Turkey's Imperial Legacy
and the Potential for Conflict in the Balkans

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Summary

Turkey is the only Eurasian state nearly surrounded by a circle of acute hot and "frozen conflicts", ranging from low-intensity violence through terrorism to full-fledged wars. The prevailing pattern of inter-communal and inter-ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and on Cyprus has long been different from the patterns of conflict in the rest of Europe and in the Near East. This difference is closely related to the fact that these lands experienced in the past a centuries-long rule by the Ottoman Empire, whose legal successor is the Republic of Turkey. The inter-communal conflict potential in the rest of Europe used to differ substantially from the one in the Balkans, but the difference has been greatly reduced as Western Europe has in one respect become "balkanised".

Keywords: Turkey, Ottoman Legacy, Balkans, Muslims, Inter-communal Conflicts

1. Introduction

All great empires leave in their dependencies deep imprints that last long after the demise or withdrawal of imperial rule. This has been true of the Roman and "Holy Roman" Empires, Arab Caliphates, "Golden Horde", Mughal, Ming and Qing Empires, Spanish, Portuguese, British, French, Russian Empires, and also of the Ottoman Empire. The imperial legacies have differed in the quality of their demographic, social, cultural, religious aspects. The durability of imperial legacies has depended, i.a., on the violent or peaceful mode of withdrawal and on the collective memory of imperial rule among its former subjects. These circumstances have influenced subsequent relations between the successor of the former imperial master and the successor states of former dependencies. In his seminal study of Western European powers' colonial empires David Abernethy summarised their legacies in their former colonies and dependencies as well as the global impact they had for long (Abernethy, 2000).

In 1923 Turkey was internationally recognized as the successor of the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Lausanne. On the Empire's periphery, Ottoman rule had produced numerous consequences that remain politically relevant today. The wide array of affected lands spans from Algeria, through the Near East, to South Eastern Europe and Transcaucasia. In the Balkans, Ottoman rule lasted 396 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 440 in Serbia, 542 in Macedonia, 483 in Bulgaria, 325 in Moldavia, 374 in Greece, and 307 in Cyprus (Brown, 1996: XII).

This article will examine the specificity of the Ottoman imperial legacy in the Balkans as compared with the legacies of Western European colonial empires. Particular attention will be paid to the part of the Ottoman legacy as it relates to the potential for inter-communal and interstate conflict in the region and to one important aspect of European security today.

2. The Nature and Policies of the Ottoman Empire

Since 1354, when the Ottomans established their first European stronghold at Gallipoli, they kept expanding their possessions on the European continent for about three hundred years. The religious-cum-ideological justification for the Ottomans' conquests in Europe was *Gaza* (Holy War). Its ultimate geopolitical objective was to expand the realms of Islam until, ideally, but unrealistically, they would cover the entire world (Inalcik, 1998: 6-7). Following this geopolitical objective, considered as a religious and moral duty, the Ottomans implanted Islam as the state religion in their European possessions. In this respect they followed the pattern of the Arab conquests six centuries earlier on the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily and Crete. According to the Islamic religious authorities, the objective of the Holy War was not to destroy, but to subdue the "infidel" world, the *Darülharb*. The declared promise of protecting the Christians in conquered territories greatly helped the Ottomans to expand their possessions in South Eastern Europe.

The Ottomans developed their, originally Central Asian, tribal militocracy into a formidable war machine, encompassing a huge feudal multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional empire that spread across three continents. The Ottoman Empire also assumed the character of a Sunni Islam theocracy in which the Sultan became simultaneously the *Caliph*, Protector of the Holy places, patron of all Muslims and head of the Sunni clergy. After the capture of Constantinople, the Ottomans claimed to be the rightful successors of the (Eastern) Roman Empire. They absorbed a considerable extent of Byzantine legal regulations and administrative practices and employed numerous Greek Phanariots as officials and proxies, particularly in financial and diplomatic services. In the Balkans, the Ottomans also coopted a considerable part of local elites and warriors, while the conquest of Arab lands reinforced the influence of Islam and Arab culture on the functioning of

the Ottoman Empire. The historic legacy of Ottoman rule thus contains a complex symbiosis of Turkish, Islamic, Byzantine and local traditions (Todorova, 1996: 48-49).

