

Nation or *Millet*?

**Contrasting Western European
and Islamic Political Cultures in the Balkans**

Dennis P. Hupchick

Assistant Professor of History

Wilkes University



**Second Annual Final Word Lecture
Faculty Recognition Day
Wilkes University
May 23, 1994**

Concerning the Speaker

Dennis P. Hupchick earned his Ph.D. in East European and modern European history at the University of Pittsburgh in 1983. He currently serves as president of the Bulgarian Studies Association, and he has organized the fifth international conference of Bulgarian and North American scholars sponsored by the association, which convenes in late May 1994 at the University of Pittsburgh. Hupchick oversees the Wilkes University East European and Russian Studies Program. He currently also is one of the featured speakers in the 1994-95 Pennsylvania Humanities Council Commonwealth Speakers Program, offering public lectures on the cultural aspects involved in recent East European developments. In 1990 he refused an offer to direct the Bulgarian research division of Radio Free Europe, in Munich, to join the Wilkes history faculty.

Hupchick has spent over two and a half years researching, living, and traveling in Eastern Europe, Turkey, and Western Europe under the auspices of the Fulbright Scholars Program, two International Research and Exchanges Board grants, and assorted exchange programs offered through the University of Pittsburgh. His primary scholarly interests are focused on Bulgaria, in particular, and the Balkans, in general, especially during the period of Ottoman Turkish rule in Southeastern Europe.

Hupchick actively pursues efforts in publishing. In 1988 he edited a volume of collected essays and articles on Bulgarian history written by the late James F. Clarke: *The Pen and the Sword*. His extensively revised dissertation appeared in 1993 under the title: *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century: Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture under Ottoman Rule*. His latest book, *Culture and History in Eastern Europe*, is currently under production by St. Martin's Press and scheduled to appear in June 1994. The manuscript of a sequel to this work, *Conflict and Chaos in Eastern Europe*, is now in the hands of St. Martin's Press and should appear in late Fall 1994. Besides these books, Hupchick has published a number of articles on Ottoman-period Bulgarian cultural history, and three others are currently in press.

Nation or Millet?

Contrasting Western European
and Islamic Political Cultures in the Balkans

Dennis P. Hupchick

Assistant Professor of History
Wilkes University



Second Annual Final Word Lecture
Faculty Recognition Day
Wilkes University
May 23, 1994

Wilkes University Press
Wilkes-Barre PA
1994

The clash of civilizations lies at the very core of the horrendous violence and the uncompromising animosity manifested by all sides in the most recent warfare in the Balkans. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a territory less than half the size of the state of Pennsylvania, the cultural fault lines of three historically and mutually antagonistic civilizations — the Western European, the Eastern European, and the Islamic — converge. Localized genocide, “ethnic cleansing,” organized rapine, and assorted other dehumanizing actions have been inflicted by all sides in the Bosnian War on each other with an indifference that can be explained only as stemming from authentic cultural hatred. Such venomous enmity is utterly irrational but, by being so, is close to boundless. Though it can be expressed most fundamentally only in terms of religious or ethnic animosity, it is rooted in each side’s unquestioned “feeling” or “belief” that the others pose a mortal threat to some, or all, of their human sense of reality and to their own unique place within it. When warfare taps such deeply embedded reservoirs of cultural antipathy, its fury tends to transcend purely political, economic, or social constraints.

While the extreme violence of the Bosnian war has been fed by cultural antagonisms among member societies of three different civilizations, it would be a mistake to blame those animosities for starting or for pursuing the fighting. The war was begun and fought for political reasons. Yet even in these, there were underlying cultural factors that must be considered. These had to do with the nature of the political institutions that the warring sides espoused as their objective. Since the institutions created by every society are shaped in the image of their culture, the various sides’ fight for political victory in Bosnia-Herzegovina represented a cultural struggle on a more philosophical, less personal level than the killing, raping, and “cleansing.” But a cultural struggle it was nonetheless.

At issue in the political battles in Bosnia-Herzegovina — and potentially in all of the former Communist states of Eastern European civilization, whether the struggle is violent or otherwise — was the imposition of either a Western-style or a native, non-Western political structure. In fact, this remains the political issue that faces not only the newly independent states of Eastern Europe but also the entire non-Western world as the

twentieth century draws to its close. But specifically for the Balkan regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and perhaps Bulgaria, the essential political cultural issue pits Western against Islamic forms.

Liberal democracy, industrial capitalism, and nationalism comprise the ideological trinity of Western European civilization's modern political culture. They have come to be institutionally expressed in the West's unique political creation — the nation-state. Because all four are products of Western European culture — the West's perception of political reality — few of us in the West recognize just how distinctive they truly are. Throughout the entire six thousand years of recorded history, at no time and in no place other than in the core area of Western European civilization has any human society spawned a native political culture in exactly these terms. The Athenians of ancient Greece, whom we like to hold up as classical political ancestors of the West, never developed a comprehensive capitalistic economic philosophy; they essentially were farmers and traders. Athenian democracy was extremely limited in its franchise to the point that it more closely resembled an oligarchy than anything else. Since only the relatively few in Athens' population with voting privileges were considered citizens of the state, while all the rest of the city's inhabitants were political, and often social, nonentities, there was no trace of nationalism present, at least as we know it. Without nationalism, there was no sense of nation; the state was the city of Athens and its environs. Athens may have been a Greek city-state, but it was not Greece.

A similar analysis leading to similar conclusions can be made of Rome, the West's other cultural ancestor. Granted, Rome developed from a city-state into a large world-state, but for that very reason it did not represent a nation-state as we know it. Rome was an empire ruled first by an oligarchy (under restricted republican forms) and then by an emperor-autocrat. Its inhabitants were subjects (despite their official designation as citizens) and multicultural in the extreme (with no true sense of common nationality). Rome's economy was agricultural and mercantile, not consciously capitalistic. Athens and Rome may have been the cultural parents of Western European civilization, but they definitely did not evolve the political culture of their offspring. When the most closely related civilization to the Western European — Hellenic civilization — failed to create political institutions resembling it, one cannot expect such development in civilizations even farther removed in culture, such as the Islamic, Indic, Mesopotamian, or Far East Asian. The West's political culture is its own unique creation.

The roots of that culture lie in the West's medieval struggle between the temporal (secular monarchies) and the spiritual (the papacy) leaderships in society for supreme worldly authority, begun when Pope Leo III crowned the Frank king Charlemagne emperor of a West-centered Holy Roman Empire in 800. Through investiture conflicts and outright military combat, Western society was dominated for the next five hundred years by the spiritual authority of Rome. Papal grasp on political supremacy was loosened in the early fourteenth century when the French King Philip IV the Fair (1294-1314) imposed on the papacy the so-called Avignon Captivity, which first overtly exerted the strength of the temporal power, in the guise of regional (some scholars like to use the word "national") secular rulers, over the spiritual. Despite its ability to break free from direct temporal control after some seventy years, and thereafter to continue asserting its claim to political supremacy in the West, the papacy never recovered completely from the political blow inflicted on it by the French monarchy.

The Protestant Reformation initiated by the German monk Martin Luther in 1515 further undermined the claims to temporal authority made by the papacy. While the Reformers may originally have been sincere in their religious beliefs, the success of their cause was the result of the political ambitions held by regional rulers who allied themselves with the Reformation to entrench their temporal authority against the claims of the weakened papacy. The real importance of the Reformation for Western European civilization was not the reform of Christianity but the decisive victory of the temporal over the spiritual authority in its political culture. One need only consider the "reform" of the church in England by King Henry VIII (1509-47) — who, through royal decree, successfully transformed the former Roman Catholic church organization in his realm into an English state church ruled by the secular monarch simply because of a dispute with the papacy over his right to marry and divorce in the interests of his kingdom and dynasty — to understand the true significance of the Reformation for the West.

A century and a half of religious-political warfare in Western Europe, initiated by the Reformation, was needed to finalize the secular authority's victory in its struggle for political supremacy. By the mid-seventeenth century a new Western cultural development was under way that further undermined any possible future claims to supreme temporal leadership by the spiritual authorities. The Scientific Revolution, spawned by such men as the Pole Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), the Englishman Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the Italian Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and the German Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and brought to full philosophical fruition by the Frenchman René Descartes (1596-1650), and the English-

man Isaac Newton (1642-1727), destroyed the Western perception of the physical Universe (hence, physical reality) as a divinely ordained, unchanging, mystical, human-centered structure. The West had inherited that view from the classical Hellenistic models developed by Aristotle and Ptolemy, the nature of which ultimately could be explained only by superstition (religious belief). The scientists substituted rational thought (mathematics) for superstition and were able to construct a physical reality that conformed to the operations of universal laws, which were defined by mathematical systems that the scientists themselves designed. Despite resistance from the Christian churches and from some of the secular rulers in the West, the scientists were able to win general acceptance of their new perception of physical reality that effectively removed the divine component from the workings of the Universe.

Success for the scientific point of view in Western European civilization was cemented in the eighteenth century by another cultural development given birth by the Scientific Revolution — the Enlightenment. It grew out of the intellectual rationalism that took root in the political thinking of the Englishman John Locke (1632-1704), as viewed in combination with the concepts of the Newtonian Universe by a French intellectual, François Voltaire (1694-1778). Centered in France, the new intellectual movement begun by Voltaire was spread throughout the West by the undeniably skilled and effective writings of himself and of such other like-minded figures as Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Denis Diderot (1713-84).

The aims of the Enlighteners were to discover and to implement universal "natural" (in conformity with nature) laws through the use of "reason" (constructive questioning based more on experience and observation than on mathematics) that could be applied to all aspects of human social existence, including the economic and the political. Just as Western science had eliminated the necessity of direct and continuous divine intervention in the operation of physical reality, the natural laws sought by the Enlighteners were thought also to function independently of God's constant intercession. According to Enlightenment ideas, once these natural laws were discovered and implemented, the results would bring humankind progress (not of the spiritual sort in the hereafter that Christianity promised, but of a material kind on earth — the first purely secular expression of this concept) that ultimately led to the "natural rights" of happiness and freedom for the individual, as well as for society in general. A human society governed by natural laws thus had no need of the traditional linkage of religion with politics, since each would be relegated to its respective and separate "natural" sphere of human endeavor, spiritual and secular. The Enlightenment gave the West its intellectual rationale for the separation of church and state.

