PART ONE

From Empires to New States

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Prologue

The Congress of Berlin

> "We can only do a human work, subject like all such work, to the fluctuations of events."
>
> Otto von Bismarck

International minority protection, which reached its apogee after World War I, had nineteenth-century roots. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the delegates combined the two principles of territorial readjustments and external control over internal affairs. The Great Powers not only checked tsarist Russia's drive into Southeastern Europe by imposing the old rules of compensation and the balance of power; perceiving the dangers lurking within the new borders they had drawn, the Powers also placed a stiff price on the recognition of four successor states of the Ottoman Empire. The heated debates, the conditions they imposed, and the subsequent results all mark the beginning of a new stage of modern European diplomacy.

CURBING RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

Tsarist Russia went to war with the Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1877. The immediate cause was the Turks' crushing of the Slavic uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, suppression of the Bulgarian insurrection, and the rout of Serbia and Montenegro. This eighth Russo–Turkish War, extending over almost two centuries, was not only the continuation of Russia's efforts to seize the Straits but also represented a new form of tsarist expansionism. Spurred by the rise of Balkan nationalism, Russia's leaders espoused the pan-Slav and Orthodox mission to liberate the lands and peoples of European

Turkey, with the goal of transforming the land bridge to Constantinople into a region of satellite states.[1]

The nine-month war, which lasted until January 1878, was an unexpectedly evenly matched contest.[2] After the Turks held the fortress of Plevna for five long months against Russia and its reluctant ally Romania,[3] the exhausted tsarist army reached the gates of Constantinople. But failing to achieve a decisive military verdict – a Königgrätz or a Sedan – Russia had neither seized the Straits and Constantinople nor evicted Turkey from Europe.

Russia's newest *Drang nach Suden* also challenged the three Great Powers. Great Britain and France, the nominal protectors of the Ottoman Empire, were determined to deny Russia access to the eastern Mediterranean, whereas Austria–Hungary, with its own large Slav and Orthodox population, was insistent on retaining the status quo in Southeastern Europe.[4] All three were outraged by the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878), dictated by pan-Slav General Nicholas Ignatiev, which rearranged the map of the Balkans, creating a huge Bulgarian client state that stretched from the Danube to the Aegean and from the Black Sea to Albania and split European Turkey in two.[5] Faced with British threats and keenly aware of Russia's economic and military weakness, Tsar Alexander II retreated from the pan-Slav gambit at San Stefano and submitted to Europe's demands.[6]

Europe's third major congress of the nineteenth century opened in Berlin on June 13, 1878. It lasted only one month because its agenda was limited and almost everything had been prepared in advance. Among the participants were the two exhausted combatants and five fresh bystanders determined to solve the "Eastern Question" – the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire –

1. Full details of works with abbreviated titles are given in Sections 1B and 2 of the Bibliography. The standard study is Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*; see also Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, pp. 64–79; Durman, *Time of the Thunderer*, pp. 158–206; Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, pp. 143–73; MacKenzie, *Tsarist Russian Foreign Policy, 1815–1917*, pp. 68–81; LeDonne, *The Russian Empire*, pp. 137–40, 265–9, 324. A revisionist work by Weeks, "Russia's Decision for War With Turkey," describes a weak, politically divided regime that reluctantly took up arms against an obdurate Ottoman Empire, primarily to salvage its "national honor."
2. Despite the dire state of Ottoman finances, British loans enabled the Porte to purchase armaments from Germany and the United States. Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy*, p. 224.
3. Lying across Russia's most expeditious southward invasion route, the United Principalities (Romania's official name until 1878) tried to limit the damage of tsarist occupation and war with the Turks by characterizing its actions as a struggle for national independence.
4. Haselsteiner, "Zur Haltung der Donaumonarchie," and Dioszegi, "Die Anfänge der Orientpolitik Andrássys."
5. Among the treaty's other terms, Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania were to gain independence, Bosnia and Herzegovina were to become semiautonomous provinces within the Ottoman Empire, and Russia's Romanian ally was to return southern Bessarabia to Russia.
6. Durman, *Time of the Thunderer*, pp. 219–44; Jelavich, *Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 181–2; Goraíainov, *La question d'Orient*, pp. 229–51.

by a calibrated multinational partition, thus setting the tone for the next Berlin Conference on Africa seven years later.[7]

The results were a triumph of Disraelian firmness and Bismarckian discipline. Reaping the main rewards of its aggression, Russia extended its Black Sea coastline by regaining southern Bessarabia in the West and by annexing Ardahan, Kars, and Batum in the East. As to the Balkans, the congress agreed on full independence for Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania, and autonomy for a greatly reduced Bulgaria. But the other side profited as well. The Ottoman Empire retained Macedonia[8] as well as control over the Straits, through which the British Fleet could pass at will into the Black Sea. Moreover, the Turks' defenders amply rewarded themselves, with Britain taking Cyprus, Austria–Hungary occupying Bosnia–Herzegovina, and France given the green light to occupy Tunisia.