The state policy of steady Islamisation in the conquered non-Islamic lands and in vassal states logically followed from the theocratic dimension of the Empire. It should be noted that the Ottomans were much more tolerant toward other confessions than the rulers in contemporary European Christian states. The Ottomans generally did not coerce the "infidels" to convert to Islam, with some exceptions, such as prisoners of war and male children taken from Christian families. The Ottomans' policies provided considerable incentives for conversion – material status, personal security and advantages for social mobility. The general thrust of this policy had been combined with and softened by tolerating and providing for religious-cum-cultural autonomy to some, but not all other religious communities (*millets*) – to the Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Armenians and Jews. The conditions attached to official tolerance were that the "infidels" unquestionably obey and submit themselves to the Ottomans. The conditions gave the imperial authorities and provincial governors the licence to repress and persecute the "infidels" at will, under the pretexts of disobedience or treason, e.g. when they revolted against the abuse, injustice or corruption of Ottoman officials. The degree of tolerance or intolerance toward other confessions varied widely, depending chiefly on the religion of principal external adversaries of the Empire. As long as the Ottoman Empire waged wars with Venice, Genoa, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, the Catholics were suspected to be a "fifth column" and treated accordingly, while the Orthodox Christian clergy enjoyed numerous privileges. When, on the other hand, the Russian Empire became the principal external threat, while France, Great Britain and Austria acted as friendly powers, the treatment of Orthodox Christians by Ottoman authorities dramatically worsened.

Originally the Ottoman state consisted of two basic classes. The ruling elite contained the warriors (*askeri*) who were exempt from state taxes. The second class was the tax-paying productive population called *raya*. In the early period the latter also included the non-warrior Muslims, but later, in the Balkans, the term *raya* became to be applied solely to Christian peasants and urban commoners. One of the fundamental principles applied by the Ottomans was the inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims in social status, legal and political terms. The Muslims enjoyed a privileged legal status according to the traditional code *kanun-i-raya*. Although some obedient Christian landlords retained their properties for more than a century and were made Ottoman knights (*spahis*), most "infidels" were clearly discriminated against. They were not allowed to ride horses, carry weapons or wear the same type of dress as the Muslims, nor could they build or repair their churches,

etc. The "infidels" were also prohibited from suing Muslims in court and from giving testimony against a Muslim.

There was another important economic difference as most "infidels", unlike most Muslims, had to pay a poll tax (*cizye* or *harac*). Outside the border areas, Christians were generally exempt from military duties. However, the Ottomans extracted from the families of "infidels", particularly in Bosnia, Albania and Abkhazia, a child tribute (*devsirme*). This involved taking healthy, male children and training them to serve in the standing Imperial army (*janissaries*), or in the central Imperial administration. This and other practices gave the Muslims a monopoly among the Ottoman military elite, and most positions in the central administration and in the judiciary. This monopoly also existed at the level of the provincial and local governments. At their retirement the *janissaries* and civil administrators were usually given grants of income derived from the *timar* (state-owned) land.

3. The Long-term Consequences of Ottoman Rule in the Balkans

As time passed, the privilege based on religion developed where Muslims privately owned the best arable land. By 1895 about a half of the arable land in Rumelia was owned by the Turks. In Bosnia, by the end of Ottoman rule all 40 of the biggest private landowners were Bosniak Muslims or Turks. By a stipulation in the peace treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarjia (1774) the Russian Empire forced the defeated Ottomans to grant it the status of protector of all Christians on the territory of the Sublime Porte. This concession allowed Russian diplomacy and later, in a similar manner, also British, French and Austro-Hungarian officials to interfere in the Sublime Porte's internal affairs, on the pretext of protecting the Empire's Christians. In the Reform Edict of 1856 the Ottomans promised to abolish the legal inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims. This promise had been very unpopular among Muslims and the Ottoman officialdom; ultimately, the Sublime Porte did not enact it (Deringil, 2007: 717). The official, legal status of inequality based on religion and the systematic legal discrimination of the "infidels" thus produced a durable social stratification. Legal, social and income inequality was often combined with ethnic language and cultural differences between various communities in the Ottoman realm.