While such ideas, especially that concerning freedom, were potentially revolutionary in a period in which the political culture was dominated by secular monarchs who justified their rule through the concept of Divine Right ("God wills it"), their explosive impact was somewhat dampened when the monarchs themselves bought into the Enlightenment by claiming to reorder the nature of their rule in conformity with certain of the natural laws espoused by the intellectuals under the guise of a public relations image characterized as Enlightened Despotism.

A new secular political culture developed in symbiotic parallel with the Enlightenment — liberal democracy. Its founder was John Locke, whose political arguments in 1690 justifying the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, which cemented parliamentary control over monarchical government, helped inspire Voltaire to launch the Enlightenment in the first place. Locke was the intellectual father of such concepts as government by the consent of the governed, the separation of powers within the government to ensure against despotic rule, and the right of the governed to rise up in revolution against a government that was despotic. All of these concepts were defined in a legal instrument — a contract between government and governed — called a constitution. He characterized a despotic government as one that either broke the contract or did not guarantee its governed certain "inalienable ('natural') rights" with which he declared all individuals were born: life, liberty, and property ownership. This latter right was particularly important to Locke, who defined happiness as a function of owning property, and liberty as its unfettered acquisition and defense. He considered all actions of individuals to be motivated by self-interest, which was expressed through owning property, and all social structures to be determined by its protection. Because, in Locke's view, property ownership thus was crucial to human political organization, it followed that his concept of government by the consent of the governed actually meant by the consent of the property owners in the state. The political ideals of Locke came to be crystallized into the Western ideology known as liberalism.

The idea that a constitution — a governing contract — was a rational and "natural" basis for government joined that of Enlightened Despotism in the political thinking of the Western European Enlighteners. But Locke's constitutional approach also made a deep impact on the political thought of a French intellectual who reacted against the pseudoscientific bent of the Enlightenment. Though influenced by it, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) rejected its notion of reason as the dominant human characteristic in favor of emotion. He trusted in nature, but a nature that was unspoiled by the corrupting forces of civilization. His political thought encompassed a structure in which all persons were active citizens who

participated in shaping the laws that governed their society. All citizens helped make the laws, and all agreed to obey them because they had helped form them. In Rousseau's eyes, this active agreement constituted human liberty. No one in such a society had the right to dominate another — there were no hereditary monarchs, no overweening church hierarchies, and no privileged nobility. There was only a society of loyal and active equals who willingly suppressed many of their personal self-interests in favor of those of the group as a whole. Rousseau held the "general will" of society paramount in his political model. That will was legally expressed in the constitution of the state founded on his premises — a social contract (the title that he gave the book in which his ideas were expressed in 1762) — that both guaranteed the individual freedoms of its citizens and delineated their collective responsibilities to the state. What Rousseau offered the West politically was a form of simple, pure, and ideal democracy.

Locke's liberalism and Rousseau's democracy were wedded together by the two late eighteenth century events that reshaped the Western European political culture into its modern form — the American and the French revolutions. The American Revolution (1775-83), with the Declaration of Independence (1776) that it issued and with the Constitution (1787) that it ultimately created, first demonstrated to the rest of the Western world that a society was capable of successfully instituting a form of government philosophically grounded in the precepts of the Enlightenment, liberalism, and democracy. But the newly established United States of America was too isolated geographically from the core area of Western European civilization's remaining societies to have a direct impact on them beyond setting an example. The decisive political upheaval in the West came only with the French Revolution (1789-99) and the French imperial wars of Napoleon Bonaparte (1799-1815).

France lay in the heart of the core region of Western Europe, so its revolution against the traditional political order in the West (the divine right despotism of regional monarchies) could not help but ignite violent storms of reaction among the monarchs ruling its surrounding societies. The declaration of human rights issued by the French revolutionary leadership (1789), which originally was conceived of as only a preamble to a constitution (but, as it turned out, to three successive and not very satisfactory ones), expressed all the ideals of liberalism and democracy in a more radical tone than in the American example. It sounded the tocsin for general political revolution throughout all of Western Europe. In 1792 war was declared by the French on the old political order in the West, and war continued until Napoleon found his Waterloo in 1815.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars spread the ideals of liberal democracy over the length and breadth of Western Europe, even reaching

into regions of Eastern European civilization (in the Balkans with the "Illyrian Provinces" [1806-13] and Russia [1812]) for short periods of time. By an ironic twist of fate, though the French were defeated on the battlefield, their political concepts ultimately emerged victorious in the West. This victory can be greatly attributed to two other cultural developments that were accelerated by the enormity of the conflict in terms of the number of people and states involved in the wars: the rise of industrialized capitalist economics and their linkage to the interests of nationalism and the nation-state.

The Industrial Revolution in Western European civilization began in England in the early years of the eighteenth century. It was sparked by rising rural productivity and the availability of ready cash for investment and consumption that resulted from improved agricultural techniques and growing British colonial enterprises. Money and markets for consumer products developed that needed only to be tapped. The opportunity was not lost on a segment of the English population that was ready-made to play the role of dedicated mass producers — the various communities of Anabaptist-type religious dissenters against the official Anglican state religion (like the Puritans and Quakers), who, by law, were excluded from all of the traditional philosophically "respectable" careers in English society (such as landholding and the government), so had been forced into the more "ignoble" monetary professions (for example, banking). It was they who refined the so-called Protestant work ethic, tying persistent and productive labor to divine order and any resulting material prosperity to divine favor. They found no better way of demonstrating God's approval of themselves and their religious beliefs than by working to satisfy the rising demands for goods that English agricultural and commercial prosperity had created.

Manufacturing operations blossomed in the English countryside, feeding on the technological developments that grew out of the Scientific Revolution. Increased goods production led to increased demand, resulting in larger production plants and expanding technologies, which, in turn, created new industries to serve the older ones. The Industrial Revolution brought about one of the most rapid social and economic transformations in human history. In less than a hundred years from its inception around 1720, every aspect of society was affected — employment, housing, transportation, urbanization, and social classes, among others — as industrialism exploded into one of the most all-encompassing forces in English society. From England, it quickly spread to the European continent, where, by the end of the eighteenth century in France and Germany, it was fast on the road toward catching up with its English parent.

Industrial capitalism found its philosophical roots in the idea of "universal natural laws" propagated by the Enlightenment and in the propertyed self-interest of liberalism. In 1758 François Quesnay first publicly broached the idea that natural economic laws existed and that they should be discovered and permitted to operate without hindrance. He was followed by Adam Smith, who in 1776 "discovered" the first, and most fundamental, of such laws — that of supply and demand — and its "necessary" political corollary — *laissez-faire* (government noninterference). According to Smith, a society's economic well-being depended on the free and unfettered, self-interested pursuit of prosperity (profits) by each of its individual members in a competitive marketplace. Claiming to have unearthed another natural law related to supply and demand, which made population growth always more rapid than increases in food supplies, in 1798 Thomas Malthus asserted that poverty was inevitable in every society, but especially in one that was industrialized, because industrialists would always grow wealthier while their workers' wages would sink ever lower. He advocated *laissez-faire* with regard to governmental social assistance for the poor so that fewer poverty-stricken children would be born, thus lessening population demands on available food supplies. Finally, in 1817 David Ricardo uncovered the "iron law of wages," which viewed labor as a commodity that was bought and sold just like any other. This law, too, sprang from the fundamental precept of supply and demand: When labor (the potential work force) was abundant, it was inexpensive (low wages); when it was scarce, it was expensive (high wages). A society with a plentiful supply of labor would always experience lower levels of wages than one with fewer available workers. Once again, Ricardo advocated *laissez-faire* regarding wages, leaving them to Smith's law as the only "natural" thing to do.

The classical economists of industrial capitalism planted that economic system squarely within the intellectual political culture of liberal democracy, with their emphasis on individual self-interest (property and profits) and on freely operating economic laws guaranteed by a government whose primary purpose it was to protect them at all costs. Liberalism and industrial capitalism went hand in hand in an optimum partnership between politics and economics. That partnership was cemented by the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon. The ideological nature of those wars brought about the earliest appearance of massed armies, fielded by governments on all sides. For the first time in history, every state involved in the fighting was forced to mobilize all of its available resources, on a scale previously unheard of, in its effort to gain victory. With the advent of mass military formations came the need to equip, clothe, and feed the millions of men under arms. Governments turned to

the industrial sector of their societies for the necessary mass production of the materials of war. The relationships sparked by military need brought benefits to all parties involved — the wherewithal to field the required military forces for the government, profits for the industrialists, and employment for the work force. When the wars ended, far from disconnecting the relationships that had been forged, the political-economic partnership remained in place. This was primarily due to the last Western cultural development that grew out of the wars — modern nationalism and its political expression through the nation-state.

The Western European concept of nationalism — the self-identification of a group of people with a state and government distinct from all others — did not originate with the liberal democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its roots were sunk with the emergence of regional monarchies, such as the French, English, and Spanish, in the twelfth century. The concept matured with the progressive success of the regional monarchs in throwing off papal temporal authority over the centuries that followed. But we should not confuse the nationalism of the pre-French revolutionary era with the form that is familiar to us today. None of the Western European states prior to the American and French revolutions was a nation-state — a state that supposedly delineated the territory inhabited and governed by a particular ethnic group. All were, instead, states that encompassed all the lands held subject by a particular monarchy, which governed them by means of a privileged, restrictive elite, whose justification for its existence lay in its feudal landholding past and whose numbers were small relative to the general population of the state. Only the Western European regional aristocracies, from whose ranks the monarchs sprang, had any real attachment to their states. The majority of the population in every state counted for little in the political scheme of things beyond serving as the primary source of royal and aristocratic revenues. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the word "nation" simply meant the aristocracy of a particular state, and not its general population. Thus, the English Magna Carta (1215), some modern interpretations to the contrary, was far more a reassertion on the part of the English aristocratic elite of age-old Germanic traditions of government through an assembly of notables than it was an expression of political concern for the interests of the English population as a whole. Prior to the liberal democratic American and French revolutions in Western European civilization, the nation was synonymous strictly with the nobility.

