



# 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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## South-East European History

# 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.

# Making the Balkan League with(out) the European Powers

BILJANA STOJIĆ\*

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When in autumn 1912 Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro launched their war against the Ottoman Empire, the European powers pondered whether they had done everything possible to prevent it. In memoirs later published by many of the prominent diplomats and politicians of the epoch, they tried their best to justify the role(s) they played before and during the Balkan Wars. In their reminiscences, the same cliché phrases are repeated, blaming either Russia as the patron of the Balkan Leagues or the Balkan states and Ottoman Empire for acting willfully and recklessly. Nonetheless, they all agreed that France, Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy should not be accused of jeopardizing the peace and ushering Europe into one of its most dangerous crises since the Napoleonic Wars. They reasoned that the Great Powers were not aware of the Balkan League or its purpose. Over a century later, and thanks to new archives, studies, and published document collections, we may declare with certainty that not only Russia but all the Great Powers knew about the Balkan League's creation.<sup>1</sup> New studies show that their claims to ignorance are not supported by the

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1 Katrin Boeckh and Sabine Rutar, eds., *The Wars of Yesterday: The Balkan Wars and the Emergence of Modern Military Conflict, 1912–13* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2018); Biljana Stojić, *Francuska i balkanski ratovi (1912–1913)* (Beograd: Istorijiski institut 2017); Matei Gheboianu and Cosmin Ioniță, eds., *Balkan Entanglements—Peace of Bucharest* (Bucharest: Universităţii



evidence. Published and unpublished documents clearly demonstrate that all the Great Powers, in both blocks, knew about the concluded agreements and preparations for war by summer 1912 at the latest.

Russia's motivations in sponsoring the creation of the Balkan League are the easiest to discern. Humiliated in the Annexation Crisis (October 1908–March 1909), Russia sought revenge against Austria-Hungary and Germany at any cost. The Balkan League presented a golden opportunity for Russia to rebuild its compromised Balkan policy and regain trust among the shaken Balkan Slavs. Russia's role was most visible during negotiations between Serbia and Bulgaria. After Milovan Milovanović and Ivan Geshov concluded the treaty on March 13, 1912, Russia backed away from its first plan and allowed the Balkan allies to arrange other treaties (Bulgaro-Greek; Serbo-Montenegrin; and Bulgaro-Montenegrin) on their own.

## DISCLOSURE OF THE ALLIANCE TO FRIENDLY POWERS

Stepping back, Russia informed its allies France and Great Britain about current and potential changes in the Balkans, and thus at least secure their sympathy if

din Bucarești 2016); *Prvi Balkanski rat 1912/1913: istorijski procesi i problemi u svetlosti stogodišnjeg iskustva* (Beograd: SANU 2015); Catherine Horel, ed., *Les guerres balkaniques (1912–1913): conflits, enjeux, mémoires* (Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: 2014); 100th anniversary of the Balkan Wars. Sources and documents: international scientific conference, November 11, 2013, Sofia. 100 години от Балканските войни. Извори и документи: доклади от международна научна конференция, 11 Aleksandar Georgijev Grebenarov, ed., ноември 2013 г., София (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; Institute for Historical Studies), 2015; Dimitris Stamatopoulos, ed., *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire. Political Violence and the Balkan Wars, vol. 2* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2015); Jacob Gould Schurman, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Champaign: BooSk Jungle, 2014); Edward R. Hooton, *Prelude to the First World War: The Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Fonthill Media, 2014); Jean-Paul Bled et Jean-Pierre Deschodt, eds., *Les guerres balkaniques 1912–1913* (Paris: Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014); Vlado Kambovski and Blaže Ristovski, eds., *Сто години од Балканските војни: прилози од научниот собир одржан на 3–4 декември 2012 година* (Скопје: Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, 2013); Srdjan Rudić and Miljan Milkić, eds., *Balkanski ratovi 1912/1913: nova videnja i tumačenja* (Beograd: Istorijski institut; Beograd: Institut za strategijska istraživanja, 2013); *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One; The Balkan Wars 1912–1913*. vol. I–II. eds. Sinan Kunalalp and Gül Tokay (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2012); R. Kasaba, *Turkey in the Modern World*, Vol. IV (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jean-Jacques Becker, “La guerre dans les Balkans (1912–1919),” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps* 71 (2003): 4–17; Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail. The Ottoman Army in the Balkans 1912–1913* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003); Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913. Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge (Warfare and History), 2000).