With these incentives at work, for instance in Bosnia, it took more than 150 years of Ottoman rule until the Muslims became a majority among the local population. The steady conversion to Islam unevenly affected the urban and rural populations, as well as various ethnic groups in the conquered European lands, and thus deepened the social divides between some of them. These divides were solidified by the Ottomans' policies of legal discrimination of non-Muslims. This differential was clearly visible in areas with the mixed habitation of Slavs, Albanians, Vlachs, Greeks and Romanians. In Bosnia, the centuries of Ottoman rule contributed signi-

ficantly to the development of distinct "confessional ethnicities" from three religious communities – the Muslims, the Orthodox Christians and the Catholic Christians, which absorbed various groups of a Slavic and non-Slavic origin. These communities coalesced into the nationalities of Muslim Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, Herzegovinian and Posavina Croats.

Several centuries of Ottoman rule produced elements of a visible Oriental culture in the way of life also among those ethnic groups that resisted conversion to Islam. These transmitted Oriental cultural legacies are still present in the Balkans, Transcaucasia and on Cyprus, and continue to be reflected in many toponyms, architecture, popular diet, drinks and music, as well as in individuals' first and family names, etc.

Another important long-term consequence of the developments during the long centuries of Ottoman rule was the demographic change due to migrations within, to and from the Ottoman Empire to neighbouring states. Some migrations were due to external developments, for instance, to the flight of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal. Some migrations resulted from the Ottomans' wars with other powers and from the suppression of rebellions and uprisings, often related to interstate wars. However, the most important population movements from the 15th century on were accomplished through organised or facilitated transfers of population and outright colonisation. The Ottoman authorities' clear strategic objective was to secure their control of major towns, key road junctions and transportation routes. This imposed demographic change has been most evident in the Balkans. By the 18th century, all major old and new towns in the Balkans had become inhabited by a majority of Muslims, mostly Turkish speakers, with some non-indigenous minorities, such as Jews and Armenians. In addition to soldiers, civilian officials and religious functionaries, the colonists, mostly from Anatolia, were used to create a firm Muslim base for the projection of Ottoman power in Europe. The colonists consisted of peasants, artisans, merchants and pastoral peoples (Yörüks, Turkomans), and Tatars from Crimea. Following the Russian conquest of the Northern Caucasus in the early 19th century, over a million Caucasian Muslims (Circassians, Chechens and Abkhazians) fled to the lands still under Ottoman rule. In addition to organised or facilitated migration, the Ottomans also practiced deportation from Anatolia of various undesirable elements and rebellious tribes. Due to numerous wars with the Venetians, Hungarians and Austrians, accompanied by uprisings, rebellions and a mass exodus of Christians, many areas in the Balkans became devastated and depopulated. The Ottoman authorities deliberately, for strategic reasons, transferred to these areas large numbers of already Islamised Slavs, Albanians and Vlachs. Thus North-Western Bosnia, The Sandžak and a good part of Southern Serbia received numerous new, predominantly Muslim settlers.

A notable demographic change also occurred as a result of Ottoman security policies in the Empire's Balkan border areas. Thus the originally Romanian-speaking half-nomadic Vlachs were resettled on purpose along the Northern and Western frontiers of the Bosnian *pashaluk* with Hungary and Austria. This defence-motivated policy created areas with local communities ethnically and socially different from those in the plains of Central Bosnia. Following the Byzantine practice, the Ottomans accorded these Vlachs a special status of *martolos* with several privileges in exchange for military service. With their centuries-long warrior traditions the Vlachs continued for a considerable amount of time to enjoy reduced taxes, the right to bear arms, and to plunder on enemy territory. Their commanders received as compensation grants of income from the *timar* land. Most Vlachs subsequently joined the Orthodox Christian community and became gradually assimilated into the Serb Orthodox confession/nationality.

