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Dividing “Their Own”: The Negotiations of the Balkan States for Partition of Macedonia

This paper studies in detail the diplomatic negotiations for the partition of Macedonia between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria from 1861 to 1913. Since this was a time of strong development of the Balkan nationalisms, the researcher investigates how and when the national programs and ideologies of these new Balkan states came into being and how the region of Macedonia was included in those programs. All the historical data and the very bargaining itself initiated the underlying dilemma: Why would the Balkan states be negotiating the division of a territory that they considered to be an exclusive part of their heritage?

The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was marked by the negotiations for partition of Macedonia between Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria, initially into areas of interest and later for territorial demarcation. From the very first negotiations in 1861, between independent Greece and autonomous Serbia, until the last one in 1913, every decade was filled with ideas and negotiations among the Balkan politicians and diplomats regarding the partition of Macedonia. The paper studies the course of these negotiations in detail.

The thorough analysis led to the conclusion that the diplomacy had actively worked on their plans, but one key aspect of deliberation was usually missing. That was the framework within which the diplomats and politicians began and ended these negotiations. This framework was complementary with the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian national programs and strategies in which Macedonia took center stage. It is interesting to note that the three countries considered Macedonia as a part of their tradition, history, and culture. However, apart from the facts of the negotiations, the basic unanswered question was: Why

would the Balkan states be negotiating the division of a territory that they considered to be an exclusive part of their heritage? The most obvious answer would be since Macedonia was not theirs and they could easily negotiate its partition. Their biased historiographies, maps, and stories for the ethnic origin of the people were just a tool in their negotiations. Macedonians, of course, were not consulted, nor were they considered as something worth discussing by the politicians of the Balkan states. Their fabricated statistics and maps were sufficient for their needs.

KEYWORDS: Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, negotiations, partition.

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