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## **Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the ‘Mental Map’ of Europe**

**ABSTRACT:** As arguably the most peripheral region within the Balkans, itself the most peripheral subset of Europe, Macedonia at the turn of the century was represented as the crossroads of East and West. Macedonia’s perceived schizophrenia crystallized during the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, a rebellion that brought the provinces of Ottoman Macedonia to the attention of the European press. The seeming brutality of the violence, and the diplomatic questions related to the future administration of Macedonia, produced conflicting interpretations among journalists as to the ‘allegiance’ of the region. The discourse over the rebellious provinces in the Ottoman Empire involved two parallel lines of thinking, one placing it within the periphery of Europe, the other at the core of “Near Eastern” politics. This article explores the approach of the British press towards the perceived ambiguities of Ottoman Macedonia and sheds greater light upon the imagining of the geographic dimensions of contemporary Europe and the Middle East.

The contemporary narrative of the classroom situates the Balkans on the periphery of European history. As either a site of imperial expansion or nationalist revolutions, the Balkans is a sideshow to the evolution of the Great Powers of Europe. It is only in the classical period—representing a time and ‘civilization’ alien to the present—that the Balkans take centre stage. As a microcosm, Macedonia is the embodiment of this problematic shift in historical and geographical attention. The name Macedonia is deeply embedded in the European classical narrative, representing the birthplace of Alexander and the heart of the Ptolemaic world. Yet after the Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the relevance of Macedonia within European history fades. A similar ambivalence towards the Balkans can be seen in relation to Middle Eastern historiography. Despite the centrality of the southern Balkans, and Macedonia in particular, within the history of the Ottoman Empire, most surveys of Middle Eastern history exclude discussion of southeastern Europe. Seemingly, Macedonia, as well as other regions within the Balkans, simply falls between the cracks.

Macedonia’s evolution from prominence to obscurity is a by-product of the nineteenth century rethinking of historical, cultural and geographic boundaries on the southeastern periphery of the ‘Great Power’ states of Western Europe. While nineteenth century scholars attempted to recast classical Greece as a purely “European” civilization, devoid of any connection with North Africa or the Levant, the history of neighbouring Macedonia was simultaneously located

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as a disputed territory between East and West.<sup>1</sup> According to the principle actors who revised the notion of Macedonia, primarily journalists, scholars, travellers, and diplomats, the region could not be reduced to conform to one manner of “civilization” over another. Like the dish that would take its name, the *macedoine* comprised a jumble of parts that made it unclassifiable.

Understanding the construction of the ‘mental map’ of Macedonia provides an essential insight into the modern (re-)imagining of the geographic dimensions of contemporary Europe and the Middle East. As arguably the most peripheral region within the Balkans, itself the most peripheral subset of Europe, Macedonia at the turn of the century was represented as the crossroads of East and West. Macedonia’s perceived schizophrenia crystallized during the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, a rebellion that brought the provinces of Ottoman Macedonia to the attention of the European press. The seeming savagery of the uprising, and the diplomatic questions related to the future administration of Macedonia produced conflicting interpretations among journalists as to the “allegiance” of the region. While the nature of the violence enacted during the Ilinden Uprising fixed Macedonia within the Balkans, strategic and to a degree, cultural associations suggested that the crisis must be managed within the broader scope of the “Near East.” In other words, the discourse over Macedonia at the turn of the century involved two parallel lines of thinking, one placing it within the periphery of Europe, the other at the core of “Near Eastern” politics.

The debate over Macedonia’s relationship with Europe at the turn of the century resonates strongly with contemporary issues of identity and space on the continent. As with the present dialogue over Turkey’s entrance into the European Union, press coverage of Macedonia at the turn of the twentieth century presents a reckoning over the meaning of Europe as a geographic and cultural entity.

#### FROM PROMINENCE TO OBSCURITY: MACEDONIA, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE ‘MENTAL MAP’ OF EUROPE

To understand the notion of Macedonia as both a place on the map as well as a member of a system of culturally related “nations,” one must first look critically at the historical conception of Europe. Macedonia was among the first lands to be included in the idea of Europe during the early Hellenic period, geographically distinct from Asia (a region dominated by Persian hegemony), and Africa (lands closely identified with Libya).<sup>2</sup> Initially defined as a purely geographic entity, the concept of Europe underwent a second critical revisioning during the early medieval period, as Christianity spread beyond the borders of

<sup>1</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Denys Hays, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968) 2.

the former Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Although associated with Eastern Orthodoxy, Macedonia remained an integral part of medieval Christendom. It is interesting to note that medieval Russia, also an Eastern Orthodox land, was excluded from the formulation of a European consciousness due to its physical isolation.<sup>4</sup> It is only during the late Renaissance that a more contemporary conception of Europe begins to emerge. The concept of Renaissance Europe paired both the geographic and cultural notions of Europe and Christendom, yet underscored the centrality of secularly governed nation-states as the core of its collective identity.

While fifteenth and sixteenth century thinkers refashioned the medieval notion of Europe, Macedonia found itself on the outside of the cultural and political conditions of the Renaissance. In the centuries preceding the Ottoman conquest, Macedonia was the site of the shifting imperial fortunes of the Bulgarian, Serbian and Byzantine Empires. With the solidification of Ottoman rule in the Balkans during the course of the fifteenth century, European scholars ceased to identify Macedonia with the emerging state system. Macedonia would remain thoroughly integrated into the Ottoman administrative structure until the region's annexation by Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece after the Balkan Wars in 1912.

How post-Enlightenment Europe conceived of Macedonia and the other lands of southeastern Europe has been a matter of some debate among historians over the last several years. Larry Wolff has argued that Enlightenment-era travellers and scholars invented an 'Eastern Europe' to provide a photo negative of the cultural and social changes occurring in Paris and London.<sup>5</sup> Yet, his work only partially ventures into Western perceptions of Ottoman Rumeli (or the land of the Romans), which, according to Wolff, seemed almost a separate category of geography within the confines of Eastern Europe.

