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SYMPOSIUM ON THE "PROJECTS OF PARTITION OF THE WEST FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO LAUSANNE" BAŞKENT UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH 26-27 APRIL 2006

With the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the 19th century, the 'Eastern Question' became the most significant agenda item in European diplomacy; and each European state tried to take a role in determining the future of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the issue of 'who takes which part of the Empire' turned out to be a significant matter of contention; on the other hand ethnic groups living in the Empire were supported in their separatist quests. Those disintegrative movements were started in the Balkans and later spread to the other parts of the Empire.

In a symposium organized by the Başkent University Center for Strategic Research, the role and policies of Western European states regarding the disintegration of the Empire were analyzed and new archival studies of historians were unfolded. What is more, new archival documents on the Armenian question were presented and the perceptions of European states regarding Armenian question as well as contemporary resolution attempts of this question were analysed. The legal formula presented by Retired Ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ attracted attention due to its novel approach to the Armenian question.

Another subject that had been emphasized during the symposium was the policies of Greece and the Greeks and its evolution throughout history. Within this context, the policies of Western states towards Athens and its reflections on Turkey were analyzed.

The symposium, which brought together both domestic and foreign historians, provided reevaluation of the events of that period in the light of new evidence with special reference on the Armenian question.

Below, the reader is provided with the concluding evaluation of the symposium prepared by the Center for Strategic Research:

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“In the symposium titled as “The Projects of Partition of the West from the Ottoman Empire to Lausanne”, which has been organized by Baskent University Center for Strategic Research in 26-27 April 2006, some contemporary conclusions and duties were stipulated.

The aim of the symposium was to evaluate the partition projects of the West designated during the interregnum and retreat periods, which had started after the defeat of Vienna in 1683, following the foundation and rising periods of the Empire. Contemporary ramifications of these projects as well as the contemporary Western plans carrying the same aims were among the subjects analyzed by the participants.

The common emphasis of the speeches was that the Western policies, strategies and methods targeting the Ottoman Empire were one of the most significant examples of world history. The speakers presented offered making some studies for enlightening all suffered nations about the possible plans of the imperialist states as well as for coming together in order to prevent such initiatives. Accordingly, it was emphasized that these studies will prevent the repetition of history and contribute to the common targets of universal values.

The concluding evaluation of the symposium reflected contemporary situation and necessary precautions with these words: “Even if the problem was seen solely as Kurdish, Armenian or Aegean problems, indeed, the foundations of these problems rested upon the old target of partitioning Anatolia and making Turkey dependent on the West economically. In reality, this is a question of demolishing and Western partition projects still continue around the same target of demolishing. The only way to face this threat was cooperation, a strong coordination, struggle and consolidation of Turkish identity. Although Cooperation was tried to be provided by establishment of some organizations, meetings and conferences; however, coordination has not been strongly established and a consensus has not been achieved yet.

The duties of universities start at this point. Determining contemporary issues and bringing them to the agenda; discussing these issues; enlightening the society; providing coordination that has not been achieved should be the targets of the universities. Baskent University has achieved this target both in terms of timing and subject matter. It put forward the issues that should be considered by bringing the threats and problems from past to present. The most significant issue is that the Western partition projects still continue.”