



The Balkan Wars

Ottoman Perspectives

Edited by
Ercan Karakoç and Ali Serdar Mete



PETER LANG

Described as the “sick man of Europe” by the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century was in terminal decline. The newly independent Balkan states—Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria—each had significant ethnic populations who had remained under Ottoman rule. Under the guidance of Russia, which had its own interests in south-east Europe, they joined forces against the Ottomans, under the name of the Balkan League, in 1912.

In the first phase of the Balkan Wars, Bulgarian, Greek, Montenegrin and Serbian armies fought together against the Ottoman Empire, dealing the Ottomans a heavy defeat in a result that made headlines around the world. In the second phase, the Balkan states fought each other, and Romania also entered the war. In the conflict’s aftermath, new borders failed to satisfy any of the belligerent parties. Interventions by the Great Powers further increased tensions in the region. As the ultimate result, the first bullet that triggered the First World War was fired in Sarajevo in June 1914.

The causes and effects of the Balkan Wars have remained controversial despite the passage of time. In this volume, writers from various Balkan nations and from across various disciplines have come together under the aegis of the Balkan History Association to address little-known and little-studied aspects of the wars. Collectively they analyze a huge range of political, historical, medical, sociological and religious aspects of the conflict. The book, with its ground-breaking content and unique bibliographies, will be an important guide for undergraduate and graduate students studying the political, military and social history of the Balkan Wars and the Balkan nations.

“The Balkan Wars of 1912/13 were a disaster for the Ottoman Empire, a triumph for the Balkan governments, and a tragedy for the population of the belligerent states. This well structured collection brings together contributors from various backgrounds. Together they help to understand overarching issues far beyond the military event, and especially the still underresearched Ottoman perspective.”

—Katrin Boeckh, LMU Munich/IOS Regensburg

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The Balkan Wars

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Explanation: The peace treaty concluded between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan League States was signed by representatives of five countries in the Portraits Hall of Saint-James Palace in London on 30 May 1913.

Source: *Balkan Wars in Ottoman Documents I*, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, İstanbul 2013, p. 91.

Diplomacy behind the Curtain: Making the Balkan League

BILJANA STOJIC*

PRELUDE: PATHWAY TOWARD THE LEAGUE

When it comes to the main cause that led Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro to set aside their disagreements and discuss the formation of the Balkan League, contemporaries and modern historians mostly point to the same answer—the Annexation Crisis.¹ Count Leopold von Berthold, the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, said just before the outbreak of the First Balkan War: “We are deceiving ourselves if we do not admit the truth that the way we annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first and crucial impulse for

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1 For more details about the Annexation Crisis consult: Alan Dž. P. Tejlor, *Habzburška monarhija 1809–1918. Istorija Austrijske carevine i Austrougarske*, trans. Mirjana Nikolajević (Beograd: Clio, 2001), 242–253; R. Kuzmanović, D. Mirjanić, R. Mihaljčić, M. Ekmečić, Z. Popović, and N. Popović, *Stogodišnjica aneksije Bosne i Hercegovine* (Banja Luka: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Republike Srpske, 2009); Momtchilo Nintchitch, *La crise bosniaque (1908–1909) et les puissances européennes*, I–II (Paris: Alfred Costes, 1937); David W. Sweet, “The Bosnian Crisis,” in *Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. Francis H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 178–193; Barbara Jelavich, *Russia’s Balkan Entanglements 1806–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 197–248; Andrej Mitrović, *Prodor na Balkan: Srbija u planovima Austro-Ugarske i Nemačke 1908–1918* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2011), 20–62.

creating the Balkan League.”² A similar opinion was offered by Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to Great Britain and one of the leading delegates at the London Conference, who noted that “the Annexation Crisis was the main cause for the War in 1912 because it fundamentally disrupted the balance of power in the Balkans and created deep distrust between Austria and Russia.” Cambon concluded that “because those two, the powers most involved in Balkan issues out of all the other Great Powers, were hobbled from working conjointly through the crisis in 1912–1913.”³

As the sides most harmed in the Annexation Crisis, Serbia and Russia learned much from that painful experience. Russia promptly concluded that France could not be its only ally in foreign affairs. Friendly contract with Great Britain was limited, and therefore Russia realized that it urgently needed additional trustees and allies. Alexandar P. Izvolsky, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the most significant loser in the Annexation Crisis according to his contemporaries, was the first to understand that Russia must rebuild trust among the Balkan Slavs. He was the first to realize that the best way to turn the course of events in Russia’s favor was by encouraging the Balkan Slavs to unite in a single alliance under Russian patronage. If the plan were to succeed, Russia would have proxies in the Balkan states and the opportunity to guide them to act in its favor. At the same time, by acting through proxies Russia would avoid openly confronting the opposing powers as had been the case in 1908–1909.⁴ To set this course of events in motion, one of Izvolsky’s last decisions as acting minister was to appoint Nicholas Genrikhovich Hartwig as the Russian ambassador to Serbia.⁵ Within diplomatic circles, Hartwig was well known for his proactive diplomacy and quick temper. In 1906, he was Izvolsky’s main competitor for the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs. When nominated, Izvolsky punished his rival by sending him to Teheran’s embassy where he spent a year. After becoming involved in a huge scandal with the British ambassador, Hartwig was recalled to Moscow.

2 Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *Balkan posle 1453. godine* (Beograd: Equilibrium, 2005), 506–507; Vincent Duclert, *La République imaginée 1870–1914* (Paris: Berlin 2010), 516.

3 Archives des Ministère des affaires étrangères Paris (onward AMAE), Nouvelle série 1896–1914 (NS), su-série Turquie, doss. 244, № 133–144, Londres, le 13 novembre 1912.

4 Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914. European Relations from the Congress of Berlin to the Eve of Sarajevo Murder*, vol. I, trans. Isabella M. Massey and Luciano Magrini (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 364–365.

5 Djordje Djurić, “Nikola Hartvig–Portret ruskog diplomate u Srbiji 1909–1914.” In *Prvi svetski rat i balkanski čvor*, ed. Momčilo Pavlović (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Moskva: Fond “Ruski svet”; Beograd: Fakultet bezbednosti; Banjaluka: Filozofski fakultet, 2014), 267–276; Dj. Djurić, “Ruski poslanik u Srbiji Nikolaj Hartvig i balkanski ratovi,” in *Prvi balkanski rat 1912/1913: istorijski procesi i problemi u svetlosti stogodišnjeg iskustva*, ed. Mihailo Vojvodić (Beograd: SANU, 2015), 203–212.

