1868-74, Goschen joined the cabinet as President of the Poor Law Board until March 1871. When he was offered to undertake a special and temporary mission to the Ottoman Empire as Ambassador Extraordinary, he felt that the anxious circumstances of the time made it incumbent upon him to give way.²⁰ In comparison with Layard, Karpat describes Goschen as 'a rather abrupt person due to his usage of the British navy to force the sultan to cede Montenegro to Dulcigno' and his political movements under the lead of 'strong instructions from London' to impose as promptly, besides highlighting the speciality of article 61 of the Berlin Treaty 'which charged the

¹⁶ Kemal H. Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History*, (London: Library of Congress and Publishing Data, 2002), p. 502.

¹⁷ Salt, "Britain, the Armenian Question", p. 309.

¹⁸ Kaya Bayraktar, "Archaeologist, Banker, Agent, Ambassador: Austen Henry Layard and Ottoman Territory", *C.Ü. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi*, 12, No. 1, (2011): pp. 281-302, 283.

¹⁹ 'Inform the Porte that the Queen has appointed the right honourable G. Goschen to be the special ambassador from relieving you the duties of 'Qualifying' 'Provoking') on leave of closure.' 'I am afraid we have needed to ask whether Mr. Goschen could be agreeable to the Sultan. The mission is quite unintentional.' TNA: Earl Granville to Layard, 6 May 1880, Foreign Telegrams.

²⁰ Arthur Douglas Elliot, *The life of George Joaschim Goschen, first viscount Goschen, 1831-1907*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), p. 197.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

Ottoman government with carrying out reforms in east Anatolia under British supervision.²¹ Furthermore, Goschen's mission to Egypt in 1876 and recommendations for certain financial reforms which resulted with the deposition of the Khedive caused suspicion in the Porte as well as Abdulhamid's approach²² to the new ambassador. In a telegram on 10 May 1880, Granville informed Layard of the support coming from Musurus Pasha for Goschen's taking the Constantinople ambassadorship: 'Musurus will telegraph that he is terrified of a refusal of a man of Goschen's high character that his mission for Egypt was financial.'²³ In reply, Layard states that 'Musurus Pasha has informed me that the Porte consents to Mr. Goschen's appointment but hopes that annual application will be made. I told him that instructions to this effect had already been sent.'²⁴

Goschen visited Stratford Canning upon Gladstone's request before his mission who had reached 94 years by that time. 'His brain seemed absolutely clear and his memory perfect' Goschen notes and found him 'so Turkophil and so optimistic as to Turkey's future that I came to the conclusion I could not derive much help from him for the purpose of my mission...but I carried away a deeply interesting reminiscence of a most striking figure in British history.'²⁵ Goschen's arrival at Constantinople was on 28 May 1880 with Her Majesty's ship 'Helicon'.²⁶ By pointing out Goschen's crucial position in the cabinet, Spinner asserts that the importance of his statesmanship was such that 'even before his departure for Constantinople, the Conservatives had been thinking of him as the possible leader of a Liberal revolt.'²⁷ It became clear that Layard was required to leave his material legacy to Goschen, 'In reply to your telegram no. 292 Lord Granville thinks you had better have your furniture and other property valued and left for Goschen's use. Care will be taken that you shall not be a loser eventually. Anything that Mr. Goschen does not require to use had better to be sold.'²⁸ Furthermore, the expectations as to his mission at Constantinople were necessarily high. In other words, Goschen represented the new Ottoman policy of Gladstone's new ministry and

²¹ Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social*, p. 502.

²² 'With reference to my telegram no. 217, very confidential: I have reason to think that the Sultan may say that the appointment of Mr. Goschen would not agreeable to him as he has been led to believe that Goschen's mission to Egypt was the cause of the deposition of the Khedive and of the interference of the European Powers and consequently looks upon his appointment here as a menace of himself.' TNA, H. Layard to Lord Granville, Foreign Telegrams, 9 May 1880.

²³ TNA: Lord Granville to H. Layard, 10 May 1880.