not their open support. Russia's task was facilitated by Geshov and Milovanović's mutual decision to share some details from the treaty with those they considered friendly powers. Both agreed that France and Great Britain were at the top of that list. On March 19, Milovanović personally informed the French ambassador to Belgrade, Leon Descos, about the agreement with Bulgaria, stressing that "Serbia and Bulgaria signed the agreement in order to harmonize their mutual interests."<sup>2</sup> As Milovanović did not go into particulars, Descos perceived his explanation as vague and immediately suspected that the treaty defined relations between the two nations more closely and strictly than he was informed. He continued to pressure Milovanović for more details, but the Serbian Prime Minister remained firm, repeating the same line: "[T]he treaty does not have a clear purpose but to reconcile interests and disagreements in Macedonia."<sup>3</sup> The Russian ambassador Nikolai Hartwig confirmed those claims, which only convinced Descos further that the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty carried some larger importance. Descos reported his suspicion to the Quai d'Orsay, highlighting "some unclear involvement of Hartwig and Russia."<sup>4</sup>

Russia fulfilled its promises when, on April 1, the Russian ambassador to Paris Alexandre Izvolsky informed the Quai d'Orsay and the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Raymond Poincaré about the secret alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria. Izvolsky disclosed two drafts to Poincaré, which Poincaré immediately forwarded to the French ambassadors in Sofia and Belgrade, asking them to confirm their validity. In the first document, Serbia and Bulgaria agreed to maintain the current *status quo* intact, while the second document stated that

2 Under Milovanović's influence, the Serbian government was secretive about sharing details from the agreement. Milovanović did not even inform all Serbian diplomats in European capitals, giving them only basic information. The Serbian ambassador to France, Milenko Vesnić, offered a remark at the beginning of the First Balkan War indicating that even he did not know all details from the alliance treaty with Bulgaria, which complicated his propaganda work. On the other hand, the ambassador to Berlin, Miloš Bogičević, was fully informed already in March, but by Prince Alexander. When he learned this, Milovanović was furious because of Alexander's indiscretion. See Archives des Ministère des affaires étrangères Paris (onward AMAE), Nouvelle série 1896–1914 (NS), su-série Turquie, doss. 243, № 44–45, Belgrade, le 6 November 1912; Miloš Bogičević, *Causes of the War: An Examination into the Causes of the European War with Special Reference to Russia and Serbia by M. Bogitsceovich* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1920), 29.

3 Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914) (onward DDF), sér. 3 (1911–1914), t. 2 (8 février–10 mai 1912), (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1931), № 225, Belgrade, le 19 mars 1912, pp. 229–30.

4 AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 230, № 169–171, Belgrade, le 16 avril 1912.

no actions would be taken without Russia's official consent.<sup>5</sup> After Izvolsky provided the drafts to Poincaré, Descos's suspicions were finally confirmed.<sup>6</sup>

Compared to Descos, his colleague in Sofia Hector-André de Panafieu was in a less favorable position. Drafts from Paris proved a surprise because he had not been informed previously by the Bulgarian authorities as Greshov had promised to Milovanović.<sup>7</sup> After receiving the drafts, he met with Geshov on April 17, who confirmed everything. Justifying his late notification, Geshov stated that the previous French ambassador to Sofia and current chief of the political section of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maurice Paléologue (1907– January 1912), knew of and approved the Bulgarian plan to conclude a defensive alliance with Serbia.<sup>8</sup>