The almost two centuries-long military confrontation of the Ottomans with Hungarian and Austrian armies, and the termination of the Vlachs' privileges, led to the migration of many Orthodox Vlachs and Serbs from Bosnia. From around 1530 on, a good part of them settled on the other side of the Ottoman border (Voje, 1994: 228-229). This long, previously devastated and depopulated strip of land, twenty to sixty miles wide and a thousand miles long, became the new homeland for mostly Orthodox Christian refugees of Slavic and non-Slavic origin. Between 1527 and 1630 this special zone, officially called the Military Border (*Militärgrenze*), was established and fortified by the Austrian imperial authorities. Its peasant-cum-warrior male population was accorded a status similar to that enjoyed previously on the Ottoman side of the border – no feudal obligations in exchange for military service when needed, the freedom of religion, the right to elect their own captains (*vojvode*) and magistrates (*knezovi*), etc. Armed and equipped by imperial authorities this population became, in some respects, a privileged cast of *kraishniki*, different from the Catholic Croats by religion and culture. Administratively separated from Croatia, this military borderland was placed under direct rule from Vienna. Over time, this minority population of Serbian warriors settled and grew on the territory of Croatia and Slavonia.

The internal conflict potential created and/or strengthened by Ottoman rule was more or less successfully managed by the authorities as long as the Sublime Porte effectively controlled and ruled its domains. Inter-communal tensions and localised rebellions had been resolutely and ruthlessly suppressed by provincial governors and/or by central authorities. The Ottomans' wars with adversarial powers (Persia, Genoa, Venice, Spain, Hungary, Austria, Russia) often generated flare-ups of internal conflicts, mass disorders and uprisings, usually followed by terrifying repression. In suppressing the unrest and uprisings of Christians, the Ottomans had

widely used not only their regular military and security forces, but also Islamised Slavs, Albanians, and Vlachs. This imperial policy poisoned, with a lasting effect, their relations with Christian neighbours and increased the inter-communal conflict potential. Particularly the last century of the decaying Empire, marked by excesses of abusive provincial *pashas* and of corrupt *phanariot* proxies has remained in the collective memory of the Balkan Christians as a dark period of "Ottoman yoke".

The Christian "*Reconquistas*" in the 17th-19th centuries were generally accompanied by the flight of Muslims, often by cruel revenge, retribution, expulsion and in some areas by sheer extermination. Numerous atrocities against the Muslim population were committed by the armies of the new conquerors. The objective was to cause a mass exodus of the Muslims and thoroughly, ethnically cleanse the conquered lands. The destruction of mosques, madrassas and other institutions of Islamic religious and cultural heritage followed. This was true in most of today's Hungary, parts of today's Croatia and Serbia, of Crete and several other Greek islands. An old Ottoman stronghold on the Danube, Belgrade was fully ethnically cleansed of its majority Muslim population after the Ottoman garrison left the Kalemegdan citadel in 1877. Out of about 260 mosques and other Islamic monuments in Serbia's capital, only the citadel and one mosque still stand. And even that mosque was attacked by a crowd of Serbian nationalists in 2004. It is estimated that between 1876 and 1912 about 120.000 Albanian and Turkish refugees fled from the Kingdom of Serbia to Kosovo and Macedonia, which were then still under the Ottomans. Many of their descendants, as well as many other Muslims from other Balkan countries, were later forced to migrate to Turkey.