²⁴ TNA: H. Layard to Earl Granville, 11 May 1880.

²⁵ Elliot, *The life of George J. Goschen*, 198.

²⁶ TNA: H. Layard to Earl Granville, 28 May 1880.

²⁷ Thomas J. Spinner, "George Joachim Goschen: The Man Lord Randolph Churchill "Forgot", *the Journal of Modern History*, 39, No. 4 (December, 1967): pp. 405-424, 413.

²⁸ TNA: Earl Granville to H. Layard, 15 May 1880.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

revisions that needed to be implemented. He further defined his general outlook on the new policy to Granville,

‘The Queen my august sovereign having been graciously pleased to appoint me as her special ambassador at Constantinople. I have the distinguished honour of placing my credentials in your majesty’s hands. Having accepted this responsible mission my first duty is to fulfil it to the satisfaction of my sovereign while at the same time the friendly relations which exist between England and Turkey will inspire until the wish to the of service to your majesty and to your people. Owing to my parliamentary position in England my stay in Turkey will necessarily be limited, your majesty will allow me to add that convinced of the lively desire of your majesty to promote the general well-being of your subjects without destinations on creed, my duty during my stay, my efforts should have contributed to bring them a result.’²⁹

Nevertheless, Goschen’s proposal to inform the Porte on the Conference diplomacy and acting in accordance with the Great Powers eventually affected the general impression of the new ambassador.³⁰ More to the point, Spinner argues that Goschen’s relations with the Sultan were not great; however, this did not disappoint the new ambassador and make him ‘unhappy.’³¹ Nonetheless, the Ottomans still considered Britain its closest collaborator instead of its long-term ally. Queen Victoria also believed that Goschen was too anti-Turk and was ‘pushing to hostilities.’³² Goschen on 14 June 1880 wrote, ‘At my official visit to Cadri Pasha on Saturday he told me the Government relied on England mainly to help them to a solution. He had read identical note. He had seen that it alluded to Lord Salisbury’s proposal remaining unanswered. He asked was it too late to answer now, in two days for instance. I replied it was too late. He continued that Abeddin Pasha would ask English mediation on Greek frontier.

²⁹ TNA: G. Goschen to Lord Granville, 11 June 1880. F.O: 78/3074 Granville to Goschen, very confidential, 10 June 1880, No. 71.

³⁰ Earl Granville clearly stated that, “Although her Majesty’s Government have invited the Concert of the other Treaty of Powers in order to exercise united pressure upon the Porte, they would desire that your Excellency should clearly convey to the Sultan and to the Porte that the representations which you are instructed to make to them are essentially of a friendly character, that it is in the interest of Turkey itself that the pending question with Greece and Montenegro should be settled, and that the only hope for the maintenance of the Turkish Empire lies in thorough and searching reform for its administration both at the capital and in the provinces. At the same time, Your Excellency will not fail to make the Sultan and his ministers understand that their present careful abstinence from menace does not imply any earnestness or determination as to the course of policy which they desire to see pursued.” TNA: Confidential, Earl Granville to Right Hon. G. J. Goschen, Foreign Office, 18 May 1880, p. 4.

³¹ Goschen further wrote, “I think the fact he (Sultan Abdulhamid) afraid of me, though as you told the Queen I never fail to be perfectly courteous... My manner leaves the impression on him that I thoroughly mean business, and that is what he doesn’t like.” P.R.O, Granville Papers, Goschen to Granville, 2 July 1880, 30/29/188, Thomas J. Spinner, *George Joachim Goschen the Transformation of a Victorian Liberal*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1973), p. 71.