When he received confirmation from Belgrade and Sofia, Poincaré sent a circular note to the other French embassies notifying them of the existence of the new alliance and asking them to investigate if their respective counterparts were well informed. Alfred Chilhaud-Dumaine, the French ambassador to Vienna, reported first. On May 16, Dumaine wrote that he had the impression that Vienna was clueless about the treaty. Every interlocutor he spoke to claimed that Serbia and Bulgaria shared such a rivalry over Macedonia that it was impossible to imagine them negotiating any sort of union. From Dumaine's point of view, Austria's ignorance was not a good development, and he counseled Poincaré to disclose all information he had to the other Great Powers to protect itself in the case any treaty clauses still unknown to France were activated. He strongly believed that it would be better for the Great Powers to share mutual responsibility in the case of war. If France chose to stay quiet, it became Russia's partner and thus shared equal responsibility in the eyes of Europe. As an experienced diplomat, he advocated the same policy as in the Annexation Crisis, i.e., "France must protect itself from obscure Russian policy."<sup>9</sup>

Jules Cambon, the French ambassador to Berlin, was fully informed even before Poincaré's circular note. His information came from a Serbian diplomat, Miloš Bogičević (Milosh Bogitsceovich), who disclosed that "it is concluded, the alliance between Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece." Bogičević emphasized that the three states had no intention to create disturbances or initiate conflict in the Balkans and that the alliance was a precautionary measure in the event of political changes imposed from outside the Balkans. In his report to Poincaré, Jules

5 DDF, 3e série, (1911–1914), t. II, № 284, Paris, le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1912, p. 285.

6 AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 230, № 169–171, Belgrade, le 16 avril 1912.

7 DDF, 3e série, t. II, № 297, Sofia, le 3 avril 1912, pp. 304–07.

8 AMAE, NS, su-série Turquie, doss. 230, № 175–177, Sofia, le 17 avril 1912.

9 AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 230, № 264–265, Vienne, le 16 mai 1912; Raymond Poincaré, *Au service de la France: neuf années de souvenirs. Balkan en feu: 1912*, t. II (Paris: Plon, 1926), 31–32.

Cambon, in the position since 1907, questioned the alliance sustainability as each side possessed different motives for joining the union. To his knowledge, Bulgaria's intention was to use the alliance against the Ottoman Empire to gain Macedonia, Serbia needed the alliance as a defense against Austria-Hungary, and, finally, the idea that Greece had agreed to fight for Bulgaria's interests in Macedonia was for Cambon too absurd to entertain. Therefore, unlike the suspicious Dumaine, Cambon believed that the alliance would remain only on paper and have no real capacity in practice.<sup>10</sup> He did not believe the Balkan League would endure. Like Dumaine he was concerned about Russia's involvement and therefore the possible implications for France, and also counseled caution.<sup>11</sup>

Poincaré, on the other hand, did not share Dumaine's and Cambon's concerns. He was unconvinced by Izvolsky, who he personally despised, but decided to think through the problem with a cool head. In all these matters, he confided in Maurice Paléologue, his classmate, and long-time friend; both agreed it was best to wait for the meeting with Sergey Sazonov scheduled for August 9.<sup>12</sup> Poincaré had been the head of the French Government since January 1912, while Sazonov came to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in October 1910. In his memoirs, Poincaré describes that journey. The Eastern question and the Balkans were one of the main topics. During one meeting, Sazonov disclosed the original Serbo-Bulgarian treaty to his colleague and personally translated the most important parts including the secret convention. Poincaré stated that the documents Sazonov presented to him contradicted the two drafts Izvolsky had shown him in April. While Izvolsky claimed that the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty was a type of defensive alliance, Poincaré understood immediately that the signed treaty was offensive and, therefore, dangerous not only for the Balkans but for all of Europe. He expressed his concern that France had not been consulted at the conclusion of the alliance and that as France's ally, Russia's involvement was a potential threat to their alliance. He strongly stressed that he would personally do everything to prevent the war because "the French public will never allow military engagement of the Republic in a strictly Balkan issue." Regardless, if needed, France would diplomatically support Russia.<sup>13</sup>

10 AMAE, Fonds nominatifs (onward FN), Jules Cambon (onward J. Cambon), doss. 49, № 58–59, Berlin, le 18 juillet 1912.

11 AMAE, FN, J. Cambon, doss. 49, № 58–59, Berlin, le 18 juillet 1912; Edward C. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), 133.

