*In the 20th and 21st Centuries, the people have got power to destabilize this well worn system of governance by deciding the fate of themselves through terrorism, a new tactic in warfare, and we at the dawn of this century witness this tug of war between 'ordinary' people's armies pricking the sides of huge armies, and defeating and bankrupting nations in front of our eyes. Great empires have crumbled as they were busy fighting for territories which they gained by war, and now we see people reclaiming their ancestral abodes by force. I wish to place the story of the Ottoman Empire and its rise and fall, so that you can envisage the outcome of all present day conflicts and how when irresponsible leaders of nations have grenades in their hands, they are like bullying kids in a backyard school. These bullies are so illiterate that they have not studied their own history, nor the history of the people where they are going to meddle. - my conclusion. Read my reasons.*

http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=3142&HistoryID=ab37

## Fall of Constantinople: AD 1453

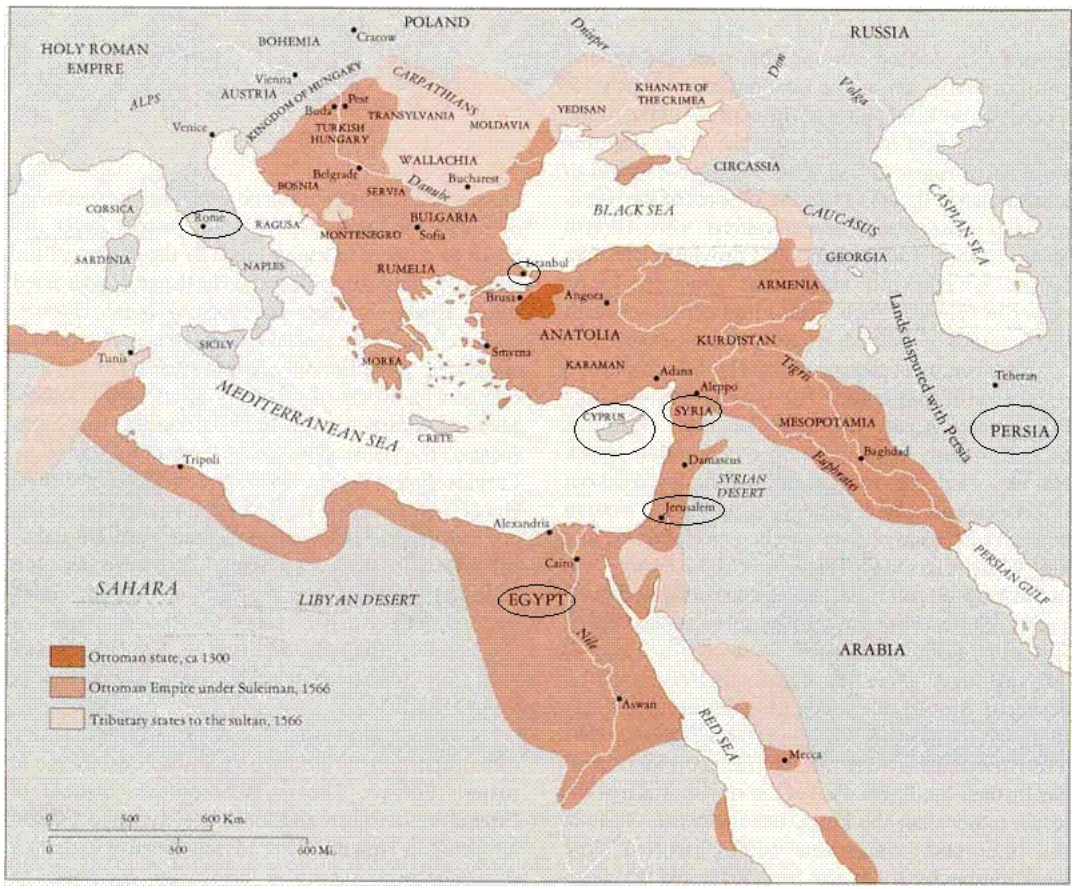
The inhabitants, of Constantinople, the city that was founded by Emperor Constantine, who ushered in Christianity into the Roman Empire, as often before, place their faith in their immensely strong city walls. Only on the harbor side are these walls vulnerable, and the harbor (the long creek known as the Golden Horn) is protected by a great chain preventing enemy ships from entering. But the young sultan Mehmed, has an answer to that. The great Eastern Roman Empire is on the brink of destruction a strong reminder for those who build their castles in the air.` For nearly a century, the mismanagement of the Government leads to its downfall.

At dawn, one Sunday morning in May, the defenders on the walls are surprised to see Muslim ships in the harbor. During the night they have been dragged on wheeled carriages, on a temporary wooden roadway, over a 200-foot hill. Over the next few days cannon are moved into place, including one 19-ton bombard. At sunset on May 28 the attack begins. Every bell in the city rings the alarm. Santa Sophia is full of people praying and singing Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy).