³² George Earl Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol.3, (London: John Murray, 1931), 141-2 in Spinner, *George Joachim Goschen*, p. 73.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

They would entirely put themselves into our hands. I expressed thanks for confidence shown but said such a course was impossible. The Berlin Treaty stipulated for collective mediation. We could not take separate action, nor would it be in the interest of Turkey. I suspect proposal was only a feeler as to our general altitude.’³³

In a telegram to Goschen on 30 May 1880, Lord Granville clearly pointed out the political and social circumstances that were changed since the Bulgarian Agitation of 1876, and repeated warnings have been addressed to the Porte both by Her Majesty’s Government and by her Majesty’s Embassy at Constantinople. In May 1876, Lord Derby informed Musurus Pasha that both circumstances and the state of feeling in the country were very much changed since the Crimean War, and in a despatch to Sir H. Elliott in the following June on the accession of Sultan Murad, ‘his Lordship remarked that it was undeniable that the liberal and enlightened projects of reforms promulgated at Constantinople had not been brought into practical operation in the provinces.’³⁴ More to the point, for instance, Matthew defined liberal ministry’s Egyptian policy without a ‘prudential basis’ which Gladstone had urged to alter nationally and explicitly warned since 1876 that Britain’s movements were becoming complicated.³⁵

Up to this point, there is a clear sense that the pragmatics of British foreign policy was gradually transformed into the dynamics of Anglo-Ottoman relations within the framework of Gladstone’s second ministry. This said, Yasamee states that ‘April 1880 saw a change of government in Britain, and with it, a change in Britain’s Near Eastern policy and also Gladstone’s Liberals assumed office with a commitment to abandon the competitive politics of the balance of power, and to establish a Concert of Europe which would unite the Great Powers in defence of the treaties and the public law of Europe.’³⁶ In this vein, it is fair to state that besides the internal politics, ‘the question of England’s relations with the Ottoman state was thrown into the political arena.’³⁷

Undoubtedly, the Greek frontier question, the naval demonstration in Smyrna and the debates on the British mediation were the main headings on the cabinet’s agenda with regards to the new Ottoman diplomacy. The main intention of the British government was to

³³ TNA: G. Goschen to Lord Granville, 14 June 2014.

³⁴ TNA, Confidential, Earl Granville to Right Hon. G. J. Goschen, Foreign Office, 18 May 1880, p. 2.

³⁵ Colin H. G. Matthew, (ed.) *the Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence, Volume X, January 1881-January 1883*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), lxix.

³⁶ Feroze A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdulhamid II and the Great Powers*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996), p. 76.

³⁷ Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social*, p. 502.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

constrain the Ottoman government by means of the Concert of Europe, to implement the articles of the Treaty of Berlin as regards Greece, Montenegro and Armenia, and to get established a strong defensive frontier between Turkey and Greece.³⁸ Charged with the responsibility, Goschen's main task was to come up with a plan that would bring all parties together on a common ground while considering British interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Britain's priorities for policy were Berlin Treaty rights, 'proper treatment' of foreign subjects, the conditions of creditors and trade.³⁹ Goschen's plan was called 'contingent coercion', the substance of which was the Powers should agree to defend Greece against a Turkish invasion, thus holding out some inducement to Greece to be reasonable.⁴⁰ Goschen's plan of offering moral support to Greece and deterring Turkey for the rectification of the Turco-Greek frontier was loyal to the concept of Concert of Europe and in a form which those nations would accept. Bismarck called the policy as 'compensation' where he was reluctant of giving to Greece as much territory as much settled at the Berlin Conference, but substituting Greece for a portion of Epirus, where the Albanian Mussulmans would prove a source of danger.⁴¹ This localisation project was not only significant for the future considerations but also provided a peaceful boundary between Turkey and Greece while considering racial and strategical considerations.⁴² It can be argued that Liberal Government's Ottoman policies were mainly based on the principles of self-government or localisation whilst pursuing amicable relations with the Turkish government. Dulcigno frontier question and the desires of Albania for self-government were articulated by international law which assisted the minority policies.⁴³