12 Maurice Paléologue, *Au Quai d'Orsay à la veille de la tourmente. Journal 1913–1914 (1<sup>er</sup> Janvier–28 Juin 1914)* (Paris: Plon, 1947), 67.

13 Poincaré, 114–117.

At first glance, Poincaré's reaction may appear rigid, but in the long-term it meant a radical transformation in French policy from the period of the Annexation Crisis. While in 1908–1909 Georges Clemenceau and Stephan Pichon openly distanced themselves from Russia, Poincaré acted more cautiously and tactically. He promised Sazonov nothing and yet managed to establish trustworthy relations. After Poincaré's visit, Sazonov had all rights to be highly satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. He wrote to the Tsar that "in Poincaré, Russia has found a trustful and prudent friend."<sup>14</sup> After the Annexation Crisis, France grappled with another Moroccan Crisis in 1911, a repercussion of Entente's feeble position after 1909. Thus, Poincaré knew that he could not afford another such challenge and that France, therefore, must play a different game. The most important result of his journey to Russia is what that Poincaré knew the most about the Balkan endeavors. Even aware of the possible consequences, he promised that he would not disclose his knowledge to the opposing bloc of powers.

As previously agreed among Milovanović and Geshov, Great Britain was also ranked as a friendly power. However, Milovanović did not inform the British ambassador Sir Ralph Spencer Paget. Serbian political circles considered Paget to be a Turkophile. Resident in Serbia since 1910, from the beginning he was a harsh critic of Serbian political affairs—a stance that did not garner the trust of the Serbian elite. Even though he was not informed directly by Milovanović, he suspected some hidden clauses and was concerned mainly with Russia's involvement. His suspicions were confirmed in April. Officially, the British authorities were informed of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance on April 6 when the Russian ambassador Count Alexander Konstantinovich Benckendorff presented the news to Lord Grey.<sup>15</sup>

Benckendorff was surprised to hear that his "news" was not news to the Foreign Office. Britain's source of information was Sir Henry Bax-Ironside, the ambassador to Bulgaria, who discovered the treaty the day after it was signed. His source of information, in turn, was most likely the Serbian ambassador Miroslav Spalajković. At the head of the British mission in Bulgaria since 1911, Sir Ironside almost immediately established close ties with the local Serbian embassy. Spalajković was appointed ambassador the same year and from the start they became close friends. With the nickname "Serbiophile," this British diplomat

14 *Международные отношения в эпоху империализма (onward MO), Документы из архивов царского и временного правительства 1878–1917, Серия вторая (1900–1913), часты II (14 августа–октября 1912 г.), (Москва–Ленинград: Гос. изд-во полит. лит 1938–1940), № 489, Докладная записка министра иностранных дел Николаю II, 17/4 августа 1912 г, pp. 29–35.*

15 Božin Simić, "Diplomatski dvojeboj na Balkanu u 1914. i 1915. Godini," *Srpski književni glasnik (onward SKG)* 51, 4 (1937): 289–294; Ljiljana Aleksić Pejčković, *Odnosi Srbije sa Francuskom i Engleskom 1903–1914* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1965): 561–562..

