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The Vice Sultan:
A. Henry Layard, Ambassador to Constantinople, 1877-1880

by

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ABSTRACT

In 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey and in so doing risked upsetting the balance of power in Europe. Many British decision makers, including Prime Minister Disraeli, were concerned that a Russian victory would result in the disposition of the Ottoman Empire which would have a negative effect on British prestige in Europe and threaten her position in India. Public pressure made it impossible for Britain to assist Turkey. Austen Henry Layard, Britain's Ambassador to Constantinople, working primarily on his own initiative, maintained Britain's influence at the Porte during the war and ensured for Britain and influential place at the table when the European powers negotiated the Treaty of Berlin which followed.
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Lilly and Arthur Price, with love and gratitude.
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Introduction

Historians of nineteenth century British diplomatic history have increasingly come to ignore diplomats, and to overlook the contributions of diplomatic personnel in influencing political decisions both in Whitehall and in the capitals to which they were posted.

This thesis will address this weakness and strengthen our understanding of one major diplomatic event by analysing the role of one British Ambassador who was assigned to represent Britain in Constantinople from 1877-1880. Austen Henry Layard served in this position during a period of extreme diplomatic crisis, specifically the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the subsequent controversial peace negotiations between the European Powers at the Congress of Berlin. This study will illuminate both these events and the British decisions which shaped them.

During the first year of his tenure in Constantinople, decision making in the British Government was in a state of chaos due to disagreements between the members of the government, including the Queen and Prime Minister, over whether British interests were best served by supporting Turkey, supporting Russia, or remaining neutral and
supporting no-one. The consistency of policy was further disrupted by a volatile public opinion which swung from a strong anti-Turkish feeling to one in its favour. Consequently, Layard had to decide for himself how to represent Britain's interests in Constantinople,- indeed, to determine their nature, and to act on his instincts to ensure the protection of those interests.

Ultimately, Layard's tenacity of purpose enabled him to shape the creation of policy in Whitehall and Westminster, which increased Britain's prestige in Europe. Yet historians have given his contribution little more than a glancing mention, and no work has specifically addressed it.

The first chapter of this thesis describes the historical context of the Eastern Question throughout the nineteenth century and up to the outbreak of the 1877 war. European statesmen believed that the deteriorating ability of the Ottoman Sultans to control their vast Empire could have a significant impact on the European nations. They wished to ensure that no one nation would benefit disproportionately, thereby risking the security of any others. Britain and Austria were particularly concerned that Turkey's collapse would be Russia's gain. Despite clause XI of the Treaty of Paris of 1856 which prohibited the European powers from
interfering in Turkey's internal administration, when an insurrection broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1876, Russia moved quickly to pressure Turkey for reforms in that area and, with the co-operation of Austria-Hungary, made the question a continent-wide concern. Within a few months the insurrection had spread to Bulgaria where it was brutally suppressed. Stories of the methods employed by the Turks were published in European newspapers and were used by the Opposition British Liberal party to embarrass the government. They alleged that the government and its Ambassador in Constantinople, Sir Henry Elliot, a recognised Turcophile, had been too lax in putting pressure on the Porte to reform its treatment of its Christian subjects. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach an agreement for reform between the Porte and the European nations in which Sir Henry was again criticised for a lack of energy, Elliot was recalled to England and replaced by Austen Henry Layard.

The second chapter provides a profile of Austen Henry Layard, his character, his background and his experience; all of which combined perfectly to qualify him for the challenges which he would face. Layard spent his childhood with his expatriat family in Italy, France and Switzerland. His boyhood experiences and acquaintances provided him with a liberal arts education and liberal ideas of democracy. As a
young man, he travelled alone across the Ottoman Empire to Baghdad and, as a result of this experience, was given employment by Sir Stratford Canning, the legendary Ambassador to Constantinople. The knowledge that he gained in this apprenticeship and the friendships which he made, particularly among the young liberal Turks, led him to have a great fondness for and understanding of the Turks which were both important factors in his diplomatic posting. Following his years working in the Embassy, Layard embarked on an archaeological career in Mesopotamia. His published reports and the media stories covering his discovery and excavation of the site of the ancient city of Nineveh gave him a celebrity status in Britain. This prompted Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen to appoint him to the position of Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Layard subsequently ran for and won a Parliamentary seat in the 1852 election.

As a parliamentarian, Layard was outspoken and openly critical of the government and the Prime Minister's conduct during the Crimean War. He worked hard with others to achieve administrative reform in government and was successful in moving government policy toward employment by merit in the civil service, rather than family connection alone.
Following his years as a Parliamentarian, in 1869, Layard was appointed British Ambassador to Madrid during a period of political unrest in Spain. This appointment lasted until his transfer to Constantinople in April 1877.

Chapter three deals specifically with Layard's tenure in Constantinople during the Russo-Turkish war; his contribution to the decisions of the British government; and his role in formulating policy - directly by virtue of the information which he provided to the government and indirectly via his secret correspondence with Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Lytton, the Viceroy to India. This section also deals with his influence at the Porte, both on the Sultan and on the Ottoman Ministers.

Layard's importance during this period was two-fold: first, by maintaining British influence and prestige at the Porte in spite of the chaos in decision making; and, second by exerting his influence on the Sultan to agree to cede Cyprus to Britain in a secret agreement which was reached immediately prior to the opening of the Congress at Berlin. This coup was intended to ensure that Britain would have a military base in the Eastern Mediterranean from which it could provide protection for Asiatic Turkey, thereby securing the overland route to India. It had the effect of also
modifying the focus of the Berlin Congress from that of providing for the disposition of the Turkish Empire in Europe to that of a group of imperialistic nations seeking to benefit by the Ottoman weakness.

Many of the early historians dealing with this period such as Sir Charles Webster, Harold Temperley and R.W. Seton-Watson were heavily influenced by their political and imperial philosophies and this influence is reflected in their work. Bearing this in mind, they still provide a great deal of useful information and other early works, such as William Moneypenny and George Buckle's *Life of Disraeli*, are particularly useful for the lengthy quotations from sources such as Disraeli's correspondence. Their focus is a traditional one in which the statesmen are given credit, or blame, for creating and carrying out all foreign policy. Layard is seldom mentioned except by Seton-Watson whose admiration for Gladstone causes him to criticise Layard as a biased Turcophile who should not have been given the appointment.

Richard Millman's *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875-1878* is the first work on the period which refers to Layard's involvement during the events of 1877-80, although without giving him due credit for his contribution. A portion of
Layard's autobiography together with many of his early letters was published posthumously in 1903. Unfortunately it ends with his appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid, but it provides excellent insights into his early attitudes toward Turkey and his development as a man of strong principles. The hand written later section remains in the British Library. In 1963 Gordon Waterfield had the patience required to investigate these heavily damaged notes. He incorporates much of the information contained in them in his biography Layard of Nineveh.

Edward Ingram has explored a number of aspects of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century in his several books and has also edited collections of the writings of other historians dealing with this period. The distance in time between Ingram and the traditional historians of this period enabled him to develop a different perspective on Anglo-Turkish relations, based on the primary importance to British prestige of the protection of India.

There is a shortage of information explicitly dealing with the realities of political decision making and the role of diplomatic personnel during this period and it is my hope this this work will shed a glimmer of light on that area.
Chapter I

For most of the century following 1814, the leaders of the nations of Europe were determined to maintain a lasting peace among the powers but this goal was threatened by a number of factors, among which were changes in the power of states; an increasing disparity between liberal democracies and autocratic systems; the growth of nationalism; and the instability of the Ottoman Empire. The emerging power of public opinion also affected decisions, and diplomats, such as Sir Henry Elliot in Constantinople, learned to their cost that government policy could be changed or paralysed when public outcry became sufficiently vocal.

Between 1875 and 1878 the Great Powers of Europe experienced a diplomatic crisis precipitated by events in the Ottoman-controlled provinces of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. On April 24, 1877 that crisis exploded when Russia declared war on Turkey. Although the other European powers did not become militarily involved in this war, it forced them to reconsider the long simmering Eastern Question: If the Ottoman Empire were to collapse, what should be done regarding the disposition of its territory? It was important to the powers to retain a balance of power in Europe, and an unequal distribution of Ottoman territory among the powers was likely to upset that balance. None of the other European
powers was prepared to become actively involved in the Russo-
Turkish War of 1877 but they watched closely, as they had
watched developments in Ottoman Turkey for the previous seven
decades, to ensure that the outcome did not impinge on any of
their interests.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Eastern
Question frequently intruded on the time and attention of
European governments and the members of their diplomatic
corps. The vulnerability of the Ottoman Empire was exposed
in the 1770s and 1780s when Russian armies first penetrated
the Balkans, and again in 1798 when Napoleon invaded Egypt
and marched on Syria. The subsequent successful rebellion
for independence in Greece drew Europe’s attention once again
to the Sultan’s inability to maintain control over his
disparate lands, and the empire began to be referred to with
increasing frequency as ‘the sick old man of Europe.’ The key
question was ‘When will the sick old man die?’

Each of the Great Powers had specific individual
concerns regarding the dissolution of the Empire. At the
Congress of Vienna in 1815 they had agreed that it was
collectively in their best interests to maintain the empire’s
gerographical integrity for as long as possible, rather than
to risk the unpredictable consequences of attempting to
partition it. The European states system which was
established at the Congress of Vienna rejected the hegemony of one power, of warfare and of revolution.¹ In order to maintain an equilibrium between powers, the Treaty of Vienna designated a new international order based on binding treaties and acknowledged rights, in which there could exist a ‘Balance of Power’ under which no individual power would expand its territory without the others having an opportunity for equal expansion. Any aggression would be forestalled by a Congress System under which all the powers would provide mediation. The treaty designated that there were five equal great powers, England, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria and it established a principle by which these powers had a right of protection over the small states of Europe. The primary objective of the powers was to establish ‘a permanent peace, founded upon a just re-partition of force between its states and containing in its stipulations the pledge of its durability.’²

Balance, stability and peace were threatened by the possible collapse of the Ottoman Empire, either due to an invasion and takeover by another country or to the revolution and self-declared independence of its many provinces. Russia was the obvious primary heir to the largest portion of the Ottoman Empire - in Europe because of the ideal of a
brotherhood of Slavic states under the influence of Russia, and in Asia because of the shared borders between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. If that inheritance should be realized not only would the balance of power in Europe be endangered, but the occupation by Russia of Constantinople would give her a port on the Eastern Mediterranean, and, so British statesmen came to believe, threaten Britain's occupation of India and her access to the sub-continent via both the overland and Suez Canal routes.

In 1815 Britain and Russia were the strongest powers in Europe. They worked closely together at the Congress of Vienna but the differences between them were too great to enable them to sustain a partnership. They were forced to recognize their fundamental differences in 1820 when Czar Alexander I attempted to persuade England to join in suppressing a revolution in Spain. As an autocratic ruler, the Czar feared that the dissemination of liberal ideas could produce a similar revolution in Russia as had taken place in France. As a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, Britain had a different outlook and many of her government members, including Lord Castlereagh, Britain's Foreign Minister, subscribed to liberal philosophies. On May 5, 1820 Castlereagh responded to the Czar with a statement of general principles which he later declared was the foundation of his foreign policy. In it he eschewed interference in the
internal affairs of other European countries; expressed support for the European system as established in 1815; and refused to act 'upon abstract and speculative Principles of Precaution.' Thus, whereas Britain had little role in the internal affairs of the German or Italian states, she became very active in the diplomacy of rebellion in Iberia, the low countries and the Balkans.

The realization of the importance to British interests of Turkish integrity metamorphosed over the course of several decades. William Pitt the Younger recognised that British interests were best protected by ensuring the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, rather than by allowing Russia to expand at Turkey's expense. In the 1790s he advocated sending assistance to Turkey to stop Russian advances in the Black Sea, but he was prevented from doing so by Edmund Burke and Lord Grey, both members of the Opposition, who advocated balance-of-power politics. They argued that, despite the Ottoman Empire's holdings in Europe, the Turkish Empire was wholly Asiatic and had no place in the European system. Although Pitt was initially defeated in his attempt to include a concern for the Ottoman Empire in British foreign policy, recognition by both the British people and the British government of Turkey's importance to Britain increased with Napoleon's attack on Egypt.
In the 1820s both Foreign Minister Castlereagh and his successor Lord Canning subscribed to the policy of non-interference in Ottoman affairs. They appreciated the importance to Britain of Ottoman geographical integrity and neither advocated assisting the Greeks in their War of Independence, nor were they under any public pressure to do so. In 1823 the British government went so far as to label the Greek rebels as belligerents. The government reversed this policy when public opinion became outraged at reports of Turkish atrocities against the Greeks.

The standard Ottoman policy for punishing revolt was massacre, and the reprisals for the April, 1821 slaughter by the Greeks of their Turkish landlords in the Peloponnese was met with swift and horrific reprisals. The leading Greek citizens and church fathers in the area were beheaded and the ageing head of the Orthodox Church was hanged from the gate of his palace in Constantinople on Easter Sunday. Executions also took place in the Danubian Provinces, Rhodes, Crete, Smyrna and Cyprus where close to 500 leading churchmen were systematically hanged over a period of days in July of the same year. On the island of Chios the population was reduced from 113,000 to 1,800.6 In 1824 the highly romanticized death of the English poet Lord Byron during the heroic Greek defence of Missolonghi and the threat of extermination of the
Greeks by the Egyptian armies of Mehemet Ali raised pro-Greek sentiment to such a high level throughout Europe and the United States that volunteers, weapons, money, and public pressure on all governments resulted in a reversal of British policy. Britain, France and Russia openly supported the Greek cause, destroyed the Egyptian and Ottoman fleets, and were instrumental in negotiating the creation of the independent Kingdom of Greece.

In 1829, however, after Russian armies pressed through to the gates of Adrianople and drove Turkey to sign the treaties of Turkmanchay and Adrianople, Britain was forced to consider how it could defend India from Russia. The Duke of Wellington, as Prime Minister, responded by introducing the series of policy initiatives in the Middle East which became the foundation for the Great Game in Asia. His plan, formulated in conjunction with Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control for India, was to turn the Middle East and Central Asia into a cordon sanitaire, a zone of buffer states stretching from Turkey through Persia. His objective was that Britain and Russia would agree to the frontiers of these states and guarantee their independence, thereby allowing Britain the security she needed to construct stable political and military frontiers in India. In effect, in 1830 Wellington shifted the responsibility for defending British India from the government of India to the Home
government. This policy continued to be followed by successive governments whose foreign policies regarding the Ottoman Empire remained consistent for several decades.

Lord Palmerston was appointed to the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Whig government which succeeded Wellington in late 1830. His early attention was focussed on European issues and he was relatively unconcerned about Turkish affairs until Mehemet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, threatened to overthrow the Sultan in 1832-33. Following this, the first Mehemet Ali crisis, Palmerston made the support of Ottoman integrity a fundamental part of British foreign policy.

In 1831 Mehemet Ali began a revolt against the Sultan. When he began to take over land beyond the borders of Egypt, Palmerston was prepared to accept his victories as an indication that the time had come for the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The Czar of Russia supported the Sultan against Mehemet. By mid 1832 Palmerston had realised his missed opportunity but he was unable to convince his colleagues in government to provide the Sultan with military assistance. With Russia's help, the Sultan defeated the rebels and, as a gesture of gratitude, entered into the Treaty of Unk iar Skelessi, an eight year mutual defence pact which effectively made Russia the military protector of the
Ottoman Empire. Britain realised too late the importance of maintaining an influential position at the Porte. Six years later the British had a chance to recover their lost position and this time Palmerston was determined not to miss the opportunity.

In 1839, when the second Mehemet Ali crisis arose, Palmerston moved quickly to prevent Russia from exploiting the situation and gaining even greater ascendancy in Turkey. When his colleagues in government hesitated to join Russia, Prussia and Austria in supporting Turkey at the expense of alienating France, who had provided military assistance and advice to Mehemet Ali, Palmerston submitted a letter of resignation in which he summarized his concerns regarding the Ottoman Empire:

The ultimate results of [declining to proceed with Russia, Prussia and Austria and without France] will be the practical division of the Turkish Empire into two separate and independent states, whereof one will be the dependency of France and the other a satellite of Russia; and in both of which our political influences will be annulled, and our commercial interests will be sacrificed; and this dismemberment will inevitably give rise to local conflicts and struggles and conflicts which will involve the Powers of Europe in most serious disputes.12

Palmerston felt so strongly about maintaining Britain's position at the Porte that he was prepared to risk a war with France, rather than a division of the Ottoman Empire. He persuaded the government to accept his point of view and
Mehemet Ali's forces were once again repulsed. On July 13, 1841 the Great Powers agreed that the Straits would be closed to all warships during peacetime, thereby reducing any particular Russian advantage at the Porte.

Despite their differences, Britain and Russia had once again worked closely together, without France, toward a common goal and in late 1840 Czar Nicholas attempted to persuade Britain to enter into a secret alliance with Russia against France. In his reply of January 11, 1841 Palmerston outlined the principles by which British diplomacy was governed. In essence they reflected the same principles which Castlereagh had provided to the previous Czar twenty years earlier. They included a stipulation that Britain would not interfere in the domestic arrangements of other nations, unless those arrangements would result in the promotion of 'external aggression.' Britain would also not be drawn into agreements based on possible future occurrences which would thereby bind future Parliaments. He was also explicit in setting out the one occasion when Britain would be likely to act:

But an attempt of one Nation to seize and to appropriate to itself territory which belongs to another Nation, is a different matter; because such an attempt leads to a derangement of the existing Balance of Power, and by altering the relative strength of States, may tend to create changes to other Powers; and such attempts therefore the British government holds itself at full liberty to resist, upon the universally acknowledged principle of self defence.
These principles remained fundamental to British foreign policy into the twentieth century, and they contributed to a dramatic development in the Eastern Question.