In a telegram to Granville, British ambassador Henry Layard stated that the Great Powers were in agreement on the English proposal.⁴⁴ Goschen believed that the Ambassadors of Austria, France, Italy and Russia supported this approach particularly preserving Sultan's authority in the territories so as getting Bismarck's consent who called this policy as 'localisation.'⁴⁵ Notwithstanding, the result of this question was ambiguous and lasted until the late 1880's. Medlicott defined the Greek question 'as a revised Greco-Turk frontier had been agreed upon by Britain and France and was submitted by them for agreement to a

³⁸ Elliot, *The life of George J. Goschen*, p. 198.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴² *Ibid.*, P. 214

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁴ 'France, Italy, Austria and Germany have agreed to English proposal on Greek frontier and I (Layard) understand Russia is likely to do so.' TNA, H. Layard to Lord Granville, 10 March 1880.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

conference of ambassadors at Berlin.⁴⁶ In a memorandum to Lord Granville on 18 June, Gladstone referred to the Greek frontier question as, ‘I suppose that in the Greek frontier question which adopted it, we have to consider; natural defence, facility of police, natural lines of traffic, especially, ethnography, most of all, the Berlin Treaty.’⁴⁷

Goschen was struggling with not only implementing the plan with the consent of European States but also to convince the Sultan to accept the decision on the frontier question. By the same token, it is also necessary to consider the roles of Kostaki Musurus Pasha who had been the Ottoman ambassador to London since 1850. In a letter to Lord Granville on 29 May Gladstone wrote, ‘Musurus Pasha has shown me the Telegram which he will carry to you & perhaps you will kindly send a joint reply if you think fit. (Musurus Pasha recalled to Constantinople in view of Goschen’s arrival there) to Musurus bey, his son and chargé d'affaires in London, announcing the sultan’s satisfaction with British policy and intention to cooperate in the execution of the *Treaty of Berlin*.’⁴⁸ In this vein, the *Daily Gazette* on 3 June stated that, ‘At the last Cabinet Council, Musurus Pasha was present, it is understood that he expounded his views as to the actions of English Government and endeavoured to reassure the Ministry with respect to Mr. Goschen’s mission.’⁴⁹ Tokay also argued that the status of Musurus, despite being prudent, particularly had relished ‘a working relationship with the Liberals’ and went in order to interpret to the Sultan that the British just desired ‘to see the implementation of the Berlin Treaty.’⁵⁰ ‘It was a strange and somewhat distressing position’ Goschen observes in a letter to his wife, ‘for the Ambassador of a friendly Power to urge in personal conversation with the Sovereign of a great empire that it was his duty to part with two fair provinces for the sake of peace and in deference to the decision of Europe.’⁵¹ It was believed that sending British fleet to Smyrna ‘will bring the Sultan to knees.’ Goschen and Gladstone were strong for measures. In a letter to Lord Granville, he was so firmly stated that ‘The Sultan has begun a struggle of it is difficult to see the end, and has I been desperate... Europe must win all along the line. Compromise has been deemed impossible. Therefore

⁴⁶ W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, (London: Greenwood Pub Group, 1956), pp. 190-208.

⁴⁷ ‘Memorandum by Mr. Gladstone to Lord Granville on 18 June 1880’, Ramm, *The Political Correspondence*, pp. 137-138.

⁴⁸ See to Goschen, tel. no. 18, 1 June reporting that Musurus Bey had been asked to express respectful thanks to the sultan on Gladstone’s and his behalf, Mr. Gladstone to Lord Granville, 29 May 1880, Ramm, the *political correspondence*, 131. “The Daily Chronicle”, *The Huddersfield Chronicle*, 9 July, 1880.

⁴⁹ “Latest News”, *the Daily Gazette*, 3 June, 1880.

⁵⁰ Musurus to the Ottoman Charge d’Affaires in London, Constantinople, 28 May 1880 in Gul Tokay, ‘Anglo-Ottoman relations and William Gladstone’, 318-333, 328, accessed 1 September, 2021 <http://ebox.nbu.bg/hist12/nc3/5tokay.pdf>

⁵¹ Elliot, *The life of George J. Goschen*, p. 219.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

there is nothing for it, except to go ahead.⁵² When Goschen met Sultan Abdülhamid after a Salamlik about the British government's policies, although both agreed on the *status quo* the main anxiety was French aggression in Tunisia.⁵³ There is little doubt that the Ottoman government and Abdülhamid II still considered Britain as the closest ally.

