

THE BALKAN CRISIS AND THE PROMOTION OF THE IDEA OF AUTONOMY FOR WESTERN ARMENIA IN THE 1870S

Dr. Samvel Poghosyan

Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan, **Armenia**

ABSTRACT

The study discusses how the national liberation struggle of the Balkan peoples contributed to the rise of the idea of autonomy for Western Armenia. The research is based on scientific studies, archival materials, and memoirs of contemporaries, which have been analyzed and illustrated using the historical-comparative method.

The liberation struggle of the Balkan peoples and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 gave Armenians hope that Western Armenia could be liberated from brutal Turkish rule. It was possible through independence, autonomy or, in the worst case, joining Russia. In fact, the idea of autonomy, and perhaps even independence of Armenia was raised, but in the new international situation, they had to be content with promises of reforms, which never became reality.

In fact, the new international situation and the defeat of the Turks in the war gave the Armenian elite the opportunity to raise the idea of Armenian autonomy and independence, through which they could be saved from the constant fear of assimilation and massacres, under which the Christians of the Ottoman Empire always lived.

Keywords: autonomy for Western Armenia 1, independence of Armenia 2, Balkan Crisis 3, Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 4, Ottoman Empire 5

INTRODUCTION

Christians in the Ottoman Empire were in an unequal and oppressed situation. The Turkish authorities never took any serious steps to improve the situation of their Christian subjects. This forced the latter to look to European Christian states, which opened the door for Great Powers to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan's reform edicts (Tanzimat) of 1839 and 1856, adopted under pressure from European powers, which promised Christians equal rights in the empire, not only remained on paper, but also further irritated Muslims. In 1875-1876 uprisings against Turkish rule broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria. Soon, Serbia and Montenegro signed an anti-Turkish alliance. The liberation movements of the Balkan Christian peoples again put the Eastern Question on the table of international diplomacy. The fate of the Ottoman Empire, which was on the verge of decay and collapse, became a subject of active discussion among the Great Powers. Naturally, the uprisings of the Balkan peoples and the intervention of the Great Powers aimed at improving their situation also inspired the Armenians. However, after the Russo-Turkish War, it became clear that the interests of the great powers were intersecting in the Balkans. They had no desire to discuss the issue of Armenian autonomy and only