In 1853 Britain and Russia became opposing belligerents as the result of a dispute in the Ottoman Empire between Russia and France. France and Russia each sought guardianship of the Christian holy places in Jerusalem and each pressured the Porte to recognize its claim. Russia also demanded the right to act as protector of the Ottoman Empire’s approximately twelve million Orthodox subjects. When her demands were refused, a Russian army invaded the Turkish controlled Danubian provinces and in October 1853 Turkey declared war on Russia. On November 30 the Russians destroyed the Turkish fleet in the Bay of Sinope and more than 3000 Turks were killed. News reports in Europe contained emotional accounts of ‘the massacre of Sinope’ which contained descriptions of helpless shipwrecked Turkish sailors being peppered with grapeshot as they tried to swim to shore, and a storm of anti-Russian public opinion was unleashed in Britain and in France. All the major British newspapers called for Britain to avenge the outrage, thereby putting the government under severe pressure. Despite the growing war fever and the divisions within the Cabinet as to the best policy to pursue, Britain continued to participate
with the other European powers to try to reach a diplomatic solution which would end the war. All attempts were unsuccessful, however, and on March 27, 1854 France declared war on Russia, followed on the 28th by Britain. The reason given was that the integrity and independence of Turkey was necessary for continued equilibrium in Europe, without which European safety was endangered, and ‘it would be impossible to maintain that independence if Russia was allowed unchecked and uninterrupted to impose her own terms upon Turkey.’

Public opinion had been a major factor in pushing Britain into the war, the popularity of which remained constant during its early months. Housing projects built at the time, not only in London but in villages throughout the country, still bear the names of Crimean battles: Sevastopol, Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman, and Scutari. However, public opinion is prone to extreme and rapid changes. At the end of 1855 such a change took place, due apparently to the receipt by The Times of hundreds of letters from officers and their families begging that the truth be told about the horrific conditions to which British soldiers were exposed in the Crimea. Stories of inept military leadership and the unnecessary deaths of thousands of soldiers from cold, hunger and disease resulted in calls for change. The Russians were in an equally bad way and the French were only slightly better off. Militarily, the war was at a stalemate. Fighting
was effectively bogged down and neither side made any real progress during the winter of 1855-56. On February 28 an armistice was declared and the powers met in Paris to negotiate terms of peace.

The Treaty of Paris which officially concluded the Crimean war on March 30, 1856 admitted Turkey for the first time to the Public Law of Europe; recognized it as a European State; and guaranteed its integrity and independence as being necessary for the peace of Europe. In the hope of reforming Turkey's attitude toward its Christian subjects, Article IX of the treaty included Sultan Abdül Mejid's 'generous intentions toward the Christian population of his Empire' and referred to an Imperial decree called a Firman issued on February 18, 1856 which promised for 'each sect, whatever the number of adherents, entire freedom in the exercise of its Religion.' Article IX also included the statement that 'It is clearly understood that [this Treaty] cannot, in any case, give to the said Powers the right to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations of His Majesty the Sultan with his subjects, or in the Internal Administration of his Empire.' The European powers hoped that, in an environment of peace and security, Turkey would have the stability and encouragement she needed to solve her internal problems, strengthen her administration and reform the way in which her people, particularly the Christian
population, were treated, and that as a result she would continue as a viable entity and a bulwark against Russian expansion.

From the Turkish perspective, the two middle quarters of the nineteenth century were a period of reform and westernization which they called the Tanzimat. The need for reform was initially recognized by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) who realized that modernization of the Turkish army was essential if the Ottoman Empire was to survive. In addition to military reform, Mahmud created new institutions within the government to centralize his administration under a more effective civil service. Having established a need for trained officers and civil servants, the Sultan reformed the education system by reviving established naval and military schools and establishing new post secondary institutions. He also actively encouraged Turkish students to study abroad. The majority of these students went to Paris and returned with ideas which they acquired by reading the philosophers of the Enlightenment. They became the reformers who prepared both the Constitution of 1876 and the Tanzimat in which was incorporated their belief in equality before the law for all citizens and a penal code which was independent of the Holy Law of Islam.

By 1856 Turkey had agreed with the European powers to
seven principles regarding the status of the Ottoman Empire.

They were:

- Preservation of the Ottoman Empire;
- Equality of all Ottoman subjects;
- Ottoman membership in the concert of Europe;
- The preservation of legitimate sovereign regimes and opposition to nationalist rebellion;
- The upholding of international law;
- Respect for the sanctity of treaties;
- Non intervention in Ottoman domestic affairs.

These principles provided Ottoman statesmen and diplomats with the opportunity to defend their empire's integrity using the same language and the same principles as the other powers. In practice, the other states did not always respect all the principles, particularly the seventh, and in the long run they did not save the Empire, but they helped to prolong its life and made it a more comfortable participant in the European system. By joining the Concert of Europe in 1856 the Ottoman Empire redefined herself from an Islamic state to a multinational secular state.

There is no evidence to suggest that Sultan Abdul Medjid was not sincere in his commitment to reform within his empire. Throughout his reign (1839-61) he had shown himself to be a humane man who was fond of order and in favour of modernization, but opposition by the pashas who governed the
various provinces which made up the Empire, rendered his edicts effectively useless and for the last years of his reign the Sultan resigned himself to a life of self indulgent pleasures.

Internal corruption in the Ottoman Empire increased after Abdul Aziz, the brother of Abdul Mejid, ascended the throne in 1861. Abdul Aziz was a savage reactionary. Fortunately the chief ministers in the early days of his reign, Fuad Pasha and Aali, worked together to successfully limit the worst of his excessive cruelty but their influence did not extend to convincing the Sultan to enact any kind of reform in the Empire, nor were they able to control the Sultan’s profligate spending which ultimately brought his empire to the brink of bankruptcy.

Prior to 1856 Turkey was debt free but the opening of the Dardanelles following the Crimean War brought foreign commerce which was accompanied by access to foreign loans. Of the 38 clauses of the Hatti Humayun of 1856 the only one which was effective was the last clause which stressed the necessity of ‘profiting by the science, knowledge and capital of Europe.’ In reality it was Europe which set out to profit by Turkey. By 1861 the Ottoman Empire had become the target for speculators and promoters of all kinds. Their scattering of baksheesh to Turkish officials combined with hefty bribes
to the pashas increased the internal corruption of the Sublime Ottoman Porte but did not promote better conditions for the Empire’s population or any significant benefit to its economic welfare and development. The Sultan borrowed heavily in order to indulge his passion for building, enlarging his harem and collecting jewels.

By 1875 the total foreign debt had reached £200,000,000 on which £12,000,000 interest was due annually, nearly three-fifths of the entire Imperial revenue. On October 7, 1875 Abdul Aziz suspended half the payments on Turkey’s debt and six months later, he suspended the other half. Thirty percent of this debt was in British hands. The increasingly fragile financial position of the Porte contributed to ever greater pressure on her subjects to provide more tax revenue, although the money which was due in taxes was often diverted from the Imperial coffers due to inefficiency, dishonesty and the continued practice of tax farming.

In July 1875 a group of Christian Herzegovinian peasants staged a tax revolt against their Moslem landlords, a not unusual event in the history of the Ottoman Empire in which misgovernment and tyranny contributed to the desperate reactions of its citizens. In this case, however, the revolt spread into neighbouring Bosnia, fuelled by assistance from fellow Christians living in Montenegro and in the semi-
independent principality of Serbia. Within a short time clashes were breaking out between the Serbian army and Turkish troops sent to put down the rebellion. As the revolt grew and spread south of her border, it showed no sign of abating and Austria-Hungary became concerned about the impact that it could have on her own empire whose population included many thousands of Slavs. She was also concerned about its effect on Russian policy.

A movement known as Pan-Slavism had been increasing in popularity during the previous forty years. Originally conceived by Slovak academics in the 1830s as a means of unifying the Slavic peoples through their common Orthodox religion, by the 1860s and 1870s its strongest features were its political and racial bases, under which its promoters advocated that a great federation of Slavic peoples should be formed under the leadership of Russia. There was also a strong suggestion that the federation would include some other Eastern European non-Slavs such as the Greeks, Magyars and Romanians. This was a particularly threatening concept for Austria whose polyglot empire consisted of large Slavic and Magyar populations. Austria's foreign minister, Count Julius Andrássy, was a Magyar aristocrat who was opposed to extending Austria-Hungary's boundaries in a way which would increase the Slavic population of the Empire, thereby posing a possible threat to the Magyar position of power. He also
did not want another Slavic country on Austria's southern border which would be likely to ally itself with Russia and which could become a focus for disaffected Austrian Slavs. For Andrassy and for Austria-Hungary, the best solution was to leave the Balkans in Turkish control.

Despite the provisions of the Treaty of Paris which precluded European nations from interfering in the internal affairs of Turkey, Count Andrassy felt that such interference was warranted by the danger to Austria-Hungary which would result from allowing the revolt to continue. In an effort to restore peace in the Balkans and maintain the territorial status quo he drafted a proposal for reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina which he proposed that the Powers jointly present to the Sultan for his consideration and action. It was circulated on December 30, 1875 and was unanimously accepted, although with some hesitation on the part of Britain whose lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the note proved to be well founded. Nevertheless, Britain did agree to support the plan when requested to do so by Turkey. The Andrassy Note was accepted by the Turkish government in February 1876. The rebels, however, continued to fight, the reforms were not enacted, and Russian sympathy for the rebel cause increased.

There was a growing possibility of a Russian-Austrian conflict in the Balkans. On May 13 1876 in an effort to
avoid this conflict, Andrassy and Russian Foreign Minister Prince Alexander Gorchakov drafted another proposal, the Berlin Memorandum, which also contained suggestions for reform but this time also included an implied threat of action against the Porte if a settlement was not achieved. Britain refused to sanction the Memorandum because Disraeli objected to the fact that Britain, France and Italy were excluded from the Berlin deliberations and were only asked afterward to concur. Prime Minister Disraeli also felt that the terms being imposed on the Sultan were impossible to complete in the time allowed and, therefore, as he wrote to the Cabinet:

The hope of restoring tranquility by these means being in Mr. Disraeli's opinion, groundless, we should then be asked to 'join in taking more efficacious measures in the interests of peace' which it is supposed, means taking more efficacious measures to break up the Empire.28

Disraeli supported Britain's Crimean policy of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which he believed was vital to British imperial interests. Nevertheless, he was once again obliged to support the Memorandum when it was accepted by Turkey and when the Sultan requested that Britain do so.

There was no public objection to the Cabinet's decision not to sanction the Berlin proposals but another event in Eastern Europe was about to focus the attention of public
opinion throughout Europe on the Eastern Question. Just as the 'massacre of Sinope' had directed European public outrage against Russia, another reported massacre directed similar outrage against Turkey.

On June 23, 1876 the Daily News, a London newspaper with a record of support for William Gladstone and the Liberal party, published a sensational report of massacres and other atrocities which it declared had been committed in a remote part of southern Bulgaria. According to this report, Circassian Moslems and Turkish irregular forces known as Bashi Bazouks had brutally massacred 30,000 Bulgarian Christians, including old men, women and children, had destroyed over 100 villages, had raped and enslaved women and girls, and had committed equally horrible outrages.29

Three days later W.E. Forster, a Liberal Member of Parliament, asked the government for confirmation of the story. Disraeli replied that there had been an outbreak of violence in the area and that villages had been burned, but that this violence was perpetrated by persons from outside the country and was between those persons and some Bashi Bazouks, rather than having been directed against Bulgarian Christians. He assured Mr. Forster that as a result of the intervention at the Porte by British Ambassador Sir Henry Elliot, regular troops had been sent to the area and the
situation had been brought under control. This response demonstrates some confusion on Disraeli’s part, indicating that he was either not well briefed about the situation, or he did not consider that the report of yet another Turkish massacre was likely to become a political concern in Britain. It was most likely the latter, as Disraeli’s response appears to incorporate some of the information which was contained in a report from Elliot, in which he stated that an insurrection had broken out in Bulgaria, probably instigated by Serbian agents who wanted to distract the Turks from their war with Serbia; some Turkish officials had been killed and reprisals had been swiftly and brutally undertaken by the irregular forces. Early reports from the Porte to Elliot did not contain information about the extent of these reprisals. Therefore, even though Sir Henry had been given the same information as had the Daily News, he considered that information to be simply unconfirmed rumour and did not include it in his dispatch. In view of Disraeli’s continuing casual approach to questions, it is unlikely that he would have responded differently if Elliot had included an account of the rumours of the extent of the atrocities.

During the following weeks the London papers continued to publish stories of atrocities against Christians in Bulgaria and the Opposition continued to question the government. Disraeli did not respond well to the questions
and dismissed the stories as 'coffee house babble.' By July 10 he had been briefed and was able to acknowledge the existence of 'proceedings of an atrocious character' but denied that there had been torture as 'Oriental people seldom resort to torture but generally terminate their connexion with culprits in a more expeditious manner.' He appeared perplexed when the House responded with laughter. Those seated close to him heard him mutter angrily, 'What is there to laugh at?'

Disraeli did not intend his remark to be taken as facetious or cynical, but those who opposed him in Parliament and outside often quoted this statement during the following months in an effort to discredit him.

The flood of media interest and public indignation did not diminish and on July 17 Disraeli delivered a lengthy statement in the House of Commons. In it he quoted from the dispatches of Sir Henry Elliot regarding the situation in Bulgaria, beginning with the first news of violence in the area and specifying what action Sir Henry had taken in response to that news.

On May 15, 1876 Sir Henry reported that violence had broken out in the area around Philippopoulis when revolutionary agents, believed to be from Serbia, burned and ravaged villages, both Muslem and Christian, if their inhabitants refused to join in the revolution. Local
authorities reacted quickly by enrolling and arming the Bashi Bazouks and other volunteers. As a result there prevailed there a guerilla warfare of local vengeance and personal passion. But all this time our Consuls...were in communication with the Ambassador and the Ambassador...was using his influence with the Turkish government to prevent as much as he possibly could, these distressing scenes. There is no doubt, from the evidence before the House, that acts on both sides, as necessarily would be the case under such circumstances, were equally terrible and atrocious.\textsuperscript{34} Disraeli also noted that an investigation was being undertaken by Vice Consul Hutton Dupuis who was stationed at Andrianople, accompanied by Mr. Walter Baring, a member of the Embassy staff.\textsuperscript{35}

Disraeli's well drafted statement should have reassured the country that the Government understood the situation and was acting in a responsible manner within the confines of appropriate diplomatic behaviour. He acknowledged that there had been brutalities, but set them in a framework of partisan war, rather than the massacre of innocent people; he assured Members that Britain's representative had done everything possible to end the horror and punish the perpetrators; he laid statements before the House from impartial witnesses indicating that the newspaper reports had been greatly exaggerated; and he promised an independent British investigation. Had he made a similar statement when the story was first reported, the overwhelming public reaction might have been averted. As it was, not only had the public
been exposed to three weeks of atrocity stories in the press but the lack of specificity in the Government’s response and the seemingly off-hand responses to the Opposition’s inquiries resulted in severe public criticism of both the Government and Disraeli. A major contributing factor to the public outrage was Gladstone’s involvement.

On September 6, 1876 Gladstone published a sixty-four page pamphlet entitled Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East in which he denounced the Turks and criticised the Disraeli government for its lack of action. The pamphlet caused a sensation. It is estimated that over 200,000 copies were sold, 40,000 of them within the first few days. Anti-Turkish agitators organized mass demonstrations throughout the country. A typical demonstration was held on September 9, in which 10,000 people gathered on Blackheath to listen to Gladstone’s exhortations. Disraeli and Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary were determined not to react to the public pressure by reversing the government’s policy toward Turkey. Disraeli cautioned Derby ‘not to act as if you were under the control of public opinion...they won’t respect you for doing it’ and wrote to Sir Stafford Northcote ‘...no member of the Government should countenance the idea that we are hysterically ‘modifying’ our policy, in consequence of the excited state of the public mind. If such an idea gets about, we shall become contemptible.’ Nevertheless, the
extent of the agitation had so inflamed public opinion that it significantly limited the government's ability to react internationally during the next fifteen months, a situation which particularly angered and frustrated Disraeli.

Disraeli's initial anger was directed at Sir Henry Elliot, and the circumstances which followed demonstrated the peculiar problems which were attached to the position of British Ambassador to Constantinople. On August 15 Disraeli wrote to Lord Derby 'Elliot has many excellent qualities, both moral and intellectual, but he has no energy. His conduct has seriously compromised and damaged the Government, and the more that is done now by him to redeem the situation, the more evident he makes it that all this should have been done months ago.'

Elliot's failure in the eyes of his political masters was due to his lack of understanding of political reality and the power of public opinion to affect government policy. These were shortcomings which would not hamper his successor, Layard. Sir Henry was criticised and eventually recalled from his post because he did not react with greater alarm to the stories of atrocities during the suppression of the Bulgarian revolt. When his actions are viewed against Britain's official policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Turkey, however, this criticism can be seen to be unfair
and excessive. For Sir Henry to have reacted in any other way would have been inconsistent with his previous instructions and with his previous actions, actions which were accepted and approved by the Foreign Office, by Derby and by Disraeli.

Elliot's interpretation of his duty in Constantinople was to refrain from interfering in Turkey's internal administration and to discourage, whenever possible, such interference from other European governments. This was in keeping with stated government policy. On July 4, 1875 as the revolt spread from Herzegovina to neighbouring Bosnia, Elliot recommended to Derby that Britain's traditional policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire was 'the safest and least likely to lead to dangerous complications.' Derby wrote, 'Concur in view as to policy of interference of Great Britain in all matters in which it can properly be exercised.' In accordance with this policy, Elliot urged the Porte not to let foreign opinion hamper 'the adoption of such measures as might seem necessary to prevent an extension of the spirit of insubordination [from Bosnia-Herzegovina].' On August 12 Derby told Sir Henry that the insurrection should be put down as quickly as possible and foreign interference avoided. Disraeli revealed his own private feeling on August 20 'If we were dealing with anyone but the Turks the failure of the insurrection would not only
be certain but immediate...it ought not to last but the want of energy at Constantinople is superhuman.'

Lord Tenterden, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, expressed similar sentiments in a memorandum dated August 21: 'The Turks] had much better have relied on their own power and suppressed the insurrection with a firm hand, as we advised them; but what can be expected of such a wretched system of personal Government except incapacity and consequent irresolution.'