By dawn the Turks are in the city. The last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, has died in the fighting.

Mehmed, the sultan, goes straight to Santa Sophia to hear a proclamation from the pulpit - that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet. The great church, for many centuries the most magnificent in Christendom, now begins its career as a mosque. And Constantinople gradually acquires a new name; the urban area, widely referred to in everyday Greek as *eis tin polin* (in the city), becomes Istanbul.

In an honorable Muslim tradition, he plans a multicultural and tolerant city. The population is much reduced, after decades of fear and uncertainty, so Mehmed brings Greeks from the Aegean (soon another part of his domain) to revive the place. The Greek Orthodox patriarch is left in charge of his flock. And when the Jews in Spain are expelled, in 1492, many of them come to Istanbul where it is official policy to welcome them.




## Ottoman expansion: 16th century AD

Throughout the 16th century, from Budapest and Vienna in the west to Tabriz (Georgia) and Isfahan (Persia) in the east, the political situation depends largely on which of Turkey's neighbors is best resisting the expansionist tendencies of the Ottoman empire.

During the reign of Bayazid II, son of Mehmed II, the Turkish thrust is mainly to the west. Herzegovina is occupied in 1483 (joining Bosnia, taken by Mehmed twenty years earlier). The Venetians are driven out of Albania in 1501.

During the reign of Bayazid's son, Selim I, the focus shifts to the east where Ismail I, founder of the new Safavid dynasty in Persia, is becoming a threat. After defeating the Persians in 1514, Selim embarks on a bold undertaking. He invades the extensive territories of the **Egyptian Mamelukes** .
By 1517 he has achieved a resounding victory, bringing Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Egypt under Ottoman control.

## The Ottoman empire and Napoleon: AD 1798-1799

During the 18th century Turkish involvement in European affairs is limited mainly to the immediate neighbors. There is a succession of wars with Russia and constant adjustment to the frontier with Austria in the Balkans. But in 1798 the Ottoman empire finds itself unavoidably caught up in Europe's great war of the time, when **Napoleon decides to invade Egypt** as an indirect method of harming British imperial interests.

## The Syrian campaign: AD 1799

Napoleon's Syrian campaign is the first unmitigated disaster in his career. It is a military failure and it provides another dire example of European brutality in Palestine, in the bleak tradition of the crusades. Marching north in February 1799, Napoleon is irritated by the resistance put up by ancient garrison towns along the coast. He is delayed first at El Arish, then at Gaza and again at Jaffa.

At Jaffa the 3000 defenders in the Ottoman garrison are promised by a French officer that their lives will be spared if they submit. But once inside the city, Napoleon orders them all to be executed.

To conserve ammunition, the instruction is given for the condemned to be either bayoneted or drowned. The gruesome scene, reminiscent of Mongol customs but also of Richard I' s atrocity at Acre in 1191, is one which even Napoleon's presentational skills later fail to justify. This event is rapidly followed by plague in the French army, and by the famous moment of flamboyant courage when Napoleon, to reassure his men, visits and touches the sick in the plague hospital at Jaffa.

Later in the campaign Napoleon wins several victories against the Turks, but Acre withstands a French siege of two months. By early June the French army is making a bedraggled and desperate retreat south through the Sinai desert.

When Napoleon gets back to Cairo in June, after four wasted months in Syria, he characteristically claims to be returning from a triumph. But he has now lost interest in this part of the world. He departs to seize his destiny in Paris, leaving behind a French army which is finally expelled from Egypt in 1801 by a combined Turkish and British force.

With the end of this three-year period of high foreign drama, Egypt returns to its traditional ways. The Mamelukes beys confidently resume their local tyrannies. But this time, finally, the sultan and his officials find the resolve to confront their unruly subordinates.

## Balkan adjustments: 17th - 18th century AD

During the 17th and 18th centuries there are frequent adjustments in the Balkan frontiers between the Turks and the neighboring Austrian empire to the west.

The extreme point of Turkish expansion is reached with the siege of Vienna in 1683. When Vienna is relieved, the Austrians regain the initiative - and gradually recover the whole of Hungary during the next four decades. Further east, in Serbia, the fluidity of the situation can be seen in the experience of Belgrade. The city is taken by the Austrians for three separate periods (1688-90, 1718-39, 1789-91) before being lost again each time to the Turks. Click for interactive version

It is also clear that another great neighboring power will soon be taking an active interest in the Balkans. Russia's push towards the Black Sea involves the two principalities lying north of the Danube, just outside the Balkans. These are Walachia and Moldavia, known together as the Danubian principalities.

The principalities, in part or in whole, are occupied by Russian armies on several occasions during the frequent wars between Russia and Turkey in the 18th century. Each time Turkish rule is subsequently restored. But soon, throughout the Balkans, there are signs of a new nationalist demand for independence. It is first seen in Serbia in 1804.