Leon Descos (1907–1914), the French ambassador to Serbia in the same period, described Hartwig as “intelligent, energetic but ruthless,” adding that he revealed most of those “qualities” during the Balkan Wars.⁶ The Ottoman second secretary in Belgrade’s Embassy, Hrant Noradounghian [Noradunkyan], held similar opinions about Hartwig. He called him “cunning” and believed Hartwig to be the main cause for the rise of Serbian hostility toward the Ottoman Empire.⁷ In many ways, Izvolsky and Hartwig were alike. Izvolsky predicted that Hartwig would act on his own in Belgrade and would easily win the trust of Serbian politicians. It was not without reason that Sergey Sazonov called Belgrade “the most scheming city in the world” and Hartwig “the biggest schemer.”⁸

At best, Hartwig could be called the second biggest schemer. The first was, without question, Izvolsky, who left for Paris in 1910. The position of ambassador to France was a dignified new placement for the former minister.⁹ At the head of the Ministry, Izvolsky was replaced by his long-time assistant Sergey Sazonov. Sazonov was nothing like his former superior, with his “rousing temper.” He acted more cautiously and tactically than Izvolsky. He was aware of previous mistakes and therefore was determined to change Russian foreign policy significantly. When he took office, he accepted Izvolsky’s idea of restoring Russia’s Balkan policy. In 1911, he appointed Anatoly Neklyudov ambassador to Bulgaria. Hartwig and Neklyudov promptly became key figures in the process of rapprochement between the two states and contributed significantly to the conclusion of the Serbian–Bulgarian treaty, which served as the foundation of the Balkan League. With the nomination of those two willful diplomats, Sazonov chose to let them determine Russian policy on the ground while he and the Ministry stood back and coordinated from the second plan.¹⁰ This attitude proved successful in the process of the formation of the Balkan League, but when events later became unpredictable, Russian diplomacy was often described as a “coachman who lost his reins.”¹¹

6 Državni arhiv Srbije (onward DAS), Ministarstvo inostranih dela (onward MID)–Presburo (1903–1918), fas. 5, januar–jun 1912, pregled štampe za 23. mart/5. april 1912.

7 Hrant Noradounghian, *Vers la Guerre balkanique; et Vers la Première guerre mondiale* (İstanbul: La Turquie moderne, 1950), 26.

8 Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914) (onward DDF), 3e série (1911–1914), t. X (17 mars–23 juillet 1914), (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1936), № 511, Belgrade, le 14 juillet 1914 734, 735.

9 Biljana Stojić, *Francuska i balkanski ratovi (1912–1913)* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2017), 72.

10 Sergey Dmitrievich Sazonov, *Les années fatales. Souvenirs des Ancien Ministre des Affaires étrangères de Russie (1910–1916)* (Paris: Payot, 1927), 58, 59.

11 DAS, Ministarstvo inostranih dela–Političko odeljenje (onward MID–PO), microfilm № 367, № 2136, Berlin, 25. septembar/8. oktobar 1912.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Hartwig's and Neklyudov's encouragement would have proved insignificant if they had not found like-minded collaborators in Serbia and Bulgaria. One of the main animators of the Balkan League, the Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs Milovan Milovanović, found in Hartwig everything he had hoped for since the Annexation Crisis. Like Izvolsky, Milovanović experienced its events as a personal defeat and humiliation. He had invested significant energy to secure adequate compensation for Serbia, but the great powers remained indifferent to all his requests. From the beginning, Hartwig became his most trusted advisor and supporter in his most daring strategies.¹² After Annexation he understood that Serbia alone did not have much of a chance against Austria-Hungary or any other Great Power. Throughout the crisis, he learned that he must "tie up the small Serbian boat to a mighty Entente ship."¹³ Tying Serbia to the Entente was one part of Milovanović's plan, while the second was to bring together those Balkan states that shared interests and had the will to overcome mutual disagreements. Milovanović strongly believed that only by uniting could the small Balkan states cope with the interests of the Great Powers in the Balkan Peninsula. According to Milovanović's plan, the main basis for the future Balkan alliance must be an "alliance of solidarity" between Serbia and Bulgaria as the two most significant countries. Within Serbian political circles, Milovanović's plan was interpreted as "too daring" since the two countries had already failed at two alliances (1897 and 1904); thus many prominent policymakers doubted the success of the new initiative. Despite a lack of support from his closest collaborators, Hartwig's support proved compensatory. The Russian ambassador was influential at the Russian Court and in Slavophile circles and, more importantly, Hartwig gave himself all rights to do whatever he pleased. As a result, under Hartwig's leadership Russian policy in Serbia straddled the line between official and private diplomacy. Highly pragmatic, in Milovanović's idea Hartwig saw great potential that stretched far beyond the Balkan Peninsula. A Balkan alliance could help to re-establish Russian prestige in the Balkans. He thus stood by Milovanović's side from the beginning and without hesitation. Hartwig continued to be the Balkan League's most

12 Soon after the pronouncement of the annexation, Milovanović went on a trip visiting European capitals, trying to convince them to grant Serbia territorial compensation in Sanjak Novi Bazar. From the mission, he only got reassurance that powers will take Serbia's interests into consideration, but the outcome of the crisis was such that Belgrade acknowledged it as a *fait accompli* of what was done in the Declaration issued on 31 March 1909 (Slobodan Jovanović, "Milovan Milovanović (4)," *Srpski književni glasnik* 51, sveska 5 (1937), 337–348.)

13 Savo Skoko, *Vojvoda Radomir Putnik*, vol. II (Beograd: Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod, 1984), 18.

important supporter, even after Milovanović sudden death in June 1912.¹⁴ During the war, Hartwig easily won the trust of Nikola Pašić, the new minister who took office in September 1912 and became his spokesman and advisor.¹⁵

The Russian ambassador to Sofia Anatoly Neklyudov followed a similar path, slowly establishing, little by little, a similar level of trust with Bulgarian politicians. King Ferdinand I and the government of Ivan Geshov (in power since March 1911) found in Neklyudov a trustworthy ally for their plans and ambitions. The special bond with the Russian diplomat did not go unnoticed by other ambassadors in Sofia. The French Ambassador Hector-André de Panafieu (in the post since February 1912) reported to the Quai d'Orsay that the King and government followed Neklyudov's guidance without questioning whether he was advising them on his own or by instruction of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Panafieu emphasized: "True, that blind faith in Neklyudov led them toward the alliance with Serbia and magnificent victories in the First Balkan War, but also misguided them into the catastrophic defeat in the Second."¹⁶