had access to classified information and was a confidante throughout the entire negotiation process.<sup>16</sup> Already in October 1911 he reported to the Foreign Office about one of the Geshov-Milovanović meetings but did not share his information with the French ambassador Panafieu, who he suspected to be a “hot-blooded Bulgarophile.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite being informed about the Balkan League and the plans of the allied states, for the time being, the Foreign Office chose to gather information only. After Ironside and Benckendorff, Lord Grey’s third source was the French Prime Minister Poincaré. After his return from Saint Petersburg, Poincaré wrote a personal letter to Lord Grey summarizing his discussions with Sazonov. With certainty, he emphasized that Sazonov had the Balkans under his control, including the alliance agreements concluded among the Balkan states. At first it seemed that Britain was little interested in the Balkans as it was focused on the Italo-Turkish War, which had been ongoing for almost a year. Combat was mostly in North Africa and the Dodecanese Islands, placing in jeopardy the Mediterranean naval routes that connected Britain to Egypt, the Middle East, and India. As a result, and unsurprisingly, Great Britain was the party most interested in leading the mediation process between Constantinople and Rome. By the end of the summer of 1912, the Great Powers, under British influence, finally concluded that Italy and the Ottoman Empire would not settle their dispute by themselves and must be made to do so. With the looming threat of another war, ending the Italo-Turkish War was of utmost importance to Great Britain.<sup>18</sup>

## JOINT STANCE OR DICHOTOMY WITHIN THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

While Great Britain was focused on the Italo-Turkish war, France played the role of loyal ally and agreed not to disclose confidential information to rival powers. Even so, the Balkan project did not remain secret from the Central powers for long.

16 Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars: 1912–1913* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: H. Milford, 1938), 60–62.

17 Helmreich, 60–62; Richard J. Crampton, “The Balkans, 1909–1914,” In *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. Francis H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 256–271.

18 AMAE, FN, J. Cambon, doss. 49, № 53–57, Berlin, le 30 juin 1912; 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), № 48, Belgrade, October 19, 1912, pp. 39–40.

Official diplomatic reports clearly show that Vienna, Bucharest, and Berlin learned of the concluded treaties no later than the summer of 1912.<sup>19</sup>

An April 15 letter from the German undersecretary Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter to Romanian King Carol I regarding the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement is the first written evidence of Germany's knowledge of the ongoing negotiations. According to one theory, Kiderlen-Waechter learned of the treaties due to reckless statements made by Miloš Bogićević (Milosh Bogitsceovich), the Serbian ambassador to Berlin. Another account suggests Germany's main source was Romania. It can be presumed that Romania, as a member of the Central Powers, notified its allies Germany and Austria-Hungary about the negotiations and the proposals it received from Milovanović and Geshov to join the League.<sup>20</sup> Following Kiderlen-Waechter's letter, Austria-Hungary and Romania continued their discussions on Balkan affairs during Berthold's visit to King Carol in August 1912. According to published Romanian diplomatic documents, during that visit Count Berthold convinced King Carol to keep Romania out of the war in exchange for expanding Romanian territory at the expense of Bulgaria.<sup>21</sup> The implicature of Romania as a member of the Central Powers was too risky for both blocks. Among the three members of the Entente, France invested the maximum effort to keep Romania out of the Balkan League and possible war. Like Austria, France promised Romania benefits if it remained neutral. While Austria offered territory, France promised protection for the Romanian minority (Aromanians) in Macedonia and a seat at the table in a future peace conference.<sup>22</sup> Romania thus used its neutrality to bargain successfully with all the interested parties: the Central Powers, the Entente, the Ottoman Empire, and the Balkan states. From all Romania secured significant promises. With this in mind, it seems likely that Romania calculated that spreading word about the Balkan League would provide more benefits than, as was the case for France and Great Britain, remaining quiet.

19 *Istorija srpskog naroda: Od Berlinskog kongresa do ujedinjenja*, t. VI–1. eds., Čedomir Popov, Dimitrije Djordjević, Djordje Mikić, K. Milutinović, V. Krestić, A. Radonić and M. Ekmečić, (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1994), 188.

20 Vladimir Ćorović, *Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku* (Beograd: Ministarstvo spoljnih poslova, 1936), 354; Vasa Kazimirović, *Nikola Pašić i njegovo doba: 1845–1926*, Vol. 2 (Beograd: Nova Evropa, 1990), 162.

21 *Ministère des Affaires étrangères. Documents diplomatiques. Les événements de la péninsule balkanique. L'action de la Roumanie (septembre 1912–août 1913)* (Bucharest: Imprimeria statului, 1913).

22 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 Cantunari (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.