The Republic of Turkey as the successor state has inherited and with a varying success managed a good part of its controversial imperial legacy. An important part of this legacy in former Ottoman Europe has been the Turkish minorities in four Balkan states. The biggest population in Bulgaria counts about 600.000 members and has been represented in parliament and coalition governments. There are innumerable personal and family ties between Turkish society and the societies in other Balkan states. Turkey's former Foreign and later Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu wrote: "There are more Bosniaks in Turkey than in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more Albanians than in Kosovo, more Chechens than in Chechnya, more Abkhazians than in... Georgia... These conflicts... have a direct impact on domestic politics in Turkey" (Davutoglu, 2010: 3-5). In some respect Turkey has "returned" to the Balkans, but in a very different role than the one played in the past by the Ottomans. Turkey's support for cultural activities and the education of Turkish minorities, and of some other Muslims has been legalised and regulated in its relations with other Balkan states. There is also a network of educational, media, professional and other institutions and activities in the Balkans maintained and carried out by the Gülen

Movement led by Turkish, Muslim preacher Fethullah Gülen, an opponent of President Recip Erdogan. Considerable investment and other activities of Turkish companies – a tool of Turkey's soft power – are present and important today in several Balkan states (Kreci and Sahin, 2016: 6-9). Since 1999-2000 a contingent of the Turkish army has made up part of the NATO-led peace-keeping force in Kosovo (KFOR).

The relevance of Ottoman social and cultural heritage in the Balkans has been, on a number of occasions, evoked by high Turkish officials, including President Recip Erdogan. In 2011 Ahmet Davutoglu elaborated on the five operational principles of Turkey's foreign policy. One of them was to have more cooperative relations and "zero problems" with the country's neighbours. These objectives, however, have not been attained and the proclaimed policy proved to be a failure. Turkey's external (and internal) situation under Erdogan's leadership has appreciably worsened. Turkey today is the only Euroasian state nearly surrounded by acute hot and "frozen conflicts"; at least one of them has spilled over into Turkey in the form of international terrorism. Turkey has strained hostile relations with most of its neighbours. It has been deeply involved in the current civil wars in Syria and Iraq, has a partly contested border with Greece and a closed border with Armenia. Since 1974 the Turkish army has occupied more than a third of the Republic of Cyprus, where in 1983 an internationally unrecognised "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" was proclaimed. Since autumn 2016 Turkey has unlawfully occupied parts of Syria and Iraq. Turkey's support for the Crimean Tatar leaders who oppose Crimea's separation from Ukraine and its reincorporation into Russia remains one of the conflictual points in Turkish and Russian relations. Turkey has played, at best, dubious roles in its relations with radical Islamic movements and groups in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, as well as with the so-called "Islamic State", while its involvement in the 2015-2016 wave of refugees and illegal migrants coming from Turkey through the Balkans toward Northern and Western Europe was suspect. Following an aborted military coup in July 2016, President Erdogan has reversed some of Turkey's policies in the region, trying to mend its relations with its neighbours, the Russian Federation and Israel.

4. The Conflict Potential in the Balkans in the 19th-21st Centuries

The three to five centuries-long Ottoman rule greatly increased the demographic heterogeneity of the Southeast European semi-peninsula for which German geographers invented a name derived from the Turkish word *balkan* (mountain). This name for the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire survived after Ottoman officialdom vanished from most of the area. Later it became the name for the entire peninsula. The Ottomans' salient legacy in the Balkans has remained in the form of an extraordinarily colourful conglomerate of cohabiting ethnic groups, languages,

religions and cultures. At the time of the Ottomans' departure in the late 19th-early 20th century, the degree of this multifaceted heterogeneity was, most probably, by far the highest among all European regions. Unlike the colonisation policies pursued by Austrian, Hungarian and Russian authorities in Vojvodina, Transylvania and the Black Sea area, the Ottomans predominantly transplanted Muslims to the Balkans. The resulting heterogeneity of population has remained high in parts of the region in spite of several waves of subsequent ethnic cleansing and genocide. Spatially, it has featured overlapping groups speaking different languages, practicing different religions and living differently, often combined with distinct social and economic inequalities.

The multifaceted heterogeneity of the population and the post-Ottoman authorities' deliberately divisive policies have provided fertile ground for perennial inter-communal tensions and conflicts. The degeneration, weakening and recession of Ottoman rule, coinciding with the rise of nationalism in all Balkan lands in the 19th-20th centuries, freed a suppressed potential for conflict. Since the assassination in 1831 of the first elected head of liberated Greece, Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, the Balkans have become and remained for more than a century one of the most virulent hotbeds of politically motivated terrorism. The tally of its prominent victims included a score of kings, princes, prime ministers, interior ministers, governors, generals, deputies and other officials and politicians, in practically all the Balkan states.