THREAT FROM THE NORTH

The support of influential diplomats was just one precondition in the complex process behind the creation of the Balkan League. Securing the final alliance required numerous external and internal factors. Among the most important was the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government, whose own moves were impossible to anticipate. It was Austrian enmity that was the main reason for the unsuccessful attempt to form a customs union between Serbia and Bulgaria. Vienna pressured Serbia to exit the union by threatening to cancel their commercial agreement. Serbia withdrew and the union never came into force. Despite Serbia's withdrawal, Austria did not re-sign a new commercial agreement and, in 1906, the Austro-Serbian Customs War, commonly known as the "Pig War," began, lasting until 1911.¹⁷ This "war" marked the main turning point that led

14 Dimitrije Djordjević, *Milovan Milovanović* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1962), 143.

15 Many authors, among them Edward J. Erickson, claim that Nikola Pašić was the main party responsible for the creation of the Balkan League aiming "to create a Greater Serbia and uniting all southern Slavs", Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans 1912–1913*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). In reality, Pašić inherited the idea of the Balkan alliance and took power from Milovanović only after his death. "Greater Serbia" must be distinguished from "the unification of southern Slavs," which both ideas opposed during World War I.

16 AMAE, NS, soussérie Bulgarie, doss. 9, № 150–152, Sofia, le 12 janvier 1914.

17 See more in: Dimitrije Djordjević, *Carinski rat Austro-Ugarske i Srbije 1906–1911* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1962).

Serbia to understand that no matter how hard it tried to please Austria-Hungary, it would never be sufficient and hostilities would endure. The Annexation Crisis erupted in the middle of the “Pig War” and strengthened the belief in Serbian political circles that instead of pleasing its northern neighbor, Serbia sever every remaining tie with Austria.¹⁸ The main figure in the Annexation Crisis, Count Aehrenthal, died in February 1912, and while his death was mourned all over Europe, in Serbia the news came as a relief. News of Aehrenthal’s death served to boost Serbia’s rapprochement with Bulgaria.¹⁹ In a later retrospective of Austrian policy, Carlo Sforza noted that Count Aehrenthal was “the last loyal servant to Austria,” or in other words, the last capable politician to conduct an independent policy.²⁰ His successor was the former ambassador to Russia, Count Leopold Berthold, who was seen to be nothing like Aehrenthal. Many contemporaries saw Count Berthold as Germany’s choice as Germany wanted a brilliant handler, i.e., a “loyal minister without his own opinion.”²¹ With his reckless actions during the Balkan Wars, Count Berthold met those expectations.²²

Both Serbia and Bulgaria had learned that any agreement without the support of at least one of the Great Powers was doomed to fail. As such, the choice of the power-protector was of the greatest importance. Italy had served as the protector of the 1904 customs union but showed its inability to match its ally, Austria. After the Annexation Crisis, Russia emerged as the natural protector of Balkan Slavs. Russia was not only the guarantor but also situated itself as a mediator between the Slavic countries, offering to help make peace and resolve their conflicting interests and overlapping aspirations.²³ Of greatest importance was that the Tsar was deemed the chief arbiter in any disagreement among the allies.

With Russia on their side, Serbia and Bulgaria opened negotiations. In the early stage discussions were timid and imprecise and each side sounded out the other. Diplomatic instructions on both sides were vague and limited to only the most confidential people. Milovanović personally directed the entire process: he even

18 Biljana Stojić, “The International Dimension of a Local Problem: Serbian Goals versus Italian Aspirations in Albania (1912–1914),” in *War, Peace and Nation-Building (1853–1918)*, eds. Aleksandar Rastović and Andrea Carteny (Belgrade: The Institute of History; Rome: Sapienza University of Rome, 2020), 205–221.

19 Paul B. Miller, “From Annexation to Assassination. The Sarajevo Murders,” in *1908: l’annexion de la Bosnie-Herzégovine, cent ans après*, ed. Carherine Horel (Bruxelles: Peter Lang 2011).

20 Karlo Sforca, *Neimari savremene Evrope*, trans. Ilija Kecmanović (Beograd: Kosmos, 1932), 59–71.

21 Sforca, 59–71; Džon D. Tredvej, *Soko i orao: Crna Gora i Austro-Ugarska 1908–1914* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore; SANUS, 2005), 109.

22 Albertini, 383.

23 DAS, lični fond Milovana Milovanovića MM-33, “Istorič pregovora za zaključenje Srpsko-bugarskog ugovora od 29. februara 1912”, Beograd, 31. mart/13. april 1912.

wrote by hand all instructions and sent them to Sofia by special couriers who gave the documents into the hands of Ambassador Miroslav Spalajković.²⁴

THREAT FROM THE EAST

Despite all conspiracy, closer relations between the two previously antagonistic states did not pass unnoticed by the other parties to the conflict, especially the Ottoman Empire. Having been involved in the Balkans for five centuries, the Sublime Porte learned well the mentalities and hidden ambitions of the Balkan peoples. Animosity toward the Turks was one of the hallmarks of Serbia and the other Balkan societies. Nationalism was the engine that shaped the states for over a century, and a key feature of nationalism throughout the Balkans was its anti-Turkish feel.²⁵ Taking into consideration the long and complicated history of relations, the Turks suspected that the Bulgarian King Ferdinand's November 1909 visit to Serbia was not just a protocol meeting, as it was presented publicly.²⁶ It served to help restore disrupted relations caused by the Annexation Crisis. Serbia was disappointed when it learned that the Annexation Crisis, the Bulgarian proclamation of Prince Ferdinand as King of Bulgaria, and Greece's annexation of Crete were all synchronized events.²⁷ As the first moment of bitterness faded, Serbia accepted the proclamation and congratulated Bulgaria.

King Ferdinand visited Serbia on his return from Vienna. He expressed the desire to visit Kopaonik Mountain and remained firm in that request even though it was late October and the weather was not favorable for such a trip. To please the guest, Prime Minister Stojan Novaković delegated Ljuba Jovanović, Minister for Interior Affairs; Jovan Cvijić, a prominent geographer; Professor Sava Urošević, a lithologist; and Professor Nedeljko Košanin, a biologist; to accompany him on that journey. After the trip, Cvijić reported that the Kopaonik trip was by all means "insignificant," but many other Serbian and foreign politicians disagreed. Jovan Jovanović Pižon, the future Serbian ambassador to Vienna, concluded that

24 *Международные отношения в эпоху империализма* (onward MO). Документы из архивов царского и временного правительства 1878–1917. Серия вторая (1900–1913), (Москва–Ленинград: Гос. изд-во полит. лит., 1938–1940), Т. XX. части I (14 мая–13 августа 1912 г), № 137, Белград, 4 июня/22 мая 1912 г, 126–8.