At the time of these exchanges other European Powers were taking a more active interest in ending the Bosnian revolt. At the instigation of Russia and Austria all the Continental Powers had agreed to instruct their Consuls in the area under revolt to attempt to mediate between the Christian insurgents and the Turkish government. At first Savfit Pasha, the Grand Vizier, resisted the suggestion and reminded the Europeans that interference in the internal administration of the Ottoman Empire breached the conditions of the Treaty of Paris, but when he realized that Russia, Austria, Germany, France, and Italy had all agreed to participate, he requested that Britain also instruct her Consuls to become involved, probably because, as Lord Tenterden pointed out, '...we are probably the only Power on whom the Porte can at all depend for honest counsel or support.' Nevertheless, Britain's reluctance to break with her traditional stance of not interfering in Turkey's
internal affairs was clear in the instructions which were sent to Elliot:

Her Majesty's Government consent to this step with reluctance as they doubt the expediency of the intervention of foreign Consuls. Such an intervention is scarcely compatible with the independent authority of the Porte over its own territory offers an inducement to insurrection as a means of appealing to foreign sympathy against Turkish rule, and may not improbably open the way to further diplomatic interference in the internal affairs of the Empire.48

In an effort to forestall any further foreign interference, Elliot pressed Safvet and the Sultan to enact prompt, thorough reforms throughout the Empire. On October 2 the Sultan issued an imperial decree in which he ordered the reforms which Elliot had suggested to be enacted. This was followed by another decree on December 12 which extended the reforms to include free exercise of religion and equality between all Ottoman subjects. He was too late. Imperial decrees which promised reform had been issued many times before but without a plan of enforcement, they were ineffective, futile gestures. This case was no different than the historical precedents and they had no impact on the actions of the European powers.

Sir Henry assumed that, once involved, the international community would not withdraw until the situation was resolved, regardless of any assurances of reform and in this he was correct. In the event, the attempt at mediation by
the Consuls was not successful. The Andrassy Note and the Berlin Memorandum were also ineffective, but public outrage throughout Europe over the 'Bulgarian atrocities' demanded that the governments of the powers continue their efforts.

The international situation was approaching a crisis. Continuing abuse of Christians by Turks gave Russia an excuse to launch an invasion of Turkey on behalf of the oppressed Slav Christians whenever she was ready to do so, and the British government was powerless to help the Turks. Derby informed Elliot on August 22, 1876, given the universal feeling of indignation in all classes of English society, 'in the extreme case of Russia declaring war against Turkey Her Majesty's Government would find it practically impossible to interfere in defence of the Ottoman Empire.' As Lord Salisbury described the situation, alliance and friendship with Turkey had become "a reproach" to Britain and in his opinion 'The Turk's teeth must be drawn, even if he be allowed to live.'

In order to overcome these problems, Derby proposed that a conference of the Great Powers be held in Constantinople in December 1876. Each country was to send two representatives, one was to be their existing representative at the Porte and the other a more senior statesman. Disraeli hoped that this approach would give the Conference greater importance in the
international community, thereby discouraging Russia from refusing to attend while making a secret arrangement with Turkey. In his speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet on November 9 Disraeli included a word of caution to Russia:

...although the policy of England is peace, there is no country so well prepared for war as our own...she is not a country that, when she enters into a campaign, has to ask herself whether she can support a second or third campaign. She enters into a campaign which she will not terminate till right is done.

Coincidentally, in a public speech in Moscow on the following day Czar Alexander II declared that if the Constantinople Conference failed, he would act alone to enforce reform on Turkey. It is a measure of his lack of confidence in the Conference that on November 14 Russia announced the mobilization of six army corps, including 160,000 men with 640 guns.

There was also a lack of confidence in the conference on the part of the European representatives. Count Georg von Münster, the German Ambassador to Britain, told Derby that he was 'strongly persuaded that the Russians do not mean the affair to end peaceably.' The French view was: 'That the conference will fail: that Bismarck wishes Austria & Russia to go to war, in order that both may have their hands full: that of the two he will probably side with Russia, but will not be in haste to interfere.' Austria could not be counted
on because, in Derby’s estimation, she was being pulled in so many directions by different interests and parties that she did not know her own mind. Lord Salisbury, who was to join Elliot as Britain’s participants in the Conference, also had no confidence in its success. He told Derby that he believed it would fail because ‘Russia [would not be] content with any terms to which Turkey can reasonably be expected to submit.’

Despite this note of pessimism, the Conference began on a positive note, as the Powers unanimously agreed to the terms which they would present to the Porte. In essence, they supported the territorial integrity of Turkey, but reduced its political independence by maintaining the status quo in Serbia and Montenegro, provided increased autonomy for Bulgaria and Bosnia, and guarantees by the Porte of reforms.

On the first day of the Conference the Sultan promulgated a new Constitution for the Empire which promised, once again, wide-ranging reforms. As the Porte considered that this announcement made redundant any proposals for reform put forward by the European Powers, the Sultan rejected all such suggestions. The Conference participants revised, re-drafted and re-presented their demands but they were consistently rejected.

Lord Salisbury’s correspondence with Derby illustrates
his frustration with the attitude of the Turks, and his conviction that Elliot had contributed to it: 'I cast about for a cause for the Turkish resistance, for I cannot believe it to be spontaneous. But there is always one cause in operation - the belief that England will fight for them in the long run, and on this belief no amount of counter protestations appear to have the slightest operation.'

He reported to Derby that:

Several of the minor diplomats, who see much of the game as spectators, assure me that the Turks are still convinced that, if there is a war, England must be drawn into it on their side, and I hear this as much from Spain as Sweden, who are phil-Turk, as from Greece who is of the opposite persuasion. The other ambassadors attributed this state of things in a great degree to the attitude and language of Sir Henry Elliot. [The German, Italian and Austrian ambassadors at the Porte] have all separately urged me most earnestly to procure Sir Henry's absence as a most important addition to our chances of peace. I am of their opinion. I do not for a moment suggest any doubt of Sir Henry's loyalty. He is a thorough gentleman and means to act quite fairly. But he allows it to be seen that his sympathies are with the Turks and against the proposals of the Powers.

The telegram which he sent you home yesterday and which he sent to me last night, illustrates his mode of proceeding. He states to you Midhat's arguments with an earnestness which shows that he agrees with him - as he admits in conversation that he does. It is evident that he said not one word to persuade Midhat to conform to the policy which has been sanctioned by the Government. I have no doubt that he let Midhat clearly see that he agrees with him. But then to pass by without any word of discussion a long and elaborate refusal of the Government's policy is enough to make Midhat believe that England is not in earnest. This impression, unless it is removed, must lead to war.

This is a complex issue. There is no evidence to
suggest that Sir Henry provided any overt encouragement to
the Porte to resist the European demands or in any way to
subvert Salisbury’s policy. When Salisbury complained that
embassy personnel were encouraging resistance by the Porte
with promises of eventual support from Britain, Elliot
pledged to ‘take care that all the members of the embassy
shall be warned that, if spoken to on the subject, they must
declare that the Porte has no assistance to expect from us.
Mr. Sandison (British dragoman) has several times been
instructed to convey this distinctly to the Porte.’61 Sir
Henry was not a well man and as his health deteriorated he
was unable to attend the preliminary meetings. He was
concerned that his absence would be interpreted to be the
result of a disagreement with Salisbury, thereby encouraging
Turkish resistance. Hence, he decided to return to England.
He assured Lord Derby, however, that he had taken care to
 guard against any misunderstanding by the Porte as to his
reasons for leaving.62

Although Sir Henry’s sympathy with the Porte may have
been a factor in persuading Midhat and the Sultan that, if it
became necessary to defend Turkey against Russia, England
would become actively involved as she had during the Crimean
War, there were much stronger reasons for Turkish leaders to
count on Britain. Britain’s reluctance to support the
Andrassy Note; rejection of the Berlin Memorandum; the
movement of the British fleet to Besika Bay; the deployment on Disraeli’s instructions of a body of Royal Engineer officers to assess Turkish military capabilities; and Disraeli’s statement at the Lord Mayor’s banquet, combined to give hope to the Turks that British support would be forthcoming. Even Derby, who was completely opposed to war, believed that, if one occurred, Britain might well become involved. He told Count Beust, the Austrian Ambassador to London, prior to the conference that in his opinion ‘we should undoubtedly fight for Constantinople, but that I did not suppose we should make the mere crossing of the Turkish frontier by Russia a casus belli: the question would be, at what moment we should think the danger near enough to justify interference.’ In view of decades of historical precedent and recent British actions, it would have required more than statements from Elliot to the Porte to disabuse them of their belief in the inevitability of British support. Indeed, Salisbury felt that the only way to do so was for Her Majesty’s Government to authorise him to ‘make use of the strongest means of pressure.’ The Cabinet, however, rejected this recommendation and instructed Salisbury to instead employ ‘every means of friendly influence and persuasion.’

Simple persuasion was not enough. In mid January 1877 the Ambassadors agreed to present their terms one final time to the Porte and, if these were once more rejected, to
declare the Conference at an end and to all, plenipotentiaries and ambassadors, leave Constantinople and return to their various countries. That was exactly what happened.

Sir Henry Elliot was not returned as Ambassador to Constantinople. Gladstone's implied criticism of him for having failed to prevent or at least minimize, the Bulgarian atrocities, Disraeli's belief that Elliot had not adequately warned him of the circumstances, and Salisbury's criticism of him at the Constantinople Conference, combined to lose for Sir Henry Elliot the trust of the Government. It is doubtful whether he could have made any difference to the outcome of the massacres or the punishment of those responsible but perhaps if he had been more politically astute he might have foreseen the effect that the massacres would have on public opinion. Had he been more energetic in reporting the horrors to his superiors as they were first told to him, rather than accepting the assurance of the Porte that the initial reports were highly exaggerated, Disraeli might have responded more forcefully when the first questions were asked in the House. By demonstrating that the government was aware of the situation and was taking steps to correct it, Disraeli might have forestalled Gladstone's opportunity to excite public opinion. In the event, however, Elliot's actions were guided by stated government foreign policy and direction, by his
understanding of British interests and by historical precedent. For this he should not be faulted. In a memorandum to Lord Derby in late September 1876 Elliot defended his actions:

My conduct here has never been guided by any sentimental affection for (the Turks), but by a firm determination to uphold the interests of Great Britain to the utmost of my power; and that those interests are deeply engaged in preventing the disruption of the Turkish Empire is a conviction which I share in common with the most eminent statesmen who have directed our foreign policy, but which appears now to be abandoned by shallow politicians or persons who have allowed their feelings of revolted humanity to make them forget the capital interests involved in the question. We have been upholding what we know to be a semicivilized nation, liable under certain circumstances to be carried into fearful excesses: but the fact of this having just now been strikingly brought home to us all cannot be a sufficient reason for abandoning a policy which is the only one that can be followed with a due regard to our own interests.66

Sir Henry Elliot's diplomatic career did not end with Constantinople. After a few months' rest in England he was appointed Ambassador to Vienna. He was replaced at the Porte by Austen Henry Layard, a man with four decades of experience in the Ottoman Empire.
Notes


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


21. Ibid., p.64.


31. Monypenny and Buckle, p. 917.


33. Monypenney and Buckle, p. 916.
35. Ibid., p. 1494
37. Monypenny and Buckle, p. 925.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 921.
40. Harris, p. 84.
40. Ibid., p. 85.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 86
45. Harris, p.?
46. Harris, p. 88.
48. Harris, p. 88.
49. Cecil, Vol. II p. 84.
51. Monypenney and Buckle p. 964.
53. Ibid., p. 340.
54. Ibid., p. 341.
55. Ibid., p. 338.

57. Monypenny and Buckle, p. 980.


59. Ibid., p. 120.

60. Millman, p. 222.

61. Ibid., p. 220.

62.?

63. Monypenney and Buckle, p. 981.

Chapter II

Disraeli's choice to succeed Sir Henry Elliot in Constantinople was Austen Henry Layard, an outspoken man of principle. By nature he was an adventurer - self confident, curious, stubborn and highly intelligent; and by career he had been an archaeologist, an author, a parliamentarian and a diplomat. Layard regularly risked censure by his party, his government and his Queen, rather than compromise his beliefs. His experiences throughout his eclectic career convinced him that the preservation of the Ottoman Empire was the best option both for British interests and for the welfare of all its subjects. He brought to his position in Constantinople a knowledge of British foreign policy in general and Turkish affairs in particular. He had represented Britain in Spain during a time of divided government and had demonstrated both courage and integrity during that service. As a parliamentarian he had progressed from being an opinionated, outspoken critic of government policy to being a capable, tactful administrator in foreign affairs. His intelligence, courage, experience, and political instinct would be tested to the full during the Russo-Turkish war and the peace negotiations which followed.

Layard was as anti-Russian and pro-Turkish as his predecessor. His fascination with the Ottoman Empire began in
the same way as the fascination of many of his contemporary adventurers, including Sir Richard Francis Burton. As a boy Layard read the Arabian Nights as a result of which he 'thought and dreamt of little else but jins and ghouls and fairies and lovely princesses.' He credits those stories with giving 'the truest, the most lively, and the most interesting picture of manners and customs which still existed amongst Turks, Persians and Arabs when I first mixed with them, but which are now fast passing away before European civilization and encroachments.' His fondness and admiration for the people of 'the East' increased throughout his adult life, much of which was spent in the Ottoman Empire.

As a young man of twenty-two, in 1839, he travelled by horseback across the Empire to Baghdad, often dressed in native costume. It was during this journey that he formed the impressions of the Turks which he retained for the rest of his life. As he and his companion waited in Constantinople to begin the Asian portion of their journey, they interviewed a number of other travellers, notably Sir Charles Fellows who had explored much of Asia Minor. They 'spoke to us in the highest terms of the Turkish populations - of their honesty, hospitality and courtesy to strangers, and expressed their conviction that we should run no danger whatever in trusting ourselves among them. We had certainly every reason to be well satisfied with all we had seen of the
Turks [in Europe] and we did not hesitate to trust ourselves among them in Asia.³

This belief was borne out by experience during Layard's stay among the many peoples who inhabited the area between Constantinople and Baghdad and he was consistently impressed by the honesty, hospitality and attentiveness to guests which he experienced:

I still look back to those evenings pleasantly spent in conversing with these simple and kindly people, and in obtaining information as to their country, habits and customs. I thus learnt to appreciate the many virtues and excellent qualities of the pure Turkish race, and to form that high opinion which I have never had reason to change of the character of the true Osmanlu, before he is corrupted by the temptations and vices of official life and of power, and by intercourse with Europeans and the Europeanised Turks of the capital.⁴

His lifelong opinion of the Russians was formed in the year before his journey to Turkey, during a visit to Russia. By a coincidence which influenced his life, he met and became friendly with a young Polish man on the boat to Stockholm.

He was a man of considerable ability, a very devout Roman Catholic, and an earnest and enthusiastic patriot. He interested me very much by his accounts of the sufferings of his fellow-countrymen, which he described with singular eloquence and of their struggles to recover their freedom of which they had been so cruelly deprived. My own political opinions led me to sympathise with him and his unhappy country and to share his feelings of hatred for its oppressors.⁵

The young Pole gave Layard letters of introduction to
some of his friends in St. Petersburg, several of whom were
employed by the Russian government. They were all
enthusiastic patriots and ardently devoted to their
country's cause. It was probably from what I learnt
from them, and their descriptions of the oppression and
cruel treatment to which not only the Poles, but the
other population of the Empire was subjected by the
Russian government and its agents, that was derived that
detestation of Russian despotism and of Russian rule
that I have retained through life.6

Layard's experiences in the Ottoman Empire in 1839 led
to his employment as an unpaid attaché by Sir Stratford
Canning, the British Ambassador to the Porte who had a
legendary knowledge of the Ottoman Empire. Canning was not
authorized to reimburse Layard financially for his services
and provided him instead with a first class apprenticeship in
the workings of British foreign policy on the ground. Layard
also learned the complexity of interests which other European
governments had in the governing of the Ottoman Empire, and
the intricate network of spies, both European and Turkish,
which existed at the Porte.

During the last six years of his early life in the
Ottoman Empire he headed a number of successful
archaeological expeditions and in his final two years, he
discovered the sites of the Biblical city of Calah (Nimrud)
and of Nineveh, capital city of Sennacherib. The primary
funding for this expedition was provided by the British
Museum and Layard returned hundreds of tons of Assyrian
sculpture to England for display, together with his own drawings of the site and copies of inscriptions. By the time he returned to England in 1851 he had become a popular celebrity and an acknowledged expert on the Ottoman Empire.

In February 1852 the popular acclaim which resulted from Layard's Assyrian discoveries resulted in his being appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Foreign Office under Liberal Prime Minister Lord John Russell. The appointment was unusual in that Layard had not been elected to Parliament but there was no legal impediment to the appointment and, due to the public fascination with the Nineveh excavations, it was a very popular one. The Liberal government was defeated only eleven days after Layard's appointment but he retained his position under the subsequent Tory government led by Lord Derby until July, 1852. The experience aroused in him an ambition for a political career. In July 1852 he successfully ran as an independent Liberal in Aylesbury and looked forward to a new career in public service. Unfortunately, however, when the Liberals were returned to power in December of that year Layard was not given a position in the Government. Instead, he accepted an offer from Canning, now Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, to travel to Constantinople where he witnessed the escalation of tension between Russia and Turkey which led to the outbreak of the Crimean War. On his return to London he wished to bring his
concerns about Russian intentions before the Government by means of a Motion in the House of Commons, but he was refused the opportunity to speak until August 16, 1853.

Layard was a man of strong emotions and in this, his maiden speech, he allowed those emotions full play. He would have been better served to have employed a little tact. Layard warned that Russia intended the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in order that she could take Constantinople and, by making this suggestion he took a stand in opposition to the Government's policy, which then assumed that Russia did not intend to challenge the status quo in the Near East. Moreover Layard made a personal attack on Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen whose sympathies were pro-Russian and anti-war:

We have committed two great errors: (1) having the knowledge of the Russia-Turkish treaty and the information of Russia's vast military preparations on the Turkish frontier, we should have insisted on disarmament, as proof of a pacific policy; (2) on Russia informing us that she was about to cross the Pruth we should have intimated that her doing so would be taken as a cassus belli, and the fleet should have been sent to Constantinople. As a result of our action, or inaction, Turkey has received a fatal blow. The Russian occupation of the Principalities is accepted, and Great Britain is regarded by the weaker states who look to her support as helpless against Russian encroachments...I have witnessed all these circumstances with extreme pain and regret. The day will come when we shall see the fatal error we have committed and repented a policy against which, as a humble member of this House, I can only record my solemn protest.?