It was not only Ottoman government having economic and social difficulties with her territories; the British Empire began to face serious challenges and resistance from colonies such as India, South Africa and Ireland. 'No one speaks of the Eastern Question here' Mrs. Goschen admitted, 'the cabinet had much to think of besides the Eastern Question and the enforcement of the Berlin mandate.'⁵⁴ Apart from this political situation in Britain, Goschen's efforts turned out positively in the East. At a historical dinner with Ambassadors on 3 May 1881, 'the long expected Note- came by which the Turks expressed their full and unqualified acceptance of our proposals' Mr. Goschen wrote his wife and stating that he was 'so immensely pleased' as much as his colleagues on the table.⁵⁵ It was the moment that the Ambassadors and the Cabinets of the Six Powers had understood each other, and had loyally cooperated in their desire to preserve the peace of Europe for their own benefit.⁵⁶

Conclusion

While Lord Granville telegraphed his congratulations to special ambassador, by the end of May Goschen returned to Britain with the Convention in his pocket as a result of his mission.⁵⁷ Within limits, it could be argued that the experience of the Cyprus Convention and the principles of the Berlin Treaty, which Gladstone assessed as 'a treaty which brings the country an assurance of peace'⁵⁸ became patterns of the nature of new Anglo-Turkish relations under the leadership of Liberal Prime Minister. Goschen played a crucial role in the Ottoman affairs leading up to the transformation process from Anglo-Ottoman alliance to European concert diplomacy. Goschen's employment of his energies in the field of diplomacy managed to bring Ottoman Sultan and the European powers together at a common ground eventually. The Eastern affairs were as significant as high imperial policies; therefore Goschen was the best statesman who would impose this change at the crossroads.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 200-1.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 236-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 222.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 240.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁸ HC Deb 30 July 1878 Vol. 242 cc644-763, "Eastern Affairs-Resolution".



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

There is little doubt that Great Elchi Canning's first principle in Ottoman diplomacy was to engage with Ottoman internal affairs and to establish a strong relationship with the Pashas, ultimately with the Sultan. Nonetheless, since there was much antipathy between Gladstone and Abdulhamid II, the alteration in diplomacy was inevitable. Recalling Henry Austen Layard on 6 May 1880 who was the British Ambassador in Constantinople since the ministry of Palmerston and the appointment of George Goschen as the special ambassador to the Porte represented a new trend in British foreign policies against the Ottoman Empire. The task Goschen was assigned to be a great way to establish the balance between party politics and diplomacy. Goschen indeed defines 'the whole story' to his wife, 'we are to propose a line. The Ambassadors frightened at the responsibility. They won't do anything without seeing how far the Turks will go. Peace or War will practically rest with England. But Lord Granville leaves all "to my judgement and discretion." Therefore, everything depends on me. I think there will be no war. The Powers will accept a very moderate line and will persuade Greece to accept it. That is my present view.'⁵⁹

It becomes clear that the new tradition consolidated while revising the Crimean alliance based on the principles of liberalism; morality, human freedom and self-determination. On the other hand, Abdulhamid preferred a German alliance against Gladstone's joining of Concert of Europe which started a new phase in Anglo-Ottoman relations. Thus, there is a clear sense that the pragmatics of British foreign policy against the Ottoman Empire began to be formalised on the collective principles of the Berlin Treaty and breaking the 'guardian and protection' tradition of the Ottoman integrity. Seen in this light, there is a clear sense that the Anglo-Turkish alliance had already ended and although Britain was determined to keep Ottoman territorial integrity despite Cyprus, it was about to change completely with the invasion of Egypt.

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⁵⁹ Elliot, *The life of George J. Goschen*, p. 225.



Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations Volume 3 Number 1 January 2022

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