The French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars changed the nature of nationalism. The overthrow of the French monarchy, the revocation of aristocratic privileges, and the installation of liberal democratic governing forms gave the general French population a political voice and a personal

stake in the state. The state thus represented the French in their totality — culturally, ethnically, politically, socially, and economically. Its borders were considered sacrosanct boundaries, within which the French people reigned supreme, free to live and govern as they chose. When the English, Austrian, and Prussian monarchies threatened to intervene militarily inside France to restore the old aristocratic regime, the French reacted with a mass rising in support of their new political order — the first time in history that the majority of the population in a Western European state had done so. French victories and their resulting territorial expansion pressured the Western monarchies into fielding ever larger armies in efforts to outman their militantly nationalistic opponents. But their efforts to defeat the new form of mass nationalism that motivated the men in the ranks of their enemy ultimately proved successful only because they too were forced to instigate that very same sort of nationalism among their own populations to increase the numbers of their military recruits. Immediately after the wars were ended, in 1815, the victorious monarchies bent all of their repressive efforts toward suppressing the nationalistic genie that they had unbottled, but to no avail. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848 pushed the Western monarchies into eventually compromising with the new nationalism and the liberal democratic forms that were its fundamental political expression.

The aftermath of the wars, which saw in Western Europe the last attempts on the part of the traditional prerevolutionary monarchies to retain undisputed political power under a regime of state repression characterized by the Habsburg chancellor, Prince Klemens von Metternich (1809-48), spawned a new form of nationalism tied closely to the rise of Romanticism. Reacting against the devastation of the wars and the social-political regimentation imposed by the victorious monarchies, the Romantics represented a young generation of intellectuals and artists who came to blame the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which dominated the thought of the European political establishments, and the rampant materialism created by the Industrial Revolution for the situation. They rejected them and their classical Hellenic roots in favor of emotionalism and escapism — primarily into a fictionalized medieval past, a past that was dominated by human emotion (that is, religion) and that had permitted the peoples of Western Europe to express their native cultures without corruption by foreign (classical) elements.

In the Romantic view of reality, which had its intellectual roots in Rousseau, each ethnic group of people carried within itself a consciousness of its special cultural uniqueness that was fundamentally expressed through the group's common religious beliefs and, most important, its common language. For the Romantics, religion (Catholicism on the

Continent, Protestantism in England) was the emotional expression of civilization and language was the key to human group self-identity — language defined "the people." To discover the true character of any people's culture, one had to know and understand the group's historical past, which could be reconstructed only by analyzing historical and linguistic evidence. In their quest to uncover the medieval origins of the various Western European peoples, the nineteenth-century Romantics gave birth to modern historical study, which required the collection and interpretation of primary source materials. They used historical documentation to validate the pasts of peoples rather than merely those of states.

The Romantics also created a completely new field of intellectual inquiry — ethnography — by their emphasis on the importance of peasant folk songs and legends as the primary vehicles for expressing any given people's native culture in its purest, most emotional form, undistorted by literary conventions or by languages spoken by neighboring, but different, ethnic groups. The tales collected and published in Germany by the Grimm brothers, Wilhelm and Jacob, or by Hans Christian Andersen in Denmark, were intended to be read as more than just interesting children's stories; they were presented to demonstrate the very soul of German or Danish culture.

It did not take long for the Romantic sense of national consciousness — the people's awareness of their common origins, language, and history — to be integrated with the military sort of nationalism created by the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in Western Europe. Every ethnic group of people now possessed a history and a culture of its own, with a unique past, character, territory, interests, and aspirations. The group as a whole constituted the "nation," and the role of the state created by the group was to represent and defend that uniqueness politically, socially, economically, and territorially.

Thus evolved the Western concept of the nation-state as the ultimate, most "natural" form of political organization. All aspects of human reality ideally were encompassed by its structure. The borders of the state were those that delineated the sovereign territory inhabited by a particular ethnic group (the nation), which was distinguishable from all others by its specific language, religion, dress, customs, and mores. Its liberal democratic government, in which all members of the group had a patriotic stake but no privileged interest groups predominated, ruled in the interests of the nation and in conformity with the Enlightened natural laws that governed human reality, free of any constraints imposed by direct religious interference. Industrial capitalism, predicated on the gainful implementation of technologies rooted in science, supported and expanded the economic well-being of the nation, providing goods, profits, employment, and

property for the nation, and furnished the material wherewithal to defend militarily its sovereignty against threats from foreign nations. Given the cultural evolution in the West that led to the development of the nation-state concept, by the end of the nineteenth century the societies of Western European civilization believed it truly represented the "best of all possible worlds."

Perhaps. But if it was the finest political expression of Western European cultural evolution, it most certainly also was extremely divisive and inherently violent. This became openly apparent after the middle of the nineteenth century, when the intellectual stimulus of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection ("the survival of the fittest": *On the Origin of Species* [1859] and *The Descent of Man* [1871]), as first applied to nation-state politics by Napoleon III (1852-70) of France and Otto von Bismarck (1862-90) of Germany, fed a series of inter-European national wars that in the twentieth century erupted into two global cataclysms and numerous local conflicts within the worldwide context of the cold war.

The Romantic notion of a nation's special cultural uniqueness implied a sense of group self-superiority, which variously could be expressed as xenophobia (the we're-number-one syndrome, which virtually all Western nation-states have demonstrated in some degree, in one form, or at one time or another), racism (Nazi Germany, for example), or messianism (the American claim to "Manifest Destiny," or the Soviet claim to leadership in international communism). Operating hand in hand with national self-superiority was an innate suspicion of all other national groups, which, depending on circumstances, posed potential threats to any given nation's national interests, whether they be political, economic, or territorial. From its inception, modern nationalism spawned an "Us Against Them" group mentality that ensured relations among nations would be highly competitive and often antagonistic. The highest expression of national self-superiority was possession of a sovereign nation-state, whose borders definitively delineated the territory over which the nation held dominant sway. Borders meant lines drawn on maps that reflected inviolable lines on the surface of the earth ideally separating distinct nationalities. But at no time in modern history have lines on a map neatly and definitively been able to separate any two neighboring nationalities on the actual ground. The utter inability of borders to represent an ideal, all-inclusive expression of the nation-state could not help but create bitter territorial disputes among neighboring nations, which laid claim to the persons and lands of conationals who inevitably were left living on the "wrong side" of virtually every nation-state border. This fact, the so-called national minorities problem, combined with modern nationalism's innate senses of self-superiority and suspicion of others, led to national conflict as an endemic element in the modern Western European nation-state political culture.

Romantic nationalism and the concept of the nation-state had a powerful impact on the numerous European ethnic groups of geographical Eastern Europe. At the opening of the nineteenth century, all of them were submerged within multinational (or, more accurately, anational) empires — Habsburg Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Ottoman — whose political structures were grounded in the aristocratic privileges of foreign ruling houses — the Austrian Habsburgs, the Russian Romanovs, the Prussian Hohenzollerns, and the Turkish Osmanlis. For those not Austrian or Prussian German, Russian, or Turkish, political life in the empires offered no advantages, in many cases not even recognizing their existence beyond listings in tax registers. Given their political circumstances, the various European ethnic groups of Northeastern, Central-Eastern, and Southeastern Europe formed a ready and willing audience for the emotional appeal of Western European Romantic nationalism — with its emphasis on the unique value of every ethnic group, based on its shared history and language, and on every group's "natural right" to possess a political organization — a nation-state — of its own.

Nationalism and the nation-state were the primary attributes of Western European political culture that attracted the attention and fired the blood of the subject peoples of geographical Eastern Europe. The emotional appeal of a people's value being determined by its own history and culture, and not by the past of the dominant aristocracy who controlled the states in which the people lived, proved to be an explosively revolutionary force that ultimately, by the end of 1918, would sweep away the empires of the region. The ideas of liberal democracy and industrial capitalism, while noticed, were relegated to varying subordinate levels in their priorities, depending on the recipients' own civilization and their place within it.

For example, the Western European peoples, such as the Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, and Poles, possessed a strong sense of their past history (developed to a high level — sometimes to the point of fictionalization — under Romantic influences) and long-standing political cultures rooted in premodern aristocratic nationalism and powerful noble assemblies that had not been obliterated totally by their incorporation into the multinational empires. It took little effort to adapt their past traditions to the new liberal democratic culture of the West. Other Western peoples, such as the Slovaks, were without a history of their own because they had never developed a strong, independent premodern aristocracy to represent their national interests. To have any chance whatsoever for shaping a nation-state of their own, they were forced to resort to outright forgery in re-creating the sort of historical past that modern nationalism required. In the end, the Slovaks succeeded in achieving this only in 1993. The same can be said of the Slovenes and of the Carpatho-Ruthenians.

Only the Czechs, the Poles, and the Slovenes, of all these East European nationalities, experienced industrial development on a significant scale prior to the twentieth century, and that only because the Habsburg and Prussian monarchies thought it in their own interests. When industrialization for the rest came during the period of communism, it was rooted in ideological (the party needed "workers" to represent) rather than economic necessities. (This goes a long way toward explaining the dilapidated and environmentally destructive nature of industry in the former Communist world — the states were more concerned with politics than with workable economics or the needs of the population.)

The East European peoples of Southeastern Europe were even more attracted by the emotional linguistic and historical components of modern Western nationalism and the nation-state concept than were the Western peoples to their north. While the others at least lay under political subjection to foreign but culturally related European empires, the Balkan Europeans were subject to a state ruled by a monarchy and governed by principles rooted in a completely non-European civilization. Though the endemic national animosities that accompanied the growth of nationalism and of nation-states was hot and contentious among nations of similar civilization (among Western Hungarians and Slovaks or Croats, or Czechs and Slovaks, or Poles and Germans; or among Eastern Bulgarians and Serbs or Greeks or Romanians), and violent, often bloody between nations of Western and Eastern European civilizations (Poles and Russians; Hungarians and Romanians; or Serbs and Croats), it proved downright vicious when East European nations were pitted against Islamic peoples, who represented the completely foreign and threatening enemy of their nation par excellence.

Islam is one of the very few historical examples in which the exact dates and circumstances surrounding the origins of a civilization can be documented with some certainty. It was born during the lifetime of a single individual — that of the Prophet Muhammad (571-632), an Arab from Mecca who managed a caravan business for his wife. Until the age of forty, when God first spoke to him in the month of Ramadan through the Angel Gabriel, Muhammad was known among the tribesmen of the Mecca region not only as a trader but as a respected arbitrator, because of his common sense, intelligence, and proclivity for solitary meditation in the desert. During one of those desert retreats to Mount Arafat, outside Mecca, Gabriel first spoke the message of God to Muhammad — there was only one god, Allah (which happened to be the name given to the tribal deity of the Kuraysh, Muhammad's own tribe), and Muhammad was chosen to be His last and greatest prophet. In a succession of visitations, which lasted

throughout the rest of Muhammad's life, the messenger angel continued to relate God's final revelation for the world.