Edward Said's classic work *Orientalism* has provided some foundation for several studies on the historical construction of space and society in the Balkans. In an analysis of Western studies of Islam and of the Middle East, Said asserts that a philosophy and discourse of superiority developed among European scholars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This notion of superiority was drawn in direct comparison with the "images, idea, personality and experience" of the Muslim "Orient."<sup>6</sup> The Orient is naturally not an "inert fact of nature." Rather, discourse over the meaning and contours of the Orient

<sup>3</sup> Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 23–25.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Bassin, "Russia Between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space," *Slavic Review* 50.1 (Spring 1991): 3–4.

<sup>5</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Enlightenment Mind* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 1–2.

served to affirm the West's political and economic dominance over the Muslim (primarily Arab) world. The actual study of the Orient in turn provided a series of intellectual premises used to "manage" Muslim populations and affirm the West's imperial ownership of this physical space. Said's *Orientalism* has inspired works arguing a form of European imperialism over the Balkans through literature and the internalization of Orientalist ideas of civilization within the confines of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>7</sup>

However, Orientalism is not undisputed as the only interpretative framework in Balkan historiography. Maria Todorova argues that Orientalism does not adequately explain Western discourse over the Balkans. Rather the system of rhetoric and imagery used to describe the Balkans evolved independently and often in opposition to Orientalism. Within the Balkanism framework (a term coined by Todorova), the Orientalist vision of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries detaches the Balkans from the 'Islamic' or 'Arab' worlds, perceiving southeastern Europe as geographically and culturally distinct from the Levant.<sup>8</sup> As a region historically associated with Europe and Christianity, as well as the more modern notion of whiteness, Balkanism entails an internal effort to understand an ambiguity within the European identity.<sup>9</sup> This contention is further fortified by the work of Katherine Fleming. Fleming criticizes the Orientalist approach towards the Balkans since the tradition of European imperialism, central to Said's thesis, is absent in the case of southeastern Europe. According to Fleming, while certain rhetorical aspects of Orientalism are present in Balkan historiography, this theoretical framework alone is an unsuitable application in dealing with the region *in toto*.<sup>10</sup>

While demarcating space into continents and regions is not restricted to geographical conditions, our analysis cannot essentialize the uniformity of an imagined locality. In the case of Europe, the notion of civilization is a much worked over concept within the craft of history.<sup>11</sup> As Milca Bakic-Hayden

<sup>7</sup> Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Milca Bakic-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54.4 (1995): 917–931; Milca Bakic-Hayden and Robert Hayden, "Orientalist Variations on the Theme 'Balkans': Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics," *Slavic Review* 51.1 (Spring 1992): 1–15.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Todorova, "The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention," *Slavic Review* 53.2 (Summer 1994): 455.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: University Press, 1997) 11; Maria Todorova, "Der Balkan als Analyzekategorie: Grenzen, Raum, Zeit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 472, 473.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine E. Fleming, "Orientalism, the Balkans, and Balkan Historiography," *American Historical Review* 105.4 (October 2000): 1224.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Rich, "Civilization in European and World History: A Reappraisal of the Ideas of Arnold Toynbee, Fernand Braudel and Marshall Hodgson," *The European Legacy* 7.3

points out, one may perceive various degrees of civilization even within a specific area.<sup>12</sup> Characterization of geography is also dependent upon the sample of viewers, as seen through our often uncritical use of the term Western or Occidental.<sup>13</sup> It is also clear that the criteria for how space is classified changes with time. In the case of the Balkans, nineteenth and early twentieth century British policymakers worked within the confines of "Near Eastern Affairs," a newly invented term used to describe the western periphery of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup> This correlation between strategic prerogatives and perceptions of geography persists to the present, as many students of modern Albanian, Lithuanian or Georgian history still find themselves under the Cold War-era umbrella of Russian and Eastern European studies.

Understanding Macedonia's place in the world is an issue little discussed in the realm of current research. Instead, contemporary scholars have largely focused upon the turn of the century debates regarding the specifically "national" or "cultural" content of Macedonia.<sup>15</sup> In reconsidering the works of European and Ottoman cartographers, ethnographers and administrators who devoted themselves to understanding the complexities of Macedonia's population, today's scholars have tended to de-emphasize the larger question of where Macedonia was situated in relation to the borders of civilizations and continents. Perhaps more importantly, recent studies have tended to downplay the internal contradictions and disagreements among foreign observers concerning Macedonia's place in the world. The specific case of Macedonia in 1903 underscores many of the pitfalls underlying the historical understanding of Macedonia as a location on the map.

The British press, the sample perspective that this essay assumes, articulated its perceptions of Macedonia during the Ilinden Uprising in accordance with certain essential biases. The editorialization of the crisis diverged along internal partisan lines (Tories and Liberals/Turcophiles and Turcophobes) of dissent and support for British foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The press of the United Kingdom naturally represented

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(2002): 331–342.

<sup>12</sup> Milca Bakic-Hayden 917–918.

<sup>13</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* 10; James Carrier, "Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-down," *American Ethnologist* 19.2 (May 1992): 195–212.

<sup>14</sup> Roderic H. Davison, "Where is the Middle East?" *Modern Middle East*, edited by Richard Nolte (New York: Atherton Press, 1963) 16; W.B Fisher, "Unity and Diversity in the Middle East," *Geographical Review* 37 (1947): 414–415; Lewis 66.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, H.R. Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics: A Review of Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1951); İpek Yosmaoğlu, "The Priest's Robe and the Rebel's Rifle: Communal Conflict and the Construction of National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908," PhD Dissertation (Princeton University, 2005).

uniquely British political prerogatives in Macedonia, often in opposition to those of other European powers.