Rome also likely learned of the Balkan League from Romania, but Montenegro was another possible source. King Nikola's daughter Jelena was married to King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and since 1905 the Italian capital controlled Montenegro's tobacco industry and the main seaport at Bar.<sup>23</sup> And, as it was involved in a war against the Turks in North Africa, Italy naturally favored more parties threatening the Ottoman Empire. Giovanni Giolitti, the president of the Italian Government in spring 1912, campaigned around the Balkans to convince additional states to declare war against the Turks. He even tried to persuade France to take part, but Paris rejected his invitation with the curt statement that they did "not want to be part of shady Italian policy."<sup>24</sup> As such, if Rome was aware of the Balkan alliance, its interests lay in letting it form. Accordingly, Italian diplomats in the Balkan capitals were little interested in tracking these events. For example, the Italian ambassador to Belgrade Carlo Baroli reported in the spring of 1912 that he knew nothing about Serbia and Bulgaria's alliance, describing relations between the two now allies as very cold.<sup>25</sup>

## AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND THE BALKAN PUZZLE

The Serbo-Bulgarian treaty was a central point of discussion during Count Berthold's visit to Berlin on May 24–26. The French embassy in Berlin reported to the Quai d'Orsay on June 8 that Berlin was aware of the alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria and that the news had caused shock in political circles. At the same moment, the Bulgarian King Ferdinand was visiting Berlin, but the French embassy knew nothing about discussions within Potsdam's walls.<sup>26</sup> French officials did not want to speculate about the meaning of King Ferdinand's visit, but newspapers such as *Zeitung von Köln* and *Les Temps* did. Both papers published similar articles guessing that Ferdinand arrived in Berlin to "seek approval for the aggressive policy he intends to conduct in the following period."<sup>27</sup> Arriving

23 Radoslav M. Raspopović, "Crna Gora i Rusija na početku XX vijeka," in *Crna Gora i Rusija: Ogledi i eseji* (Beograd: Službeni list Srbije i Crne Gore; Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore: SANUS, 2005), 275–299; Francesco Guida, "Vico Mantegazza, l'Italie et la crise bosniaque," in *1908: l'annexion de la Bosnie-Herzégovine, cent ans après*, dir. Catherine Horel (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2011), 91–99.

24 AMAE, FN, J. Cambon, doss. 49, № 13, Berlin, le 15 mai 1913.

25 GianPaolo Ferraioli, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852–1914)* (Soveria Mannelli (Catanzaro) Rubbettino, 2007), 543–544.

26 *Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)*, 3e série (1911–1914). t. III (11 mai–30 septembre 1912), (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1931), № 83, Berlin, le 8 juin 1912, pp. 103–104.

27 "Politički pregled." *SKG*, XXVIII, no. 12, 16/29. jun 1912, 951–4; "La visite du roi de Bulgarie à Berlin." *Le Temps*, le 7 juin 1912, 2.



in Berlin after a visit to Vienna, he, whether by coincidence or not, encountered the Montenegrin King Nikola who was also on an official visit to Ballhausplatz. Historian John D. Treadway speculates that the meeting between the two Balkan sovereigns was prearranged and that the two formed an alliance in Vienna under the nose of Franz Joseph and Count Berthold. It is hard to confirm this allegation since Ferdinand and Nikola did not meet in person and all contacts went through their delegations.<sup>28</sup> Treadway's claim is unconfirmed by other historians and the Austrian press. Vienna's newspapers described the visit of the Montenegrin king as the ultimate validation of his loyalty to Austria and approval of Austria's Balkan policy.<sup>29</sup>

The Austrian public's high confidence in June had, by August, turned into paranoia that resulted in an attempt to interfere in Balkan affairs. A bomb explosion at a market in the Macedonian town of Kočani, in which 50 people were killed and 180 injured, served as a pretext for Austrian meddling. Since the majority of the victims were ethnic Bulgarians, the Bulgarian public was upset the most. Across the country gatherings were organized where demonstrators appealed to the Bulgarian government to avenge the Kočani victims. The incident's severity could easily have served as a pretext for war, but Bulgaria and its allies were not yet ready to fight: Serbia and Bulgaria had not yet concluded their military convention; negotiations between Serbia and Montenegro had just started; and, above all, Russia's Duma elections were scheduled for September. As such, it had to withhold its diplomatic support at that precise moment and urged the Bulgarians to remain calm.<sup>30</sup>

