

Historical Context – Congress of Berlin (1878)

- Treaty shattered Greater Bulgaria from San Stefano; created autonomous Bulgaria & Eastern Rumelia
- Ottoman losses fueled nationalist aspirations among Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians
- Great Powers (Russia, Austria-Hungary, Britain, Germany) redrew map to balance influence
- Set stage for irredentism & ethnic tensions in multi-ethnic Ottoman Europe

Balkans after Congress of Berlin (1878) – shows reduced Bulgaria, Ottoman territories, Austria's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Rise of Nationalism & Young Turk Policies

- Ethnic groups sought unification (e.g., Serbs in Bosnia/Novi Pazar, Greeks in Macedonia/Crete)
- Young Turks (1908): Turkification → centralization, Turkish language/culture promotion
- Discrimination & atrocities (Armenian massacres, suppression of Greeks/Macedonians) → revenge motive
- Balkan states united despite rivalries against common Ottoman enemy

Bulgarian soldiers (Balkan League era) – historical group portrait of troops.



Formation of the Balkan League (1912)

- Secret treaties: Serbia-Bulgaria (Feb 1912), Greece-Bulgaria, Montenegro joins
- Goal: Expel Ottomans from Europe & divide territories
- Enabled by Ottoman weakness (Italian-Turkish War 1911) & Russian encouragement

Territorial aspirations of Balkan states pre-1912 – shows overlapping claims in Macedonia.



Causes of the Balkan Wars – Summary

- Ottoman decline & minority oppression under Young Turks
- Nationalist irredentism (Serbia: South Slav union; Greece: Megali Idea; Bulgaria: San Stefano borders)
- Atrocities & desire for revenge
- Great Power rivalries (Russia pro-Slav; Austria anti-Serb expansion; Germany/Austria alliance)
- Opportunity: Weakened Ottoman military

Battle scene from First Balkan War



The First Balkan War (Oct 1912 – May 1913)

- Oct 1912: Declaration of war by Balkan League
- Key victories: Kumanovo (Serbia), Kirk Kilisse/Lule Burgas (Bulgaria), Greek advance to Salonika
- Ottomans reduced to Constantinople environs + Adrianople/Janina/Scutari
- Dec 1912: Failed peace talks; war resumes March 1913

Treaty of London (May 30, 1913)

- **Main provisions:**
- Ottomans cede European territories west of Enos-Midia line (except Albania)
- Crete to Balkan League; Aegean islands & Albania status to Great Powers
- No specific division among victors → seeds of Second War



Europe July 31, 1913 (post-Second War) – shows final territorial changes.



The Second Balkan War (June–August 1913)

- Bulgaria attacks Serbia (June 29, 1913) over Macedonia division
- Greece, Romania, Ottoman Empire join against Bulgaria
- Rapid defeats: Romania takes Southern Dobruja; Ottomans retake Adrianople
- Bulgaria surrenders after multi-front war

Treaty of Bucharest (August 10, 1913)

- Bulgaria loses Macedonia (mostly to Serbia/Greece), Southern Dobruja to Romania
- Gains small Aegean access (Dedeagach)
- Serbia dominant in Macedonia; Greece gains Salonika region
- Ottomans retain Adrianople & eastern Thrace

The Balkan peninsula, 1912-1913

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Results & Geopolitical Consequences

- Ottoman Europe largely eliminated → major power shift
- Serbia emerges strongest (gains Macedonia, blocks Austria to Adriatic)
- Bulgaria resentful → later allies with Central Powers in WWI
- Heightened Austria-Serbia rivalry → Sarajevo 1914 trigger
- Russia backs Serbia; Germany/Austria align → alliance blocs solidify

Ottoman/Balkan soldiers in trench (Catalca Lines, 1912–13)



The Balkan Wars as Prelude to WWI

- Created unstable borders & revanchism (esp. Bulgaria)
- Intensified Great Power proxy conflicts in Balkans
- Serbia's rise threatened Austria-Hungary → Franz Ferdinand assassination (1914)
- Shifted balance: Weakened Ottomans, strengthened Serbia/Russia axis