God's will, as proclaimed by Muhammad, was quite simple and straightforward — all humankind must believe in one, absolute, all-powerful God, in God's last and greatest prophet, and in the inevitability of a last judgment by God of all humans who ever lived. This belief was called Islam, meaning "submission" (to the will of God) in Arabic. Those who submitted to God's will were termed Muslims ("those who submitted"). Faith (or submission) carried with it obligations in two further categories beyond faith — in devotional activities and in interpersonal relations — that together encompassed virtually every aspect of human existence. As part of the devotional duties, a Muslim was required to publicly testify to her or his faith in front of at least two witnesses; pray individually five times daily, and congregationally on Fridays; fast in daylight hours during the month of Ramadan; give alms to help support the poor; and make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during her or his lifetime. There were five levels of activities governing a Muslim's interpersonal relations: mandatory duties, such as marriage contracts, support of families, wearing specific types of clothing, and *jihad* ("holy war") — the duty of all Muslims to fight unbelievers whenever it was legitimately proclaimed (guaranteeing all who died in it the unconditional reward of eternal paradise); recommended duties, such as setting slaves free; permitted actions, such as a male having four wives and simple, fast divorce proceedings; reprobated activities, including gambling, eating pork, drinking wine — all of which were considered hateful; and forbidden actions, such as murdering a Muslim, stealing from a Muslim, mistreating Muslim wives, female infanticide, Muslim males marrying pagans, and Muslim females not marrying Muslim males. All of these precepts were set down by Muhammad and his numerous scribes in the sacred book of divine Islamic revelation called the Koran.

Many of the revelations contained in the Koran were direct or slightly modified stories found in the Jewish Old and Christian New Testaments of the Bible. Most likely, Muhammad had become quite familiar with them from listening to numerous and often lively theological discussions in the various marketplaces of West Asia. The late sixth and early seventh centuries were a time when such matters were mundane topics of conversation among the peoples of the Byzantine Empire, which dominated the commerce of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Once his new religion was set in motion, Muhammad made efforts in the Koran to bring both Christians and Jews living in Arabia into the Islamic fold — he accepted Christ as the next to last prophet of God (second only to himself in greatness), and he related the story of his nocturnal trip to Jerusalem and

back. Both efforts eventually failed. Yet Muhammad considered Jews and Christians "People of the Book" (those possessing scriptures that represented divine revelation) who had once known true belief in God but who had drifted away from it and God's precepts over time.

Besides Jewish and Christian components, the revelation in the Koran included native Arabic paganisms. There can be little doubt that Muhammad, a man renowned for his personal intelligence, realized that, so long as the Arabs remained tribally divided, they would continue to play an inferior role to the Byzantines and Persians in West Asian commercial and political life. His insight told him that the key to power in those states lay in the unifying force among their various peoples of an all-encompassing religious belief; Christianity strengthened Byzantium and Zoroastrianism did Persia. To attract Arabs to Islam, Muhammad was not above incorporating certain of the native pagan beliefs, such as the spirituality of the black meteorite — the Kaaba — in Mecca (traditionally considered sent to earth by the gods), and the existence of good and evil spirits (*jins*). In his efforts to convert his tribe and others to the new faith by any means, it was said that Muhammad, in a speech made at the Kaaba, once seemed to give the old pagan local gods the right to intercede between humans and Allah. He later disavowed those statements as being forced from him by the devil, and they were not included in the official compilation of the Koran. (These were the famous *Satanic Verses*, concerning which Salman Rushdie has had to fear for his life.)

Although Muhammad's original revelations constituted the birth of a new religion, they quickly were transformed into something much more comprehensive. For three years following the beginning of Gabriel's visitations, Muhammad unsuccessfully attempted to convert his family and other Mecca tribes to the faith of submission. The Kaaba was considered a holy pagan shrine, from which his family had grown wealthy selling goods to the pilgrims who annually flocked into Mecca to worship. Muhammad, with his constant public attacks on paganism, was bad for family business. In 622 he was forced to flee Mecca with a few devoted disciples to escape murder by the Arabs of the city. He arrived in Medina, a commercial town to the northeast, where his reputation as an arbitrator and holy man led to his swift installation as political leader by the Arab tribes of that city. His flight from Mecca to Medina — the *hijra*, meaning "the journey" — proved such a decisively crucial turning point in his life, and in the fate of Islamic civilization, that the year 622 was eventually designated the year one in the Islamic calendar. From Medina, the Prophet victoriously led his newly converted tribal forces against Mecca (630), after which the *jihād* precept of his proclaimed faith drew an ever-increasing number of Arab tribes to his banners. By the time of his death

in 632, the Muslim forces under his command controlled virtually all of the Arabian Peninsula.

Muhammad was both a prophet and a political-military leader, so that, in his person, church and state were indivisibly merged. From the time of the *hijra*, Islam was both a religion and a state. Muhammad declared that Islam constituted a united community of true believers (an *umma*), in which all Muslims were members. That community was governed by the Islamic precepts spelled out in the direct revelations of God through His Prophet. The Koran was not merely the revealed will of God, it was the divinely sanctioned state legal system for the universal community of Muslims. Thus from its very origins, the Islamic state was theocratic. (It is a misnomer, because it is so biased by Western cultural perceptions, to brand as "fundamentalist" today's Muslim political movements that seek the reestablishment of religious governments within Islamic civilization. Unlike the Christian fundamentalists in the United States, who push a radical religious agenda on a government that they nevertheless consider institutionally separate — and necessarily so — the so-called radical Islamic movement simply wishes to reestablish the traditional Islamic political culture that operated among Muslim societies until forms of Western European political culture were imposed on them by the victorious powers of the West following World War I.) The Islamic state was welded together by a common religious belief, a common language — Arabic — forged by Muhammad to write down the revelations of God, and by a common set of laws.

When Muhammad died, the divine revelations ceased and Islam was deemed complete. But he left behind a large and dynamic Islamic state for which many areas of law remained ill-defined or were completely untouched by the Koran. Because Islamic religious law was a matter crucial to the state, the legal profession, which comprised the most literate and skilled religious leadership, was forced to find ways of filling the gaps. They turned to examining the stories of Muhammad's life — his words and actions — to extrapolate how he might have ruled in a given situation not specifically covered in the Koran. Eventually six collections of such stories, termed the traditions (*sunna*) of the Prophet, were accepted as canonical (*sunni*) by the Islamic community, and a school of legal thought grew up around each of the collections. Every individual item covered by the traditions was called an *hadith* ("saying"). The Koran and the books of collected sayings together came to constitute the main sources for both Islamic theology and Islamic state jurisprudence. They were collectively termed the *shariat* ("sacred law").

In examining the life and significance of Muhammad, one might be tempted to view him as a cross between Christ and Emperor Constantine

I, but the analogy really does not hold up under close scrutiny — Christ was considered a god by his followers, a divinity to which neither Muhammad nor his followers ever laid claim; and although Constantine played an important role in the Christian church, he was never considered an integral part of the church hierarchy. In a truly telling analogy, one cannot help but be struck with the similarities Muhammad shared with the far more legendary Jewish prophet Moses, whom we think lived around 1400-1200 B.C. Both men directly received divine revelations informing them of God's will for humankind after spending extended periods alone in the desert. (The overwhelmingly vast and desolate nature of the desert environment goes a long way in helping to explain why all of the world's great monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — were born in one general area of West Asia.) Both were products of disunited, nomadic and seminomadic West Asian tribal societies, to whom they both brought political and legal unity through the imposition of a set of divinely decreed sacred laws. Both thus forged dynamic theocratic states, whose borders reflected the territories in which their respective church-state held sway and whose governments claimed divine will for their forcible expansion. And, unlike the Christian European worlds, in both of which the separation of church and state ultimately led to the identification of different human societies in nonreligious terms — ethnic or national groups — the Jewish and Islamic worlds persisted in recognizing as fundamental only religious differences among peoples.

The internal unity and innate dynamism of the religious state forged by Muhammad were instrumental in creating one of the most explosively expansive empires known to history. United in faith and eager to spread it and its divinely ordered state throughout the known world, the militant Arab tribes joined together under the green banner of the Prophet and swept out of the Arabian desert wastes into the territories of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Within little more than a decade of Muhammad's death, the Muslim Arabs had conquered all of Iraq and Iran, destroying a Persian Empire that had been fatally weakened by a crushing defeat suffered at the hands of the Byzantines in 628. During the same period of time, the Arabs had wrested the Syrian, Palestinian, and Egyptian provinces away from a Byzantine Empire that had found itself nearly as exhausted by the late Persian wars as its defeated enemy, and which was then also wracked by internal Christian heresy. The majority in the population of the lost provinces held to the Monophysite belief that Christ was not truly human but a divine apparition who only looked human. The Byzantine government in Constantinople, which was Nicæan in belief, tended to discriminate against and even to persecute the heretics to such an extent that the conquering Arabs were often welcomed as liberators by the

population, many of whom rapidly converted to Islam since its simple and categorical monotheism made more sense to them than the complexities of the Christian Trinity. Moreover, as "People of the Book," those heretics who did not convert found their Muslim conquerors far more tolerant of their beliefs than their former Byzantine Orthodox governors.

By the middle of the eighth century, the Arabs had swept over all of North Africa and entered Europe, capturing nearly all of the Spanish Peninsula and threatening the heart of France. Only the defenses of Constantinople stopped a similar European incursion by way of the Balkans. In the East by the mid-eighth century, the Muslim warriors had carried their banners into Central Asia — today's Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan — and into the Punjab and Kashmir regions of India. These eastern conquests, combined with those in the West, created one of the largest, most ethnically diverse imperial states in the world at the time. It was cemented together by common religious belief, sacred law, and the sacred Arabic literary language. Most of those within its borders who did not convert to Islam found their Muslim masters relatively tolerant of their beliefs because of the Koranic concepts of "Peoples of the Book" and interpersonal hospitality and fairness.

One might glance at a map showing the extent of the Islamic Empire of the eighth and ninth centuries and come away with a false sense of its political realities. The empire seems so vast and so unified that one wonders how the Europeans were able to withstand the militant Muslim pressures on their territories. In this case (and in many cases, one might add), the map is deceiving.