He not only referred to Aberdeen's current policy as
being ill-chosen, but criticised Aberdeen in hindsight in the strongest terms for his reaction to events in Serbia in 1843. At that time the Serbian ruler, Prince Michael, was expelled by a popular movement because he was seen by the people to be controlled by Russia. The Russian government claimed a right of interference and was supported in this claim by England:

The noble Earl now at the head of Her Majesty's Government but then Foreign Secretary, justified his policy by a declaration which has always appeared to me to be subversive of all public law, and as calculated to render the will of the strongest the law of Europe...by her success in that transaction, Russia showed that she was mistress in Servia and could check any rising independent nationality in that quarter. Since that time she has completely carried out her policy in the Danubian Principalities...By the convention of Balta Liman, forced upon the Porte, Russia has established her right to interfere in all the internal affairs of the Principalities; and her present occupation has proved that Wallachia and Moldavia are now, to all intents and purposes, Russian provinces. Independent nationality is very nearly crushed in them. 8

These bold speeches destroyed any chance that might have existed for Layard to obtain a salaried government position in Aberdeen's administration but in characteristic fashion, he wrote to Lady Huntley:

The split between myself and the Ministers is now complete and I suppose all chance of employment is out of the question. I do not mind. I have always done what I believe to be my duty, and I trust I shall always be able to refer back to what has occurred with conscientious satisfaction. 9

Again he blamed Aberdeen for not insisting that Russia should disarm in January 1853 when Her Majesty's Government was aware that Russia was 'making vast naval and military
preparations' and that there was every likelihood that Russian troops under Prince A.S. Menchikoff, the Russian Commander, were about to proceed to Constantinople:10

I trust I have said enough to show that, notwithstanding repeated warnings—notwithstanding positive facts, brought to the notice of the Government...by their own agents—notwithstanding that Government were then acquainted with a state of things which imperatively called upon them to place themselves in a position to meet any events which might occur, they failed to take those precautions which the emergency required, and to assume that attitude which the honour of this country and...the interests of peace required.11

On March 28, 1854 Britain and France declared war on Russia, thus vindicating Layard’s analyses in hindsight. No sooner had Layard finished one controversy than he entered another. On March 31 Layard warned the government that its preparations for the provisioning of British troops was inadequate and that, as a result of this neglect, many would be ‘infected with the worst of fevers’ and would not return.12 Among the thousands for whom this was prophetic was Layard’s brother, Arthur, who died of an attack of dysentery and was buried near Balaclava.

Layard travelled to the Crimea together with John Delane, the powerful editor of The Times. Together they witnessed the Battles of the Alma, the siege of Sebastopol where hundreds of British soldiers died of disease and exposure, and the charge of the Light Brigade during the Battle of
Balaclava. Layard was outraged at the terrible suffering endured by the British troops. On November 8 he wrote regarding the Battle of Inkerman, 'Another such victory would be almost fatal to us.' He recognized that defective organization in Britain was to blame for the atrocious condition of the soldiers and he was determined to prevent the continuation of this disastrous situation, regardless of any impact this might have on his political career. In the event, Lord Aberdeen's leadership was already coming under attack as the country became aware that the war was not going to end quickly.

The Times continued to support the government until the middle of December 1854. At the opening of Parliament on December 12 it reported that 'never was war prosecuted so vigorously and resolutely as this at this moment.' Following this statement The Times was bombarded with hundreds of letters from officers and their families begging that the truth be told. One week later it began to criticize the government and the military leaders for the mismanagement of the war. The Boxing Day edition contained the statement: '...how disgraceful that England, so wealthy, so mechanical, and with such infinity of resources, should after all depend upon the rawest material of war-the British soldier-and should be reduced to throw him away by wholesale in order to make up for our want of military science, not to say common
sensel'zs' In its final edition of 1854 on December 30th The Times began its attack on the system of patronage appointments to military command which it claimed was responsible for the debacle which existed in the Crimea. The article concluded by charging that it was 'a crime in a War Minister to permit an officer to remain for a single day in the nominal discharge of duties the neglect of which has brought a great and victorious army to the verge of ruin.'

Lord John Russell, the Government Leader in the House, began to press Aberdeen to recall Lord Raglan, the British Commander-in-Chief, from the Crimea and to replace Lord Newcastle with Lord Palmerston as Minister of War. Aberdeen was reluctant to make Newcastle a scapegoat for a situation which was not entirely under his control and refused to make the change. As the new year began, however, horrifying details of the state of the army became more widely publicized and government members as well as the general public became aware of the full extent of the mismanagement of the war. On January 23 John Roebuck, the Radical M.P. for Bath, gave notice that he would move for a Committee of Enquiry in the conduct of the war. That evening Aberdeen received a letter of resignation from Lord John Russell. The resignation was tendered on the basis that Lord John could not resist Roebuck's motion because the Commons had the right to insist on such an inquiry if they wished. On January 29
the motion was carried by 305 to 148. Aberdeen was obliged to resign. Lord Derby declined the Queen's offer to form a Tory government and Lord Palmerston was then chosen to lead the country.

Lord Palmerston was a popular choice but his appointment did not change the situation in the Crimea, nor did it reduce the pressure on the government to change the system which had led to that disaster; nor did it appease Layard.

On his return to England early in 1855, working closely with John Delane, Layard organized public meetings in which he denounced the incompetency of the army leaders and the maladministration which had resulted in the loss of so many lives. This quickly became a political focal point. Influential men throughout the country joined with Layard and formed the Administrative Reform Movement, which maintained that merit and efficiency in public appointments had been sacrificed to party and family influence. Public opinion was with them and The Times suggested that Layard should be appointed Secretary for War. Lord Palmerston was willing to do so but Layard's criticism of the handling of the war, and particularly of the roles of Lord Raglan and Admiral Sir J.D. Dundas, angered the Queen so much that she vetoed the proposed appointment. The appointment would have given Layard a practical outlet in which to channel his zeal for reform.
Instead, he used all his energy to challenge the Government's system of appointments to senior military, diplomatic and civil service positions, and in the process became an opponent of Palmerston's regime, as he had been of Lord Aberdeen's.

On June 15 Layard introduced a Motion for Debate before the House of Commons which stated:

That this House views with deep and increasing concern the state of the nation, and is of the opinion that the manner in which merit and efficiency have been sacrificed in the public appointments to party and family influence and to a blind adherence to routine has given rise to great misfortunes, and threatens to bring discredit upon the national character, and to involve the country in great disaster.

The motion was defeated but a modified version was passed, which recommended tests of merit and the removal of obstructions to fair promotion. This was the first step toward the professionalization of the British Civil Service, although it did not apply to the army.

Layard had succeeded in initiating a program of reform but in doing so he had angered many powerful people. He could have avoided this consequence by focussing on the issue rather than becoming diverted into personal attacks on individuals in the military and government. One such individual was Lord Palmerston whom he unjustly accused at a public meeting at the Drury Lane Theatre of treating the
suffering of Britain's troops in the Crimea with levity.

Lord Palmerston took the opportunity during the reform debate to respond to this charge:

To his face I tell him that there is not a word of truth in the assertions which he then made. I never jested at the sufferings of the soldiers. I never made light of their unfortunate condition, and so far from having vilified the people of England, the whole course of my conduct and every word which fell from my lips here or elsewhere has attested the respect and admiration which I feel for the people of this country, and the pride with which I am animated in belonging to a nation so noble and so distinguished.¹⁹

In his criticism of the Duke of Newcastle, Minister of War, Layard said:

The Government sent troops to Varna. I pointed out to them that Varna was one of the most unhealthy spots in Turkey in Europe, and that pestilence and disease would inevitably fall upon our army. (The Duke) met my warnings as such warnings are usually met by him. From that Pandora's box before him, from which issued every manner of delusion and deceit, he pulled paper after paper, return after return, to prove that Varna was the most healthy place in the world, and that our troops had never been so well even in an English barracks. While the right hon. Gentleman was speaking the Angel of Death was already hovering over our devoted men.²⁰

During the same debate Layard spoke about the suffering of the troops and informed the House that that suffering was not due to tents or decent food not being shipped to the Crimea but to the lack of transport to take the supplies to the troops. He blamed Lord Raglan for making incompetent decisions such as deciding to leave the ambulances behind when advancing to Alma. As a result of this decision the
army was not able to follow up their early success by pursuing the enemy because there were no means of moving the wounded, many of whom were left on the field of battle for two days and two nights. He went on to cite many examples of bad decisions which had contributed to the suffering of the troops and to the lack of military success, and concluded:

All those (calamities) from which we have hitherto suffered have arisen from the want of a definite policy, and from the absence of those ordinary precautions which any well-digested plan would have enabled us to take. I do not hesitate to say that at least one-third, if not two thirds, of the lives that have been lost in battle and by disease might have been spared had the Government done its duty. Let Ministers take warning in time by what has passed.21

Layard was clever, knowledgeable and talented but he was also emotional, dogmatic, impatient, and unwilling to compromise. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's amendment to Layard's motion was enough to satisfy the reformers and Layard was abandoned by most of his supporters, including Delane. The editor of The Times had published many articles championing Layard's efforts but he finally concluded that Layard was too emotional and aggressive to be the rising political figure he had originally envisioned.22

The aftermath of these events proved that Layard could learn from his experiences. Following the Administrative Review debate Layard took a break from Parliament to found
and organize the very successful Ottoman Bank of which he was the first Chairman. The success of the Bank gave Layard sufficient income once again to seek a parliamentary career. In 1860 he was elected by the voters of the "working class" Borough of Southwark. In writing to express her pleasure in the election results Elizabeth Eastlake wrote to Layard's aunt: "...let us hope that with no less independence of feeling he may exercise a little more discretion, & find that more is to be done by gentle means than by violence." Lady Eastlake's sentiments were undoubtedly shared by Layard's other friends and family.

In fact, Layard had learned to control his feelings so well that he became an effective contributor to parliamentary debate, particularly when he spoke on foreign affairs. He studied political developments on the Continent and spoke knowledgeably about the relations of Russia and the Porte, as well as the French occupation of Syria. He defended Count Cavour, his lifelong friend, from a charge of duplicity with regard to the cession of Nice and Savoy to France. He became known in the House of Commons as an expert on Italy, as well as on Turkey.

Layard had lived in Italy through most of his boyhood as the Italian climate was more kind to his father's chronic respiratory ailments than that of England. Among his ex-
patriot companions were the sons of Walter Savage Landor and it is to the writings of Landor that Layard attributed 'those radical and democratic opinions which I sturdily professed even when a boy.' His Italian school friends included 'Ubalino Peruzzi, Fabroni, and others who, in their manhood took a distinguished part in the events which led to the unity and independence of their country.' The free spirited days of his boyhood in Italy and his love of Italian art and architecture which were first nurtured in his childhood combined to create a life-long love of that country and its people. When unification finally became a possibility in 1860 Layard fully supported this cause.

After his early years of opposition to the policies of the British government, Layard's second parliamentary term was marked by his being in agreement with Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, who was pursuing a liberal policy in Europe. This fact, combined with his knowledge and his performance during debates impressed Palmerston so strongly that when Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, moved to the House of Lords, Palmerston decided to appoint Layard to the Post of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Palmerston had always respected Layard's knowledge and energy and, even when Layard was at his most vituperative during the Crimean War debates and the Administrative Reform Movement, he was willing to appoint him Secretary for War and to harness his abilities.
It was only the Queen's objection which had prevented that appointment but the situation had changed, the war was over and there was no apparent reason why Layard should not, now, be made part of the Government.

The Queen was less forgiving than Lord Palmerston. Remembering Layard's previous criticism of the Government, and particularly of Lord Raglan and Admiral Dundas, she strenuously opposed the appointment. Palmerston even appealed to Prince Albert to intervene but without success. Finally, Her Majesty grudgingly conceded:

This appointment would, in the Queen's opinion, be a serious evil. If Lord Palmerston, on sincere self examination, should consider that without it the difficulties of carrying on his Government are such as to endanger the continuance of its success, the Queen will, of course, have to admit one evil for the country in order to avert a greater. She still trusts, however, that, knowing the nature of the Queen's objections, he will not place her in this dilemma.27.

Lord Palmerston took the Queen at her word, thanked her for her 'gracious and condescending acquiescence' and proceeded with the appointment which infuriated both Her Majesty and Prince Albert.28

Layard justified Palmerston's confidence in his ability. He had learned to curb his emotional outbursts. Between June 1861 and the resignation of Lord Russell's administration in 1866 he dealt effectively with many aspects of foreign
affairs. It was during this time that Britain faced criticism for misleading Denmark into counting on British support against Prussia regarding Schleswig-Holstein; the American Civil War and the blockade of the Southern States created hardships for millions of English millworkers who had no raw materials to weave; and a defiant ruler in Abyssinia threatened to lead to a major campaign in that country. While Lord Palmerston and Foreign Secretary Lord Russell dealt with these major crises they trusted Layard's judgement enough to permit him to deal with the day-to-day problems at the Foreign Office. 'I shall never get through this mass of papers', wrote Russell, 'I leave it entirely in your discretion.' Layard was so well trusted that during the late summer when Ministers moved to their country estates, he was left alone at the Foreign Office.

Layard had also learned to deal with questions in the House of Commons in a calm and logical manner, displaying none of his former emotionalism. The Times in referring to his changed approach wrote: 'That men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things...the most merciless of critics has become the most versatile of apologists; the most dashing of assailants has shown himself a master in the tamer arts of defence. Though we cannot help smiling at his altered tone and official complacency, we should be the last to reproach him with it as a fault.'
Although Layard had learned a certain amount of tact, there was a limit to his willingness to compromise. His career as a front line diplomat began because he reached that limit in a debate over the beautification of London. Layard had been appointed to the position of Chief Commissioner of Works in 1868 by Prime Minister Gladstone, and given responsibility for capital construction. His vision for the beautification of the buildings along the Embankment was in conflict with that of the Parliamentary Secretary of the Treasury. Layard, for whom art and architecture had been a life-long passion, resented the fact that "the only consideration is to be not how well, but how cheaply can a thing be done and this will not do for the Arts." Economy had more appeal than aesthetics for Gladstone, who solved the dilemma by sending Layard to Madrid as Minister Plenipotentiary.

Layard was the first foreign representative to present his credentials to the progressive government in Madrid following the 1868 revolution. During the seven years of his service there, Layard survived seventeen administrations which represented a variety of political philosophies. During one period of civil war Layard was commended internationally for his bravery when he helped to smuggle the former Prime Minister, Marshal Francisco Serrano, Duke de la Torre, out of
the country. Despite the fact that Layard acted at the request of the Spanish Dictator Emilio Castelar, this act of courage caused him once again to be the subject of controversy when, a year after his exile, in 1874, Serrano was returned to power. His regime was extremely unpopular and because of Layard's former association with Serrano, he was suspected of arranging his return and was criticized in both the British and Spanish press.

In 1875 Prince Alfonso, the seventeen-year-old son of ex-Queen Isabella II was placed on the throne of Spain by the army, supported by the Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish political conservatives. Protestant places of worship were closed and the sale of Protestant literature was banned. Layard objected to these practices and soon became very unpopular with the Spanish governing elite. It did not like the forthright, Protestant Layard and stories began to circulate in London that the British Legation was being used as a meeting place for those who opposed the government. This controversy upset Queen Victoria who wanted to recognize the Bourbon royalist claimant and feared that Layard would not give him the support that he needed. Disraeli was now Prime Minister. Although he was a member of the Church of England, Disraeli had never been a religious man and he felt that there was too much fuss being made about the Protestants who 'really were nothing'. He believed that the stories in
Layard's dispatches about Protestant difficulties were exaggerated and he was prepared to comply with the Queen's wish to recall him, but Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary, appreciated the work that Layard had done in Madrid and stubbornly resisted their requests to remove him on the basis of unproved accusations. Derby's belief in the veracity of Layard's report proved to be well founded and he was able to report to Layard:

I had difficulty in inducing the Queen to believe that they were not over-coloured. She takes a strong personal interest in the young King and naturally wishes to see things that concern him in the most favourable light. But the concurrence of testimony from other independent sources has had its effect, and your accuracy is not now disputed.\footnote{33}

All of his experiences made Layard an obvious candidate to replace Elliot. On December 22, 1876, in anticipation of Elliot returning to England following the Constantinople Conference, Disraeli wrote to the Queen to suggest that Layard should be sent to Constantinople. The Queen agreed to the appointment and, after meeting with Layard, told Disraeli that she was pleased with Layard's tone in conversation. 'He is very strong upon the vital interests of this country, which Mr. Gladstone and some of his followers have entirely forgotten.'\footnote{34} Queen Victoria had abandoned her past objections to Layard. For his part, Disraeli wanted to be personally involved in the formation of foreign policy to reassert the power and prestige of Britain in Europe which he believed had
been lost by the Gladstone government. To this end, it was important to him that the man who was selected to replace Elliot should be someone he could count on to represent his own voice at the Porte.35

Disraeli had known Layard since he was a boy in Italy. Both Disraeli and his father were friends of Layard’s aunt and uncle, Sarah and Benjamin Austen. It was at Mr. Austen’s recommendation that Disraeli was permitted to give up his training for the Bar in favour of becoming a writer; and it was to Mrs. Austen that he owed credit for the publication of his novels.36 During Layard’s political career, Disraeli ‘more than once made me offers and advances which, if I had chosen to leave my party and had accepted them, would, I have every reason to believe, have satisfied a reasonable ambition.’37 Instead, Layard made his own way and, in the process gained a depth of experience which made him uniquely qualified to represent England during this diplomatic crisis.

Disraeli respected the strength of character Layard displayed during his years in Spain. He also recognized that Layard was sincere when he expressed his agreement with and support for, the Palmerstonian approach to the Eastern Question. In January 1877 Layard published a lengthy article in The Quarterly Review in which he expressed his beliefs regarding the Eastern Question:
If there were one cardinal principle of English foreign policy, it has always been the maintenance of Constantinople and the Dardanelles in the hands of a Power from whose hostility and ambition England had nothing to fear. We supported the Turks because they were there, and we had nothing to put in their stead which would be equally safe and advantageous for us, or for the peace of Europe and the world. The only other Power that could possess Constantinople and the Dardanelles was Russia, and every English statesman, and indeed, every true Englishman until lately, felt instinctively that Russia in possession of that post would be the greatest danger and menace to England.

It is absurd to accuse any serious party or statesman in England of having been 'Turcophile' - a friend of the Turks for the Turks' sake...Every one admitted...that Turkish rule unreformed and unchanged would become an anomaly in Europe and could not continue to exist side by side of modern civilization and modern government; Would it be better to break up the Ottoman Empire suddenly, and to leave the Powers without and Christians within to fight and to scramble for its 'debris' the strongest getting the largest share, if not the whole? (Would it not be better to wait until) the Christian population (have had) time and opportunity to improve themselves by education, to increase in wealth, and to attain the political and social influence which comes from education and property. The first of these courses is and has been the policy of Russia; the second has always been that of English statesmen like Lord Palmerston, and of every wise and farseeing European statesman - the Russians.38

Throughout his career Layard had been consistent in his belief that the Christian population of European Turkey was incapable of self rule. It was this belief that explains the difference in his attitude to Russia's occupation of Poland which he detested and Turkey's occupation of the Balkans. He believed that if Poland were freed from Russia her educated, civilized population could administer their country without interference or guidance from outside. In contrast, if the
Balkans were freed from Turkish domination, they would be unable to administer their own affairs and the ensuing struggle among the Powers to at best guide and at worst dominate this area would result in the destruction of the balance of power in Europe and would probably, as Layard suggested in his Quarterly Review article quoted above, result in a European war.