From the editorial desks of several major British newspapers, the savage nature of the Ilinden Uprising elicited conflicting feelings towards both the combatants and their victims. The tide of violence in Macedonia was perceived within the confines of the 'historical oppression' of the Ottoman regime, an Oriental power, towards Christian peoples on the borders of Europe. Yet Christian acts of brutality towards Muslims and other Christians alike blemished the conflict, reducing it to an almost tribalist affair. In this regard, according to British spectators, Macedonia encapsulated the cruel, sordid realities of the Balkans.

Aspects of the Ilinden Uprising simply could not be perceived and managed within the confines of Europe. The Macedonian provinces were integral components of the Ottoman Empire, devoid of a singular confessional or ethnic identity. As seen through the prominent role of native Muslim Albanians in the Ilinden Uprising, Macedonia could not be essentialized as a member of the Christian Balkans. British journalists and editors also contemplated the multi-confessional disposition of Macedonia when considering the regional and international implications of the crisis. Alluding to the former sectarian conflicts in Ottoman Lebanon and Armenia, the Ottoman state had to be included in the solution to the Macedonia crisis in order to avoid further inter-communal violence and the commencement of an inter-European war over the Near East.

#### LIKE THE "WILDEST SCENES OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR": ETHNICITY, VIOLENCE AND THE MACEDONIAN CONTEXT

Ottoman Macedonia was a territory in dramatic flux during the course of the nineteenth century. In the face of mounting debts, foreign invasion and internal dissent, the Ottoman state undertook a radical policy of domestic reform. In redefining notions of law, education, citizenship, taxation and other forms of civil participation, Istanbul worked feverishly to expand centralized control over its empire.<sup>16</sup> This reform scheme ultimately could not forestall separatist

<sup>16</sup> See Fikret Adanir, *Die Makedonische Frage: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1908* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1979); Fikret Adanir, "The Macedonians in the Ottoman Empire, 1878–1912," in *The Formation of National Elites: Volume IV*, edited by Andreas Kappler (Dartmouth: New York University Press, 1992) 161–191; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism of Turkey*. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964); Isa Blumi, "Defying the State and Defining the State: Local Politics in Educational Reform in the Vilayets of Manastir and Yanya, 1878–1912," in *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen, 1878–1918*, edited by Isa Blumi (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2003) 103–122; Roderic Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 59.4 (July 1954): 844–864; Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century*

elements in the empire to press forward with their plans for secession. Among the groups determined to break free from the grip of the Ottoman state was a small group of revolutionaries based in the Macedonian port city of Salonika. Inspired by the recent successes of separatist forces in neighbouring Bulgaria (where many of these revolutionaries had previously worked or studied), this group of native-born Macedonian intellectuals set out in 1893 to secure through violent means an autonomous (and eventually an independent) state in the heart of the Ottoman Balkans. Over the next decade, these founders of the Internal Macedonian Revolution Organization (*Vŭtreshna Makedonska Revoliutsionna Organizatsiia* or VMRO) laid the groundwork for revolt, organizing local peasants and expatriate radicals into armed gangs or *çetes*. The VMRO's activities did not go uncontested. In addition to the countermeasures taken by Ottoman security forces, this largely Bulgarian Orthodox (or "Exarchate") insurgency was forced to contend with rival ethnic paramilitary groups backed either by the kingdoms of Greece and Serbia or the Muslims population at large, who almost unanimously did not desire to separate themselves from the Ottoman state. The threat of arrest and internal dissent drove the VMRO to launch their long planned revolt prematurely in the summer of 1903, leading to thousands of deaths by the time the uprising ended later that fall.<sup>17</sup>

With the first reports of an insurrection in Macedonia on 2 August 1903, the theme of violence dominated the headlines of the major British newspapers throughout the months of the revolt. In each daily printing, journalists tallied the reports of various acts that would trickle in. Through the progression of events, the catalogue of brutality grew cantankerous with repetition. In its sum total, the violent events occurring in Ottoman Macedonia resembled, to one observer, "the wildest scenes of the Thirty Years War."<sup>18</sup>

While there was no shortage of stories that illustrated the barbarities committed in Macedonia, several names and events became caricatures of the crisis. Within each atrocity, the multiple actors engaged in the conflict, each reflecting the recognized ethnic and confessional groups comprising Macedonia, were typecast along the lines of conflicting civilizations.<sup>19</sup> While journalists and

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*Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> For concise studies of this period in Macedonia's history, see Nadine Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question, 1893–1908: From Western Sources* (Boulder, Colorado: Eastern European Monographs, 1998); Murat Hatipoğlu, *Dünden ve Bugüne Makedonya Sorunu* (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2002); Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Revolutionary Movements, 1893–1903* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988); Gül Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu: Jön Türk İhtilali'nin Kökenleri, 1903–1908* (Istanbul: AFA Yayınları, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> "The Macedonian Outbreak," *The London Times* 14 August 1903.

<sup>19</sup> The use of ethnic categories in regards to the population of Macedonia cannot be read uncritically. The use of census material was often employed in nineteenth century to



editors from the ‘Turcophobe’ Left and ‘Turcophile’ Right at times disagreed as to the relative virtues of the combatants, both perspectives within the British press affirmed the otherness of the region. Yet it is within the individual characterization of the supposed ethnic groups that one finds a general overlapping notion of Europe, the Balkans and the Near East within Macedonia.