Almost from its inception, the Islamic state suffered from a number of innate weaknesses. First and foremost was its origins in the life of a man who was both prophet and king ruling through divine revelation. At Muhammad's death, his followers were faced with the sticky problem of determining who would serve as his successor. How did one legitimately succeed a leader who ruled as the last Prophet of God? The Arabs' attempts to solve this problem demonstrated an obvious vulnerability in a society that was totally theocratic — any political differences must, of necessity, find a religious expression, and vice versa. Within twenty years of Muhammad's death, the Islamic world experienced its first civil war over the succession question, and the split between the two warring sides has remained to the present day.

The first two successors (*khalifs*) of Muhammad were members of his Hashimite family clan, related to him by either birth or marriage. When the position became open for the third time, in 644, Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was pitted against Osman, member of the Umayyad family clan and husband to two of Muhammad's daughters. Osman was

elected but was eventually assassinated by Ali's supporters (656), upon which Ali assumed the khalifate. A blood feud erupted between Ali's faction and the Umayyads that lasted throughout his five-year rule. He was assassinated in his turn by a disaffected follower in 661, and the position of *khalif* passed firmly into Umayyad hands. Ali's party refused to accept this decision and, instead, held to a belief in the legitimate succession through Ali and his son, Husayn, who was killed by Umayyad forces in 680. In those events were born the two major political-religious branches of Islam — the Sunnis (accepters of the Umayyad succession to the khalifate, who constitute the majority within the Islamic world) and the Shi'ites (upholders of the succession through Ali and Husayn, who have built a religious cult around the bloody events of their lives).

Internal political-religious strife was complicated by another source of divisiveness that the Islamic world never succeeded in overcoming. Despite the unifying overlay of the Islamic concept of a single community, Arab society remained essentially tribal at the grass-roots level. The victorious Arab Islamic armies were tribal in organization and led by traditional tribal leaders. As the empire they created grew larger, the tribal commanders developed into local governors ever more removed geographically from the capital city of the *khalifs*, whether that lay in Mecca, Damascus, or, later, in Baghdad. They assumed growing political autonomy within the regions they controlled, their authority reinforced by the long distances separating them from the recognized center of Islamic power. Regional government basically became divided along tribal lines. Thus, traditional Arabic tribalism, even clothed in the mantle of Islam, prevented the vast Islamic Empire from developing a highly centralized state system. Furthermore, it proved a continual basis for local rebellions against the khalifate, for interregional conflicts, and for the formation of religious splinter movements within Islam, whether Sunni or Shi'ite. There arose within the Islamic Empire a number of essentially independent tribal states, such as the Umayyad Moorish state of Spain and the Fatimid state of Egypt and North Africa. Even today divisions among the various Islamic countries are, at their roots, more fundamentally tribal than national in nature (for instance, the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict, the late Lebanese civil war, or the inability of the West Asian and North African Muslim states to coordinate political and economic activities).

Although Islam did not officially recognize nonreligious differences among peoples, another problem was caused by the tendency of the original Arab leadership to favor Arab Muslims over non-Arab Muslim converts by granting them tax privileges and priority in government and military service. During the early years of the conquests, the Arabs who settled within the newly won lands remained apart from the indigenous

populations, in a manner similar to that of the original Germanic invaders in the Western Roman Empire. It took decades for this attempted ethnic isolation to break down through a slow process of intermarriage and active opposition on the part of indigenous converts. But once the ethnic barriers began to collapse, the Islamic ruling class underwent a rapid process of cultural assimilation. In 660 the Umayyads transferred their capital from Mecca to Damascus, located in the heart of former Byzantine territory in West Asia. Faced with the problems of governing a vast empire and possessing little of the necessary bureaucratic experience, the Islamic rulers soon adapted Byzantine systems. Under the "Peoples of the Book" precept, protection (*zimma*) against persecution was offered the Christian and Jewish populations in Syria, many of whom were permitted to enter Umayyad government service. Through Damascus, Arabic Islamic culture received a welcome transfusion of Hellenic culture.

Such a situation caused a reaction within the ranks of the more zealous Muslim Arabs in the empire, which was exacerbated by declining military fortunes against their Byzantine Christian enemies. In the mid-eighth century, the Abbasid Arab family in Iraq raised a successful rebellion against the Umayyads of Damascus, assisted by Shi'ites who were given, as it turned out, empty promises of toleration by the Sunni rebel leaders. In 762 the Abbasid *khalifs* established their new capital at Baghdad, with the result that, despite the ethnic Arab ideology of the rebels, the new seat of government experienced a cultural assimilation similar to that of Damascus before it, only in this case the adapted culture and new government personnel were Persian. The influx of Hellenic and Persian cultures into the Islamic world raised the level of the Arabs' originally Semitic culture to that of a civilization. Fortunately for Islam, the essential ingredients of the original Muhammadan culture were able to assimilate the powerful influences of Hellenism and Persianism to emerge from the process strengthened and still dominant. But by the close of the eighth century, it was obvious that Arab ethnic leadership in the Islamic world was mostly nominal in the face of the empire's non-Arab majority in population and culture.

This fact hit home in the mid-eleventh century when Arab leadership in the Islamic Empire was completely overthrown by relatively new converts to Islam — the Turks. They originally entered the Islamic world as slaves (an accepted fate for pagans or other "unbelievers" captured in battle by Muslim forces) acquired by the Muslims during the constant border warfare along the empire's Central Asian frontiers. Renowned for their military prowess, the captured Turks were converted to Islam and then formed into highly effective slave armies and guard units by their Arab masters, who used the Turks' natural combativeness first to supple-

ment and then to supplant the Arab tribal forces, the members of which were steadily growing sedentary and complacent with their privileges and wealth. There evolved within the Islamic Empire a large praetorian force of powerful and increasingly wealthy Turkish slave forces who, by the eleventh century, realized that they, and not the Arabs, were the true strength of the Islamic state. In 1055 the Arab *khalif* of Baghdad was removed and a Turkish sultan, Tuğrul Bey, installed, who assumed the traditional authority of the *khalif* within the portion of the Islamic world that the Turkish rebels, known as the Selcuks, succeeded in controlling. The Islamic Empire was shattered by the event, with the peripheries dividing into component Arabic tribal states while the Turks commanded the important core territories of West Asia.

The fervently devout Selcuk Turks reinvigorated Islamic militancy. Their incursions into the Byzantine Empire and their more stringent dealings with the Christians of Syria and Palestine helped spark the unsuccessful Crusading movement in Europe. So completely did they transform the ethnic demography of Anatolia, which they wrested from Byzantium after the Battle of Manzikert (1071), from Greek to Turkish that the area has borne the name Turkey to the present day. But the Selcuks too grew sedentary and complacent in turn. They were replaced as leaders of the West Asian Islamic world during the fourteenth century by a new Turkish force recently brought into Anatolia to serve as the principal border guards against declining Byzantium — the Ottoman Turks.

The name Ottoman is a Western corruption of the Turkish, which derived from that of their original tribal leader (*emir*), Osman I (1281-1324). He ruled the principality closest to Byzantium and Europe in the Selcuk state, and he pursued unrelenting warfare against the Christians directly across his borders. This soon attracted to his standard a swelling number of warriors from all parts of the Selcuk world eager to fight for expanding the territories of Islam in the tradition of the *jiḥād*. (Such men were known as *gazis* and came from numerous Turkish tribes, so that Osman's state quickly acquired a multi- or nontribal character, with loyalty to the house of Osman replacing any strictly tribal allegiances.) By his death, the Byzantines were completely expelled from Anatolia, and under his son and immediate successor, Orhan I (1324-60), the Ottomans (as we collectively may call the assorted warriors and allies of the house of Osman) permanently established themselves in Southeastern Europe. Their military successes against the European Christians stretched in an unbroken string through two and a half centuries under the leadership of an unprecedented succession of ten consecutive rulers, each exceptionally endowed with superb military and political talents. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, with the death of the last, and greatest, of those sultans,

Süleyman I the Magnificent (1520-66), and the succession by his son, whose character aptly fit his descriptive title, Selim II the Sot (1566-74), their empire experienced an equally dramatic three hundred years of decline. Under the misguidance of rulers who often equaled their illustrious, able ancestors in the opposite characteristic of incompetence, the Ottoman Empire sank to the level of the "sick man of Europe" by the middle of the nineteenth century.

During most of the period of Ottoman ascension (the fourteenth through the fifteenth centuries), the empire was predominantly non-Muslim in the religious belief of its subjects and non-Turkish in its subjects' ethnic composition. Except for its Anatolian homelands, the territory controlled by the Ottomans until the beginning of the sixteenth century lay in Southeastern Europe, and its population was predominantly Christian. Even with the conquest of Muslim Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and parts of North Africa by Sultan Selim I the Grim (1512-20), the empire's European provinces remained politically and economically important, and their Christian population constituted some 40 percent of all Ottoman subjects. Such a situation presented the Muslim rulers with certain problems related to their ability to govern the European territories, since the law of the land was Islamic sacred law, and that was considered valid for Muslims alone. Even when the Ottoman Empire continued to expand into the predominantly Muslim regions of Iraq and western North Africa during the rest of the sixteenth century, thus increasing the Muslim subject population of the empire, the problem of governing non-Muslims remained.

The Ottomans could draw on past tradition dating back to the time of the Prophet in attempting to deal with the problem of non-Muslim subjects. The precepts of "People of the Book" and the extension to them of "protection" (so long as they recognized the political supremacy of the Islamic rulers and did nothing to impinge upon the glory of the true faith) had been maintained by Umayyad, Abbasid, and Selcuk regimes. The "protected ones" (*zimmi*s), as Christian and Jewish subjects were known under the precepts, were forced to pay certain special taxes to the government that Muslim subjects did not, such as the head tax (*cizye*) levied on the male heads of all households, and the land-use tax (*haraç*), which under the Ottomans came to be extended to all peasant subjects no matter their religion. Certain social and legal restrictions were placed on the "protected" peoples, such as regulations on the types, textiles, and colors of clothing; the size and height of religious buildings; the ownership of horses and weapons; and ability to give testimony in legal proceedings involving Muslims.