The congress modified the Treaty of San Stefano in another significant way. Whereas Russia's dictated treaty had been silent over minority rights, the Powers were determined to impose conditions regarding religious freedom and civic rights in all the new states.[9] In bringing forth a new political order in the Balkans, the Great Powers added a major new ingredient to the agenda of European diplomacy[10] (see Map 1.1).

THE DANUBIAN PRINCIPALITIES, THE JEWS, AND THE GREAT POWERS

Among the four newly liberated states, Romania was by far the principal object of international concern over the issue of minority rights. The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which formed the strategic triangle separating Russia and the Habsburg monarchy from the mouth of the Danube and the Straits, had over the past generation established the region's most dismal record.

Romania's ethnic and religious problems were shaped by its geography, history, and national culture. Following four centuries of Ottoman rule, the

7. See the critical appraisals by Munro, *The Berlin Congress*, and by Lord, "The Congress of Berlin," pp. 47–69, prepared on the eve of the Paris Peace Conference by a key participant in the Polish Commission of 1919.
8. As distinct from the ancient kingdom of Alexander the Great, this Ottoman province since the fourteenth century was a heavily mixed region of Greeks and Slavs as well as of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, which, after 1878, became a caldron of national rivalries, repression, and terrorism.
9. The accord between Austria–Hungary and England signed on June 6 made this statement: "Les deux Gouvernements se réservent la faculté de proposer au Congrès des mesures tendantes à assurer la protection des populations." Austria. Haus- Hof- und Staats Archiv, Great Britain, VIII, fasc. 170, quoted in Gelber, "German Jews at the Berlin Congress," p. 221.
10. Preconference agreements in Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After*, pp. 4–35; pessimistic verdict in Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*, p. 565.

Map 1.1. Southeastern Europe after the Congress of Berlin, 1878.

Danubian provinces in 1828 came under Russian control. Over the next four decades, tsarist officials introduced laws and administrative practices that promoted economic modernization but also imposed an exceptionally harsh regime over Romania's sizable Jewish population.[11] During this critical incubation period of local nationalism, the poets and publicists, following the trends of European romanticism, defined "Romanianism" in terms of native virtues (blood, soil, and orthodoxy). These they contrasted with the negative images of pagan Turks, avaricious Hungarians, Austrians, and Russians, predatory Greeks, and, especially, the alien Jews whose numbers had swelled under Ottoman rule to about 10% of the population and almost half the population of the Moldavian capital Jassy (Iaşi).[12] For a brief period in 1848, liberal and patriotic Jews and Romanians joined in the struggle for freedom and a unified country, only to be crushed by tsarist and Ottoman troops.[13]

In 1856, the Romanian question moved to Europe's center stage. Russia, after its humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, was forced to evacuate the Principalities, cede the mouth of the Danube (southern Bessarabia) to Moldavia, and renounce its claim as the protector of Christians in the Ottoman Empire.[14] However, when the victors failed to agree on a new government, the Romanians took matters into their own hands. In 1858 the assemblies in Wallachia and Moldavia established identical regimes and a year later elected a single ruler, Alexander Ion Cuza. Despite the fiction of Ottoman suzerainty and the blandness of the new official name ("The United Principalities"), Romanianism had triumphed. Europe, preoccupied elsewhere, followed France's lead and bowed to this peaceful defiance[15] (see Map 1.2).

But not without reservations. Since 1815, general statements on national rights, religious toleration, and civil equality had become a standard condition in international diplomacy. For example, in the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, Britain and France had induced a pledge from the three partitioning powers to "preserve the Polish nationality"[16]; in 1830, in return for recognizing Greece's independence, the Powers had mandated freedom

11. Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, pp. 46–50.
12. Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism*, pp. 4–5.
13. Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, pp. 50–4; Djordjevic and Fischer-Galati, *Balkan Revolutionary Tradition*, pp. 111–12; Cohen, "The Jewish Question," p. 202.
14. Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War*; Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War*; Baumgart, *The Peace of Paris*.
15. Hitchins, *Rumania*, pp. 6–7; Iancu, "Napoléon III et la politique française."
16. Webster, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 287–8, 290–1, 306–7; Müller, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Wiener Kongresses*, pp. 203–97; Straus, *Attitude of the Congress of Vienna Toward Nationalism*, pp. 123–45.