25 Danilo Šarenac, "The Final Push against the Eternal Enemy: The Serbian Preparations for the First Balkan War," *International Journal of Political Science and Urban Studies (Uluslararası Siyaset Bilimi ve Kentsel Araştırmalar Dergisi)*, Cilt 7, Sayı 1 (Mart 2019): 57.

26 DDF, 3e série, t. I, № 47, *Thérapie*, le 7 novembre 1911, 50–2.

27 DAS, lični fond Jovana M. Žujovića, arh. jed. 56, l. 29, Kralj Ferdinand na Kopaoniku; arh. jed. 93, Dnevnik II (1908–1914), list 39.

this “special excursion” was an event of the highest significance in the history of the Balkan League.²⁸

Regardless the motives, that event set the negotiation process in motion. A Serbian delegation headed by King Peter I, Minister for Foreign Affairs Milovan Milovanović, and President of the Government Nikola Pašić visited Sofia in April 1910 on their return from an official visit to Constantinople. This visit was a Serbian initiative to smooth tense relations following the Annexation Crisis. In April, just a few days later, the Bulgarian King Ferdinand paid an official visit to Sultan Mehmed V. Visits by two Balkan sovereigns were considered at that time to constitute a solid base for future cordial relations between Turkey, Serbia, and Bulgaria. According to Hrant Noradounghian, no one suspected their cordiality would be *tellement éphémère*. Three months later in June, Prince Yusuf İzzeddin returned the visit to King Peter in Belgrade. It would prove the last friendly meeting before bilateral affairs deteriorated. In the final months of 1910, Hartwig, along with Spalajković and Andey Tocheff, the Bulgarian representative in Serbia, organized return visits for the Serbian and Bulgarian Sokol organizations. Despite such efforts, entente remained far from reality. Hrant Noradounghian classified these visits as the “first symptoms of certain rapprochement.”²⁹ Both occasions were public, and therefore Ottoman diplomats were aware of and suspected their real motives. Until the late summer of 1911, negotiations between Serbia and Bulgaria remained stagnant. The parties exchanged drafts and visits but nothing concrete was agreed.

The decisive moment for ongoing negotiations was sparked in the Mediterranean, not the Balkans. The Italo-Turkish war that commenced on September 29, 1911, accelerated the dialogue between Milovanović and Geshov. Despite the war being fought mostly in North Africa, the Ottomans feared their Christian subjects in the Balkans would join forces against them, a fear that was reinforced when the Sublime Porte learned that Italy openly sought to win Balkan states to its side. Italy invested the greatest effort to persuade Greece, but it remained in vain. Greece and the other Balkan states suspected that they would be misused and left without any reward. At least, that was what they had learned from previous experience. Refusal to serve as puppets only strengthened the pursuit of Balkan unification. The old agenda, “Balkans for Balkan people,” convinced them that unification would free them from the Turks and other external powers.

In response to the war, the Bulgarian government made the first move by dispatching Dimitar Hristov Rizov, the former ambassador to Serbia and a supporter of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, as a special delegate to conduct the

28 See note 25 above.

29 Noradounghian, 24–29.

final phase of negotiations with Milovanović.³⁰ Nikola Pašić and Ljubomir Stojanović also were part of the Serbian delegation. While Rizov and Pašić wanted to immediately settle the most difficult issue—spheres of influence in Macedonia—Milovanović, as the leading negotiator, insisted on leaving that delicate matter until the very end. Since July 1911, Milovanović had been the head of government and exercised the strongest influence on decision-making. The reason for Milovanović's delay was the disagreement with Pašić over Macedonia. While Pašić and most of the public believed that Macedonia was the “key point” in the entire Balkan Peninsula, Milovanović disagreed and was ready to dial back Serbia's claims to secure the long-lasting alliance and redirect Serbia's ambitions toward the Adriatic Sea. Milovanović strongly believed that only an outlet to the sea would enable Serbia to be utterly free from Austro-Hungarian political and economic pressure. Milovanović was aware that the price for this alliance was high, but, unlike Pašić, he anticipated a greater aim.³¹ On the other hand, Pašić opposed such foolishness, claiming that Macedonia “is the key of biggest influence” and those who hold that key control the entire region.³² Time would prove his words to be prescient.

The crucial meeting to negotiate the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance was held on the Belgrade–Lapovo train line with the highest confidentiality.³³ The final treaty was ratified on March 13, 1912, and, according to Milovanović, “it was the greatest day for Serbia and Bulgaria and for the entire Balkan peninsula.”³⁴ The treaty had two parts, one public and one secret, accompanied with a war convention. The public part summarized the compatibility of interests between the two countries, while the secret part was directed against the Ottoman Empire and, to a lesser extent, Austria-Hungary. The secret annex was revealed to the public on June 21, 1913, at Serbian insistence and published in *Le Temps*, the highly influential French newspaper commonly called the “seventh great power.”³⁵ The most questionable article in the secret agreement was the third article, which defined zones of influence in Macedonia. It split Macedonian territory into Serbian and Bulgarian zones, and for a small, unassigned territory it anticipated the arbitration of

30 Snežana A. Radoeva, “Doprinos Dimitra Rizova zajedničkoj akciji na Balkanu (1904–1913),” in *Balkanski ratovi 1912/1913: nova viđenja i tumačenja*, eds. Srđan Rudić and Miljan Milkić (Beograd: Istorijski institut; Institut za strategijska istraživanja, 2013), 17–30.

31 Djordjević, *Milovan Milovanović*, 164–166.

32 Milorad Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1973), 35.

33 Djordjević, *Milovan Milovanović*, 130.

34 DAS, MM-33; Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (onward ASANU), Zaostavština Nikole Pašića, №. 14924/56, Ugovor Srbije i Bugarske sa tajnim dodatkom.

35 M. B. Hayne, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War 1898–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45–46.

the Russian Tsar Nikolai II.³⁶ The war convention was signed on May 12 and was completed by two technical contracts concluded in July and September.³⁷

FORTIFICATION OF THE LEAGUE IN THE SHADOWS

The conclusion of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance formed the base for the formation of the wider Balkan League. The three further agreements were not as complex and were far easier to conclude. Parallel to negotiations between Serbian and Bulgarian politicians, their diplomats were also busy in talks with other potential allies: Montenegro, Greece, and Romania. Any official event was used as a pretext for discussion and an exchange of views. For such conspicuous diplomacy, the Bulgarian King Ferdinand appeared to be the most skilled, at least in the opinion of the British ambassador to Sofia Sir Henry Bax-Ironside. At the celebration of Prince Boris's coming of age in February 1912, King Ferdinand managed to persuade Greek Crown Prince Constantine to join the negotiations and to the forthcoming alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria.³⁸ As was the case in Serbia and Bulgaria, the main precondition for Greece to join the League was the new government headed by Eleftherios Venizelos, in power since October 1910.³⁹ Like his Serbian and Bulgarian counterparts, Venizelos was pro-Balkan and a Francophile. He believed the small Balkan states could only face up to the Great Power(s) if they set aside their differences and quarrels, and unified their strength in a mutual cause. Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria had just one cause in common—hostility toward the Ottoman Empire—and for a time this allowed for cooperation.