On March 12, 1877 Layard was recalled to London and given instructions for his new posting as Extraordinary Envoy to Constantinople. He was to advise the Sultan and the Sublime Porte that they had forfeited England's sympathy, owing to the massacre of the Bulgarian Christians and the lack of punishment of those responsible. Most importantly, he was to convince the Sultan that if there were to be a war between Russia and Turkey, the British Government would not provide any help to Turkey so it would be in the Sultan's best interest to do his utmost to avoid a war. Layard's objective was to eliminate Russia's excuse for declaring war by ensuring that the Turks would abandon their position of intransigence and become more amendable to conciliation. Disraeli believed that a softening of the Turkish attitude, combined with divided counsels and precarious finances in Russia, would cause the Russian government to avoid embarking on a war against the Porte in the face of British opposition. Layard believed that if he had arrived sooner he
would have achieved his objective but by April 1877 it was too late and he arrived to face the most extreme diplomatic crisis of his career - war.
Notes


2. Ibid., p.27.

3. Ibid., p.157.

4. Ibid., p.193.

5. Ibid., p.95.

6. Ibid., p.97.


8. Ibid., pp.1773 f.


11. Ibid., pp.841 f.


15. Ibid., December 26, 1854.

16. Ibid., December 30, 1854.


19. Ibid., p.2209.

22. Waterfield, p.278.
23. Ibid., p.292.
24. Ibid., p.293.
26. Ibid., p.23.
28. Ibid.
29. Waterfield, p. 296.
30. Ibid., p.299.
31. Ibid., p.313.
32. Ibid., p.344.
33. Ibid., p.343.
34. Monypenny and Buckle, p. 1007.
37. Ibid., p.52.
Chapter III

When Layard arrived in Constantinople in April 1877 he was confident that he could persuade Sultan Abdul Hamid II to request British mediation between Turkey and Russia and thereby avoid the outbreak of war. On April 22 he asked Derby for permission to persuade the Porte to make that request. Derby, less optimistic and more realistic, acceded to Layard 'without hope of any result [but] solely that we may not be responsible for leaving any means untried to preserve peace.' Layard’s optimism was due in part to his characteristic self-confidence, but he was also relying on information given to him by the Russian Chargé d’Affaires. The latter told him on April 22 that his government had ordered him to suspend diplomatic relations with the Porte, and to leave Constantinople immediately. But he added, in confidence, that:

...he was instructed not to make any allusion to war and expressed his personal opinion that there is no reason to apprehend immediate hostilities...He said that without having any authority whatever to express an opinion it seemed to him not impossible that if the Porte sent an ambassador to the Emperor who would state that Turkey accepted the Protocol of London such a step might lead to some result...On the whole I judge from his language that Russia is still wavering.\(^1\)

Layard was confident that he could succeed in convincing the Sultan to take whatever steps were necessary to avoid a war with Russia, but during his first meeting with Abdul
Hamid and his Grand Vizier, Savfet Pasha, a telegram arrived from the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow advising the Sultan that Russia had declared war against Turkey. Layard’s instructions had not taken this eventuality into account. Now that war was a reality, he received no clear direction from the decision makers in Whitehall. Public opinion in Britain and the views of members of the Cabinet were divided on the question of how involved England should become. Layard was, therefore, obliged to rely on his own judgement throughout the whole eight months of the Russo-Turkish War, and until Salisbury’s accession to Derby’s place as Foreign Secretary.

As the number of enfranchised citizens increased during the nineteenth century, so had the influence of public opinion on decision making increased. Sir John Drummond-Hay, Minister to the Court of Morocco, cautioned Layard: ‘An Ambassador cannot look alone, as in the days of Ponsonby and Redcliffe, to the course he deems would best serve the interests of his country - and I may add of Turkey - but he must seek to satisfy lynx-eyed humanitarians and others, even though he may know that the real cause of humanity will not be benefitted.’ This was an unnecessary caution as Layard was fully aware: ‘A strong and decided foreign policy without strong and decided public support is impossible.’
Public opinion had been a factor in changing the government's policy during the Greek revolt and had weighed heavily in the success of the Administrative Reform Movement. At the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877 there was still sufficient public outrage at the Bulgarian massacres to preclude any chance of Britain becoming actively involved on behalf of Turkey as she had in the Crimean War. On the other hand, there was still strong popular mistrust of Russia and concern about her ambition toward India. As the strong anti-Turk, Rev. W. Denton, recognized, 'As to any active coercion of the Turk, another massacre, alas! must take place before we arrive at that determination.'

Layard governed his actions according to what he felt were British interests. In the process he followed a fairly common variant of a traditional view. He believed that the security of Britain’s eastern interests was directly linked to the continuation of Turkish occupation of Constantinople and the maintenance of the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire in the middle east and central Asia. Layard was concerned with the effect of events in the Balkans not on Europe but in Asia. He considered it to be '...the most monstrous piece of folly that we should be ready to sacrifice the most vital interests of our country, India, our position as a first class power, the influence that we have hitherto exercised in the cause of human liberty and civilization,
rather than to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Turks because some Bashi Bazuks [sic] have murdered some worthless and unfortunate Bulgarians.'

Throughout the nineteenth century the security of India was of prime importance for the British government. A particular concern was the threat, realistic or exaggerated, to Indian security which was posed by Russian expansion in central Asia and the Middle East. Opinions varied as to how best to protect the northern border of India, but British decision makers agreed that the maintenance of the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire provided an important buffer for India. With this approach Layard completely concurred. He believed that if the Ottoman Empire in Asia were to collapse Russia could easily occupy or dominate the central Asian states, including Afghanistan, which would bring her to the north west frontier of India. Once she had achieved this goal it would be a simple matter to either invade India from the north, or to incite rebellion among the Indian peoples and make Britain's hold on the subcontinent virtually impossible to maintain. Layard, like many of his contemporaries, believed that this had been Russia's intention throughout the century. In his opinion, as expressed secretly to Disraeli in August 1877:

There is but one policy to pursue. We should give Russia clearly and distinctly to understand that we will not consent under any circumstances whatever to the
occupation by her of Constantinople...if the Russians after completely defeating the Turkish forces in Bulgaria occupy Adrianople Turkey should be made to understand that she must consent to such terms of peace as through mediation of the European powers will satisfy Russia and effect the objectives for which the war is ostensibly waged.7

Disraeli tried to put Layard's advice into practice during the war but it was difficult to intimidate the Russians when they were aware that he did not have the support of his foreign minister or of the majority of the Cabinet. Only following Salisbury's appointment as foreign minister was Layard's advice applied.

Layard believed from the outset that the only sensible course for British policy to follow was to support the Ottoman Empire and he was confident that, in due course, the British people would also realise the sense of this policy and would exert pressure on the government to take whatever steps were necessary, including war, to stop any Russian advance. His challenge would be to ensure that this realization occurred before it was too late to save the Ottoman Empire.

Disraeli agreed with Layard and was equally anxious to save the Ottoman Empire but, as strong as his influence was among his colleagues, and even with the support and encouragement of the Queen, Disraeli knew that he could not
persuade the Cabinet that Britain should become involved in the conflict. He described the Cabinet as having six parties: 'The party of war at any price: Hardy, J. Manners, Hicks-Beach. The party who are for having a Christian service in St. Sophia - Lord Carnarvon. The party for peace at any price - Lord Derby. The party who are all for reconciling all these parties and standing by our original engagements - the Queen and myself.' Lord Bath wrote to Granville 'the debates in the Cabinet are of more importance than those in Parliament, and the differences of opinion there are greater than between opposing political parties.'

Layard was the British ambassador of the day with the greatest experience as a politician. He, too, understood the divisions in the Cabinet and his dispatches were slanted precisely to affect the debates in that body. In an effort to make the decision makers understand the importance of supporting the Ottoman Empire, he pointed out to them that the continuation of this war could immediately endanger Britain's imperial interests. During the Spring of 1877, when the Russian army was successful in pushing forward into Asia and occupying the area on the Armenian frontier around Kars and Erzerum, Layard frequently raised concerns with Lord Derby about the possible effect of the Russian victories:

I venture to call your most serious attention to the designs of Russia in that quarter. I am very much inclined to think that even if she is not prepared to
occupy permanently any part of Turkey in Europe, she will insist, if she is successful in war, upon cession of Batoum and a considerable part of Armenia... If such should be the case Persia will be absolutely at her mercy and our interests in India will be most grievously compromised.  

Another possibility which could cause a major problem for Britain in India was that of a jehad, or holy war.

Layard warned Derby on May 4, 1877:

If the war lasts and the Porte finds itself in extreme peril, I think it very likely that attempts will be made to raise the Musselman population under Russian rule and if they do rise the contagion may spread beyond the Russian borders.

On June 13 his warning became more explicit:

The efforts that the Turks are making to move the Mohammedan world against Russia and in support of Islam are not, I think, to be passed over lightly. If the war is soon brought to an end nothing very important may come out of them, but if this continues and the existence of the Turkish Empire is seriously threatened it might be different. As yet the “Jehad” or war against the infidels is not proclaimed... if it were and the Sultan were to raise the green standard above the parapet it is not easy to foresee what the result might be. We might feel it in India.

and on July 27:

It would probably be most dangerous to our Imperial interests if Russia were to occupy Constantinople even for a time. It is difficult to foresee or calculate the effect of her presence in the capital of the caliph of Islam upon the Musselman population of India and Central Asia. Whatever the effect may be it could scarcely be fortunate to England.

The possibility of a rising by their Indian subjects was of concern to British decision makers, who well remembered
the Indian mutiny only two decades before. Layard had spent six months in India from November 1857 to May 1858 and had seen for himself the devastation which followed the mutiny.

In describing the possibilities which could arise from a jehad, Layard was not merely trying to manipulate his superiors. He was genuinely alarmed. In particular he warned:

There is already a very bitter feeling springing up against England. It is thought we are giving advice and tying the hand of the Turks to promote selfish ends. If we lose the little influence we have there will be nothing left to keep the Porte in check.¹⁴

In 1878, following the British annexation of Cyprus, this thought again became central to Layard’s views.

In the interim, however, Layard feared that irreversible decisions taken in London would prevent a return to the policy of support for the Ottoman Empire, or ensure that by the time an appropriate policy was defined it would be too late to be enforced. Layard therefore used every opportunity in his dispatches with Derby, with the Foreign Office, with Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, and even with Gladstone, to defend Turkey and attack Russia. He did so by appealing to standard British ideas regarding the nature of civilised political order. Here Layard’s own knowledge of the personal attitudes of specific British statesmen shaped the nature of his comments. He sought to change the perception of Turkey
as a barbarous place filled with barbarians and to remind
British decision makers of the importance of India to the
Empire and the danger to India which could arise if the
Ottoman Empire were to be dissolved. Thus, Layard tried to
mitigate the damage which had been done to public opinion by
the Bulgarian outrages by sending reports which significantly
reduced the number of reported deaths.

[Mr. Storey's report] was drawn up from house to house
inquiries and is certainly the most complete and
trustworthy return yet given. You will see that it
reduced the number of Christian victims to below 4000

(Enough; God knows!) Lady Strangford declares that
the Batik slaughter had nothing to do with religious
fanaticism but was brought about in consequence of a
long standing quarrel...about rights to pasturage.15

Layard recommended that this report be presented to
Parliament. He also sent a copy of it to Gladstone and took
that opportunity to make several other positive comments
about the political and religious situation in Turkey which
might be expected to meet the Opposition leader's approval:

At first I was inclined to laugh at the idea of a
Turkish House of Commons but I have been so much struck
by the intelligence and independence of some of its
members and of the dignified and orderly manner in which
its proceedings have been conducted by the members
being allowed to express their opinions with the most
perfect freedom that in the course of time I am
persuaded it may lead to a better and more complete
understanding between the various creeds and sects and
races that form their empire than any other reforms
that could be imagined. Of course if Russia succeeds as
she probably will in overpowering Turkey these seeds of
something like constitutional government will be
destroyed. I have received deputations from Patriarchs
and heads of every religion (including Christians) and
without exception they are unanimous in expressing a
desire rather to remain under the Turkish rule than be transferred to that of Russia or under a semi independent government like Servia.¹⁶

Again, Layard reassured Derby about Christian-Muslim relations within European Turkey:

I enclose a private letter from Mr. Blunt which gives a favourable accounting of relations between Musselmans and Christians in Rumelia...the unanimity with which the heads of all the Christian sects have expressed themselves to me against Russia and Russian rule is very remarkable. I can not but believe them sincere.¹⁷

Layard used the Constitution which had been declared at the beginning of the Constantinople Conference as a means to contrast to Derby what was happening in Turkey with the autocratic Russian system, 'In the Parliament there are the germs of very important changes in this Empire, unless Russia crushes them out, which she will do if she can, for there is nothing which she more dreads than good and orderly government founded on liberal institutions in this country.'¹⁸

Despite his lack of official instructions, Layard was not left completely without direction from the government; however these instructions were clandestine. He received support, encouragement and direction from Lord Beaconsfield, through a correspondence carried on in secret. Throughout 1876-77, Disraeli, opposed in various ways by his Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and India, chose to circumvent them by appointing key subordinates who shared his views and
then working with them against their formal superiors. Layard was such an appointee and wittingly worked in this fashion.

When it came to achieving his goals, Layard, like Disraeli, was a pragmatist. In 1847 Sara Austen cautioned her nephew against being too impetuous and advised him that 'the submission of your own judgement and will, (is) the primary element of diplomacy.' Throughout his career Layard was seldom able to apply this advice to his actions. In several of its cartoons Punch depicted Layard as 'the Nineveh Bull,' a description which suited both his stocky physical frame and his dogmatic approach to any question on which he held a strong opinion. In such cases, as has been exemplified previously, he held his principles to be paramount. In 1877 he was committed to the maintenance of British prestige which he believed was inherent in the defence of the Ottoman Empire against Russian encroachment. He was certain that an active foreign policy by Britain was necessary to ensure that the Empire would remain intact. Derby was opposed to any British involvement which could lead to war and several other members opposed any idea of supporting Turkey. Therefore, Layard's only hope lay in Disraeli resolving the conflict within the Cabinet, and convincing its members that Britain's interests were best served by adopting an active policy. No doubt it was
Disraeli's knowledge of Layard's pragmatism which prompted him, in the Spring of 1876, to describe his ideal candidate as 'a man of the necessary experience and commanding mind at Constantinople - and one not too scrupulous.'

Beaconsfield and Layard had compatible views on the Eastern Question, and each counted on the other to do whatever was necessary to preserve Britain's interests. Layard expressed this confidence in his correspondence with Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India on July 26, 1877:

The government, paralysed [sic] by the Gladstone agitation and the opposition of the Liberal minority is apparently prepared to allow the Russians to do what they like. Perhaps when Parliament is prorogued and Lord Beaconsfield is more free to act, something will be done. He recognizes and understands the extreme gravity of the situation and the danger that the occupation of Constantinople by the Russians would be to our Imperial prestige and interests.

Layard had great faith in Beaconsfield's judgement and leadership. Lord Beaconsfield was an avowed imperialist, for whom politics and foreign policy, issues of prestige and power, were intimately related. Derby confided his analysis of Disraeli's approach to his diary: 'To the Premier the main thing is to please and surprise the public by bold strokes and unexpected moves: he would rather run serious national risks than hear his policy called feeble or commonplace.' Thus, he had arranged for Queen Victoria to be declared Empress of India, to give her the same imperial title as that
of her counterparts in Europe. Disraeli was also a cynic. He did not care about the problems of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire, nor did he care about the Turks. 'All the Turks may be in the Propontis as far as I am concerned,' he told Derby. However, he did care very deeply about Britain and the British Empire and about how both were perceived in the world. The goals of Beaconsfield's foreign policy were to maintain the British Empire, to reverse Britain's isolationism in Europe and to reassert Britain's influence and prestige as a European power. During the years when Gladstone was Prime Minister of England, Beaconsfield believed that British prestige had slumped while European affairs had become dominated by the 'Northern Courts' of Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna. Disraeli was determined to disrupt this alliance. 'There is no balance,' he wrote to Lady Bradford on September 6, 1875 'and unless we go out of our way to act with the three Northern Powers, they can act without us which is not agreeable for a State like England.'

In more concrete terms, by the 1870s Beaconsfield subscribed to the Palmerstonian policy that protection of the geographical integrity of the Ottoman Empire, as outlined in the Treaty of Paris, was in Britain's best interest. The causes of the Crimean War had been the subject of endless analysis in political and diplomatic circles for twenty years and it was widely concluded that Tsar Nicholas I would never
have acted as he had, if Aberdeen had proclaimed Britain's readiness to go to war from the outset. Disraeli accepted this view and believed that Russia was a weak power, which could be restrained from action by clear signs of British resolution. His problem was that the atrocity agitation precluded him from making any credible threat of defending Turkey by force.

He saw the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as the best protection against Russian expansionism in Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean, both of which were believed by many in England to threaten the security of India and the overland access route to the sub-continent. Britain had developed important trading partnerships in the Middle East and the overland route into northern India was an important option for British businessmen. In due course, the Suez Canal would become the paramount route, but in 1877 its importance had not yet been tested.