The most powerful example of the complexity and savagery in Macedonia was the battle of Krushevo in the middle of August. Initially the site of a rebel victory against Ottoman forces, Krushevo was later the scene of a violent massacre of local inhabitants by Ottoman troops as well as local militiamen.<sup>20</sup> The first British reports of the taking and retaking of Krushevo contained little in the way of detail,<sup>21</sup> but soon reports of a more general massacre of civilians followed.<sup>22</sup> By 26 August, the details that would emerge from the Krushevo massacre were explicit and heart wrenching, as stories of rape, pillage and indiscriminate killing of Christians by Ottoman soldiers abounded. For the supporters of the rebels, as well as for the so-called ‘Turcophiles’ in the Tory press, the massacre symbolized the evil spreading throughout Macedonia.<sup>23</sup> Thematically, Krushevo emphasized several determining biases of the British press in their attitude towards the phenomenon of violence. Supremely, violence represented a dichotomy between the “Turk” and the “Bulgarian” as polar declinations between East and West.

In a conflict that distinguished combatants along ethnic lines, the “Unspeakable Turk” arose as the embodiment of villainy and the maladies of the East. Alluding as far back as to the period of Genghis Khan, British journalists presented Ottoman (i.e., Eastern) oppression in the Balkans as steeped in history.<sup>24</sup> The massacre at Krushevo served to verify the preternatural cruelty of

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prove the predominance of various ethnic groups in Macedonia. In each of these censuses, often conducted by Western European scholars, the criteria of “religion” and “language” provided the basis for the ethnic categorization of the region. However, few of these studies considered the multi-lingual tendencies of the Macedonian population or understood the shifts in sectarian allegiance within Macedonian society. The fluidity of religion and ethnic identity persisted well in the twentieth century. See Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> In the contemporary Republic of Macedonia, Krushevo carries with it the connotation of Macedonia’s genesis as a political entity. See Keith Brown, *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> “The Dispatch of the Russian Squadron,” *The London Times* 19 August 1903.

<sup>22</sup> “A Fortnights Review: The Eastern Outbreak Predicted,” *The Manchester Guardian* 22 August 1903; “Great Britain and the Porte,” *The London Times* 20 August 1903.

<sup>23</sup> Editorial, *The London Times* 5 September 1903; “Turkish Outrages,” *The London Times* 26 August 1903; “The Sack of Krushevo,” *The Manchester Guardian* 26 August 1903.

<sup>24</sup> “Greece and Turkey,” *The Daily News* 31 August 1903; “Flogging a Dead Horse,” *The*

the Ottomans.<sup>25</sup> For editors on both the Left and the Right, Ottoman bloodlust in Macedonia was symptomatic of the greater barbarism plaguing Ottoman state and society. Violent reprisals by Ottoman troops upon the Christian population on the scale seen in Macedonia revealed the "fanaticism" inherent within Islam. Although it is often not specified what the meaning of fanaticism fully purveyed, this term more or less implied the violent reaction against religious or cultural antagonisms.<sup>26</sup> One such example that demonstrated Ottoman fanaticism was the murder of the Russian Consul in Manastir by an Albanian soldier in early August.<sup>27</sup> This example of "Islamic extremism" was followed by reports stating that Muslims were gathering in mosques throughout Macedonia, which was interpreted as a sign of impending massacres.<sup>28</sup> British perceptions towards "fanatical Muslims" in Macedonia were set against the backdrop of the Ottoman reform movement of the nineteenth century. Despite repeated imperial proclamations promoting legal equality between Muslims and Christians in the nineteenth century, British editors covering the Macedonia story agreed that it was impossible for a Muslim state to place non-Muslims "on a footing of equality with the Mussulman..."<sup>29</sup> In this sense, the conflict in Macedonia took on a tone of a crusade for some British journalists, emphasizing the need to rid the incurable evil of Muslim rule over a Christian population.<sup>30</sup>

As a military affair, it became clearer to the correspondents in the region, as well as their desk-bound counterparts in England, that the rebellion was initially progressing at the expense of Turkish feebleness. Repeated stories of desertion, maltreatment, confusion, and low morale among the Ottoman troops were highlighted in the 'Intelligence' sections of the news.<sup>31</sup> One *Guardian* editor

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*Daily News* 2 September 1903.

<sup>25</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 September 1903. "Macedonia Again," *The Daily News* 7 August 1903; Editorial, *The Observer*, 16 August 1903; "What Macedonia Wants," *The Observer* 6 September 1903.

<sup>26</sup> For a comparative look at the historical usage of the term "fanaticism," see David Edwards, "Mad Mullahs and Englishmen: Discourse in the Colonial Encounter," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31.4 (October 1989): 647–670.

<sup>27</sup> "A Russian Consul Murdered," *The London Times* 10 August 1903; For further detail see Duncan Perry, "Death of a Russian Consul: Macedonia 1903," *Russian History* 6 (1980): 120.

<sup>28</sup> "Spread of Rising," *The London Times* 13 August 1903; "Increasing Excitement of the Musselmans," *The Manchester Guardian* 13 August 1903; Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 18 August 1903; "Will Turkey Resist," *The Daily News* 19 August 1903.

<sup>29</sup> "Macedonia," *The London Times* 15 August 1903.

<sup>30</sup> Letter to the Editor, *The Daily News* 4 September 1903.