Map 1.2. Evolution of Romania's frontiers, 1856–1920.

for all religions; and in 1856, the Powers bound the Ottoman Empire to respect the rights of non-Muslims.[17]

To be sure, these humane stipulations were largely unenforceable. Not only were powerful states such as Russia and Turkey fiercely resistant to outside interference, but also small states were jealous of their sovereignty.[18] Moreover, even a powerful guarantor, such as Great Britain, was more reluctant to sow disorder than to fight for justice and human rights in

17. Claude, *National Minorities*, pp. 7–8; Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, pp. 159–60.
18. Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe*, pp. 130–1.

the East.[19] Thus, against Russia's egregious violations of Polish freedom in 1830 and 1863, there were only sterile diplomatic protests; and when several thousand Maronite Christians were massacred in Lebanon in 1860 and hundreds of rebels slaughtered in Crete in 1866, the western powers were silent. Only the threat of Russian intervention over the "Bulgarian horrors" sent western emissaries scurrying to Constantinople in a futile plea for reforms.[20]

The Jewish question in European diplomacy was an entirely different matter. It too begins at the Congress of Vienna, where German–Jewish notables had sought international support in their vain struggle to maintain the rights they had gained under the French occupation.[21] Instead of state power, Jewish diplomacy relied on the talents, courage, and connections of private individuals who believed in the solidarity of their people. Newly emancipated themselves, and having only recently achieved economic and political success, these West European Jewish intercessors set out to support the rights of their coreligionists in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe and to persuade their rulers to introduce more liberal regimes. By the mid-nineteenth century, two leaders stood out, the British stockbroker–philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885) and the French jurist and statesman, Adolphe-Isaac Crémieux (1796–1880), who had joined forces in 1840 to combat a ritual-murder accusation in the Ottoman Empire.[22] During the Crimean War, the Rothschild bankers in

19. After several candid interviews with Alexander II over the repression in Poland in 1863, during which the tsar parried expressions of public outrage in England and in France with his accusations of the Socialist and Democratic plots against Russia hatched in Britain, British Ambassador Lord Napier gave this advice to Earl Russell: "I prefer what I believe to be the interest of England and Germany to the aspirations of the Polish race . . . The Russian Empire is passing through a great transformation . . . under a respectable Sovereign and an improving administration. A great error, nay a great crime, has been committed in Poland, but we are justified in hoping that it was an exceptional wrong in a general course of justice and conciliation . . . I see in the cessation of the Polish revolt, in the subordination of European interference to moderate aims, and in the maintenance of peace, the best guarantees for the solid progress of representative principles of government in Poland and in Russia." Napier to Russell, St. Petersburg, April 6, 1863, in Bourne and Watt, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part I, Series A (Russia), p. 36. For the diplomacy of the 1863 Polish crisis, see Taylor, *Struggle for Mastery*, pp. 133–41.
20. Krstitch, *Les minorités*, pp. 172–7, 181–4; also Harris, *Britain and the Bulgarian Horrors*; Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism," especially pp. 118–9.
21. Although the Jewish emissaries gained Prussian, Austrian, and even Russian support for an emancipation article in the constitution of the new German Confederation, the opposition of key German states and the lack of British support produced the empty, unenforceable Article 16. Kohler, *Jewish Rights*; Baron, *Die Judenfrage*; Wolf, *Diplomatic History of the Jewish Question*, pp. 12–15, 17–18.
22. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*. Montefiore and Crémieux also interceded, unsuccessfully, in the case of Edgardo Mortara of Bologna, who was seized by the Catholic Church in 1858 after an alleged baptism by a servant girl and subsequently became a priest. Kertzer, *Edgardo Mortara*; Iancu, "Adolphe Crémieux et la défense des droits des juifs," pp. 252–4.

Britain and France urged their governments and the Porte to include Jewish rights in the peace treaty.[23]

Romania's clash with the Great Powers began in 1856. On the eve of the Congress of Paris, Austria, Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire met in Constantinople to draft peace terms with Russia. Without warning, French Ambassador Edouard Thouvenel introduced several clauses pertaining to Moldavia and Wallachia that called not only for equal treatment and protection of all religions, but also for equal access to public employment, equality of civil rights, particularly the right to property in all its forms, for natives *and* foreigners, and equal political rights for all inhabitants not under foreign protection. Although mentioning no specific groups, Napoleon III's emissary had clearly endorsed full Jewish emancipation in Romania.[24]