Serbia opened negotiations with Greece at the same time, but Athens and Sofia were able to find common ground more quickly. Following the same formula, negotiators kept discussions secret from foreigners and, most importantly, from the Turks. Despite the secrecy, the signs of rapprochements were apparent to the public. Governments exchanged several cordial letters, followed by the visit

36 ASANU, Zaostavština Nikole Pašića, № 14924/56; Vojni arhiv (onward VA), Popisnik 2, Ratne arhive Prvog i Drugog balkanskog rata 1912. i 1913. kutija 8, grupa dokumenata 4, № 24138.

37 DDF, 3e série, t. III, № 235, Sofia, le 1^{er} août 1912, 312; Ivan Evstratiev Guéchoff, *La genèse de la guerre mondiale. La débâcle de l'alliance balkanique*, (Berne: Librairie Académique Paul Haupt, 1919) 31–36; *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876–1996. Dvostrani i višestrani međunarodni ugovori i drugi diplomatski akti o državnim granicama, političkoj i vojnoj saradnji, verskim i etničkim manjinama (1876–1918)*, t. I, ed. Momir Stojković, (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ: Međunarodna politika, 1998.), № 108, 109, 114, 295–301, pp. 309–310.

38 Vasilij N. Štrandtman, *Balkanske uspomene*, trans. Jovan Kačaki (Beograd: Žagor, 2009), 113.

39 Nikolaos E. Papadakis, *Eleftherios Venizelos: Grčka, Balkan, Evropa* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2009), 57, 58.

of Bulgarian students to Athens and Bulgarian Major Samarzjiev to the Greek military warehouses. Such unusual actions led observers to conclude that Sofia and Athens were synchronizing their goals and interests. Already in April 1912, the French ambassador to Athens Gabriel-Pierre Deville carefully observed and reported to Paris that an alliance between Greece and Bulgaria was just “a matter of days.”⁴⁰

The pact between Bulgaria and Greece was officially signed on May 29.⁴¹ Because France was considered to be a friendly power, Greek politicians informed Ambassador Deville that the alliance only had a defensive character whose aim was to ensure both nations’ protection from the imperialist aspirations “of some greater power.”⁴² Deville’s interlocutor denied that the alliance contained clauses about the Ottoman Empire or “God forbid that Greece is planning war against the Turks.”⁴³ As a skilled diplomat, Deville was able to see past such fictions and informed the Quai d’Orsay to be extremely cautious. Following developments, Deville noted that “the main feature of dealings between the Balkan states in spring 1912 was a confusion of the main actors, especially on the Greek side.”⁴⁴ He distrusted the most the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Lambros Koromilas who was, in Deville’s judgment, a “narrow minded chauvinist.”⁴⁵ Contemporary Greek historiography demonstrates different opinions on the Balkan League and the negotiation process. Historian Hellen Gardikas-Katsiadakis claims that the Venizelos government was misinformed and purposely led toward the wrong conclusion. Furthermore, she argues that Ivan Geshov misinformed Dimitrios Panas, the Greek ambassador to Sofia who signed the treaty, about the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement. Allegedly, Geshov said that the treaty was just to reassure their national interests. According to Gardikas-Katsiadakis, this partial information led Panas to conclude incorrectly that the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement was merely defensive. She claims that if Panas and the Greek government had had complete information, it would have entered negotiations with Bulgaria and Serbia with an entirely different viewpoint and it was possible that eventually Greece would not have concluded any treaty.⁴⁶

40 DDF, 3e série, II, № 311, Sofia, le 9 avril 1912, 323.

41 Č. Popov, D. Djordjević, Dj. Mikić, K. Milutinović, V. Krestić, A. Radonić and M. Ekmečić, eds., *Istorija srpskog naroda: Od Berlinskog kongresa do ujedinjenja*, t. VI-1 (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1994), 187.

42 AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 242, № 272-277, Athènes, le 5 novembre 1912.

43 Ibid.

44 AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 230, № 266-273, Sofia, le 22 septembre 1912.

45 Ibid.

46 Helen Gardikas-Katsiadakis, “Greek-Serbian Relations 1912-1913: Communication Gap or Deliberate Policy,” *Balkan Studies*, 1 (2004): 23-38.

Parallel to the Greek-Bulgarian negotiations was a dialogue between Serbia and Greece, but they did not end in the signing of any binding agreement.⁴⁷ Lacking an official alliance, the two countries intended to compensate with a military convention. In September, the Serbian and Greek headquarters exchanged several drafts for future conventions and the Greek General Yoanis Metaksis arrived in Belgrade at the beginning of October to ratify the convention. However, at the last moment Venizelos recalled the general, arguing that as the war had already started it would be better to establish a direct line between the two headquarters.⁴⁸ For the most part, Greece and Serbia did not have many conflicting points to resolve. Their interests mostly overlapped in Macedonia, that “apple of disorder” as it was commonly called. The situation following the First Balkan War and the confrontation with Bulgaria brought Serbia and Greece onto the same side. Negotiations resulted in an official alliance treaty and military convention on June 1, 1913.

The fourth member of the Balkan League—Montenegro—was the last to conclude its alliance treaties. The main barrier to successful Serbian and Montenegrin negotiations was the complex long-running relations between the two dynasties. In 1912, relations between them could best be described as alienated, and they presented a significant obstacle to sincere discussion and long-lasting agreement. The paradox was that the Serbian Karadjordjević dynasty and the Montenegrin Petrović-Njegoš dynasty were kin as King Peter’s deceased wife, Zorka, was King Nikola’s daughter. The relations between son-in-law and father-in-law were difficult even before King Peter came to the Serbian throne in 1903. After the removal of the Obrenović dynasty, Nikola had ambitions to unite the two countries under his scepter because of his family ties to both dynasties. Instead, the Serbian crown was offered to his son-in-law Peter, creating a grudge between them. Russia was aware of these sensitive relations and took on the role of moderator between the two Slavic countries bound by blood. At the beginning of 1912, King Nikola visited St. Petersburg and during his stay was advised: “[F]or progress and prosperity Montenegro must find the way to overcome differences with the other Balkan states.”⁴⁹ Nikola was furious since he had not come to Russia for advice, but to gain Russian guarantees for the loan he intended to request from the French banks. Since 1893/4, when France and Russia concluded their alliance, Russia played the role of unofficial guarantor for all loans and investments French investors made in the Balkans, which the

47 Централен държавен архив (онward ЦДА), Министерство на външните работи и изповеданията (онward МВРИ), f. 176К, opis 2, а. е. 1373, л-286, Атина, 13 /26 юли 1913).