<sup>31</sup> "The Macedonian Outbreak," *The London Times* 12 August 1903; "The Powers and the Situation," *The London Times* 27 August 1903; Editorial *The London Times* 19 August 1903; "A Russian Consul Shot," *The Observer* 8 August 1903; "The Macedonian

surmised that the Ottomans simply did not possess the needed “science, political tact, high individual intelligence, machine-like organization” to put down a guerrilla insurgency.<sup>32</sup> Too backward to compensate and too decrepit to reform, to the point that the word reform “itself stinks in Turkish nostrils,” the Ottomans typified the “Oriental” type: weak, reactionary, regressive, and savage.<sup>33</sup>

While the “Turk” occupied the role of the alien, Oriental other, indigenous allies to the Ottoman state were painted with the same brush. In addition to the atrocities attributed to Ottoman regulars, local militias, or *başıbozüks*, were held equally responsible for numerous massacres during the Ilinden Uprising and therefore possessed many of the Oriental traits attributed to the Ottoman state.<sup>34</sup> British journalists emphasized the regional specificity of these units in identifying them as comprising locally recruited Muslim Albanians. While these Muslims “shared no community of race” with other Muslims of the region, Albanians were still recognized as “Turks” in that they shared in administering the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup> Henry Noel Brailsford, a correspondent working for the Manchester *Guardian* during the Ilinden Uprising, wrote:

There is no race in European Turkey which enjoys collectively a reputation quite so unenviable as that of the Albanians. They are the *bêtes noires* of the Embassies, the scapegoat of the Porte... If anywhere excesses have been committed [during punitive operations] which even the Sultan cannot deny, the inevitable excuse is that

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Revolt,” *The Observer* 23 August 1903.

<sup>32</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 27 August 1903; “Smoking Them Out,” *The Daily News* 7 September 1903. In still another report discussing the Ottoman intention of burning down the forests in order to keep Christian rebels on the run, one reporter had this to say:

It may have shocked some humane people in the Western countries. But there was nothing surprising in it. Everybody is familiar with the saying that no grass grows where the Turks have trodden. To destroy the forests in Northern and North-eastern Macedonia will be quite in keeping with the Turkish method of government from the day when the Sultans first crossed into Europe.

<sup>33</sup> “The Powers and the Situation,” *The London Times* 27 August 1903.

<sup>34</sup> “Bashi-Bazouks Raiding,” *The Daily News* 18 August 1903; “Turkish Outrages,” *The London Times* 26 August 1903.

<sup>35</sup> H.N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906) 81. It has been argued that the distinction between “Turks” and “Albanians” in Macedonia during the Ottoman period in fact mirrors the divergence between rural and urban Muslims. Burcu Akan Ellis contends that rural (*köylü*) Muslims, regardless of their ethnic origins, were traditionally socialized into the Albanian culture while urban (*şehirli*) Muslims accepted Ottoman Turkish-speaking imperial culture. See Burcu Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies: Memories and Identity Among Urban Muslims in Macedonia* (Boulder: Eastern European Monographs, 2003).

the Albanians 'got out of hand...' For a century past this ill name was the only herald which brought the Albanians to the knowledge of the West.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the parody between "Turks" and "Albanians" drawn by British editors and reporters, the "Albanian" is never identified as an intruder or alien force in Macedonian affairs. Journalists instead affirm the fact that Muslim Albanian was a native character and indigenous manifestation of the foreign rulers. While playing the foil to their Christian adversaries, the Albanians portrayed in British coverage of the Ilinden Uprising suggested that within Macedonia there were internal fault lines between Christianity and Islam, and between East and West. In other words, it seemed that the Oriental could indeed cohabit, as well as be native to, Macedonia.<sup>37</sup>

Standing opposed to the "Turk" were the Christians insurgents of the VMRO, occupying the role of the victims and martyrs in the Ilinden affair. Among the representatives of the British press, *The Daily News* took up the Ilinden Uprising with the most conviction, championing the VMRO's successes and pardoning their failures. For editors at the *Daily News* and the *Guardian*, the case of the lamentable "Bulgarian Christian," seen as the primary components of the VMRO, was the embodiment of the Liberal humanitarian cause:

Sunk in bestial poverty in the midst of great natural riches, crushed into serfdom by alien landlords on the soil that is its inheritance, the prey of every brigand or soldier or Moslem neighbour who has a knife in his belt, with neither courts nor police nor arms to which he can appeal in his own defense, the peasant fights, when at length he has the means, with no sense of sacredness of life—for what is life worth in the Balkans? The conquerors who have eaten his bread and stolen his labour have also crushed his soul and deadened his humanity.<sup>38</sup>

As a fighting body, Liberal papers highlighted the audacity of the VMRO with each step.<sup>39</sup> In most cases, journalists emphasized the humanity of the VMRO insurgents in comparison to their Turkish or *başıbozuk* adversaries.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> A correspondent from *The Daily News* lamented that the use of Albanian troops against Christian insurgents was "as if we were to let loose Ulster on the South of Ireland." See "Macedonia Again," *The Daily News* 7 August 1903.

<sup>37</sup> Greater research is need in understanding both the reality and perception of the Ottoman state's relationship to its Albanian population (an issue little discussed in Maria Todorova's work). For a brief survey of the Albanian role within late Ottoman history, see, Isa Blumi, "The Commodification of Otherness and the Ethnic Unit in the Balkans: How to Think about Albanians," *East European Politics and Societies* 12.3 (1998): 527–569.

<sup>38</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 9 August 1903.

<sup>39</sup> "Slaughter at Nevka: Insurgents Bloodless Exploit," *The Daily News* 7 September 1903.

<sup>40</sup> "Rumours of Fighting," *The Observer* 6 September 1903.