While the positive elements of Ottoman imperial heritage were quickly forgotten or erased, the negative collective memories of Ottoman rule have remained. They were widely exploited by politicians in post-Ottoman states to incite hatred and retribution not only toward the Turks but also toward all Muslims. Some post-Ottoman rulers managed to contain and manage this conflict potential, while others intentionally exacerbated inter-communal tensions. By the end of the Ottoman dominance in the region, the Balkans had become Europe's "powder keg". In 1908 the Ottoman Empire finally ceded Bosnia to Austro-Hungary and by 1913 lost most of its European possessions. Only about a year later, Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand von Habsburg was assassinated in June 1914 in Sarajevo. Although the perpetrator of this act of terrorism, Serb Gavrilo Princip, was motivated by his opposition to Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ottoman ingredient was clearly discernible in the sparking of a regional crisis, which provoked the outbreak of the First World War. The Balkans became one of its bloody theatres.

Tensions and conflicts between ethnic and religious communities marked by the Ottoman legacy have punctuated the political history of the Balkans in the 20th century. The bloodiest outbreaks of violence have taken the form of interstate conflict and civil wars, partly coinciding with two world wars and reflecting geopoliti-

cal shifts in relations between great powers and their respective alliances. The last wave of mass violence in the Balkans was stimulated by the end of the "Cold War" in Europe and by the breakdown of Yugoslavia. The most intense and violent incidents in the conflict were related to interstate borders and administrative divisions inherited from the Ottomans. Most notable among them were Bosnia's Western and Northern borders – one of the oldest in Europe. These borders were fixed in 1699 by a peace treaty signed at Sremski Karlovci as the borders between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. Prior to the proclamation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence in February 1992, these borders became contested and immediately afterwards were forcefully violated by Serbian and Montenegrin separatists, followed by Croatian separatists, all supported either by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or by the Republic of Croatia. Another former Ottoman border, this time with the Kingdom of Serbia, became, in the late 1990s, the venue of armed conflicts between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albanian Kosovar separatists and NATO. After 2008, the somewhat modified border was central in a political conflict between the Republic of Serbia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo.

Table 1. Intrastate and Interstate Conflicts in Southeast Europe with Ingredients of Ottoman Legacies

Years	Participants	Developments and their outcome
1908	Austro-Hungarian occupation authorities vs. Muslim Bosniaks, Orthodox Serbs	Suppression of resistance followed by unrest and terrorism culminating in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand von Habsburg
1912-1913	Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and Greek armies vs. Ottoman army, Muslims	The First Balkan war and partition of most Ottoman territories in the Balkans
1913	Serbian army vs. Bulgarian army	The Second Balkan war and reapportioning of the conquered Ottoman territory
1914-1918	Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, German armies vs. British, French, Russian, Serbian and Greek armies	The First World War in the Balkans; the Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire
1918-1919	Serbian army vs. Muslim Albanian Kosovars	Suppression of the resistance and subjugation of the Albanian Kosovars
1919-1921	Turkish army vs. Greek Army	Interstate war followed by the exchange of population, and the removal of most Muslims and Turks from Greece