In addition to the traditional restrictions affiliated with "protected" status, the Balkan Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were made

liable to a child levy (*devşirme*), which was a periodic collection of Christian male children between the ages of seven and fourteen, conducted at intervals of one to seven years, depending on the manpower needs of the Ottoman central government. Only youths demonstrating physical or intellectual promise were chosen. They were then marched off to Anatolia, where they were converted into fanatical Muslims and given the best possible available training to fill posts in all levels of the government bureaucracy or to serve either in the ranks of the famous Ottoman standing infantry force — the Janissaries — or in the sultan's guard cavalry — the Sipahis of the Porte. All of the children collected by *devşirme* were considered enslaved, owned by the office of the Ottoman sultan.

A unique facet of Ottoman government was the fact that, while the empire was in its ascendancy, all of the personnel in the bureaucracy, from the highest administrative office to the lowest, were the household slaves of the sultan, who held over them the absolute power of life and death. This made the government of the Ottoman Empire the most centralized and efficient state administration known from the fourteenth through the mid-sixteenth century. Since Islamic sacred law forbade the enslavement of fellow Muslims, the Ottoman government was overwhelmingly staffed by slaves who originally were Christians. Lest a too prejudicial image be made, however, it should be borne in mind that slavery in the Ottoman context little resembled that of the American South — there were no whips, chains, or other degrading aspects involved. Entry into the sultan's slave household opened the door to immense power, wealth, social position, and public honor for any slave with the natural abilities and dedication to rise through the bureaucratic or military ranks. Every government and standing military office was filled strictly on the basis of individual merit, with no regard whatsoever given to birth status or social position, as was the case among the European societies at the time. Only slaves of the sultan were entrusted with the workings of the government and the highest military commands. To be a slave of the sultan was to possess the opportunity to rise as far as skill and ability would permit. For as long as the sultans were capable rulers and generals able and willing to exert their absolute authority over their slave household, the empire thrived. When the system began to break down in the mid-sixteenth century, with jealous born-Muslims forcing or bribing their way into government and military offices, thus loosening the absolute authority of increasingly inept or disinterested sultans and escalating internal corruption, the Ottoman Empire slipped into irredeemable decline, and the situation of its non-Muslim subjects deteriorated.

During the fourteenth-century period of Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, the Christians of the region were plagued by internecine wars

among the various Christian states of Byzantium, Serbia, and Bulgaria. Their populations were burdened with rising semifeudal oppression, economic disruption, and unstable living conditions caused by nearly a century of constant warfare. As the territories captured by the Turks expanded, and it became clear that they were in Europe to stay, many Christian rulers and their subordinate warrior nobility joined the Ottomans as allies, in efforts to retain their political and social positions. Christian Bulgarians and Serbs fought loyally in the Ottoman ranks during most of the military campaigns that won control of the Balkans for the Turks, including that which resulted in the famous Battle of Kosovo (1389), when Serbia definitively was broken as an independent state. Bulgaria and Serbia were incorporated directly into the empire only after certain of their rulers and nobles had reneged on avowed alliances with the Turks.

The administrative system that the Ottomans imposed on their European territories was that of a statewide military compound, in line with the Turks' Islamic perception of their empire as God's military machine for expanding the domains of the "true believers" at the expense of the "infidels" of the world. Istanbul (the former capital of Byzantium, Constantinople), captured in 1453, served as capital and military headquarters for the supreme commander, the sultan. The provinces of the empire were structured as encampments reflecting the Ottoman military organization, with civil and military authority concentrated in the hands of the commanders on the various levels. The European and Asian lands constituted two separate wings (or corps) of the army, and their military commanders were the chief provincial administrators. Under their authority were a number of banners (*sancaks*), analogous to large regiments in Western military terminology, which, in turn, were comprised of a number of companies (*kazas*). Both also were governed by subordinate officers who possessed military and civil authority. Each provincial military-administrative district was required to provide a set number of cavalymen (*sipahis*) when the sultan declared a campaign. While the provincial cavalry formed the bulk of the Turkish military force, the slave Janissary and guard cavalry of the sultan served as its disciplined, and tactically decisive, shock units.

The provincial cavalry was supported by a pseudofeudal system of land tenure. Unlike the medieval Western feudal system that entailed ownership of the land and of its peasant serfs by the knight warriors, the Ottoman provincial support system did not grant any ownership rights to the Turkish warriors. All land conquered by the Turkish forces was considered the personal property of the sultan. To maintain the numerous troops under his supreme command with little recourse to the state treasury (which, in actuality, constituted his personal coffers), the sultan granted

his provincial authorities and warriors the rights to collect all or a share, dependent on their military rank, of the taxes due from the inhabitants on parcels of most of the land, distributed throughout the empire, in return for military service. The amount of income granted was set down in a document issued by the sultan's central government. If a recipient did not meet the military requirements, the government was free to revoke the grant and give it to another warrior. An Ottoman military "fief" was thus strictly financial in nature and involved no direct ownership of land or peasants (except for a rather small parcel intended to be used for the holder's personal sustenance). The peasants included under this arrangement, the majority of whom in the European provinces were Christians, retained their personal freedom and, for all practical purposes, ownership of their personal plots.

For as long as the sultans and the slave administration remained strong, this system ensured that the lot of the non-Muslim population of the empire was far better than that enjoyed by their Western European counterparts. In return for tilling their fields and paying their taxes, they were left fairly unmolested by their Muslim overlords. They possessed a considerable amount of local autonomy in regulating the mundane affairs of their lives, and, as "protected" "People of the Book," they were permitted to worship in the Christian faith of their forefathers. The Ottoman Turks were originally known for their commonsense approach toward building and governing their empire. They realized that the economic and military strength of the state depended on the ability of their conquered subjects to produce the necessary agricultural, craft, and monetary resources. The non-Muslims needed to be protected and husbanded so they could be shorn of revenues and goods on a regular basis to maintain the well-being of Ottoman Islamic society in general. The Turks referred to their peasant population as *reaya*, which means a flock of sheep with this very connotation. Sheep they may have been, but their personal freedom and less burdensome tax and labor obligations to the state and local authorities proved a magnetic draw upon hundreds of serfs who flocked into the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from Hungary, Croatia, Austria, and Poland to escape the onerous burdens of peasant life in Western Europe.

The problem of administratively integrating this important non-Muslim segment of the empire's subject population into the theocratic Islamic Ottoman state was definitively solved by Sultan Mehmed I the Conqueror shortly after his conquest of Constantinople in 1453. If the Islamic sacred law of the state could be applied only to Muslims, then Mehmed reasoned that the religious laws of the non-Muslims would serve well to govern legally those respective groups. Using the "People of the

Book" precept as his justification, Mehmed's solution to the problem was to institutionalize further the theocratic nature of Islamic political culture by dividing his subject population into *millets* ("nations"), based solely on religious affiliation, and administered by the highest religious authorities of each. All non-Muslims in the empire were officially distributed among three *millets*, representing the three most important non-Muslim faiths existing among the subject population: the Orthodox Christians, headed by the patriarch of Constantinople and representing the single largest, and therefore most important, group of non-Muslims; the Jews, who were of great commercial significance for the Turks, headed by an elected representative of the rabbinical council in Istanbul; and the Armenians, headed by an Armenian patriarch of Istanbul appointed by the sultan, who also came to represent any Roman Catholic subjects of the Turks. The first *millet* officially founded was that of the Orthodox Christians in 1454, one year after the fall of Constantinople. The Armenian *millet* was recognized in 1461, while the Jewish *millet* did not officially come into being until 1839, although a Jewish representative to the Ottoman court was chosen by Mehmed himself in 1453 and the practice was continued by the Istanbul Jewish community thereafter.

Each *millet* was responsible for representing its membership before the Ottoman court and for its own internal administration. They all were granted the rights to tax, judge, and order the lives of their respective members insofar as those rights did not conflict with Islamic sacred law and the sensibilities of the Muslim ruling establishment. The religious hierarchies of the *millets* were thus endowed by the Turkish central authorities with civil responsibilities beyond their ecclesiastical duties, and their head prelate was held accountable by the Turks for the proper functioning of their internal affairs. In effect, each *millet*, personified by its religious administrators, became an integral part of the empire's domestic administration, functioning as a veritable department of the Ottoman central government. In return for ensuring the smooth administration of its non-Muslim subjects, the sultan's government granted each *millet* a considerable amount of autonomy in the spheres of religious devotion and cultural activity, judicial affairs not involving Muslims, and in local self-government.

Although the term *millet* involved the idea of "nation" in the Turkish language, it shared little in common with the Western concept of nationality. In the first place, it identified people solely on the basis of their religion; ethnicity played no role. Both the Armenian and Jewish *millets* were defined by belief, despite their names' apparent modern ethnic connotations. As far as the Ottomans were concerned, Armenians were those non-Muslims who adhered to a form of the Monophysite Christian

heresy that had arisen centuries earlier in an Armenian state that no longer existed. It was the religion, not the ethnicity, that was important in the Turks' definition of the *millet*. The same could be said for the Jews. With respect to the Orthodox Christians, the Turks made no distinctions among Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, or Romanian Orthodox believers. They all were lumped together in a single *millet*, even though it is certain that the Turks were aware that ethnic differences did exist among them. Given the theocratic nature of Islam and the Islamic state, ethnicity was thought to be relatively unimportant in the fundamental scheme of reality for the Muslim Turkish rulers. It made little difference to them that the head of the Orthodox *millet* was, and would remain, a Greek. In the second place, by eliminating all consideration of ethnicity, the *millet* identification entirely lacked the territoriality associated with the Western concept of the nation. No matter where one lived within the empire, no matter how mixed the population, *millet* affiliation governed one's life. Neighbors could be Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Jews, or Armenians, and that fact did not lead to national animosity and territorial disputes among them because all were members of their own self-contained administrative systems, complete unto themselves, with no claims whatsoever on the others. For all the subjects of the Ottomans, their homeland was anywhere within the borders of the empire. This fact led to increasingly mixed ethnic populations throughout the Balkans, especially in regions where the traditional homelands of different ethnic groups lay side by side (for instance, in northern Macedonia, where Bulgarians and Serbs rubbed elbows, or in southern Macedonia, where Greeks and Bulgarians met).