Some instances of VMRO violence were harder to explain away. In comparison to the more or less ubiquitously held view of the savage and degenerate Turk, the conservative press tended to find some reason to condemn the VMRO. As one reads earlier accounts of the *Times*, it is often construed that the VMRO themselves were the culprits of the mass of atrocities being committed in Ottoman Macedonia.<sup>41</sup> Irrespective of one's sympathies, the issue of VMRO atrocities could not be ignored. The most noted terrorist attack by the VMRO during the Ilinden Uprising occurred on 26 August at Kukeli Burgas in the *vilâyet* of Edirne.<sup>42</sup> That evening a bomb exploded in the kitchen of a civilian train, killing several Muslim women and children and injuring several others.<sup>43</sup> For Liberal news editors, this event challenged the seeming chivalry of the VMRO. Still the *Daily News* chose to take the news in stride and accentuated the greater evils of the Turk in Macedonia.<sup>44</sup> Although the VMRO meant no ill will against the civilians who died in the attack, Kukeli Burgas demonstrated that the VMRO was only responding to the atrocities committed by the Turks and were targeting their property.<sup>45</sup> Another editor of the *Daily News* reasoned that it was unfair "to blame the whole body of the insurgents for crimes committed by a few irreconcilables [sic] among them. The people of London would be indignant if foreign critics should take Jack the Ripper's performances or illustrations and reports of the 'The Police News' as the measure of metropolitan morality."<sup>46</sup> Instead, Liberal journalists explained these acts of violence as expressions of desperation by men stretched "beyond the limits of humanity."<sup>47</sup>

Nonetheless, under this guise of intolerable oppression, the VMRO, for better or worse, stood apart from the "Turk," bringing justice and order to Macedonia. Recognizing them as an organized body of men comprised mostly of schoolteachers, journalists alluded to the "tradition of revolt" in the Balkans as the necessary prelude to independence.<sup>48</sup> It was publicized that the VMRO was more than just a guerrilla movement, but the beginnings of Macedonia's

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<sup>41</sup> See "The Balkan Crisis: Dynamite Outrages," *The London Times* 1 May 1903; "The Balkan Crisis: The Salonika Outrages," *The London Times* 2 May 1903; "The Macedonia Outbreak," *The London Times* 12 August 1903.

<sup>42</sup> "Train Blown Up: Many Killed and Injured," *The Daily News* 28 August 1903.

<sup>43</sup> "The Bomb Outrage," *The Manchester Guardian* 29 August 1903.

<sup>44</sup> "The Railway Outrage: Further Details," *The Daily News* 29 August 1903.

<sup>45</sup> "The Danger of War," *The Daily News* 31 August 1903.

<sup>46</sup> "A Free Hand," *The Daily News* 2 September 1903.

<sup>47</sup> "Comitaji 'Atrocities'," *The Daily News* 26 August 1903; "In the Balance," *The Daily News* 27 August 1903.

<sup>48</sup> "Insurgents Activity in Macedonia," *The London Times* 6 August 1903; "The Name Comitaji," *The Daily News* 19 August 1903. "The Tactics of the Insurgents," *The Manchester Guardian* 25 August 1903.

own provisional government.<sup>49</sup> According to stories reported from the interior, the VMRO had already begun the process of collecting taxes, using force if necessary to receive what was required to them.<sup>50</sup> In this regard, the VMRO represented the order and reason typifying the European state. Still, despite the seeming commonalities of religion and, arguably, race, there is a clear separation between the English newspaper reader and the Macedonian peasant. Through deprivation and centuries of exposure to the Turk, the Christian peasant became dehumanized and instinctively underdeveloped as a European. He was, at best, culturally, a simpleton. Under such duress, he became bestial and unable to distinguish any sort of value of a human life.

This separation between the Balkan Christian and the British observer was especially pronounced with reports that Bulgarian Christian insurgents actively feuded with their local Greek Patriarchist counterparts.<sup>51</sup> These stories often disclosed details of attacks against Greek villages, the extortion of wealthy Greek citizens and the execution of purported Greek spies by the VMRO.<sup>52</sup> Among the best-publicized accounts of VMRO violence against the Greek population of Ottoman Macedonia were the series of assaults against Greek villages along the Black Sea coast after the declaration of revolt in the *vilâyet* of Edirne.<sup>53</sup> It later became known in the press that Greeks had raised their own *çetes* or gangs to combat the VMRO and refused assistance to the Exarchist or Bulgarian refugees of the fighting.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile the Greek government, as well as the Greek Patriarch of Istanbul, interceded on the behalf of the Greeks of Macedonia.<sup>55</sup> As a conflict seemingly dominated by Muslim/Christian violence, this enmity between Greeks and Bulgarians did not sit well with the British press. How could fellow Christians turn against one another in the face of the greater threat of Islam? Moreover, how could Greece, which only recently had

<sup>49</sup> "Aims of the Macedonian: A European Misconception," *The Daily News* 12 August 1903.

<sup>50</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 14 August 1903.

<sup>51</sup> The Bulgarian Church, or the Exarchate, split off from the Greek Orthodox Church, the Patriarchate, in 1870. Bulgarian Christians, or Exarchists, made up the vast majority of the recruits of the VMRO.

<sup>52</sup> These accounts of attacks upon against Greek villages are represented in such articles as, "The Bulgarian Bands in Macedonia," *The London Times* 5 August 1903; "The Dispatch of the Russian Fleet," *The London Times* 5 August 1903; Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 14 August 1903.

<sup>53</sup> This story was featured in a series of articles in *The London Times* between the 25 and 27 August.

<sup>54</sup> "The Rising in the Balkans," *The Observer* 27 September 1903; "The Macedonia Outbreak," *The London Times* 12 August 1903.

<sup>55</sup> "Feeling in Bulgaria," *The London Times* 17 August 1903; Editorial, *The London Times* 19 August 1903.

been “liberated” from the “Turkish yoke,” resort to supporting the Porte against the insurgents?