Despite the fact that Disraeli had orchestrated Britain's purchase of the Suez Canal shares, he joined with many in England who continued to believe that Constantinople was the key to India. In October 1876 when the German Chancellor Prince Otto von Bismarck, suggested that the European peace could only be preserved by partitioning Turkey and that England should take Suez and Egypt, Disraeli wrote
to Lord Barrington:

If the Russians had Constantinople they could at any time march their army through Syria to the mouth of the Nile and then what would be the use of our holding Egypt? Not even our command of the sea could help us under such circumstances. People who talk in this manner must be utterly ignorant of geography. Constantinople is the Key of India, and not Egypt and the Suez Canal.26

Layard expressed similar sentiments in his private correspondence with Lord Lytton:

I am astonished to find Lord Derby et al attaching no importance to an alternative route to India when a ship sunk in the waterway or a few pounds of dynamite placed on the banks might close the Suez Canal.27

Disraeli also recognised the similarities between the polyglot empire of the Turks and the British Empire and worried about the implications of setting precedents in European Turkey which could rebound on Britain. On October 1, 1875 he wrote to Lady Bradford, ‘Fancy autonomy for Bosnia, with a mixed population: autonomy for Ireland would be less absurd.’28 This concern was still in his mind a few months later while he was deliberating whether to accept the Andrassy Note. As he wrote to Lord Derby, presenting an argument well suited to the views of an aristocrat, whose broad landholdings had just escaped the clutches of family debts,

(I am concerned) whether in the advice which we are asked to give Turkey, we are not committing ourselves to principles which are, or may be soon, a matter of controversy in our own country: for instance, the
opposition of local taxation to local purposes and the right of the peasantry to the soil.29

Above all, Disraeli tried to use Layard as a means to resurrect his own preferred solution to the Russia-Turkey crisis - to bring British forces right into the theatre, by placing a British garrison at Gallipoli and the fleet in the Sea of Marmora, and then force Russia to back down, even at the risk of an Anglo-Russian crisis.30 On June 6, 1877 Disraeli asked Layard to persuade the Sultan to invite the British fleet to Constantinople while still maintaining neutrality, ostensibly because England would be taking a material guarantee for the observance of existing treaties. Layard was to make all the arrangements in secret ‘otherwise the Russians might be at the Dardanelles before they occupy Constantinople and our fleet might be caught in a trap - the material guarantees therefore should also consist of a military occupation of the peninsula of Gallipoli by England. 20,000 men would secure this.’31 Disraeli’s thinking was that, since the Cabinet would reject such a proposal if he directly made it, by having the suggestion come from the Porte, he could recommend its acceptance to the Cabinet. Layard did try to facilitate the plan but the Sultan was adamant in refusing to make such a request unless Britain discarded her neutrality and openly entered the war on the side of Turkey. The mere fact that Disraeli pressed Layard to follow this
line, however, is a clear indication of the nature of Disraeli's real policy objectives in 1876-77. Initially, he wished to diffuse the crisis, but if war broke out Disraeli was not prepared to stand on the sidelines while changes were being made which could affect Britain's prestige in Turkey and in Europe; he was prepared to take any action which would enable Britain to have an active role. Of equal significance is the illustration of the nature of British decision making - the fact that a Prime Minister could try to use an ambassador to overturn his own Foreign Minister's policy and the Cabinet's inclination. Finally, Layard's dispatches, which were often fundamental in causing the Cabinet to take forward steps over the next nine months, were never simply the reports of an objective observer, but highly and precisely politicised as well.

Layard was confident that Beaconsfield shared his attempts to re-establish British support for Turkey and he was concerned that, without the Prime Minister, the political situation in Britain could become even more volatile and its policy even less firm. Beaconsfield's health was failing. Layard knew this and shared his concern with Lord Lytton in August, 1877: '...although the spirit in the Cabinet (Lord Beaconsfield) may be strong, its fleshy part is weak. I do not however altogether despair that the spirit will prevail.' Beaconsfield was suffering from a combination of
asthma, chronic bronchitis and gout which frequently affected his ability to function. He often referred to his state of health in his correspondence with Lady Bradford, as he did in a letter of August 1, 1876 referring to the previous evening's Commons debate: 'I did not speak at all to my own satisfaction, wanting energy and therefore fluency and clearness and consecutiveness of ideas.'

In the early months of 1877 Beaconsfield was constantly unwell and was obliged, before the adjournment of Parliament for the Easter recess, to leave London for Hughenden on urgent medical advice. Thus, during this early period of the war between Russia and Turkey, when Layard was struggling to maintain the impression of continued British prestige and influence at the Porte, he suffered not merely from a lack of definitive policy from Westminster but from the very real possibility that Disraeli would die or resign from office thereby plunging the country and its eastern policy into even greater chaos.

Even if Disraeli had been stronger, it is doubtful whether he could have acted any differently in the face of his divided cabinet and the opposition of public opinion. As Layard recognized:

We have no policy, no definite views - consequently no influence and power. I have done all that I could to point out the danger to our interests and influence
in Asia of the secession to Russia of the Eastern part of Armenia and of such a port on the Black Sea as Batoum...the consequences to the British Empire are, in my opinion, incalculable. But I do not see what the government can do in the face of public opinion. A strong and decided foreign policy without strong and decided public support is impossible.34

As a direct result of their mutual concern, Layard also worked closely with another of Disraeli's appointments, Lord Lytton, Britain's Viceroy to India, so as to ensure that Britain would continue to be seen by Islamic populations as being an ally of Turkey. By June 1877, the Afghanistan Emir, Sher Alli, was so embittered by British policy that he refused permission for a British agent to enter the country - a step which challenged British pretensions in his country. The British correctly feared that promises of support from Russia were strengthening Sher Ali's determination. In order to combat this influence, Layard encouraged the Sultan to send an envoy to the Emir of Afghanistan to reinforce the importance of remaining 'hostile against Russia and consequently...friendly to England.'35 It was almost a month before the preparations could be completed, but on July 10, Layard was in a position to inform Derby:

Last week Ahmed KahntoussiEffendi, the Envoy of the Sultan to the Amir of Afghanistan called upon me with his secretary. He had been directed to do so by His Majesty who had told him to give me the fullest explanation as to the object of his mission and most ample assurances that any influence it might have with the Amir would be exercised in favour of British interests and with a view to the establishment of friendly relations between England and Afghanistan...If
Afghanistan were to be brought under Russian influence there would no longer be any independent Mahommedan state in Central Asia. It was His Majesty believed, in the interests of England as it was to those of Islam over which he was the head, to prevent Afghanistan falling into the hands of Russia. His envoy would be instructed to make the Amir understand this and to prevail upon him to maintain the most friendly relations with the Indian government...he will leave tomorrow for Bombay.36

Layard had advised Lytton that the envoy would be travelling to India and requested that he be ‘well and kindly treated.’37 He also telegraphed the India Office in London to request permission for the envoy to travel through India. Never one to suffer bureaucratic delays with patience, Layard waited two weeks for a response and, receiving none, advised the Sultan that permission had been granted. This assumption upset both senior India Office officials and angered the India Secretary, Lord Salisbury. Salisbury believed in the importance to Britain of maintaining a British sphere of influence in Afghanistan and in ensuring that Russia would never dominate that country. In 1875 he said "Whenever [Russia] is in possession of the dominant party in Afghanistan (sic), and has seated its nominee upon the throne, she will be able, as the Russians themselves say, 'to besiege Constantinople from the heights above Peshawur.'38 Indeed, Salisbury wished to make Afghanistan a puppet state but by 1877 he also wished to keep the issue quiet and he mistrusted Lytton, Layard and Disraeli.
Salisbury protested Layard's actions to Derby but it was too late. They could not rescind the invitation without losing face with the Sultan and the mission proceeded. This incident contributed to the growing distrust between Salisbury and his viceroy. It also drew the government's attention once again to Russia's efforts to increase her influence in Afghanistan and resulted in the British government sending an official warning to the government of Russia not to occupy Merv.39 This inclination of Layard to act in what he considered to be in the interests of Britain regardless of instructions, or the lack thereof, was a feature of his tenure in Constantinople - in effect, this Ambassador and that Viceroy would force Her Majesty's Government's hand, and work with the Prime Minister against the policy of his Ministers.

In the early months of the war British public opinion was still opposed to providing assistance to Turkey. Layard wrote 'I am doing the very utmost to keep matters straight and to maintain the shreds of our influence here but the task is a difficult one and the responsibility is great. Good advice and asking much without anything to give in return will not do much good.'40

Despite this pessimistic comment, Layard was not a man
to wait for events to unfold without his involvement. He used his experience with and knowledge of the Turkish people in his analysis of the political situation at the Porte. His years with Stratford Canning had taught him a great deal about how politics at the Porte and intrigues at the palace were organized. He also shared the mid Victorian assumptions that a strong and straight Englishman could naturally assert influence over any Oriental potentate and thus shape the policy of a personal government.

His initial impression of the Sultan was a favourable one, but he held that certain influential Ottoman Ministers had influenced Abdul Hamid II during the Constantinople Conference to reject the European proposals, primarily in order to provoke a war with Russia. On his arrival at the Porte, Layard sought to reduce the influence of these men and worked to change Turkish policy by gaining the trust and confidence of the Sultan. He also determined that his influence on the Sultan should be well recognized at the Porte, so as to give him the power to then influence other Turkish ministers. By April 30 he was able to report:

I have received many civil messages from (the Sultan) and have the means of getting to him through an old friend. This may be important hereafter.41

While he waited for the British government to formulate a decisive policy with regard to the Turkish situation,
Layard worked toward an early end to the war. As he wrote to Lord Derby on May 30, 1877:

Being without any definite instructions from you as to the course I should pursue here, I have thought that the best and only thing that I could do under the circumstances is to prepare the mind of the Sultan and his Ministers for peace, should there be an opening in mediation.42

Layard devoted his substantial energy to providing the Sultan with advice in many areas and in this his behaviour went beyond the normal behaviour of an ambassador toward the monarch in a foreign court.43 In the early days of the war this may have contributed to the Sultan’s continued belief that Turkey could still count on British assistance if her existence became threatened, in spite of Layard’s frequent assurances to the contrary. Nevertheless, the effort which Layard invested in gaining the confidence of the Sultan became extremely important in moulding this stage of the Eastern Question. It was Layard’s personal influence over the Sultan which would be a key factor in enabling Britain to take the leading role at the Congress of Berlin.

Quite aside from his professional duty, Layard liked the Sultan personally and the two men established a relationship of mutual regard. Layard was able to describe to the Sultan in great detail the vast empire which he governed, and to discuss the many areas for potential economic development on which the Sultan could embark once peace was restored. This
was an area of discussion which delighted the Sultan and the
two men spent many hours in its pursuit. Mr. George Washburn
of the American Robert College said that Layard's relations
with the Sultan 'were more intimate than those of any other
Ambassador before or since.'44 The Layards were often invited
to visit the Sultan at his home where Mrs. Layard was invited
to join her husband and the Sultan for dinner. The esteem in
which Layard was held by the Sultan was publicly demonstrated
by the fact that Mrs. Layard was the first woman to be given
this special mark of favour.45 The friendly relationship which
grew between the Sultan and Mrs. Layard resulted, in 1878, in
her being given a special decoration for her humanitarian
work among the wounded Turkish soldiers and refugees who
flocked to the capital in the final days of the war. Even
many years after the Layards had returned to London and Abdul
Hamid had become disillusioned with British policy toward
Turkey, he kept a photograph of Mrs. Layard on display in his
private study.

Abdul Hamid II became Sultan on August 31, 1876
following the deposition and suicide of his oldest brother
Abdul Aziz in May and the deposition three months later of
the next brother in line, Murad, on the grounds of insanity.
Abdul Hamid was a shy man, given to periods of depression,
who had a lifelong fear of assassination. It would be
natural for a person of his character to be drawn to the
Layard’s first impression of the Sultan was that ‘He seems to me like a man out of whom much might be made.’ After three months in his new position, Layard was able to advise Lord Derby:

Everything in this country must depend more or less upon the Sultan. If he is a weak, ignorant, bad man things must go ill. If, on the contrary, he is an enlightened, well intentioned man of a firm will there are fair hopes of a decent administration of affairs... During the last few days (the Sultan) has given proofs of a firmness and decision for which I must confess I was not prepared.

Layard recognised that ultimate power was vested in the Sultan but Abdul Hamid was a very insecure man. His mother had died when he was very young and he grew up among the intrigues and jealousies of the Seraglio, in ignorance of governing or policy creation. His older brothers were both deposed due to their insanity, probably driven to that state by fears of assassination. Layard observed:

He is kept in constant strain by reports of conspiracies in favour of the deposed Sultan Murad and of his younger brother Reschid Effendi. Each Minister makes use of those reports which no doubt have some foundation, to frighten the Sultan and to undermine his colleagues whom he suggests are privy to these intrigues...this utter want of men competent to direct public affairs is one of the most fatal signs of decomposition of the Empire.

This situation provided Layard with an opportunity to influence Turkish political decisions at the highest level and he endeavoured from the beginning of his tenure to encourage the trust and confidence of the Sultan as a means toward this end. Privately, he confided to Lord Lytton:
My only hope is in the Sultan. I think I have gained some influence over him and he is full of liberal ideas and good intentions; but timid.49

Layard’s first self appointed task was to use his growing ascendancy over the Sultan to reduce the influence of those Turkish Ministers whom he felt comprised a ‘war party.’ He hoped to persuade Turkey to appeal to the five Powers, England, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, and Germany, to mediate between the warring parties but he was opposed by the ‘war party.’ On April 30, 1877 he reported to Lord Derby:

After a severe struggle, in which I succeeded in getting the assistance of the Sultan, I was able to defeat the war party and the result is already apparent in diminished influence of Mohammed Damat Pasha and Rediff Pasha, the two men who have exercised the greatest influence over the Sultan, and whose influences over him are most to be feared. I have good hopes that Rediff Pasha, a most incompetent and ignorant person, totally unfit to be at such a moment as this Minister for War, will soon fall...the next man to get rid of is Mohammed Damat, the Sultan’s brother-in-law but that is a hard matter.50

Layard, never one to mince words, confronted both Rediff and Damat and ‘spoke to them very plainly, telling them that through the evil counsels they had given and the way in which they had shielded the authors of the Bulgarian outrages they had sacrificed the friendship and alliance of England and had plunged their country into what might prove to be a fatal war.’51 This type of plain language, amounting to scolding the Porte’s most senior and influential ministers, was typical of Layard’s nature, but also demonstrates the confidence he had in his relationship with the Sultan and the power he
represented, that his actions would not cause a diplomatic problem. On May 23, 1877 he reported to Derby:

Rediff Pasha is well aware that it depends upon me whether he shall go or not, has become abject like such Turks do under such circumstances and is ready to do anything I wish.52

In the event, Rediff was not removed from his office. Nepotism was a fundamental pillar of Turkish politics which even Layard did not have the means to shake. Nonetheless, he had acquired some influence in Turkish politics, as Disraeli gleefully reported to Lady Bradford:

One result of the influence of Mr. Layard is that he had got rid of all the Ministers who were jealous of foreigners and so deprived the Sultan of the services of many distinguished English officers now all employed. Baker Pasha among others.53

Even though Layard was not successful in having Rediff removed from office, he managed to remove Shefket Pasha from command. Shefket Pasha had been involved in the suppression of the Bulgarian revolt and Layard had pressured the Sultan to punish all those who had participated in the atrocities. On May 11, 1877 he wrote to Said Pasha, the Sultan's Secretary:

After I saw you this afternoon, I read in Turquî that Shefket Pasha had been named to a command in Asia Minor notwithstanding the distinct assurances given to me by the Grand Vizier and Savfet Pasha that he should be sent in a kind of exile to Baghdad, and Lord Derby's declaration to the Porte that his appointment, I am convinced, would produce a deplorable effect in England. Relying upon assurances given to me by two Turkish ministers I had informed Her Majesty's Government that
Shefket Pasha should be sent to Baghdad. As I have been deceived I will not in future rely on any promises given to me and unless Shefket Pasha’s appointment be cancelled at once I shall have to place the case before Her Majesty’s Government leaving all the responsibility of result upon the Porte.\(^5^4\)

Five days later, Layard reported to Sir Arnold Kembell that the appointment was cancelled immediately and completely. Layard had pressured the Sultan throughout his embassy to punish those responsible for the Bulgarian massacres and his success in having Shefket dismissed sent a signal to both Europe and Turkey that the incident had not been forgotten or forgiven. It also demonstrated the extent of Layard’s influence in Turkish affairs, as well as his ability to strategically threaten the withdrawal of British favour to achieve his ends. He rarely used this type of threat, relying instead on his own considerable power for persuasion in his discussions with both the Sultan and with Turkish Ministers.

In 1855 Layard had criticized the British government for entering the Crimean War and deploying troops without having obtained any intelligence as to the situation they would be facing. As Ambassador to Constantinople in 1877 he was determined that, if Britain eventually came to the aid of Turkey, which he was sure would happen, her military commanders would not be under the same disadvantage as their predecessors had been. Moreover, he inherited an excellent
system for military intelligence gathering which had been designed to provide accurate information to Westminster on Turkish military power as well as her defensive weaknesses. He used this system for that purpose and also to tell the Sultan the truth about Turkish losses when His Majesty was not given that information by his own officials. Layard maintained a constant correspondence with British Consuls and military personnel throughout the war zone as well as with front line military commanders and British naval captains, such as Captain Musgrave of HMS Cockatrice at Salina to whom he wrote on May 30, 1877:

The information which you have given me with respect to the proceedings of both Turks and Russians is of importance and I should feel much obliged by your writing to me whenever you have any more to communicate...any information that you can obtain about the employment of torpedoes by the Russians or Turks will of importance. Hobart Pasha is now in the Black Sea. If you hear anything of his movements I shall be glad to be informed of them.

He also dispatched British ships such as the Rapid on his own authority to visit various ports on the west coast of the Black Sea, such as Kustenlyi and Varna, and to remain in that area and keep him informed of any activity which might take place. He could justify this and all other information gathering on this basis of his concern about possible threats to the Christian populations in the Empire. In actuality his involvement went far beyond that concern.