48 Gardikas-Katsiadakis, 23–38.

49 DDF, 3e série, II, № 154, Cettigné, le 4 mars 1912, 144–149.

French considered to be “politically unstable and economically immature.”⁵⁰ In most cases, Russian diplomats backed the Balkan states in their dealings with French investment bankers, but this time they rejected King Nikola with the simple message, “[S]top scheming against Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire and reconcile with Serbia.”⁵¹ The Montenegrin king returned from the visit discontent but eventually realized that he did not have much choice but to find middle ground with Serbia. The appropriate occasion for reconciliation was the already scheduled repatriation of Princess Zorka’s remains to Serbia. She had been buried in Cetinje in 1890 when the Karadjordjević family was still living in exile, but when he ascended the throne King Peter expressed the desire to inter his wife’s remains in the family crypt at Oplenac. King Nikola gave his consent and the two sovereigns scheduled the event for March 26, 1912. Initially, it was planned that King Peter would arrive in Cetinje and personally accompany the coffin to Serbia, but a minor stroke prevented him from traveling. King Nikola declared the stroke to be fake and a false excuse meant to disrespect him and his dynasty.⁵² Instead of peacemaking, this event created additional grudges and postponed negotiations until the late summer.

Because discussions with Serbia were off, Montenegro instead sought agreement with Bulgaria. During August and September diplomats exchanged several drafts identifying mutual interests and goals, but these consultations did not lead to an official agreement. As a result, the alliance between Montenegro and Bulgaria was a verbal pact that aimed to specify the beginning of the war, operational directions, the conditions for peace, and so on.⁵³ As with previous negotiations, these efforts were detected by Turkish diplomats. Even though both sides denied it, Montenegrin-Bulgarian rapprochement was clearly linked to Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.⁵⁴

Finally, negotiations between Serbia and Montenegro at last started in September. An exchange of drafts opened negotiations, but face-to-face talks were held in Lucerne, Switzerland in order to escape the Sublime Porte’s attention. The two sides concluded a treaty on September 27, while the military convention

50 Stanislav Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2008), 45–52.

51 AMAE, NS, su-série Monténégro, doss. 4, № 94–96 Cettigné, le 18 février; AMAE, NS, su-série Monténégro, doss. 4, № 100–101, Budapest, le 28 février; AMAE, NS, su-série Monténégro, doss. 4, № 109–111, Cettigné, le 5 mars 1912.

52 AMAE, NS, Monténégro, doss. 4, № 115–117, Cettigné, le 26 mars 1912; Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Kralj Petar I Karadjordjević u otadžbini*, t. 2 (Beograd: BIGZ, 1987), 419; Tredevej, 111.

53 *Balkanski ugovorni odnosi*, I, № 111, 301–305.

54 AMAE, NS, Monténégro, doss. 4, № 225, Cettigné, le 1er septembre 1912.

was signed on October 6. Official ratification of the documents was completed on November 4 after hostilities had already commenced.⁵⁵

Discussions between Montenegro and Greece were brief as the two nations stated that they did not have major conflicting interests to settle and expressed mutual respect and compliance with the goals already established with the other parties to the League. As such, the Serbo-Montenegrin treaty was the last alliance to be concluded and with it the Balkan League was ready to be put in motion.

ROMANIA: UN/WANTED ALLY

With the formation of the Balkan League, the so-called Balkan question—one part of the larger Eastern Question—first opened with the Serbian and Greek national awakenings in 1804 and 1821 and entered its final phase. For a long time, the idea of a single Balkan alliance was merely an illusion found in the 1860s plans of the Serbian Prince Mihailo Obrenović. Mihailo's Balkan League existed only on paper, and as soon as the cohesive figure disappeared from the scene, the Alliance fell apart as if it never existed. Unlike Mihailo's union, the Balkan League would survive the death of its main creator, Milovan Milovanović. Despite their differences, both alliances shared the idea that Romania was key as it would serve “as a counterbalance in Serbia and Bulgaria's play.”⁵⁶ Milovanović strongly believed in the idea, and he thus invested extensive effort to bring Romania into the alliance and re-create Mihailo's agenda. While Milovanović was proactive, Geshov disagreed with the idea, claiming that “Romania, from 1910, is bound in some secret military agreement with the Ottoman Empire meaning that it is obliged to stand with the Turkish army in case of war.”⁵⁷

In 1897, Milovanović married Maria, the granddaughter of the Serbian politician Jovan Marinović and the daughter of Dimitri, a prominent power broker from Bucharest. The Romanian family afforded him extensive connections in Romanian society.⁵⁸ Before the Serbian public he personally vouched for Romania, arguing it would be more sympathetic toward the Balkans rather than the

55 Živko G. Pavlović, *Opsada Skadra 1912–1913: (prilog istoriji Prvog balkanskog rata)* (Beograd: Štamparija Save Radenkovića i Brata, 1926), 29–35; *Prvi balkanski rat 1912–1913 (operacije srpske vojske)*, t. I, eds., B. Perović, M. Lah, A. Djonlagić, B. Gledović, M. Djurišić, B. Ratković, B. Davidović, and S. Katić (Beograd: Istorijski institut Jugoslovenske narodne armije, 1959), 127–128; Miloš Jagodić, *Novi krajevi Srbije (1912–1915)* (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, 2013), 16–17; Savić Marković Štedimlija, “Rusija i Balkanski savez 1912.” *Analiti* no. 2 (February 1937): 39–48.