The answers to these questions found within the British press contain certain key similarities. For the *Guardian*, the inter-Christian violence of the Ilinden Uprising reflected the general problem of “racial and religious feuds” in Eastern Europe.<sup>56</sup> Denouncing it as a “scandal to Europe,” the *Daily News* concurred that the violence in Macedonia was in the end a mass brawl with the multifarious sectarian and ethnic groups fighting one another.<sup>57</sup> The Tory Right and Liberal Left agreed that the responsibility for this discord among the Balkan Christians rested squarely upon the Greek government. The *Times* warned that Britain’s past support for Greek independence should not blind the reader to Athens’ monstrous resolution of “co-operating with Turkey against fellow-Christians in the field.”<sup>58</sup> The *Daily News* posed the “treachery of Greece” in much stronger terms, stating:

The jealousy between Greek and Slav is the one disquieting [aspect]... of a situation where otherwise the struggle between European and Asiatic civilization has been maintained on a fierce and brutal, but none the less on a heroic level... But the treachery of Greece reduces us to a much more sordid plane [sic]. Turkey has known well how to appeal to the weakness of the Hellenic character. She has woven the Greek trader and capitalist into the web of her corrupt machinery of government... For years they have stood in with the Turk, and they must now be prepared to take a share of the detestation aroused by the misdeeds and extortion of the Turk.<sup>59</sup>

Inter-communal fighting between Exarchists and Patriarchists solidified Macedonia’s place within the Balkans. It is during the Ilinden Uprising, as Todorova argues, that European writers reinforced the idea of the Balkans as synonymous with violence and tribalism in the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> Greek and Bulgarian violence resulted in a coup against the civilization that seemed most likely to support and welcome them. Instead, the ferocity of this hatred threatened to reduce the proceedings in Macedonia to a more “sordid plain” (the Balkans), poisoning the seemingly hallowed crusade of liberation against the Ottoman government.

#### EUROPE’S LEBANON: THE ILINDEN UPRISING AND ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT

While the human element of the Ilinden Uprising occupied a prominent place within any discussion of Macedonia in 1903, the concerns of British journalists and editors over the Ottoman Balkans was not restricted to the local actors. A

<sup>56</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 15 August 1903.

<sup>57</sup> “The Dark Cloud,” *The Daily News* 20 August 1903.

<sup>58</sup> Editorial, *The London Times* 28 August 1903.

<sup>59</sup> “Greece and Turkey,” *The Daily News* 31 August 1903.

<sup>60</sup> Todorova, *Imagining* 116-119.

great deal of interest was devoted to the international implications of the crisis, with regards to the future stability of the Ottoman Empire and relations between the Great Powers of Europe. It is this aspect of British press coverage of the Ilinden Uprising that the discussion of Macedonia takes a turn away from culture and society in the region, and towards the strategic significance of Macedonia within the Near East.

Macedonia attracted international attention after the murder of Russian Consul Rostovsky in Manastir. Receiving the death of its representative with outrage, St. Petersburg promptly dispatched a portion of its fleet to the Thracian coast and demanded the murderer's execution.<sup>61</sup> Despite Austria-Hungary's seeming approval of the demonstration, doubts in Great Britain remained.<sup>62</sup> Although it was understood that Russia and Austria-Hungary were the recognized custodians of peace in the Balkans, the Tory press was among the first to vehemently contend that the real interests of St. Petersburg and Vienna lay in expansion and not peace.<sup>63</sup> *The Observer*, usually a more Liberal leaning publication, also approached the issue of Russian intervention with some circumspection, stating in one editorial that Russia sought to expand its interests in Eastern Europe by simultaneously demanding justice for the death of Consul Rostovsky, as well as seeking economic concessions from Istanbul.<sup>64</sup> Russia's intervention into the Macedonian crisis prompted British editors to ask who among the European Powers was the best agent to bring peace in Macedonia. While many within the Liberal press tended to assign Britain as the lead in this effort, being the most "disinterested" and "compassionate" of the Powers, it was agreed that the issue had to be dealt with collectively by Europe.<sup>65</sup> The deaths of thousands of Christians posed a challenge to Europe as a "civilization," thus its resolution was taken as a moral duty of "Christian" Europe.<sup>66</sup> A repeat of the massacres in eastern Anatolia in 1890, "when the blood of Armenians ran like water and Europe stood idly by," had to be avoided.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> "The Macedonia Rising: Russian Demands on Turkey," *The London Times* 17 August 1903; "The Presentation of Russia's Terms," *The Manchester Guardian* 21 August 1903.

<sup>62</sup> "The Macedonia Rising: Russian Demands on Turkey," *The London Times* 17 August 1903; "The Macedonian Rising: Reported Turkish Massacres," *The London Times* 22 August 1903.

<sup>63</sup> Editorial, *The London Times* 25 August 1903.

<sup>64</sup> "The Macedonian Revolt," *The Observer* 23 August 1903.

<sup>65</sup> Editorial, *The London Times* 28 August 1903; Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 4 September 1903; "The British Government and Macedonia," *The Observer* 27 September 1903; Editorial, *The Observer* 4 October 1903.

<sup>66</sup> "Will Austria Mobilize?" *The Daily News* 5 September 1903; "What Macedonia Wants," *The Observer* 6 September 1903.

<sup>67</sup> "A Balkan Solution," *The Daily News* 8 September 1903. Henry Noel Brailsford expressed a similar sentiment in his piece, "Macedonia: A Possible Solution," *Fortnightly*



Nonetheless, the most difficult question remained: What to do? While editors at the *Daily News* initially advocated giving Bulgaria “a free hand” at intervening in Macedonia and ending Ottoman rule in the Balkans, each of the newspapers surveyed agreed that the solution to the crisis was to create an autonomous province in Macedonia under nominal Ottoman control.<sup>68</sup> This conclusion was not without precedence. In the light of previous civil conflicts in Crete and Lebanon, autonomy presented a successful model of handling the complexities of a post-Ilinden order.<sup>69</sup> As a measure that both Europe and the Porte could find some common ground, the “Lebanon” solution would prevent the possibility of a war between either the newly independent Balkan states or the European Powers over the region.<sup>70</sup> While sustaining Ottoman suzerainty in Macedonia was not entirely desirable, editors advocated the stationing of Western advisors along side specifically appointed Ottoman administrators in order to maintain law and order.<sup>71</sup> Considering the tensions demonstrated by Exarchists and Patriarchists during the Ilinden Uprising, few among the British press trusted the Balkan Christians to police themselves.<sup>72</sup> The plan received further backing from the Balkan Committee, a group composed of several well-known “experts” in Macedonian affairs, including Henry Noel Brailsford and John MacDonald, special correspondent for the *Guardian* in the Balkans.<sup>73</sup> However, Brailsford would alter his views in a piece in the October issue of the *Fortnightly Review*, stating that the appointment of an Ottoman Christian governor by Europe, which was originally the demand of the VMRO, would only exacerbate tensions in Macedonia. Instead, the European Powers should be permitted to administer the province directly, allowing Istanbul only the right to

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*Review* 1 October 1903: 640.