1942-1944	Serbian "Chetniks" vs. Muslim Bosniaks in Bosnia and The Sandžak	Bloody armed clashes
1944-1945	Yugoslav (mostly Serbian) partisans vs. the "Ballists" and other Albanian Kosovar armed formations	Armed violence during the retaking ("liberation") of Kosovo and separating it from Albania
1964-1989	Bulgarian Communist regime vs. Turkish minority and Bulgarian Muslims	Repression of the Turks and *Pomaks*, police violence and massive forced name changes
1980-1981	Serbian police, Yugoslav Army vs. Albanian Kosovar youth demonstrators in Pristina	Suppression of demonstrations carrying the slogan "Kosovo republic" and "Kosovo for the Kosovars"
1988-1999	Serbian police, Yugoslav Army vs. Albanian Kosovar rebels	Police repression, guerrilla warfare and the mass expulsion of Albanian Kosovars and Turks to Macedonia and Albania
1990-1994	Moldovan nationalists vs. Gagauz autonomists	Mostly non-violent political conflict, Gagauz autonomy established
1992-1996	Bosnian Serb separatists vs. Muslim Bosniaks	Terror against and expulsions of Bosniaks from Eastern Bosnia, blockade of Sarajevo and civil war
1992-1994	Croat separatists vs. Muslim Bosniaks	Armed attacks on Bosniaks in Central Bosnia and Herzegovina, civil war
1991-2004	Adjarian Muslims vs. central Georgian authorities	Tensions and numerous conflicts since the 1920s; forced submission of the autonomous Republic of Adjara to Tbilisi's control
2004- 2008	Albanian Kosovars vs. Kosovar Serbs and Serbian nationalists in Serbia proper	Clashes with some victims, destruction of religious buildings and other property
2014-	Crimean Tatars vs Russian authorities	Tensions and protestation against Crimea's reincorporation into Russia

5. Conclusions

The Ottomans' imperial legacy, particularly in the Balkans, is in a number of respects similar to the legacies of Western European colonial powers: a very considerable demographic change and an increase in cultural and religious diversity in colonies and dependencies; a great change in social stratification; new external and internal administrative borders, many of which later became borders of successor states; the creation of a superiority complex, and partly a guilt complex among the

dominant nation, etc. There is, however, a number of differences between the Otto-man and Western European legacies: no racial stratification was brought to the Bal-kans; no representative institutions or modern bureaucracy were introduced; there was no retention of the former imperial language by successor states; there was no stimulation to modern economic development; the was no enhancement of domes-tic political stability, etc. (Abernethy, 2000: 363-386). The biggest contrast, how-ever, between these legacies concerns their religious dimension. Spreading their faith was much more important as a motivation and justification for Ottoman con-quests in Europe than for the Western European powers prior to and during their co-lonial expansion overseas. To a lesser extent, it has been true also of the subsequent imperial policies of the latter in their colonies and dependencies, particularly those of the British, French and Dutch. The Ottomans had purposefully implanted and spread their state religion in the Balkans not only for spiritual and cultural, but also for geo-strategic reasons. The impact of their proselytizing policies in the Balkans was strong and comparable with the Spanish and Portuguese colonial policies after their conquests. However, the Ottomans' Islamic impact has remained geographi-cally limited and globally much less important than the Christianisation implanted and promoted by the Western European colonial powers in the two Americas, Aus-tralia, Africa, and also in Asia.

Largely for the reasons mentioned above, the Balkans for a long time used to differ in one important respect from both the rest of Europe and the Near East. Only in the Balkans and Transcaucasia are there today (four) European states whose be-lievers are mostly Muslims. In Albania the Muslims constitute about 80 percent, and in Kosovo about 90 percent of the total population. In one more Balkan country the Muslims make up a 60 percent majority in the entire state and a still stronger majority in its biggest entity, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is not ac-cidental that the sharpest inter-communal clashes in the Balkans in the 20th century have taken place along the Muslim – Christian divide in ethnically mixed areas. As noted by Dennison Rusinow, the bloodiest conflicts during the wars of Yugoslav succession in the 1990s occurred in areas where the mixes of ethnic, religious and cultural communities changed most under Ottoman rule (Rusinow, 1996: 94-96). In the rest of Europe, the opponents in practically all religiously coloured inter-communal and interstate conflicts for centuries belonged, on both sides, to Chris-tian denominations (Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox). The Near East has experi-enced some sharp conflicts between Muslims and Christians (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt). However, the bloodiest confrontations with, by far, the biggest number of victims have involved Sunni and Shiite Muslims as opponents.