## Serbian independence: AD 1804-1878

The immediate cause of the Serb uprising in 1804 is the brutal rule of four janissaries, who in 1801 assassinate the Turkish governor of Belgrade and take power into their own hands. The Serbs find a leader of genius in Karageorge (a nickname meaning 'black George'), who first seizes and beheads the four janissaries. He then wins a succession of battles against regular Turkish armies before capturing Belgrade in December 1806. Serbia has liberated itself without outside help.

For seven years the Serbs run their own affairs. The state council introduces a constitution in 1808, with Karageorge as hereditary leader. Serbian schools are opened, including one which evolves into Belgrade university.

These achievements are possible partly because Turkey is distracted, from 1809, by yet another war with Russia. But peace is made in 1812, leaving Turkey free to focus attention on her own backyard. Three separate armies converge on Serbia. Belgrade is taken in October 1813. The Turkish soldiers are told that during a period of two weeks they may kill any Serb over fifteen years of age and enslave women and children. In a single day, in a hastily organized slave market in Belgrade, some 1800 Serbs are sold.

A second uprising begins in 1814. By 1815 it has a new leader, Milosh Obrenovich, soon to be styled 'supreme prince of the Serbian nation' (Karageorge has fled to exile in Austria).

Milosh, who like Karageorge is the son of a peasant, is more skilful than his predecessor in negotiating with the Turks. He is ruthless in the disposal of his rivals (even arranging for the assassination of Karageorge when he returns to Serbia in 1817). And he is helped by the fact that from 1821 the Turkish sultan is also coping with the Greek war of independence.

The result is that Milosh remains in control until, in 1830, he wins both Turkish and international recognition for an autonomous Serbia. The state is to remain within the Ottoman empire but will enjoy Russian protection.

For most of the next eighty years Serbia is ruled by Milosh's descendants. Serbians increasingly see themselves as leaders of the Yugoslavs ('southern Slavs'), an ambition which greatly alarms Austria - particularly after the revolutionary events of 1848, when the Slavs of Croatia try to win independence from Habsburg control.

The war fought by Serbia against Turkey in 1876-8 extends the national borders and results in full independence, acknowledged in the congress of Berlin. But it also represents a setback in the campaign to lead the southern Slavs, for the same war brings Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austrian control.

## Greek independence: AD 1821-1832

Early in the 19th century there are several schemes by Greek aristocrats to raise an insurrection for the liberation of Greece. Prominent in these plots are the Ypsilantis family, one of whom - Alexandros Ypsilantis - becomes in 1820 the leader of a group calling itself Philiki Etaireia (Friendly Band).

The Philiki Etaireia has been founded in 1814 by Greeks living in the Russian port of Odessa on the Black Sea. Like the contemporary Carbonari in Italy, their specific purpose is to rid their homeland of foreign oppressors. But these Greeks operate on a grander scale. They intend to march south through the Balkans with Russian support. Click for interactive version

In March 1821 Ypsilantis moves with a small force into Moldavia. His expedition fails when he is defeated by the Turks near Bucharest in June, but the attempt has provoked impromptu uprisings in several parts of Greece, beginning on or around March 25 (now Independence Day). The massacre of several thousand Muslims by Greek insurgents is followed by Turkish reprisals, including the hanging of the Greek patriarch in Constantinople.

These chaotic beginnings are typical of the warfare which follows over the next few years. Neither side can gain a lasting advantage. Turkish armies are baffled by guerrilla tactics in the mountainous regions of Greece.

The Greeks complicate their own task by local bouts of civil war, and from 1824 there is another threat. The Turkish sultan demands support from his viceroy in Egypt, Mohammed Ali, who sends his son Ibrahim Pasha with a fleet and army. During 1824 Ibrahim and the Egyptians subdue much of the Peloponnese. But they too, like the Turks, are unable to suppress entirely the Greek resistance.

Meanwhile the struggle is attracting wider attention. As a fight for liberty, by the distant descendants of Europe's first democrats, this is the most romantic of the independence movements now flaring up around the world. In 1823 Lord Byron arrives.

A large loan is raised for the Greek cause in London in 1823 and the new foreign minister, George Canning, adopts a pro-Greek policy. The eventual result is an alliance between Britain, Russia and France - and the arrival in Greek waters in 1827 of fleets of the three nations.

Their immediate purpose is merely to show a glimpse of the iron fist and to threaten an economic blockade. But in October, more by accident than design, they encounter the Egyptian and Turkish fleets at Navarino. In the resulting battle the Muslims lose sixty ships and some 8000 men, with very light allied casualties. It is the main turning point on the route to Greek independence.

The war drags on for another five years (the Turks hold Athens until 1832), during which time there are intense international negotiations as to the nature of an independent Greece.

It is eventually agreed, in the 1832 treaty of Constantinople, that Greece will include the Peloponnese, the mainland up to a line between