<sup>68</sup> “The ‘Rooss’ and the Turk,” *Daily News* 25 August 1903; “A Turkish Warning,” *The Daily News* 28 August 1903.

<sup>69</sup> After successive outbreaks of inter-communal violence in Lebanon in 1860 and Crete in 1895 and 1896, the European powers, with the complicity of Ottoman authorities, agreed that each of these regions required autonomous administrations tailored to compensate for their sectarian heterogeneity. See Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> “A Turkish Warning,” *The Daily News* 28 August 1903; Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 1 September 1903; “What Macedonia Wants,” *The Observer* 6 September 1903. Although supporting the “Lebanon” plan, the *Guardian* added that “future generations” would have to discuss the “ultimate destiny of the Balkan lands.” Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 18 August 1903.

<sup>71</sup> Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 8 August 1903; Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian* 1 September 1903.

<sup>72</sup> “Macedonia—A Suggestion,” *The London Times* 2 September 1903; Editorial, *The London Times* 5 September 1903.

<sup>73</sup> “Views of English Observers,” *The Manchester Guardian* 1 September 1903.

receive a small percentage of the tax revenues and to station a minimal number of troops on the "Albanian frontier."<sup>74</sup>

While violence may have situated Macedonia within the Balkans, it was within the political setting of the Near East that the management of Macedonia's internal disorder was discussed. Within this particular discourse, the imperial vision of British observers determined Macedonia's continued association with the remainder of the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. Represented as yet another cancer threatening the integrity of the Ottoman state, Macedonia drew active comparisons with Lebanon, eastern Anatolia and Crete. The deaths of Exarchists during the Ilinden Uprising, like the massacres of Armenians in eastern Anatolia a decade earlier, aroused impassioned calls for the defence of Christianity by a united Europe. Not unlike many other instances of imperial intervention, the Liberal and Tory press entrusted European know-how to civilize and reform the Macedonian countryside. Yet in the interest of peace between the competing imperial powers in the eastern Mediterranean, the resolution to the violence in Macedonia had to be based upon internationally recognized precedents (in this case, Lebanon and Crete). In spite of their desire to see the Ottomans expelled from the Balkans, British journalists and editors perceived the fate of Macedonia as having a direct effect upon the stability of the entire Near East. Thus, the sultan's right to Macedonia, for the time being at least, had to be respected.

#### CONCLUSION

Since the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, Macedonia has been slowly re-integrated into the mental map of Europe. With the rise of the new geopolitical borders of the Cold War, Macedonia was detached from the post-Ottoman "Near East" (which was by and large reinvented as the modern Middle East) and became identified with Eastern Europe and the evolving Yugoslav state. The social and political upheaval that has confronted the former Yugoslavia has to some degree revived the image of Macedonia as the crossroads of East and West. In his 1993 bestseller *Balkan Ghosts*, Robert Kaplan characterizes post-Ottoman Macedonia as a "historical and geographic reactor furnace," a place where the "tectonic plates of Africa, Asia and Europe collide and overlap."<sup>75</sup> The politicization of Islam as a force within the Balkans, as well as the present "War on Terror," has also had an effect upon the notion of Macedonia as contested ground. After the uprising of the National Liberation Army in the first half of 2001, false rumours of an Islamist/Al-Qaeda conspiracy in Macedonia surfaced

<sup>74</sup> Brailsford, "Macedonia: A Possible Solution," 644–645.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Kaplan. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 51.

in both the Western and Balkan media.<sup>76</sup> Macedonia's ambiguous relationship with the "Islamic world" is not unique in contemporary Europe. As in the case of Turkey's application to the European Union, many figures in Western Europe have cast doubt on whether a Muslim, "non-Western" nation could ever integrate itself into the "Christian club" of European states.

Contemporary skepticism over Turkey's relationship to the European Union, like Macedonia during the turn of the century, reveals a much broader quandary over the criteria for one allegiance to a specific space. Does geography define a state's association to an entity such as Europe? Or do "cultural" or "historical" affiliations play a greater role in mapping geographic borders? The creation of the mental map of Europe is a layered, evolving phenomenon. As seen through the coverage of the Ilinden Uprising, Macedonia at the turn of the century was concurrently within, and exclusive of, Europe. Comprising a segment of Europe's geographic periphery, Macedonia was a Balkan land. While the violence of the Ilinden Uprising served to reinforce Macedonia's "Balkan-ness," the emergence of indigenous, "quasi-Oriental" actors (Muslim Albanians) suggested that Macedonia's ties to the Muslim lands east of the Bosphorus were perhaps stronger than other areas of the Balkans. Yet culture and physical geography was not the only determinant of Macedonia's spatial identity. The political borders of the region, as well as political prerogatives of the European powers, situated Macedonia outside of European internal affairs.

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<sup>76</sup> John Philips, *Macedonia: Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 195–196. See also P. H. Liotta and Cindy R. Jebb, *Mapping Macedonia: Idea and Identity* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004).