The Embassy in Constantinople was a clearing house for
the gathering and dissemination of information regarding the military operations in European and Asian Turkey. Layard collected dispatches from British Consuls and military personnel, both European and Turkish. The information which they contained was then analysed by Lieutenant-General Sir Collingwood Dickson, the Military Attaché whose presence in the Embassy was specifically requested by Layard, and incorporated into reports which Layard forwarded to Lord Derby. The reports included the state of defensive works and fortresses, defensive forces and strategic weaknesses, and the deployment of arms and armaments. These assessments were thorough and useful. One such report was the subject of a memorandum from Dickson to Layard in May 1877:

...a report from Col. Lennox in Shumla. Collingwood put together a Memorandum of various military and engineering requirements for the improvement of the Turkish means of defence in their fortresses and works on the Danube, many of which are of vital importance; and I venture to propose that this Memorandum, unsigned and non-official, should be placed in the hands of the Turkish Minister of War, and in a private interview I can quietly urge upon him the absolute necessity of endeavouring to supply these wants without delay.57

As a result of Dickson's analysis Layard provided the Turks with the following advice:

...a large corps d'armée should be assembled at once at Adrianople, round which city works are about to be erected to form an intrenched (sic) camp. This army of reserve should be composed of the latest levies, with such proportion of regular troops as can be spared, and these should be prograded and trained as rapidly as possible. This force would cover the approaches to Constantinople, and be a rallying point for an army
retiring behind the Balkans. In order to facilitate the defence of the long line of the Danube, moveable corps with field artillery, placed under the most able and intelligent commanders that can be found, should operate between the large fortresses, watching the Russians with vigilance and ready to oppose any attempt on their part to cross the river, and so time would be gained for reinforcements to be sent from the strong garrisons of the nearest fortresses.58

While much of this advice was elementary in nature, the Turks did reinforce Adrianople as they were advised to do and did such a masterful job of it that when the Russian General Mikhail Skobelev took the city he made a point of seeking out the man who had overseen the construction in order to congratulate him.59

In Europe Romania gave free passage to the Russian troops to cross her territory in April 1877 but it was June before they could cross the Danube into Bulgaria. The delay did not diminish their success, however, and once across the Danube the Russian army moved swiftly to occupy much of northern Bulgaria and to break through the natural defence of the Balkan Mountains in two places, one of which was the Shipka Pass. The loss of the Shipka Pass left the road open to Adrianople, the second city of the Empire, and a short march to the capital. An official Turkish dispatch reported "The existence of the Empire hangs on a hair."60

Russia appeared to be victorious and Colonel Henry
Wellesley, Britain's Military Attaché at Russian headquarters and another of Disraeli's men, met with the Emperor to discuss the terms of peace which would be acceptable to Russia. They were - the return to Russia of the strip of Bessarabia lost in 1856, and the acquisition of Batum in Asia Minor. The occupation of Batum would provide Russia with the opportunity to threaten the towns on the southern coast of the Black Sea and the Bosporous. Alexander II assured Wellesley that he would not occupy Constantinople unless the course of events made such a step necessary and that the Powers would be invited to a Conference to settle Turkish affairs.

Details of this discussion were sent to Layard and he gave his opinion in a secret letter to Beaconsfield:

Terms received from Russia amount to dismemberment and partition of Turkey in Europe with direct consequences to England and the balance of power. Something must be done to increase defences at Gallipoli. Recommend fleet be established at Besika Bay. There are no direct means at our disposal of checking Russia, of maintaining the status quo and of placing England in a commanding position but to avail ourselves of this we must abandon our position of unconditional neutrality. If I am to do anything with regard to the defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula and Constantinople an experienced officer should be sent here at once - such a man as Col. Home, for instance.*1

As the result of this correspondence, Disraeli made three recommendations to the Cabinet at its June 30 meeting. They were: to invite Austria-Hungary to agree to a protocol
to prevent Russian occupation of Constantinople; to strengthen the Mediterranean fleet at Malta; and to send the fleet immediately to Besika Bay, where it would be poised to pass through the Dardanelles and into the Sea of Marmora if Constantinople were to be threatened with occupation. All three recommendations were accepted and acted upon and by the otherwise divided Cabinet. In addition, as Layard had recommended, Colonel Home, an officer of the British Intelligence Department, was dispatched to provide advice on the strengthening of the defensive position of the Gallipoli Peninsula. These steps, however, could not do more than check the most extreme of possible Russian actions, advance on Constantinople.

Layard’s concern was seven months premature. Russia suffered a series of losses and an early victory was no longer assured. While Russia had been focussing her efforts on taking Nicopolis, her generals diverted troops which were to have occupied Plevna, a strategic locale on the direct route to the passes through the Balkan Mountains. On July 19 Osman Pasha occupied Plevna with Turkish troops and on the 20, when the Russian army arrived to take over the town, they were repulsed. On July 31 they tried again; again they were unsuccessful. At the same time, Mukhtar Pasha began to drive Russian forces back from Armenia, and Suleiman Pasha re-took the Khainkoi Pass and began to attack the Russian forces
which were holding the Shipka Pass. The month of August was a time of crisis for the Russians. Alexander II considered retreating across the Danube but was persuaded to continue to besiege Plevna. Despite the apparent success of the Turks, Layard believed in the possibility of an ultimate Russian victory and in late July recommended to his government that in the interests of peace and for the protection of the Christian populations, England should occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Boulair Lines around Constantinople. If the Russians did advance on Constantinople, the Sultan had made plans to move the seat of government to Broussa:

His departure and that of all the high functionaries of the state would leave the capital at the mercy of the mob...the pressure of many thousands of Musselmans who have fled from their burning villages, in the utmost misery, the sight of the starving women and children and stories they tell of Russian and Bulgarian "atrocities" whether exaggerated or not signified but little as far as their effect is concerned and are already causing the greatest excitement and indignation amongst the Mohammedan populations of Constantinople. A mere trivial and accidental occurrence, such as a quarrel between a Musselman and Christian might lead to a general outburst. 62

Layard's argument that the need for support of endangered Christians again was sufficient to carry the Cabinet forward, despite opposition from Lord Derby. Layard was instructed to request permission from the Sultan for British forces to occupy Gallipoli but was unsuccessful in obtaining it. The Sultan was adamant that unless Britain joined Turkey in its fight against Russia he would not allow
any occupation by British troops.

Layard then took advantage of the opportunity to approach the Sultan with the possibility of ending the war while they had the chance to negotiate an advantageous peace. In hindsight, this offered Britain and Turkey the most favourable time to achieve their objectives. Characteristically Layard took this initiative entirely on his own, without instructions from London. The Turkish Ministers, however, had gained confidence in their victories and believed 'that they will be able within a few days to commence offensive operations with every prospect of a favourable result ...that the enemy will be ultimately repulsed and driven out of Bulgaria and Rumelia as he has been out of Armenia.' Accordingly, the Sultan was not prepared 'to entertain any proposals of peace which Russia is likely to make or to accept.' The Sultan's confidence in the advice of his ministers was misplaced.

On September 11 the Russian troops once again attacked Plevna and were once again repelled. After this disaster, they decided to besiege the town rather than risk any more loss of life. The siege of Plevna lasted three months; on December 10 the starving survivors were forced to surrender. The delay in capturing Plevna had cost the Russians more than 50,000 lives and had paralysed their progress in Europe for
five months; but the fall of Plevna was the beginning of the end for the Turkish defenders. On January 17 Russia took Philippopolis and on January 20 Adrianople fell. The road to Constantinople was wide open.

Since the earliest days of the war Layard had warned his superiors of the serious ramifications of the Russians occupying Constantinople and his concern had not been ignored. On May 6, 1877 Derby sent a message to the Russian Emperor which was personally delivered by Count Pyotr Shuvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London. Derby advised the Emperor that Britain would maintain a position of neutrality 'so long as Turkish interests alone are involved.' However, he pointed out that there were interests which Britain was determined to defend and these included the retention by Turkey of Constantinople:

The vast importance of Constantinople, whether in a military, political or commercial point of view is too well understood to require explanation. It is therefore scarcely necessary to point out that Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to witness with indifference the passing into other hands than those of its present possessors of a capital holding so peculiar and commanding a position.

On May 30 the Emperor responded by assuring Lord Derby that he had no intention of occupying Constantinople, but Lord Loftus, Britain's Ambassador in St. Petersburg, cautioned Derby against being lulled into a feeling of security regarding Russian objectives:
In the present grave circumstances it is necessary that England should be prepared for all eventualities. She has vital interests in the East to defend, and should not suffer that those interests should depend on assurances, however sincere, or on declarations however binding, the fulfilment of which is exposed to the uncertain chapter of incidents...I believe that an occupation of Constantinople and the Dardanelles by England for defensive purposes would be the surest means of coming to an understanding with Russia with regard to Turkey and may possibly be the means of saving Europe from more serious obligations.67

Following the fall of Plevna, Derby reminded the Russian government of its promise that the Emperor did not intend to occupy Constantinople, but Russia's military success had given her new confidence. On December 16 the Russian Prime Minister replied that Russia must have a full right of action as any belligerent power would expect, and asked Britain to provide details of precisely which British interests would be endangered by the occupation of Constantinople. In fact, over the next two months Russia posed the greatest menace to British interests that it ever did between 1856 and 1914, and was the most willing to run the risk of war with Great Britain.

Meanwhile, the brave stand of Osman Pasha at Plevna had demonstrated that Turkey might be a 'sick old man' but he was not yet dead. The British public, always fascinated by stories of brave men succeeding against the odds, changed their opinion to favour the brave little Turks. As anti-
Russian feeling grew in the country a new song became popular in the music halls and a new term was introduced into the English language.

“We don’t want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do, we’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, we’ve got the money too.”

This swing in public opinion and the collapse of Turkish ability to oppress Balkan Christians, combined with the rise of a potential Russian danger to Constantinople, changed the views of the British elite. Now Britain faced a diplomatic crisis and Layard played a signal role in the confused process of British crisis decision making.

On December 13 the Sultan asked Britain to request that Russia agree to a three-month armistice. This request was discussed at a Cabinet meeting on December 18 which decided that, rather than request an armistice, Britain would offer to mediate terms of peace between Russia and Turkey. It was also decided to ask Parliament to vote supplementary naval and military estimates. Layard obtained agreement from the Porte to the mediation and Lord Augustus Loftus, Britain’s Ambassador at St. Petersburg, was instructed to ask the Russian government if it would entertain overtures of peace. On December 30 Loftus reported that Russia would only negotiate directly with the Porte. Events on the ground during the next four weeks moved with extraordinary speed and
reports about them confused both Layard and his superiors.

A state of confusion also existed within the Russian ranks. Following the fall of Plevna the Tsar returned to St. Petersburg and disagreements surfaced at Russian headquarters between the military leaders, Foreign Ministry representative Nelidov and General Nikolai Ignatiev, the pan-Slavic former Ambassador to the Porte. Confusion was further increased by contradictory and delayed instructions from St. Petersburg. On January 3 the Tsar sent instructions to Grand Duke Nicholas, who commanded Russia's western forces, outlining the terms of peace which Russia demanded. In an effort to delay peace negotiations for as long as possible he sent these instructions by courier, rather than by telegraph, and they were not received until January 14. Gorchakov wanted to put off any peace negotiations in order to enable Russian troops to occupy as much territory as possible and also to deprive Disraeli of the excuse to ask Parliament for a vote of credit to expand the military. Cabinet information at this time flowed freely from Derby to Gorchakov via Schuvalov.

Russian forces continued to advance rapidly toward Constantinople and on January 10 the Sultan, fearing the occupation of his capital, sent a telegram to the Queen appealing to her to mediate with the Tsar for an armistice
and to discuss peace terms. The Queen passed this request on to Alexander who replied:

Your Majesty does me justice in saying that I desire peace, but I wish it to be serious and lasting. The Commanders-in-Chief of my armies in Europe and Asia know the conditions on which a suspension of hostilities can be granted. The Queen and Disraeli were angry and offended by this response but it effectively removed Britain from any position of mediation between the belligerents.

In the meantime the Turkish troops had been ordered to cease fire, believing that England was negotiating for peace on their behalf but on January 19 the Tsar sent instructions to Grand Duke Nicholas to continue military operations and delay negotiations with the Turks. Nicholas was so angry with these instructions that he smashed the telegraph lines. Nevertheless, he obeyed the Emperor’s instructions and continued to advance toward Constantinople. Constantinople was in chaos. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and wounded Turkish soldiers had flocked to the city ahead of the Russian troops and many were living in the frozen streets and crowding into mosques where they died of typhus, smallpox and starvation. While Mrs. Layard and a group of British women were attempting to provide some humanitarian aid, Layard arranged for the Sultan and his family to be evacuated on a British gunboat once the city was taken. On January 19 Layard sent a dispatch to Derby requesting asylum for the
Sultan in England if Russia should occupy the capital.

While panic and chaos enveloped Constantinople, the British Parliament debated whether to approve supplementary army and navy estimates for £6 million which the Queen had recommended in the Speech from the Throne on January 17, 1877, in case 'some unexpected occurrence may render it incumbent on me to adopt measures of precaution.' The debate lasted for five nights and at times became extremely heated. However, on the fifth night a telegram from Layard galvanized the Members into supporting the motion with a majority of 199 votes. The Liberal party had previously indicated that it would vote against the government and W.E. Forster had moved an amendment challenging the motion, but after hearing Layard's report as to the state of affairs in Constantinople, Forster withdrew his amendment and abstained from voting, as did most of the Liberal party members. Layard's telegram read:

Notwithstanding armistice Russians are pushing on towards Constantinople....Although five days have elapsed since signature of bases of peace and the Convention of Armistice, Protocol had not yet reached the Porte, which is kept in ignorance of real terms....Telegraph with Europe cut off, except through Bombay. State of affairs very grave....One of the conditions of the armistice [is]that the Chekmedje lines should be abandoned, and Turks have been compelled to retire quite, thus leaving Constantinople completely undefended. Russians have occupied Tchataldjia in considerable force.73

It was later learned that the information in the
telegraph was incorrect, inasmuch as the Russian troops had not been ordered to occupy the capital, and Layard was criticised by those who opposed the vote. It is generally accepted, however, that there was no intention on Layard's part to deceive the House. His telegraph was based on the best sources available to him at the Porte and is an indication of the extent of the confusion which existed in Constantinople at the time.

Disraeli finally had the support he needed in his cabinet as well as in the country and he acted quickly to move the fleet through the Dardanelles. On February 8 Admiral Hornby, who commanded the British fleet at Besikka, was ordered to move the British fleet from Besika Bay to Constantinople. Alexander II saw this as an indication of British intention to provoke a war with Russia and ordered Grand Duke Nicholas to occupy Constantinople as soon as the fleet passed the Bosphorus. Even though Alexander modified his position to the extent of agreeing that so long as no British troops were landed on the shores of the Dardanelles, the Russians would not occupy Gallipoli or enter the Bulair lines around Constantinople, Grand Duke Nicholas ordered his troops to continue to move forward and to occupy the area to the west and south west of the capital. Britain responded to this advance by requesting permission from the Sultan to land British troops on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus and
Layard was ordered to buy four warships from the Turks to prevent them from falling into Russian hands. When this ploy was leaked to the Russians they threatened to move 30,000 troops into Constantinople unless the Turks immediately surrendered their entire fleet. The Sultan refused to sell the ships to Britain or to surrender his fleet to Russia. Derby threatened to withdraw Britain's Ambassador to St. Petersburg if Russian troops entered the city. Diplomatic relations between Britain and Russia had reached a very fragile state. On February 15 Derby gave Shuvalov the following written warning:

They [H.M. Government] could not but regard any attempt on the part of Russia to occupy the peninsula [of Gallipoli] or the Forts of the Dardanelles as an act which...must be designed to interfere with the navigation of the Straits, and, therefore, a direct breach of the conditions on which the attitude [of neutrality] hitherto maintained by Great Britain has depended.74

In the interim the Porte sent a strongly worded protest against the instructions to the fleet via Layard:

The Russian army is at the gates of Constantinople...the step taken by Her Majesty's Government exposes a million human beings to perish in the midst of a conflict for foreign interests...the Porte protests against it, leaving the responsibility of the frightful catastrophe that may ensue to England.75

The Sultan also sent a telegram to the Queen begging that Britain should withdraw her instructions. Server Pasha also continued to press Layard on the subject. In response to Ottoman concern that a continuing British military presence
would result in Russian occupation of the city, Layard and Hornby, without consultation with London, moved the fleet ten miles further away from Constantinople, thus removing the immediate threat to the city. Layard's independent action in this instance demonstrates his ability to act independently and quickly when he felt that it was appropriate to do so. The fact that his political superiors did not reprimand him for countermanding their orders indicates the trust which they maintained in his actions.

The Queen and Beaconsfield were convinced that unless Britain took firm action immediately, Constantinople would be attacked by Russia and Britain would be obliged to declare war from a position of considerable disadvantage. Beaconsfield began to discuss with the Queen and Colonel Wellesley the possibility of a war between Russia and Britain. This possibility was temporarily eased when, on March 3, Russia and Turkey signed a formal treaty at San Stefano which effectively ended the presence of Turkey in Europe.

Under the terms of the treaty, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania were enlarged and granted independence, and a Greater Bulgaria was created whose frontiers extended to the Aegean in the south, incorporating most of Macedonia and what is now Albania. Bulgaria was to be an autonomous tributary
principality with a Christian government and a national militia. As Layard had predicted, Turkey was also required to cede to Russia eastern Armenia, including Batum, Kars, Ardahan, and Bayazid, as well as part of Bessarabia and an extended area along the Black Sea coast. This last concession was given on the understanding that Turkey was unable to pay the 1,410,000,000 roubles assessed by Russia as damages. Beaconsfield was outraged at the extent of the territory which Russia demanded and stated in the House of Lords that 'the Sultan of Turkey is reduced to a state of absolute subjugation to Russia and...he would no longer (be) in the position in which he was placed by the European treaties.' As a result of this effective amendment to former treaties, Britain demanded that all the clauses of the Treaty of San Stefano should be subjected to the scrutiny of a European Congress and no alteration of the treaties of 1841, 1856 and 1871 would be valid unless approved by the treaty Powers. Russia refused to submit the treaty for Congress consideration which re-escalated the controversy between Britain and Russia. On March 27 Beaconsfield wrote to Gathorne Hardy his fear that England was drifting into war, although he was still confident that by standing firm, war would be avoided.

On March 27 Cabinet approved calling out the reserves and giving instructions to the Indian Government to send a
force through the Suez Canal to occupy Cyprus and Scanderoon, a minor port in northern Syria, from which positions they could command the Persian Gulf and the country around Baghdad. Lord Derby was unwilling to support the acquisition of 'new Gibralters' in the Levant and tendered his resignation.77 He told Schuvaloff what had transpired and Schuvaloff predicted that Derby's resignation would be interpreted by Russia 'as a definitive triumph of the war-party in England and that on their side preparations will be made.'78

Lord Salisbury was appointed to fill the vacant position of Foreign Secretary. During the course of the war, Disraeli had become increasingly distanced from Derby, to whom he had previously been something of a surrogate father, and had begun to confide more frequently in Salisbury. Salisbury, in turn, realized that he could become Disraeli's successor and, with the change in public opinion toward Turkey allowing him to exercise greater flexibility in his loyalties, he increasingly supported the Prime Minister's recommendations regarding Turkish matters. For Layard this finally provided the opportunity to work with a foreign secretary whose views and objectives were sympathetic with his own.