By the seventeenth century, the absolute authority of the sultan, on which the entire stability of the state structure was dependent, had begun to decline with the onset of successively inept holders of the office. The effects of this loss of authority at the center were magnified by disruptive external and internal pressures. Western European technologies played havoc on the tradition-bound Islamic approach to state reality. Naval developments in the West ushered in the Age of Discovery, beginning in the sixteenth century, which opened sea routes to the necessary and lucrative spice trade with Far East Asia, circumventing the Ottoman middlemen who had controlled such commerce in the past. Gold and silver from the Americas flooded the eastern Mediterranean markets of the empire, causing rapid inflation, higher taxes, and an explosive rush for cash on all levels of Ottoman society. Moreover, in the seventeenth century, Western military gunpowder technologies transformed the weaponry and tactics of warfare, to which the Ottomans, holding fast to the traditional military approaches that had served them so well in the past, were slow to respond. The result was the end of Ottoman military

dominance in Eastern Europe and the onset of ever-greater ignominious defeats in battles with "infidel" Christian enemies. Western European states, such as France and England, were able to force on the Turks treaties — the nature of which was reflected in their titles: capitulations — that placed nearly all of the empire's trade relations and profits in their own hands. Militarily antiquated and economically strangled, the empire ceased to expand, and, following the disastrous second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683, it was forced into gradual, but perpetual, contraction in Southeastern Europe.

Lacking the bedrock of the sultan's strong central authority, the declining economic and military fortunes of the empire led to the breakdown of internal order. The slave household government was disbanded in favor of selling offices to the highest bidders in efforts to bring more increasingly valueless currency into the central treasury. The need for additional state revenues resulted in the resort to tax-farming, with its heinous financial oppression of the lowly taxpayers. State lands, formerly not bestowed as military fiefs, were sold off as private property to high-ranking administrators and commanders, who converted their holdings into income-producing estates. In addition, a growing number of provincial cavalrymen took advantage of the increasing ineffectiveness of the central government to cast off their military obligations and illegally transform their conditional holdings into private estates. This situation, in turn, resulted in the rise of provincial banditry among those troops who either lost their lands to more powerful warriors or could no longer expect to win holdings from newly conquered regions. The central government was forced to depend on its paid standing Janissary forces, which meant drastically increasing their strength. The ranks of the Janissaries swelled with the influx of born-Muslims, who bribed their way into the ranks and who possessed little inclination for military discipline, often making or breaking sultans at their whim. The state treasury was thus forced to pay the salaries of an increasing number of worthless troops. And so the fiscal conditions of the empire were caught in a constant downward spiral.

The non-Muslim population was forced to foot the lion's share of the bill through exorbitant taxes. Many Muslims considered their Western Christian enemies to be the cause of the problems, so, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, disgruntled Janissaries, bandit troopers, and local Turkish authorities were not above venting their frustrations over the worsening state of the empire on the Christian subjects close at hand. Banditry and local anarchy grew commonplace, and the Christian subjects were exposed to rising bouts of violence. The pretexts for the adoption of Western European national concepts by the Ottomans' subject Christian populations lay in the burgeoning chaos within the empire during the

eighteenth century, and in the inability to overcome the anarchy and effectively to modernize in the Western mold during the nineteenth.

The nationalist contentions of all the Balkan Christian peoples (Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Romanians) paint a picture of Ottoman rule in Southeastern Europe as one long period of oppression, degradation, and enslavement — they call it the “Ottoman yoke.” But the five hundred-year “yoke” was mostly myth. Until the West definitively gained the military and economic upper hand over the Turks at the end of the seventeenth century, the lot of the Balkan Christians within the empire was better than that enjoyed by most of the general populations in Western European states. Certain of them, especially the Greeks, enjoyed lucrative privileged political and commercial status — they controlled the Orthodox *millet*, played a dominant role in foreign trade, and monopolized most Ottoman diplomatic and foreign affairs offices of state. While the very ideas of a child levy and state slavery strike Westerners and Westernized Europeans as repugnant, it should be noted that many Christian mothers begged the local Ottoman authorities to take their sons because they realized it was the only avenue open to non-Muslims to social and political advancement and the attendant possibilities of untold wealth, prestige, and power. (Many levied children later remembered their families and regions of origin by extending to them preferential treatment.) Although every Balkan Christian national myth includes frightening images of conversions to Islam forced on them by the Turks, in reality thousands of Christians voluntarily made the decision to change faith to gain local economic or social benefits, such as reduced taxes or acquisition of careers not normally open to Christians, such as law. Certainly there existed scattered local cases of forced conversions, especially during the period of decline, but those same conditions also contributed to increased voluntary conversions as well. Converts to Islam removed themselves from their *millets*; therefore they were lost to the only mechanism available for expressing non-Muslim group self-identity. As far as their former *millet* compatriots were concerned, the converts became “Turks.”

It was, after all, the *millet* system of Ottoman administration that permitted non-Muslims in the empire to retain and develop their individual sense of ethnic self-awareness. Free to practice their faiths and cultivate their religious cultures, they naturally came to identify with their religion and the form of language used in their devotions. As early as the seventeenth century, the Slavic Orthodox Christians (Bulgarians and Serbs) were aware that, although they were Orthodox, they did not speak the same language as did the Greek church hierarchy that controlled the *millet*.

As the empire declined and the lot of the non-Muslims deteriorated, the Western nationalist concepts that seeped into the Balkans from across the frontiers with Austria and Russia were first digested within the context of the *millet*. When the Serbs rose in revolt (1804-13), they were reacting against local atrocities perpetrated on the Christians of the Belgrade region by that city's undisciplined Janissary garrison. The Serbs claimed to be acting in the interests of the Ottoman sultan when their rebel forces defeated his unruly and anarchistic provincial governor, who was terrorizing faithful members of the Orthodox *millet*, and thus acting to restore central control over the region. Only when the weak central government proved unable to reassert its direct authority in the region and local Turkish anarchy again prevailed did the Serbs, now infected by Western nationalist ideas spread to them by fellow Serbs north of the Danube, resurrect their rebellion as an ultimately successful national struggle (1815-30) for autonomy, and finally complete independence (1878) from the Turks.

As for the Greeks, though their War of Independence (1821-31) was instigated by nationalist firebrands in Russian military service, the masses of the Greek population who fought the war were reacting against rising local Turkish anarchy. Their goal was to win self-rule for the Greek speakers of the Orthodox *millet*. Rising Greek nationalism, brought to mainland Greece by expatriates living in merchant communities in the West and in Russia, and reinforced by numerous romantic Western philhellenes who poured into Greece as rebel volunteers, laid claim to all regions in the Balkans existing under the *millet* authority of the Greek patriarch of Constantinople. Later the Greek nationalists came to claim the reestablishment of a Greek-dominated Byzantine Empire as their primary aim, but their tactical approach toward its attainment leaned heavily on the *millet* argument.

The Bulgarian example was the purest case of a Balkan nationalist movement operating within the *millet* context. Latecomers to the Balkan nationalist scene, the Bulgarians were influenced by ideals acquired from Russia, Serbia, and Greece. But when the Bulgarians began their push for national recognition in 1860, they did so by campaigning for recognition of a separate Bulgarian *millet* by the Ottoman central government, which would entail the creation of a Bulgarian Orthodox church independent of the Greek patriarchate. They succeeded in this goal in 1870, causing immediate troubles to arise with their now-autonomous neighbors, Serbia and Greece. In the eyes of all three peoples, the geographic extent of the independent Bulgarian church would be synonymous with the geographical borders of some future independent Bulgarian state. The now highly nationalist Serbs and Greeks could not permit regions they claimed for themselves to be swallowed by Bulgarians simply because the majority of

the Orthodox population in them adhered to the Bulgarian church. This dispute between nationalism and national *millets* continued long after Bulgaria succeeded in winning political autonomy in 1878 (and complete independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908), and lay at the root of the violent conflicts over Macedonia that raged until the Balkan Wars (1912-13), after which the struggles among the three contenders became nationalistic in the strictly Western sense.

Events in the Balkans over the past decade have demonstrated that the curious intertwining of national and *millets* identities is a continuing legacy for the peoples of Southeastern Europe. The triumph of Western European nationalist concepts among the modern, post-Ottoman Balkan Christian states could not help but affect the Muslim populations living within the borders of those states.

In Bulgaria, for instance, until the 1950s, the Muslims, who constituted about 10 percent of the total population, were considered second-class but economically necessary citizens. They were virtually ignored by the government and resented by the Slavic population, who had been fed the standard "Turkish yoke" nationalist line in their schools. Most of the Muslims in Bulgaria talked, dressed, and acted like Turks, and were considered as such by the Slavic Bulgarians, by the Turks in Turkey, and by themselves. A small percentage of Muslims, however, may have dressed like Turks but spoke Bulgarian. Most of these were recognized as descendants of Orthodox Bulgarians who had converted (or, according to the Bulgarian nationalist line, were forced to convert) to Islam during the period of Ottoman rule. They were not considered Turks by either Bulgarians or Turks. Yet both Muslim groups were effectively treated in the same perfunctory manner by the government and people of the country — a Muslim was a Muslim and could never be a Bulgarian national; it was a *millets* approach. In the 1980s the Communist government reversed this policy, claiming that most of the Muslims who were identified as Turks were actually descendants of converted ethnic Bulgarians (which is probably a historically accurate claim). So, by rejecting the *millets* identity of the Muslims, the government set about forcibly "Slavifying" or deporting the Turks in Bulgaria, in a misguided attempt to create an ethnically pure Bulgarian nation-state. The Muslims responded by fortifying their *millets* identity with claims to group rights within the country couched in traditional Western nationalist terms. The authorities' misguided policy was one of the main factors leading to the downfall of the Bulgarian Communist government in 1989, since Turkish human rights (a concept born of Western nationalist struggles) became the umbrella under which all Bulgarian anti-Communist oppositional movements were finally able

to unite. The question of the Turks in Bulgaria — whether they are *millets* or ethnic in identity — remains a burning issue in the post-Communist period and poses a continuing problem for the new Bulgarian coalition government, which finds itself posing as a representative of a Christian Slavic nation-state dependent on the support of a crucial Muslim (non-Bulgarian, in *millets* terms) political party.