Hailed by the British and French Jewish press, this proposal created an uproar in the Danubian provinces. The ruling princes of Wallachia and Moldavia bombarded the diplomats in Paris with protests and complained directly to the British and French governments that granting civil, political, and property rights to the Jews would "bring the country to certain ruin." These threats, strongly endorsed by the French and British consuls in Jassy (Iaşi) and Bucharest, struck a sympathetic chord among the Powers, which beat an unceremonious retreat.[25]

Having won the first round, Romania revealed its future course by forbidding the Jews to vote for the two assemblies that decided the country's future. The National Liberals, deserting their 1848 Jewish allies, assumed a strongly anti-Jewish stance in their "practical politics."[26] In Moldavia, with its larger Jewish population, political leaders called for restricting citizenship to Christians, halting Jewish immigration, and even curtailing Jewish religious practices.[27]

Two years later, in response to the merging of the two principalities, the European powers tried again to dictate terms to Romania. Once more it was France, prodded by Baron James de Rothschild, which called for full civil and political rights to all inhabitants without distinction of origin

23. Feldman, "Jewish Emancipation"; on the Rothschilds' importance in the financing of the Crimean War, see Ferguson, *House of Rothschild*, pp. 71–82.
24. Feldman, "Jewish Emancipation," pp. 46–7; texts in Ubicini, *Principautés devant l'Europe*.
25. Article 23 of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 contained only the conventional provision on freedom of religion without specifying equality of civil and political rights. Feldman, "Jewish Emancipation," pp. 48–9; Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, p. 57. Compare Riker, *Roumania*, pp. 22–108.
26. On the growth of Romanian chauvinism, see Emerit, *Victor Place et la politique française en Roumanie*, pp. 80–1; Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, pp. 59–61; Fischer-Galati, "Romanian Nationalism," especially pp. 384–6.
27. Feldman, "Jewish Emancipation," pp. 50–4.

or religion.[28] This time it was tsarist Russia that thwarted the effort by castigating the "moral and social" deficiencies of the Moldavian Jews.[29] In an awkward compromise, Article 46 was inserted into the 1858 Convention of Paris:

> All Moldavians and Wallachians are equal before the law and in matters of taxation, and shall have equal access to public employment in each of the principalities . . . Moldavians and Wallachians of all Christian faiths shall equally enjoy political rights. The enjoyment of these rights can be extended to other religions by legislative enactment.[30]

Not unexpectedly, Romanians and Jews interpreted this text in opposite ways. Whereas the former denied that any special form of Jewish protection had been granted, the latter insisted that their existence and legal rights were now recognized.[31] To be sure, the seven signatory powers had cloaked their disagreement over Jewish emancipation in ambiguity. After excluding Jewish inhabitants from the category of "Moldavians and Wallachians" entitled to full civil and political rights, in the last sentence they proposed a specific, if unattainable, remedy.[32] For the next two decades, this terribly vague article locked Romanians, Jews, and the Great Powers in a public debate over its meaning.

The reign of Alexander Cuza between 1859 and 1866 brought a brief golden age to the United Principalities. The compromise candidate of the conservative landowners and the more-Nationalist-than-Liberal Forty-Eighters, Cuza quickly alienated his patrons by promoting a series of progressive, modernizing measures.[33] A protégé of Napoleon III, he also

28. On July 16, 1858, the son of Baron James de Rothschild forwarded the petition of seventeen Moldavian Jews to Foreign Minister Count Alexandre Walewski, chair of the Conference of Paris, who offered firm assurances of France's support; Ibid., p. 57; Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, pp. 57–8.
29. Iancu, *Juifs en Roumanie*, p. 58.
30. Text in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 48, p. 120; minutes, pp. 81–132.
31. Text of petition to the Romanian Chamber of Deputies in 1872, in Kohler and Wolf, *Jewish Disabilities in the Balkan States*, App. I, pp. 98–101. Western Jews went even further, maintaining that the article not only recognized the existence of non-Christians and accorded them civil rights but also constituted an international obligation by the United Principalities; *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, Oct. 11, 1858, pp. 571–2.
32. Feldman, "Jewish Emancipation," pp. 58–63.
33. These included fairly sweeping electoral, legal, and agrarian reforms; the expansion of public education and establishment of universities in Bucharest and Jassy (Iaşi) and the nationalization of the estates of the monasteries, which placed a quarter of the country's territory under state control. Fischer-Galati, "Romanian Nationalism," especially pp. 384–5; Hitchins, *Rumania*, pp. 7–10.

    Despite Cuza's reforms, the state and the landowners still held about 66% of the land whereas the peasants only a little over 33%, and usually the poorest properties in marshlands, sandy soil or the steepest terrain. Otetea, *Romanian People*, pp. 388–9.