The preceding ten months had been extremely difficult for Layard. Throughout the war he had been alone in
maintaining the continuation of British influence at the Porte, in spite of the fact that the assistance which he could provide to the Sultan was limited to information and advice. Nevertheless, he acquired and retained the Sultan’s personal trust and friendship. During the chaotic last weeks of hostilities it was Layard’s advice which ultimately moved the Cabinet toward acceptance of the possibility of an active role against Russia. For the duration of his term at the Porte Layard was given more specific direction by Salisbury than he had received during Derby’s term of office, but the need for his experience and pluck was not thereby diminished as the diplomatic crisis continued to escalate.

From the outset the main objections which Disraeli and Salisbury had to the Treaty of San Stefano were the creation of a large Bulgaria and Russia’s acquisition of Batoum and Kars. Layard described Batum as ‘the key to Armenia and Asia Minor.’ It is difficult to assess the extent of Layard’s influence on the formation of this objection but, given the consistency of his warnings to London about the repercussions of this eventuality, it is reasonable to assume that such an influence did exist. He wrote to Lytton in January 1878:

I am doing all that I possibly can to make the government feel the immense importance of preventing Batoum, Kars, Erzeroum and the East of Armenia into Russian hands because it would endanger the Indian Empire and therefore England’s position as a great power.
Salisbury entered his new office with a confidence and vigour which he had been unable to exercise during the ill-fated Constantinople Conference. His first act as Foreign Secretary was to compose a circular which was sent to all the European Powers and to both Houses of Parliament. The circular defended Britain's diplomatic position regarding the submission of the entire Treaty of San Stefano to a Congress. During the following weeks Salisbury made no secret of which points of policy were open to negotiation and on which points Britain was prepared to fight. 'We hope for peace - but prepare for war; and we are taking every necessary precaution,' he wrote to Odo Russell, Britain's Ambassador in Berlin.

After a year of dealing with an uncertain British policy and conflicting or non-existent instructions from Whitehall, Layard was now thoroughly briefed by Salisbury as to what policy was and how it should be implemented. In early April, Russia pressured the Porte to surrender Shumla, Varna and Batum. In response to Layard's request for instructions, Salisbury suggested that Turkey should hold on to all three for as long as possible, but cautioned Layard not to give the Sultan any hope of military assistance from Britain. Layard may have been better informed about British policy and plans but he was still in the same position as he had always been,
of having 'much to ask and little to give in return.' It was remarkable that, in view of this position, he continued to retain the absolute trust and confidence of the Sultan.

In the weeks following the Treaty of San Stefano, the Cabinet sought to find ways to minimize the effect on India of Russian encroachment in Asia. Colonel Home suggested to Disraeli that it would be a strategic coup for Britain to have a base in the Eastern Mediterranean from which she could quickly launch troops. On May 5, 1878 Beaconsfield described the benefit in a letter to the Queen:

If Cyprus is conceded to your Majesty by the Porte and England at the same time enters into a defensive alliance with Turkey guaranteeing Asiatic Turkey from Russian invasion, the power of England in the Mediterranean will be absolutely increased in that region, and Your Majesty's Indian empire immensely strengthened.

For both Salisbury and Disraeli, the acquisition of Cyprus became a crucial matter - the means by which they could sustain Turkish independence vis-à-vis Russia, and underwrite the influence which they intended to execute in Turkey. Thus, this issue became central to Anglo-Turkish relations and the Congress of Berlin.

On May 25 Salisbury instructed Layard to propose to the Sultan that Turkey join with Britain in a secret defensive alliance under the terms of which England would help Turkey to defend her Asian territories against Russia; in return the
Sultan would agree to reforms and protection for her Christian subjects and, in order that Britain could provide the appropriate vigilance over Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, she would occupy and administer Cyprus. Any surplus revenue over expenses would be paid to the Turkish government. To ensure that Layard understood the urgency of these instructions, Salisbury sent a follow-up telegram on the same day pressing him to get the agreement 'with all the energy in your power.' If the Sultan did not agree, Layard was to inform him that all negotiations with England would cease and the Empire would be partitioned. Given the relationship of mutual trust and respect which existed between Layard and Abdul Mejid it is highly unlikely that Layard resorted to the use of Salisbury's threats. Within forty-eight hours he had persuaded the Sultan to agree to the convention and on May 31 telegraphed to inform Salisbury that he had taken the responsibility for signing it, rather than allowing any further delay while he awaited approval from London.

Salisbury's anxiety to ensure the early acceptance of the Cyprus Convention was due to the fact that the Foreign Secretary was negotiating a secret Anglo-Russian Convention with Schuvalov. Under the terms of the Convention the two countries accepted major modifications to the Treaty of San Stefano in anticipation of the European Congress which was to
be held in Berlin. The agreement included dividing the proposed area of Bulgaria into two provinces - the northern one to be autonomous and the southern to remain subject to Turkish rule. Russia was to get Batoum and Kars subject to a Russian promise not to acquire any more territory in Asiatic Turkey. Layard was not privy to this information when he was negotiating the Cyprus Convention.

On July 3 the Convention was submitted to the Turkish Grand Council for ratification. They refused to ratify the agreement until after the Congress of Berlin 'on the ground that the Convention might cause Russia to refuse to surrender territory in Asia Minor, tempt other Powers to demand similar concessions and anger public opinion in Turkey.' Salisbury was becoming extremely anxious and once again Layard used his friendship with the Sultan to persuade him to grant a firman. The firman was dated July 1, 1878, although it was actually signed on July 6.

The Cyprus Convention was a triumph for Layard and demonstrated, as nothing else could, the trust in which Layard was held by Abdul Hamid. It had been negotiated during a time of the Sultan's extreme emotional instability, precipitated by a revolt in Constantinople.

On May 18, 1878 Ali Suavi, a disaffected teacher, led a
minor revolt in the hope of replacing Hamid with his insane brother Murad. Although the revolt was easily suppressed it had the effect on the Sultan of unleashing the paranoia which had emerged intermittently throughout his life and making it a permanent feature of his personality. As Layard described it:

Ali Suavi's revolt had the effect of bringing out in Abdul Hamid the germ of insanity he and all other members of his house had inherited from their ancestor, Sultan Ibrahim.89

Abdul Hamid suffered a complete breakdown during which he secluded himself in his palace, convinced that Ali Suavi had been sent by the former Grand Vizier, Midhat Pasha, and financed by the Russians. During his seclusion he sent for Layard to beg for protection for his wife and children, as he believed his assassination was scheduled to take place on the following day. It was while the Sultan was in this terrible emotional state that Layard persuaded him to accept the Cyprus Convention. Allowing for the distrust which Hamid felt for even his closest advisors, Layard's success was nothing short of remarkable.

Britain was represented at the Berlin Congress by Disraeli and Salisbury, who did not announce the existence of the Cyprus Convention until after the Congress of Berlin had convened on June 13. Its immediate effect was to modify the focus of the Congress from its stated purpose which was to
deal with the clauses of the Treaty of San Stefano, particularly as they related to the recognition of the Balkan peoples. Other participant nations were able to use the Cyprus Convention as a precedent by which they could also secure a prize as Britain had done. Accordingly, Austria-Hungary obtained a right of occupation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the administration of the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar; France was quietly told by Bismarck and Salisbury that there would be no objection raised to her moving in on Tunis; and Italy expressed her designs on Tripoli. Germany asked for nothing at the conference but soon afterwards began to invest heavily in the Middle East.90

The pre-Congress negotiations which Britain had carried out with Russia and with Austria-Hungary ensured her delegates a prominent place at the table and they were able to negotiate a modification of the Treaty of San Stefano: Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Northern Bulgaria were given independence, Southern Bulgaria became an autonomous state known as Eastern Rumelia, the Greek border was adjusted and Macedonia and Armenia stayed with Turkey. In effect, Turkey retained 30,000 square miles which she would have lost under the original treaty.

The Cyprus Convention marked the climax of Layard's term in Constantinople. By obtaining the Sultan's signed consent
despite the objections of the Turkish ministers, Layard demonstrated his extraordinary influence over Abdul Hamid and justified Disraeli’s faith in his appointment. It also showed his London colleagues that the ‘Nineveh Bull’ was capable of being a first-rate diplomat whose contributions helped to restore British prestige in Europe and the East. On his return from Berlin, Disraeli expressed his confidence that the Cyprus Convention would provide sufficient security for Asiatic Turkey, that it would put an end to the recurring wars between Russia and Turkey.  

Ironically, however, all this turned to dust. Within two years Disraeli’s government was out of office and Gladstone entirely abandoned the policy which the Convention was intended to underwrite; meanwhile, Turkey became hostile to Britain.

The Treaty of Berlin effectively ended the crisis between Britain and Russia. Austin Henry Layard was given a knighthood for his services to his country during this difficult time. He continued to represent Britain in Constantinople until the fall of the Conservative government in 1880.
Notes

2. F.O. Dct. 625.
4. Layard Papers, 39136
6. Layard Papers, 39136.
7. Ibid.
8. Weintraub, p. 579.
10. Layard Papers, 39128.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
21. Layard Papers, 39839.
22. Stanley, p.337.
23. Monypenny and Buckle, p.925.
24. Ibid., p.885.


27. Layard Papers, 39128.


29. Ibid., p.891.

30. Blake, p.609.

31. Layard Papers, 39137.

32. Layard Papers, 39136.


34. Layard Papers, 39136.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 39128.

37. Ibid., 39136.


40. Layard Papers, 39136.

41. Ibid., 39130.

42. Ibid.

43. Millman, p.294.

44. Waterfield, p.376.


46. Layard Papers, 39130.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 39136.
50. Ibid., 39130.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
54. Layard Papers, 39130.
56. Layard Papers, 39130.
57. F.O. 424/55 No. 287.
58. F.O. 424/55 No. 15249.
61. Layard Papers 39137.
62. Layard Papers, 39128.
63. F.O. Dct. 424/55 705.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 424/55 640.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., 424/55 644.
68. Monypenny and Buckle, p.1112.
69. Ibid., p.1092.
70. Millman, p.364.
72. Millman, p.379.
73. Ibid., p.393.
74. F.O. 78/4271 No.186.
75. Millman, p.392.
76. Monypenny and Buckle, p.1143.
77. Derby, p.533.
78. Layard Papers, 38538.
79. Ibid., 39136.
80. Ibid.
81. Millman, p.418.
82. Layard Papers, 39136.
83. Haslip, p.142.
84. Layard Papers, 39137.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Haslip, p.137.
90. Layard Papers 39137.
Conclusion

Austen Henry Layard was Britain’s Ambassador to Constantinople from 1877-1880 during which time he made a significant contribution to the Government which appointed him, and to the Sublime Ottoman Porte to which he was appointed. He was unable to accomplish all his objectives but, on balance, his successes outweighed his failures.

Despite the fact that Layard received no instructions from his government during the crisis months of Turkey’s war with Russia, he used his initiative to pursue British interests in Turkey during that period. His knowledge of Ottoman culture and politics, and the overt respect and affection which he had for the Turkish people, enabled him to build a friendship with Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Because of this friendship and the trust in which he was held by the Sultan, Layard was able to intervene between the Sultan and those Ministers who were not friendly toward Britain, an accomplishment which worked to the mutual advantage of Turkey and Britain during the active months of the war. Under his direction English officers and the British military attaché in Constantinople provided valuable military and strategic advice to the Sultan and his Ministers, as did the English engineers, such as Colonel Home, whom Layard was directly responsible for having sent to the Porte. These officers also provided valuable information to the British government regarding the status of the
Layard was also able to use his knowledge of British policy and decision making to persuade his political masters of the importance of Constantinople to British interests. His reports from the front on the military progress of the Russian army were influential in convincing the Cabinet that in the event Russian troops occupied Constantinople, British interests in India would be threatened as there was no adequate Turkish defence in Asia. The prospect of a Russian naval occupation of the Dardanelles would then also threaten British investments and interests in Alexandria, Port Said and the Suez Canal.

In June 1877 Disraeli tried to persuade his cabinet to authorise the British fleet to sail into the Sea of Marmora but he was unable to do so. In the following month, Layard was able to persuade the same decision makers to authorise a British military occupation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The difference between the two approaches was that when he made his recommendation, Layard gave the politicians arguments which they could use to justify their decision to an inflamed anti-Turkish public: the specific defence of Christians living in Constantinople, rather than the generic defence of the city.

Layard’s greatest triumph was in persuading the Sultan to enter into the Cyprus Convention and to keep that agreement secret.
until Lord Salisbury was ready to announce it at the Berlin Congress. Although it was initially indicated that Britain would occupy Cyprus in order to provide military assistance to Turkey in the Middle East, that assistance was never provided and the effective removal of Cyprus from Turkey was the first Ottoman remunciation of its land in the Eastern Mediterranean. It created a precedent which was followed by the occupation of Egypt by Britain in 1882.

Just as Layard succeeded on two fronts, he also failed on two fronts. He could not get Britain systematically to follow the policy which he felt was necessary to ensure the security of the Ottoman Empire; and he could not get Turkey to follow a wide reaching policy of reform without which the empire could not endure.

During the war British decision makers were unable to reach a consensus as to what action should be taken to deal with the crisis. To some extent this indecision was rooted in the firmly held principles of government members such as Lord Derby but it was also strongly affected by public opposition to any military assistance being given to Turkey. As has been noted, Layard succeeded in some individual instances in persuading the members of cabinet to support measures which would benefit Turkey, even going so far as to agree to defensive military assistance; however, despite all his efforts he was not able to provide the
government with an argument which was strong enough to persuade them to abandon Britain's declared neutrality. Layard's experience in dealing with his government illustrates the nature of British decision making during a major set of events. It demonstrates that government foreign policy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire was at an impasse for an entire year, leaving the Ambassador without instructions to ensure protection of Britain's interests and prestige at the Porte. In addition to various commercial ventures in the Middle East, those interests included protection of the overland route to India, the British Empire's most important possession.

Following the war, Layard recognised that, unless the Sultan enacted the reforms which he promised in the Treaty of Berlin and the Cyprus Convention, the Ottoman Empire could not survive. In April 1880 he wrote to Salisbury:

You will, I feel sure, do me the justice to admit that I have done my best to open the eyes of the Sultan and of his Ministers to the dangers they are running, and impress upon them the urgent necessity of making those reforms in the Government and administration of the Empire upon which you have visited, and of treating with justice and impartiality its various Christian populations. Had the Porte listened to your advice and entered into a sincere and cordial understanding with England as she had undertaken to do by the Cyprus Convention, Turkey might have been saved by dissolution for at least some time to come. As it is, I see very little hope for the future and events are hurrying on so fast and recent occurrences have given so much encouragement to Christian nationalities to hasten their inevitable struggle with the Ottoman power that a general break up of the Turkish Empire may take place sooner than it is expected or than we are prepared for it.
Salisbury must have recognised that no-one could have made a greater effort or found more persuasive arguments than Layard had in his effort to persuade the Sultan to initiate the promised reforms. He outlined his effort from one meeting when he told the Sultan:

...if England seeks an ally it is a strong and not a weak one. Consequently it is her objective to render your Empire prosperous and powerful, so that if the time should come when it may be necessary to carry out the objectives of the alliance she may find in Turkey an ally able to assist her in opposing the advance and encroachments of Russia...Your Majesty must at the same time remember that the policy of Her Majesty's Government as that of all constitutional Governments must depend upon public opinion. Your Majesty has learned by experience that whatever may be the sympathy of England and even if her interests are concerned, you can not expect her help if the administration of your country is such as to lead the English people to believe that your subjects are oppressed, ill treated and unjustly governed. It is on this account that H.M. Government are urgently pressing upon Your Majesty the necessity of losing no time in putting into execution those reforms which you have promised to introduce.3

When Layard was unsuccessful in persuading the Sultan to enact reforms he tried to persuade Salisbury that Britain should become involved in the interest, as always, of maintaining intact what was left of the Ottoman Empire. Layard sincerely believed that he could help and had specific ideas as to how to do so. Unfortunately, the effect of the actions of decision makers in Turkey and in Britain negated the effect of those intentions. Layard recognized that Turkey was virtually bankrupt following the war and tried to convince Salisbury to provide monetary assistance to enable the Turks to establish a reform program. He also wanted Britain to take a stronger stand with the Sultan to pressure him
for reform. But the Eastern Question was no longer a pressing issue for British foreign policy and Layard did not receive the support he requested. In the fullness of time his analysis of the situation and its ramifications proved accurate.

The effective expulsion of Turkey from the Balkans, Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia had not gone unnoticed by other Christian populations in the Ottoman Empire. Ideas of nationalism spread to Armenians, Albanians and even to some Arab populations while the effect of liberal ideas began to creep in to the younger generation of Ottoman Turks. Rather than attempt to draw his empire together by enacting reforms which would limit the dissatisfaction of his people, Abdul Hamid became more reactionary, encouraging the massacre of dissenting populations. Internationally, in the first years after the war the Sultan played the powers off against one another, eventually moving closer to Germany for financial and military advice. In this way he managed to retain his throne until his deposition by a group of liberal 'young Turks' in 1909.

The disintegration of his Empire, however, did not wait for his deposition. In 1882 Britain occupied Egypt; in 1885 Eastern Rumelia evicted its Turkish governor and merged with Bulgaria; and in 1897 following a war in which Turkey was successful against Greece, Crete became autonomous under the protection of the European Powers.
Although Layard's power to persuade was limited, his ability to analyse international situations was generally accurate, as exemplified by his comments on the freedom of the Balkan nations:

I believe that the cause of their freedom could be better served by allowing the Christian race to work out for themselves in conjunction with the Musselmans, their destiny. To liberate them by war was to create undying hatreds between the different races which could only end by the extermination of the minorities... It now only remains to be seen how far a sudden collapse of this Empire, which may lead to serious European complications, can be prevented.4

Layard’s contribution to the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire and the interests and prestige of Britain within that Empire was a significant one. In 1900 a Foreign Office official wrote to Lady Layard:

Sir Henry Layard's great services to his country have been to a great extent undervalued owing to party passions, and also because Sir Henry's force of character and outspoken frankness raised up against him many bitter enemies. The present generation has been too closely connected with a period in which the map of Europe has been recast, and during which the passions of men were roused to a pitch almost of frenzy, to form a dispassionate judgement upon a man who played at that time so prominent a part upon the political stage.5

The evidence contained in this narrative is intended to correct that neglect.
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