A similar problem plagued the former Yugoslavia, with its numerous Muslim populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and the Serbian regions of Kosovo and Sandjak. Except for the Muslims of Kosovo and many in Macedonia, who were ethnically Albanian, most were ethnic descendants of Slavs who had converted to Islam during the Ottoman period. Like the Muslims in Bulgaria, they were largely ignored by the Serb-dominated government until following World War II and Tito's attempt to hold together a country that had shown signs of disintegrating along ethnic lines in the years just prior to the war. Under Tito Yugoslavia was divided into a federation of six republics and two autonomous Serbian provinces. Each republic supposedly represented the state of an officially recognized "nation." The demographic majorities in the two autonomous Serbian provinces were ethnically non-Serbian (Kosovo's population was predominantly Albanian and Vojvodina possessed a mixed Hungarian, Slovak, and Romanian majority). Tito's system attempted to incorporate the Muslim populations by recognizing the rights of "nationalities" within all of the national republics for groups not belonging to the so-called nation, among whom a category of Muslims, primarily in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was listed at one time as "Undefined Yugoslavs." Although neither the Communists nor, it seems, Western specialists appeared to realize it, this organization officially re-created the traditional *millets* as far as Yugoslav Muslims were concerned, while simultaneously dealing with them in Western ethnic-national terms.

When Yugoslavia collapsed as a state in 1991, the splinter successor states spun off by its demise attempted to make nation-state reality of the Tito republic system. All of the newly independent ex-Yugoslav countries — Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina — as well as the new, Serb-dominated "Yugoslav" state, composed of Serbia (without autonomous regions, which had been absorbed directly into Serbia proper) and Montenegro, issued new state constitutions declaring their respective national programs. In every case except one, the strict precepts of the Western-style nation-state were proclaimed as the law of the land. Each defined the state in terms of its dominant ethnic nation, and each, though avowing legal equality for all within its borders, structured its governing authority in a way to guarantee that ethnic minorities — frequently referred to as "nationalities," à la the old Titoesque jargon — were

relegated to an inferior political and social position, thus enhancing the risk of inter-ethnic conflicts soon after independence was declared.

The single exception to the nation-state approach were proposed constitutions for ethnically and religiously mixed Bosnia-Herzegovina issued in 1992. While the state was declared sovereign within its borders, no single ethnic group — Croat or Serb — or single religious group — Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox — was proclaimed dominant. Attempts were made to reconcile the national and the *millet* approaches that these considerations raised to some compromise political-social organization for the country. The first considered dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina into a federation of seven to ten districts, each with a particular ethnic or religious majority in its population, governed by a presidency that was rotated among the Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. This same idea later emerged as the Vance-Owen peace initiative sponsored by the United Nations in a failed attempt to stop the bloodshed in the Bosnian war. It, like its original predecessor, failed because it was unworkable. It was unworkable because it mixed the proverbial apples and oranges — nation-state, territorial ethnic nationalism with *millet* religious, nonterritorial self-identity. The members of the three different cultures in Bosnia-Herzegovina — more accurately, three different civilizations — were so territorially intermixed that partition into enclaves truly representative of each would have fractured the country into hundreds of little parcels, making effective government impossible. In deliberations leading up to the original constitutional proposal, the delegates of the Serb population in Bosnia walked out because they refused to accept anything less than complete ethnic-national autonomy and more territory than the planned partition granted them.

When the original partition plan proved unacceptable, the Muslim party, headed by Alija Izetbegović, put forth a new proposed constitution that sprang directly from the Ottoman Islamic *millet* tradition. In it Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens were not recognized officially by ethnicity but by religious affiliation. All religions were considered equal under law. The central government was to be elected democratically on a proportional basis relative to the strength of the three main religions. The Croats, with the least numbers in the total population, reluctantly agreed to cooperate with the Izetbegović Islamic approach, if only because it dampened the Serb ultra-nationalist claims. If the Croats, who had little experience of Ottoman rule, were grudging in their response to the Muslim constitution, the Orthodox Serbs, with their inflamed and long-standing anti-Turk national mythology, were positively enraged. Claiming that the Bosnia-Herzegovinian government was “fundamentalist” and attempting to reinstate Islamic dominance over the Christians, and encouraged by the

nationalist Milošević Serb government, the Serb nationalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina immediately took up arms and precipitated the Bosnian war.

The *millet* traditions of the Bosnia-Herzegovinian, predominantly Muslim, government made it difficult for it to accept the various peace proposals made by Western and United Nations mediators. Not once during the excruciating process of innumerable agreed-upon but broken cease-fires and so-called peace negotiations did the European and American diplomats involved give serious consideration to the Izetbegović plan, which was more attuned to the human realities of Bosnia-Herzegovina than were Western state concepts. Its lack of a nation-state mentality was too foreign — too Islamic — for them to have perceived its possibilities. Despite its public display of sympathy for the sufferings of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the West tolerated the atrocities committed in the name of conquering “national” territories by Serbs and Croats, and of self-defense by Muslims, all the while wringing its hands over the difficulties in finding a Western-style nation-state solution to a problem that could never be solved conclusively by that method. Perhaps the West’s open concern for the Bosnia-Herzegovinian Muslims was a diplomatic ploy to retain some sort of credibility in the general Islamic world, while its historical inner cultural antagonism toward Islamic civilization would not permit it to effectively help the Muslims fend off the Serb and, later, Croat nationalist onslaughts. Be that as it may, with no concrete military or diplomatic support from the West, the Izetbegović government was forced to consider a new, less complicated tripartition plan advanced by the Serbs and Croats and embraced by the Western powers, resulting in even further bloodshed as the Muslims’ former Croat allies turned on them to secure as much territory as possible for themselves.

The various Christian nationalities of the Balkans are dangerously befuddled when dealing with Muslim populations in their midst because of the nebulous merging of the two concepts of nation and *millet*. They persist on treating Muslims as a distinct group apart, no matter their ethnic character (the *millet* approach), while projecting on them a sort of national character as the traditional enemy of Balkan Christian nations — the Turks. The Balkan Muslims, in their turn, being a mixed bag in ethnic composition and surrounded by highly nationalistic and hostile neighbors, have been forced to adapt a certain amount of the Western nationalist program to their essentially *millet* character. Many Western analysts see this as a growing “Muslim nationalism” (historically, a contradiction in terms!). Given the chance by their nationalist Christian neighbors, Bosnian or Albanian Muslims would probably choose to emulate the Turks of Turkey, who managed to merge Western nationalist

concepts with their Islamic traditions, although the merger was (and remains) disruptive and far from stable. But the Turks were fortunate enough to have succeeded in expelling most of the non-Turks from their territories right at the beginning (1921-23). They did not have to face the problem of dealing with significant numbers of ethnic-national minorities enjoying potent national support from relatives just across their borders, as do both the Albanian and Bosnian Muslims today. The Bosnian Muslims have given the world a preview of how a modern Muslim state in Europe might deal with its multicultural population — an updated version of the traditional Islamic institution of toleration, the *millet*. The Serbs have demonstrated how the post-Communist, nationalist Balkan Christian world would react. Their perception of the new Balkan political reality is a near-carbon copy of the old nineteenth-century view, summarized in the words of a Bosnian Serb *černik* officer in a television interview given on the front lines somewhere near Srebrenica: "The *Turks* are just over that hill. I am fighting to drive the *Turks* out of my village, out of my land. I am fighting for my Orthodox faith. I am fighting because I am a Serb and this land is mine." (He was, in fact, fighting brother ethnic Serbs whose faith was Islam and whose ancestors had lived in that region for as long as his own.)

No analyst could create a more telling expression of the cultural conflict that permeates today's Southeast European political conditions.

Select Suggested Readings

- Anchor, Robert, *The Enlightenment Tradition*, New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- Andrić, Ivo, *The Bridge on the Drina*, trans. Lovett F. Edwards, New York: Signet, 1967.
- Armitage, Angus, *The World of Copernicus*, New York: Signet Science Library, 1963.
- Babinger, Franz, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Berg, Maxine, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Bishai, Wilson B., *Islamic History of the Middle East: Backgrounds, Development, and Fall of the Arab Empire*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1968.
- Burke, James, *The Day the Universe Changed*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1985.
- Chartier, Roger, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Doyle, William, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Fromkin, David, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, New York: Avon Books, 1989.
- Gagliardo, John G., *Enlightened Despotism*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967.
- Holtman, Robert B., *The Napoleonic Revolution*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1967.
- Itzkowitz, Norman, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980.
- Jensen, De Lamar, *Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution*, Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1992.
- Jelavich, Barbara, *History of the Balkans*, 2 vol., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

- Jelavich, Charles, and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977.
- Kaplan, Robert, *Balkan Ghosts*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Kennedy, Hugh, *The Prophet and the Ages of the Caliphates*, White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing, 1986.
- Kinross, [John P.D.B.], Lord, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*, New York: Morrow Quill, 1977.
- Lewis, Bernard, *Islam and the West*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Lybyer, Albert H., *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913.
- Manuel, Frank E., *The Age of Reason*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968.
- May, Arthur, *The Age of Metternich, 1814-1848*, New York: Henry Holt, 1933.
- Middleton, W.E. Knowles, *The Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1963.
- Murray, William S., *The Making of the Balkan States*, New York: AMS, 1967.
- Perry, Glenn E., *The Middle East: Fourteen Islamic Centuries*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., *The Emergence of Romanticism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Rodinson, Maxime, *Mohammed*, trans. Anne Carter, New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.
- Seton-Watson, R.W., *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, New York: H. Fertig, 1966.
- Shaw, Stanford J., *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vol., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Stavrianos, L.S., *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1958.
- Stoianovich, Traian, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.
- Strayer, Joseph R., *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Sugar, Peter F., *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977.
- Vucinich, Wayne S., *The Ottoman Empire: Its Record and Legacy*, Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger, 1979.
- West, Rebecca, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin, 1982.

Concerning the Lecture

The premise of the Final Word Lecture is that the lecturer has only six months to live and would like to sum up a career of teaching and scholarship for colleagues, students, and friends. While the selected professor is, in fact, healthy, the hypothesized death adds urgency and focus to the lecture. The idea is borrowed from the University of Michigan's "Last Lecture."

The Final Word Lecture is given on the evening of Wilkes University's Faculty Recognition Day, at which faculty are lauded for their achievements as teachers and scholars. A number of awards, including the Carpenter Award for teaching, are announced at this annual event.

The Final Word lecturer is chosen by a committee of Wilkes professors and receives a \$1,000 award through the generosity of an anonymous donor. At a subsequent time, and at the donor's discretion, the title of the award and lecture series will be changed to include the donor's name.

James L. Merryman received the first Final Word Lecture award in 1993.