56 DAS, lični fond M. Milovanovića, MM-14, Beograd, 14/27. September 1910.

57 Ibid.

58 Djordjević, *Milovan Milovanović*, 52.

Ottoman Empire or, for that matter, Austria's imperial claims. Despite his confidence, it is hard to believe that Milovanović was unaware that the Romanian port of Constanța was the main Black Sea port for all shipping to the Ottoman Empire, including ammunition supplies. Certainly, the Sublime Porte wielded all its power to prevent Romania from joining the League. The Great Power, especially France and Austria-Hungary, also invested much energy in keeping Romania out of the war with its generous promises of territory and other compensation.⁵⁹ Those promises were more alluring than the uncertain outcome of a war against the still powerful Ottoman Empire. All previous experience demonstrated that the Balkan states could not defeat the Turks in open battle, and nothing guaranteed this time would be any different. Instead of a precarious war, for the time Romania chose safe neutrality while leaving open the possibility of revising its stance in the event of border changes.⁶⁰

HEADING FOR THE WAR: NARROWING THE OTTOMANS HORIZON

According to contemporaneous sources, including Turkish diplomatic documents published in 2012, the Ottoman Empire was the only country on the Balkan Peninsula and in Europe, for that matter, which was completely unaware of the emerging anti-Turkish League.⁶¹ The four Balkan states invested extensive efforts to keep negotiations hidden from the Turks in the spring and summer of 1912, but, with certainty, by summer all Great Powers had some sense of the Balkan League's formation. Members of the League disclosed the news openly to some Great Powers (France and Great Britain), while others (Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy) learned of the League from their diplomatic networks and contacts. Considering the close ties between the Ottoman Empire and Germany, for example, it is difficult to imagine that whispers did not reach Turkish diplomats

59 Romanian ally Austria-Hungary promised to "correct" the border in Dobruja at the expense of Bulgaria, while France promised that it would enforce protection of the Romanian minority in Macedonia (Gheorghe Zbucea, *România și războaiele balcanice 1912–1913: pagini de istorie sud-est europeană* (București: Albatros, 1999), 68; Ion Bulei, *Brève histoire de la Roumanie*, trans. Ileana Cantuniari (Bucarest: Meronia, 2006), 130; Biljana Stojić, "French Diplomacy toward Romania during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)," in *Balkan Entanglements—Peace of Bucharest*, eds., Matei Gheboianu and Cosmin Ioniță (București: Editura Universității din București, 2016), 31–53.

60 Arhivele Naționale ale României (onward ANR), Casa Regală, Inventare 725, dosar 16/1912, № 7, Bucarest, 16/29 octombrie 1912.

61 Sinan Kunalalp and Gül Tokay, eds. *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One; The Balkan Wars 1912–1913*, vol. I–II (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2012).

and policymakers. Such conclusions can be confirmed in the diplomatic correspondence of the other powers, which clearly show that Turkish diplomatic networks were as well informed as any other European power. Therefore, explaining the lack of Turkish activity to prevent the war must be sought elsewhere.

The first rumors regarding unusual endeavors in the Balkans had already appeared in spring 1913. The Turkish ambassador to Paris Rifat Paşa sent a letter on May 15, 1912, to his colleague in Belgrade, Fuad Hikmed Bey, asking him to confirm if Serbia and Bulgaria had “signed an alliance for the preservation of *status quo* in the Balkans.”⁶² Hikmed Bey responded that in Belgrade everyone spoke about “the necessity of concluding some customs union with Bulgaria,” but he knew nothing about the already signed political alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria.⁶³ Nonetheless, Hikmed Bey was intrigued and further investigated the matter. Hikmed Bey’s inquiry turned up nothing, at least according to his next report to the Sublime Porte. On June 6, he sent to İstanbul press clippings from the Serbian newspapers *Mali Žurnal*, *Straža*, *Tribina*, and *Balkan* in which Bulgaria was harshly criticized for its foreign policy. This led Hikmed Bey to the conclusion that Serbia remained suspicious of Bulgaria, and he questioned whether the announced customs union, let alone a more extensive political alliance, was even possible.⁶⁴

Despite Hikmed Bey’s ignorance, at the beginning of June the Sublime Porte received news that Serbia and Bulgaria had concluded an alliance. Following up on this information, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Asım Bey sent a circular note to all embassies and legations asking them to conduct inquiries on this matter. Nabi Bey, an Ottoman representative in Sofia, first responded. He disclosed that he had been told that Serbia and Bulgaria exchanged a few verbal notes concerning the defense of the current state of affairs in the Balkans at the beginning of the Italo-Turkish War in September 1911. Nothing further than those cordial exchanges was undertaken, and no matter his persistence, Nabi Bey could not secure any additional information or proof about an already concluded alliance.⁶⁵ Additionally, Count Tarnovski, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Sofia, reassured Nabi Bey that the Bulgaro-Serbian alliance was merely gossip whose purpose was to undermine the Austrian position in the Balkans, concluding that most probably the rumor was “just one more intrigue of Balkan Russophiles.”⁶⁶ Turhan Paşa Përmeti, the ambassador to Russian concluded much the same in a

62 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 27a, Paris le 29 mai.

63 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 27b, Constantinople le 30 mai; № 27c, Vienne, le 31 mai 1912, 46–48.

64 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 28d, Belgrade, le 6 juin 1912, 51.

65 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 28c, Constantinople, le 5 juin 1912, 50–51.

66 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 44, Sofia, le 2 juillet 1912, 63.

June 27 conversation with Sergey Sazonov on Balkan affairs. On that occasion, Sazonov reassured Turhan Paşa that Serbia or Bulgaria would not dare to disrupt the current balance on the peninsula. He added that he had “unconditional trust in Montenegrin King Nikola as clever and pro-Russian that he either will undertake some action against the Ottoman Empire.”⁶⁷

The only lucid voice was Osman Nizami Paşa, the ambassador to Berlin. On several occasions during summer 1912, he reported to Asım Bey and his successor, Gabriyel Effendi Noradunkyan, that the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance was real and dangerous. In his reports, he paid most attention to Serbia and Bulgaria’s endeavors as they were the largest Balkan states. Thus he believed that their alliance was the greatest threat to Turkish interests. In August, he even conveyed that he had heard that Greece and Bulgaria were halfway to settling their differences on the matter of Albanian autonomy.⁶⁸ Despite Nizami Paşa’s warnings, the Porte remained inactive.

Another possibility is that the Porte was aware of the Balkan League but classified such information as insignificant. The Ottoman Empire had many reasons to feel relaxed. In all previous wars, the Turkish army had won easily and there was little reason for the outcome to be any different this time. Further, at the moment when the Balkan League was allegedly created, the Ottoman Empire was in the middle of a war with Italy over Cyrenaica and the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean. Even in its fight with one of the Great Powers, in the spring and summer of 1912, the Turkish army had better standing points than Italy. For decades, the Ottoman Empire was belittled by Great Powers as the “Sick Man of Europe” or the “Sick Man at the Bosphorus.”⁶⁹ In reality, however, on the eve of World War I the Porte had invested extensively in military training and rearmament. Starting from 1882, the Ottoman Empire had installed a German military mission under General von Kaehler. Within that mission, Lieutenant Colonel Wilhelm Leopold (Baron) von der Goltz had a particularly important assignment.⁷⁰ Highly valued in European military circles, Goltz was invited in the mid-1880s to come to Serbia to train its army, but he declined the offer. From 1886 he was the lead army instructor—and starting from 1910, he began the fundamental reorganization—of the Turkish army.⁷¹ At the recommendation

67 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 43, Saint-Petersbourg, le 27 juin 1912, 62.