In the last five decades, the difference between the Balkans and Western Eu-rope in the religious coloration of existing or potential inter-communal conflicts has

greatly diminished. This was due to the mass influx to Western Europe of Muslim migrants, mainly from North Africa, the Near and Middle East, and also the Balkans. With new migrants crossing the Mediterranean, the total number of Muslims in Western Europe is approaching twenty million, and has exceeded almost three-fold the corresponding number in the Balkans. Today the populations of Germany, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands contain Muslims at levels between five and ten percent of their total population. Moreover, the potential for inter-communal conflict along the Muslim – Christian divide has been enhanced by urban concentrations of Muslims, their marginalised social and political status, bellow-average income, lower education levels and higher unemployment rates, particularly among the young. The influence of Islamic fundamentalism, the growth of domestic Jihadism in some Western European states among the second or third generation of Muslim migrants and their connections with international Islamist terrorism has increased the potential for conflict. It is estimated that out of about 27.000 volunteers to the "Islamic State" in December 2015, around 5.000 came from Western Europe, chiefly from France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium. This contingent exceeded roughly six-fold the corresponding number of volunteers from the Balkans (*2015 Strategic Survey*, 2016: 166; Gaub, 2016). And so it will probably increase the number of returnees. This threat to the security of some European states was brutally displayed in the terrorist attacks in Madrid, London, Paris, Brussels, Nice, several German towns and elsewhere. Arson and attacks on Muslim migrants in Germany and the growth of anti-Islamic extremism in several Western European countries have confirmed the potency of this challenge. So far no state has tried to act as an external protector of Muslim minorities in Europe, with the exception of Turkey in Cyprus.

Among Muslim migrants in Western Europe there is a sizeable, hundred thousands-strong minority of Shiites from Iran, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. In the areas of their urban concentration there is thus a potential for Shiite – Sunni inter-communal conflicts. Since the 1960s-1970s there have also been other imported inter-communal cleavages in Western Europe. The cleavage between Muslim Arabs and Jews, largely brought from Algeria and Palestine, has expressed itself in numerous terrorist attacks against Jews, including the attack on the Israeli sportsmen at the Olympic games in Munich, as well as desecration of Jewish cemeteries, attacks on Judaic schools and Jewish shops, particularly in France. Another cleavage is between the Turks and the Kurds, who count altogether over three million persons. It has already produced some violence in Germany and might well further escalate if the original conflict in Turkey reaches the level of an outright civil war.

While a good part of Western Europe has thus, in some respect, become "balkanised", former Eastern Europe has been largely spared this phenomenon. This

has been due to very different and restrictive demographic and immigration policies pursued since 1945 by its Communist regimes and also by subsequent post-Communist governments. The four states of the Višegrad group have openly and actively resisted the pressure of migration from the Near East and opposed the policy adopted by the German federal government and the measures proposed by the European Commission.

In the Near East the importance of the Muslim – Christian divide as a source of inter-communal conflicts has diminished due to the dwindling or outright disappearance of often persecuted Christian minorities. The Christians' migration to other countries has increased the differences between the Near East and Western Europe and contributed to the recent influx of Syrian and other Near Eastern refugees and migrants to Europe.

The residual Ottoman legacy, supplemented and partly modified by the impact of post-Ottoman rule, remained an important to notable ingredient in inter-communal and interstate conflicts in the Balkans in the 20th century. The Muslim – Christian divide still remains the most troublesome legacy of Ottoman rule in Cyprus. However, since the end of the "Cold War" and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the Balkans ceased to be one of Europe's "powder kegs". Since the termination of the wars of Yugoslav succession, the Balkans are no longer a hotbed of European terrorism. In several former Ottoman possessions in Europe inter-communal cleavages have become intermixed with interstate conflicts. This partly hidden conflict potential still exists, but its importance as a threat to European security has been greatly reduced, particularly following NATO's interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995) and in Kosovo (1999). The imposition and maintenance of two international protectorates in the Balkans have assured the results of regional pacification. One of the challenges to Europe's security in the form of Islam-related terrorism comes today primarily from Western Europe, and not from the former Ottoman possessions on the continent.

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