Russia had sufficient authority to constrain the Balkan states, but it could not control the other powers. Without consulting the other European ministers, on August 13 Count Berthold proposed to decentralize administration in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup> He stated that Austria-Hungary intended to improve the current state of affairs and end riots and guerilla movements once and for all. This out-of-the-blue proposal caught the Concert of Europe unprepared. The Great Powers worried about hidden Austrian motives, but eventually all five gave their consent to Count Berthold to carry out the proposed reforms.

28 Džon D. Tredvej, *Soko i orao: Crna Gora i Austro-Ugarska 1908–1914* (Podgorica: Istorijiski institut Crne Gore; SANUS, 2005), 118–119.

29 Helmreich, 68.

30 BD, IX/II, № 461, Sofia, January 6, 1913, 360–368; Državni arhiv Srbije (DAS), serija Great Britain (GB), Microfilm 205, № 52, Annual Report, 1912, Belgrade, June 6, 1913.

31 Jovan M. Jovanović, *Borba za narodno ujedinjenje 1903–1908* (Beograd: Geca Kon A.D. 1938), 74.

The four members of the Balkan League did not believe the Austrians were honest, suspecting hidden motives in securing Albanian autonomy and sewing mistrust among Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Montenegrins. Berthold's initiative provoked rising discontent that achieved the opposite effect rather than his intent. Instead of pacifying the situation, his proposal strengthened relations within the Balkan League and led them to speed up their final war preparations. In the end, Austria never implemented its proposed reforms because the Balkan states forced it into a second plan. Relations with the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, moving toward the final breaking point.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSION

On October 15, the Sublime Porte ordered its ambassadors to leave Belgrade, Sofia, and Athens. Turkish diplomats left the Balkan capitals on October 17 while, on the same day, Gabriyel Noradunkyan Effendi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs,<sup>33</sup> ordered the Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian ambassadors to İstanbul to leave.<sup>34</sup> Some respected contemporaries questioned Noradunkyan's decision to withdraw the Turkish diplomats and reject the ultimatum presented by Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece out of hand. Dr. Cemil Topuzlu, the mayor of İstanbul in 1912, provides one example. In his memoirs, Hrant Noradounghian, the cousin of Gabriyel Effendi and a secretary in the Ottoman Embassy in Belgrade, defended his famous cousin's decision, arguing that if the Porte acknowledged Macedonian autonomy it would have been defeated without firing a single bullet. On the other hand, Hrant placed the guilt on the army and the officers, pointing out in his remark that the Turks could have turned the war's outcome to their advantage if they had had Mustafa Kemal Atatürk or İsmet İnönü leading them through the Balkan Wars.<sup>35</sup>

32 Arhiv Jugoslavije, zbirka Jovana J. Pižona, br. 80, fas. 43, arh. jed. 5–18; “Poslednja opomena Srbije (uoči rata 1912)”; “Politički pregled”, XXIX, 6 (16/29. septembar 1912), *SKG*, pp. 459–462.

33 During the Balkan Wars, Noradunkyan Effendi served as Minister for Foreign Affairs in two Cabinets: Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa (22 July–29 October 1912) and Kamil Paşa (29 October 1912–23 January 1913). Regarding this prominent political figure see more in: Ercan Karakoç, “Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Bir Ermeni Nazır: Gabriyel Noradunkyan Efendi,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Cilt 7, Sayı 25 (Bahar 2010): 157–177.

34 Hrant Noradounghian, *Vers la Guerre balkanique; et Vers la Première guerre mondiale* (İstanbul: La Turquie moderne, 1950), 59–60.

35 Noradounghian, 62–64.

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