68 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 54, Berlin, le 15 août 1912, 68.

69 The term appeared for the first time during the Crimean War in 1853 but not until May 1861, and in the beginning of the American Civil War did it first enter the language of the press and later diplomacy (E. R. Hooton, *Prelude to the First World War: The Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Fonthill Media Limited, 2014), 12–13).

70 Erickson, 11.

71 *Ibid.*, 25.

of Marshal Goltz, Turkish headquarters purchased the most modern fast-track cannons and mountain and field artillery.⁷² Unfortunately, Goltz's reforms were interrupted due to the war with Italy, but the Turkish army still demonstrated a high level of military capacity and endurance. Turkish generals probably thought that if they could match Italy, they could certainly overmatch the small Balkan states, even if they were united.

From this perspective, if the Turks knew about the League, they did not act to prevent its creation because they were confident in their military superiority, or at the least, trusted that old grudges would destroy the alliance from inside. This prediction did eventually play out in the Second Balkan War but too late for the Ottoman Empire to preserve its interests. Another explanation for the Ottoman Empire's inertia may have been that prominent politicians considered the war useless. At the beginning of the war the Grand Vizier Mehmed Kâmil Paşa stated to the British *Daily News*, "if we win, Austria-Hungary will gain all the benefits; if we lose, the benefits will go to Russia."⁷³ In any case, he concluded, the Ottoman Empire and its Balkan allies would be the losers, while the Great Powers would reap the political benefits for themselves.⁷⁴ In addition, the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs Gabriyel Effendi did not believe the Balkan states could launch a war in 1913 as winter was fast approaching.⁷⁵

Utterly preoccupied with the ongoing war against Italy, the Turks neglected the situation in the Balkans until September when it was too late to prevent the events that soon unfolded. Zeki Paşa, the commander of the Vardar army, harshly criticized the head of the state in his memoirs: "We didn't understand Balkan people(s) and the League they created and we were blind to distinguish enemy and 'friendly powers.'" In other words, the Ottomans were unable to see that Balkan states were not enemies. Besides headquarters, he equally placed blame on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, claiming that they only understood the seriousness of the situation after the broader European public began to discuss the upcoming war that was already inevitable. For its blindness, the Ottoman Empire paid a high price: a catastrophic defeat that caused widespread dissatisfaction across the empire. Two ministers of war were assassinated—Nazım Paşa (July 1912–January 1913) and Mahmut Şevket Paşa (January–June 1913)—and in January 1913 the Young Turks returned to power in a bloody mutiny.⁷⁶

72 Ibid., 51–53.

73 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, Introduction, 13–14.

74 Ibid.

75 Ercan Karakoç, "Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Bir Ermeni Nazır: Gabriyel Noradunkyan Efendi," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Cilt 7, Sayı 25 (Bahar 2010): 157–177.

76 Erickson, 22.

CONCLUSION

The Porte's most costly mistake in late September was to underestimate the Balkan states and their willingness to fight a war no matter the cost. Turkish policymakers thought that a simple demonstration of its military supremacy would frighten the four Balkan states into quiescence. On September 22, 1912, 100,000 Turkish soldiers conducted military maneuvers in the Thrace region near the Bulgarian border. Unfortunately for the Turks, the demonstration had quite the opposite effect. The Balkan states interpreted the maneuvers as a "disguised war mobilization" and responded in kind. On September 30, the four allies mobilized their forces. According to published Ottoman documents, even at that moment the Sublime Porte remained unsure whether the simultaneous mobilization was proof of some mutual agreement(s) among the Balkan states or just a coincidence.⁷⁷ On October 1, confirmation arrived from London that Belgrade, Sofia, and Athens had formed an alliance and would submit a joint ultimatum to the Sublime Porte demanding autonomy for Macedonia.⁷⁸ The Turks summoned the Great Powers and demanded that Paris, St. Petersburg, and London immediately dispatch their fleets to blockade the Montenegrin, Greek, and Bulgarian coasts. Gabriyel Effendi additionally requested that Austria-Hungary impose punitive measures on Serbia's land border.⁷⁹ The Great Powers did not deploy their fleets, considering such a move to be premature. Instead, they used diplomatic tools to smooth tensions between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire. Mediation was mostly conducted by the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré, but in vain. On October 13, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece submitted a joint *démarche* consisting of nine points to the Sublime Porte that demanded fundamental reforms in the Empire's European provinces.⁸⁰ Montenegro was not party to this final diplomatic formality and declared war on October 8. In response to the Montenegrin declaration of war and the *démarche*, the Sublime Porte withdrew its ambassadors from Belgrade, Sofia, and Athens and, with that, the path to war was inevitable.⁸¹

77 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 124, Constantinople, le 2 octobre 1912, 103–104.

78 Noradounghian, 54.

79 *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, I, № 125, Constantinople, le 2 octobre 1912, 104–06.

80 МО, Серия вторая 1900–1913, часты II (14 августа – октября 1912 г), № 1013, 13 октября/30 сентября 1912 г, 441–43.

81 George Peabody Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War: 1898–1914. The Balkan Wars. The League and Turkey*, vol. 9, Part 2 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), № 34, London, October 15, 1912, 24; Arhiv Jugoslavije, zbirka Jovana Jovanovića Pižona, no. 80, fasc. 43, arh. jed. 17.

Surveying the past century, the Balkan Wars marked a watershed moment between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I. They demonstrated many of the elements of war that had evolved in the century since Waterloo.⁸² Or, as the French socialist and pacifist leader Jean Jaurès put it, “The Balkan Wars served as general rehearsal for a Great War.”⁸³

Jaurès himself was ultimately assassinated at the table of his favorite café by a young nationalist on July 31, 1914. War propagandists and militant supporters of the *revanche* policy believed Jaurès was the last obstacle to the rightful war against Germany for which they had waited 43 years. His name would come to be listed as the first of 1,397,000 Frenchmen killed in the bloodiest war so far known in the history of humankind.⁸⁴

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82 Hooton, Preface, 9.

83 Gabriel Hanotaux, *La guerre des Balkans et l'Europe 1912–1913* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1914), 365–371.

84 Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français 1914–1918* (Paris: Perrin 1994), Introduction.

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Explanation: Gabriyel Noradunkyan Effendi, Ottoman Armenian Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire from July 1912 to January 1913 in the Balkan Wars:

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